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## **The construction of nationalism in Chinese media events in the reform era: an analysis of online mass communication, 2008-2012**

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# **The Construction of Nationalism in Chinese Media Events in the Reform Era**

An Analysis of Online Mass Communication, 2008-2012

Qiaoqi Zhang

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# **The Construction of Nationalism in Chinese Media Events in the Reform Era**

An Analysis of Online Mass Communication, 2008-2012

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## **Notes on Conventions**

1. Concerning Chinese names, I follow the Chinese custom to place family names before given names.
2. I keep the spellings and expressions of online Chinese data sources the same as the original

## Chapter 1 Introduction

With the advent of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has undergone tremendous transformation in the last few decades. The Chinese government has made great achievements to improve people's living standards, as the economy is growing at a brisk clip. With an increasing global impact, it is generally believed that the PRC is becoming a rising power in the 21st century in many aspects such as economy, politics, and military. David Kang (2007, 13) argues that China's amazing rise as a strong power—in East Asia in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, military spending, and national power—is unprecedented. Although David Shambaugh (2013, 4) points out that China only partially exerts global influence, he still admits that “China is the world's most important rising power.”

Notably, the Chinese government has staged a series of remarkable mass media events to narrate various successes over the last two decades, telling stories about the country's past, present, and future and showing it as a rising powers, as “the international mass event is an excellent format for generating a sense of membership in the international community” and shows a country's modernity (Schneider, 2019, 57). The 2008 Beijing Olympics represent the realization of a “one-hundred-year Olympic dream.” Susan Brownell (2013, 1318) holds that “the event symbolically marked the incorporation of China—the world's most populous nation, a rising economic and political power and the nation most culturally and geographically distant from the West—into the world system to a degree never seen before in human history.” The 60th national anniversary in 2009 demonstrates a rising powerful Chinese state to all world audiences. Zhu Jiangnan and Lu Jie (2013, 1086) examine how other countries responded to the PRC's military might exhibited in the 2009 national celebrations and indicate “that the military implications of China's rise appeared to be more compelling to other countries than its economic implications.” The official design of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo constructed a unified, harmonious future for the PRC and the world, which established the PRC as a cultural power in the world (Callahan, 2012). In 2012, the government launched the Shenzhou 9 manned spacecraft mission. The success of this mission “constitutes a new achievement in the PRC's effort to build an innovation-driven country, a new significant step in the PRC's scientific development, and an important contribution to human exploration of the outer

space.”<sup>1</sup> These media events are supposed to enable the government to improve the PRC’s international image and further strengthen the people’s national pride and identification with the ruling Party, i.e., the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

### **1.1 State Nationalism and Popular Nationalism in the PRC: Affecting Ruling Legitimacy**

The PRC’s rise, narrated in the mass media events mentioned earlier, promotes state nationalism, led by Chinese authorities. However, besides state nationalism, there is another type of nationalism, i.e., popular nationalism expressed and spread by the Chinese populace. Generally, state nationalism in the PRC’s reform era is top-down nationalism transmitted from the authorities to the people, bearing characteristics of pragmatism (Zhao, 2004 & 2014). In contrast, popular nationalism is bottom-up nationalist sentiment widely presented in public discourse and nationalist activities. Regardless of what forms Chinese nationalism takes, it affects the authorities’ ruling legitimacy (Brady, 2009a; Gries, 2004; Shirk, 2008; Tai, 2006; Zhao, 2004; Zheng, 1999).

In the reform era, the authorities have established “patriotism” as an important official discourse to seek political stability and maintain the ruling legitimacy. The Chinese leaders attached importance to political stability for state administration, especially after the political unrest caused by the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. They put an overwhelming emphasis on patriotic propaganda to boost Chinese people’s loyalty to the state. This way, they sought to attain a stable society and ruling legitimacy. This is state patriotism, or rather, state nationalism, equal to what Zheng Yongnian (1999) called “official nationalism” and Zhao Suisheng (2004) named “state-led pragmatic nationalism.”<sup>2</sup> Zhao (2004, 209) indicates that the authorities use pragmatic nationalism to “rally support in the name of building a modern Chinese nation-state” and “preserve regime legitimacy.” Similarly, Anne-Marie Brady (2009a, 435) argues that concerning thought work,<sup>3</sup> mass persuasion serves as

<sup>1</sup>A congratulatory note delivered by former Premier Wen Jiabao, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2012/06/shenzhou-9-makes-triumphant-return/>, accessed 22 April 2016.

<sup>2</sup>As both patriotism and nationalism connote the meaning of “love of the country/nation,” many people use the two concepts interchangeably without making a distinction. Generally, the two terms are similar in the literal and deep meanings. Patriotism focuses more on the nation itself to address attachment and loyalty to a country, while nationalism highlights distinction between nations. Since nations nowadays are placed in an environment with competitions that distinguish themselves from others, I will mainly use the term nationalism in my argumentation of the dissertation, except in some cases that especially refer to Chinese patriotic propaganda, such as the Patriotic Education Campaign.

<sup>3</sup>Thought work (*sixiang gongzuo* 思想工作) refers to the work to model people’s ideology. Brady (2008, 7) indicates that “in the Chinese context, propaganda is the medium and thought work is the content.”

an essential tool to strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP. To implement mass persuasion, “patriotism was emphasized [since 1991] as a key theme of political ideology, along with collectivism and socialism” (Brady, 2009a, 448).

Where does Chinese popular nationalism come from? Two positions mainly interpret the origin of popular nationalism: one is from people’s perennial consciousness based on shared culture, language, and territory, which then becomes modern popular nationalism. For example, Walker Connor (1994, 159) supports this viewpoint, suggesting that nationalism is mass rooted. The other position stems from nationalist sentiments created or fostered by the elites, including outstanding politicians, military officials, and intellectuals at the start of the modern era. Most criticism agrees that it is the elites who bring about nationalism. For instance, Ernest Gellner (1983, 118) regards the intellectuals as “the driving force of initial nationalism.” Miroslav Hroch (1985, cited in Smith, 1998, 56) distinguishes three stages of the emergence of nationalism in Eastern Europe: small circles formulated the idea of “nation” and then disseminated this idea to the growing town. After that, the populace’s involvement in the nationalist movement constructed popular nationalism. Besides, Benedict Anderson (1991) attributes the origin of nationalism to print capitalism<sup>4</sup> dominated by businessmen and intellectuals, emphasizing the elites’ pivotal role in generating nationalism. However, Joseph Whitmeyer (2002) admits elites’ function in disseminating nationalist ideology but proposes that elites failed in creating nationalism. Chinese nationalism originated in the late 19th century and early 20th century when foreign powers invaded China. Intellectuals introduced nationalism from the West and Japan and disseminated it to the populace. In the PRC, state nationalism largely influences popular nationalism because of the great efforts made by the authorities to propagate patriotism to the populace. Through such propaganda, it is believed that state nationalism turns into popular nationalism when people accept such official patriotism and then internalize it as their nationalism. Furthermore, to a certain degree, state nationalism is set as a paradigm of popular nationalism.

Nevertheless, there is no clear line between state nationalism and popular nationalism in the PRC,

<sup>4</sup> Print capitalism, coined by Anderson (1991), refers that the nation, as an imagined community, is impacted by the printing press (e.g., newspapers) and proliferated by capitalism.

as the two types of nationalism have considerable overlap and intertwinement. They have the same meaning of “love for the nation.” A big difference between the two is that state nationalism teaches people to accept political indoctrination passively, but that popular nationalism prompts people to actively rethink politics and participate in political activities. Miao Feng and Elaine Yuan (2014, 120) note that bottom-up, spontaneous popular nationalism—manifested in online opinion and voices—indicates people’s engagement in national politics. Another major difference is that different agents bring about different features of the two types of nationalism. The agents of state nationalism are the authorities, so state nationalism does not frequently fluctuate to ensure a stable society. The agent of popular nationalism is the populace whose sentiments are prone to be stimulated so that popular nationalism is dynamic when a stimulus exists.

In most cases, as the people express nationalist sentiments in line with the authorities’ expectations (not threatening the authorities’ legitimacy), state nationalism and popular nationalism can be understood as same. However, in some cases, when certain stimulation such as international conflicts gives rise to excessive popular nationalism that might be out of control of the authorities, the authorities may have to take some measures to adjust popular nationalism to a “safe” scope wherein nationalist sentiments do not negatively affect the legitimacy.

## **1.2 Media Events and Online Communication: Constructing Chinese Nationalism**

With the rapid development of mass communication, mass media events have become a form of popular art, drawing broad public attention and impacting people’s daily lives. Yet, what is a media event? How does it affect people’s daily lives? In a general sense, a media event is a mega event recorded and broadcast by mass media to transmit cultural symbols and/or political conceptions to audiences. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992, 1) define a media event as a “high holiday of mass communication.” To be more specific, it is a live televised ceremonious performance targeting a large audience to disrupt people’s daily routines. The disruption makes people collectively remember the day as a moment when the nation is celebrated (Billig, 1995, 45). The “ceremony interrupts the flow of daily life (syntactics); it deals reverently with sacred matters (semantics); and it involves the response (pragmatics) of a committed audience” (Dayan & Katz, 1992, 14). For example, the Chinese government announced 3 September 2015 as a Victory Day to celebrate the

70th Anniversary of Victory over Japan in World War II, and the whole nation then took one day off to watch the parade that presented a powerful Chinese nation on the world stage<sup>5</sup>. The event disrupted audiences' daily routines (which had never happened on that specific day before) and promised to remind the audiences of the days of humiliation in the past and to impress them with a powerful nation at present.

Dayan and Katz (1992) define three categories of media events: Contest, Conquest, and Coronation. Contest refers to competitions among people or countries involving sports games, election campaigns, and other rivalry forms. Conquest demonstrates great moments that symbolize the big progress of humankind in history. Live broadcast allows audiences to witness these exciting moments. Coronation is the presentation of rituality, such as award ceremonies and inaugurations, creating a distance between the figures being celebrated and the onlookers. However, it should be noted that as the three categories of media events are often mixed, no distinct boundaries exist between these types of events. A media event usually does not fall into just one category but often includes parts of other categories as well. Most of the time, one element is dominant (Dayan & Katz, 1992, 27). For instance, a sports game, considered a Contest in principle, is also endowed with a Conquest element (if a contestant breaks a record) and a Coronation component (in the opening ceremony and the award ceremony).

Media events are organized and designed by a group of people, some organizations, or authority institutions with special intentions. For example, a presidential campaign aims to familiarize voters with presidential candidates and guide them to vote for their favored candidate. Normally, the procedure of this kind of media event is prescheduled before it takes place, which allows audiences to expect what will happen in the next step (such as candidates' speeches and the announcement of the campaign result). In contrast, abrupt events, such as big natural disasters, are another event-form widely reported by mass media. They do not tell "stories" designed by communication agents but transmit social or political implications to audiences. Their unpredictability for audiences creates more novelty than designed events. As there are no directors for the events, their representation in detail mainly relies on media coverage. In this way, media practitioners heavily script the process

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/13/content\\_20704788.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/13/content_20704788.htm), accessed 21 December 2020.



and results of how the events are transmitted to the audiences based on their demand.

In the PRC, nationalism is an important theme in political communication for the authorities to strengthen Chinese people's national identity in the reform era. Mass media events play a critical role in constructing state nationalism and arousing popular nationalism. Two types of media events respectively enhance state nationalism and popular nationalism: government-staged media events and abrupt media events, on which I will elaborate in the following part.

By stressing the PRC's achievements in a conspicuous way, media events staged by the Chinese government promote state nationalism. The design of these events, such as artistic performances and astronauts' exploration in space, aims to inspire audiences to appreciate Chinese civilization or to witness great moments of the PRC's successes. With achievements, the government expects the people to be more patriotic and at the same time attribute the successes to the efforts of the authorities.

Besides the above-mentioned scheduled media events, abrupt events emerge in the PRC, influencing state nationalism and popular nationalism. For instance, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake was a natural disaster that did not directly connect with nationalism. However, Chinese media covered many stories related to this disaster (including generous donations) to show the solidarity of Chinese people, which prompted "small symbolic acts of patriotism" (Schneider & Hwang, 2014, 655). In addition to natural disasters, media events concerning international conflicts directly generate popular nationalism. For example, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 ignited strong popular nationalism. Such media event engenders nationalism from the populace in a more spontaneous way than staged media events. Yet, to a certain extent, Chinese authorities affect the development of spontaneous events through administration. Different from staged media events, abrupt events, especially those rooted in the international conflicts, sometimes inadvertently ruin the legitimacy of the authorities if the authorities do not perform well enough in dealing with the conflicts.

No matter what categories media events fall into, mass media play a significant part in scripting

various event stories for Chinese audiences. As “mass communication in the traditional sense is now also Internet-based communication in both its production and its delivery” (Castells, 2009, 65), Internet media with plenty of digital resources have become the most popular channel for the audiences to view live broadcasts, access related news information, and launch discussions, owing to the advancement of Internet access and communication devices. Tai Zixue (2006, 94) argues that “vigorous promotion of the Internet and related information technology is considered by the government to be a necessary step in boosting China’s national pride and bringing legitimacy to the rule of the Communist Party in the country.” The current Covid-19 pandemic accelerated online communication around the world. According to Statista<sup>6</sup>, the PRC was ranked the first with the highest Internet users in the first quarter of 2021. More specifically, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) states that

1. As of December 2020, China had 989 million netizens<sup>7</sup>, up by 85.4 million over March 2020, and its Internet penetration had reached 70.4%, up 5.9 percentage points over March 2020.
2. Up to December 2020, the number of mobile Internet users in China had reached 986 million, up 88.85 million over March 2020. The proportion of China’s netizens accessing the Internet via their mobile phones had amounted to 99.7%, up 0.4 percentage point over March 2020. (CNNIC, 2021, 1)

Not just acting as news media, Internet media also provide various platforms for audiences to discuss and exchange ideas. Reacting to the narration of “national success” or “nationalist conflicts” connoted in media events, many Chinese Internet users air opinion and express nationalist

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262966/number-of-internet-users-in-selected-countries/>, accessed 15 August 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Internet users in the PRC are commonly addressed as “netizens (*wangmin* 网民 or *wangyou* 网友).” David Herold (2014, 21) refers to “netizens” as (politically oriented) “Internet citizens” and states “that online spaces serve the function of a public sphere making the emergence of a civil society in China possible.” He also points out that “*wangmin*” or “*wangyou*” are heavily used by the Chinese government to promote a particular vision of web communication (Herold, 2011). Manya Koetse (2018) argues that the difference between the term “netizens” used in Western countries and East Asian countries is that Western countries consider it carries many political implications, but East Asian countries such as the PRC use the term “netizens” to refer to any Internet user including those who use the Internet for entertainment. However, Payal Arora (2012, 94) argues that Internet users in the “Third World” countries are similar to Western users, and they are both heavily leisure-oriented, as the Internet is widely regarded as a leisure space. I regard that many “netizens” in Chinese discourses do not have the sense to organize or participate in activities in such a civil society as Herold refers to; they mostly use the Internet for daily communication and for fun.

sentiments on these Internet platforms, which provides a corpus of opinion for studying online nationalism under the influence of mass communication in media events.

To study online communication of nationalism in the PRC, the main focus of this dissertation is on the rising period in the reform era from 2008 to 2012, when the PRC started to shine on the international stage and the national confidence of the Chinese became stronger than before. From 2008 to 2012, the PRC had made some prominent achievements in terms of economy and culture, which made state nationalism a “natural” process to shape popular nationalism and promote the citizens’ national identification. In the following part, I will enumerate four factors why the period I focus on is important for the study of online mass communication of nationalism.

First, the outstanding performance of the economy in this period marked the rise of the PRC. The PRC’s reform era started in 1978. Its economic development, however, did not make much progress until a market economy was introduced in the 1990s. With the admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, the PRC integrated into the global economy, thus greatly accelerating its economic development. This, taking advantage of the world market, was the starting point of the PRC’s economic take-off. The year 2008 was the 30th anniversary of the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy, and it was a critical year for the PRC in its economic reform history. Specifically, the world economy suffered from an economic crisis in 2008, which was also a heavy blow to the Chinese economy. The authorities launched the Four-trillion Yuan Economic Stimulus Package Program and tax stabilization in 2008 to cope with this problem (Whalley & Zhao, 2013). Although the world’s leading economies experienced negative economic growth, the PRC’s GDP still maintained a growth average of 9.7% from 2008 till 2010 (Morrison, 2013, 5). Nonetheless, the worldwide economic recession negatively influenced Chinese people’s lives, causing, among other things, excessive inflation. However, with the efforts of the authorities, the constant growth of the economy promoted the populace’s identification and satisfaction with the nation-state.

Second, the period between 2008 and 2012 created a more liberal political environment than other periods in the PRC’s reform era for mass communication. After the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, the PRC has been under the leadership of three consecutive presidents: Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and

Xi Jinping. In the Jiang era (1989-2002), the state put more emphasis on political stability than on economic development, especially at the beginning of this era when the impact brought by the Tiananmen Square protests was discernible. In this situation, the people had limited liberty in the political sense. In the current Xi era (2012-present), although the economy is further developed, the power of the political system is highly concentrated in President Xi, who is considered the “chairman of everything” (The Economist, 2016, 43-46) and who creates “a tightly centralized political system” (Economy, 2014, 80). In the Xi era, the Central Propaganda Department (CPD) regulates public opinion on the Internet unprecedentedly that sets up many barriers for free online discussions. Compared to the former Jiang era and the later Xi era, the Hu era (2002-2012) was relatively low profile, and in this era, the government spearheaded economic development, leading to an economic boom. Hu advocated a “harmonious society (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会),” which allowed the Chinese to have a little more freedom to air political opinion. In this sense, online public political opinions in this period are freer and more accessible than in the other two periods.

Third, in respect of the cultural impact on the world (as I have already mentioned above), the PRC has staged a series of media events in this period to present the successes of the Chinese nation to the world. Among all media events, the Beijing Olympics were the most significant. William Callahan (2010, 1) argues that “the opening ceremony of Beijing’s Summer Olympics can tell us much about the political direction of China’s rise.” Furthermore, Sun Wanning (2010, 127) notes that after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the PRC “is believed to have ‘graduated to world power status,’ and its supposed ascent as the most powerful nation of the twenty-first century has started to take on the appearance of established truth rather than prediction.” In short, the year 2008, when Beijing hosted the Olympics for the first time, was a milestone for the rise of the PRC. Besides the Beijing Olympics, other media events, such as the 2010 Shanghai Expo, also presented a rising Chinese nation to world audiences.

Fourth, in the period between 2008 and 2012, Internet access in the PRC was broadly expanded. In 2008, the PRC surpassed the United States (US) in terms of the number of Internet users (Krysko, 2011, 198). Online communication was available to most Chinese. More importantly, with various Internet-based, freely accessible online platforms, the people could voice political views in this

period more conveniently than in other periods.

Mainly targeting Chinese mass media events from 2008 to 2012, I examine how the government and media companies establish nationalist discourse and how online public opinion reflects Chinese netizens' nationalist sentiments under the influence of mass communication. I use passive surveys to investigate online public opinion by applying a manual method and an automated analysis program (for details, see Chapter 4). Furthermore, I explore whether there is a relationship between media communication and public nationalism on the Internet. To be more specific, I examine the following questions in three categories:

1. The operation of nationalism in the PRC

What is nationalism? In what form and how does it operate in the Chinese context? What is its relationship with Chinese patriotism? Why does the Chinese government aim to propagate patriotism instead of nationalism?

2. Construction of nationalism in media events

How is nationalism narrated and constructed in media events? What communication strategies do the Chinese government and media companies use to construct state nationalism and adjust popular nationalism, i.e., how do they strengthen or maintain the authorities' ruling legitimacy through media events?

3. Evaluation of popular nationalism reflected in online public opinion

How do audiences' online reactions shape online public opinion? How are the reactions presented in online public opinion? What should we do to evaluate the effect of communication? Is it possible to know how effective efforts made by the Chinese government and media companies to guide public opinion are? Is ruling legitimacy strengthened or maintained based on the evaluation of nationalist public opinion?

Exploring these questions, I argue that Chinese authorities use nationalism tactically to pursue popular support and strengthen ruling legitimacy through mass communication of media events in the reform era. Focusing on the digital reflection of Chinese people is a new and hitherto underutilized way to investigate the effectiveness of the authorities' efforts to utilize mass communication and mass media, through these means, to construct state nationalism, shape popular nationalism, and maintain their ruling legitimacy.

### **1.3 State of the Field of Media Communication and Online Nationalist Public Opinion Research in the PRC**

Scholars have recently done numerous studies to understand online nationalism and the extent to which it is influenced by the mass communication of various media events. These studies mainly involve two issues: media/government communication and audiences' online expressions of nationalism.

On the issue of mass communication of media events by Chinese media, the major contentions lie in three aspects: communication characteristics, media content, and media effect in the PRC. Regarding the first aspect of the characteristics of mass communication in media events, a typical argument is that Chinese media communication is highly regulated by CPD and serves a state administration purpose. Sun (2002) indicates that during the Sydney Olympics of 2000, Chinese media sent many journalists on-site to report the event, which "allowed the transmission of images from the event to serve the political and cultural agenda." Brady (2009b) argues that the CPD guided the Olympic propaganda conducted by Chinese media and drove the media to publish positive reports but to avoid sensitive coverage to improve the PRC's image on the international stage. In addition, she notes that the "saturation-style" Olympic propaganda in the PRC dominates the public sphere (Brady, 2009b). Thus, positive and heavy propaganda are typical characteristics of political communication in the PRC.

The second aspect is media content, more specifically, under the influence of media commercialization. Political content in the PRC is strongly regulated in many periods, especially concerning topics that may ruin the legitimacy of the CCP (Schneider, 2016). This affects audiences'

interests and thus may further arouse dissatisfaction with the state. Media commercialization, although under political regulation, generates alternative content for audiences to access sensitive information that the state intends to control. By exploring the annual Chinese media event, the Spring Festival Gala Party, Zhang Xiaoling (2011) shows how the state used new forms to transmit values and concepts—such as patriotism—to audiences. Furthermore, she offers an insight into the dynamic relationship between media reform and political control and argues that commercialization reform drives media to pursue profits, which poses a challenge to the state that has to balance the control and autonomy of the media (Zhang, 2011). In the state-controlled media system, Chinese media practitioners apply self-censorship to avoid offenses.

Generally, the regulation and reliability of media content are slightly different in different media forms. The CPD often strictly watches the content of traditional media such as newspapers and television, making a difference between commercialized media and state media. By investigating the 2005 anti-Japanese protests in the PRC, Daniela Stockmann (2010) finds that commercialized media are more credible than official media for urban citizens and that commercialized media can help the state shape public opinion if given more freedom by the state. Concerning Internet media, content regulation of news websites is sometimes as strong as that of traditional media. Yet, on social media, where there is a large quantity of user-generated content, it is hard for the CPD to control all content immediately. Florian Schneider (2016, 2677) indicates that traditional Chinese websites, as information sources, only present isolated beacons of information approved by the CCP. Within this paradigm, discussions published by Internet users are limited within the range of CCP regulations (Schneider, 2667).

The third aspect concerns the effectiveness of media communication, i.e., how capable Chinese authorities are at legitimating themselves through political communication. Concerning the legitimacy of Chinese authorities in media events, Hwang and Schneider (2011) explore how the CCP used the 60th national anniversary event to establish its legitimacy by analyzing the political performance presented in the event. They note that dominant discourses did not effectively guide public opinion and that nationalist discourses in propaganda would also pose a challenge to the legitimacy of the CCP. Examining communication strategies used in the Beijing Olympics,

Françoise Papa (2012) argues that the state applied a soft power strategy in the event, following a traditional top-down propaganda pattern. Yet, it did not achieve the goals of improving the PRC's image in the West, as it was difficult to reconcile vertical propaganda from the state with horizontal social interaction among audiences. Applying content analysis and digital tools to Sino-Japanese conflicts, Schneider (2016) explores how Chinese authorities shape nationalist discourse on the info-web and argues that the authorities successfully bring digital media into the scope of traditional Chinese mass media.

On the issue of online public opinion representing nationalism, scholars use different methods to establish debates. The current state of the field primarily focuses on two major themes. One is how nationalist discourse is constructed on the Internet; the other is the influence of online popular nationalism, i.e., how online Chinese nationalism influences Chinese people's offline activism and life in general and how it influences the foreign relations of the PRC. There are many debates on the construction of online nationalist discourses. Cheng Yinghong (2011) uses discourse analysis to discuss Chinese online nationalism connected with online racism against Africans and reveals that racial discourses are fueled by nationalist sentiment. Jiang Ying (2012) applies a critical approach to exploring cyber-nationalism by examining how western media portray Internet censorship in the PRC and indicates that young Chinese (most netizens), influenced by consumerism, play a critical role in the development of nationalism, besides state propaganda. Yu Haiyang (2014) employs a documentation study to examine distorted narrations of Chinese imperial history on the Internet, arguing that these exaggerated narrations give rise to strong populist nationalism and that the glorious past becomes a reason for the populace to blame the government for its incapability in disputes with other countries. Applying a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) method, Cristina Jayme Montiel, Alma Maria Salvador, Daisy See, and Mariene De Leon (2014) examine news reports on Huangyan Island (also called Scarborough Shoal) conflict covered by domestic media of the PRC and the Philippines to find out how media in the two countries use discourse to claim sovereignty of the island and to shape nationalist public opinion. Through the categorization of indicative words of the posting data on Sina Weibo, Feng Miao and Elaine Yuan (2014) perform a qualitative discussion to explore online nationalist sentiments about the 2012 Sino-Japanese disputes. Their computer-assisted content analysis exemplifies a powerful method to deal with huge



amounts of online posted data. In their findings, they argue that “China’s online popular nationalism embodies wide-ranging popular imaginations, diverse public opinions, and variegated efforts of political participation in national affairs” (Miao & Yuan, 2014, 135).

Concerning the impact of popular nationalism, scholars publish various arguments. Cheng Mingming and Anthony Ipkin Wong (2014) analyze the influence of Chinese popular nationalism on tourism since the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands Incident through in-depth interviews and on-site observation. They indicate that national history is a crucial factor influencing public patriotic sentiments for Chinese tourism to Japan. By collecting news about offline nationalist protests, Jeremy Wallace and Jessica Chen Weiss (2015) carry out a quantitative investigation to analyze the political geography of offline nationalist protests in the PRC. Their statistical analysis provides an insight into the potential factors inducing offline protests.

In general, previous studies have laid a solid foundation for understanding mass communication and nationalism in the PRC. However, most studies discuss either media communication or nationalist manifestations, but only a few examine both aspects and their relationship (e.g., Schneider’s work in 2016). Few works investigate nationalist discourse on the Internet on a large scale to explore online nationalism. Furthermore, in terms of the methodology, some of the studies (e.g., Brady’s study on the Beijing Olympics) do not explicitly describe the method design. Brady’s work draws mainly from Chinese media sources and from secondary literature to map out political communication in the PRC and the role of mass persuasion in maintaining the CCP legitimacy. Although Wallace and Weiss conducted quantitative analyses, they did not examine public opinion that presents nationalist sentiments. In this dissertation, I will use a computer-assisted automated program to conduct sentiment analysis to examine online nationalism. I will apply a mixed (qualitative and quantitative) method to analyze media communication, online nationalism, and possible online and offline interaction. I choose two major media events taking place between 2008 and 2012 as research objects for case studies. One is the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a government-staged event promising to promote state nationalism. The other is the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, an abrupt media event that largely stimulated popular nationalism. The two case studies cover how nationalism is presented in official and nonofficial discourses.

### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

Chinese nationalism, accumulating the people’s love and loyalty to the nation, affects the legitimacy of the ruling Party and the government positively and negatively: it either promotes or decreases their legitimacy. The process of mass communication of media events influences people’s perception of nationalism. Therefore, mass media events and the related mass communication impact state legitimacy.

Based on the argument mentioned above, I built a theoretical framework shown in Figure 1.1 (a) and Figure 1.1 (b). Figure 1.1 (a) is the major, structured theory for the dissertation, and Figure 1.1 (b), as a supplementary part of the major theory, is used to analyze its core part: nationalism, mass communication, and media events.

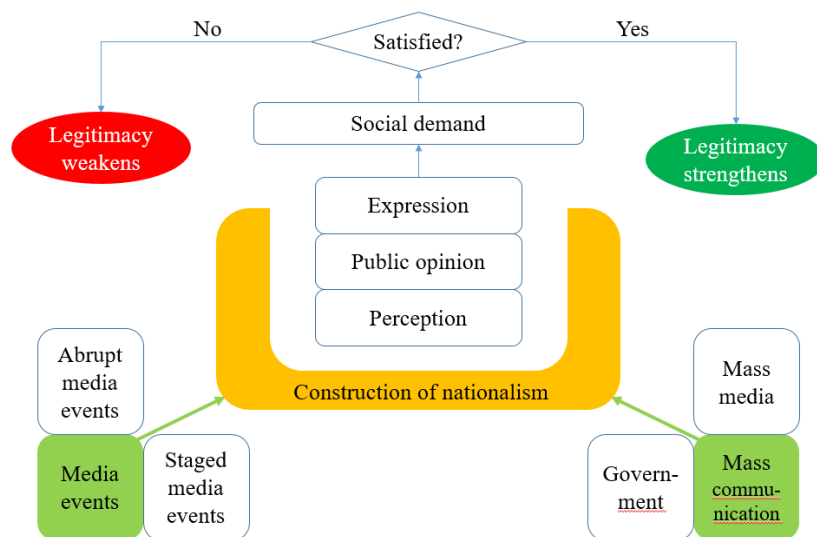


Figure 1.1 (a) Theoretical framework (1)

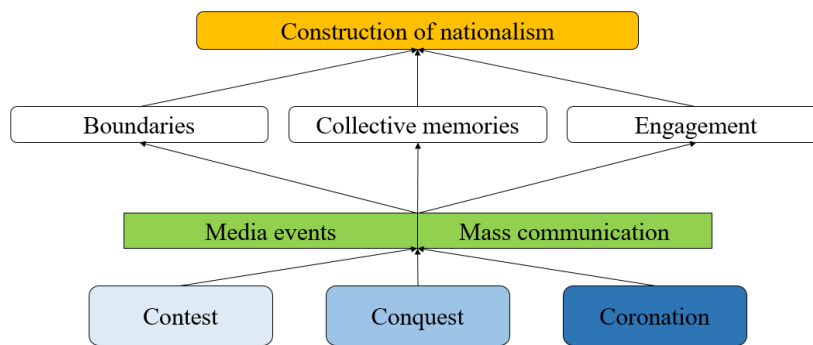


Figure 1.1 (b) Theoretical framework (2)

In Figure 1.1 (a), I present three steps that compose the theoretical framework (1) from bottom to top: (1) nationalism is constructed by the media and government through media events; (2) audiences perceive nationalism, shape nationalist public opinion, and express nationalist sentiment; (3) nationalism works for the political legitimacy of the authorities, either positively or negatively.

Nationalism, a central concept of the dissertation, is constructed in media events by mass media and/or the government through mass communication. Government-staged and abrupt media events are the two major event types that construct state nationalism and shape popular nationalism through government and/or media impact. In this dissertation, the 2008 Beijing Olympics exemplify government-staged media events (for details, see Chapter 5); the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident represents abrupt media events (for details, see Chapter 6). Audiences perceive the implications connoted in the events, and popular nationalism is correspondingly stimulated. In this way, they form nationalist public opinion and then express nationalist sentiments by discussing event topics and publishing-related reviews on the Internet. In the process, if a social demand is satisfied in the events (i.e., if social consent dominates), popular nationalism will strengthen Chinese authorities' legitimacy; if not (i.e., if social discontent dominates), popular nationalism will weaken or even ruin the political legitimacy. In this sense, under the control of the authorities, Chinese media have an incentive to adjust popular nationalism, especially when it goes too high and poses a challenge to the state in abrupt media events. In contrast, in government-staged media events, where people align themselves naturally with the nation, the nation's achievements and presented in the

media events will produce people's consent. As the government positively shapes nationalism, the events expectedly pose no challenge to the authorities but increase the ruling legitimacy by obtaining people's consent.

It should be pointed out that the ultimate goal of a media event is to maintain and/or strengthen the ruling legitimacy of the authorities. Legitimacy is understood as the right to rule the governed. A government is established by the ruling class because there is a demand for a stable way to organize people in society. John Locke (1689/2003) points out that ruling legitimacy comes from the consent of people who transfer part of their right to the government and seek a better living environment to be established by the government after a social contract is made between the government and the people. In this sense, people play a critical role in preserving the legitimacy of the ruling class. In the PRC, state nationalism aims to legitimate the ruling of the authorities. Influenced by state nationalism, popular nationalism works dynamically in two directions: it either strengthens or weakens the ruling legitimacy, depending on the people's consent. To be more detailed, if people's needs are fulfilled by what the authorities do, popular nationalism strengthens the legitimacy; otherwise, it weakens and may even ruin it.

People's consent relies on the fulfilment of their different levels of demands. Abraham Maslow (1943) established a controversial model of hierarchical human needs that illustrates five basic needs for human life: physiological needs, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. The physiological needs, which should be satisfied first, are at the lowest level: for example, the need for food and sleep. If people cannot be physiologically satisfied, they will not look for the fulfilment of the needs on the higher levels. The safety needs imply that people seek a safe and stable environment for their lives. Safety here includes good health, economic security, and emotional safety. The needs for love and belonging come when the previous two kinds of needs are gratified. The esteem needs are where people look for achievements and respect from others: "Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy of being useful, and necessary in the world" (Maslow, 1943, 382). On top of the hierarchy is the need for self-actualization, referring to "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow, 1943, 382).

Since its inception, this model has received criticism from scholars for many reasons, such as lack of empirical evidence (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976) and no consideration of cultural and language environment (Neher, 1991). Based on Maslow's model, some scholars, Douglas Kenrick, Vidas Griskevicius, Steven Neuberg, and Mark Schaller (2010, 293), for instance, revised this model and extended it to seven levels: immediate physiological needs, self-protection, affiliation, status/esteem, mate acquisition, mate retention, and parenting. Nevertheless, for the present purposes of my research, Maslow's model in its original form is a useful tool to understand the social demand satisfied by nationalism. Schneider (2019, 49) points out that nationalism that generates group affiliation expresses human aspiration and safety and security needs. To be specific, nationalism creates a sense of national identity that protects individuals within the nation from being invaded by outsiders. This satisfies the safety needs. What is more, nationalism entails love for the nation, satisfying people's love needs.

The social demand regarding a media event entails satisfying different levels of needs for most of the population. In the PRC, the social demand is created or emphasized by the authorities and/or the media through political propaganda. This holds for both government-staged and abrupt media events, as illustrated by the Beijing Olympics and the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident. Concerning the Beijing Olympics, in the early 20th century, Chinese media put forward "the Olympic dream" (*aoyun meng*, 奥运梦), aiming at participating and hosting the Olympic Games. Thus, a social demand was created, and then, taking this idea for the propaganda of nationalism, the authorities spared no effort to realize this dream by mobilizing the people to participate in the event. Under these circumstances, the Olympic dream gradually took on the role of Maslow's love and esteem needs of the people in the form of a social demand. The Olympic dream was a collective goal shared by the people, showing their love and expectation for the nation. As, under the influence of media propaganda, the people may feel eager to achieve the goal, they gained much confidence, self-esteem, and respect from other countries when the goal was achieved. During this wait, the perception arose that if the government won the bid and magnificently hosted the event, social demand would then be satisfied. Furthermore, social demand became a motivation for the authorities to win the bid and host a remarkable Olympic event. If the audiences felt satisfied with the event,

social consent would be achieved, and the authorities gained legitimacy.

Regarding the case study of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, the social demand has been created by Chinese authorities for a long time through addressing “the unification dream” (*tongyi meng*, 统一梦). This dream mainly pertains to the reunification with Taiwan, the only unsettled area of the PRC (the reunifications with Hong Kong and Macau were accomplished in the 1990s). However, in a larger sense, unification also implies that the nation will settle the territorial disputes with neighboring countries, such as Japan, although Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping advocated shelving the dispute in the 1970s (Zhai, 2013). Obtaining sovereignty over disputed territories is related to the national interest, and so becomes a social demand of the people. However, it is not as easy as the Olympic event to satisfy social demand because such disputes are complicated to settle and require intricate diplomatic strategies. In this sense, in the abrupt media events that arouse international conflicts, the development of the events is normally unpredictable, so the authorities and the media have to carefully deal with public opinion expressing strong nationalist sentiments and adjust it to a level where it will not threaten the legitimacy of the authorities.

In the theoretical framework illustrated in Figure 1.1 (a), nationalism and mass communication are two fundamental theories in media events. I will explore their detailed interaction illustrated in Figure 1.1 (b). Media events are a way to construct nationalism employing three key elements: boundaries, collective memories, and engagement (for details on the definition of nationalism and the three elements, see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1). When conducting nationalist discourse analysis, I will examine the three elements in media and/or government communication to explore how nationalism reflected in public opinion is shaped in Chinese political communication practice.

As discussed in Section 1.2, Contest, Conquest, and Coronation are three genres of media events defined by Dayan and Katz (1992). I propose that these genres are in an iterative relationship in a media event if more than one occurs. It means that the categories not only overlap with one another but also emerge in sequential steps. The first step is Contest between different groups, followed by one group conquering the other group. The last step, Coronation, is then the validation of the winner. As these sequential steps, the categories stand for the development of a media event, although one

step sometimes takes precedence over the other two. This helps understand how the government and/or media present(s) major events and attached sub-events<sup>8</sup> to implement mass communication of nationalism.

### **1.5 Structure of the Dissertation**

Besides this introduction, the dissertation elaborates on nationalism and mass communication, methodology, two case studies, and the conclusion. Chapter 2 introduces the theories of nationalism. By taking the definition of nationalism as the starting point, this chapter discusses the origin, development, and spread of nationalism. It also compares several concepts that are closely connected with nationalism—for example, patriotism, nation, state, and nation-state—to clarify the similarities and differences between these concepts and nationalism. I intend to pave the way for an understanding of nationalism in the context of online discourses in the PRC. Moreover, it explores how nationalism was imported to China to construct a popular national identity, how the authorities make efforts to promote state nationalism, and how the Chinese express nationalist sentiments.

Chapter 3 explores theories on mass communication and mass media. By distinguishing mass communication from common interpersonal communication, it examines the conditions for the existence and characteristics of mass communication, and the power mass art has in large-scale communication. It also discusses the social implications of mass media, especially Internet media, and their relations with politics. Furthermore, it explores how mass communication was developed in the PRC and what kind of censorship mechanisms are used by the government to guide political communication. More importantly, it introduces how the government implemented patriotic education in political communication aimed at the populace before and after the reform.

Chapter 4 discusses the methods that I used in this dissertation. I used a mixed approach to analyze online nationalist communication in mass media events. This approach involves both quantitative and qualitative methods. I adopted a qualitative method, i.e., critical discourse analysis, to explore how the Chinese government and media companies construct the people's national pride and national identity through various narratives of media events. Concerning people's online feedback

<sup>8</sup> For example, the torch relay is a sub-event of Olympic events.

on state and/or media communication of media events, I analyzed audiences' engagement in discussions to measure popular nationalism using quantitative and qualitative analysis. For a quantitative analysis of online public opinion in the case studies, I used a hand-processing method that examines if and how nationalism is reflected in the collected posts from a representative Chinese Bulletin Board System (BBS), Tianya BBS. What is more, I applied a supervised automated program that does a sentiment analysis of online nationalism presented in online comments in news comment sections of Tencent news website to understand online nationalism in these sources.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 present two case studies. Chapter 5 explores how the government showcased the realization of the Olympic dream, and it asks how this process constructed state nationalism. By comparing the 2008 Beijing Olympics to the 2012 London Olympics, it examines how Chinese audiences expressed nationalism on the popular Internet community Tianya under the influence of Olympic communication, such as the opening ceremony. Chapter 6 studies the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident in terms of nationalist communication from representative the media company Tencent and the online expression of popular nationalist sentiments by the audiences. I examined Tencent's attitudes towards the incident—in terms of editing styles and nationalist frames—in its opinion pieces to explore how Tencent scripted the related news to shape nationalist public opinion. By applying an automated content analysis program for sentiment analysis, I investigated how audiences expressed nationalist sentiments in the related news comments, thus gauging the online nationalist public opinion.

Based on the results from the preceding chapters, Chapter 7 concludes that government-staged media events (such as the Beijing Olympics) help the authorities strengthen ruling legitimacy by their very design. In contrast, in abrupt media events (such as the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident), the authorities, in order to maintain legitimacy, need to mediate popular nationalism by editing media content, potentially aided by commercial media companies (such as Tencent). This chapter summarizes the strategies applied by the government and media companies in the mass communication of media events. In addition, it summarizes the factors that affect online nationalism. Finally, it rethinks Chinese political communication by identifying the characteristics of current nationalist communication in the PRC and the dilemmas that may arouse in the future. It discusses



the powerful entanglement of globalization, nationalism, and digital media. It points out that staged and abrupt media events will continue strengthening or maintaining state legitimacy.

## Chapter 2 Nationalism

In his book *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson (1991, 3) states that “nationness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.” Nationalism, as an important concept in politics, plays an essential role in shaping the modern world. In this chapter, I discuss the origin, formation, development, and the positive and negative aspects of nationalism by addressing the related questions: what is nationalism? Where does it come from? How does it develop? What are its positive and negative aspects for governance? Who are the actors that create or use nationalism? How do the positive and negative aspects work in reality? In what way is nationalism mixed with patriotism to realize the purpose of governance? What are the Chinese authorities’ attitudes towards nationalism? How is nationalism operated in the PRC?

### 2.1 Theories on Nationalism

Nationalism grows from people’s national consciousness and inspires people to distinguish themselves from “outsiders” or even establish their own “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991). In the Chinese case, nationalism was aroused with the Western powers’ invasion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and Chinese intellectuals played a critical role in spreading nationalism. Nationalism then went from the elites to the populace. Till now, nationalism is still an important discourse in the PRC’s political communication, heavily influencing citizens’ political lives.

#### 2.1.1 Related Concepts

Nationalism, as a political concept, is closely related to other concepts such as ethnic groups, nation, and state, which probably incurs different understandings of the culture and history of a certain group or entity. For example, when discussing China’s history, people tend to consider China as an ancient country with a long history. The most famous statement among both officials and the populace is that “the Chinese nation has five thousand years of civilization (中华民族有着五千年悠久的文明史).”<sup>9</sup> However, this statement about China’s civilization is frequently criticized. Many scholars in area studies do not agree with the idea of a civilization continuous over five thousand years, as this statement does not account for spatial elements, which they reckon are important for

<sup>9</sup> See [http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuanqu/bkqx/2019-06/24/c\\_1124664210.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuanqu/bkqx/2019-06/24/c_1124664210.htm), accessed 21 December 2020.

the development of civilization. As Neil Smith (2010, 25) says, “What counts as an area or even as a border around a certain area has been radically transformed.” He further argues that spatial scales are territorial results of the competition of social forces, and they are mutable in general (Smith, 2010, 31). So, because the area we refer to as the cultural unit of China fluctuated, it is questionable whether we can attribute “five thousand years of civilization” to this cultural unit. Arif Dirlik (2010) points out that the reification of “China” and “Chineseness” has an impact “on the identification of the region and the self-identification of its dominant Han nationality,” and that available trans-dynastic appellations “shaped the civilization process in the region but suggested little by way of the national consciousness.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he indicates that in the Chinese diaspora, “Chineseness becomes a marker even when the populations encompassed by the term are marked by significant historical and cultural differences” (Dirlik, 2010, 17).

From a modernist perspective, the above-mentioned statement of China’s civilization is also problematic. According to some theorists, for instance, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, the nation is a modernist concept and never had a long history. Why do people often make such a statement? In the case of China, a possible explanation is that the Chinese word *minzu* (民族) entails two concepts: “nation” and “ethnic groups,” which confuses many people. This ambiguity can be a propaganda tactic used by Chinese officials to create the image of a “great nation” as a cohesive (ethnic) group, set apart from other (smaller and younger) nations, to arouse citizens’ national identity. This and other ambiguities hinder our understanding of what nationalism means. Therefore, it is necessary to first clarify some related concepts, including ethnic groups, state, nation, nation-state, nationalism, and patriotism, and their use in Chinese political communication.

### *Ethnic groups*

Thomas Mullaney (2011) notes that the Ethnic Classification project undertaken by Chinese scholars in the 1950s contributed to the nation-building process of the PRC to construct a “unified, multinational country.” The project realized the ethnotaxonomy of 56 individual ethnic groups (*minzu*, 民族), including the Han nationality, the Miao nationality, and the Hui nationality. “By

<sup>10</sup> See <http://boundary2.org/2015/07/29/born-in-translation-china-in-the-making-of-zhongguo/>, accessed 27 April 2016.

simultaneously surfacing and canonizing the officially recognized *minzu* and sublimating and subordinating the rest, the Chinese state has been remarkably successful in turning the fifty-six-*minzu* model into common sense” (Mullaney, 2011, 122).

In practice, the statement “China’s five thousand years of history” mainly refers to only one of the Chinese ethnic groups, the Han nationality, the largest. Admittedly, from the ancient period till now, the Han nationality has a long history, but this is the history of the Han nationality rather than that of the whole Chinese nation. The ethnic group “Han” is different from the concept of “nation.” The Han nationality has not continuously governed what today is called “China,” and there were some disruptions to the Han rule throughout history, including non-Han dynasties such as the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), governed by the Mongols, and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), ruled by the Manchus.

An ethnic group is largely related to cultural elements. Within the group, people share many similarities. Specifically, since ancestry is a kind of “myth” (Smith, 1999), they believe in having the same parentage, adopt the same customs, speak the same language, live in the same place, etc. Anthony Smith (1991, 20) notes that “the ethnic group is a type of cultural collectivity, one that emphasizes the role of myths of descent and historical memories, and that is recognized by one or more cultural differences like religion, customs, language or institutions.” He also lists the following six main attributes:

1. A collective proper name;
2. A myth of common ancestry;
3. Shared historical memories;
4. One or more differentiation elements of common culture;
5. An association with a specific “homeland”;
6. A sense of solidarity of significant sectors of the population (Smith, 1991, 21).

These attributes comprise common ground shared by members within an ethnic group and thus

arouse a sense of belonging. The shared historical memories are important to construct people's national identity. In Chinese history, ethnic groups have set up a shared myth in historical memories. For example, people of the Miao nationality regard Chi You, the tribe chief of the Jiuli tribe in ancient times, as their common ancestor (Shi, 2014). The Miao people live in a concentrated community and mostly lead their lives by agriculture. After hundreds of years, they have formed their particular culture (with elements such as witchcraft) different than other ethnic groups. In their history, after several migrations because of wars against other groups, the Miao people at last settled in the mountains in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, including some parts of Guizhou, Hunan, and Yunnan provinces. With the myth of ancestry, most members of the group believed in having the same ancestor Chi You, share the same historical narratives (such as wars and migrations), maintain the same culture, and live in the same area, which gives the members the feeling that they belong to the same Miao group rather than to another group.

### *State*

This section deals with the general concept of the "state" from different perspectives. It is necessary to distinguish between pre-modern states and modern states. In pre-modern times, the territory of a state is undefined. States are formed through familial affiliations and religions. Modern states, on the contrary, have a defined territory (although some states have territorial disputes with others) and sovereignty. Pre-modern states can evolve into modern states under certain conditions. For instance, Philip Kuhn (2002) identifies three conditions for China to transform from a pre-modern state to a modern state: first, political participation to strengthen state power and legitimacy; second, political competition with the public interest; third, political control of local interests. In the following part, I shall focus on modern states.

Unlike ethnic groups tied to culture, a state represents a political entity that aims to enforce social safety and stability. There are more than 200 states worldwide, including the PRC, the US, and the United Kingdom (UK). A state's sovereignty endows it with a superior power that lays a foundation for ensuring its independence through the legislation, justice, and administration. This entails the state's threat or use of violence, usually through agencies such as a police force, the military, and prisons. Furthermore, the state takes on responsibilities for its people, including collecting resources,

establishing a common identity, ensuring domestic and foreign security, and creating legitimacy.

Max Weber (2009, 78) defines the state from the perspective of sociology: it is the institution that controls the monopolistic power of legitimate violence within a given territory. When a conflict arises among people, such an institution helps them solve it. In this sense, rather than private agencies, the state would be the accredited central political authority to act in this role. “The state is considered the sole source of the ‘right’ to use the violence” (Weber, 2009, 78). Furthermore, Weber (2009, 78) argues that “the state is a relation of men dominating men.” This relation is established through the legitimacy of violence. Weber (2009, 78-79) categorizes three types of legalization of domination: the first is “eternal yesterday,” that refers to ancient recognition and habitual orientation; the second is “charisma,” which means that the dominators’ glamour makes the dominated people dependent on the dominators; the third is “legality” created by the statute and rules. Some state parties legalize their governing through these three ways, which are important for the leadership to wield political power.

Like Weber, Gellner (1983, 4) attributes the emergence of the state to the division of labor and divides human history into three periods: pre-agrarian, agrarian, and industrial. In the pre-agrarian period, no state existed because the scale of people’s work was too small to allow labor division; in the agrarian period, with the expansion of working scale, labor division was needed to improve production efficiency, and thus, the state was established in most societies to further set up education systems that helped train people for the more sophisticated working requirements; in the post agrarian and industrial age, the state inevitably existed in all societies (Gellner, 1983, 5).

In his book *State in Society*, Joel Migdal (2001, 16) gives his definition of the state as “(1) the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by the territory; (2) the actual practice of its multiple parts.” In this definition, image and practice are the two basic elements of the state. The image of the state as an entity has two boundaries: a territorial boundary demarcating it from other states and a social boundary separating the state from the private or personal area. The practice of state actors fortifies or diminishes the image of the state. Migdal (2001, 32) regards the state as “a contradictory entity”: the image maintains the unification

of the state, but the practice results in the fracture between the state and society.

The state politically influences people in society. Given that people live within a state, we can say that they act as citizens obeying rules and enjoying a set of rights regulated and provided by the state. No matter what ethnic groups the people come from, they are united within the relatively fixed boundary of the state.

### *Nation*

The perspective of primordialism argues that nations arose naturally in ancient times based on shared cultural elements such as language, territory, and religion. Drawing from Charles Darwin's biological selection theory, Pierre van den Berghe (1987, 8) attributes primordial human sociality to what he calls a "genetically selected propensity for nepotism" or "kin selection," based on his belief that the coherence or collectiveness of people increases fitness in society. He also indicates that "the very concept of the nation is an extension of kin selection" (van den Berghe, cited in Smith, 1998, 147). Thus, in van den Berghe's view, ethnic kinship is a central element in the formation of nations in ancient epochs. Anthony Smith (1991) agrees with the primordial view of nationalism, holding that nationalism originates from cultural elements such as ancestry and history.

However, many more theorists contend that the nation is a modernist concept. Gellner (1983, 40) indicates that nationalism is strongly related to the age of industrialism. Regarding nationalism as "a recent development," Anthony Giddens (1985, 116) points out that "both nation and nationalism are distinctive properties of modern states." Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm (1990, 10) argues that the nation "belongs exclusively to a particular and historically recent period. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the nation-state ...."

Agreeing with most theorists, I assume that the nation is closely linked to the modern era. In ancient times, people were mostly confined within a limited area due to low productive forces, which did not form a sense of nationhood. Even though sometimes they might have a sense of belonging within a group, it was never national consciousness. Only when it came to modern times, owing to the upsurge of vernaculars and the development of print capitalism, they gradually imagined that they

lived in a shared community with other people they did not know (Anderson, 1991). From this belief, people desired to establish their nation—even through violence, if necessary.

The process of constructing nations went through several phases. At first, only ethnic groups existed (Smith, 1991). Later, the ethnic groups gradually had a desire to establish a state to organize society. After establishing the state, nationalism prompted the idea that each member within a state was from the same nation, which legitimated the existence of the state. To construct the same national identity, people considered that all members within the state shared the same history, lived in the same territory, spoke the same language, and possessed collective consciousness. The boundary of the above elements should be congruent with the political boundary of the state (Gellner, 1983, 1). In other words, a nation is not just a community of the same culture, but more importantly, it should be a political communion. The state is the political shell of the nation (Gellner, 1983, 143), but it is not a prerequisite for ethnic groups to construct a nation. Montserrat Guibernau (2013a, 14) defines a nation without a state as a “human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself.” Nations aim to have states, but not all nations succeed at this aim. A defining characteristic of a nation is the ambition of sovereign political rule, even where this rule does not exist.

Scholars give different definitions of a nation from different perspectives. Weber (2009, 176) defines a nation by showing the relationship between a nation and a state: “A nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own.” In addition, Weber and Ernest Renan similarly attach strong importance to the solidarity of a nation. Weber (1978, 922) writes that: “In the sense of those using the term at a given time, the concept undoubtedly means, above all, that one may exact from certain groups of men [*sic*] a specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups. Thus, the concept belongs in the sphere of values.” Likewise, in Renan’s (1994, 17) argument, “a nation is a grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices which one has made and those one is disposed to make again. ... The desire of nations to be together is the only real criterion that must always be taken into account.” Anthony Giddens (1985, 116) defines a nation



as “a collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states.” Emphasizing the intimate connection between the nation and the state, Giddens (1985, 119) additionally argues that a nation “only exists when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed.” That is to say, the administrative function of the state is vital to the existence of the nation.

From a cultural perspective, Smith (1991, 14) defines a nation as “a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.” Guibernau (2004, 141) criticized the element “rights and duties for all members” by pointing out that this definition fails “to offer a clear-cut distinction between the concepts of nation and state.” The combination of the two ensures the construction of nation-states (Guibernau, 2013a). She also indicates that Smith neglects the cases of nations without states, such as Catalonia. To respond to this criticism, Smith (2004, 205) then argues that Guibernau seems to conflate the two concepts when interpreting “the ‘political’ dimension of national identity and its relationship to the concept of the ‘nation-state.’” Furthermore, Smith (2004, 205) contends that his definition of a nation is only political in orientation and tied to the political definition of the modern ideology and movement of nationalism. I do not think Smith explains well why he adds the political element in his definition of a nation. Thus, I agree with Guibernau’s argument that nations are common communities, while states are sets of political institutions.

Anderson (1991, 6) gives a more appropriate definition that a nation “is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” For the people living in a nation, it is impossible to know everyone else within it. They may, however, understand—through their imagination—to live in the same communion as everyone in the same nation, with whom they share some similarities. The imagined nation is limited because every nation has its boundaries. No matter how big a nation is, it would not easily accept people from other nations as members of its own, as it wants to confine itself to a limited territory and hold a sense of self-protection. This is regarded as a kind of “coordination” or “combination” that is used to maintain certain “power” for

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the nation. Russell Hardin (1995, 28) argues that “Successful social coordination, whether intended or not, can create extraordinary power ... Combination for the sake of survival then makes it possible not merely to survive but to thrive and even to plunder.” The magic power is in some sense equal to the sovereignty of the nation. Michael Shapiro (2004) argues that sovereignty is socially constructed through the cultural governance of artistic forms such as drama, music, and film. Sovereignty endows the nation with the independence to set up political institutions, an economic and a military system, etc. Thus, it ensures that people in the nation enjoy political rights smoothly and live more respectably to a certain extent. The nation is a community because it is considered an area where people are treated equally, although this does not usually happen in real life. People cannot see the community, but they are able to feel its existence at any time and define themselves as members of this community.

#### *Nation-state*

Following Anderson, Michael Billig (1995, 63) argues that “Nationalism involves assumptions about what a nation is: as such, it is a theory of community, and a theory about the world being naturally divided into such communities.” In addition, he points out that the nation has political and cultural meanings: the “nation-state” (nation-as-state) and “people living with the state” (nation-as-people) (Billig, 1995, 24). The connection of the two meanings constructs the idea of nationalism, implying that “any nation-as-people should have their nation-as-state” (Billig, 1995, 24). This point of view resonates with Guibernau’s view of the nation-state mentioned above. So, what is a nation-state? How do we distinguish it from the two concepts—the nation and the state? The nation-state is regarded as the final step in the process of nation-building. Guibernau (2004, 132) notes that “The nation-state is a modern institution, defined by the formation of a kind of state that has the monopoly of what it claims to be the legitimate use of force within a demarcated territory and seeks to unite the people subject to its rule by means of cultural homogenization.”

The world system of nation-states is a novel feature of modern nationalism (Duara, 1995, 8). A nation-state is culturally a nation and politically a state, presenting the consistency of the boundary of the nation and the state that is asserted by nationalism (Gellner, 1983). Giddens (1985, 121) points out that “The nation-state, which exists in a complex of other nation-states, is a set of institutional

forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries, its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence.” He associates nation-states with violence (such as war) but indicates that modern nation-states are “internally pacified” (Giddens, 1985).

There are many nation-states around the world, some of which take the form of a multiethnic state comprising a major ethnic group and other minor ethnic groups. For example, the PRC is a nation-state with the Han nationality dominating the whole population. Prasenjit Duara (1995, 60) suggests that one representation of the political community in imperial Chinese society is exclusively Han-based. This lays a foundation for the current situation of ethnic groups for the Chinese nation-state. As Billig (1995, 21) indicates, “The modern nation-state is the product of an international age” and “introduce[s] order and organization into a world of disorder and inefficient chaos.” Setting up a nation-state within a territory is an important goal for nationalists.

### *Nationalism*

Nationalism develops in two stages in political practice. The first stage is when there is no nation. In this stage, nationalism acts as a force that prompts people to establish the nation they imagine. This usually entails violence to eliminate members outside of this group. When a nation is established, the second stage comes into play. The inhabitants express nationalism by showing love and loyalty to the nation. Whenever the nation is invaded, nationalists within this nation will defend it at any cost.

From the perspective of anthropology, Anderson (1991) regards nationalism as a set of “cultural artifacts” that are created by human beings (instead of a natural cause) and rooted in cultural systems, such as religious communities and dynastic realms. Gellner (1983, 4) argues that the state is a precondition for the rise of nationalism. When ethnic groups intend to set up their nation-state that differs from the old “state,” the idea becomes tied to emotions in their mind. This emotional attachment by the members of the ethnic groups is viewed as nationalism. In this regard, nationalism is an attitude linked to emotions that stimulate ethnic group members to establish their nation-state and defend it.

Gellner (1983, 1) offers this definition of nationalism: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.” Here the “political unit” stands for the state, while the “national unit” refers to the nation. The goal of nationalism is to make the boundaries of the two identical. He also notes that “nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones” (Gellner, 1983, 1). In addition, he further explains how nationalism originates and is presented in society as follows:

Nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority and in some cases the totality, of the population. It means the general diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of a reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is the establishment of an anonymous impersonal society, with mutually sustainable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of the previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves. (Gellner, 1983, 57)

In Gellner’s view, nationalism attaches much importance to “high culture,”<sup>11</sup> in particular to “a school-mediated and academy-supervised idiom,” because high culture homogenizes every individual in terms of the language and culture. It ensures the social transition from agriculture to modernity, as Gellner (1983, 40) argues that “all this being so, the age of transition to industrialism was bound, according to our model, also to be an age of nationalism, a period of turbulent readjustment. ...”

Another definition comes from Smith (1991,73), who states that: “Nationalism is an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation.” It suggests that nationalism acts as an impetus for the establishment of a nation. To this end, nationalism promises to create violence.

<sup>11</sup> Gellner (1983, 54) defines high cultures as “standardized-, literacy- and education-based systems communication.”

Based on the above discussions, I take nationalism as action-oriented, national-identity thinking, represented in discourse (the expression of nationalist opinions) and social behavior (nationalist activities), that shows love and loyalty to an imagined community. Nationalism entails that people define themselves as members of a nation: they identify with the nation by devoting themselves to it. In this way, this frame of thinking does not just remain a mode of thinking, but—more importantly—it leads to certain discourse and action, i.e., the aforementioned expression of love to the nation by airing opinions and by participating in nationalist activities.

“What is my identity (in the world)” may well be a common question that people ask themselves. Peter Burke and Jan Stets (2009) identify three bases of identities: role, person, and group. The role identity is associated with people’s role in society, i.e., their social position (Burke & Stets, 2009, 124). One person can have multiple, parallel roles in society: for instance, a woman can have both “teacher” (as occupation) and “mother” as role identity. The person identity is the set of meanings that define the person as a unique individual (Burke & Stets, 2009, 124). At last, different social groups—for example, religion and club membership—generate group identity. National identity also represents a kind of group identity, as it needs a group of members within a nation to construct such an identity. When the question of identity comes into play in specific situations that prompt a nationalist engagement, national identity is aroused. Once people’s national identity is determined, they identify with or recognize all things attached to the nation, including history, culture, and language. In ordinary life, people have what Billig (1995) calls “banal nationalism,” which helps maintain national identity. If a crisis arises in a nation (such as an invasion from outside groups), people devote themselves to defending the nation. In this sense, national identity thinking has two implications: one is to identify with the nation, and the other is to defend the nation at any cost.

Which elements contribute to national identity thinking? I regard national boundaries, collective memories, and people’s engagement in nationalist activities as keys to build national identity (see Figure 1.1 (b)). Demarcated boundaries are essential to define the territorial scope of various nations and states. Anderson (1991) indicates that the boundary makes a nation limited, an important feature of an imagined community. However, the boundary is not restricted to a territorial dimension; it also

connotes political, cultural, and psychological variances to stimulate national consciousness or imagination. Political boundaries come from government administration. Within a certain scope, the administration of the society by the government establishes political boundaries. Cultural boundaries are formed through the languages, customs, and social behavior of a population. These boundaries also affect the population's way of thinking and distinguish it from that of the other population. Gellner (1983) argues that cultural boundaries should be congruent with political boundaries in a nation-state, and nationalism aims to make the two identical. Without national boundaries, it is difficult for people to distinguish their nation from other nations. When nationalism is stimulated, members of the nation will consciously or unconsciously identify with those within the nation and exclude outsiders. Thus, emphasizing national boundaries illuminates distinct differences between nations and increases nationalism. Territory disputes highlight such differences and arouse nationalism.

Collective memory, sometimes called collective remembering, is a source that works for social and national cohesion. It constructs people's cultural identities (Smith, 1991) and takes a critical position in forming group identities, such as national identities (Barash, 2016). However, memory is a personal experience instead of a collective experience because memory is in "the original sphere of the self" (Barash, 2016). In this sense, "collective memory" does not equal "memory" (Barash, 2016; de Saint-Laurent, 2018). Specifically, collective memory does not mean the immediate remembrances of everyone within a group. It "is the collective past as it is enacted and mobilized in discourses, practices, and artifacts" (de Saint-Laurent, 2018, 158). James Wertsch (2002) indicates that collective memory is "an active process" created through cultural tools such as language and textual narratives. He also notes that in terms of official collective memory, the modern state, by establishing education institutions, plays a critical role in controlling such narratives of collective memory about the past (Wertsch, 2002, 68). The narratives create meanings for people to understand the past of the group (Wertsch, 2002,). History shapes the glorification of the past in such a memory.

The selective use of history provides nationals with a collective memory filled with transcendental moments in the life of the community, events, and experiences that allow people to increase their self-esteem by feeling part of a community, which proved capable of great things

and that might also be ready to become again a beacon to the world (Guibernau, 2004, 137).

I consider that collective memory to some degree equals collective consciousness. Antonio Damasio (2010, 110) defines consciousness, or rather, self-consciousness, as “a state of mind in which there is knowledge of one’s own existence and of the existence of surroundings.” Kay Mathiesen (2005, 248) argues that collective consciousness is plural, aware, and collective by forming a collective subject. He further explains that plural means many people rather than one individual conduct collective consciousness; in the process, people are aware of its content and united to realize the ultimate goals of collective consciousness (Mathiesen, 2005, 248).

Jeffrey Andrew Barash (2016) argues that collective memory is inherited through various symbols, i.e., symbolic embodiments. In the process, mass media play an important role in inheriting collective memory. In a media event, mass media sometimes repeatedly exhibit national symbols, such as national flags, that stimulate national consciousness and further generate national identity thinking. In the PRC, the glorious ancient history and grievous modern history are narratives that arouse Chinese nationalism. Whether they are in the form of pride or humiliation, they are collective memories, generating national identity thinking.

The expression of nationalism calls for people to engage in nationalist activities with a certain stimulus. Nationalism is viewed as psychological sentiments aroused by special stimulus (e.g., nationalist instigation), which takes people away from their daily lives, and thus transfers them from the statement of banal nationalism to that of stimulated nationalism. Affected by the stimulus, people engage in various national activities in society to express nationalist sentiments. The related activities are oral or non-oral, including public discussions, patriotic education programs, street demonstrations, etc. As they symbolize nationalism and can be seen and accessed, it is possible to evaluate nationalism through such engagement.

Boundaries and collective memories are, in some sense, static elements that construct a national sentiment. However, engagement allows people to exchange ideas aroused by nationalism and participate in various nationalist activities, prompting the participants to deeply perceive national

attachment in practice. By engagement, I mean that people's collective actions are presented in nationalist discussions and/or nationalist activities, the result of action-oriented national identity thinking. The discussions and activities can be regarded as direct evidence of nationalist expressions, as engagement in media events enables people to get an immediate experience of the historical sense in their memories.

### *Patriotism*

Patriotism is a term that is inextricably linked with nationalism. Daniel Bar-tal and Ervin Staub (1997, 2) argue that "patriotism reflects a positive evaluation of emotion towards the group and its territory," thus making it a comparable concept to nationalism, as I have previously argued. Furthermore, Morris Janowitz (1983, cited in Billig, 1995, 56) defines patriotism as "the persistence of love or attachment to a country." Similarly, Bar-Tal (1993, cited in Billig, 1995, 56) points out that patriotism is the "attachment of group members toward their group and their country in which they reside." Gellner (1983, 138) even argues that "Nationalism is a very distinctive species of patriotism, and one that becomes pervasive and dominant only under certain social conditions, which in fact prevail in the modern world."<sup>12</sup> However, Billig (1995) suggests that nationalism and patriotism are the same, and patriotism is what nationalists call their own nationalism. To clear up the entanglement between the two and come to working definitions I apply in my research, I will discuss similarities and differences between nationalism and patriotism in the next section.

### *Nationalism vs. Patriotism*

As two powerful forces that write the history of many nations, nationalism and patriotism frequently draw massive attention. There seems to be no clear discrepancy between them, and many people including scholars often use them as synonyms. For example, Zheng and Zhao equal Chinese patriotism and nationalism, as I mentioned in the introduction chapter (see Chapter 1)

Nevertheless, a few scholars still agree to distinguish between the two concepts. For example, George Orwell (1945/2018, 83) indicates that patriotism is "devotion to a particular place and a

<sup>12</sup> Gellner (1983, 138) identifies three distinctive features of patriotism: homogeneity, literacy, and anonymity.



particular life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force upon other people.” Yet, he points out that nationalism is “inseparable from the desire for power” for the nation, which even may not exist (Orwell, 1945/2018, 112). He thus considers patriotism as more positive than nationalism, based on the connection of nationalism with power and violence (Orwell, 1945/2018). Likewise, Louis Snyder (1976) distinguishes patriotism and nationalism by stating that patriotism is defensive, while nationalism is aggressive, implying that patriotism has a justifiable reason to exist, but nationalism does not.

Arguing that “the confusion between patriotism and nationalism has pernicious practical effects,” Maurizio Viroli (1995, 8) makes a deep analysis of the distinction between the two terms. First, he indicates that patriotism is the more ancient term, originating in ancient Rome as “republican patriotism,” referring to a “rational patriotic sentiment that pursues the common good for people in civil society.” The term nationalism emerged in late 18th century Europe, and it emphasizes an unconditional loyalty or exclusive attachment rather than a rational sentiment in pursuit of a common goal (Viroli, 1995, 2). He suggests that “the language of republican patriotism could serve as a powerful antidote of nationalism” (Viroli, 1995, 8). Furthermore, Viroli (1995, 12) notes that nationalism is “attachment to the cultural, ethnic, and religious unity of a people”—which advocates parochial love for homogeneity within a limited scope, for example, culture and politics—but patriotism is “love of common liberty and institutions that sustain it,” which represents a more inclusive form of love. In Viroli’s (1995, 13) explanation of liberty, it is “equal liberty” that means “the possibility for all the members of the republic to live as citizens without being oppressed through denial of political, civil or social rights.” However, I consider patriotism in Viroli’s discussion as situated in an ideal environment. Within the framework of nation-states, where competition exists, it may not be possible to realize ideal love for the nation by patriotism.

Following Viroli’s argument, Ross Poole (2007, 129) indicates that patriotism and nationalism follow two distinct traditions of political thought. To be more exact, patriotism is a virtue of a republican tradition, while nationalism, as a modern concept, is set in a nation-state program. In respect of love denoted by the two concepts, patriotism is more inclusive than nationalism. The love of a patriot for his or her country does not denounce or even antagonize the nations of others, but

the love of a nationalist does (Poole, 2007, 137). By pointing out that patriotism is a benign expression of patriotic loyalty to one's own nation and nationalism a malign expression of a desire to dominate other nations, Peter Hays Gries, Zhang Qingmin, Michael Crowson, and Cai Huajian (2011, 16) suggest that patriotism and nationalism are different in the Chinese context. As discussed in the introduction chapter, the Chinese historical context of humiliation is central to the establishment of Chinese nationalism. They further argue that it is nationalism—and not patriotism—that has a clear impact on Chinese foreign policy preferences (Gries et al., 2011, 17). However, despite suggesting the difference in their article, they do not elaborate on how exactly patriotism differs from nationalism in the PRC.

Although many scholars stress the differences between nationalism and patriotism, I would argue that their similarities take a dominant position, and the difference mainly lies in the degree of aggressiveness that is hard to measure. In most cases, such a difference can be neglected because sometimes patriotism can arouse fierce nationalist behavior even for self-protection. I regard the behavior expressing love for the nation without evoking negative sentiments towards other nations (e.g., singing their national anthem to celebrate a national anniversary) as the representation of patriotism. However, in the context of a competition between nations, it is often difficult to distinguish whether certain behavior reflects a sense of either nationalism or patriotism. For example, in the Olympic Games, competitors pursue a good score for the benefit of their nations, mostly in good sportsmanship, but instances of fraudulent behavior and/or cheating have tainted the event at times. How can we address this behavior? Should we define the perpetrators as “nationalists” because their actions intentionally negatively affect other nations? Or should we call them “patriots,” as they just show love for the nation and do not engender substantive aggression to other nations? Or do other factors, such as lucrative financial gains (prize money, potential sponsor contracts), play a bigger role?

When it comes to international conflicts, the boundary between patriotism (defensive) and nationalism (aggressive) generally becomes blurry. A nation under attack might be more inclined to take on the role of aggressor and counterattack its opponents, provoked or unprovoked, next time. In conflict situations, there are no strict criteria to differentiate between nationalism and patriotism.

However, since both nationalism and patriotism display signs of aggression towards other nations in conflict situations, differentiating between the two is less relevant in international conflict situations. Therefore, as mentioned above, I would regard the two concepts as the same in most cases where two or more nations are involved.

In Chinese mass communication, patriotism is used much more broadly than nationalism, especially in official propaganda. I suspect this is for four reasons: first, when only focusing on topics about the nation, such as most content of patriotic education,<sup>13</sup> the narration that stimulates national pride can be viewed as a way of arousing patriotism. Second, as it is popularly contended that patriotism is more positive than nationalism, people may be more willing to accept ideas of patriotism from a moral and psychological perspective—nationalism is extensively considered parochial, unsuitable for positive propaganda. Third, the Chinese translation of nationalism, *minzu zhuyi* (民族主义), sometimes confuses people, as *minzu* (民族) is associated with two concepts: ethnic groups and nations. In daily use, *minzu* commonly refers to ethnic groups. Thus, it prompts people to attach more importance to ethnic rather than national identity, contrary to official propaganda purposes. In other words, too much emphasis on *minzu* in the sense of ethnic groups invites separatists from minority ethnic groups to divide the nation. Fourth, in China, patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi*, 爱国主义) calls on people to love not only the nation but also their fellow citizens and the government. A slogan like this is included in primary school student textbooks in the 1990s, saying: “love the motherland, the people and the CCP” (*reai zuguo, reai renmin, reai Zhongguo gongchandang*, 热爱祖国，热爱人民，热爱中国共产党)<sup>14</sup>. This aimed to convince people that the nation, the state, the people, and the Party are all the same unit. In this case, the dissemination of patriotism has the function of consolidating the legitimacy of the CCP. Callahan (2010, 26) indicates that the purpose of patriotic education for the CCP is to unite different groups as “Chinese” to gain its legitimacy. He further argues that “the goal of this propaganda campaign is not loyalty to the nation but loyalty to the party-state” (Callahan, 2010, 44).

<sup>13</sup> For example, education of China’s national conditions in many aspects, including history, politics, and economy, is patriotic. The visiting of patriotic education bases is both patriotic and nationalist, as it often involves the conflicting relationship between China and Japan. Such bases especially demonstrate the history of Japan’s invasion of China, which often arouses people’s resentment against Japan.

<sup>14</sup> It emerged in my textbook when I was a Grade 1 primary school student.

### **2.1.2 Origin of Nationalism**

It is tempting to take “nationalism” as derived from “nation.” However, this might be a mistaken idea. “Nation” is mostly regarded as a modern concept. With the advent of print capitalism, people started to imagine a shared community through reading newspapers in the modern era, as the readership experience brought collectivity to those readers (Anderson, 1991). Nationalism became an impetus for people to unite for the creation of their nation. In this light, people first have this emotional attachment/sentiment, i.e., nationalism, and then try to set up the imagined nation. It equals what Hobsbawm (1990) argues: nationalism emerged earlier than nations, and nationalism created nations. Gellner (1983, 55) holds a similar idea that “it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round.”

Regarding it on a personal and emotional level, we can ask again: where did nationalism come from? As discussed previously, Gellner (1983) argues that the origin of nationalism lay in industrialism, which demanded an educational system. Specifically, in industrial society, high productivity required a division of labor realized through education by literate professionals. Consequently, the state established an educational system that facilitated the unification of language and culture. In some sense, a shared language was one of the key elements that enabled nationalism, as people from different regions often spoke different dialects. Furthermore, using the same language also shortened the psychological distance between unacquainted people and made them feel that they all belonged to the same community.

In addition to Gellner, Anderson (1991) holds that print vernaculars played a critical part in the origin of national consciousness, and the development of print capitalism in the 16th century is a fundamental reason for the development of nationalism. In the beginning, as reading materials were written in exclusive script languages such as Latin (the language for official writing in Europe), it was only possible for social elites to understand such materials. This changed with the advent of capitalism. Economic expansion at an accelerated rate prompted people, particularly merchants, to look for information on markets elsewhere. A good way for them to acquire this information was to read newspapers. In this situation, the demand for newspapers greatly increased. The development of print capitalism entailed the possibility of large-scale production, so people printed more

newspapers to meet commercial demand. As many people in Europe were not able to read Latin, newspapers were largely published in different vernaculars to cater to audiences' reading abilities. Gradually, newspapers became written documents that were not only favored by elites but also by common people.

What was contributed to the emergence of vernaculars that replaced Latin? In medieval Europe, Latin worked as a universal language. However, "The universality of Latin in medieval Western Europe never corresponded to a universal political system" (Anderson, 1991, 40). This situation was changed, leading to the emergence of vernaculars. Anderson (1991) lists three favorable circumstances for the emergence of print vernaculars. The first is that Latin became more Ciceronian in the form (the style from Marcus Tullius Cicero, who exerted a big influence on classical Latin), and its content veered away from everyday life, which made Latin now different from what it was in the medieval period (Anderson, 1991, 39). The old Latin was considered not esoteric "because of its subject matter or style" (Anderson, 1991, 39), but people viewed the new Latin language as sacred due to its written content. Thus, old Latin gradually lost its superiority as a written text. The second circumstance is the Reformation launched by Martin Luther in the 16th century. Reformation promoted the dissemination of Luther's religious book written in German, which the general populace, who could read little to no Latin, favored. Simultaneously, the book provoked people to build up a political state with their own religion. Luther's books became best-sellers, so people's demand for books written in vernaculars profoundly increased, which allowed vernaculars to replace the mainstream Latin language. The third circumstance is that, while the spread of vernaculars as written languages was slow in general, in some instances, it spread at an accelerated rate. This was due to a few monarchs who used certain vernaculars for administrative centralization. As a result of the rise of print vernaculars (at the expense of Latin), the religious imagined community (Christendom), built with the aid of the popularization of Latin, declined little by little; instead, new political imagined communities (nations) emerged through "interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print) and the fatality of human linguistic diversity" (Anderson, 1991, 42-43).

### **2.1.3 Development of Nationalism**

Most theorists (e.g., Hobsbawm, Smith, and Gellner) consider that nationalism originates in Europe. Anderson, however, challenges this view and argues that nationalism originates in America (mainly the US, Brazil, and the former Spanish colonies). He identifies four waves for the development and spread of nationalism from America to Europe and then to colonized Asia.

The first wave was Creole pioneers' American nationalism in the 16th century. Two factors contributed to the rise of Creole nationalism: the tightening of Madrid's control over the Creole and the spread of the liberalizing ideas of the Enlightenment (Anderson, 1991, 50). Anderson (1991) indicates that the Spanish American identity of the Creole living in America was accepted neither by local Americans nor by those born and lived in their own motherland Spain. Their ambiguous identity aroused Creole nationalism. In this process, they were indirectly affected by Enlightenment ideas to distinguish themselves from local people. The provinciality and plurality of newspapers allowed them to imagine a community different from the communities of other people who spoke other vernaculars.

Furthermore, pilgrimage, which meant a "journey" in American administrative organizations, was a key concept to shape nationalist discourse among Creoles. No matter where the Creoles were born and educated, they could not return to their metropolises or the colonies to take an important position in the upper echelons of its bureaucracy. During their pursuit of the position, they got to know many people who had similar experiences. With a feeling of alienation and discrimination, all these people then became companions and thus formed an imagined community. "Pilgrim Creole functionaries and provincial Creole printmen played the decisive historic role" (Anderson, 1991, 65). Consequently, within the imagined community, the Creoles' nationalism emerged for the first time.

Influenced by the American Independence Movement (1765-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799), the second wave of nationalism emerged in Europe in the first and middle half of the 19th century and was "a golden age of vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs" (Anderson, 1991, 71). Furthermore, "the energetic activities of these professional intellectuals were central to the shaping of nineteenth-century European nationalism" (Anderson, 1991, 71). Anderson views nationalism in Europe just as a copy of that in America. In the process

of spreading nationalism in Europe, print capitalism standardized vernaculars, which met the nation's requirement that would use a standardized vernacular as its national language. From then on, European nationalism came into being.

The latter half of the 19th century saw the third wave: "official nationalism," which meant the "willed merger of nation and dynastic empire ... stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire" (Anderson, 1991, 86). Represented by "Russification" and "Anglicization," official nationalism emerged where an imagined community threatened the domination of the dynastic empire. Anderson (1991) notes that Czardom implemented the first Russifying measure for Baltic Germans, regarded as the most loyal to Czardom. Czardom forced them to use Russian as a teaching language in schools. Parallel to this, in India, the British East India Company engaged in educating local people in "western" ways besides "eastern," imposing the British ideology and British world view on the Indians and forcing them to identify with British culture.

The last wave emerged in the first and middle half of the 20th century in the colonial countries of Southeast Asia and Africa and reached its peak after World War II. Unlike official nationalism, which was a reaction to popular nationalism, the wave of colonial nationalism was a reaction to imperialism. Intelligentsia played a core role in forming this kind of nationalism, owing to their literacy and bilingualism that allowed them to familiarize western culture and ideology, including nationalism. As Anderson (1991, 118) argues that "the paradox of imperial official nationalism was that it inevitably brought what were increasingly thought of and written about European 'national histories' into the consciousness of the colonized," the colonial educational system promoted young people's colonial nationalism. He takes Indonesia, colonized by the Netherlands from the 17th to the 20th century, as an example: the Dutch imperialist administration established a few schools in Batavia with a centralized hierarchy similar to the state bureaucracy. The government designed the geography of the schools to emphasize this hierarchy. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the elementary schools located in the small towns; then the middle schools were established in the larger towns; on the top, there was tertiary education located in the capital. In this way, these schools fostered a group of young people who could speak both the local language and Dutch, which enabled

them to learn Dutch history and culture. Students from different colony parts got together, allowing them to generate a sense of belonging to the same imagined political community where they learned the same knowledge. By doing so, they gradually turned to be potential nationalists. In addition, students travelling from small towns to large cities in pursuit of higher education, equal to a pilgrimage, were restricted in the colonial territory by the administrative system, which laid the foundation for the establishment of an imagined community. With time passing by, nationalist ideas prompted the students to establish their own nation, and the colony's boundary thus became that of the nation.

#### **2.1.4 Positive and Negative Aspects of Nationalism**

Nationalism that has existed in the world for several hundred years is generally considered a mixed blessing for social progress. To be more precise, while it creates nation-states, it also threatens the stability of existing states (Billig, 1995, 43). It has both positive and negative impacts on the governing of states. Smith listed several benign effects of nationalism:

Its defense of minority cultures; its rescue of “lost” histories and literatures; its inspiration for cultural renaissances; its resolution of [a] “identity crisis”; its legitimation of community and social solidarity; its inspiration to resist tyranny; its ideal of popular sovereignty and collective mobilization; even the motivation of self-sustaining economic growth (Smith, 1991, 18).

Nationalism has three main positive aspects that serve the governing purposes of states. First, nationalism aims to bond everyone in a nation with certain symbols, such as national flags, national emblems, and national anthems, which arouse people's collective consciousness and commitment to the nation. However, these symbols, emerging people's daily lives, just provide banal reminders of nationhood (Billig, 1995, 41). People perceive such nationalism unconsciously. Only when “the orderly routines have broken down” (Billig, 1995, 41), for example, a media event taking place, can people's nationalism be consciously stimulated. As “similarity and difference are the dynamic principles of identification” (Guibernau, 2013b, 16), people view others within the same group as companions and unite with them to devote themselves to constructing and defending the nation. In this way, nationalism endows people with a sense of belonging and increases solidarity.



Second, nationalism serves some psychological functions, as it meets human needs by providing “a way of feeling that we are right” (Searle-White, 2001, 87). The feeling of righteousness and justice brings people power in national conflicts. In addition, it helps people strengthen their national identity (Billig, 1995) and sometimes cures their spiritual emptiness. For example, if people lose their beliefs, nationalism can act as mental support in some sense to build up faith. Thus, people adore the nation by making every effort to support it, demonstrating nationalist loyalty.

Third, a government can use nationalism to enhance its legitimacy when it satisfies a social demand (for details, see Chapter 1). People’s love for the nation inspires them to be concerned about state affairs and support the government when it strives for (and achieves) the nation’s development. This kind of love thus may extend to the government.

Nevertheless, apart from the benign characteristics, pernicious features of nationalism draw the government’s attention too. If nationalist sentiments are too excessive, it can make people xenophobic and obstruct bilateral relations between nations. It then may have negative effects on economic development in the case of an already established economic cooperation between nations. In addition, as many scholars (e.g., Weber, Giddens, and Viroli) associate nationalism with power and violence, they regard nationalism as intrinsically aggressive. Furthermore, it can even threaten the legitimacy of the government. Although the cause (or the resolution) might be complex in an international conflict, people may blame their government for incompetence to avoid or solve the issue when a nation-state is “defeated” by its opponent. The unfavorable characteristics give nationalism a bad reputation in political discourse.

## **2.2 Nationalism in China**

The *Records of the Grand Historian*, written by Sima Qian in 91BC, recounts Chinese history from the Yellow Emperor period to the Han Dynasty and establishes a common myth about the ancestry of the Chinese. Most Chinese people believe that China has a long civilization and they are the descendants of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor (*yanhuang zisun*, 炎黄子孙). It is generally agreed that the Chinese nation originates from the Yellow River Valley where the Yellow

Emperor (*Huangdi*, 黄帝) and the Yan Emperor (*Yandi*, 炎帝) were said to have defeated the other tribes by joint forces. The emperors united all people within the territory and were regarded as the ancestors of the Chinese. Shen (1997, 6) informs us that this idea came from the late Qing Dynasty when intellectuals deemed the Yellow Emperor a cultural symbol to set up national identity.

Regarding the origin of the Chinese nation, Fei Xiaotong (1989, 1) indicates that “as a self-conscious (*zijue* 自觉) entity, the Chinese nation emerged in the protest against Western powers in the recent hundred years; but as an existing (*zizai* 自在) entity, it was formulated in a thousand-year historical process<sup>15</sup>.” Fei suggests that the Chinese nation already originates in ancient times, with the Han nationality continuously assimilating other ethnic nationalities, but the Chinese people only realized the nation’s existence in modern times when imperialist powers invaded the state. In contrast to Fei, I would regard the nation as a strictly modern, rather than an ancient, entity for the following reason: the territory of the dynasties was usually not fixed in ancient China, so its political boundary was not congruent with the cultural boundary shared by the Han people. This did not make it a nation in the modern sense. However, it is interesting that as the Han nationality became stronger and stronger in the historical process, its influence on other ethnic groups increased. For example, although the Han assimilated many ethnic groups, the myths about the origin of Chinese people would only refer to the Han people’s origin.

### **2.2.1 Rise of Chinese Nationalism**

Nationalism in modern times symbolizes a way for the Chinese to replace Universalism or Sino-centrism in ancient times. China is deeply influenced by Confucianism, which views the state more from a cultural than from a political perspective. Rana Mitter (2004, 117) articulates this idea by stating that “Nationalism in China was an ideological creation that emerged largely in reaction to the perceived inadequacies of a political identity that was based on Confucianism.” Zhao (2004, 43) further explained this point by arguing that “In the eye of traditional Chinese, China was the universe (*tianxia*) and the center of the world. All others were barbarians (*manyi*), outsiders (*waihua*) and tributaries”. Universalism (*tianxia zhuyi*, 天下主义) dominated in ancient China so that people regarded the emperor as the master of the world instead of the master of a nation-state. When

<sup>15</sup> This is my translation.

Western powers invaded China in the 19th century, they shattered “the fictive remnants of Sino-centrism” (Zhao, 2004, 48), forcing the people to seek another ideology to replace *tianxia zhuyi*. Nationalism was to become this new ideology.

In the middle and late 19th century, a group of important historical events consecutively took place in China, arousing the people’s national consciousness: The First Opium War (1840-1842), the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), the Second Opium War (1856-1860), the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), and the Boxer Movement (1899-1901). The First Opium war presents a crucial conflict between China and Britain, forcing the Chinese to realize that the state was not the center of the world and that it could be weak compared to other nations. This war broke out when the opium trade between Britain and China in the 1830s brought a series of problems to Chinese society: a reverse flow of silver payments, the wide emergence of opium smoking, and the dissolution of the former order (Wakeman, 1978, 178-179). Among these problems, Michael Dillon (2010, 44) indicates that “It was this economic crisis rather than righteous indignation at the depredations visited by opium on the health of the Chinese population that created the vigorous official pressure to suppress the sale and use of opium.” The ban of the opium trade, in the end, led to the war in 1840. The war ended in China’s defeat. The government signed the first treaty with Britain, the Treaty of Nanking, involving paying indemnities, ceding Hong Kong to the British government, etc. This was a great humiliation for the Chinese state, shattering its dream of a “central kingdom,” as it had never expected outside “barbarians” to defeat it and force it to sign such an ignominious treaty.

The Second Opium War, also known as the Arrow Incident, taking place on a vessel called the Arrow in 1856, continued the first one. One deep reason was that Britain was not satisfied with China’s attempts to walk away from the Nanking Treaty signed in the First Opium War, which “was a consequence of an ever-expanding British economy” (Wong, 1974, 373). Although it was a war again between Britain and China, other countries that aimed to benefit from the war with defeated China were involved, notably France, the US, and Russia. The British and the French joined forces defeated the Chinese army, leading to the Qing government’s signing the Convention of Peking, an agreement comprising treaties with Britain, France, and Russia. In the Open-Door Policy of the convention, China had to cede more territory to Britain and Russia, allow free entrance to China by

foreigners, legalize opium sales, etc.

The two opium wars profoundly affected Chinese intellectuals' realization of how far China was behind the foreign powers. In addition, it aroused the public's national consciousness, as "the ramifications of the Western invasion were not only China's humiliation and compromised independence but also modern political and technical models and new ideas, including nationalism, for China to follow and adopt" (Zhao, 2004, 48).

The weakness of the Chinese government in the First Opium War incurred the people's dissatisfaction and even led to an uprising: the Taiping Rebellion, which "was in many respects the hinge between China's pre-modern and modern histories" (Kuhn, 1978, 264). The Taiping Rebellion was waged by Taiping Army, headed by Hong Xiuquan<sup>16</sup> and his fellows, who established an unrecognized state, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, in 1851. Resorting to anti-dynastic appeals, the Taiping Rebellion represented the objection to the Manchu rule. Foreign forces did not engage in the anti-Taiping Campaign in the beginning. However, judging that the Taipings' future interests were based on a revitalized and secured China, the British decided to intervene in the Taiping Rebellion to support the government suppressing the rebels (Kuhn, 1978, 303). Thus, the Taipings were put into the anti-imperialist battle to fight against foreign military forces. They became firm quasi-nationalists<sup>17</sup> in unstable China, seeking to establish their own kingdom that was for all (Kuhn, 1978, 276). Although the Taiping Rebellion was suppressed with the death of Hong in 1864, its influence on the Chinese people's national consciousness should not be neglected. In addition, ethnic nationalism advocated by the Taipings became the core pursuit for the revolutionists at the beginning of the 20th century.

In addition to the conflicts with western powers, the war with the neighboring country Japan further stimulated Chinese nationalism. The first Sino-Japanese war in 1894 demonstrated the huge distance of military force between China and Japan and foreshadowed the current conflicts between the two

<sup>16</sup> Hong Xiuquan (1814-1864) is a Chinese religious prophet and leader of the Taiping Rebellion.

<sup>17</sup> I view the Taiping as quasi-nationalists because they intended to establish a kingdom different from a nation-state in the modern sense. Thus, although the Taiping had certain similarities with nationalists in terms of threatening the existing regime and fighting foreign powers, they were not real nationalists who want to build up a nation-state rather than a kingdom.

countries, including current territorial disputes. Both China and Japan introduced reforms in the 1860s but had different results. The Self-Strengthening Movement (1861–1895) failed to strengthen China, while the Meiji Restoration (1868–the 1890s) was a big success, which turned Japan into a modernized industrial state. This success ensured that the Meiji Japan’s imperial power became much stronger than China and other states in Asia, prompting Japan to establish a “continental policy” to conquer its neighboring rivals (Shen, 2005). The main conflict between China and Japan was over Korea, a vassal state of the Qing Dynasty (Dillon, 2010). As in the opium wars with the British, China suffered a total defeat by the Japanese, which gave another big blow to the government and the people. Consequently, the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed, which forced China to cede the Liaodong Peninsula, Taiwan, the Pescadores, and subsidiary islands and pay an indemnity to Japan.

As “Japan’s defeat of China in 1895 brought fears of partition—of China being ‘sliced like a melon’—much closer” (Zarrow, 2005, 44), Chinese people became aware that the threat was not only from distant western powers but also from their neighboring country that they had not thought capable of defeating them. These events involving military and political defeat at the hand of foreign powers led to xenophobic movements within China. One such movement was formed by the so-called Boxers (*yihe tuan*, 义和团), a group of starving, landless and superstitious peasants, many of whom were good at martial arts. Rising in Shandong province in 1900, the boxers were an organization against the Qing government in the beginning and then foreign influence. They turned their slogan “Oust the Qing and Restore the Ming” (*fanqing fuming*, 反清复明) into another one: “Support the Qing and Exterminate the Foreigners” (*fuqing mieyang*, 扶清灭洋) after the government co-opted the movement. The Boxer Movement showed strong xenophobic sentiments, and fiercely attacked Christian missionaries, who could enter China to preach due to treaties such as the Beijing Convention. What was more, the people who had connections with foreigners, particularly Chinese Christians, also became targets of the Boxers. This led to “tens of thousands of Chinese died at the hands of other Chinese only because they were Christians” (Thompson, 2009, 1). The massacre thus triggered the formation of an international coalition: The Eight-Nation Alliance<sup>18</sup>, and “more tens of thousands of Chinese died at the hands of Western soldiers only

<sup>18</sup> The eight nations referred to Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the US, and the UK. Besides these nations, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain also played a part in the invasion.

because they were Chinese” (Thompson, 2009, 1). The defeat of China resulted in the signing of the Boxer Protocol with the eleven nations in 1901. The protocol forced China to pay an indemnity of four hundred and fifty million Haikwan Taels to the nations and prohibit importing arms and ammunition for two years.<sup>19</sup>

This series of events, continuously ending in China’s failure, dealt a heavy blow to the idea of China as the center of the civilized world, *tianxia zhuyi*. Especially the war against Japan heavily shocked the Chinese elites, who advocated “a truly fundamental reappraisal of the culture” (Zarrow, 2005, 1). However, they found a new impulse to stimulate the national consciousness of the Chinese in nationalism. For the rise of nationalism in China, Zhao Suisheng provides his analysis as below:

The collision between traditional centralism and the modern nation-state system and the crushing defeats that China suffered in a series of military confrontations with the West [and Japan] gave rise to nationalism. The wars, unequal treaties, humiliations, and material and territorial losses suffered by Chinese people during a century of contact with foreign imperialist powers were continuous sources of inspirations to Chinese nationalism (Zhao, 2004, 30).

How, then, did this Chinese nationalism develop? As mass communication (mainly newspapers) was introduced to China by westerners in the 19th century, it laid a foundation for the Chinese to imagine their nation. In the meantime, Chinese intellectuals and revolutionaries played a pivotal role in introducing and spreading nationalism, facilitating the establishment of the Chinese nation.

### **2.2.2 Development of Chinese Nationalism**

Chinese intellectuals and revolutionaries, as mentioned above, played a key role in the spread and development of nationalism. Intellectuals introduced nationalism and applied it to the Chinese case. Revolutionaries, led by Sun Yat-sen,<sup>20</sup> who tactically interpreted the meaning of nationalism, made great efforts to realize the ultimate goal of nationalism by establishing a nation-state. In this section, I will examine how nationalism developed in China by looking at important nationalist events and

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000001-0302.pdf>, accessed 12 October 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) is the first leader of the Nationalist Party and the first provisional president of the Republic of China in 1911.

their themes in different developmental stages of nationalism, i.e., anti-foreignism, anti-imperialism, and reaction to the international environment.

In the late 19th century, Liang Qichao<sup>21</sup> adopted the concept of “nationalism” from Japan and applied it to China for the first time. He argued that China could survive in a world full of competing nations on the condition that the state was powerful enough in economic and military terms. Further, he argued that to build a powerful state, its people had to become powerful first (Liang, 1916/1994). He discussed how people, in general, should perform in society to strengthen the state, and indicated that the development of state sovereignty in Europe—even in the world—benefited from nationalism (Liang, 1916/1994, 5). In addition, he distinguished two kinds of nationalism: big nationalism (*da minzu zhuyi*, 大民族主义) and small nationalism (*xiao minzu zhuyi*, 小民族主义), referring to state nationalism and ethnic nationalism, respectively. In practice, big nationalism comprised nationalist sentiments in China against outside nations, and small nationalism was Han nationalism against other ethnic groups within China (such as the Tibetan nationality). In Liang’s view, big nationalism should mean that the nation should comprise many ethnic groups in addition to the Han nationality for China.

Liang’s ideas provided a general description of nationalism and discussed how it could work in favor of China. Sun (cited in Zheng, 1999, 28) further advocated the idea that a nation-state would aid China: “We now do not have a state to be ruled. What we need to do is to construct a state. After construction of the state, we can govern it.” However, Sun’s view of nationalism was initially different from that of Liang, as Sun attached more importance to the majority of Hans and distinguished them from other ethnic groups. A popular slogan put forward by the revolutionaries was “A Revolution to Expel Manchus” (*Geming Paiman*, 革命排满), showing the Hans’ resistance against the Manchus. This kind of nationalism fell into what Liang defined as “small nationalism” or ethnic nationalism.

Influenced by nationalist ideas of Sun, the 1911 Revolution, entailing the Wuchang Uprising<sup>22</sup> and

<sup>21</sup> Liang Qichao (1873-1929) is a Chinese scholar, politician, and revolutionary whose ideas greatly influenced political reformation and movement in the late Qing and the early 20th century.

<sup>22</sup> The Wuchang Uprising was led by revolutionaries including Xiong Bingkun, Cai Jimin, and Wu Xinghan in 1911.

a series of uprisings across China, overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established the first nation-state, the Republic of China (RoC) in 1912. Chinese nationalism finished nation-building and exerted an influence in the political field for the first time.

After the establishment of the RoC, Sun and other revolutionaries considered that “the political consequence of defining the new nation in terms of Han people alone would be the dissolution of the former Qing empire” (Zhao, 2004, 67). They attempted to “obscure the distinction between Han and other ethnic minorities as one race/nation” (Zhao, 2004, 69). Establishing the idea of the “Doctrine of a Republic of Five Nationalities” (*Wuzu Gonghe*, 五族共和), Sun (cited in Zhao, 2004, 68) argued that “The territories of Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetans should be integrated into one nation. This is called national unity. ... The people in the Republic of China are equals and should not be distinguished by race, class, or religion.”

Following the 1911 Revolution, two separate movements generated two kinds of nationalism, which signified the further development of Chinese nationalism: the New Culture Movement (*xinwenhua yundong*, 新文化运动), generating elite nationalism, and the May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong*, 五四运动), generating popular nationalism.

The New Culture Movement took place around 1915, with a group of intellectuals led by Chen Duxiu<sup>23</sup>, introducing Western culture and ideologies such as communism, democracy, and science. This movement was supposed to compete with the entrenched traditional culture, i.e., Confucianism. It boosted nationalist ideology among literates, although Chen promoted “democratic nationalism,” i.e., nationalism from people protected by the state (Zarrow, 2005, 135).

The May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong*, 五四运动) in 1919 directly stimulated popular nationalism and was a turning point in modern history. After World War I, the government signed a humiliating treaty with Japan that forced China to accede to Japan’s demands. The Chinese people saw this as shameful, and it infuriated the nationalists who launched the May Fourth Movement to

<sup>23</sup> Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) is a Chinese revolutionary socialist, one of the founders and the first General Secretary of the CCP.



protest against the government and the humiliating treaty. Anti-imperialism and patriotism were the most popular themes in this movement, with support from elites, students, workers, and merchants. It was the first presentation of popular nationalism and took the form of demonstrations. It spread from elite nationalism to the common people, focusing on such topics as sovereignty, national independence. Dillon (2010, 178) argues that “to all intents and purposes, the May Fourth and New Culture Movements were one and the same, a continuum of political and cultural thought and deed.” The May Fourth era when the two movements took place was distinguished from the late Qing period and the 1930s when the nationalist government was in power, as Mitter (2004, 23) notes that the May Fourth era signifies “a sense of real and impending crisis; a combination of a plurality of competing ideas aimed at ‘saving the nation,’ and an audience ready to receive, welcome, contest, and adapt these ideas.”

In the Warlord era (1916-1928), many parts of China were dominated by different warlords: local powerful military leaders. Zarrow (2005, 87) notes that the law of the warlord system is that “no single unifier could emerge due to the ambitions and jealousy of the others and due to the forces of imperialism,” and therefore national reunification could never be achieved. Under the influence of the May Fourth Movement, Chinese nationalists had a goal to establish a reunified China. The Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*, 国民党, also known as *Kuomintang*, KMT in short),<sup>24</sup> established by Sun in 1894 in Honolulu and led by Jiang Jieshi<sup>25</sup> (also known as Chiang Kai-shek), launched the Northern Expedition with the aid of the CCP<sup>26</sup> in 1926. They defeated the warlords two years later and terminated the secession period of the Chinese nation. Jiang established a new government in Nanjing in 1927 and officially achieved national reunification. Unlike former nationalist movements such as the May Fourth Movement, the Northern Expedition aimed at national reunification rather than on the nation’s independence.

After the reunification of China by the KMT in 1927, the war between the CCP and the KMT broke out immediately, falling into two stages: 1927–1937 and 1946–1950. This war was interrupted in

<sup>24</sup> The KMT was the most powerful Party in China until 1949 when the CCP defeated it.

<sup>25</sup> Jiang Jieshi (1887-1975) assumed leadership of the KMT in 1926 and ruled mainland China until 1949.

<sup>26</sup> Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao founded the CCP in 1921 in Shanghai. Mao, acting as the paramount leader, assumed power in 1935.

1937 when Japan invaded China again. The resulting Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) prompted the CCP and the KMT to ally to fight against outsiders, in this case, the Japanese military. The war resulted in Japan's defeat in 1945, representing the first complete success of Chinese nationalism against foreign invasion. China defended itself with the joint efforts of nationalists (the KMT) and communists (the CCP). The war, however, continued till 1949, when Jiang evacuated to Taiwan with his army. The CCP, led by Mao Zedong,<sup>27</sup> then established a new nation-state, the PRC. Its national strengthening has been a struggle since then.

Based on the previous discussion, I mainly categorize two developmental stages of Chinese nationalism: first, a collective feeling was aroused to fight against outside invaders and establish an "imagined community," i.e., a nation, in place of the old cultural system. Second, when the nation-state had been established in China, its people had a nationalist consciousness entailing love for the nation and motivations to construct a better nation than any other in the world. This echoes Liang's ideas that I have outlined above about economic and military strength and superiority. In other words, nationalism in the Chinese context contains two meanings in different historical periods: nation building and strengthening of the nation.

What are the themes of Chinese nationalism? Hu Shi<sup>28</sup> (1935/2013, 26) suggests that nationalism has three levels of meaning: anti-foreignism, the promotion of inherited national culture, and the establishment of a nation-state. The three meanings also refer to three steps for the development of nationalism, of which the last one is the most difficult: a nationalist movement often stops after the first two steps (Hu, 1935/2013, 26). In Hu's explanation, anti-foreignism embodies aggressive nationalism. Too excessive nationalist sentiments might lead to xenophobia. This level is equal to the first type of nationalism in China that led to its nation building.

Another important theme of Chinese nationalism from the May Fourth Movement (1919) to the Second Sino-Japanese War (1945) is anti-imperialism. However, it does not lose its significance after then: in the Mao era (1949-1976), anti-imperialism was again a major factor in Mao's

<sup>27</sup> Mao Zedong (1893-1975) is the PRC's founding father and the first paramount leader of the CCP (1935-1976).

<sup>28</sup> Hu Shi (1891-1962) is a Chinese philosopher and writer who advocated liberalism. He was also one of the leaders of the New Culture Movement and a president of Beijing University.

nationalism (Zhang, 2014). Mao (1965, 196) suggests that nationalism “is determined by historical conditions” and differentiates China’s nationalism from that of the Japanese aggressors and that of Adolf Hitler, implying that Chinese nationalism is defensive nationalism. Attaching importance to the unification of socialist countries, Mao (1965, 196) asserts that “Chinese communists must therefore combine patriotism with internationalism.” Mao’s “nationalism is neither Han chauvinism nor local nationalism but the nationalism at the level of the Chinese nation, which is consistent with patriotism in essence and has shown its power in practice” (Zhang, 2014, 68). In addition, his “nationalism includes both resistance and construction” (Zhang, 2014, 68). In the phase of striving to strengthen the Chinese nation, it cannot be denied that Mao’s patriotic spirit deeply influenced the Chinese people’s nationalist sentiments. Although Mao heavily emphasized class struggle, the CCP still encouraged the people to construct and strengthen the nation. Yet, this kind of nationalism was not salient, and it was to a certain extent similar to what Billig termed “banal nationalism,” which was usually sensed but not frequently activated.

Following the Mao era, the people attached more importance to nationalism in the Deng Xiaoping<sup>29</sup> era (1977-1989). Specifically, in the Mao era, Chinese society was relatively isolated from the outside world since Western thought and culture were considered bourgeois ideas. However, in the Deng era, as Deng advocated the slogan “the Four Modernizations,”<sup>30</sup> Chinese society became more open to the world. After initiating the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, the Chinese gradually cast an alternative eye on foreign nations. With the rapid development of the economy in the 1980s and 1990s, westernization was widely accepted by many Chinese, so that Western culture, to some degree, even threatened the status of traditional Chinese culture. To counter this situation, Chinese nationalism in the Deng era was mainly a reaction to the international environment, besides a domestic modernization (Zheng, 1999, 47). Chinese nationalism aimed to “use China’s power to revive Confucianism rather than to continue promoting a Western nationalism in China” (Zheng, 1999, 83). In addition, Zheng argues that Chinese nationalism contains three meanings:

First, it is about how the Chinese state should and can be reconstructed in accordance with

<sup>29</sup> Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) was the paramount leader of the PRC from 1978-1989.

<sup>30</sup> “The Four Modernizations” refer to national strengthening in the fields of agriculture, industry, defense, and science and technology.

changing domestic and international circumstances. Second, it is about state sovereignty and people's perception of China's proper position of power in a world of nation-states. Third, it is about people's perceptions of a "just world order," an international system that accords with China's national interest (Zheng, 1999, 14).

Apart from Zheng's argument, Zhao pays more attention to the pragmatism of nationalism. Zhao (2004, 19) suggests that "the content of nationalism was not always attendant in similar situations of modernization, because self-interested political entrepreneurs treat it as a political enterprise and manipulate it in response to changing supply and demand conditions in the political market place." Furthermore, he divides Chinese nationalism into liberal nationalism, ethnic nationalism, and state nationalism. Each of them has its own emphasis: liberal nationalism focuses on the civil rights of participation in government; ethnic nationalism stresses cultural-ethnic identity; state nationalism attaches importance to political-territorial convergence (Zhao, 2004, 21). The different types of nationalism are strategies applied by the government corresponding to the "political market."

Peter Hays Gries (2004, 19) argues that the Chinese "have deep-seated emotional attachments to their national identity." He also notes that "the Chinese identity involves dynamic relationships with other nations and the past and Chinese nationalism involves both Chinese people and their passions" (Gries, 2004, 19). In Gries' view, Chinese nationalism is not an isolated emotional attachment: it is closely connected to other nation-states, such as the US and Japan. In addition, national history, the people, and their emotions play an important part in constructing Chinese nationalism because "the ways Chinese imagined their 'Century of Humiliation' at the hands of Western imperialists in the past have a powerful influence on the nature and direction of Chinese nationalism today" (Gries, 2004, 19). Zheng (1999, 51) indicates that "the end of the Cold War led to the rise of nationalism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and nationalism replaced the old communist ideology in these countries." This case is also applicable to China. In the early 20th century, nationalism sprang from the struggle for China's independence and sovereignty, while new nationalism was mainly aroused to strengthen the nation and legitimize the ruling of the state.

### **2.2.3 Official Attitudes towards Chinese Nationalism**

Nationalism is a mixed blessing that establishes the legitimacy of the government and may sometimes threaten the ruling class. This mainly depends on how strong popular nationalism is. Generally, the Chinese government holds different attitudes towards popular nationalism and uses different strategies to deal with various situations in different periods.

As previously mentioned, in the Mao era, the PRC was almost isolated from the outside world, thus not causing many conflicts with other nations. Stimulated popular nationalism was at a low level. Socialism, in addition, was a common goal shared by other socialist countries, obscuring the differentiation between the PRC and other nations. In the meantime, Chinese authorities held a relatively mild attitude toward nationalism to encourage the people to strengthen the nation. In the Deng era, as the economy was the main goal for national construction, nationalism did not receive much importance either. The authorities strategically used nationalism to deal with the problems existing in modernization and westernization in the PRC.

The Revolutions of 1989 in socialist countries led to the collapse of faith in socialism. In the Jiang era, the authorities advocated nationalism to mitigate this problem. Patriotism became an important political instrument calling for the people to love and devote themselves to the nation and ensuring social stability. From the Jiang era till now, state nationalism is much more emphasized by the authorities than before. With the implementation of the Patriotic Education Campaign in the 1990s (which will be detailed in Chapter 3), state nationalism is broadly enhanced, which also promotes popular nationalism. The government was practical to deal with the related issues aroused by popular nationalism. Mostly the government supports nationalism to show its responsiveness to the public will. Yet, it suppresses excessive nationalist sentiments in some cases because excessive nationalism may ruin foreign relations and bring about economic losses. More importantly, it may also urge nationalists to blame the government for its weakness in diplomacy, which potentially threatens the government's legitimacy.

Under the influence of state nationalism, popular nationalism in the Jiang era was stronger than in its previous eras. Gries (2004, 121) identifies three waves of popular nationalism in the late 1990s in the PRC: the Diaoyu Islands protests in 1996, the China Can Say No sensation, and the Belgrade

bombing protests in 1999. When the Japanese foreign minister declared that the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands were Japanese territory in 1996, Chinese nationalism was immediately triggered. To cope with nationalist sentiments, the CCP “sought both to suppress and to co-opt popular Diaoyu activism” (Gries, 2004, 123). In this way, they adjusted nationalism to a controllable level.

A few nationalists wrote the book *China Can Say No* to express anti-American sentiments. According to Gries (2004), in the beginning, it received official support, yet soon the government found that the book criticized a few leaders and even challenged the hegemony of the CCP. Therefore, the government tried to constrain the spread of popular nationalism by limiting book circulation. This incurred the authors’ objection, who argued that what they expressed in the book was just “popular opinion.” The government took some measures similar to what happened with the 1996 Diaoyu Islands protests: again, they sought to suppress and co-opt popular nationalism.

The third nationalist wave happened on 8 May 1999, when the US bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade and killed three Chinese. This greatly aroused nationalism among domestic and overseas Chinese. As too many fierce protests led to riots of nationalists, the Chinese government first tried to suppress the protests. This, however, did not work, so the government then attempted to appease the nationalists. Gries (2004., 121) argues that for the three big waves of nationalism in the 1990s, the government’s reaction contained both suppression and co-optation, but the proportion of the two was different. Concerning the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands protests, suppression took the domination position; for the *China Can Say No* sensation, the proportion was even; for the Belgrade bombing protests, as popular nationalism was bottom-up and it was a little out of control, co-optation was the main method adopted by the government (Gries, 2004).

Concerning the attitudes towards popular nationalism in recent years, the government has changed its tune from time to time. Before 2008, Zheng (2009, 144) argues that “the state intervened again to control hardline nationalistic voices in order to stabilize China-Japan relations and nationalism against Japan has died down.” However, after 2008, loosening the control of the expression of popular nationalism, the government “has become increasingly reluctant to constrain the expression of popular nationalism and more willing to follow the popular nationalist calls for confrontation

against the Western powers and its neighbors” (Zhao, 2013, 536). This is because the people have a greater desire to express nationalist sentiments with the expansion of communication channels, and the government is more confident of gaining popular support with the rise of China in the international arena. In addition, Zhao (2013) identifies four momentous developments that are reflected by popular nationalism: first, public opinion of nationalism increasingly influences China’s foreign policy; second, nationalist expressions become powerful to attract audiences’ attention to increase the revenue of media outlets; third, state nationalism and popular nationalism have converged; and fourth, nationalism increases domestic, economic, and political uncertainties in the PRC. The complicated relations between popular nationalism on the one hand and domestic stability and foreign relations, on the other hand, make it difficult for the government to choose to promote or suppress (popular) nationalism.

To sum up, after nationalism emerged in China in the late 19th century, it was represented in the following forms: state nationalism, ethnic nationalism, liberal nationalism, and popular nationalism. The elites used ethnic nationalism to resist foreign invasion and overthrow the Qing Empire in the nation-building period. Nationalism was a stimulus for the people to create their imagined political community. After establishing the nation-state, the elites replaced ethnic nationalism with state nationalism to maintain a unitary state. In some sense, state nationalism is the “safest” for the ruling class because it preserves the unity and sovereignty of the Chinese nation. In the reform era, the government has greatly emphasized state nationalism, which also inspired popular nationalism. To keep popular nationalism to a controllable level, the government applies different methods to adjust popular sentiments to maintain social stability and to construct its legitimacy.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

Nationalism is action-oriented national identity thinking that expresses love and loyalty to a nation that already exists or is to be established. Three important elements construct nationalism: boundaries, collective memories, and engagement. Strengthening those elements improves people’s national identity and nationalism. In the PRC, nationalism is expressed by the state and the populace, separately categorized as state nationalism and popular nationalism. State nationalism shapes popular nationalism through various forms of political communication, thus seeking public support

to maintain or strengthen the authorities' legitimacy.

This chapter mainly outlines the origin, development, and positive and negative aspects of nationalism, mainly based on Anderson's theories that I will briefly reiterate here: nationalism, as a modern concept, emerged in the world with the development of print capitalism in the 16th century. Hitherto unconnected people imagined themselves in the same political community through a shared discourse in the form of printed media. From these conditions, nationalism emerged and spread in four waves: Creole pioneers' American nationalism, nationalism in Europe, official nationalism, and nationalism in Southeast Asia and Africa (Anderson, 1991). Under the influences of these waves, at the end of the 19th century, Chinese intellectuals imported nationalism from the West and Japan, which became the major force to overthrow the old Qing Empire.

China's modern history was one of the main impulses that prompted the emergence of nationalism. Elite nationalism later evolved into official nationalism (that I call state nationalism); nationalism expressed by the populace became popular nationalism. In the 19th century, Westerners introduced newspapers to urban China, which laid a foundation for the rise of nationalism among a group of elites, who bolstered the transmission of nationalism by launching the New Culture Movement to disseminate various western ideologies (including nationalism). As China suffered continuous imperialist aggressions, nationalism was actuated to fight against foreign invaders. The people devoted themselves to nation building, and in 1912, they established the first nation-state, the RoC, distinguished from the old Qing Empire. In the period of the RoC, the task of Chinese nationalism was mainly to protest against the Japanese invasion, operated by both the KMT and the CCP. After a long war with the KMT, the CCP established the current nation-state in 1949, the PRC, finishing its nation-building process. As the nation-state was constructed, the CCP government took a series of measures to promote people's nationalism, for example, setting up state-controlled schools and a state-organized propaganda apparatus. Especially in the Patriotic Education Campaign in the reform era, the government made great efforts to enhance state nationalism to legitimize its rule. State nationalism affects popular nationalism to a large extent. If popular nationalism is too strong, the government will have an incentive to adjust it to a stable level. The relation between popular nationalism and the rule of the government is perhaps best expressed in the Chinese saying: "the



water that bears the boat is the same that swallows it up (*shui neng zai zhou, yi neng fu zhou* 水能载舟，亦能覆舟).”

## Chapter 3 Mass Communication

Mass communication plays an essential role in spreading various messages. Richard Harris (2004, 1) indicates that people now are “swimming in the media sea,” where they find various leisure activities and acquire all kinds of information. For instance, many TV and radio stations provide news broadcasts and entertainment programs specifically designed for mass taste. In the last several decades, with the popularization of the Internet and communication devices (especially smartphones and tablets), mass communication was greatly facilitated, and information became much more easily accessible. Under the influence of mass communication, the world becomes more integrated, and people’s lives are fundamentally changed from a simple style into a diversified one.

The origin of mass communication is associated with the invention of various media forms. Newspapers, as the earliest form of mass communication, emerged in people’s lives in the 17th century (Mitchell, 2007). By the 20th century, further progress in science and technology led to the invention of other media forms. To be more specific, 1906 saw the first public radio broadcast produced by Fessenden (Baudino & Kittross, 1977, 64), followed by Philo Farnsworth’s invention of television in the 1930s (Schwartz, 2000). After that, John Mauchly and J. Presper Eckert introduced the first electronic digital computer in 1946 (Burks & Burks, 1981, 311). Mass communication then tremendously speeded up with these inventions.

Mass communication is instrumental in creating and disseminating nationalism. As already noted by Anderson (1991, 61) in the previous chapter, the printing press<sup>31</sup> and capitalism contributed to the origin of nationalism. Harold Innis (2007, 126) gives a useful account of the emergence of

<sup>31</sup> The printing press raises two issues. First, the question of who invented printing technology is controversial. Generally, people consider either Chinese alchemist Bi Sheng or German printer Johannes Gutenberg as the inventors of printing technology. Shelton Gunaratne (2001, 464) argues that Bi invented moveable type printing in the mid-11th century in China, and Gutenberg independently invented this in the West four hundred years later. The most distinctive character of Bi’s invention was repetition instead of design-for-market (Carothers, cited in McLuhan 1962, 34). In contrast, Gutenberg printed many books, including the Bible, in the 15th century, making him known as the inventor of the printing press (Gunaratne, 2001). I agree with Gunaratne that printing technology originates in China. However, concerning the popularization of the printing press, I tend to regard that Gutenberg’s invention greatly accelerated the development of mass communication because Bi’s technology was not widely applied during his time (Anderson, 1991). Second, the printing press is only one channel for mass communication. As I will discuss in detail below, mass communication is carried out by three media types: print media, electronic media, and Internet media, which belong to different categories of technology. The carriers of print media are mainly paper, relying on printing technology. Digital media are visual and audible, depending on various electronic devices. Internet media are based on electronic media with extra Internet access, increasing interactivity among communicators.

nationalism and argues that printing technology that normalized the vernaculars in newspapers created an opportunity for the emergence of nationalism. Billig (1995) contends that mass media reinforce nationalism, as media are where the symbols of nationalism are flagged. In societies with advanced information and communication systems, mass communication becomes more and more significant, and almost everyone in modern society has access to certain forms of mass communication. It accelerates the spread of nationalism in the global realm.

In this chapter, I will explore the theories on mass communication, mass media in communication, and the operations of mass communication in the PRC by addressing the following questions: what is mass communication? How does it originate? How is it presented to people, and in what forms? What are the social functions of mass media? What is propaganda? How is mass communication related to propaganda and politics? How do Chinese mass media develop, and how are they reformed? What is the impact of media reform on Chinese political communication, including patriotic propaganda? How does the Internet facilitate online communication, particularly online expressions of nationalism, in the PRC? How are state nationalism shaped through mass communication in different phases of the reform era to consolidate state legitimacy? How does state nationalism shape popular nationalism to maintain legitimacy? What is the current situation of Chinese nationalism in terms of strength and demographics?

### **3.1 Theories on Mass Communication**

Mass media take different perspectives to inform audiences of updated information in mass communication. In the process, media practitioners establish various discourses to shape public opinion by applying media theories, such as agenda setting and framing. This section discusses the theoretical frame of mass communication, mass media, agenda setting, and framing theories widely used by media practitioners.

#### **3.1.1 Definitions of Mass Communication**

The term “mass communication” is understandable in two aspects: mass and communication. Noel Carroll (1998) indicates that “mass” refers to a large audience rather than individuals or several people, and the content of information is to be disseminated at large. A useful definition of

“communication” comes from Manuel Castells (2009, 54): “the sharing of meaning through the exchange of information.” We can phrase this as the interaction between information disseminators and receivers (verbally or nonverbally) for this research. Mass communication does not function in traditional ways, such as face-to-face and person-to-person information exchanges; instead, the communication process is anonymous. Furthermore, this dissemination of information in the form of mass communication is not a dialogue but “predominantly one-directional” (Castells, 2009, 55). Although people conduct mass communication through different media forms, in official communication channels such as national television news, the disseminators who control mass media have dominant discourse power and decide what to or not to publish or discuss.

Harris (2004, 4) explains these constituent terms, “mass” and “communication,” from the perspective of cognitive psychology. Mass communication is “mass” for three reasons: first, audience members are anonymous and diverse, from all walks of life, and their number is huge (Wright, 1959, cited in Harris, 2004, 4). Second, mass communication sources, monopolized by big companies and the states, are institutional and organizational (Harris, 2004, 4). For example, in the US, most mass media are in the hands of private companies, and in the PRC, communication sources, especially sensitive sources, are tightly manipulated by Chinese authorities through propaganda apparatus. Third, economic consideration on advertising that aims to attract a large audience controls the basic functions of the media (Harris, 2004, 4). It is communication (in a two-way sense) because audiences usually give some response. To a certain extent, communication by nature is reciprocal. The statuses of information disseminators and receivers are different in practice. Information disseminators such as big media companies or the government normally control information sources, putting them in a dominant position in the communication chain. Receivers are the targets of disseminated information, and in mass communication, it is possible that disseminators inconspicuously impose certain ideas on the receivers, which may impact their behavior.

Two types of mass communication jointly shape public opinion in the Internet sphere: top-down vertical communication (a traditional way) and multi-end information flows (the current situation). Specifically, top-down vertical communication refers to activities between a small number of information disseminators and a huge number of receivers. The disseminators release information

through specific channels for various purposes, such as notifying, educating, and warning the receivers. After receiving the messages, receivers consciously or unconsciously give feedback to disseminators. In addition, as information disseminators usually monopolize communication sources, receivers have no other channels to obtain such information, and they highly depend on accessing official information.

Thanks to the emergence of Internet media, especially Web 2.0,<sup>32</sup> multi-end information flows took dominance. Shifting from passive consumers of media content, audiences have gradually taken on the role of message disseminators, and the original disseminators have also adopted the role of receivers (Vickery, Wunsch-Vincent & OECD, 2007, 64). Due to the nature of the Internet, all Internet users can principally act as a broadcast station (Shirky, 2008). Thus, user-generated content becomes important product of Internet communication, leading to the emergence of participatory culture (Vickery et al., 2007; Jenkins, 2006). Thus, I view information disseminators and receivers as alternative agents in the same communication chain, as they can change their roles from time to time.

Taking the impact of Internet media into account, my definition of mass communication is as follows: information transmission from media companies to a large number of receivers, followed by broad reflections and idea exchanges (both occurring on the Internet) among the receivers. The media content generated by the receivers becomes an information resource for further communication and a barometer to gauge public opinion needed by media outlets and media companies. This definition covers a communication process that entails both multi-end information flows and top-down vertical communication. In democratic countries, media sectors are generally independent without much external influence, but in authoritarian countries, they are directly or indirectly influenced by the state. Although media outlets and media companies dominate communication processes, Internet media prompt receivers to repost and comment on a topic, making online communication swifter and more interactive than traditional media.

<sup>32</sup>Web 2.0 is a term coined by Darcy DiNucci (1999), referring to Internet services that focus on user-centered online interactivities.

The process of mass communication as defined above includes three phases: the first is the transmission of information (in the form of mass media content) from information disseminators (media outlets and media companies) to receivers; the second is reflection and discussion among receivers, thus producing user-generated content; and the third phase is monitoring and evaluating public opinion by media outlets and media companies via feedback from user-generated content. The following figure shows this communication loop:

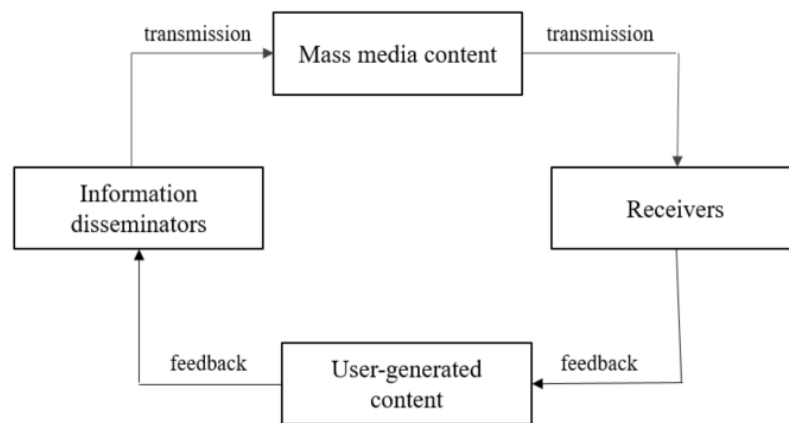


Figure 3.1 Communication loop

### 3.1.2 Mass Media

Mass media are core channels for the implementation of mass communication. The epithet “mass” applies to media because “they make their products technologically available to large audiences, even if they do not command large audiences” (Carroll, 1998, 188). In the following part, I will discuss the classification, convergence, content, and social functions of mass media.

#### *Media Classification*

The forms of mass media fall into three categories: print media, (traditional) electronic media, and a sub-category of the latter: Internet media. The first two types emphasize traditional top-down ways of information dissemination. Internet media provide more possibilities of interaction between information disseminators and audiences, besides improving communication efficiency (digital content usually reaches audiences faster than other media forms). Print media include newspapers,

books, magazines, posters, etc. Traditional electronic media are radio, television, film, etc. Internet media are electronic media that are connected to the network. The devices involve networked computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.

Newspapers take the leading position among the printed forms of mass communication. To create normative news, newspaper journalists have to comply with certain “news values.”<sup>33</sup> The values vary in different countries based on the purpose and orientation of different newspaper offices. Timeliness, accuracy, and objectivity are the basic values for many newspapers (Fuller, 1996). By setting up these values, newspapers cater to audiences’ tastes to attract more attention. Target audiences, content types, and issuing time and frequency form different standards of classification for newspapers. Table 3.1.2 shows different classifications, based on these standards of newspapers in the PRC, with examples:

Standards of classification	Types of newspapers
Issuing time and frequency	Daily newspapers, evening newspapers, weekly newspapers, and monthly newspapers
Content	Health newspapers, sports newspapers, education newspapers, entertainment newspapers, etc.
Target audiences	Women’s newspapers, children’s newspapers, farmers’ newspapers, etc.

Table 3.1.2 Classification of newspapers in the PRC

Among many types of newspapers, the development of each kind of newspaper varies in different periods and places, depending on the economy and culture of areas. Stockmann (2012, 229) indicates that people in rural areas of the PRC are less interested in newspapers than those in urban areas and that people in the developed eastern part of the PRC prefer more marketized newspapers than the less developed western area.

Electronic media that require lower literacy are more user-friendly than print media. Radio, as a

<sup>33</sup> Street (2001, 19) defines news value as “the working assumptions of journalists about the extent to which an event matters and what is significant about it.”

popular electronic media form, provides audiences with pure aural programs. Live broadcast radio transmits breaking news faster than newspapers. With some characteristics of newspapers and radio, television provides audiences with visualized and audible enjoyment, making communication more direct, vivid, and understandable.<sup>34</sup> In addition, it has some societal and political functions, as “television is important for enhancing national identity, providing an outlet for domestic media content and getting news and information to the public, which is especially critical in times of emergencies” (Sanou, 2011, foreword).

### *Media Convergence*

Convergence technology generates Internet media by connecting the traditional media (newspapers, radio, and television) with the Internet. More specifically, this technology remediates Internet service and the existing media content, such as text, image, and sound. Technologies are converged for the multi-functionality of one medium because “our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation” (Bolter & Grusin, 1999, 5). Bolter and Grusin (1999, 19) contend that remediation is realized through the oscillation between immediacy and hypermediacy. Immediacy represents transparency and authenticity; hypermediacy makes audiences aware of the presence of media they use. For Internet media, interfaces remind audiences of hypermediacy, but the refresh rate of data (visual content) creates immediacy.

Media convergence brings about a huge alteration to mass communication. Henry Jenkins (2006, 15-16) notes that “Convergence alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers produce news and entertainment.” Audiences have become more active than before in media use. Internet media have set up multiple communication tools connected to the Internet that promise to enhance the interaction between information disseminators and receivers. Although media convergence does not generate more content, it brings about more efficient distribution for content (van der Wurff, 2008). With the Internet, mass media can offer users a more convenient and efficient way to access information and actively participate in current news discussions. Media convergence thus generates more user participation in mass communication than

<sup>34</sup> For this point, McLuhan (1964/2003) distinguished two kinds of media: cold media and hot media, based on the definition of media and audience’s participation in media use. He regarded television as cold media, while newspapers as hot media, which is the opposite of my understanding of cold/hot media.



before and creates a “participatory culture” among the audiences (Jenkins, 2006).

Various media devices are the basis for media convergence. Networked computers are the first devices on which users can access the Internet, and they have remained a popular converged channel for mass communication. However, they are not the only access point to the Internet. As Castells (2009, 63) argues, “The Internet from wireless devices becomes the critical factor for a new wave of Internet diffusion on the planet.” The other devices, such as tablets and smartphones, also absorb the advantages of traditional media and surpass them with more efficient, diversified, and interactive content.

### *Media Content*

What kind of content is considered suitable in mass communication? How do information disseminators organize media content into mass communication processes? If information disseminators intend to attract audiences’ attention, the content should be at least related to potential audiences and organized suitably. Media content should not only inform people of information but also bear characteristics of an artwork, specifically, a mass artwork that Carroll defines as follows:

X is a mass artwork if and only if 1. x is a multiple instance or type artwork, 2. produced and distributed by a mass technology, 3. which artwork is intentionally designed to gravitate in its structure choices (e.g., its narrative forms, symbolism, intended affect, and even its content) toward those choices that promise accessibility with minimum effort, virtually on first contact, for the largest number of untutored (or relatively untutored) audiences (Carroll, 1998, 196).

This definition distinguishes three core features of a mass artwork: art, mass delivery, and easy accessibility. First, a mass artwork is a kind of art. Although it may be different from traditional art, it is derived from traditional art forms, carrying related artistic features. Second, a mass artwork is produced through a mass delivery system defined as “a technology with the capacity to deliver the same performance or the same object to more than one reception site simultaneously” (Carroll, 1998, 199). Duplication and the mass delivery system are the prerequisites of a large number of audiences. They help audiences get access to such mass artwork. Third, the most important feature of a mass

artwork is easy accessibility. Distinct from avant-garde art that requires serious investments in time, knowledge, and connoisseurship from audiences, mass artwork is dedicated to producing comprehensible, easy work for a great number of people, including those who have not been trained in the related field before.

Some debates interpret the relationship between avant-garde art, popular art, and mass art. Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel (1967, 83) suggest that popular art is connected to high art in a way that a serious artist focuses on the actual world, draws upon common types, and sharpens his observation through popular artwork. They also point out that “where popular art in its modern forms exists only through the medium of a personal style, mass art has no personal quality but, instead, a high degree of personalization” (Carrooll, 1998, 68). While avant-garde art confounds audiences’ expectations, mass art builds and reinforces them (Carroll, 1998, 193). Carroll (1998, 189) notes that mass art belongs to popular art, but not every kind of popular art is mass art. Two criteria distinguish mass art from popular art and avant-garde art: mass media technology and easy accessibility. For example, vaudeville theatre, popular in the late 19th and early 20th century in the US and Canada, is a famous art form. Yet, since it is not broadcasted to a great many people through mass media, it is not regarded as mass art. Some avant-garde works are broadcast through mass media, but they are also not viewed as mass art either because they are not designed for mass accessibility.

In short, although Carroll does not focus much on the specific content of mass communication (such as news or sporting events), his insight into mass art is highly relevant to what counts as mass communication. Mass art is an important criterion that makes mass communication attractive to an audience. To be mass art, the content of mass communication should bear the following characteristics: the aesthetics of art, duplicability with mass media, ease of comprehension by (relatively) untutored audiences, and a design suitable for mass accessibility. In this way mass communication can make itself a kind of mass artwork to draw audiences’ attention. For example, in Chapter 5 on a government-staged mass media event, the Beijing Olympics, the music, narration, and aesthetic sense of the artistic performance in its opening ceremony make it mass artwork.

Media, as “the extensions of man [*sic*]” (McLuhan, 1964/2003), have several social functions. From the perspective of sociology, Harold Lasswell (1948, 217) identifies three of these functions in mass media: (1) surveillance of the environment; (2) correlation of various parts of society in responding to the environment; (3) transmission of social heritage from one generation to the next. Based on Lasswell’s argument, Charles Wright (1959, 16) adds a fourth one: entertainment. He analyzes the function of mass-communicated news as surveillance of the environment: mass media monitor information dynamics of society and take responsibility to inform people about the situation of their environment. The downside is that such information might solicit an unfavorable response. For example, Wright (1959) indicates that news on disasters offered by mass media may foster panic. Similarly, “uncensored news about the world potentially threatens the structure of any society” (Wright, 1959, 16).<sup>35</sup>

Mass communication plays an important role in correlating different parts of society. As society is composed of many parts—individuals, associations, various parties, etc.—various views on a particular issue may exist for each of these. Therefore, how to organize all the parts into a whole entity to respond to the environment becomes an issue for “specialized leaders.”<sup>36</sup> One approach is through mass communication. Mass media, manipulated by authority agencies with intellectuals and experts, dominates power in the communication through cultural hegemony.<sup>37</sup> Yet, what constructs power in communication? Castells (2009, 10) argues that “power is the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor’s will, interests and value.” In mass communication, specialized leaders, intellectuals, and professionals from the authority agencies are the actors who desire to influence people by creating hegemonic discourses. To some extent, many people’s world views are molded by those with power, but others keep struggling to counter such discourse through their own usage of media. Wright (1959, 18) indicates that to realize the correlation, specialized leaders set a public agenda to guide audiences’ communication act (for details, see the following section on

<sup>35</sup> As a counterpoint, Susanne Hoffman (2002) notes that politicians can use disasters for political purposes, i.e., use “social panic” to enforce their vision of social order.

<sup>36</sup> Lasswell (1948, 218) indicates that these specialized leaders are the correlators, such as editors, journalists, and speakers, who are the message senders in communication chains.

<sup>37</sup> To explain cultural hegemony, Antonio Gramsci (1971, 12) holds that the superstructure levels include civil society and political society controlled by intellectual groups who exercise social hegemony to lower strata: common people

agenda setting theory).

The third function of mass communication identified by Lasswell is to transmit social, cultural heritage from one generation to the next, or rather, to maintain cultural inheritance by educating people. Wright (1959) notes that cultural transmission continues socialization among people. Yet, he criticizes mass production of artistic materials, as huge duplication may incur “a loss of quality” with mass broadcast and depersonalization of the process of socialization by mass media (Wright, 1959, 19-20). In other words, what is taught by mass media is not fit for every individual. If so, hegemonic discourse impoverishes public discussions, which is harmful to the development of society. Although mass media do not offer good education to everyone, they sometimes stimulate audiences’ emotions and inspire their thoughts on many aspects of work and life. Carroll (1998, 276) argues that artworks tend to gravitate universal emotions, including anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise, thus making it possible for people to resonate with what they see through mass media. Therefore, as there are a thousand ways to understand an artwork, they inspire different thoughts of people and further influence their behavior.

Entertainment is an additional function proposed by Wright. Mass media relax audiences with entertaining content. For example, in many newspapers, sports news and entertainment news sections offer information about football matches, new movies, pop stars, etc. In addition, many TV programs, including music concerts, soap operas, and talk shows, are broadcast, bringing audiences to a relaxed and enjoyable mode. For its dysfunction, Wright (1959, 20) argues that mass entertainment “fails to raise public taste to the level that might be achieved by less extensive forms of entertainment such as the theater, classic books, or opera.” Some people believe that as the content of mass entertainment is adapted to fit audiences’ understanding, it loses part of the aesthetics of original art forms. However, this view is rather conservative and is criticized by Carroll and Jenkins for its elitist position. Carroll (1998) values mass art in mass communication. Similarly, focusing on audiences’ participation in media usage, Jenkins (2006) indicates that bottom-up convergence culture shaped by mass consumers offsets top-down delivered culture imposed by media conglomerates, which creates a diversified culture for audiences.

Social functions of mass communication shape people's perception of the world, partly owing to agenda setting and framing of mass media. In the following section, I will introduce the two media theories that construct media content.

### **3.1.3 Agenda Setting and Framing Theories**

Agenda setting is critical to highlight certain topics, serving the communication purposes of the information disseminators. Walter Lipmann (1922/2007, 10) argues that "The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event." He indicates that mass media that create a pseudo-environment for people are important in shaping people's mental image of the world (Lipmann, 1922/2007). The pseudo-environment created by media covers the reality of the world. Particularly, as people continuously use mass media nowadays, mass communication affects their attitudes or ideologies on various issues (Thompson, 1990). Lipmann (1922/2007) does not use the term "agenda setting," but shows how mass media construct the world image in people's heads and then influence public opinion.

Bernard Cohen (1963, 13) points out that agenda setting does not tell people what to think but what to think about. Yet, the term "agenda setting" did not gain its populace until 1972, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw formally conducted research on a political campaign in the US. As numerous events happen worldwide every day, newspapers cannot cover everything and every detail in news reports. The need for orientation defined in relevance and uncertainty stimulates people to call for an agenda (McCombs, 2010, 54). In this case, media practitioners, or rather, gatekeepers<sup>38</sup>, have an incentive to select some news items to transfer "the salience from the media agenda to the public agenda" (McCombs, 2010, 5).

Agenda setting theory refers to the mechanism that mass media set the agenda for audiences to focus on certain topics but neglect others by emphasizing those communicators intend to make salient (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). For example, during a serious economic crisis, if two conflicting events take place at the same time (one is exciting news about the championship of a national sports team,

<sup>38</sup>According to Wilbur Schramm (1964, 85), gatekeepers are the persons who select the news and the reporters who talk to 'news sources.'"

and the other is on a drought disaster that leads to continuous falling of farmers' incomes), gatekeepers would choose to highlight the positive news but cover little or even nothing about economic difficulties encountered by the farmers.

Agenda setting has two levels: issue highlighting and attributes. McCombs (2010) defines a public issue as an object competing for the attention of journalists and audiences. To highlight the issue constitutes the first level of agenda setting, resonating with telling people what to think. Attributes are a group of characteristics that feature the objects, and they compose the second level of agenda setting, affecting audiences' understanding of the objects. As McCombs (2010, 71) suggests, this level tells people how to think about the objects. In other words, agenda setting is incorporated with another media theory: framing.

Scholars give different definitions to framing. Robert Entman (1993, 52) indicates that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." Framing focuses on concrete aspects of news reports instead of the whole report. Stephen Reese (2001, 11) defines framing as "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world." From a critical and constructionist perspective, he regards frames as the representation of power, with which social actors such as media practitioners actively construct the social world (Reese, 2010, 19). In this sense, framing contributes to hegemonic political discourse in news texts to shape public opinion.

Agenda setting links with framing at both the first and the second levels. At the first level, object agenda setting selects particular issues that are precipitated by framing, as Entman (2010, 336) suggests that agenda setting can be considered another name for realizing the first function of framing: problem definition; at the second level, agenda setting can be seen as a subset of framing. McCombs (2010, 87) indicates that attribute agenda setting is "a particular frame" illuminating how people "picture topics in the news." Additionally, Coleman (2010, 251) argues that "a frame is the overarching master narrative, under which there can be several attributes." As macro-attributes,

“frames are bundling devices for lower-order attributes” (McCombs, 2010, 91). Although agenda setting and framing have much overlap in terms of functions, some differences still exist on two aspects: agenda setting emphasizes the salience of certain topics, but framing discusses what the topics are; agenda setting focuses on the salience of respective attributes of the objects, while framing explores these characteristics from a holistic and integrated perspective.

Media practitioners employ similar strategies in agenda setting and framing. One strategy is heavy reporting of important/favorable news but little to no trivial/unfavorable news reporting.<sup>39</sup> Besides, “the lead story on page 1, front page versus inside page, the size of the headline and even the length of the story” are methods to highlight the topics (McCombs, 2010, 2). What media practitioners select for news release limits the topics that audiences can access, and, in this way, public opinion is potentially oriented. To further achieve the desired or predetermined effect, news editors apply framing devices such as metaphors, catchphrases, and lexical choice. What is more, the format and style of news texts sometimes also affect audiences’ understanding of a particular issue. For example, texts attached with images and videos more vividly depict news details than text-only news. With these strategies, mass media design news content in the way that they aim to set up certain stereotypes in audiences’ heads and then guide their thoughts and behaviors.

### **3.2 Propaganda in Mass Communication**

Propaganda serves the intended purposes of information disseminators in mass communication. Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell (1999, 97) suggest that “The late 19th and early 20th centuries were periods of great expansion of propagandistic activities. The growth of the mass media and improvements in transportation led to the development of mass audiences for propaganda, increasing its use and effectiveness.” It indicates that the development of propaganda and mass communication was at a similar pace. In the meantime, propagandistic activities, to a large extent, exist in mass communication.

Propaganda is a commonly used word in both official discourses and people’s daily lives in the PRC. The CCP has attached great importance to implementing political propaganda since its founding in

<sup>39</sup> Media practitioners and/or the government (in authoritarian states) will decide the important issues.

1921. Jacques Ellul (1973, 304) argues that organization is a distinctive character of Mao's propaganda, and "every individual must be put into a network comprising many organizations that surround him on all sides and control him on all levels" in the Mao era. By implementing political propaganda, the CCP confined the people within the frame of organization. As noted in the previous section, among the four functions of mass communication, to realize the third one: the correlation of the parts of society, we mostly need mass communication or propaganda to mobilize the different parts to combine in an integrated community. It might be necessary for propagandists to use propaganda activities to coordinate people in society, as Ellul (1973, 128) argues that "any modern state, even a democratic one, is burdened with the task of acting through propaganda. It cannot act otherwise." Thus, I set up the questions: What is propaganda? How to differentiate propaganda from mass communication? How does it come to people's lives in mass communication? How is it related to politics? What is censorship in propaganda? How does censorship work? I will explore these questions in the following sections.

### **3.2.1 Definition of Propaganda**

Propaganda has a derogatory connotation in the English-speaking world, implying a meaning of cheating, distortion, brainwashing, etc. However, in the Chinese context, propaganda (*xuanchuan* 宣传) is a neutral term, more positively connoted, and broadly used in political and commercial communication.

Despite its bad reputation, there might be some necessity of propaganda. Edward Bernays (1928) emphasizes such a necessity for society by arguing that propaganda leads people's behavior and establishes certain order for society. He argues that in a commodity economy, various products have different prices. To buy the products with the best performance-price ratio, people need to investigate all the prices of the same product. If everyone searches the prices, the market will be jammed (Bernays, 1928). Similarly, in political situations, if nobody guides people's behavior and every individual behaves as s/he wishes, society will be in disorder. "To avoid such confusion, society consents to have its choice narrowed to ideas and objects brought to its attention through propaganda of all kinds" (Bernays, 1928, 11). In this situation, people yearn for the coming of



propaganda (Bernays, 1928).<sup>40</sup> In addition, Nicholas O'Shaughnessy (2004, 39) notes that the content of propaganda is emotional, and it meets people's emotional demands. He further indicates that "propaganda is seen as a key element in the ability of advanced industrial and post-industrial societies to organize and integrate themselves and exert some sort of authority over their individual publics" (Bernays, 1928, 49).

What is propaganda? Bernays (1928, 20) defines propaganda as "the mechanism by which ideas are disseminated on a large scale, in the broad sense of an organized effort to spread a particular belief or doctrine." He considers that propagandists carry out propaganda on a large scale, a basic element of mass communication. The purpose of propaganda is "a particular belief or doctrine" (Bernays, 1928, 48). This means that a propagandist has an intention to affect the thought of information receivers. Lasswell (1927, 627) gives this definition of propaganda: "Propaganda is the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols." Significant symbols refer to "objects which have a standard meaning in a group" (Lasswell, 1927, 627). In the process of propaganda, for his own purpose, a propagandist shapes or modifies collective attitudes that are amenable to significant symbols.

In addition, Jowett and O'Donnell (1999, 4) define propaganda as "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." In this definition, "deliberate" does not refer to a derogatory sense but instead shows that propaganda is full of consideration about the most effective way to impose a certain ideology. The goal of propaganda is to achieve the propagandists' intent, that is, "to create a certain state or states in a certain audience" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999, 6). The beneficiaries of propaganda are propagandists rather than audiences. Jowett and O'Donnell's definition (1999) indicates three steps that realize propagandists' goals: first, shape perceptions through languages and images; second, manipulate cognitions by affecting one's beliefs and attitudes; third, direct a specific behavior. Furthermore, Jowett and O'Donnell note what the propagandist should do:

<sup>40</sup> It should be pointed out that Bernays was rather paternalistic in his view of society.

Beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are desirable end states for propagandistic purposes and determine the formation of a propaganda message or campaign or both. Because so many factors determine the formation of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, the propagandist has to gather a great deal of information about the intended audience (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1999, 9).

Every government in the world takes advantage of propaganda to accomplish its ends (Smith et al., 1946, 1). By discussing external characteristics of propaganda, Ellul (1973, 61) argues that “propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization.” The propagandist is “an organized group” whose purpose is to mobilize audiences to actively join or at least support the activity. This mobilization is mainly realized by controlling public psychology, as individuals need propaganda to gain satisfaction in society (Ellul, 1973).

Propaganda aims to shape favorable political thoughts. In modern society, propaganda is mostly conducted in mass communication to arouse people's emotions and shape their ideas on particular issues. By propaganda, I mean it is the reinforcement of a certain attitude or ideology through mass communication to achieve propagandists' purposes. The attitude is related to public opinion on the authorities, to a proposal from the government, and to the relationship between people and public servants, etc. The propaganda strategy aims to arouse positive public opinion, to oppress objections, or at least to stop those in-between ideas from becoming objections (Lasswell, 1927, 629).

Propaganda is similar to mass communication in some respects, as both of them disseminate information to a large audience by producing information on a large scale (Bernays, 1928). In terms of their differences, communication is multidirectional, while propaganda is one directional, i.e., from propagandists to receivers. Propaganda attaches more importance to the propaganda effect than mass communication. To be more specific, mass communication is a broad concept involving many aspects of certain facts, while propaganda focuses more on the opinion (attitudinal or ideological influence) to prompt people to act in a certain way that propagandists expect. In other

words, a certain attitude that frequently emerges is usually the core content of propaganda, serving propagandists' purposes. The content of mass communication is variable, and information transmission is based on communication technology. Yet, propagandists also conduct propaganda via face-to-face channels besides mass media. For example, patriotic education in Chinese classes is face-to-face political propaganda transmitted from teachers to students. What is more, propaganda has a stronger didactic or paternalistic slant than mass communication.

Propagandists use different types of propaganda for different aims. Jowett and O'Donnell (1999) classify three types of propaganda by colors entailing white, gray, and black, based on the source and accuracy of information. White propaganda is of the highest reliability, convincing audiences of certain facts. For example, a government press conference is typical white propaganda aimed at disseminating official information on special issues.

Black propaganda is related to inaccurate sources aimed at spreading rumors. Jowett and O'Donnell (1999, 15) argue that "the success or failure of black propaganda depends on the receiver's willingness to accept the credibility of the source and the content of the message." The military used black propaganda in the past, but nowadays, it is often used in sensational reporting for political or commercial ends. For instance, when a pop star introduces his/her new movie, his/her team sometimes may create certain topics by announcing a non-existent affair with his/her new partner. In this way, audiences' attention may be first attracted to the scandal and then to the pop star's new movie. This can help his/her new movie attract enough attention to make huge profits. In addition, during the 2016 US presidential election campaign, a large amount of black propaganda appeared on social media such as Facebook, making the term "fake news" popular in many countries. In recent years, false news has frequently emerged on the Internet to influence political decisions, using sensational titles or fake content as a kind of black propaganda.

Gray propaganda falls between white and black propaganda, with the source and the accuracy of information suspended. For example, concerning big accidents, news reporting in the PRC sometimes only covers stories in the beginning without continuous reports or only covers parts of the stories that do not threaten the administration of the government (In many cases, the government

should take the main responsibility of the accidents for its unqualified social management). It is a way to hide the real source of information and divert audiences' attention from the accidents. In short, gray propaganda is used by agents to fight against competitors in the military, politics, or business sectors.

### **3.2.2 Propaganda and Politics**

Propaganda is mainly connected with commerce and politics, as “political parties and interest groups engage legitimately in propaganda exercises” (Street, 2001, 109). Here the interest groups refer to companies that aim to popularize their products. In commercial sectors, companies often use advertisements, or rather, propaganda, to increase sales by highlighting some special functions of products. In addition, in representational forms of politics, such as the PRC politics, the government uses propaganda to guide citizens' thoughts and actions,<sup>41</sup> as politics is considered as the business of politicians and “the sincere and gifted politician is able, by the instrument of propaganda, to mold and form the will of people” (Bernays, 1928, 92).

Strategical use of propaganda helps politicians realize smooth social governance. “If a politician is a real leader, he will be able, by skillful use of propaganda, to lead the people, instead of following the people by means of the clumsy instrument of trial and error” (Bernays, 1928, 112). Censorship is a tactic commonly used by propagandists. Through censorship, propagandists reduce some risks brought by harmful information.

### **3.2.3 Censorship**

Censorship is a way of imposing media control. Like propaganda, it does not just exist in authoritarian countries, but in fact, it is a common phenomenon in mass communication all over the world, as “every state exercises some control over what journalism writes or broadcast” (Street, 2001, 104). Media control through censorship “is fundamental to determining whether regimes survive or fall” (Lorentzen, 2014, 413). Censorship filters content including negative news, politically sensitive issues, violence, pornography, etc., showing the government a positive image and creating an advantageous environment for favorable public opinion.

<sup>41</sup> In countries with consensus-based politics, propaganda is not a requirement for governance, but it exists.

The government and/or media companies censor(s) news information when they find it necessary. By distinguishing hard and soft censorship, Schneider (2012, 157) proposes that censorship is “any authoritative action that actively discourages the construction of certain discursive positions, either prior or subsequent to the expression of the respective discourse.” The government usually initiates the authoritative action. In the PRC, as news presents a critical information form that propagates ideology, policy, and rules, the government spares no effort to control news production and distribution from media outlets. Censorship thus becomes an essential step for the government to monitor news dissemination and regulate public opinion. Besides news, in the digital age, as user-generated messages include various information, the government may also censor sensitive content that arousing social panic or threats to the state.

How to censor the news and user-generated content from mass media? Street (2001) proposes four techniques of news censorship. The first is to use state communications systems. If the state controls media systems, the media systems can more readily represent the interest of the government. The second is to control the distribution of information to journalists by press conferences. The third is to use media centers to manage institutionalized information. The last is to impose pressure on journalism through scrutiny of and complaints about media reporting. In terms of user-generated content, such as news comments and tweets, deleting unfavorable online content is common in the PRC. For example, if netizens post or repost anti-government expressions about a new social media policy, the Internet administration department may delete such content.

As censorship is an effective way for media control, the Chinese government implements strict censorship on media content that involves various types of information, especially those that harm CCP legitimacy (Brady, 2008). However, censorship at the different-level government is not equal. To be specific, censorship conducted by the central government takes priority over that of local governments. Kuang Xianwen (2018) indicates the central government attaches more importance to national guidelines and policies and the image of the central state and leadership, while the local governments focus on social stability and their own images. Dominating in the political system, the central government allows negative news on local governments. Media sectors conduct independent

investigative reporting as a supplementary of censorship on lower-level officialdom, which helps the central government maintain power (Lorentzen, 2014). What is more, no clear official guidelines are available to carry out censorship. Peter Lorentzen (2014, 411) argues that “rather than setting guidelines ahead of time, the Central Propaganda Department (CPD), under the direct control of the CCP’s Central Committee, issues a constant stream of specific directives and guidance regarding what news items can be reported and how to report them.”

In respect of online censorship, the Chinese government established the Golden Shield Project (*jindun gongcheng*, 金盾工程), or rather, the Great Firewall of China (GFW) in 1996 to block foreign websites and web services regarded as threats to public opinion management, including Facebook, Gmail, and YouTube. The GFW stops domestic Chinese reading information that the government deems harmful, but some Chinese people still try to access blocked information via Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). Although those people can jump across the GFW, they cannot achieve it all the time. In some cases, when sensitive political events happen (e.g., the 2009 Xinjiang riots), all VPN services were blocked to ensure social stability.

In addition to filtering sensitive content with GFW, political astroturfing is commonly seen in the PRC (Han, 2015). Employed by the government to guide public opinion (Bandurski, 2008; Han, 2015), a group of web administrators called the “Fifty-cent Army”<sup>42</sup> (*wumao dang*, 五毛党) carry out astroturfing. Yang Guobin (2009, 50) notes that “their mission, however, is not to promote critical debate but rather to covertly guide the direction of debates following the principles laid down by the propaganda departments of the party.” They act as Internet commentators who delete negative public opinion or write pro-government comments<sup>43</sup>. For each pro-government comment, they are believed to receive 50 RMB cents. In fact, sometimes, the commentators are paid even less than the average level, which leads to barely enough quantity and generally low quality in the content of comments (Han, 2015, 118). To be more exact, Han Rongbin (2015) argues that the Fifty-cent Army’s astroturfing fails to gain legitimacy for the government.

<sup>42</sup> The Fifty-cent Army is a group of people working on the Internet to help the government administer online public opinion.

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that writing a pro-government comment is a form of propaganda.

Although people may feel disgusted about censorship by the government, censorship has existed in political communication for a long time. Admittedly, sometimes appropriate censorship can stop rumors and avoid panic among people. For example, during the Japanese Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2011, many Chinese people fearfully rushed to buy salt because it was said that salt with iodine was helpful for radiation resistance, but the nuclear incident would pollute sea salt. This led to soaring prices and the depletion of salt stocks in many places in the PRC. Under these circumstances, it may be necessary for the government to censor such information to dispel the rumor, which is important for some overanxious people to relieve their worries after the incident.

Nevertheless, censorship covers truth, incurring fierce opposition sometimes. Chinese netizens find alternative methods to avoid censorship, for example, searching for censored information through VPN and coining various slang to discuss sensitive topics (e.g., using “zf” to refer to *zhengfu* 政府: the government). Overall, excessive censorship will ruin the effect of mass communication and generate dissatisfaction with the government.

### **3.3 Historical Development and Reform of Chinese Mass Media**

Chinese mass media have developed at a fast pace since the 19th century. In the 19th and 20th centuries, many forms of mass media, such as newspapers, cinema, and radio, were successively imported to China from the West. During the 1920s and the 1930s, two major Parties, the KMT, and the CCP, actively established their own media forms to expand their influence. After assuming power in 1949, the CCP established many media forms besides newspapers and reformed the PRC’s media system and institutions, exerting a big influence on media development.

In the PRC, the state ran all forms of media and mainly used them for political propaganda until the launch of media reform in the 1990s. The reform profoundly changed the organization of media sectors by putting many media outlets into the market, but it did not change the state’s control over political communication. In that case, many media outlets lost financial support from the government and had to create revenue by themselves. The media restructuring campaign in 1996 witnessed the start of the conglomeration of media outlets, aiming to consolidate and strengthen the control of key media institutions by the CPD (Zhao, 2008, 104). Yet, the CCP still maintained its

hegemony by securing “command heights” of media sectors (Zhao, 2008, 121). In this section, I will introduce how traditional mass media: newspapers, cinema, radio, and television developed in China and how media reform influenced the media content.

### *Newspapers*

Newspapers did not exist until the late 19th century when western powers extended publishing bases from coastal areas to many parts of China (Xu, 1994, 170). The *Shun Pao* (*Shen Bao* 申报) was the first western-style newspaper distributed in Shanghai in 1872 (Mitter, 2004, 76). In the 1919 May Fourth Movement, when intellectuals introduced Marxism to China, newspapers became important to spread western thoughts (Schwarcz, 1986, 259). The KMT established its Party organ, *the Central Daily News* (*Zhongyang Ribao* 中央日报), in 1928 in Shanghai (Hsu, 2014, 71).

The CCP also spared no effort to establish its own newspapers. Zhao (1998, 14) notes that in the beginning period of its founding in the 1920s, the CCP created organs and non-Party publications under its leadership. The principle for the media was the “mass line” (*qunzhong luxian* 群众路线), i.e., “the media are supposed to report the people’s opinions, concerns, and aspirations and to inform the leadership of the performance of cadres who are working directly with people” (Zhao, 1998, 25). In 1922, the CCP established the first Party organ, *the Guide* (Fang et al., 2002, 198). It reestablished a new system of Party organs, setting a basic guideline for the establishment of following newspapers in 1939 (Fang et al., 2002, 249-250).

Media control is a necessity for the CCP, but it was not the innovation of the CCP and Mao. Tony Saich (1991) indicates that following the policies of the Communist International (Comintern), Henk Sneevliet, as a helper for the formation of the CCP, noted the principle of media control. The CCP then used newspapers and magazines as paramount channels for propaganda after its founding in 1921. Mass media, in any form, had to submit to politics. Mao (1942) delivered a speech at the Forum of Literature and Art at Yan’an in 1942, pointing out that “there is, in fact, no such thing as art for art’s sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics.” This suggests that Chinese literature and art should be embedded with political potential. Mao reemphasized the Party’s domination of media.



The CCP, to a large extent, controlled news media but did not monopolize it. It allowed a few commercial newspapers and radio stations to satisfy the urban taste (Zhao, 1998). During 1949 and 1951, many Party-controlled newspapers were booming with numerous newspapers established, including *Worker's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *China Youth News*, and *Health News* and in 1953, the circulation of newspapers increased nearly two times compared with 1950 (Fang et al., 2002, 332).

Mass media were instrumental in propagating various political mass campaigns in the Mao era. In 1957, Mao launched the Anti-Rightist Campaign (*fan you yundong*, 反右运动) to suppress the intellectuals. "Big-character posters (*dazi bao* 大字报)" were a popular propaganda tool for class struggle during that period (Shi, 1997, 84). Following this campaign, Mao initiated the Great Leap Forward Campaign (*da yuejin* 大跃进, 1958-1962) to achieve huge progress in agriculture and industry. In the campaign, "the media played a notorious role" in the exaggeration of food production, leading to the Great Famine in the 1960s (Zhang, 2011, 35). In that period, the reporting of the role models was a distinctive characteristic of news reports. Media practitioners depicted well-known role models such as Lei Feng<sup>44</sup> and Jiao Yulu<sup>45</sup> to encourage the masses to cultivate good moral traits (Fang et al., 2002, 397). During the Cultural Revolution (*wenhua da geming*, 文化大革命 1966-1976), the circulation of newspapers had a special feature: most newspapers were suspended, but the total circulation was much increased (Fang et al., 2002, 406). This was because the Party mainly used unsuspended newspapers for positive political propaganda<sup>46</sup>. In addition, repetitive reports were common in the propaganda due to the Party's censorship, because saying what others had published, nobody needed to be afraid of being purged or criticized. The authorities used 80% of the layout of local newspapers to publish articles in official organs (Fang et al., 2002, 406).

The reform and opening up in 1978 boosted the development of newspapers involving Party organs

<sup>44</sup> Lei Feng (1940-1962) is a Chinese soldier of the People's Liberation Army famous for selflessness and modesty.

<sup>45</sup> Jiao Yulu (1922-1964) is a CCP cadre praised by Mao for his devotion to the state.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding positive propaganda as a significant way to educate people, Mao (1961, 59) notes that "We should carry on constant propaganda among the people on the facts of world progress and the bright future ahead so that they will build their confidence in victory." After Mao, the following generations of Chinese leadership also have attached great importance to positive propaganda, as Brady (2008) argues that "'Focus on positive propaganda' has been a phrase like a mantra by successive leaders in propaganda work since 1989."

and commercial publications. The CCP gave some freedom to media sectors in the middle and late 1980s, which, however, aroused some challenges to the CCP's authority. The 1989 Tiananmen Square protests forced the CCP to react to these challenges by tightening the control of the mass media. Positive propaganda was frequently used in mass communication to gain public recognition and maintain stability in society. The implementation of the market economy in the 1990s gave rise to media reform. Besides political themes, media practitioners added commercialized elements to attract a big urban audience. Specifically, they established evening and metropolitan newspapers to offer audiences various kinds of soft news catered for leisure taste.

### *Cinema*

Cinema emerged in China at the end of the 19th century. In 1896, the first foreign film was released in Shanghai, and the first Chinese film, *Dingjun Mountain* (*dingjun shan* 定军山), was made in 1905 (Lu, 1997). The film industry was completely commercialized in the 1920s in Shanghai, featuring period films (Pang, 2002, 22). The 1930s was the golden years of Chinese cinema under the influence of left-wing writers,<sup>47</sup> shaping the national identity of the filmmakers and the viewers (Pang, 2002, 73). In the 1940s, the development of cinema turned much slower and even stopped because of the anti-Japanese wars.

Inheriting Lenin's conviction, cinema was the most popular mass medium in the 1950s for Chinese propaganda (Chu, 2002; Pang, 2002; Donald & Keane, 2002), serving a political education end. During the Mao era, by establishing role models of worker-peasant-soldiers (*gongnongbing* 工农兵) or low-rank officials, films were broadcast in indoor and open-air cinemas to entertain and educate the masses. In the reform era, mainstream melody films<sup>48</sup> (*zhuxuanlü dianying* 主旋律电影) were popular in the cinema to rectify people's ideology, shifting the focus on senior Party leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping (Chu, 2002).

With the commercialization and conglomeration of mass media in the mid-1990s, penetrated with

<sup>47</sup> The left-wing writers refer to in the 1930s, a group of Shanghai intellectuals, led by the celebrated writer Lu Xun (1881-1936), used writing as a cultural force to support the CCP to liberate the Chinese people.

<sup>48</sup> In the 1990s, films were used to propagate the "main melody" of the CCP, emphasizing patriotism, heroism, collectivism, etc.

political elements, entertainment films went into the market. Filmmakers had to find a balance between the commercialization and propaganda function of the mainstream melody films. One way to solve this problem was to choose an ideology acceptable to most people, such as traditional culture and patriotism, as the main theme of the films (Ma, 2011, 114).

### *Radio*

Radio, broadcasting via loudspeakers in early times, emerged in China in the 1920s. The first radio station was established in 1923 in Shanghai with foreign assistance (Fang et al., 2002, 213). In 1928, the KMT founded the Central Radio Station<sup>49</sup> in Nanjing (Xu, 1994, 172). Using it as “an ideological weapon” (Howse, 1960, 59), the CCP set up Xinhua Radio Broadcast Station in Yan’an in 1940 and renamed it “China National Radio (CNR)” in 1949.

Radio became a popular mass medium after 1949. It was popular for one reason that it was audible and did not require high literacy. As many Chinese were not well educated in the Mao era, radio was an easier accessible medium than newspapers. In the 1970s and 1980s, radio was commonly used in urban China. From 1949 to 1978, radio was considered the main source of news information, as newspapers were mainly available to the elites (Chen & Liu, 2010, 74). In the 1990s, the popularization of TV sets that met audiences’ aural and visual demands led to radio decline. Radio gradually turned into the weakest medium among traditional media.

In the 21st century, however, radio regains its popularity, especially in urban areas (Fang et al., 2002). The reasons for the fast expansion of radio are: first, with economic development, people’s lifestyles change, calling for the return of radio. Especially in the last two decades, many Chinese families were able to afford a car equipped with in-vehicle broadcasting radio that provides drivers with real-time information such as weather forecasts and traffic jams. Second, radio has generated a special group of audiences who need effective communication without face-to-face interruption. As most radio stations introduce interactive programs, audiences can join such programs to share experiences and express feelings only with their voice, which other media may not offer. Third, the market economy in the reform era boosts the development of advertisement, so the low cost for

<sup>49</sup> It is now Radio Taiwan International (RTI).

advertising raised the competitive strength of radio. Like newspapers, radio has also established online broadcasting stations that adapt to the new media environment created by the Internet. Although it does not attract so many audiences as television, other media forms will not completely replace it.

### *Television*

Television emerged in the PRC in 1958 with the establishment of Beijing Television (BTV) that later evolved into China Central Television (CCTV) (Chang, 1989). The household penetration rate of television was low until the late 1980s (Cooper-Chen & Liang, 2010). This was because the sluggish economy did not allow the television to reach many families. Yet, by the end of the 1980s, as most families were able to afford a TV set, television became the most popular mass medium and played a leading role in mass communication. Television has been an instrument for the propaganda of modernization, greatly influencing the cultural and political consciousness of Chinese urban citizens (Lull, 1991).

### *Switching Media Content*

The reform in Chinese media sector in the 1990s led to the switch of media content. Before the reform era, news reports were featured with a perfect and positive sense (Chang, 1989, 258), but media commercialization in the 1990s prompted media practitioners to change media content by increasing commercialized, entertaining, or sometimes even negative elements without offending the government. Although taking a large proportion in mass communication, political content was not as overt as before to serve state propaganda.

Nationalism, in this situation, was still an important theme for media content. For example, TV series was a popular type carried out in the reform. In 1990, the first Chinese domestic drama, *Yearnings* (*kewang*, 渴望), was broadcast, and “television functions as an apparatus for objectifying ‘state desires.’” (Rofel, 1995, 313) Although the melodrama was presented in a seemingly apolitical way by focusing on love and moral issues, it still unfolded a political allegory of national identity or nationness (Rofel, 1995). The political content of various television series accounts for the cultural governance of the CCP in visual communication (Schneider, 2012). What was more, media

practitioners designed news programs by reporting negative aspects of society. In 1994, *Focus Report* (*Jiaodian Fangtan* 焦点访谈) was the first news program exposing social issues instead of implementing direct didactic and positive propaganda (Zhang, 2011). “Through such soft news, mainstream propaganda and commercial culture are combining to create an atmosphere of caring about people’s livelihoods and are nurturing a harmonious society” (Miao, 2011, 105). Various entertainment shows gained their popularity in the 1990s, representing the impact of media reform on entertainment TV programs (Zhang, 2011). These “entertainment shows mobilize the audience to pursue happiness and Chinese identity affirmation” (Zhao, 2009, 87). Media content then became more diversified for mass consumption.

Television, the most popular traditional media form, transmits live broadcasts of media events to promote political ideologies since “every nation-state has a political agenda—promoting nationalism or a specific version of cultural citizenship—in the media coverage of such events” (Sun, 2002, 119). In 1997, live broadcasts of media events, for instance, Deng Xiaoping’s funeral and Hong Kong’s return to China, were staged on television for the first time (Fang et al., 2002). After that, almost every significant media event was presented with live broadcasts, including national anniversary celebration parades, mega sports games, and important conferences. As a dominant medium in global households, television plays an essential role in the mass communication of media events (Potter, 2013, 102).

In short, with media reform in the 1990s, Chinese media content shifted from pure political propaganda to commercialized propaganda, becoming more varied to audiences. However, no matter how mass media developed in the PRC, they “are instruments to propagate the Party’s policy and directives, to persuade people about the correctness of a policy, and to tell them a good result of a particular policy” (Zhao, 1998, 26). Although mass media are mostly commercialized nowadays except the front runners, including *the People’s Daily* and Xinhua News Agency, they have to comply with the CCP’s regulations without challenging the authorities. In other words, in terms of political communication, mass media are under the surveillance of the CCP.

### **3.4 The Internet and Chinese Online Communication**

Traditional media present the world to audiences. Yet, based on the traditional media, the Internet innovates mass communication in terms of efficiency and human interaction. It “offers an entirely different channel for understanding what people are saying, and how they are connecting” (Watts, 2007, 489). Online mass communication has gradually become an indispensable part of human behavior, besides traditional ways of communication.

The Internet did not enter the PRC until 1994 (Yang, 2009). With the advent of the Internet, Chinese traditional mass media were successively plugged into the network and established their online websites. Hu Xin (2002, 194) notes that “online media have been seen as an alternative, bring fresh views and more diverse information to the public sphere.” In 1996, newspapers such as the *People’s Daily* and the *Economic Daily* began to publish an electronic edition on the Internet. CNR established its official website in 1998. CCTV went online in 2009 by establishing a website named China Network Television (CNTV), offering web broadcasts. Online versions of traditional media, on the one hand, provide audiences with more channels to access the content of traditional media, but, on the other hand, they shift audiences’ attention to the Internet media.

Apart from the online versions of traditional media, the popularity of the Internet prompted the establishment of big media companies in the PRC. The major news media companies such as Sohu, NetEase were successively established in the late 1990s, largely changing audiences’ way of accessing information. The Internet companies would not challenge the government who exerts a great impact on their business, as Hu (2002, 193) indicates that “rather than taking political risks to make their fortune online, news companies have resorted to more tabloid forms of content including stories featuring violence and sex, as well as sports programs to attract eyeballs and clicks.”

Internet media produce diversified content, including videos, blogs, and opinion pieces, and set up various virtual communities, such as Internet forums, for audiences to exchange ideas. With the spread of enormous content, online mass communication thus became prevalent among media users. Audiences enjoy online content and sometimes act as discourse producers by voicing online opinions. This is similar to what Tai suggests:

The Internet has created the opportunity to allow Chinese netizens to express their opinions on important issues of interest and has thus become a barometer for politicians, government functionaries, and lawmakers among others to gauge public opinion and to consider actions thereafter (Tai, 2006, 205).

Cyberspace creates a place like a public sphere where netizens discuss issues and express emotions, including nationalist sentiments. Jürgen Habermas (1974, 50) defines the public sphere as a space between society and the state: the private life of the masses and the public life of the state controlled by empowered elites.<sup>50</sup> However, by pointing out that Internet communication “is an ideology of publicity in the service of communicative capitalism,” Jodi Dean (2003, 98) notes that the Net is not equal to the public sphere as conceptualized by Habermas for three reasons: first, the public sphere is not really “public,” as it excludes groups of people such as women and working classes, but the Internet sphere includes anyone who accesses the Web. Second, on the Internet, people lack face-to-face communication that exists in the public sphere. Third, the public sphere is organized by elites to reach a consensus, while the Net is disorganized and seeks contestation. Dean (2003, 105) instead defines the Net as a “zero institution”: “An empty signifier that itself has no determinate meaning but that signifies the presence of meaning.” This is because the Net “enables myriad conflicting constituencies to understand themselves as part of the same global structure even as they disagree over what the architecture of this structure should entail” (Dean, 2003, 106).

Although the Internet facilitates mass communication, it also brings strict regulation on digital content. As contestation and conflict are distinctive characteristics of the Internet sphere (Dean, 2003), cyberspace raises many unpredictable issues for media management and poses more challenges to public administration than before. Maria Petrova (2008) points out that the Internet creates an uncontrollable flow of information and less media freedom in nondemocratic countries.

<sup>50</sup> Habermas (1974, 49) describes that “by ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions—about matters of general interest. In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it.” Habermas designates the public sphere with freedom, but the Internet sphere does not enjoy full freedom.

The Chinese government has taken a series of measures to reinforce the control over online mass communication. Zhao (2009, 40-41) identifies proactive strategies in media management as strengthening the role of the CPD and official news, setting up the press spokesperson system, shaping the ideological orientation of Chinese journalists, renovating personnel management, and enrolling well-educated young professionals. In June 2010, the State Council Information Office (SCIO) issued a White Paper on *The Internet in China* to publicize regulations about online mass communication.<sup>51</sup> The White Paper announces that the government affirmed the extensive use of the Internet but forbade many online issues, such as pornography, sensitive political problems, and rumors. In 2011, the government established stricter rules by requiring all media companies to sign the Public Pledge of Self-Regulation and Professional Ethics for China Internet Industry for self-censorship.<sup>52</sup> In December 2013, the Chinese Supreme People's Court promulgated a law that if Internet users write defamatory messages reposted 500 times or viewed more than 5000 times, they can face an up-to-three-year jail.<sup>53</sup> In addition, on 28 February 2014, the CCP established the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission (formerly known as the Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group) headed by President Xi Jinping, to supervise the Internet-related issues, which suggests tighter control over online content.

Concerning mass media events, Internet media take a major responsibility for transmitting live broadcasts and providing audiences with various platforms to share and express ideas. As noted in Chapter 1, in the last two decades, the Chinese government has staged a series of mass media events to narrate the dream stories the nation to strengthen citizens' national identity, since "national identity has been the crucial condition for the legitimacy of the modern state" (Poole, 2007, 145). In such staged events, the government designs the event, and media outlets report them to showcase a great China to inspire Chinese audiences' national pride and patriotic sentiments. In abrupt media events, media outlets take the main responsibility for shaping nationalist public opinion by editing and publishing news content. Audiences respond to news information by reading news reports, watching news videos, writing comments, posting threads, etc.

<sup>51</sup> See [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-06/08/content\\_9950198\\_7.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-06/08/content_9950198_7.htm), accessed 7 September 2012.

<sup>52</sup> See <http://www.isc.org.cn/english/Specails/Self-regulation/listinfo-15321.html>, accessed 27 August 2015.

<sup>53</sup> See <http://www.chinanews.com/fz/2013/12-04/5579427.shtml>, accessed 2 January 2014.



People's behavior reflects how they express nationalism. Jan Stets and Peter Burke (2000, 226) argue that "the basis of social identity is in the uniformity of perception and action among group members," embodied in cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral aspects. National identity prompts people to make positive judgments of their nation and take certain actions to defend the nation uniformly. In other words, when news reports stimulate popular nationalism, people may show love for the nation by expressing emotions and organizing or joining street demonstrations. Therefore, we can identify how netizens behave on the Internet as a presentation of public online nationalist sentiments. By examining their online opinion, it is possible to explore nationalism under the influence of mass communication in media events.

### **3.5 Mass Communication of Nationalism in the PRC**

Mass communication of nationalism is critical for Chinese authorities to shape nationalist public opinion and maintain legitimacy. Daniel Lynch (1999, 2) holds that "if a state can control society's communications process, it can structure the symbolic environment in such a way that citizens will be more likely to accept that state's political order as legitimacy." Like any other government, Chinese government attaches great importance to propagating patriotism to maintain its legitimacy (Lynch, 1999, 2). Embedding patriotic propaganda in mass communication, the government deems mass communication of nationalism as a significant theme of its ideological propaganda.

Two important years marking the turning points in the reform era are significant for nationalist communication in the PRC: one is the year 1989 when the Tiananmen Square protests forced the government to shift its propaganda focus to social stability through political indoctrination of the younger generation (Zhao, 2004, 213). From then on, the government implemented patriotic propaganda to educate the Chinese, especially the young generation, to love the nation and act as disciplined and law-abiding citizens. The other year is 2008, when the PRC celebrated its 30th anniversary of reform and opening-up to the outside world, hosted the Beijing Olympics that symbolized the Olympic dream, and survived the world financial crisis. Suggesting "China's rise as a big power" (Ma, 2013), these successes increased the Chinese people's national confidence on the world stage.

Taking the years of 1989 and 2008 as demarcation points, I divide the reform era into three periods to discuss mass communication of state nationalism and popular nationalism in the PRC: the “identity crisis” phase (1978-1989), the “identity building” phase (1989-2008), and the “identity strengthening” phase (2008 till the present).<sup>54</sup> With different historical backgrounds in the three periods, communication of state nationalism and popular nationalism bear distinctive characteristics. In the following part, I will analyze state nationalism, its propaganda in the three phases, and its influence on popular nationalism. I will also discuss the current inclination and the demographics of popular nationalism.

#### *“Identity Crisis” Phase (1978-1989)*

Before the identity crisis phase, Mao Zedong, the most influential and powerful political leader, shaped and consolidated Chinese people’s national identity with his own charisma. Regarding Mao as “the Great Teacher” (*weida daoshi* 伟大导师), the Mao cult was a phenomenon in the 1960s and the 1970s across the PRC (Leese, 2011). Since Mao, who experienced humiliated history in the Qing Dynasty, was a nationalist, his nationalist feelings influenced the Chinese. As noted in Chapter 2, after the founding of the PRC, Mao established socialism and communism as a belief of the people. He advocated more internationalism than nationalism within the frame of class struggle and revolution and used nationalism to encourage the people to work hard for the construction of a socialist nation in the Great Leap Forward Campaign in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Mao, 1965). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), although the Chinese economy was in good shape with fast GDP growth in 1975 (Russo, 2012, 262), the revolution exerted a destructive impact on Chinese politics. Nationalism was neglected by the authorities and “was even rejected as ‘bourgeois ideology.’” (Ding, 1994, 164)

The crisis of faith emerged as a political issue after Mao’s death and lasted throughout the 1980s. When Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader at that time, proposed to reassess Maoism to pave the way for economic reform in the late 1970s (Zhao, 2004, 210), the Chinese started to become suspicious about socialism and communism. To cope with the crisis of faith, the CCP led by Deng

<sup>54</sup> Although Billig (1995, 60) suggested that nationalism should not be explained as “identity,” I argue that an overlap exists between nationalism and national identity, i.e., people’s recognition of the nation.

did not put much emphasis on modeling people's ideology as Mao but proclaimed to shift its core work from class revolution to economic reform in 1978 in the hope to find a way to mobilize collective efforts on economic development. It strived to improve people's living standards and gain popular support through material progress.

The identity crisis increased when socialist movements took place in the Communist Bloc in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, and especially the PRC's Tiananmen Square protests dealt a heavy blow to the CCP leadership. With the major reform emphasis on economic development, "the near-total collapse of public faith in communism threatened an already-eroded state legitimacy and created an opportunity for the popular advancement of alternative visions of China's future" (Zhao, 2004, 211). In other words, the economy-focused policy allowed some people, including liberal intellectuals,<sup>55</sup> to embrace aspects of Western ideology such as liberal democracy for the PRC. As Zheng (1999, 50) notes, economic development in the PRC "resulted in a new crisis of national and cultural identity, especially among young people and in the intellectual circles." The CCP made certain economic progress throughout the 1980s but did not gain substantive improvement of state legitimacy in politics. People still lacked confidence about socialism and communism, so the crisis of faith continued.

Although Deng put political reform second place after the economic reform in the 1980s, the CCP propagated state nationalism through many ways, including patriotic slogans, posters, and banners. For example, the four Chinese characters "Invigorating China" (*zhenxing zhonghua* 振兴中华) painted on the walls in many places was the most popular slogan in that period (Wang, 2014, 129). In addition, the CCP published many patriotic posters such as "the national flag is hoisted in our hearts"<sup>56</sup>. These were explicit ways to promote state nationalism (Landsberger, 2004).

#### *"Identity Building" Phase (1989-2008)*

The appeal for democracy of liberal intellectuals forced CCP leaders to realize the importance of

<sup>55</sup> Liberal intellectuals in the 1980s were regarded as "enlightenment intellectuals" who drew inspiration from the West and who wanted "to carve out a 'public space' that was independent of the state" (Fewsmith, 2001, 12). Fang Lizhi, a Chinese astrophysicist and activist, was one of the liberal intellectuals.

<sup>56</sup> See <http://chinese posters.net/posters/e13-251.php>, from Stefan Landsberger's collection, accessed 12 November 2014.

political stability. The CCP then attached much importance to political propaganda besides economic reform. David Shambaugh (2007, 29) suggested that “the CCP has viewed propaganda as education of the masse—a proactive tool to be used in educating and shaping society.”

By promulgating the “Outline on the Implementation of Patriotic Education”<sup>57</sup> at the beginning of the 1990s, the CCP headed by Jiang Zemin launched a nationwide Patriotic Education Campaign targeting all Chinese, particularly the youth, to boost citizens’ national identity. Zheng (1999, 90) points out that the campaign was launched “to fill the ideological vacuum to strengthen its political legitimacy.” Similarly, Callahan (2006, 185) indicates that the purpose of the patriotic policy is “to control memory as a way of shoring up regime legitimacy.” Thus, in the second phase nationalism, mixed with patriotism, was formally established as an official discourse to strengthen citizens’ identification with the nation and the government. Zhao (2004) has summarized the four aims of the campaign: first, to define the national condition of the PRC; second, to link the communist state with the noncommunist past; third, to explain the communist state as the defender of the PRC’s national interest; fourth, to illustrate national unity as a theme against ethnic unity.

The CPD conducted the campaign in various forms, including textbooks, posters, and patriotic education bases. It adopted “national conditions education” (*guoqing jiaoyu* 国情教育) as core curriculum to instruct primary and middle school students with trauma and humiliation of modern Chinese history. Student textbooks were one of the most important propaganda channels to disseminate patriotic ideology. Besides, the CPD published a series of posters including the “Patriotic Education Propaganda Poster Set” in 1994, the “Amazing” series in 1996, and the “Educational” series in 1994, 1996, 1997, etc.,<sup>58</sup> in which “love/devotion to the motherland” (*ai/zhongyu zuguo* 爱/忠于祖国) were the keys words. Furthermore, the CPD turned a slogan in the 1980s “Invigorate China (*zhenxing zhonghua* 振兴中华)” into “the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation” (*zhonghua minzu de weida fuxing* 中华民族的伟大复兴) to remind people of glorious national history (Wang, 2014, 129). Concerning the second slogan, “rejuvenation” emphasizes the great power and prosperity of the Chinese nation in the past, inspiring the people to

<sup>57</sup> CPD formulated the outline. For its Chinese version, see <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66685/4494186.html>, accessed 23 October 2016.

<sup>58</sup> See <http://chineseposters.net/themes/index.php>, from Landsberger’s collection, accessed 12 November 2014.

work hard for national revival.

The CPD announced 100 patriotic education bases in 1997, encouraging more cities to establish more bases all over the country. As an important part of the patriotic campaign, the bases, including museums<sup>59</sup>, memorials, and scenic spots of “red tourism,” exhibited China’s humiliation in modern history and the CCP’s revolutionary past. The conflation of national history and CCP history narrated in the bases aimed to arouse visitors’ national consciousness and increase their identification with the Party. By 2019 altogether, 473 bases had been set up within the whole country.<sup>60</sup> Although the campaign mainly targets Chinese youth, the bases expand the teaching functions to all of society. They are available in many cities and open to every visitor. Since Chinese tourism has been greatly popularized in the past decades, more and more Chinese receive such propaganda by visiting the bases, speeding up this way of spreading state nationalism.

*“Identity Strengthening” Phase (2008 till the present)*

In the third phase, although the reform policy has improved people’s living standards, many social problems, such as cadre corruption and unequal distribution of wealth, continue to annoy people and give rise to public dissatisfaction with the government (Chen & Hao, 2014). Those problems much eroded the relationship between the government and people, exposing some potential threats to the legitimacy of the CCP, as the people sometimes may blame the government for its incompetent management of society.

One way to relieve this tension between the government and the people is to stage mass media events that may not solve the problems but increase public recognition. These events, to a large extent, display commercial elements such as material symbols of urban development to enhance public identification. The market-oriented media make patriotic communication more commercialized than before, so “patriotism has become a striking and recurring element in commercial advertising [...]. And expressions of love for the nation, in turn, have found their way into the official government commercials as well” (Landsberger, 2009, 349). Therefore, commercial

<sup>59</sup> Anderson (1991) indicates that government institutions use museums to shape people’s sense of an imagined community.

<sup>60</sup> See [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-09/16/c\\_1125001631.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-09/16/c_1125001631.htm), accessed 18 September 2019.

elements in patriotic communication make this kind of propaganda different from pure patriotic education. To be more specific, commercial elements make propaganda softer than the previous “100% political” propaganda. With consumer-seller dynamics, nationalism seems to be sold well, as it caters to mass audiences’ tastes. Media consumers have by now become socialized into a media system in which commercial elements are ubiquitous (Esarey, 2011), and the audiences, as consumers, have grown accustomed to such commercial elements in their daily lives.

In the third phase, patriotic communication featured a series of staged mass media events aimed at enhancing people’s national identity and government legitimacy. In the events, the government established dream discourses that created different social demands for the people and at times mobilized them to participate in the realization of the dreams. The staged “dream” events are prescheduled and supposed to meet the established social demands. When the social demands are satisfied in the events, the government then gains legitimacy. Distinguished from the former didactic Patriotic Education Campaign, patriotic communication in mass media events is more acceptable to audiences: for one thing, the patriotic content is more concrete, as it is based on the “stories” presented in the events and audiences “experience” certain historical moments with the unfolding of the stories throughout. For another thing, Internet media prompt political communication to become more interactive among audiences than the previous propaganda campaign that followed a traditional “one-to-many” top-down model. Audiences’ participation is much increased in online communication, which influences offline activities (Online communication facilitates the organization of offline activities if accepted by the officials). In some cases (volunteers in media events), the audiences are both passive recipients and active propagandists. This suggests that audiences and propagandists are more balanced in mass media events than in the top-down propaganda campaign.

No matter in what forms state nationalism is propagated and emphasized in political communication, it influences and sometimes is influenced (by) popular nationalism. Chinese popular nationalism reflects people’s internalization of state nationalism. Popular nationalism is a kind of unflagged banal nationalism in people’s daily lives until a stimulus emerges. Abrupt media events take people out of their daily lives by triggering popular nationalism. As such events are unpredictable, it is hard

for the government to lead it positively to meet social demands. As I have argued in Chapter 1, if popular nationalism is too strong and social demands cannot be gratified, it ruins government legitimacy.

What is the influence of political communication, with the joint effort of traditional media and Internet media, on Chinese nationalism in general? Some scholars hold that Chinese nationalism over the past two decades is not rising or even declining. Tang Wenfang and Benjamin Darr (2012, 823) argue that Chinese nationalism will decline with the increasing levels of urbanization and education. Based on the sample survey of nationalist public opinion in the Beijing municipality, Alastair Iain Johnston (2016, 9) also points out that Chinese nationalism does not continuously increase and even declined around 2009. Nevertheless, most scholars believe that Chinese nationalism is on the rise after the launch of the Patriotic Education Campaign (Gries, 2004; Zhao, 2004). I agree with the view that nationalism, particularly online popular nationalism, is rising to a certain degree, as evidence shows that online communication greatly facilitates the spread of nationalist sentiments. Nowadays, it is easier to trigger popular nationalism since information flows much faster than before.

Regarding the demographics of popular nationalism, Johnston (2016, 9) suggests that older generations are more nationalistic in the PRC than younger generations. Similarly, Robert Hoffmann and Jeremy Larner (2013) find that older, female, rural, and poorer people are more nationalistic than other groups, but an exception is that white-collar and university-educated people are also categorized as more nationalistic groups. In terms of online presentation of popular nationalism, young urban male Chinese, who comprise the largest part of Internet users, seem to be more likely to act as the most active nationalist groups who often express nationalist sentiments on the Internet and join street demonstrations.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Owing to the development of digital mass communication, nationalism has spread rapidly in the past several decades in the PRC. In this chapter, I have given an account of the theories of mass communication, propaganda, Chinese mass media, the Internet, and Chinese patriotic

communication. As a neutral concept, mass communication is multidirectional in the communication process. In contrast, propaganda is one-directional, from the propagandists to audiences, and it is more explicit than mass communication in terms of achieving propagandists' purposes. The two concepts, in essence, have many similar features, such as a large audience. Most of the time, they are intertwined with each other in Chinese media practice. In the digital age, communication of Chinese nationalism does not just rely on traditional ways of propaganda but is more interactively conducted, allowing audiences to participate in politics more frequently than before.

The Chinese mass media, controlled by the state, implemented political communication for politicians' ends before the reform era. In the reform era, media commercialization prompts the media to not only speak for the CCP but also seek their own revenue. This is what Stockmann (2012) terms "propaganda for sale." To sell media content, nationalism is a common resource because audiences tend to read stories that stimulate strong emotions. Although the Chinese media enjoy certain freedom, they are still tightly regulated by the CCP, especially in politics.

Chinese popular nationalism, as a kind of bottom-up nationalist sentiments, is expressed in public opinion, playing an important role in political communication. Abrupt media events involving international conflicts promise to generate popular nationalism. Since the conflicts are normally difficult to be settled within a short period, it is hard for the CCP to satisfy social demands by solving the problems. In this sense, to confine stimulated popular nationalist sentiments within a proper scope seems critical for the CCP to maintain legitimacy. As mass media mainly conduct the communication process of the events, the way they narrate the events influences how audiences express nationalist sentiments, which may further affect CCP legitimacy.

Patriotism is an important theme in Chinese official political communication since it is core to construct and strengthen people's national identity and consolidate the Party's rule. The propaganda of state nationalism is traditionally formulated in an explicit top-down style, such as the Patriotic Education Campaign; in the current national identity strengthening phase, staged media events turn out to be another way to implicitly convey state nationalism. Patriotic propaganda conducted in



mass media events, as a popular way to educate audiences who get used to commercialized media environment, is less explicit than top-down patriotic education.

In government-staged media events, the state takes a leading role to showcase the realization of dreams, meeting with the predetermined social demand established by political propaganda (e.g., the goal of hosting the Olympics that had been propagated by the government and media for a long time was achieved in the Beijing Olympics, see Chapter 5). Mass communication in the form of the visual presentation presented a powerful nation to Chinese audiences who may owe the successes to the leadership of the CCP. Therefore, state nationalism in such events tends to affect popular nationalism in a positive way and further strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP.

In conclusion, as discussed in Chapter 1, three nationalist elements are critical to constructing nationalism in both kinds of media events: boundaries, collective memories, and people's engagement. These elements are either emphasized or neglected by media outlets or companies through communication strategies such as agenda setting, framing of nationalist discourse, and various editing styles. In this way, state nationalism consolidates the legitimacy of the authorities, and popular nationalism maintained at a proper level does not pose a threat to the authorities.

## Chapter 4 Methodology

In this dissertation, I use a mixed method, involving qualitative and quantitative analyses, to understand how mass media events have influenced online Chinese nationalism in two case studies. I will specifically go into the following questions: how does the Chinese government design media events to propagate state nationalism? In what way do media companies report certain events to stimulate popular nationalism? How are nationalist sentiments of the Chinese, in particular netizens, expressed in online communication? In this chapter, I will explain the methodology that I will use to address these questions. First, I identify my research aims and then explain what methods I use to reach these. These methods are multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) and the so-called automated sentiment analysis program (ASAP), which I will elaborate on in the following part.

### 4.1 Research Aims

The main aims of this research include two parts: 1. to elucidate how the government and the media use mass communication to construct state nationalism; 2. to examine online expressions of popular nationalism. I will look at this subject from the perspective of mass media events. The first aim hereby is to examine if and how the construction of nationalism is different in the case of a staged media event, where the information disseminators have had ample time to prepare and script all media content, and in the case of an unforeseen, abrupt event, where media content has to rely on certain protocols, but have otherwise a much more impromptu character. In addition, it is worthwhile to examine the workings of nationalist discourse on BBS forums and comment sections separately with staged and abrupt media events. In order to reach these aims, I will look at two case studies, one representing a staged media event and one an abrupt media event: the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, as the first case, and the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident in 2012 as the other.

In the first case study, I focus on the 2008 Beijing Olympics and compare it to the 2012 London Olympics regarding the presentation of the opening ceremony and related online nationalist public opinions of Chinese audiences. The second case, the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, is an example of an abrupt, non-staged event. I will focus on media coverage of this event to illustrate how nationalist discourses play out in such a case.

The MCDA is a method that examines the texts and visual elements of media communication. I use the MCDA to analyze nationalist communication implemented by the government or the media in both cases. To deal with the second aim, I apply content analysis to explore online public opinion that reflects audiences' online nationalism. For the first case study, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, I conducted a manual content analysis on a part of the Internet data sets.<sup>61</sup> For the second case study, I carried out the ASAP to analyze the collected full data sets. The reason to apply different methods in these two case studies is that I did not have access to any data collection software when I did the first case study in 2014, and thus I could only collect the data by manual labor. As the collected data set was relatively small, this did not pose any serious problems. When I worked on my second case study, I did have access to a data collection software system. In addition, I developed the ASAP, allowing me to do nationalist sentiment analysis automatically. Figures 4.1(a) and 4.1(b) below show the two modes of analysis in a schematic diagram:

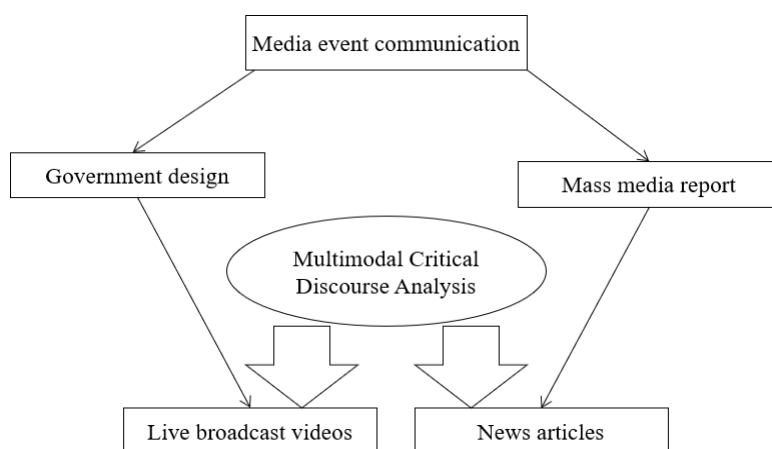


Figure 4.1 (a) Schematic diagram of media event communication analysis

<sup>61</sup> In this case study, the comment number of the whole data set in each thread is about 1300-6800. I chose 100 comments from the middle (comment 1001-1100). Although the 100 collected comments are smaller than the whole data set, they are close to netizens' real without distortion from invalid opinion (for more details, see Section 5.3.2).

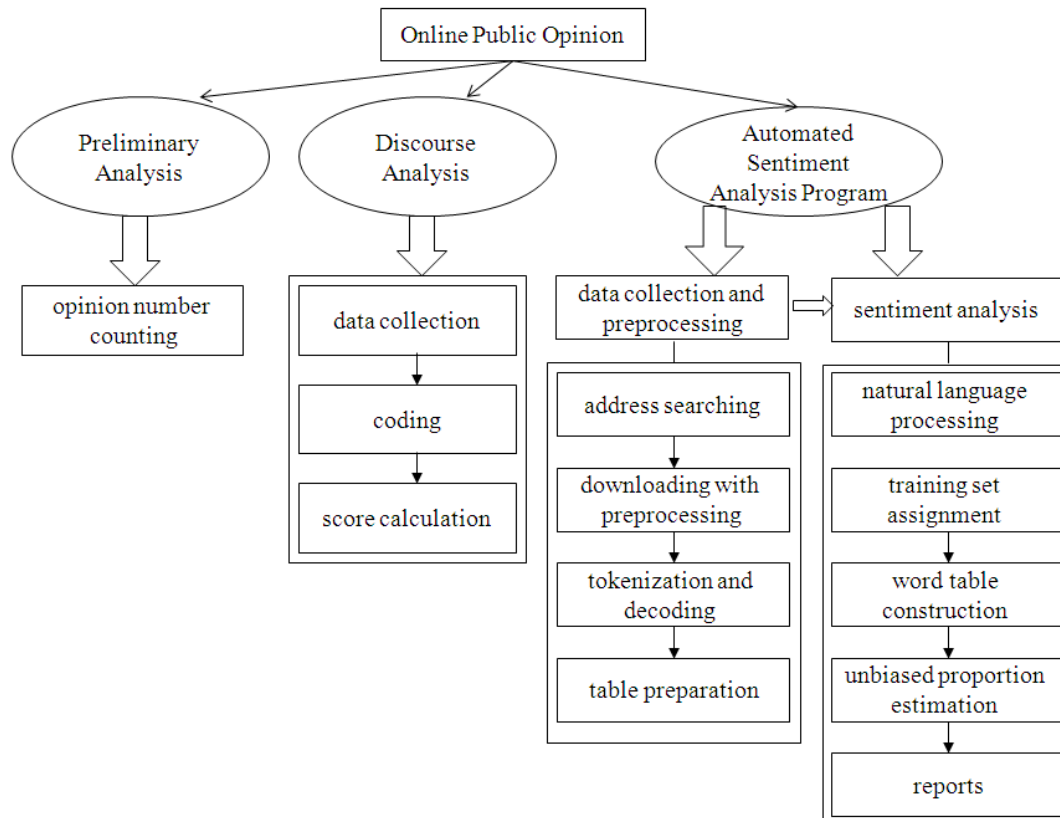


Figure 4.1(b) Schematic diagram of online public opinion analysis

#### 4.2 Media Event Communication: Discourse Analysis

To explore nationalist discourses concerning Chinese media events, I first address the differences between government-staged media events and abrupt media events. In staged media events, both the government and media play essential roles in the construction of nationalism.<sup>62</sup> The government acts as an organizer or designer to stage these events. Because these events represent state affairs (e.g., the Shenzhou missions represent the PRC's comprehensive national strength; the Shanghai World Expo manifests the PRC's history and culture), they remind audiences of their national identity by telling "national stories." In addition, in these media events, the government applies specific strategies to directly arouse state nationalism, which I will detail in Chapter 5. Media companies act as the agents to transmit these events to audiences, following the pre-scheduled account of official nationalist discourses. However, they do not have much influence on shaping

<sup>62</sup>In fact, in mass communication through Internet media, sometimes netizens are active information transmitters instead of passive receivers, disseminating information with posts, blogs, micro-blogs, etc. However, compared to official information disseminators with dominant discourse power in society, netizens' information dissemination is much less influential in portraying media events. Yet, we admit that they, to some degree, shape online public opinion.

public opinion with their own strategy. In this light, to analyze nationalist discourses presented in staged events, we mainly need to analyze how the government organizes and designs media events. In contrast to this, in abrupt media events (more specifically, the ones that stimulate popular nationalism), it is mainly media companies rather than the government that shape public opinion with detailed reporting—although, admittedly, the government has its way to show attitudes toward the events. Therefore, to explore nationalist discourse in abrupt media events, I will focus on how media companies cover the events.

Media events are narrated with discourses that Michel Foucault (1975/1977) regards as an important tool to build up a “knowledge system” connected to power in society. Foucault illuminates the relation between knowledge and power as follows:

Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of the “truth” but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, “becomes true.” Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation, and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute, at the same time, power relations (Foucault, 1975/1977, 27).

Based on Foucault’s argument, all communication agents are comparable to “institutions” that represent power to audiences, while the procedures of mass media events are analogous to the production of discourse. Produced by those with dominant social or political power (the government and media companies), the related discourse is “knowledge” to be learned by mass audiences. As knowledge is endowed with authority, audiences tend to follow the ideas conveyed in such knowledge. Although the idea that “the highest truth resides in what is said” (Foucault, 1969/1972, 216) seems controversial, discourse created by mass media plays a prominent part in conveying the “truth”—including nationalism—in the process of mass communication. Consequently, based on Foucault’s discourse theory, I will analyze the discourses that the two agents of mass communication employ in media events: the government and media companies, and their varying roles in constructing knowledge of nationalism in both staged and abrupt media events.

Discourse is language units and visual symbols that convey meanings. Foucault (1969/1972, 123) points out that “discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation.” Here “the statements” especially refer to textual materials. In addition, mass communication involves visual texts, including images and videos. Regardless of forms, if they emerge in the communication of media events, we may consider them as discourse. Therefore, I define discourse in media events in a broader sense as all kinds of materials, including texts, images, and videos systematically presented by mass media.

Discourse analysis involves various kinds of communication materials. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2001) coin the term “multimodal” and note that language, images, and sound are different parts of the same discourse. They propose that the multimodal communication theory focuses on two aspects: semiotic resources and communicative practices, including discourse, design, production, and distribution (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Furthermore, David Machin and Andrea Mayr (2012) classify communication materials into two categories: text and spoken language, and visual communication, such as images and videos. They analyze texts with a critical linguistic method, critical discourse analysis (CDA), aiming to “show language and grammar can be used as ideological instruments” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, 4). However, to deal with visual communication, they suggest applying the MCDA<sup>63</sup> to study “how images, photographs, diagrams and graphics work to create meaning” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, 9). They outline several methods to analyze the language in texts by exploring lexis, metaphorical tropes, nominalization, and presupposition. They also examine semiotic recourse to discuss the attitudes of the speakers. Based on this approach, I will separately analyze two types of discourse that construct nationalism in the live broadcasts of media events: news texts and visual symbols.<sup>64</sup>

Discourse analysis, however, is not just confined to texts and videos. The context where discourse is produced is worth considering: mass communication limits audiences’ possible understandings

<sup>63</sup> Schneider (2012) has provided a detailed discussion on multimodal analysis in his book *Visual Political Communication in Popular Chinese Television Series*.

<sup>64</sup> Concerning discourse analysis, multimodal discourse, semiotics, and visual analysis, Schneider (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) discusses the steps of different analysis methods.

of news information in a predetermined context (Schneider, 2012, 12). “Context” includes a “cognitive process and representations or socio-cultural factors” (van Dijk, 1988, 25). Teun van Dijk (1988, 29) indicates that “a full-scale analysis of discourse involves an integration of text and context in the sense that the use of a discourse in a social situation is at the same time a social act.” He also suggests that a complete account of news discourse includes a description of the textual structure of news and a depiction of the production and reception process of the news discourse (van Dijk, 1988, 30). In the Chinese case, the textual structure of news is predetermined by media companies; the production of news is related to media outlets, media companies, and the government; and the reception process of news pertains to audiences.

In staged and abrupt media events, different subjects merit a close look. The government designs and organizes the staged events to satisfy audiences and “sell” state nationalism to promote people’s national identity and win immediate popular support. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, 119) argue that “design adds two things to the discourse: (1) it contextualizes, makes it work within the context of a communicative interaction ... and (2) it selects which modes will be used to realize which aspects of that communicative interaction. ...” Therefore, live video broadcasts are the primary sources to study mass communication in government-staged media events. In abrupt media events, however, as there is no design, the subject of analysis shifts to how media outlets and media companies disseminate this information (whether based on existing protocols, on an ad hoc basis, or a mix of the two). It is vital to bear in mind that, in disseminating the information concerning abrupt events, the media, especially state media—following the “Party principle”—at all times have to act as the “mouthpiece” of the Party and people (Zhao, 1998, 19). In short, in exploring the two types of media events, staged and abrupt, I shall mainly focus on live broadcasts with staged events to examine how state nationalism is constructed through visual presentation. For the second one, I shall analyze news reports released by media companies to explore how popular nationalism is shaped in news discourse.

### *Staged Events: Government Design*

The government-staged events by nature engender nationalism, as the government has an incentive to promote audiences’ national identity to get public support. For example, in the 2010 Shanghai

World Expo, the government collaborated with diverse actors, such as enterprises and media corporations, to create a range of discourses that constructed a sense of central Chinese nation/nationalism (Schneider, 2014). Even if the government does not intentionally design events in a patriotic mode, the events still bear certain patriotic characteristics to promote nationalism. For instance, media events such as the “Two Conferences” (*lianghui* 两会): The National People’s Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), held every year to improve government work, are not directly centered on nationalism. Nevertheless, such events are by default nationalist because they are related to national politics, implying that a national level is a natural place for significant politics. Terms like “our nation” (*woguo*, 我国) are commonplace and seem normal in official discourse when discussing national politics. It is not aggressive or radical nationalism, but it still flags in the national context.

What is more, in some cases, the topics in the events that are directly related to nationalist discourse make the point clearer. For example, when referring to the work of the Foreign Ministry, it often involves foreign relations such as Sino-American relations and Sino-Japanese relations. Addressing disputed territorial issues in the conferences is regarded as a kind of expressing nationalism. Based on the MCDA, I will explore how the government narrates the events, what kind of tactics it uses in the narratives, and how the events promote audiences’ nationalism.

On a macro-level, I will look at staged events as a whole to discuss their design and organization in terms of background, time, space, duration, participants, and programming. Sometimes more indirect elements, such as narration, also play an important role. For instance, the tone, voice volume, and word selections in the narration form a certain mood. Taking these elements into account in the analysis leads to a better understanding of staged media events and how nationalism plays out in these events. In addition, I will take the social context during the events into consideration and explore how it influences the design of staged media events. To be more precise, apart from live broadcasts of these events, I will also explore the sub-events attached to the main events and to the official propaganda and policies pertaining to them. For example, the Beijing Olympics propaganda involves the major event in August 2008 and pre-game events including the Olympic education program, the volunteer recruitment program, and the torch relay. Such pre-game events form a social



context, exerting an influence on the whole media event.

Some staged media events, lasting several days or even months, span a multitude of videos. To avoid exhaustingly analyzing all related videos, I chose the videos containing key moments. The critical moments in a staged media event depend on the type of the event. A useful classification here comes from Dayan and Katz (1992), who discern the types “Contest,” “Conquest,” and “Coronation.” For all of these, the beginning and end are critical moments. In a Contest, artistic performances announce the beginning or end and showcase the culture and history of the hosting countries. The Contest transmits political ideology, as a group of celebrities in various fields (sportsmen, statesmen, or other celebrities) are involved, and their presence and speeches raise attention from the audience. In a Conquest, the beginning lays the foundation for a great success in the later process. Furthermore, a good ending of the project is essential, as it shows “an impressive success,” a popular concept in Chinese discourse, depicting the expected results. Concerning Coronation, the ending is the most crucial moment: someone is awarded a prize or appointed a position. In short, the beginning and end are essential parts of media events.

I will select the most critical part of live broadcast videos as research objects to explore nationalism expressed in visual communication, depending on the types of the events. For example, in the case study of the Beijing Olympics, I choose the live broadcast of the opening ceremony to analyze the discourse that constructs state nationalism. It is because the opening ceremony is the starting point of the event, from which audiences learn about the hosting country and the participating countries before the competition begins. More importantly, it presents exquisite cultural performances that presumably cater to audiences’ taste.

I will examine the discourse narration mode in the video: from what point of view and in what process does the government “tell stories”? What is precisely shown? I will discuss discourse content that is the foundation of such narration and focus on the images or icons widely used in media events to increase national pride, such as mascots and national flags. I will ask the following questions: why does the government use these images? What is left out? How do these images convey nationalism? What is the setting in these images? How is salience achieved in these images?

In addition to images, I will explore narrators' announcements to analyze how they arrange their speeches to strengthen state nationalism and how their spoken words are connected to what is shown.

#### *Abrupt Events: News Discourses from Media Companies*

Visual and text communications about one topic usually have much overlap. When a textual news report is published online, media practitioners attach pictures and videos to the news text. Nevertheless, news texts represent a different form of discourse to articulate meaning than visual communication. Roland Barthes (1977, 33) indicates that the linguistic message (such as a message in news texts) is twofold: the literal message aimed at identifying something; and the symbolic message used to interpret and fix the understanding of the liberal and undetermined iconic image. Therefore, sometimes language limits the meaning that visual communication conveys. With moving images and spoken words, videos are more direct than texts. However, news texts offer more space for audiences to think about connotations between the lines because when audiences read news items, they control the tempo and have more time to recall their background information and digest the deep meaning. When watching a video, audiences hardly have time to ponder over flashing discourse. Concerning abrupt events where news texts take the leading role, I will focus on news texts' language and editing style to figure out how media companies articulate nationalism in textual communication. I will conduct my research according to the MCDA methods introduced by Machin and Mayr to analyze the discourse of the selected news articles in terms of the following aspects:

- Lexical analysis

Lexical analysis refers to the special vocabulary used in news texts. In news discourse, news editors are inclined to use some words or expressions to convey nationalism, for instance, motherland (*zuguo* 祖国), blessing (*zhufu* 祝福), and realization of a dream (*yuanmeng* 圆梦). In the analysis, I will explore such words that promote national pride or shape nationalist sentiment.

- Representational strategies

Representational strategies are the way that people are addressed. Specifically, they are related to

semiotic choices in CDA (Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 2003: 145, cited in Machin & Mayr, 2012, 77). Since “representational choice will bring associations of values, ideas, and activities” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, 78), I will explore how news texts make referential choices to approach news editors’ intentions. When referring to “social actors,” media have some strategies to address them. Various forms of address, such as functionalization (e.g., “the spokesman”), use of honorifics (e.g., “the General Secretary Xi Jinping”), and pronouns (e.g., we, us, you), are useful in constructing nationalism. For example, Billig (1995, 103) indicates that politicians play the patriotic card on many occasions “in calling upon familiar stereotypes” by “advocating a particular vision of who ‘we’ are, and what ‘we’ should be like” to win people’s support. It is a representational strategy also widely used in Chinese political news. I will analyze how news editors refer to these “actors” in news texts and formulate patriotic views for audiences.

- Rhetorical devices

Rhetoric devices are tools to construct meaning. Aristotle (350BCE/2010, 6) defines rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” Van Dijk (1989, 82) argues that a given communication purpose determines the rhetorical structure of news. The purpose of news discourse in political communication is essentially persuasion, and communicators or propagandists use many rhetorical devices to better convey their ideas. I will analyze rhetorical devices that influence nationalist communication in news discourse, such as parallelism (ubiquitous in Chinese political news for grand narration or poetic sense), metaphor, and synecdoche. Among these, metaphor is one of the most important rhetorical devices in political communication. George Lakoff and Mark Johan (1980, 3) state that the “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.” As metaphors highlight one aspect but hide other aspects of an object (Lakoff & Johan, 1980, 10), news editors use metaphors in media events to emphasize some ideas but obscure others.

### **4.3 Online Public Opinion: Passive Surveys**

It is impossible to gauge people’s nationalism with any measuring instrument directly. However, a large amount of online communication data provide a corpus to evaluate nationalism expressed in online public opinion. Compared to the traditional paradigm of audiences’ feedback (reactionary

articles in newspapers), there are vastly more data on opinions aired online, which are accessible far more easily. To analyze such “big data,” social scientists have started to apply computational methods with unprecedented effort. David Lazer, Alex Pentland, Lada Adamic, Albert-Laszlo Barabasi, Devon Brewer, Nicholas Christakis, Noshir Contractor, James Fowler, Myron Gutmann, Tony Jebara, Gary King, Michael Macy, Deb Roy, and Marshall van Alstyne (2009, 722) indicate that “a computational social science is emerging that leverages the capacity to collect and analyze data with an unprecedented breadth, depth, and scale.” Furthermore, Wouter van Atteveldt and Peng Tai-Quan (2018, 81) note that “computational methods have the potential to greatly enhance the scientific study of communication because they allow us to move towards collaborative large-N studies of actual behavior in its social context.” That said, it is worth noting that there are cases where computational methods cannot be applied. In these cases, manual methods, covering limited amounts of data, still prove to be indispensable.

Concerning the role of the surveyor in the analysis of online public opinion data, I call the method (because data are collected online after netizens actively publish their opinion) “passive surveys” to distinguish it from traditional ones that I regard as “active surveys.” The research of big data has some advantages over traditional research methods. In traditional, active surveys, such as interviews, a surveyor distributes questionnaires, so respondents are aware of being interviewed. This awareness may raise concerns, such as leaking personal information and lead to biased responses. Some respondents even refuse to participate. Neil Munro (2018) points out that refusal bias exists in traditional surveys in the PRC, largely affecting the measurement accuracy of political trust.

Online passive surveys, in contrast, reduce the chance of refusal bias. In traditional surveys, respondents give opinions as responses and are aware of how their responses might be used—and possible repercussions for them. For passive online surveys, however, the goal of voicing opinions is not in response to a survey; furthermore, netizens are mostly anonymous and prone to be spontaneous. In other words, gathering online data on opinions allows researchers to measure respondents’ actual behavior instead of their self-reported attitudes (Munro, 2018, 82). Although such online opinions are contextual and only represent an individual’s views at a particular time and in a specific part of cyberspace, analysis of online public opinion data sheds light on the study of

mass communication besides traditional opinion surveys.

With an automated collection and analysis of big data, it is reasonable to assume that the gathered data is representative of the actual public opinion due to its enormous “sample” size. However, due to certain limitations of (current) technology, big data extraction is sometimes impossible. In these cases, a manual method may yield results. The drawback is that a manual method can only deal with limited data, but the result is still representative with correct sampling methods. Both methods follow the same steps in the process: data collection, data coding, and calculation. Regardless of which method I use for the final analysis, I will do a preliminary analysis in each of my case studies by counting the number of clicks and comments on the subject to examine netizens’ interest in these topics. The netizens’ interest further indicates a general representation of their nationalist behavior, as the media event is organized or takes place in a nationalist setting and represents national interest. In other words, a nationalist sentiment fosters interest in national media events.

#### *Manual Discourse Analysis*

When it is impossible to obtain all data automatically, I choose to retrieve a sample of the data set representing most online opinions. I use this method to analyze the representative data for the first case study, the Beijing Olympics. The necessary steps of manual discourse analysis are data collection, coding, score calculation, and results. A search on keywords is a common way to collect relevant data. I chose the names of the events as keywords (for details, see Chapter 5). After collecting the data, I established a set of rules to code nationalist meanings expressed in the opinion texts. For different events, I used slightly different coding rules that I will detail in the case study (for details, see Appendix 1 and 3). I then manually analyzed online comments regarding the threads on Tianya BBS. After that, I calculated the total scores on different topics.

#### *Automated Sentiment Analysis Program (ASAP)*

Pang Bo and Lillian Lee (2008, 10) define sentiment analysis as “the computational treatment of opinion, sentiment, and subjectivity in text.” In other words, a computer can be used to analyze big data to detect sentiments represented in texts automatically. Pang and Lee (2008) also suggest that sentiment analysis mines the data in terms of its features, including term presence, position

information, parts of speech, syntax, negation, and topic-oriented features. The automated sentiment analysis program (ASAP) is mainly adapted from a previous approach, ReadMe, proposed and developed by Daniel Hopkins and Gary King (2010).<sup>65</sup> The function of the ASAP is to perform calculations of the proportion of file/comment catalogues with various sentiments, also called “opinion mining.” It serves as an automatic classifier for objects. I used the ASAP to evaluate nationalist sentiments expressed in online public opinion data in the second case study, the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident.

In the process of analysis, I used a supervised learning approach in the ASAP with unbiased estimation. This approach consists of the statistical processing of a given training set, i.e., a set of examples used to train the computer to understand the sentiments in all online discourse. With the hand-coded training set, the ASAP efficiently calculates nationalist sentiment percentage with different points or scores to indicate the different levels of nationalist sentiment. This information demonstrates how news coverage influences nationalism expressed in online discourse. Five steps are included in sentiment analysis with the ASAP: natural language processing, training set assignment, word-table construction, unbiased proportion estimation, and results reporting (see Figure 4.1 (b)).

#### Step 1. Natural language processing with Chinese word segmentation

Hopkins and King (2010, 232) argue that concerning processing an English text, it is necessary to convert all the words into lowercase, eliminate punctuation, and stem the word based on the characteristics of the English language. Analyzing a Chinese language text, however, is different. Chinese is made up of characters instead of letters that form words. These characters have no upper- or lowercase and no stems. Furthermore, different combinations of characters generate various meanings. For example, the word “国家” has two characters. If it is read character by character, it has two meanings: state and family. However, if it is read as a word, “国家” means country or nation-state. In terms of the essence of meaning, English stems are similar to Chinese words. Therefore, in this analysis, I will adapt the Chinese word segmentation system that was realized

<sup>65</sup> A comprehensive natural language processing module for Chinese word segmentation makes the ASAP different from the original ReadMe.

through a word library and the Institute of Computing Technology, Chinese Lexical Analysis System (ICTCLAS) tool package.<sup>66</sup> When the computer analyzes the data from a text, it deals with the text in the unit of words or expressions instead of only characters. For example, if there was no word segmentation system, the sentence “我讨厌日本人” (I hate the Japanese) would be processed as 我/讨/厌/日/本/人; if a word segmentation system was added, the sentence would be processed as 我/讨厌/日本人. In this way, the computer deciphers the meaning of the text more accurately.

### Step 2. Training set assignment

A prerequisite for the ASAP is a hand-coded training set large enough to contain all examples of nationalist sentiments in the online discourse that is to be analyzed. This is mainly determined by the size of the training set and the style of the comments. Using the examples of blogs (usually 300 words per blog entry), Hopkins and King give the following suggestion:

Coding more than about 500 documents to estimate a specific quantity of interest is probably not necessary unless one is interested in much more narrow confidence intervals than is common or in specific categories that happen to be rare. For some applications, as few as 100 documents may even be sufficient. (Hopkins & King, 2010, 242)

Since the comments I analyzed are of a much smaller size (most are less than 20 words) than the blogs analyzed by Hopkins and King (2010), I selected 300 comments in each case study as enough for the desired estimation accuracy. I randomly selected the first 300 comments from the local comment database that I downloaded from the data source with a fixed number. Then, I manually coded the selected comments to be the training sets according to the coding rules. With this training set, the ASAP learned how to understand and code the residual comments.

### Step 3. Word table construction

After the previous steps, the training set of comments and the comments for automated sentiment analysis were loaded from a spreadsheet file to a word table for further statistical processing. Based on the training set, the ASAP recognized which words in the samples gained high points and which

<sup>66</sup> I adapted the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) system, see <http://ictclas.nlpir.org/>, accessed 9 August 2014.

words deserved low points. For example, in the training set, I marked the comments containing the phrase “打日本” (strike against Japan) with 2 points and those with the meaning of “谴责” (condemn) with 1 point, which was memorized by the ASAP.

#### Step 4. Unbiased proportion estimation of comments with different sentiment levels

The ASAP regarded all words in the comments as an unsorted collection to process the residual comment data. In other words, it processed each comment as a set of individual words, ignoring the grammar structure and the word order. Therefore, Hopkins and King (2010, 232) indicated that this provided a relatively low biased proportion estimation of comments with different sentiment levels.

#### Step 5. Results

After finishing the previous four steps, the ASAP output various proportions of comments with their different nationalist sentiment levels. Based on the results, I summarized the analyzed online nationalist sentiments and discussed the media impact on netizens' nationalist/patriotic sentiments in the case study chapter (See Chapter 6).

Overall, I used the multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to analyze nationalist communication implemented by the government and media. To explore netizens' nationalist sentiments and evaluate media effects, I applied the manual or automat method in different case studies. In the 2008 Beijing Olympics case study, I used the manual method for the small data set; in the case study of the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, I used the automat methods. In the following chapters, I will show how I applied these different methods to the two case studies to examine how the Chinese government and Chinese media influence netizens' articulation of nationalism.

### **4.4 Conclusion**

Media reform and conglomeration in the last three decades in the PRC deeply affect how mass communication incorporates CCP propaganda, resulting in market forces and the Party principle becoming two separate lines between which mass media have to balance (Zhao, 1998). Internet media converging with traditional media provides netizens with a public sphere where they are able



to publish their opinions presenting nationalist sentiment. In this dissertation, I study two kinds of media events, government-staged media events and abrupt media events, to analyze how state nationalism and popular nationalism play out in this new media landscape. To conduct research on nationalist tones in communication in media events, whether staged or abrupt, I identified research aims that include government/media propaganda that elicits a nationalist public opinion as a response. For the case study that represents a staged media event, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, I applied the MCDA on visual communication. In the case study that represents an abrupt media event, the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, I also used the MCDA on nationalism framed in opinion pieces on the media company Tencent's website. Applying passive surveys, I adopt established forms of content analysis to explore netizens' public opinions. I applied manual methods to the first study and the automated sentiment analysis program (ASAP) to the second one consisting of numerous comments published by netizens.

I must state a few limitations and reservations concerning the methodologies. First, my big data analysis with the ASAP in the case study of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident was the first time anyone applied such a program. While the results seem promising, more cases need to be tested in the future for the higher reliability of this automated method. Second, in the case study of the Beijing Olympics, the automated data collection systems were not available to retrieve the full data set on Tianya BBS, so manual collection was necessary, limiting the number of the researched comments. Therefore, to come to a fuller understanding of this case study, suitable data collection software will aid future research. Third, when setting up the coding rules for nationalism, it was difficult to identify implied meanings of comments, such as "object to the Olympics" and "hate the government." Sometimes, when people's views on media events are not fully congruent with their nationalist ideas, it is difficult to gauge their nationalist sentiment. For example, if a comment shows the only disagreement with the government (or with the event), this seems unpatriotic at first glance, but it may as well be the opposite.<sup>67</sup>

Such ambiguous situations generate complex results in the analysis, and in future research, I will

<sup>67</sup> In most cases, I treated such an opinion as patriotic because it showed, first and foremost, netizens' concern about national affairs. Although this was complex, I had done all the coding myself, which ensured the unified judgement of the comment texts.

treat such comments separately. To do so, I will set up more sophisticated coding rules by combining concrete context with these negative comments to identify their deeper meaning. At the same time, I will also refer to the preliminary analysis of the participation of netizens on that topic showing their concern about the events (state affairs). This will make for an even better understanding of online nationalism. In the case study of the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, the ASAP already carried out a complicated evaluation on netizens' nationalist sentiments, thus shedding light in the field of the complex, large-scale study of online public opinion.

## **Chapter 5 Beijing Olympics: Pursuing the Olympic Dream**

Taking the 2008 Beijing Olympics as an example, I will examine in this chapter how the Chinese government conducted patriotic propaganda before and during a scheduled event. By comparing the opening ceremony, one of the key parts of Olympic events, to that of the 2012 London Olympics, I will look at the similarities and differences between the visual presentations of two countries in terms of communication of nationalism (among other values and ideologies). In addition, I will discuss how Chinese audiences reacted to the events on Tianya BBS, one of the most popular Chinese online forums, to examine popular nationalism and evaluate the communication effect expected by the government or the Chinese media. To do so, I will analyze audiences' online engagement presented in the number of clicks and replies of the selected threads in the two Olympics. I will further do discourse analysis on audiences' online comments that further reflect their nationalism.

My findings demonstrate that the Chinese government successfully used heavy propaganda through a series of sub- and parallel events before the Beijing Olympics to increase public engagement and support. In comparison, the London Olympics applied similar communication strategies, most notably in the opening ceremony, with the same goal (to enhance the national image and national identity), but without overtly nationalistic tones. Moreover, as the Beijing Olympics were more about Chinese identity than the London Olympics, online Chinese audiences' reception showed much more nationalism (or national pride) in the former. As I will reveal, the overt promotion of nationalism and national identification through the Beijing Olympics succeeded in strengthening CCP legitimacy.

### **5.1 The Olympic Dream**

The 2008 Beijing Olympics have been one of the most significant mass media events held by the Chinese government in the first decade of the 2000s. Since the point of the Olympics is an athletic competition between various nations, it is a suitable occasion for participating countries to distinguish themselves and foster nationalism and a sense of national identity. What is more, the hosting countries can gain international recognition, increase economic growth, and advance

technology and infrastructure. (Scandizzo & Pierleoni, 2018). For the PRC, the event was important because it witnessed the realization of a social demand, the Olympic dream, established by the government and media and perceived by Chinese people. The government tried to satisfy the social demand to strengthen its legitimacy through the event.

Brady (2009b) has depicted the Beijing Olympics as a kind of mass distraction from various social problems existing in 2008. However, I do not completely agree with this: while the Olympics did draw (part of) the people's attention from social issues to the event, hosting the Games had different aims (such as enhancement of national confidence) rather than just serving as a distraction for social issues. Furthermore, the Chinese government planned the hosting of the Olympics even before 1993 (The PRC lost the first bid in 1993). It is unlikely the government would have intended the Olympics as a distraction for potential social problems at least fifteen years in the future. In addition, the huge number of the people who had actively participated in the event suggested wide public support. By the end of March 2008 (five months before the opening ceremony), the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) had received more than 0.41 million applications for volunteers from Beijing and the rest of China.<sup>68</sup> Although the motivations of volunteers could be internal (altruism and egoism) and external (institutional encouragement or improvements in academic performance) (Bladen, 2010, 785), this high number of volunteer applications suggested a high level of engagement among the populace. Concerning Chinese people's attitudes towards the government related to the event, Zhao Suisheng (2008, 49) indicates that "Although many social, political and economic problems in the PRC worry the Chinese people, they still react adversely to foreign criticism of the Chinese government." Therefore, the people's support for the Olympics and the government was still discernable, and hosting the Olympic event was not "primarily" about distracting from social problems.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, usually the Olympics, a competitive event, would fall—in Dayan and Katz's (1992) definition of media event types—in the Contest category. However, in the case of the PRC, the winning of the bid was far more important than the athletic competition between nations. The contest in the bid in 2001 helped the PRC accomplish the first step of realizing

<sup>68</sup> See <http://english.china.org.cn/english/China/206666.htm>, accessed 12 November 2012.

the Olympic dream (I will detail this in the following part). The Beijing Olympics then represented the second step that concluded the dream. Thus, more like a celebration or what Dayan and Katz (1992) call a Coronation for the nation, the Beijing Olympics worked for a long time to realize the propagated Olympic dream.

### 5.1.1 Conceiving of the Olympic Dream

As China suffered bitter humiliation in the 19th and 20th centuries (see Chapter 2 on the rise of Chinese nationalism for details), the idea of China and the Chinese being weak took hold. This idea is best articulated by Liang (1916/1994, 157), who argued that “we are known by the world as the ‘sick man’ without any physical capability, which provides both Westerners and Easterners with a chance to bully us.” This sickness, or rather, weakness, had a figurative sense, pertaining to the Chinese nation as political power and a literal sense, with the Chinese people being physically weak. This notion of the “sick man of East Asia” (*dongya bingfu* 东亚病夫) took hold in Chinese culture through education, and was articulated in popular culture: for example, the popular martial arts movies, *Fists of Fury* (1972) (*Jingwu Men* 精武门) and *Fearless* (2006) (*Huo Yuanjia* 霍元甲) emphasized on this idea to bolster (a reflection on) nationalism. Due to this notion, physical prowess became a goal within Chinese nationalism.

Modern sports in China, as an invented tradition, play a crucial role in strengthening nationalism (Xu, 2008, 8). The Olympics became a paragon event for the Chinese to show that they were not weak but superior in strength, as demonstrated by their “sports power (*tiyu qiangguo* 体育强国).” Since 1908, when the *Tianjin Youth Daily* published three issues about the Olympics (Zhang, 2008), Chinese people have conceived of an Olympic dream that consists of three parts: sending an athlete to the Olympics, cultivating a group of athletes for the Olympics, and hosting the Olympic event.

The first two parts of this dream were realized not long after, as Liu Changchun, the first Chinese athlete, participated in the Olympics in 1932 in Los Angeles, and the first Chinese delegation attended the Olympics in 1936 in Berlin. However, China was less successful in getting to host the Olympics for a long time: Beijing’s first attempt did not take place until 1993 when they tried for the 2000 Olympics. This bid failed with only two ballots less than its competitor, Sydney. This

dampened the Olympic fans' morale and spirits, but it also strengthened the resolve to win the next bidding. In their second bid, in 2001, Beijing did win the right to host the 2008 Olympics. This became a turning point in Chinese Olympic history, initiating the completion of the third part, thereby the whole of the Chinese Olympic dream.

Hosting the Olympics allowed China to show to the world as a major international power, beyond economic benefits. Billig (1995, 120) suggests that "modern sport has a social and political significance, extending through media beyond the player and the spectator." The Chinese government made great efforts to propagate the Beijing Olympics that would demonstrate the prowess of the PRC's athletes, thereby countering the stigma and the Chinese as weak in contemporary history to both the Chinese populace and international audiences. If the Olympic event was indeed successful in improving national image, for one thing, it would strengthen Chinese people's national confidence; for another thing, the government would gain legitimacy through the organization of the event. In this way, the Olympics would serve as a staged media event to advance nationalism. Focusing on the prior game propaganda and the opening ceremony, I will explore how the Chinese government organized and staged the Beijing Olympics in the following sections.

### **5.1.2 Organizing the Olympic Dream**

As the motto of the Beijing Olympics was "One world, one dream," it seemed that the Chinese government intentionally promoted cosmopolitanism. However, Shirley Cheng et al. (2011, 296) argued that the 2008 Olympics did not increase popular identification with other countries but rather enlarged the cultural distance between China and the Western world. In addition, Sun Yat-sen (1924/1970, 311) had advocated that "We must understand that cosmopolitanism grows out of nationalism; if we want to extend cosmopolitanism, we must first establish strongly our own nationalism." This suggests the Chinese government prioritizing nationalism over cosmopolitanism. The motto established China's image "as a harmonious member of the international family, sharing the same vision with other international members" (Zhang & Zhao, 2009, 248). Furthermore, Chen Ni (2012) also argues that media events such as the Beijing Olympics branded China's image abroad and domestically to show the legitimization of the government. Therefore, the goal of the motto was to promote more nationalism than cosmopolitanism.

The government also established three important themes: Green Olympics (*lüse aoyun* 绿色奥运), High-tech Olympics (*keji aoyun* 科技奥运), and People's Olympics (*renwen aoyun* 人文奥运). Generally, High-tech Olympics, Olympics with cutting-edge technology, were presented in the event since the government widely applied high technologies in the artistic performance and the Games. For example, it used high technologies and new materials to construct the national stadium that shaped a bird's nest.

To put the theme of "Green Olympics" into practice, the PRC spent more than 12 billion US dollars on improving the environment through a series of environmentally friendly initiatives, such as closing polluting factories and building up the Olympic forest park (Berkowitz et al., 2007, 174). According to Jin Liyan, James Zhang, Ma Xingdong, and Daniel Connaughton (2011), these initiatives succeeded in bringing positive changes to people's behavior and support for the green theme and the Olympics. However, solving the environmental problems proved too tricky for the short period in which these initiatives were deployed, and after the Olympics, as the problems were not structurally addressed, pollution still existed in Beijing (Cao et al., 2013).

Finally, the government developed the theme of People's Olympics into an invitation to world audiences to view China's historical culture through Beijing's lens. The claim in the theme that the 2008 Olympics were "people-oriented" suggested that the government valued a high level of participation. The government aimed to shorten the distance between people and the nation and give people a sense of collectiveness and belonging. Yet, the goal of the "people-oriented" Olympics was not always realized: it carried the suggestion for greater openness and less censorship, but people were still under tight control when it came to obtaining information about the Olympics. International communities also criticized the 2008 Olympics for not improving human rights (Manzenreiter, 2010, 34). In short, the three themes changed the nation for a short time to gain public support but did not profoundly change people's lives.

The Chinese government also fostered people's engagement in the 2008 Beijing Olympics through specific programs and events: the Olympic education program (2005-2008), the volunteer

recruitment program (2006-2008), the Olympic torch relay (April-August 2008), and the Paralympics (6-17 September 2008). The preparations for hosting the Olympics started as early as 1993, but then the bid to obtain the 2000 summer Olympics rights failed. In 2001, after winning the second bid, preparations became even stronger than before. Through the Olympic education program, primary and middle school students received direct propaganda education in class. The volunteer recruitment program specifically targeted university students who were the most active group in social activities, so the government enrolled them to win their recognition and support. Contrary to the Olympic education program and the volunteer recruitment program specifically designed to promote state nationalism, the Olympic torch relay and the Paralympics followed a traditional hosting process that enrolled many people in the event. In the following, I will discuss all these programs and events to explore how they increased people's engagement and contributed to the enhancement of nationalism.

#### *Olympic Education Program*

The government launched a Beijing 2008 Olympic education program in 2005, aiming to cultivate “a generation of young students who understand the Olympic spirit, comprehend Olympic knowledge, and possess international vision and habits of civility and politeness” (BOCOG, 2005, cited in Brownell, 2009, 49). Brownell (2009, 44) argues that “Olympic education contained a depoliticized patriotic education that linked national identity with sports heroes rather than political systems and re-situated Chinese national identity within an international community in which it would now take its place as an equal partner.” I would argue that Olympic education was not wholly depoliticized because one of its aims was to train students disciplined during the event. The “habits of civility and politeness” (Brownell, 2009, 49) are characteristics of well-disciplined citizens, as “the moral education of the people has been viewed historically as a function of good government in China” (Landsberger, 2001, 541). Although the political aims were not explicitly indicated in the goals of this program, they implied a patriotic connotation that worked in favor of the government and ultimately contributed to promoting nationalism.

The Olympic education program frequently displayed the official emblem and five mascots of the Beijing Olympics' to build up a friendly national image. The emblem, called “Dancing Beijing,”



resembled a dancing figure and a red seal in the shape of the Chinese character “京,” referring to the capital city, Beijing. As the character was in a stylized calligraphic, it combined traditional Chinese culture elements with the Olympic spirit. Below the characters were the five Olympic rings, indicating the Olympics. The mascots, called “福娃 *Fuwa*” (literally “good-luck dolls,” also known as “friendlies”), expressed, according to Zhang and Zhao (2009, 248), the values of Chinese culture: “grace, peace, and kindheartedness.” Named Beibei, Jingjing, Huanhuan, Yingying, and Nini, each mascot symbolizes a blessing: Beibei stands for the blessing of prosperity, Jingjing for the blessing of happiness, Huanhuan for the blessing of passion, Yingying for the blessing of health, and Nini for the blessing of good luck. Put together, the five names formed a sentence, “Bei-Jing-Huan-Ying-Ni 北京欢迎你” translated into “Beijing welcomes you,” carrying a message of friendship. The emphasis on both emblem and mascots on Beijing was not only because the 2008 Olympics were held there but also because Beijing represented the whole PRC to promote people’s national identity through a synecdoche.

#### *Volunteer Recruitment Program*

Launched in 2005, the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic volunteer program was a top-down initiative. More than 1.5 million volunteers were engaged in the program (BOCOG, 2010, 247). Volunteer service work played a significant role in ensuring a smooth staging of the event, which prompted the government to select the volunteers carefully. Zhuang Juan and Vassil Girginov (2012) point out that the selection of the volunteers was not random, and in fact, depended on applicants’ social, human, and political capital. The selection was carried out in three steps: a stadium-university docking system<sup>69</sup>, volunteer training and testing, and political background checks.

First, the stadium-university docking system entails that one university was assigned to provide the most volunteer force for each Olympic stadium. This allowed BOCOG to maintain working relationships with certain universities in Beijing by giving their students preference to students from universities that were not part of this system (Zhuang & Girginov, 2012, 246). As a result of this system, while volunteers were recruited from all levels of society, students from particular

<sup>69</sup> The system means that one university was assigned to provide the most volunteer force for Olympic stadia, which was adopted by BOCOG to maintain working relationships with universities in Beijing (Zhuang & Girginov, 2012, 246).

universities had a higher chance to be selected.

Second, the government offered a series of training courses that taught foreign languages, related rules, and volunteer work regulations. Besides this, the students were taught etiquette to represent a positive image of the nation to foreigners. The training courses worked as a step in the selection by rejecting students who could not pass the tests to show their ability to cooperate in a team and perform the assigned duties (Zhuang, 2012, 249).

Third, political background checks are a common occurrence in the state- or CCP-related activities; therefore, given the national importance of hosting the Olympics, it was no wonder that such checks were carried out in the volunteer selection program. Checking students' political status (e.g., social relationships and criminal records) was a step for the background checks.

Indicating that “each volunteer acted as a vehicle of power, through which power was being performed in a web of social relations,” Gladys Pak Lei Chong (2011, 52) argues that by using soft power (e.g., establishing certain discourses), volunteer services were a governing strategy for the state: the Olympic volunteers served as model citizens. The recruited volunteers were at the receiving end of Olympic propaganda in the training courses. They also acted as new, grassroots Olympic propagandists themselves. They received education from official initiatives and disseminated official ideas to the populace and foreign audiences when providing volunteer services.

### *Torch Relay*

The torch relay has been a regular activity of every Olympic event since the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics. The Olympic flame is lit in Olympia, Greece, the cradle of the Olympic Games, several months before the start of the major event. The torch is then relayed to selected cities and finally reaches its destination, where the Olympic Games are hosted. It is generally carried by runners and other athletes, with certain exceptions (such as being on a boat or airplane).

Although the torch relay is a routine sub-event of the Olympics, the global torch relay only started in the 2004 Athens Olympics because of a change of sponsorship (Horne & Whannel, 2010, 761).

In the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the PRC took this new tradition, organizing the torch relay worldwide. After 2008, this global torch relay was canceled because of “the conflicts between anti-Chinese groups and the advocates of free Tibetans and the sacred fire defense runners supplied by the Chinese government” (Masumoto, 2013, 29). In that case, the torch relay has been confined within the hosting countries to avoid conflicts since the 2012 London Olympics. As a sub-media–event announcing to the world that China was going to host the Beijing Olympics, the torch relay was equal to a preliminary celebration of the realization of the Olympic dream (the opening ceremony was a major celebration).

The torch relay increased people’s engagement in the event and promoted their national identity. It was impossible to allow all audiences to watch or participate in the Olympic Games on the spot. However, the torch relay offered many an opportunity for onsite participation. The selection of the torch bearers was not limited to celebrities or athletes, and common people could also have a chance to participate. Even if most of them were not chosen to relay the torch, they could watch the on-the-spot relay as a kind of engagement. This prompted the local audiences to express patriotic feelings. In my personal observation of the torch relay in Changsha, Hunan on 4 June 2008, I witnessed not only a great level of excitement on seeing the torchbearers but also many people chanting “go China” (*Zhongguo jiayou* 中国加油).

The 2008 torch relay lasted about five months, much longer than that of the 2004 Athens Olympics (78 days) and the 2012 London Olympics (70 days)<sup>70</sup>. The route map, from Olympia to Beijing, covered many famous cities inside and outside the PRC, including Shanghai, London, and Paris. The torch relay served two main propaganda aims of the CCP: one was to announce to the world that China’s Olympic dream was about to come true; the other was to disseminate the local culture of the torch relay cities and make the world know about the nation. Both aims served to promote the people’s nationalism.

It should be noted that the torch relay for the 2008 Olympics did not go smoothly outside the PRC. Western media and Chinese media differently reported the torch relay conflicts in London, Paris,

<sup>70</sup> The shorter period of the London torch relay is due to the route limitation within the hosting country after 2008.

and San Francisco. Activists protested the torch relay in those cities to claim Tibetan and Uyghur independence and address human rights problems, which was covered by the western media as “peaceful protests against a repressive regime and a military crackdown” (Horne & Whannel, 2010, 766). Chinese media then condemned the activists’ attacks “as violent acts against innocent people (especially the disabled ‘heroine’ of Paris, Jin Jing) requiring the restoration of order and stability” (Horne & Whannel, 2010, 766). The attacks ended the torch relay outside the PRC, arousing strong online popular nationalism reflected in BBS discussions (see details in the following sections).

### *The Paralympics*

The Beijing Paralympics were held from 6 to 17 September 2008, about two weeks after the regular Olympics. The two events were designed with the same motto: “One world, one dream,” and a mascot named Fu Niu Lele (福牛乐乐). The Paralympics took shape in an analogical form of the Olympics. Admittedly, the scale of the Paralympics was much smaller, garnered far less popular interest than the regular Olympics, so its influence was weaker. However, as an extension of the main event, the Paralympics were, to some degree, expanded the time duration. The propaganda related to the Paralympics was similar to that of the main event. Especially when the PRC dominated the medal count in the Paralympics, this result aroused the people’s national pride once more.

In conclusion, the Chinese people’s perception of the 2008 Games was different from that of Olympics hosted outside the PRC that did not arrange so many activities for engagement as the Beijing Olympics did through the comprehensive and dedicated organization. As the Beijing Olympics were hosted with the government’s great efforts, heavy coverage in mass communication submerged the Chinese audiences in a sea of Olympic propaganda. Billings et al. (2013) argue that heavy viewers of the Olympic Games demonstrated a higher level of nationalism than lighter viewers. Thus, the Chinese media set up an Olympic agenda through continuous the exposure of Olympics.

### **5.1.3 Narrating the Olympic Dream**

On 8 August 2008, at 8:00 pm Beijing time, the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony started as a magnificent spectacle at the national stadium. Geremie Barmé (2009, 64) indicates that “Intended

for mass consumption, the story at the Games was crafted to speak directly to the world of China's vision of itself." The ceremony narrated the Olympic dream in a grand and magnificent style to global audiences. It announced the realization of China's Olympic dream and proudly showed a rising China to the world.

By reimagining China on the world stage, the opening ceremony served some aims. Cui Xi (2013) indicates that the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony created a national image full of cultural symbols to foster a stable Chinese society. Similarly, Zeng Guohua (2013, 3) argues that "the construction of the ideal China in the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics both to the world and to the people inside China can arguably be summarized as a strategic construction of a 'new' set of Chineseness." In addition, the state aimed to "effectively communicate with the world about its vision of the future and the very course of its internationalization" (Xu, 2008, 225). Besides internationalism, as noted by Jacques deLisle (2008, 31) who points out that nationalism "predictably comes more to the fore as the [2008] Games approach," the narration of the ceremony took on a strong patriotic tone that I will detail in the following section.

To examine how the Chinese government constructed nationalism in the ceremony, I choose the live broadcast that Chinese audiences viewed most. Two companies, the Beijing Olympic Broadcasting Co., Ltd (BOB) and the American National Broadcasting Company (NBC), took charge of broadcasting the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony. The BOB version aimed at audiences in mainland China, while the NBC version targeted the audiences in the US and English speakers in other countries. Chinese audiences who watched the BOB version on CCTV reached 1.1 billion, and audiences in the US watching the NBC version approached 211 million (BOCOG, 2010, 129). I focus on the BOB version in this case study and explore how the narration of the opening ceremonies unfolded the Olympic dream. In doing so, I will discuss the visual presentation, camera angles and movements, and hosts' narrations of the ceremony.

### *Visual presentation*

The opening ceremony created various solemn and majestic scenes. It built up an ancient, friendly, powerful, and innovative national image and promoted national pride and national identification by

introducing Chinese culture, philosophy, ideology, technology, etc. The visual presentation largely embodied the motto (“One world, one dream”) and the three themes (High-tech Olympics, Green Olympics, and People’s Olympics). In addition, concerning constructing nationalism, one of the three elements of nationalism, as I discussed in Chapter 1—collective memories—was strongly reflected in the visual presentation. In comparison, the other two elements, national boundaries and people’s engagement, were not distinct. This was because the motto “One world, one dream” blurred national boundaries, and engagement was heavily scheduled in the prior game propaganda instead of the opening ceremony. In the following part, I will discuss what philosophy and ideology the opening ceremony conveyed; how the artistic performance emphasized Chineseness and branded China’s image; how the opening ceremony highlighted the motto and the themes to reimage China; and how it constructed nationalism by shaping collective memories and enhancing national pride.

The various performances in the presentation aimed to establish a friendly image of the PRC. In the welcome ceremony, 2008 performers recited excerpts from *the Analects*, one of the Confucian classics. Of these, “isn’t it delightful to have friends coming from afar?” (*you peng zi yuanfang lai, buyi le hu?* 有朋自远方来，不易乐乎？) reiterated the meaning of the Fuwa mascots’ names: “Beijing welcomes you (*Beijing huanying ni*. 北京欢迎你).” Another section, called Dream, with three astronauts walking in “space,” exhibited the PRC’s aerospace technology. During this section, a huge ball representing the earth rose, and actors tumbled on its surface. Finally, Chinese singer Liu Huan and English singer Sarah Brightman appeared on the top of the ball, singing *You and Me* (*wo he ni*, 我和你). The image of the planet earth and the lyrics of the song (e.g., you and me, from one world, we are family.) directly expressed the motto “one world, one dream” (Chen et al., 2012, 191). These messages not only showed the PRC’s affability to the world but also presented its ideas of peace, embodied in the argumentations such as “peaceful rise (*heping jueqi*, 和平崛起)” (Zheng, 2005) and “peaceful development (*heping fazhan*, 和平发展)” (Kang & Gung, 2007). Peaceful rise and peaceful development were important political discourses and diplomatic policies developed in the Hu Jintao era, suggesting that the PRC aimed to create a peaceful environment for its development. The presentation shaped friendliness as a crucial aspect of peaceful ideas, indicating that the PRC is completely integrated into the international community with peaceful development (Luo et al., 2010, 1610).



Figure 5.1 The dream section during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony <sup>71</sup>

The opening ceremony emphasized an important Chinese philosophy, Confucianism that cultivates East Asian people's characters, way of thinking, and behavior (Yum, 1988). Confucianism attaches great importance to a hierarchical relationship in both families and the state. People with dominating social status often use this to maintain power and control those at the lower hierarchical system levels. Originating in Confucianism, former President Hu's ruling philosophy of a "harmonious society"<sup>72</sup> stressed the importance of social stability (Chan, 2009, 821). As core ideologies in the Hu era, Confucianism and harmonious society were reiterated in the opening ceremony several times.

As mentioned above, the welcoming ceremony used Confucian classics to show hospitality to global audiences. The recitation of excerpts from *the Analects* in harmony with drumbeats "highlighted the idea of harmony through the accuracy and coordination of the drummers' performance" (Chen et al., 2012, 191). The section of Chinese characters of the opening performance also embodied Confucianism, together with Hu's harmonious society ideology, by demonstrating Chinese writing development. Three thousand performers acting as students of Confucius came on the stage with bamboo slips, the primary media for written texts in China before the paper (see Figure 5.2). They read another famous excerpt from *the Analects*: "Two heads are better than one" (*sanren xing biyou woshi yan* 三人行必有我师焉). After that came the moving blocks demonstrating the movable type

<sup>71</sup> This image is a snapshot of the opening ceremony broadcast on Youku, taken on 12 July 2014. The following images of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony were also taken from Youku on 12 July 2014.

<sup>72</sup> A harmonious society should have these social values: "democratic and ruled by law, fair and just, trustworthy and fraternal, full of vitality, stable and orderly, and maintains harmony between man and nature." (Hu, 2005, 3, cited in Chan, 2009, 821).

printing characters, China's invention of printing. The moveable type showed a big character 和 in both ancient and modern styles (see Figure 5.2). The character 和 referred to “harmony 和谐” and “peace 和平,” once again resonating Hu's political ideology of the harmonious society and peaceful rise of the PRC. Then the image of the Great Wall of China, a world heritage site, presented a sense of magnificence. Finally, the peach flowers grew out of the characters, symbolizing the meaning of romance and prosperity.

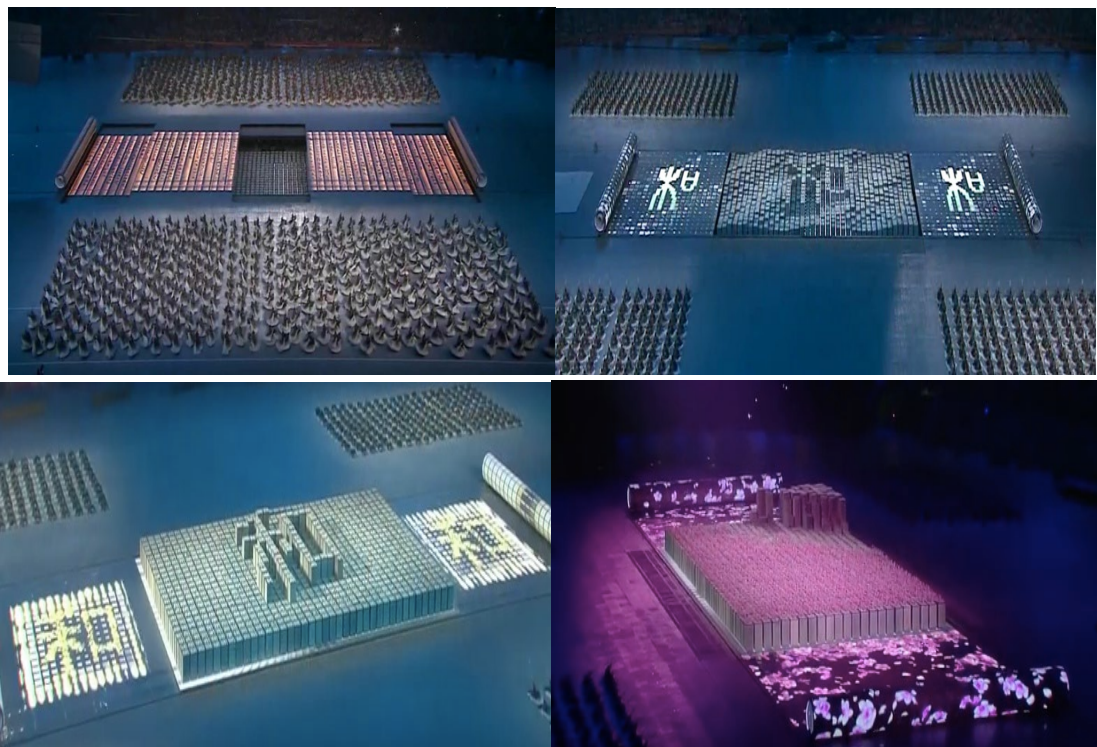


Figure 5.2 Fluid array of 897 movable type blocks that formed three variations of the character 和 during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

Elements of Chinese society, such as culture, history, and inventions, were the core content of the visual presentation, arousing national identity and national pride. For example, the countdown section presented two matrixes with Chinese numerals besides the Arabic numerals: 60 六十, 50 五十, 40 四十...and 1 一 (see Figure 5.3). The huge Chinese numerals displayed an important part of Chinese culture: Chinese characters. It also introduced four Chinese inventions—the compass, gunpowder, papermaking, and printing—to demonstrate the technological excellence of ancient China.





Figure 5.3 The countdown during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

The narration of Chinese history in the opening ceremony focused on collective memories. Specifically, the ceremony highlighted the memories of past grandeur and omitted China's modern history of humiliation, complying with the rule of positive propaganda in the CCP political communication tradition and Chinese culture of auspiciousness in festival-like media events. The Silk Road section of the ceremony focused on one of the most prosperous dynasties in history: the Tang Dynasty, the golden age of ancient China when Chinese culture and economy were outstanding in the world. Mark Edward Lewis (2009) addresses this dynasty as "China's cosmopolitan empire." As the Tang Dynasty represents a powerful state in Chinese history, this section of performances aimed at reinforcing the idea of the restoration of the Chinese nation.

The Ancient Silk Road<sup>73</sup>, the ancient network of trade routes that spanned most of Central Asia from China to the Mediterranean, was depicted as a friendship bridge that connected China with the outside world. Supported by people in green costumes, a dancer elegantly performed Dunhuang<sup>74</sup> Dance on a huge sheet of "paper," conveying the essence of ancient Chinese dance (See Figure 5.4). In addition, actors demonstrated the maritime Silk Road by acting out seafaring navigation with the help of a Chinese invention, the magnetic compass. The performance also displayed trading products, such as chinaware ceramics and tea that were aimed at a better understanding of the past

<sup>73</sup> It exerts a great influence on the current Belt and Road initiative, a development strategy established by the Chinese government in 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Dunhuang was a major stop of the Ancient Silk Road, playing an important part in China's ancient trade.

and at promoting Chinese national pride.

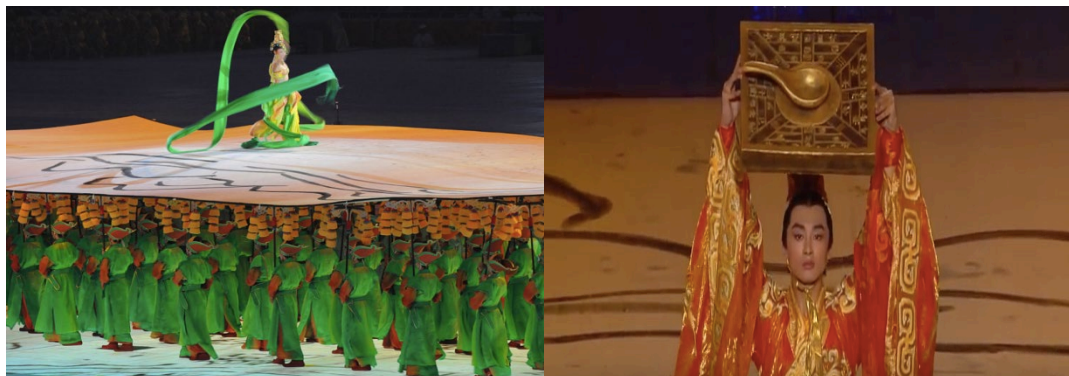


Figure 5.4 Performances connected to the Silk Roads during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

The Li and Yue (Ritual and Music) section presented traditional culture and art (see Figure 5.5). This section demonstrated Chinese poems in the form of songs. Accompanied by Kun opera (*kunqu* 昆曲), the oldest form of Chinese opera, the actors sang a song that dates back to the Tang Dynasty, called *A Moonlit Light on the Spring River* (春江花月夜). On top of two rows of marble pillars (*huabiao*, 华表), lutenists played the lute, a traditional Chinese instrument. On the pillars were yellow dragons that symbolized the Chinese nation.

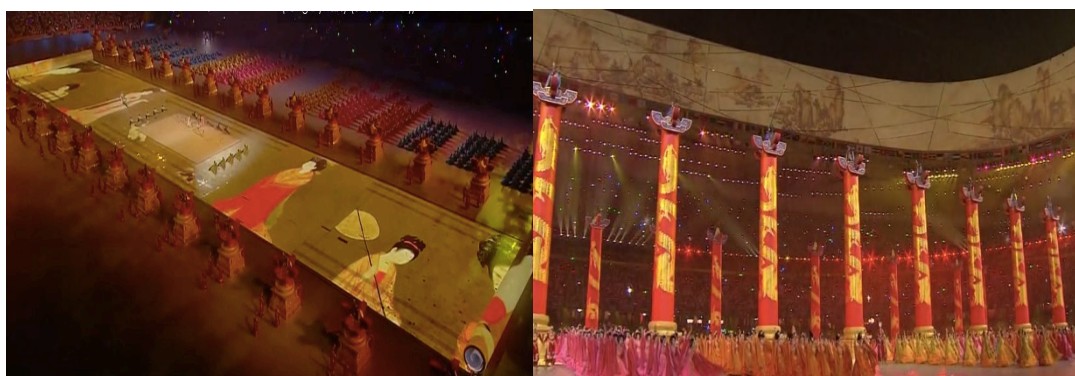


Figure 5.5 Performances connected to Li and Yue during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

The section called Starlight symbolized China's integration with the world and peaceful development. In the middle of a green block made up of actors sat the pianist Lang Lang and a five-year-old girl, Li Muzi, playing the piano, a modern instrument imported from the West. This showed modern China's embracement of foreign artist forms. During the performance, actors' green costumes lit up, resembling stars. The actors moved to form a dove shape from the star light that

symbolized China’s pursuit of peace in modern times. This dove then turned into the Bird’s Nest (the national stadium), twinkling like a massive star. The Bird’s Nest suggested a peaceful, homely place for athletes.

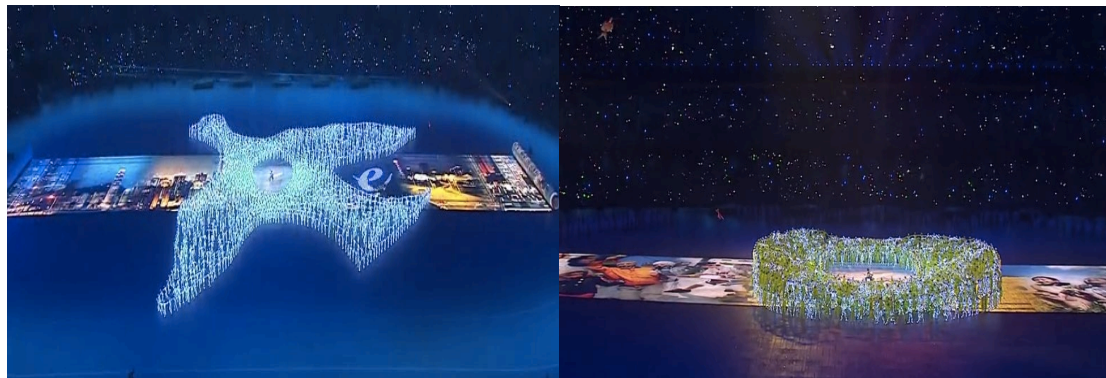


Figure 5.6 The Starlight section during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

In addition to the PRC’s culture, history, and social values, etc., the three themes BOCOG selected— High-tech Olympics, Green Olympics, and People’s Olympics—were integrated into the performances. High tech was broadly applied in the ceremony. For example, as already mentioned previously, China completely designed and built the Bird’s Nest where the ceremony took place. The structure of the Birds’ nest was made of 40,000 tons of steel, of which materials were constructed with high technology that helped the steel support the structure (Berkowitz et al., 2007, 173). Another example is the use of LED technology for the display of huge scenes. This technology was used in the display of huge images, including Chinese characters (see Figure 5.2), the countdown (see Figure 5.3), and the scroll painting (see Figure 5.7), to create visually compelling scenes. A third example is a technology used to coordinate performances. As thousands of cast members performed some scenes, the designers used the “Shenzhou 4000” control system, an

advanced communication system also used for space missions, to coordinate the performances (Dong, 2010, 2807).

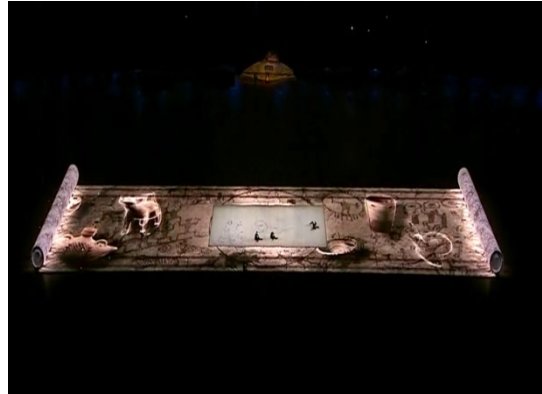


Figure 5.7 Scroll painting during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

The theme Green Olympics was mainly narrated in the Nature section of the opening ceremony. Two thousand eight masters performed Taijiquan (太极拳), a popular Chinese martial art. These masters formed a circle around a group of students and a teacher who discussed the environmental protection problems. Because Taiji emphasizes a harmonious relationship between man and nature, it provided the answers to the questions raised by the teacher and the students.

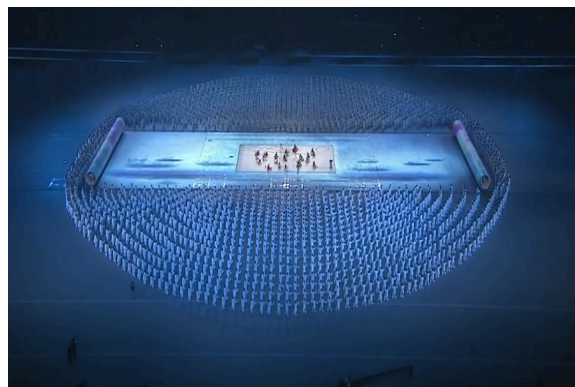


Figure 5.8 The Nature section during the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony

The theme of People's Olympics connoted two aspects: culture and a focus on people. The ceremony presented cultural elements: in the form of rituals, music, and operas. However, I found a counterexample of people orientation in the flag-raising ceremony where a nine-year-old girl Lin

Miaoke lip-synced to another girl Yang Peiyi's vocal track, when performing the song "Ode to the Motherland." It helped achieve a better theatrical effect but made some negative impact on the two children (according to the news reports on the related topics). In some sense, for the director, the media effect may be the first important thing, so this went against the theme of people-orientation.

Overall, the visual presentation in the opening ceremony combined the essence of ancient and modern China to impress both domestic and international audiences. Chen et al. (2012) point out that through visual symbols, the opening ceremony reinforced the traditional cultural values of Confucianism—harmony and peace, unity, and power and innovation—to increase China's soft power on the international stage. Based on what has been discussed, the visual symbols presented the image of an open, inclusive, and powerful China that embraced the whole world. This largely upgraded Chinese people's national confidence and satisfaction with the performance.

#### *Camera Angles and Movements*

Besides the visual presentation content (i.e., what was shown), camera angles and movements played an important role in shaping audiences' reception of the Olympic event and, through this, ultimately, contribute to the construction of nationalism. The ceremony juxtaposed several camera angles: bird's-eye views, low-angle views, and high-angle views. Among these angles, bird's-eye views were widely used to present grand scenes of the stadium and the artistic performance to demonstrate a spectacular effect.

Highlighting certain visual elements by framing and/or zooming in is a way to stimulate nationalism if the visual elements are signs with nationalist connotations (examples being a national flag and the state leaders). When Chinese political leaders and officials from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were present in the broadcasts, all the leaders' names were announced on the speaker without distinction or emphasis. However, the camera went to President Hu at least twice, and each time the camera stayed on him for a few seconds (the first time was 25 seconds, and the second time was 6 seconds). Later, the camera focused once on Juan Antonio Samaranch, who made great contributions to the PRC's return to the IOC, and on Jacques Rogge, the IOC president. However, in both the cases, the duration was much shorter (8 seconds in the case of Samaranch and

7 seconds in Rogge).

A similar situation occurred in the national-flag-raising section. During the Chinese national anthem section, the camera first moved to President Hu and focused on him for a few seconds before panning over to a group shot of high-ranking officials. It also went to stadium audiences, but some showed up so quickly that it was even difficult to identify their faces. When Chinese athletes appeared on stage in the parade of nations, the camera also immediately switched to the president.

Besides framing the president as a significant presence, the media framed Chinese athletes as inspiring. For example, during the parade of Chinese athletes, the camera was set for a short time at a relatively low angle, enabling the athletes to make intimate contact with the camera. Some athletes took up this opportunity and went close to the camera to greet viewers during the live broadcast. This virtually did not happen during the parade of other nations.

President Hu ranked first, then high-ranking Chinese officials, and the stadium audiences third concerning screen time. It might symbolize the different political status of people in the hierarchical system as Confucianism established. The president not only had the most screen time but also was brought into pictures most frequently. During the ceremony, he was shown on camera nine times in total.

In general, the most focus was on the president. The camera often filmed him at a low angle to build up a heroic image that implied the president led all the audiences to witness the big success of the Olympics where the officials had put tremendous effort. Later, the camera focused once on Samaranch who contributed to the PRC's return in the IOC, and on Rogge. With other high-ranking officials, the camera angle was either at eye-level or lower. The angle was eye-level or higher for the (much smaller) amount of screen time for the stadium audiences. The differences in angles, through which the viewer looked up to leading figures, in contrast to the sweeping views from eye level or above of larger groups of the common audiences, could be a subtle way of echoing the hierarchical Chinese political system.

### *Narration by Masters of Ceremonies*

Masters of Ceremonies (MCs) narrated the 2008 Beijing Olympics live broadcasts. A male MC, Sun Zhengping, and a female MC, Zhou Tao, hosted the live show. Working at CCTV, Sun was famous for hosting sports events. Zhou had hosted many important Chinese media events, such as the 1997 Hong Kong return gala and the spring festival gala, making her very experienced in hosting ceremonies. The MCs' narrations in the presentation contained nationalistic elements. First, the MCs used general description with little discussions or comments to glorify China. Second, they applied a poetic narration style showing their happiness for the realization of the Olympic dream and deep attachment to the Chinese nation. Third, they employed a set of rhetoric devices such as parallelism to increase the power of their discourse that stimulated national pride.

The MCs' narrations in the opening ceremony appeared official and were most likely scripted. This has been a distinct feature of broadcasting Chinese ceremonies for a long time, as Susan Brownell observed already in the 1992 Barcelona Olympic telecast in the PRC:

When the Chinese produce their own opening ceremonies, the commentary is written into the ceremony by the choreographers. The choreographers' written text is read during the performances by one of the two MCs. The MCs typically include one male and one female who alternate speaking. The text is well-planned, not spontaneous, and is an integral part of the performance, with the content and timing rehearsed in advance. This text, which includes the choreographers' descriptions of the themes, the numbers of participants, and other information and figures, is published in programs that the spectators are given to read. (Brownell, 1995, 34)

The narration in the live show of the opening ceremony consisted of many narratives. First, when the two MCs introduced a cultural performance to the audiences, they used general abstract descriptions. For example, Sun announced that

中国素以文明古国，礼仪之邦著称于世，几千年来不仅创造了灿烂悠久的历史文化，

更形成了高尚的道德准则和完整的礼仪规范。<sup>75</sup>

China is known as a country where people highly value etiquette. It has several thousand years of splendid history and culture, a set of high moral standards, and complete etiquette norms.<sup>76</sup>

Sun mentioned well-developed moral standards and etiquette norms in China but did not talk more about what these standards and norms were and how people complied with them, lacking details to describe China.

Second, the MCs' voices and tones, especially Zhou, were similar to reading a poem most of the time. It also resonated with what Brownell (1995, 35) noted: "in China such sentimentality, expressed in a semi-classical poetic language, is an integral part of the opening ceremonies. It forms an important part of the audience's appreciation."

When the two MCs spoke in the ceremony, their tone betrayed that they recited scripted lines instead of interacting with the audiences or with each other. However, judging by their narration styles, it is necessary to highlight slight differences between the MCs' narrations. As a professional sports commentator, Sun briefly introduced some background information on the artistic performance, and he did so in a matter-of-fact way. Zhou, who had much experience in hosting similar official mega-media events, narrated propagandistically. Following Sun's announcements, she gave further explanations but adopted a stronger poetic style in a seemingly subjective way. For instance, the beginning of the narration went like this:

孙正平：今天晚上我们将在国家体育场为您现场直播北京第二十九届奥林匹克运动会开幕式的盛况。

周涛：今晚我们将在气势恢宏、气质独特的鸟巢中与您一同见证“同一个世界，同

<sup>75</sup> The announcement is what I have heard and written down based on the live broadcast video. The following examples of MCs' narrations are from the same source.

<sup>76</sup> This example and the following examples are my translations.



一个梦想”的诞生。

Sun: This evening, we will live broadcast the spectacular opening ceremony of the 29th Beijing Summer Olympic Games at the national stadium.

Zhou: This evening, we will witness with you the birth of “One world, one dream” at the unique and magnificent Bird’s Nest.

While the two MCs introduced the same stadium, Zhou used more adjectives (magnificent 气势恢宏 and special 气质独特) to describe it. She also talked about the Olympics theme by using the word “birth (*dansheng* 诞生)” to highlight a sense of novelty. Moreover, “witness with you...” shortened the psychological distance to the audiences. Although Sun’s announcement was plainer than that of Zhou, he still provided few comments or discussions in the narration. His performance was in line with a traditional MC propaganda characteristic, i.e., a minimum of commentary and no negative comments (Brownell, 1995, 33).

Third, in the narration, the MCs used rhetorical devices, including metaphors and parallel sentences. For example, just before the official start of the ceremony, Zhou announced that

就拿这座独一无二的鸟巢来说，是多少个人默默耕耘，是多少双手点滴铸造，是多少颗心倾注热望才能让我们拥有如此华丽的殿堂在此刻迎接四海的宾朋。那些辛劳奉献的建设者，那些微笑周到的志愿者，那些淳朴热情的普通人，都是中国的骄傲，都是奥运的英雄！

At this exciting moment, friends all over the world are welcomed to such a gorgeous palace hall, the unique Bird’s Nest (the national stadium), created by numerous hard-working and dedicated builders, smiling and considerate volunteers, and warm-hearted people. They are all the pride of the Chinese nation and the heroes of the Olympics!

This fragment of Zhou’s narration contains three groups of parallel sentences: 1. 是多少…是多少…是多少；2. 那些…那些…那些；3. 都是…都是…。 This type of sentence made the speech

more powerful and enhanced the poetic effect. However, in the narration, Zhou did not mention further information about the efforts the “numerous, hard-working, dedicated builders, smiling, considerate volunteers, and warm-hearted people” made for the Bird’s Nest. The concepts “hands 手” and “hearts 心” in the original sentences are metonymies used to represent the whole concept of “people 人.” Zhou also called the Bird’s Nest a “gorgeous palace hall,” and she likened builders, volunteers, and warm-hearted people [sic] to the heroes of the Olympics. What was more, the MCs narrated the following couplet<sup>77</sup> to add to the poetic style of their presentation:

周涛：今夜，星光灿烂，八月的中国洋溢着如火的热情，诚邀八方来客，广纳四海宾朋。

孙正平：今夜，礼花满天，仲夏的北京绽放着灿烂的心情，见证拼搏奇迹，铸造荣耀巅峰。

Zhou: This evening in August, under brilliant starlight, China enthusiastically welcomes guests and friends from all over the world.

Sun: This evening in midsummer, with spectacular fireworks, Beijing jubilantly witnesses a miracle of struggling and a summit of great honors.

In the two parts of the couplet separately narrated by the MCs, almost every word or phrase was antithetical. For example, “brilliant starlight (星光灿烂)” versus “spectacular fireworks (礼花满天)”: both phrases included four characters and described a scene of prosperity and happiness for celebration. The rhymes in the couplet are: “*reqing* 热情” versus “*xinqing* 心情” and “*binpeng* 宾朋” versus “*dianfeng* 巅峰” generating a poetic effect. This couplet also established an image of an open, enthusiastic, powerful, and confident China. In addition, they used representational strategies such as “our nation (*woguo* 我国)” and “motherland (*zuguo* 祖国),” inviting a sense of belongingness. Their addressing the audiences as “we (women 我们)” or “our (women de 我们的),” implied that both narrators and audiences were members of a shared community.

<sup>77</sup> A couplet refers to a pair of successive rhyming lines that is common in Chinese poems.

In short, the visual presentation and MCs' narration in the opening ceremony placed the Olympic dream in a cultural framework to construct the image of a great China and foster state nationalism. For Chinese audiences, the Olympic dream recurring in the visual presentation aimed to increase national confidence and enhance national identity. The glorious achievements of the past and modern progress represented in the artistic performances aimed to enhance the audiences' identification with the nation and stimulate their nationalism. Following a traditional propaganda style, the MCs applied a poetic way to narrate the opening ceremony to increase national pride. As I have argued, their narration of the opening ceremony was aimed to foster nationalism in Chinese audiences' minds.

## **5.2 London Olympics**

London is the only city that held the Olympics three times, in 1908, 1948, and 2012. The latest one, held from 25 July to 12 August 2012, took place after the Beijing Olympics and drew wide attention from the Chinese, which allows for a comparison. According to CCTV, during the 2012 Games, 1.18 billion reviewers across China watched the broadcast, and most of them watched the official Channel CCTV 1. Altogether 108 million viewers watched the live broadcast of the London Olympics opening ceremony aired in China's early morning, and more than 200 million viewers watched the rebroadcast.<sup>78</sup>

The London Olympics opening ceremony attracted numerous Chinese viewers for three major reasons: first, I assume that the 2008 Beijing Olympics as a moment of national pride had instilled a liking of the Olympics in many Chinese viewers. After four years, many Chinese people wanted to see the differences between the two Olympics. Second, every Olympic event fosters the hosting nation's incentive to unfold the most positive image of their society, culture, and history through its opening ceremony. To promote the British nation image, public diplomacy mainly focused on foreign audiences, among whom the Chinese audiences were the priority (Zhong, et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2013). Thus, the opening ceremony potentially catered to Chinese audiences. Third, Chinese media played an essential role in building up a "creative, innovative, humorous, and amiable image" of the UK by releasing positive news coverage of the event (Zhou et al., 2013, 884).

<sup>78</sup>See <http://english.cntv.cn/special/AD/20120926/102555.shtml>, accessed 10 December 2012.

### 5.2.1 London Olympics Opening Ceremony

The London Olympics opening ceremony was staged on 27 July 2012 at the London Stadium. This section focuses on two core parts of the ceremony—the visual presentation and Chinese hosts’ narrations—and examines how British nationalist elements were constructed in the performances and how Chinese hosts interpreted the presentation to shape Chinese audiences’ understanding of the event.

#### *Visual Presentation*

British stage director Danny Boyle directed the visual presentation, *Isles of Wonder*. Following a timeline from the Pre-industrial Age up to the present, it endeavored to promote Britain’s national image by showing its greatness in a light-hearted style. In doing so, this ceremony presented various aspects of the UK, including the advanced healthcare service system (the National Health Service), popular culture (e.g., Mr. Bean), children’s literature (e.g., *Peter Pan*), and notable British inventions (e.g., the obstetrical ultrasound technology and the invention of the World Wide Web). These achievements exerted a great influence on the UK, even the world. In the following part, I will discuss the sections that showcased the UK, the artistic style, and three elements that constructed British audiences’ nationalism.

The opening section, a two-minute film titled *Journey*, produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), showed a beautiful landscape alongside the famous River Thames. This short video gave audiences a general impression of London and the country with several important landmarks, for example, Big Ben, the London Eye, and the Battersea Power Station. In the end, the journey went to London Stadium, where the London opening ceremony started.

The first part (of two) of the section called *Second to the Right and Straight on Till Morning* celebrated the National Health Service (NHS) founded in 1948 when the former London Olympics took place. Ryan Thomas and Mary Grace Antony (2015, 498) indicate that the British newspaper *the People* described the NHS as a British birthright, “prompting shared cultural identification and drawing battle lines on acceptable political conduct.” The performance featured 600 NHS dancers,

all of whom NHS staff, with children on 320 hospital beds. The beds were arranged to depict, through illuminated blankets, a child's face with a smile and a tear, spelling an acronym "GOSH." These were the logo and name of a children's hospital: The Great Ormond Street Hospital, founded in 1852 and one of the world's leading children's hospitals. In the performance, the doctors and nurses took care of sick children by reading stories and comforting them to fall asleep.



Figure 5.9 The logo of the Great Ormond Street Hospital during the London Olympics opening ceremony<sup>79</sup>

The following part focused on children's literature by combining the characters in literature and hospital scenes. In the scene, a girl read a book on a bed with a torch, when the famous British novelist J. K. Rowling read an extract from *Peter Pan* (or *Peter and Wendy*). After that, a fairy tale world appeared, as a group of villain puppets from British children's literature popped up on the stage, including the Child Catcher (*Peter Pan*), the Queen of Hearts (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), and Lord Voldemort (*Harry Potter*). After the puppets were driven away, the children in hospital pajamas started to jump on the beds and dance with the doctors and the nurses. This suggested that society protected the children through the medical system.

Concerning its artistic style, the show took a buoyant tone, a marked difference from the Beijing show that was notably more solemn. It included, among other sketches, a comical interlude performed by the popular comedic actor Rowan Atkinson as his character Mr. Bean. Humor also

<sup>79</sup> Screenshot from YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4As0e4de-rI>, accessed 16 August 2014. The following figures of the ceremony are from the same source.

existed in other scenes. For example, when the British weather forecaster Michael Fish reported the BBC weather forecast, “Don’t worry about a hurricane,” the rain suddenly poured down. It was an irony of the British weather forecast department, creating a brisk atmosphere in the presentation.



Figure 5.10 Rowan Atkinson in the role of Mr. Bean during the London Olympics opening ceremony

The short film called *Happy and Glorious* was centered on an English fictional character, James Bond. Even more noteworthy was that this film featured Queen Elizabeth II as herself (see Figure 5.11)<sup>80</sup>. The movie featured many British national flags: on the helicopter that the Queen and Bond boarded, on the Queen’s parachute when she and Bond parachuted from the helicopter, on the face of a bus driver waving towards the helicopter, in the hands of audiences looking at the helicopter, etc. The “flagged” nationalist symbols (such as flags) frequently shown in the film, according to Billig (1995), were contributed to stimulated nationalism.

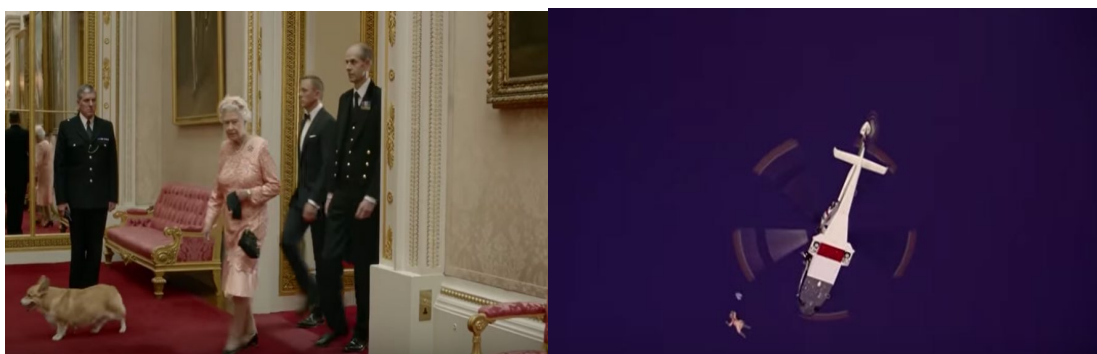


Figure 5.11 Screenshots from *Happy and Glorious* with Queen Elizabeth II in the presence of the character James Bond (left) and a stunt double dressed as the Queen skydiving (right)

<sup>80</sup> It was then proven that Gary Connery was the Queen’s stunt double in the performance of the skydiving.

Although the UK did not systematically conduct the Olympic education program as the PRC, it still aimed to promote people's national identity to consolidate the nation. As I have argued in the theoretical part, three important nationalist elements arouse identity thinking and national attachment: collective memories, national boundaries, and people's engagement. I will identify the three elements in the visual presentation to examine how they construct British nationalism.

Collective memories were mainly narrated at the beginning of the visual presentation, covering the pre-industrial age and the Industry Revolution. The section *Green and Pleasant Land* depicted the pre-industrial age when the stage was transformed into immense green grasslands and a small hill to display rural scenes: children playing outside; people feeding caged animals; groups of domestic animals such as sheep and cattle strolling on the grasslands. The rural scenes affirmed the collective memory of a peaceful life in the pre-industrial age.

However, the villagers' peaceful rural life ended, as workers rapidly built factories symbolized by seven big chimneys. This heralded the coming of the Industrial Revolution, interpreted by the section *Pandemonium*. While not ignoring its negative effects, the performance framed the Industrial Revolution as the most significant economic and technological advancement in history. In doing so and highlighting the UK's role in it, this section constructed the Industrial Revolution as a positive shared memory that instills national pride.

Another feature that shapes audiences' collective memories and constructs an imagined community is a shared religion: Christianity. In the ceremony, the Scottish singer Emeli Sandé sang the Christian hymn "*Abide with Me*," with modern dancers performing in the stage center. This song acknowledged that Christianity is the dominant religion in the UK, although "Boyle claims that it has an appeal to those of all religions and none" (Bryant, 2015, 340).

Besides positive memories, the opening ceremony presented sorrowful memories to arouse a shared national identity. For example, the show included a minute's silence and poppy flowers to commemorate the people who died in the two world wars in the 20th century. A series of photos were displayed to commemorate the victims of the London bombings on 7 July 2005, just one day

after winning the bid to host the Olympics. Although the memories were painful, they may impress the audiences more than pleasant memories.

The ceremony did not stress national boundaries that differentiated the UK from other nation-states but highlighted the UK's constituents, inspiring British audiences' national identity thinking. In the performance, a youth choir led by a solo of 11-year-old boy sang four songs: Jerusalem, Danny Boy, Flower of Scotland, and Bread of Heaven, representing the four countries of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The soft and emotional tones expressed deep attachment to the nation. During the singing, the four countries' screenshots and the British players' performances in the Rugby Union Games aimed to arouse audiences' national pride.

Concerning British people's engagement, a video in the section *Abide with Me* connected this event to the previous 1948 London Olympics, arousing collective remembrance of the past games. It then presented the torch relay, starting from the ignition of the flame in Greece. The video focused on public engagement and especially gave some close-up shots of handicapped torchbearers, also showing British social humanity. In addition, numerous audiences watched the relay in the streets, suggesting their support for this international event.

The ceremony did not focus on either high technology or the number of volunteers, as did the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony. For example, thousands of people performed the countdown in the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony with high-tech LED displays. In contrast, the 2012 London countdown section seemed much simpler but still creative: ten groups of children came on stage, holding balloons with numbers from 1 to 10 (see Figure 5.12). The balloons consecutively popped, 10 to 1. Although the two ceremonies used different ways to give the presentation, they were aimed to brand their nations on the international stage and thus enhance domestic audiences' national identity.





Figure 5.12 The countdown during the London Olympics opening ceremony

### *Chinese Hosts' Interpretation*

Unlike the Beijing opening ceremony, two teams, Bai Yansong (CCTV 13, the news channel) and Zhang Bin and Sha Tong (CCTV 1 and 5, the comprehensive channel and the Olympic [or sports] channel<sup>81</sup>) mainly interpreted the live broadcast of the London Olympics opening ceremony in the PRC. As the official language of the opening ceremony was English, most Chinese audiences could only understand the ceremony through the Chinese hosts' interpretation.

The two teams interpreted the London opening ceremony in different styles. Bai did not use any poetic language to narrate the events. Instead, he provided plenty of background information and comments on the performance in a matter-of-fact manner. His style of narrating the event was personal rather than following the official Chinese propaganda style. In the official Olympic channel, i.e., CCTV 5, Zhang and Sha's narrations were less formal than that of the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony. However, the two hosts hardly interacted with each other, making their narration style slightly similar to that of the MCs in the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

Then, the question is why the hosts' narrations of the two ceremonies (Beijing vs. London) and on two Chinese channels (CCTV 13 vs. CCTV 5) were so different. The most distinct reason was that as the Beijing Olympics, held in the PRC for the first time, was connected with the established Olympic dream, the Chinese government, as an organizer, had an incentive to promote state

<sup>81</sup> CCTV 1 shared the live broadcast of the London Olympics.

nationalism with traditional official propaganda methods (the style of solemnity and majesty). The MCs' narrations in the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony were typical for such patriotic propaganda. In the London Olympics, the PRC—as a participating country—did not have a motivation to enhance nationalism in the same way as during the Beijing Olympics. Concerning the different styles of the two Chinese host teams in the London Olympics opening ceremony, the major reason may be CCTV 5 was officially selected to broadcast the ceremony, which led to a more formal propaganda style.

### **5.2.2 Artistic Performances: London versus Beijing**

The opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics and the London Olympics were designed to be spectacles. Brownell (2013) suggests that they represent the political systems of the Chinese state and the British state, and the London Olympics received even greater attention in the PRC with the expansion of telecommunication. As consecutive events, the two ceremonies used similar strategies to brand their nations, and both attracted large attention from the Chinese, making them comparable in many aspects.

Generally, from the perspective of visual effects, the London Olympics opening ceremony was in some sense not as magnificent as the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony since the PRC invested much more money than the UK. Based on the cost of hosting the Olympics (Beijing: over 40 billion US dollars<sup>82</sup> versus London: 9.25 billion GB pounds<sup>83</sup> approximately equaling 14.5 billion US dollars), it was not difficult to see this difference. The higher cost allowed the Beijing Olympics to create the artistic performance more magnificent.

The design of the two performances bears similarities and differences. In general, both performances spared no effort to introduce their own history, culture, society, and contribution to the world. For instance, the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony celebrated the four Chinese inventions; the London Olympics opening ceremony displayed the Industrial Revolution and the British inventions. For their differences, the former centered on Confucianism were seen as a new form of nationalist

<sup>82</sup> See Zimbalist (2011, 125)

<sup>83</sup> See Evans (2016, 32)

discourse for the governance of Chinese authorities (Cheung, 2012). The latter emphasized individualism with social humanity embodied in cast members' varied costumes, personalized pop music and dance, care for (handicapped) children, and commemoration of the victims in the wars, etc.

Children, usually regarded as the hope and future of a nation, were widely used in both performances. For example, in the national flag-raising ceremonies, the respective national anthems were sung by children. In the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, children participated in various performances, such as the Beijing opera section. At the beginning of the London opening ceremony, children from the four countries of the UK performed the anthem of their respective countries. As this opening ceremony narrated a story of the UK's future (Bryant, 2015, 342), it was not surprising that children were frequently featured on the stage or in the pre-designed videos. Both ceremonies showed children's smiling faces that suggested happiness, peace, and an overall positive atmosphere.

Targeting their domestic audiences, the two opening ceremonies used similar ways to arouse national pride. The Beijing Olympics opening ceremony presented a glorious history by focusing on China's ancient civilization but ignored national humiliation in modern history. Likewise, the London Olympics opening ceremony celebrated the past but never mentioned its colonial history, as Bryant (2015, 342) argues that "Boyle's story of the nation was also notable for the tone of the telling. It was that rarity a story told straight – a celebration of Britain devoid of criticism and without irony".

Some differences between the two ceremonies merit discussions. First, the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony featured a great number of cast members in the same or similar costumes, giving an impression of uniformity. In contrast, the London Olympics opening ceremony had a smaller number of actors/actresses with a more varied array of clothing, reflecting individual British people's personalities and stories. The differences depended on the budget for each event (a larger cast of performers more expensive) and rested with different cultures and values of the two countries. To be specific, the PRC favors unified collectiveness in artistic performances, while the UK prefers to show characteristics of multiplied individualism.

Second, as one of the key elements to improve the stage effect, budgets for the events were different. Why did the PRC rather than the UK use a high budget to create an astounding stage effect? I assume it was for social satisfaction that helped enhance legitimacy. Chinese people attach great importance to “face” (*mianzi* 面子), measuring one’s dignity and respect. As I argued in Chapter 1, the Chinese government hosted the Beijing Olympics to satisfy its citizens, promote national identification, and enhance its legitimacy. One way to achieve this goal was to create a crowd-pleasing spectacle, rather than to optimize the budget and keep spectacle to a minimum to create the image of a government that acted economically. Thus, the Chinese government spent a considerable sum of money on gaining “face” through the spectacle of the opening ceremony, although it experienced an economic recession at the same time. While they led to the Beijing Olympics being the most expensive summer Olympics to date, the splendid stage effects made the government indeed gain “face” for the people. Hyun Bang Shin and Li Bingqing (2013, 568) argue that most media published numerous reports of positive public reactions to the event.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, the British valued the more practical elements of hosting the event without face culture. Due to economic considerations, the London Olympics cost much less than the Beijing Olympics, bring about distinct stage effects.

Third, the styles of the two ceremonies are in sharp contrast. The performance in the Beijing opening ceremony was solemn and majestic. The grand scene aided by high technology and the MCs’ formal narration proved this point. Moreover, the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony took a serious tone in creating a positive image of China. The London Olympics opening ceremony saw a more cheerful tone with elements of self-deprecating humor. It also included heavier, mournful themes: the commemorations of victims in World War I and the 2005 London bombings. The question of why these styles were so different lies in the approach the respective organizing nation took. As already discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the Chinese government and media mainly propagated the Beijing opening ceremony as a Coronation— one of the event types defined by Dayan and Katz (1992)—i.e., the crowning achievement of China’s bid to host the Olympics. It was a celebration of Chineseness (de Kloet et al., 2008; Zeng, 2013) that suggests success and happiness, and such

<sup>84</sup> There were negative responses, mainly from marginal population groups, including migrants who were provided the labor force in constructing the necessary infrastructure for the Games but were excluded from living in Beijing due to issues such as unaffordable housing (Shin & Li, 2013).

commemorations were not in line with a happy atmosphere. Therefore, the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony portrayed the positive aspects without mentioning the negative topics. The designers of the London Olympics opening ceremony, despite its lower budget, aimed to exhibit their national characteristics oppositely to the Chinese (light-hearted vs. solemn). It was a way to establish British identity, resonating with what Brownell says (2013, 1321): “Boyle’s opening ceremony, then, deliberately highlighted the chaos of British democracy with the authoritarian order of Beijing.”

Fourth, the cultural performances of the two ceremonies reflect two opposed political systems (Brownell, 2013, 1320). To be specific, the Beijing opening ceremony represented a hierarchical system (e.g., camera movements); the London opening ceremony stressed equality (e.g., Queen Elizabeth II’s parachute jumping) and humanity (e.g., the disabled children’s performance and commemoration of victims). This shaped audiences’ understanding of nationalism in the two countries. The Beijing Olympics opening ceremony emphasized the unified identity of Chineseness, Sinocentric, and ethnic-based Chinese nationalism. However, the London Olympics opening ceremony “highlighted the diversified identity of Britishness, conveying social inclusiveness, cultural hybridity, and civic-based multicultural nationalism” (Lee & Yoon, 2017).

In short, the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics presented a friendly, collective-based, civilized, dignified, dynamic, and technologically advanced nation-state to the world, which changed the stereotypical image of the PRC as a closed and laggard country in the past. This helped improve the confidence of the Chinese people. The opening ceremony of the London Olympics exhibited a humanistic, individualized, humorous, creative, and prosperous state. Myung-Sook Park and Hyae-Syn Tae (2016) suggest that both performances attached great importance to showcasing their national identity. Although the meanings of each performance were different, both performances integrate expressions of their counterpart country. To be more specific, the Beijing Olympics employed westernized expressions in the performance, while the London Olympics used oriental expressions (Park & Tae, 2016, 188).

Since the Chinese government “expects the media to play multiple roles, especially in the

construction of a good image of the Party-state both domestically and internationally” (Zhang, 2011, 193), the media, as the bridge between the government and domestic audiences, take charge of transmitting patriotic propaganda that caters to both domestic audiences’ taste and the government’s interest. As reflected online in the Tianya BBS, Chinese audiences tended to compare the two shows, and many of them favored the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony when they watched the London ceremony.

### **5.3 Tianya BBS and Online Nationalism**

The expansion of the Internet as mass media considerably changed how the media set the public agenda and how people are involved in public affairs. For example, when a media event occurs, Internet media broadcast the event online simultaneously as traditional electronic media. After viewing these broadcasts, Internet users air opinions and express emotions on the Internet by posting threads and comments. A virtual community reduces practical limitations of time and place to voice opinions. Furthermore, due to the anonymous character, commenters feel relatively free and confident to talk and join in various discussions, although in some cases, certain sensitive opinions that offend the government will be deleted or forbidden by web administrators with Chinese censorship mechanism (for details, see Chapter 3).

#### **5.3.1 Development of Chinese BBSs**

A Bulletin Board System (BBS, also referred to as an online forum) is an important online service where users can register and post messages, respond to threads, etc., emerging around 1997 in the PRC. BBSs had been one of the most popular Chinese online platforms for more than a decade around the 2000s. Although social media such as Sina weibo (established in 2009) and Wechat (founded in 2011) gradually started to boom online, eventually leading to the decline of the BBSs, it did not significantly influence the popularity of the BBSs between 2008 and 2012. The BBSs usage rate slightly declined from 2008 to 2012 (2008: 30.7% vs. 2012: 29%), but the number of users saw a significant increase during that period (2008: 91.00 million vs. 2012: 155.86 million).<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> These statistics are based on the report of CNNIC, see <http://www.cac.gov.cn/files/pdf/hlwtjbg/hlwlzkdctjbg023.pdf> and <https://www.cnnic.net.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201207/P020120723477451202474.pdf>, accessed 29 May 2019.

This shows that BBSs were still the most active online channels for public discussions of mass media events and nationalist expressions between 2008 and 2012 when the Beijing Olympics and the London Olympics in this case study took place.

BBS users expanded from social elites and university students to the populace throughout the first decade of the 21st century. Li Shubo (2010, 67) indicates that the early BBS users were well-educated elites, and that campus BBSs were popular among university students who used it as a resource for searching study information and leisure by discussing shared hobbies. The BBSs of Qinghua University (*shuimu shequ* 水木社区, website: [www.newsmth.net](http://www.newsmth.net)) and Beijing University (*beida weiming*, short for BDWM 北大未名, website: <https://bbs.pku.edu.cn/v2/home.php>) were representative Chinese campus virtual communities. By 2000, BBSs vastly expanded, becoming a major online forum for public discussions. Even eight years later, during the Beijing Olympics, “[a] BBS is the primary way that Chinese netizens access and transmit information online to a large number of people, almost as effectively as mass media” (Xiao, 2011, 204).

In this study, I choose Tianya BBS (<https://bbs.tianya.cn/>) as a research site to explore online nationalism. Tianya BBS, established in 1999 in Hainan, is one of the leading Internet forums among Chinese online communities. It has generated discussions on numerous social and political topics,<sup>86</sup> some of which drew the attention of traditional media and local governments, thereby attracting many Internet users. Xiao Qiang (2011, 204) indicates that by the end of 2007, Tianya BBS had “3.4 million total registered accounts and 100,000–500,000 users online at any one time. The online community has 200,000 daily online users, hundreds of thousands of new posts, and millions of commentaries per day.” Besides, according to statistics from American web traffic analysis company Alexa that specializes in Internet traffic analytics, Tianya’s Chinese traffic rank was 26, and global traffic rank was 141, measured over three months, on 5 May 2012 (see Figure 5.13). In 2008, a study

<sup>86</sup> The debate between Zhou Gongzi and Yi Yeqin (the so-called Zhou Gongzi incident in 2005) and the Death of Wang Yue (the so-called Xiao Yueyue incident in 2010) are notable examples of heated discussions generated by netizens on Tianya BBS. In the Zhou and Yi debate, the main contention was how the rich were defined and whether the rich were allowed to discriminate against the poor. Yi, claiming himself a rich person, posted certain threads to demonstrate this discrimination. Zhou raised various challenges to Yi, accusing Yi of being a parvenu. Zhou won the debate with support from netizens in the end. In the second incident, Xiao Yueyue, an Internet celebrity and proven to be a fake person, was depicted as a fat and obnoxious girl whose strange behavior drew great attention from netizens. The incident showed netizens’ appreciation of ugliness.

by Xinhua Net revealed that Tianya BBS, as one of the three most influential online communities in the PRC (Xiao, 2011, 217),<sup>87</sup> rendered it an excellent platform for online Chinese nationalism during the Beijing/London Olympic events.



Figure 5.13 Alexa's traffic rank of tianya.cn on 5 May 2012<sup>88</sup>

### 5.3.2 An Analysis of Online Nationalism on Tianya BBS

In this study, I compared online expressions of nationalism related to the Beijing Olympics and the London Olympics on Tianya BBS. I selected threads as the data source to evaluate online nationalism. The study includes two phases: the first is a quantitative analysis of netizens' engagement in the Olympic events by investigating the click rate of threads and the number of replies; the second is to explore the content of the replies that present public nationalist sentiments.

#### *Audiences' online engagement*

On BBSs, Internet users discuss various topics by creating a post to voice their opinion and/or express emotions on the subject. Users interested in these topics can read these posts and add their comments, thus forming a thread. The number of clicks each thread has received is one quantifiable measure of audiences' first interest in the topics they discuss; the number of comments per thread is another.

<sup>87</sup> The other two forums are Qiangguo (<http://bbs1.people.com.cn/board/1.html>) and Kaidi ([www.kdnet.net](http://www.kdnet.net)).

<sup>88</sup> See <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/tianya.cn>, accessed 5 May 2012.



To collect data, I separately entered two Chinese keywords, “北京奥运 (Beijing Olympics)” and “伦敦奥运 (London Olympics),” in the search engine of Tianya BBS. I confined the search to threads’ titles and then ordered the results by the number of clicks and by the number of replies, respectively. In addition, I limited the results to threads created in the same year as either the Beijing (2008) or London (2012) Olympics. This means that I regard threads on either of the Olympics created outside the respective Olympic year as not relevant<sup>89</sup>, and I have excluded these threads, even the ones that were being created before the year 2008/2012 but active in those years (i.e., new replies were added to them). Within the search results, I have assessed whether each thread indeed discussed the Olympics, as suggested by the keywords Beijing/London Olympics being part of the title or another topic. The latter were irrelevant to my research, and I have therefore also excluded them from the analysis. In the end, I narrowed my research to the ten most clicked and the ten most replied threads<sup>90</sup>. Table 5.1 illustrates the number of clicks, the number of replies, the date the thread was created, and title of each of the top ten most-clicked threads, and Table 5.2 shows these details for the top ten most replied-to threads. Figure 5.14 and 5.15 are shown to compare the results of the two events in terms of the number of clicks and the number of replies, respectively.

2008 Beijing Olympics (ranked by number of clicks)			
Rank	Number of clicks	Thread creation date	Title of thread
1	636579	19-04-2008	4月19日巴黎街头全法万名华人支持北京奥运大集会直播 Live broadcast of an assembly of ten thousand Chinese people supporting the Beijing Olympics on 19 April in the streets of Paris
2	538297	07-08-2008	开在七夕的北京2008年第29届奥运会开幕式直播贴 Live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics on Chinese Valentine’s Day
3	391124	10-04-2008	全球华人凝聚 北京奥运会旧金山市火炬传递圆满成功 Global Chinese gathering: the torch relay of the Beijing Olympics completed in San Francisco
4	346523	09-08-2008	北京奥运开幕式现场照片美轮美奂(不断更新中) Nice on-site photos of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony (live updated)

<sup>89</sup> The major (sub-) events took place in the year when the Olympics were held, which had a more immediate impact on public opinion than other years, so I confined the publishing time of the threads within the game year.

<sup>90</sup> Overlap exists in the two groups of threads because netizens can click the threads with the highest number of replies.

5	228778	02-04-2008	全程记录 2008 北京奥运会火炬传递活动(时时更新) Recording of the torch relay of the 2008 Beijing Olympics (live updated)
6	195109	30-07-2008	韩媒曝光北京奥运开幕式彩排遭谴责(转载) That South Korean media expose the rehearsal of Beijing Olympics opening ceremony is condemned (reproduced)
7	188674	22-07-2008	北京奥运最引人关注的中国十大巨星和国外十大巨星 The most attractive ten domestic and ten international superstars in the Beijing Olympics
8	159552	23-08-2008	2008 北京奥运会闭幕式图文直播 Live broadcast of Teletext reports of the closing ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics
9	145932	06-07-2008	参加北京奥运会开幕式的世界各国领导人名单 A list of the state leaders of all countries attending the Beijing opening ceremony
10	144896	07-08-2018	奥运期间的首都机场宛如星光大道,群星北京看奥运,来看看最全的机场撞星记 Beijing Capital International Airport is like the Avenue of Stars during the Olympic time: numerous pop stars come to Beijing to watch the Olympic Games; have a look at the pop stars at the airport

2012 London Olympics (ranked by number of clicks)			
Rank	Number of clicks	Thread creation date	Title of thread
1	577372	27-07-2012	2012 伦敦奥运会开幕式直播讨论帖 Live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics
2	305566	06-08-2012	这坑爹的伦敦奥运会——《八卦来了》奥运号 The cheating London Olympics—“Gossip is coming”: Olympic series
3	283478	13-08-2012	伦敦奥运闭幕式,白岩松吐槽解说针针见血!!CCTV13 开始神吐槽之路 The closing ceremony of the London Olympics: Bai Yansong's criticism is sharp to the point!! CCTV 13 starts criticizing [the ceremony].
4	271811	28-07-2012	伦敦奥运开幕联欢会的吐槽评论已出。(评论转载翻译贴) Complaining about the opening ceremony of the London Olympics (reproduced and translated comment thread)
5	242962	29-07-2012	伦敦奥运会和北京奥运会开幕式图片对比,兼国观的一些神吐槽 A comparison of the pictures of Beijing and London Olympic opening ceremonies and some sarcasm in the section of International Review [of Tianya BBS]
6	233513	04-08-2012	对比下北京的伦敦奥运吃的东西,欢乐贴 A comparison of food in the Beijing Olympics and the London Olympics, fun thread
7	219508	28-07-2012	我擦!!!!伦敦奥运一句话击败中国!!中国奥运完败!!! Oh snap!!!! In one sentence, the London Olympics have defeated China!! The Chinese Olympics are a complete failure!!!
8	181795	29-07-2012	2012 第 30 届伦敦奥运会游泳项目关注讨论帖 Discussion on the swimming event of the 30th London Olympics in 2012

9	153946	01-08-2008	伦敦和北京奥运开幕式对照.....只看图别说话好坏心自知 A comparison of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics and that of the London Olympics ... don't comment and only view the pictures and you will know the differences
10	152925	28-07-2012	刚看了伦敦奥运开幕式,对比北京奥运开幕式。。。[I] just viewed the London Olympic opening ceremony and compared it to the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony...

Table 5.1 Top ten threads with the highest number of clicks (Beijing vs. London)<sup>91</sup>

2008 Beijing Olympics (ranked by number of replies)			
Rank	Number of replies	Thread creation date	Title of thread
1	13261	07-08-2008	开在七夕的北京 2008 年第 29 届奥运会开幕式直播贴 Live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics on Chinese Valentine's Day
2	4741	19-04-2008	4 月 19 日巴黎街头全法万名华人支持北京奥运大集会直播 Live broadcast of an assembly of ten thousand Chinese people supporting the Beijing Olympics on 19 April in the streets of Paris
3	4621	02-04-2008	全程记录 2008 北京奥运会火炬传递活动(时(实)时更新) Recording of the torch relay of the 2008 Beijing Olympics (live updated)
4	4258	10-04-2008	全球华人凝聚 北京奥运会旧金山市火炬传递圆满成功 Global Chinese Gathering: the torch relay of the Beijing Olympics completed in San Francisco
5	3710	23-08-2008	2008 北京奥运会闭幕式图文直播 Live broadcast of Teletext reports of the closing ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics
6	2361	30-04-2008	开个北京 2008 年奥运会倒计时 100 天庆典晚会的直播讨论贴吧 Publishing a live discussion thread for the 100-day countdown of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics
7	1752	30-07-2008	韩媒曝光北京奥运开幕式彩排遭谴责(转载) That South Korean media expose the rehearsal of Beijing Olympics opening ceremony is condemned (reproduced)
8	1524	06-07-2008	参加北京奥运会开幕式的世界各国领导人名单 A list of the state leaders of all countries attending the Beijing opening ceremony
9	1314	17-08-2008	2008 中国北京 29 届奥运会闭幕式直播贴!!!!!! Live broadcast of the closing ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics!!!!!!
10	1294	09-08-2008	北京奥运开幕式现场照片美轮美奂(不断更新中) Nice on-site photos of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony (live updated)

<sup>91</sup> I retrieved the data on 20 July 2014. The retrieved threads were still available on the Internet in 2021.

2012 London Olympics (ranked by number of replies)			
Rank	Number of replies	Thread creation date	Title of thread
1	6891	27-07-2012	2012 伦敦奥运会开幕式直播讨论帖 Live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics
2	4337	30-07-2012	伦敦奥运会男子体操团体决赛直播讨论帖!(23 时 30, CCTV5) Live broadcast of team finals of men's gymnastics at the London Olympics (23:30, CCTV5)
3	3927	13-07-2012	2012 第 30 届伦敦奥运会游泳项目关注讨论帖 Discussion on the swimming event of the 30th London Olympics in 2012
4	3191	31-07-2012	伦敦奥运会体操女团决赛直播贴(今晚 23:30,CCTV5) Live broadcast of team finals of women's gymnastics in the London Olympics (tonight 23:30, CCTV5)
5	3021	29-07-2012	伦敦奥运会和北京奥运会开幕式图片对比,兼国观的一些神吐槽 A comparison of the pictures of Beijing and London Olympic opening ceremonies and some sarcasm in the section of International Review [of Tianya BBS]
6	2721	28-07-2012	刚看了伦敦奥运开幕式,对比北京奥运开幕式。。。. [I] just viewed the London Olympic opening ceremony and compared it to the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony
7	2614	28-07-2012	我擦!!!!伦敦奥运一句话击败中国!!中国奥运完败!!! Oh snap!!!! In one sentence, the London Olympics have defeated China!! The Chinese Olympics are a complete failure!!!
8	2448	28-07-2012	伦敦奥运开幕联欢会的吐槽评论已出。(评论转载翻译贴) Complaining about the opening ceremony of the London Olympics (reproduced and translated comment thread)
9	2269	28-07-2012	伦敦奥运开幕式全面超越北京奥运,有木有! The London Olympic opening ceremony completely surpasses the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony, isn't it [?]
10	2031	13-08-2012	伦敦奥运闭幕式,白岩松吐槽解说针针见血!!CCTV 13 开始神吐槽之路 The closing ceremony of the London Olympics: Bai Yansong's criticism is sharp to the point!! CCTV 13 starts criticizing [the ceremony]

Table 5.2 Top ten threads with the highest number of replies (Beijing vs. London)<sup>92</sup>

Based on Table 5.1 and 5.2, two elements of nationalism: Chinese people's engagement (shown in the torch relay) and collective memories (reflected in the Beijing opening ceremony) received close attention in the Beijing Olympics; the other element of nationalism—national boundaries (i.e., the emphasis of the differences/conflicts between countries)—was largely formed through the

<sup>92</sup> I retrieved the data on 20 July 2014.

comparison between the Beijing Olympics and the London Olympics. In the Beijing Olympics, the creation dates of the top ten threads mainly fall in two periods: April 2008 (the torch relay) and July-August 2008 (the major game event). In the London Olympics, the creation dates of the top ten threads only fall into the period of the games. This suggests that in the Beijing Olympics, as the PRC organized various Olympic propaganda activities (such as the volunteer enrollment and the Olympic education program) and longer torch relay (inside and outside the PRC), it immensely increased Chinese people's engagement. As an important element to construct nationalism, Chinese people's engagement in the Beijing Olympics was much more than that of British people in the London Olympics.

People's engagement in the media event strengthens popular nationalism and increases national identification. This is reflected by the topics of the most viewed and replied-to threads. The torch relay is a popular subject. Among the most viewed threads, the topic of conflicts in the torch relay in Paris ranks the first, and the torch relay in San Francisco ranks the third, just after the thread on the live broadcast of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony. It shows that the interruption of the Olympic dream stirs online opinions reflecting strong nationalism.

In contrast, in the 2012 London Olympics, the Chinese government and media had no prescheduled Olympic propaganda activities, and Chinese people's engagement in the London Olympics was much less than in the Beijing Games. Furthermore, as discussed previously, the route of the torch relay of the London Olympics was confined to the UK, leading to shorter duration. Thus, it brought about less participation of the British in the London torch relay than that of the Chinese in the Beijing torch relay. In terms of the influence of the London torch relay on Chinese audiences, the relay did not raise great attention among them, as no threads are seen on this topic in either of the top ten that mentioned the London torch relay. Instead, besides the London Olympics opening ceremony, Chinese audiences attach importance to the sports programs (Among the most replied threads, three out of ten threads on the London Olympics are about particular sports competitions: one is about swimming and the other two are about gymnastics). This suggests that because the PRC only acts as a participating country in the London Olympics, Chinese audiences' major concern switched to participating in the Games, particularly to the performance of Chinese teams.

As shown in the threads (Table 5.1 and 5.2), Chinese audiences hardly made comparisons between the Beijing Olympics and its predecessor, the 2004 Athens Olympics during the Beijing Olympics. Yet, they frequently compared the Beijing Olympics with the London Olympics (In the most-replied top ten threads, six out of ten threads make such a comparison). By further examining the threads' content, I find that five out of these six regard the Beijing Olympics as better than the London Olympics. It means that after hosting the Beijing Olympics, the event has become a benchmark for Chinese audiences to evaluate the London Olympics.<sup>93</sup> This implies that the Beijing Olympics have largely won public satisfaction as the government expected. Hence the Beijing Olympics strengthened the government legitimacy in this regard.

The number of clicks indicates audiences' surface-level interest in certain topics. Figure 5.14 shows that the number of the most clicked four threads of the Beijing Olympics is higher than that of the London Olympics. For the threads ranking 5–10 regarding the number of clicks, the number of clicks is higher for the London Olympics. The largest difference lies in the threads ranking second: (“live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics” vs. “the cheating London Olympics— ‘Gossip is coming’: Olympic series,” 538297 vs. 305566). The difference between the last threads on the two Olympics is the smallest (144896 vs. 152925). This suggests that Chinese audiences are more concerned with the hottest topics of the Beijing Olympics than those of the London Olympics.

The number of replies reflects audiences' deeper engagement in these topics. The top ten threads with the highest number of clicks show a similar disparity between the London and Beijing Olympics as the top ten threads with the most replies. Figure 5.15 shows that the number of replies for the five highest-ranked threads is higher for the Beijing Olympics than for the London Olympics; it is the opposite for the remaining five threads. The differences in the number of replies between London and Beijing are small, with one exception: the most replied-to thread of the Beijing Olympics has almost twice as many replies as the most replied-to thread about the London Olympics (13261 vs. 6891: Live broadcast of the Beijing opening ceremony vs. live broadcast of the London

<sup>93</sup> The PRC won the most gold medals in its Olympic history in 2008.

opening ceremony). This further supports the result mentioned above: Chinese audiences are more concerned with the hottest topics of the Beijing Olympics than those of the London Olympics, especially in the threads on the opening ceremonies.

The threads on the live broadcast of the opening ceremony have the most replies with both the London and Beijing Olympics. They also rank first (London) and second (Beijing) in most reviewed topics. Discussions on (the live broadcast of) the ceremonies are common in the threads, especially that of the London Olympics, reflected in more than half of the top ten threads (in both most-viewed and most-replied thread groups). Between 2008 and 2012, live streaming<sup>94</sup> did not enter Internet usage, so an important way of sharing the live broadcasts of the Olympic events was to post the live pictures and comments in threads and comment sections of BBSs (videos could not be posted in the threads during that period). Thread starters posted such live broadcasts in the form of threads and comments. Commenters, including the thread starter, then replied by posting related broadcasting information or giving comments. In this way, these threads accumulated close attention from the audiences who looked for updated information of the live broadcast.

This suggests, on the one hand, the opening ceremonies are the most important section of the two Olympic events for Chinese audiences. On the other hand, the audiences are much more concerned with the Beijing Olympics than the London Olympics, not even considering that with the expansion of Internet service and communication devices from 2008 to 2012 many more people joined online discussions in the PRC (the number of BBS users in the PRC grew from 91.00 million in 2008 to 155.86 million in 2012, as mentioned in Section 5.3.1).

<sup>94</sup> Live streaming that started to become popularized in 2015 refers to online media that simultaneously process received information and deliver live broadcasts in real time.

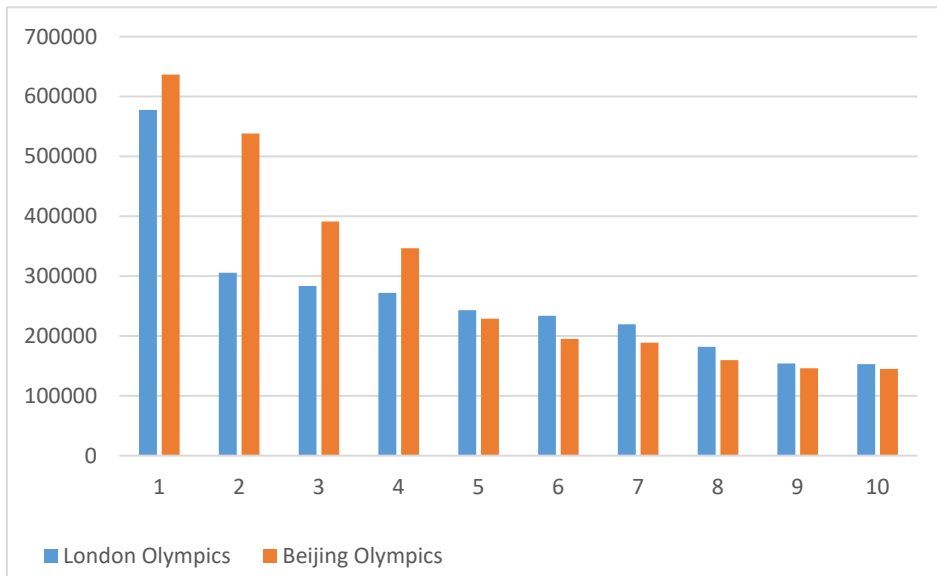


Figure 5.14 Comparison of the number of clicks: the Beijing Olympics vs. the London Olympics

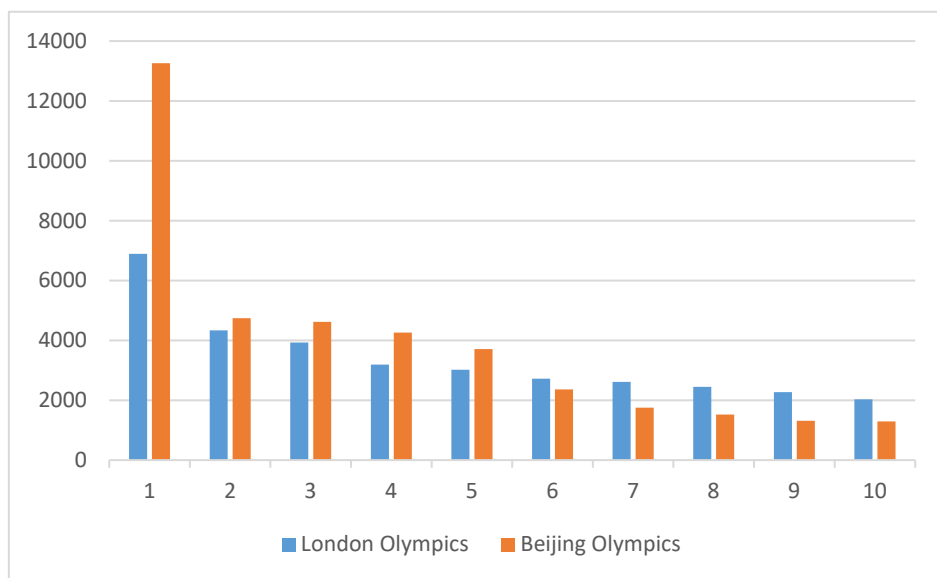


Figure 5.15 Comparison of the number of replies: the Beijing Olympics vs. the London Olympics

### *Analysis of Nationalism of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies*

After examining audiences' engagement of the Olympic events, I performed a content analysis by exploring the discourse of the selected threads on both the Beijing and London Olympics and then selecting certain examples of audiences' comments to analyze how Chinese audiences constructed nationalist discourse to express online nationalism.

I first manually score the comments in the selected threads. Based on the top ten most replied threads



for both Olympics, I identified two groups of threads as the subject for the analysis of online nationalism: two similar topics in each event should be selected; thus, the related comments, to a large extent, are comparable. The most replied-to threads about the opening ceremony meet the requirement discussed above. This shows that the visual presentation of the opening ceremony is directly linked to online public opinion voiced in Tianya BBS discussions. Besides, I also select similar topics of the live broadcasts of the closing ceremonies of the Beijing and London Olympics. I chose four threads in total: one about the opening (A) and one about the closing (B) ceremony for the Beijing (1) and London (2) Olympics. These threads are:

A1. 开在七夕的北京 2008 年第 29 届奥运会开幕式直播帖

Live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics on Chinese Valentine's Day

A2. 2012 伦敦奥运会开幕式直播讨论帖

Live broadcast of the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics

B1. 2008 北京奥运会闭幕式图文直播

Live broadcast of Teletext reports of the closing ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics

B2. 伦敦奥运闭幕式，白岩松吐槽解说针针见血!!CCTV13 开始神吐槽之路

The closing ceremony of the London Olympics: Bai Yansong's criticism is sharp to the point!!

CCTV 13 starts criticizing [the ceremony]

When a thread becomes popular, the earliest replies are noticed most, so some forum users are enticed to reply as fast as possible to threads they think might attract attention in the hopes of gaining Internet fame. The reply content is usually limited to a statement to declare that they are the first to respond, a so-called first post in English-language Internet environments (where the poster usually only states "first" or a similar phrase). On Tianya BBS, the most common first replies include 沙发 ("sofa"), 占座 ("taking a seat"), and 马克 ("mark") that are meaningless for this study. Thus, I will exclude them in the analysis. What was more, as mentioned in the previous part of this section, thread starters posted live broadcasts of ceremonies by replying to pictures in the comment sections. In fact, they did shape real public opinion. Such replies distorted any popular nationalism analysis, so I selected comments 1001–1100 in each thread to avoid these. After collecting all replies in each of the four threads, I categorized the nationalist sentiments of each into five levels, based on their

content and the tone expressed in them: “very high,” “high,” “neutral,” “low,” and “very low,” and then respectively marked them with 2 points, 1 point, 0 point, -1 point, and -2 points. Appendix 5.1 details the methodology according to which each comment falls into one of these five categories. Table 5.3 shows the total scores of nationalist sentiments reflected in the selected hundred comments in each of the four threads.

Thread	A1	A2	B1	B2
Points	123	71	75	64

Table 5.3 Results of Group A and Group B

The above results reveal that audiences show more nationalism in the opening ceremonies of both Olympics than in the closing ceremonies ( $A1 > B1$  and  $A2 > B2$ ). A possible reason for this is the initial novelty, freshness, and excitement the opening ceremony entails as the start of the event: although the closing ceremony, just as the opening ceremony, features entertaining, artistic performances, audiences may perceive these as repetitive of the opening ceremony, and the novelty has worn off. In the Beijing Olympics, another factor might have been important: more than the closing ceremony, Chinese audiences viewed the opening ceremony as the crowning achievement of realizing the Olympic dream.

Among Chinese audiences, the Beijing Olympics aroused more nationalism than the London Olympics in both the opening and closing ceremonies ( $A1 > A2$  and  $B1 > B2$ ). Why does this happen? Leading up to and during the Beijing Olympics, propaganda was very heavy and lasted for a long time, pushing citizens to immerse themselves in an environment of ubiquitous Olympic propaganda. The Olympic propaganda activities, including the patriotic education program, the volunteer enrollment, and the torch relay, prompted all of society to participate in the Olympic event. Public engagement in such activities increased national identification and nationalism. Audiences’ active online discussions of the ceremonies signify the effectiveness of the propaganda.

Since the London opening ceremony was broadcast at 5 am (China time) on the morning of 27 July 2012, only dedicated Chinese audiences updated the ceremony information live on the respective Tianya BBS threads. Furthermore, the thread starters led audiences to compare the two ceremonies by continuously posting related pictures of the Beijing opening ceremony in the comment sections. The primary comparison focused the content of the ceremony. Many Chinese netizens considered that the Beijing opening ceremony was better than the London opening ceremony. I have identified some characteristics of the comparison that serve as an explanation for this:

1. Cultural differences might have led to Chinese audiences not understanding the essence of the London artistic performances. Comments show some audiences' misunderstanding of British cultural symbols. As they did not understand British history, for example, when they saw the section of Pandemonium, many of them only thought the London ceremony was a mess.
2. Most Chinese audiences were more impressed by the spectacle and grandeur of the Beijing opening ceremony, owing to the far greater budget of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony (Beijing: over 40 billion US dollars vs. London: 14.5 billion US dollars).
3. Since the Chinese government and media propagated the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony as the stage where the PRC realized its Olympic dream, other Olympics—including London—could not reach the engagement level in the Beijing Olympics.
4. Chinese netizens also misunderstood the poppy flowers featured in the London ceremony to commemorate victims during WWI. The flowers reminded them of a historical trauma brought by the British in the Opium Wars, sparking antagonistic emotions towards the London opening ceremony.

Besides those supporting the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, some audiences regarded the London Olympics opening ceremony as better than its predecessor, at least in some respects. For instance, some commenters took a hostile stance towards the PRC's health care system inspired by the London Olympics opening ceremony's emphasis on the UK's NHS. Other replies indicated a predilection to British pop music over Chinese pop music, preferring the London Olympics opening ceremony. However, these negative comments are in small numbers compared to those supporting the Beijing ceremony.

Chinese nationalism is enhanced in the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, as accomplishing the Olympic dream satisfies a social demand. The London Olympics opening ceremony strengthens Chinese nationalism in some sense because it underlines the greatness of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony in comparison. However, the threads on Tianya BBS at the London Olympics opening ceremony reflect less Chinese nationalism than the Beijing opening ceremony. In the following section, I will discuss this discourse of online reactions in more detail.

#### *Discourse analysis of comments*

I have awarded each comment in a select sample of a hundred comments in four threads on the opening and closing ceremony with a score to reflect its nationalist statements, from -2 to +2. The scores allowed me to make some general statements on the level of nationalism in each thread and compare which ones showed more nationalist sentiments. To further explore how the comments expressed nationalism, I selected ten comments that typically showed audiences' nationalism from the threads on opening ceremonies of the Beijing and London Olympics<sup>95</sup> to see how audiences constructed nationalist discourses in the thread comments:

#### *Examples of comments on the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony*

1.有这么多国内的兄弟一起熬夜看直播,真的很感动。爱我们这个可爱的土地,爱我们这个饱经风桑的母亲。

It is exhilarating to stay up and watch the live broadcast together with so many domestic buddies.

Love our lovely motherland, who experienced many vicissitudes of life.

2.前排就坐!!! 任何排华分裂中国者都得死!!!!

First!!! Anyone who splits China must die.

3.美国老鬼子去死吧,白衣服标志的洋独独们出现在镜头里了!! 啊,看见咱们的红旗了,好多国旗!!

Go to hell, American devils. Foreign separatists in white emerge in the camera!! [I have] seen our red flags, so many flags!!

<sup>95</sup> The same threads as in the previous part. Yet, the comments I selected are not confined to the scope from the 1001st to the 1100th comment, and they belong to the whole comment section of the threads.

4. 双手举棋的中国人，向你们致敬！祖国和你们站在一起。

[I] salute the Chinese with flags in both hands! The motherland stands with you.

5. 我来直播，大家为我们的祖国鼓劲！

I come for the live broadcast. Everyone keeps his finger crossed for our motherland.

6. 群众集体练功？好，集体发功把美国摧毁了！长我民族志气，灭美帝威风。

Do the Chinese populace practice martial arts together? Fine, destroy the US with martial arts! Boost our national morale and puncture American imperialists' arrogance.

7. 感谢在美国支持北京，支持奥运的同胞。

Thank the compatriots in the US for supporting Beijing and the Olympics.

8. 感动，终于看到一个白老外举着咱的国旗支持奥运。

I am so moved to see a white foreigner holding our flags up to support the Olympics.

9. 祖国在我心，怕什么，兄弟们加油！

The motherland is in my heart. Don't be afraid. Go buddies!

10. 人现在还少，但是都分散开了，大家分组围住 ZD 们，这样不论哪一组镜头照 ZD，都能看到鲜红的国旗，海外的同胞们，偶(我)爱你们！

There are only a few scattered people. Let's surround ZD (*zang du*, Tibetan separatists) in groups so that red flags can appear in each camera shot of Tibet separatists. Overseas compatriots, I love you!

#### *Examples of comments on the London Olympics opening ceremony*

1. 一环占座，我脚[觉]得，基本木[没]有可以超越北京的！

I think [the London Olympics] generally cannot surpass the Beijing Olympics.

2. 占座，前几天刚回看了北京奥运开幕式，中国的文化真是博大精深。

[I] reviewed the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony a few days ago. Chinese culture is extensive and profound.

3. 大家何必都这么认真呢？咱们自己已经开过了，经历过了，现在嗑着瓜子轻轻松松看热闹就行了。

Why are we so serious? We have hosted and experienced the Olympics. Now we just sit there to relax and watch the games.

4. 跟体育有关的，俺都喜欢猜一把，看好伦敦开幕式，一定跟北京的不同，一定好看，一

定超过北京的开幕式。

I am interested in anything related to sports. I am optimistic about the London Olympics opening ceremony that must be different from the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, and the former must surpass the latter.

5. 伦敦奥运会倒计时比北京奥运缶阵倒计时弱了很多……

The countdown of the London Olympics opening ceremony is much worse than that of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

6. 哎，从已经放的镜头来看，比北京确实差不少呀！

Ah, judging by the broadcast camera shots, [the London Olympics opening ceremony] are much worse than the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.

7. 阴森森的感觉，咱们天朝那时多霸气

[I have a feeling of] spooky atmosphere [in the London Olympic opening ceremony]. The ceremony of our Tianchao [refers to the PRC, showing national pride] is much more powerful.

8. 表示人呢！人口少完全无气场啊！来天朝借人吧！！精彩在哪里！贝爷是骗子！

Too few people! Insufficient people make [the London Olympics opening ceremony] utter weak!!! Come to *Tianchao* to borrow some people!! Where is the excellent opening ceremony?! Beckham is a cheater!

9. 太不像个开幕式了，节奏太快，也很乱。

[It] does not look like an opening ceremony. It is too fast and in a mess.

10. 罂粟花都出来了，相比欧美媒体，咱中国媒体真是太不把自己当人了。作为鸦片的最大受害者，居然不趁机吐槽？

Poppy flowers come on the stage. Compared to American and European media, our Chinese media really do not respect themselves. As victims of opium, why should we (and Chinese media) not criticize this?

In the examples of the Beijing Olympics, some nouns that patriotically address the Chinese nation and fellow Chinese citizens are common in the selected comments: “祖国 motherland,” “天朝 *Tianchao*,”<sup>96</sup> “兄弟 buddies,” and “同胞 compatriots.” The nouns show up in conjunction with

<sup>96</sup> *Tianchao* is a catchphrase widely used in cyberspace to either express national identification or show disapproval and sarcasm of the Chinese state.

positive verbs, such as love, support, bless, cheer up, and salute. The specific use of these terms shows a discourse of representational strategies to express patriotic emotion. The first-person plural establishes a sense of inclusivity. For example, the word “our” (*women de* 我们的 or *zanmen de* 咱们的) establishes a sense of shared ownership. The first comment on the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony listed above uses “lovely” and “vicissitudes” to describe the commenter’s deep love for the Chinese nation. In comments 3 and 10 on the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony listed above, audiences use inflammatory language towards the US (American devils; puncture American imperialists’ arrogance) and Tibetan activists (ZD). This is an expression of Chinese nationalist sentiments as well.

In the ten selected comments on the London Olympics, a common discussion on comparisons between the two ceremonies of London and Beijing emerges. Generally, many comments praised the Beijing Olympics but criticized the London Olympics. Different from directly expressing their patriotism in the case of the Beijing Olympics (as shown in the first ten selected comments), commenters express nationalism in more indirect ways in the case of the London Olympics (mostly by stressing that the PRC did a “better” opening ceremony than the UK). A lexical difference between the two events also emerges: in the comments on the Beijing Olympics, audiences call the PRC their “motherland”; in those on the London Olympics, they call it “*Tianchao*.” Furthermore, like in the selected ten comments on the Beijing Olympics, audiences employ representational strategies when commenting on the London Olympics. For example, “we” and “our” display a sense of collectivity that illustrates commenters’ attachment to the shared community: the Chinese nation. In this context, the commenters make use of metaphors as well. For example, commenters use poppy flowers—used as a commemorative symbol in the context of the UK’s part in WWI—to evoke the memory of British exports of opium to China in the past, sparking (nationalist) resentment against the UK.

To sum up, commenters’ responses to the London Olympics are largely based on the influence of the Beijing Olympics. They compare the Beijing Olympics to the London Olympics, which may be led by hosts’ interpretation. The commenters on Tianya BBS construct nationalist discourses in similar ways when discussing both the Beijing Olympics and the London Olympics. A difference is

that the national discourses in comments on the Beijing Olympics are more direct, using terms more strongly laden with emotion than comments on the London Olympics. In other words, the discourses on Tianya BBS about the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics impress audiences with direct national pride. In contrast, the same discourses on that of the London Olympics generate the commenters' identification with the Chinese nation mainly by comparing its opening ceremony negatively to that of the Beijing Olympics.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a case study in government-staged media events by examining how the Chinese government organized the 2008 Beijing Olympics, especially how cultural performances during the opening ceremony constructed a patriotic ideal for the audiences. As one of the most important media events for the PRC in the 21st century, the whole Beijing Olympic event was a Coronation, a celebration of the realization of the Olympic dream, fulfilling a social demand established by the government and media. It received wide support from the people, largely owing to the constant propaganda efforts. The prior game propaganda was an implicit form of mass communication of state nationalism and laid a solid foundation for the games to draw broad attention. As a key part of the event, the opening ceremony was designed in a magnificent way to boost national confidence and pride and to prompt more profound love for the nation and satisfaction with the government.

By comparing the London Olympics opening ceremony to that of the Beijing Olympics, I found that, although different in style, the PRC and the UK spared no effort to introduce culture, history, and society to global audiences and build an excellent national image. The London Olympics opening ceremony used methods similar to the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony to arouse national identity, such as frequently showing the national flag. As far as other aspects were concerned, for example, the MCs' high-pitched voice and poetic tone in the narration of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, to a large extent, was different from that of Chinese hosts who interpreted the London Olympics opening ceremony. However, as it was a traditional CCP propaganda style in the Beijing Olympics, Chinese audiences may have accepted it as they are used to that way of narration (no comments on Tianya BBS criticized this point, to my knowledge).



Furthermore, the chapter analyzed online nationalist public opinions related to the two Olympic events on Tianya BBS. The preliminary result in researching Chinese audiences' online engagement in the events shows that the audiences launched more discussion on the Beijing Olympics than on the London Olympics, although Tianya BBS users increased a lot from 2008 to 2012. The analysis of nationalist comments on Tianya BBS relating to the opening/closing ceremonies shows that the Beijing Olympics aroused more nationalism than the London Olympics. Three vital reasons explain this: first, the Beijing Olympics were hosted in the PRC. Second, propaganda was far more pervasive for the Beijing Olympics. Third, the preparations of the Beijing Olympics entailed many opportunities for Chinese audiences to engage, a critical element in constructing nationalism. In short, in the Beijing Olympics, the construction of state nationalism in the form of the Olympic dream was handled by the propaganda apparatus. Through this propaganda, the legitimacy of the Chinese government was maintained and even strengthened.

The quantitative analysis I conducted on online nationalist sentiments presented in Tianya BBS thread comments, with numerical values indicating the level of nationalism, has laid a foundation for further statistical analysis. To conduct a large-scale process of public opinion in media events is a tendency for future online mass communication research. The next chapter will go into detail about this issue.

## **Chapter 6 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands Incident: Fighting for the Unification Dream**

In this chapter, I investigate how Tencent, a leading Chinese news media company, shaped online popular nationalism and how Chinese audiences reacted to express their nationalist sentiments regarding an abrupt media event—the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident. Selecting eighteen opinion pieces on Tencent website, I use discourse analysis and the ASAP to examine online mass communication of popular nationalism. I also explore whether an interaction exists between online and offline nationalism. To do so, I will address the following questions:

1. What was the social demand established by the government and media in the incident? How did they establish it?
2. What were Tencent's attitudes towards the incident? How did Tencent set the agenda to draw public attention? What frames did Tencent use to narrate this incident and adjust audiences' nationalism?
3. How did audiences react to opinion pieces on the incident? To what extent was popular nationalism presented in the related comment sections? Did online nationalism reach an extent arousing offline activism? Did Tencent help the government maintain legitimacy?
4. Did online nationalism interact with offline nationalism?

I first analyze Tencent's general attitudes towards the incident through careful text reading and identify these attitudes guide public opinion by highlighting or de-emphasizing the three elements of nationalism (boundaries, collective memories, and people's engagement). Following this initial assessment, I conduct qualitative and quantitative analyses. Applying Foucault's discourse theory, I analyze Tencent's news discourse to discuss how Tencent convey "knowledge" or "truth" to shape nationalist public opinion. I look at the communication characteristics of four Chinese news portals and compare how they edit news reporting through their unique news column called *zhuant* (专题)

on the incident, which supports my selection of Tencent as the research website. I conduct a discourse analysis of opinion pieces in Tencent's original news column In Touch Today (*Jinri Huati*, 今日话题) to explore Tencent's news frames and then make a detailed statistical analysis of the opinion pieces, followed by a discussion of the research results. In the end, I find that Tencent mainly adopted restrictive attitudes towards nationalism through a set of frames. These frames obscure the boundaries, skip the collective memories, and decrease nationalist engagement to weaken nationalist sentiments. Tencent shaped online popular nationalism at a level that prevented serious offline activism and government threats.

### **6.1 The Unification Dream**

Chinese authorities have constructed a social demand related to the incident through the narration of the unification dream. Since Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇, also known as First Emperor of Qin), China has been a unified state that conquered all other warring states in 221 BCE. However, in modern times, with twenty neighboring countries, territorial disputes have always been bothering the PRC. Chinese leaders have made great efforts to promote national (re)unification, which established a social demand in public perception. In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping put forward a principle known as "One country, two systems," according to which Hong Kong returned to the PRC in 1997 and Macau in 1999. The PRC currently looks for ways to apply the principle to reunification with Taiwan, but this issue is still unsolved. Former President Jiang Zemin (2006) delivered a speech in 1995 to propose eight propositions for the PRC's peaceful reunification with Taiwan. In addition, former President Hu Jintao (2009) advocated finding a peaceful solution for the Taiwan issue to realize the unification dream.

What is more, territorial disputes with neighboring countries such as Japan and the Philippines are also barriers to national unification. In 2012, shortly after Present Xi Jinping assumed power, he formulated the "Chinese dream," of which the unification dream is an important part (Xi, 2013). This narrative prompted the Chinese to keep a close eye on all territorial issues. When conflicts emerge, popular nationalism is correspondingly triggered. As discussed in previous chapters, such nationalism is different from state nationalism, but the two may intermingle when incidents happen.

### **6.1.1 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands Incident**

The Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands conflicts, part of the larger East China Sea disputes between mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan, have existed since the 1970s. It is currently one of the most important on-going disputed issues, hindering the realization of the unification dream claimed by the official.

The Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands conflicts are part of a wide antagonization of Japan. The Japanese military defeated China in two Sino-Japanese Wars—the main source for anti-Japanese sentiments and Chinese popular nationalism (Zarrow, 2005). Additionally, the Patriotic Education Campaign and other Chinese modernization narratives considered Japan the most significant antagonist, making anti-Japan sentiments a crucial part of nationalist discourses for the Chinese.

The Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands are a group of uninhabited islands located in the east of mainland China, northeast of Taiwan, west of Okinawa Island, and north of the southwestern the Ryukyu Islands. As it was reported by the Committee for the Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas that there might be energy deposit under the sea, it aroused these conflicts (Blanchard, 2000, 98). The situation boiled down to the PRC and Japan claiming sovereignty over the uninhabited islands, leading to confrontations for many decades.

The most recent confrontation happened in April 2012, when the Tokyo government proposed to purchase three of the five islands from a private owner. The Chinese regard it as Japanese provocations, triggering strong popular nationalism, as evidenced by online nationalist discussions and large-scale street demonstrations. Chinese mass media devoted an extensive amount of time and broadcasts to the conflict, thereby framing it as a media event. According to Dayan and Katz's (1992) definitions, this media event was an instance of a Contest and, eventually, a Conquest. As the conflict escalated and reached a climax when the Japanese government officially signed the purchase in September 2012, it symbolized that Japan conquered the islands and won the Contest. It lasted for about five months (April-September 2012) and comprised of a set of sub-events, each reported diligently by media outlets. For the sake of convenience, I drew up a timeline of these sub-events<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> This is an abbreviated and revised timeline, based on the earlier and more detailed timeline by Michael D. Swaine (2013, 13-17).

of Japanese activities in Table 6.1 and Chinese reactions in Table 6.2:

*Japanese activities*

Date	Event
16-04-2012	Shintaro Ishihara, a Japanese right-wing politician and outspoken governor of Tokyo (1999-2012), proposes to purchase the islands and have them administered by the Tokyo government <sup>98</sup> .
17-04-2012	Shintaro Ishihara declares that the Tokyo government and the owner of the islands have almost reached a purchase agreement. <sup>99</sup>
19-04-2012	Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda claims that the Japanese government will temporarily not interfere with the island purchase of the Tokyo government. <sup>100</sup>
28-04-2012	The Tokyo government calls for fundraising to purchase the islands. <sup>101</sup>
04-06-2012	The Japanese donate one billion Japanese yen to purchase the islands; officials plan to visit the islands in summer. <sup>102</sup>
11-06-2012	Six Japanese officials inspect the islands. <sup>103</sup>
12-06-2012	The National Diet <sup>104</sup> holds a public hearing about purchasing the islands. <sup>105</sup>
25-06-2012	Eight Japanese officials visit the islands. <sup>106</sup>
06-07-2012	Two Japanese officials visit the islands. <sup>107</sup>
07-07-2012	The Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda announces to nationalize the islands. <sup>108</sup>
24-07-2012	The Japanese government prepares to nationalize the islands officially. <sup>109</sup>
15-08-2012	Japanese authorities detain 14 Hong Kong activists. <sup>110</sup>
17-08-2012	The 14 Hong Kong activists are set free. <sup>111</sup>
27-08-2012	The Japanese government budgets two billion Yen for purchasing the islands. <sup>112</sup>
05-09-2012	The Japanese government reaches an agreement with the owner to purchase the

<sup>98</sup> CNTV, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120417/000487.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Sankei Shimbun, available on huanqiu.com, see <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJvInN>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>100</sup> The Nikkei, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120419/000509.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>101</sup> CNTV, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120427/001227.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>102</sup> China.eastday.com, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120604/000212.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>103</sup> *Beijing Morning Post*, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120611/000363.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>104</sup> The National Diet refers to Japan's bicameral legislature.

<sup>105</sup> CRI Online, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120612/000009.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>106</sup> CNTV, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120626/000188.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>107</sup> *China News*, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120611/000363.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>108</sup> *Global Times*, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120707/000636.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>109</sup> *China Economic Net*, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120725/000202.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>110</sup> CRI, available on Sohu, see <http://news.sohu.com/20120816/n350751360.shtml>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>111</sup> *Beijing Times*, available on Sohu, <http://news.sohu.com/20120817/n350839788.shtml>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>112</sup> Xinhua News Agency, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120905/001233.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

	islands. <sup>113</sup>
10-09-2012	The Japanese government passes the policy of nationalization of the islands. <sup>114</sup>
11-09-2012	The Japanese government signs the contract with the owner of the islands. <sup>115</sup>

Table 6.1 Timeline of Japanese activities

*Reactions of the PRC*

Date	Event
15-08-2012	Activists from Hong Kong land on the islands support the PRC's claim of sovereignty. <sup>116</sup>
19-08-2012	The first wave of massive anti-Japanese demonstrations emerges in cities across the PRC, including Beijing, Jinan, and Qingdao, <sup>117</sup> which constitutes the first wave of offline activism.
10-09-2012	The Chinese government declares sovereignty by announcing the base points, -lines, and territorial coordinates of the islands. <sup>118</sup>
14-09-2012	Chinese coast guard vessels enter the disputed territorial waters. <sup>119</sup>
15-09-2012	The second wave of massive anti-Japanese demonstrations emerges across the PRC and calls for a boycott of Japanese products. <sup>120</sup>
18-09-2012	The 81st anniversary of the Mukden Incident <sup>121</sup> is commemorated in China. <sup>122</sup>

Table 6.2 Timeline of the PRC's reaction

From this timeline emerges the following: after the Japanese government bought the islands, the Chinese government applied soft ways to protest Japan by announcing the territorial coordinates of the islands and sending vessels to the territorial water instead of directly waging war. This, in some sense, suggested the PRC was defeated in the Contest. The 2012 incident demonstrates the workings of nationalism and the goal (working towards the unification dream by obtaining sovereignty of the

<sup>113</sup> *Global Times*, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120905/000759.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>114</sup> People's Daily Online, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120910/001514.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>115</sup> *China News*, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120911/001101.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Xinhua Net, available on Sohu, see <http://news.sohu.com/20120817/n350832132.shtml>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Xinhua News Agency, available on caixin.com, see <http://international.caixin.com/2012-08-19/100425762.html>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Xinhua News Agency, available on Sina, see <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2012-09-11/021925143125.shtml>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>119</sup> Xinhua News Agency, available on CNTV, see <http://news.cntv.cn/china/20120915/100385.shtml>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>120</sup> *Lanzhou Morning Post*, available on Tencent, see <https://news.qq.com/a/20120916/000572.htm>, accessed 20 August 2014.

<sup>121</sup> The Mukden Incident is an event launched by the Japanese army for the invasion of northeastern China in 1931.

<sup>122</sup> *China News*, available on Tencent, see <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2012-09-18/005025193047.shtml>, accessed 20 August 2014.

islands) was not met.

### 6.1.2 Major Chinese Commercial News Portals

Chinese commercial news portals are more popular among news consumers than official websites. As Stockmann (2012, 227) notes that “the Internet may emerge as a more credible information source compared with traditional media,” the reporting of commercial news portals run by non-official media companies would be even more interesting and believable to Internet users than official news websites.

Four major non-official news media companies exist in the PRC: Tencent (qq.com), Sina (sina.com.cn), NetEase (163.com), and Sohu (sohu.com), each establishing an online news portal around 1998. According to the PRC’s provisions on the administration of Internet news information services, Internet media—including these news portals—only have the right to gather and repost news from traditional media outlets in the PRC, instead of creating their own news content.<sup>123</sup> Under this constraint, these websites adopt two news reporting ways: besides publishing aggregated news items, they can also publish opinion pieces on hot news.<sup>124</sup> This gives news portals a certain degree of freedom in producing original content (editorials, opinions, blogs, pictures, videos, etc.) that is still contingent on the news. By their subjective nature, opinion pieces are prone to affect audiences’ thoughts and behaviors, unlike the more static relaying of news coverage.

#### *News design of zhuan ti by news portals*

The 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident lasted for about six months, followed by a series of protective activities from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. News portals heavily commented on the events through special news columns with extensive, in-depth background information, called *zhuan ti* (专题, “special reports”)<sup>125</sup>. As shown in Figure 6.1, the news design of the four websites’ *zhuan ti* on the incident was similar in terms of form and content. Each *zhuan ti*

<sup>123</sup> See <http://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/provisions-on-the-administration-of-internet-news-information-services>, accessed 2 May 2013. Although Internet media are not allowed to interview, they may use clickbait headlines to attract attention.

<sup>124</sup> News portals may also repost comments and opinions from other channels. However, this is not their major feature.

<sup>125</sup> For an example (on Tencent), see <http://news.qq.com/zt2012/dyd/>, accessed 20 July 2014.

had a masthead with obvious Chinese characters showing the title, the subtitle, and images that depicted the incident. Under the masthead, three-column parts comprised the major content: some videos were on the left side; news items were in the middle; a timeline was on the right (except Sohu).

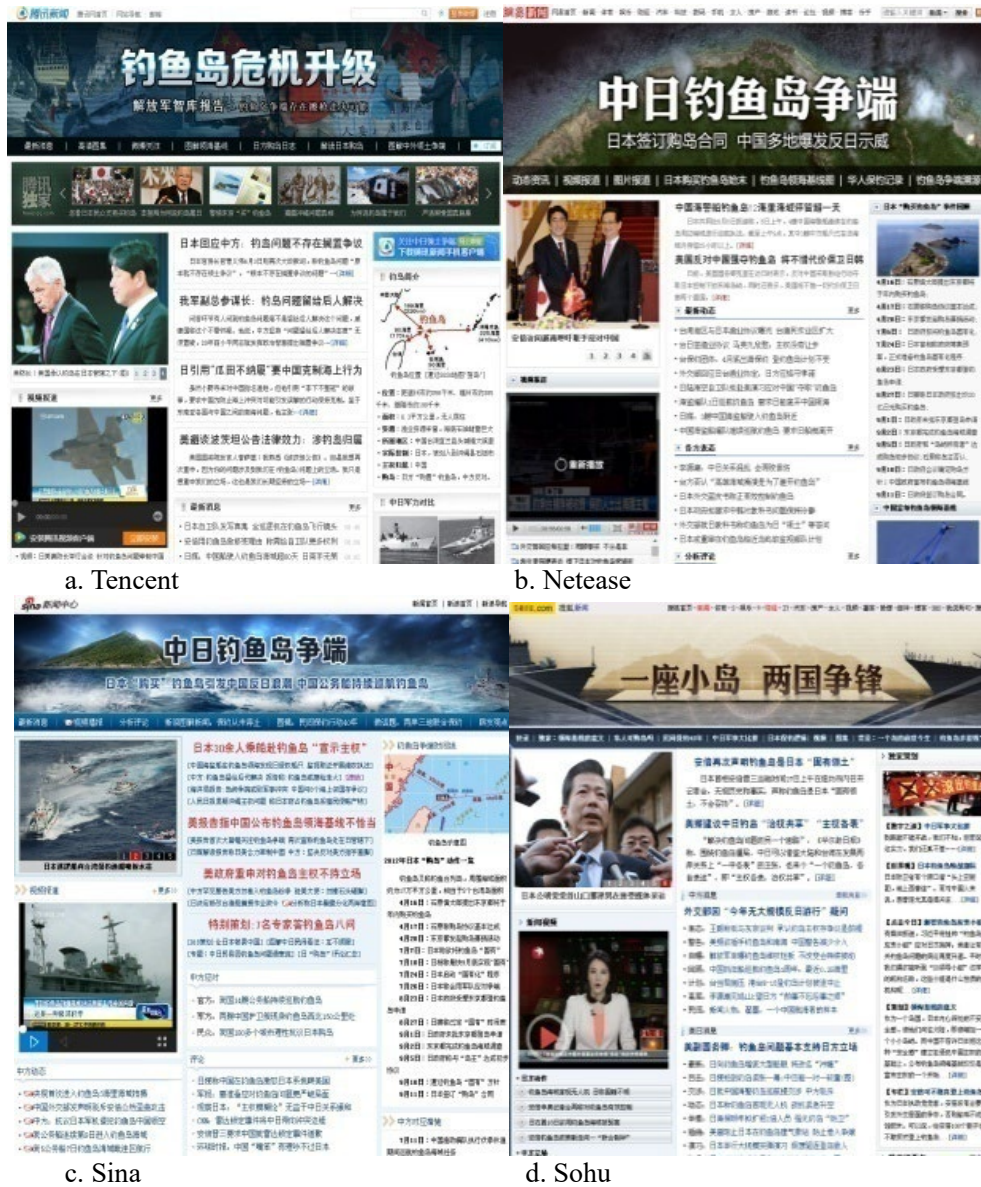


Figure 6.1 *Zhuanqi* of the four major news portals on the 2012 Diaooyu (Senkaku) Islands incident<sup>126</sup>

The latest news in the middle of the webpage of news portals' *zhuanqi* about the 2012 incident looked alike because their editors gathered news items from either official or non-official media outlets, telling similar stories about the incident. Among various news materials on *zhuanqi*, I will focus on

<sup>126</sup> Images sources: <http://news.qq.com/zt2012/dyd/>, <http://news.163.com/special/dydzd2012/>, <http://news.sina.com.cn/z/rbgd2012/>, and <http://news.sohu.com/s2012/baodiao/>, accessed 2 August 2014.



the mastheads (the title sections at the top) and the timelines edited by the four websites. The masthead was equal to a book cover, catching the first attention. The timeline included the general information of the incident, through which audiences could learn about the incident in a fast way.

Table 6.3 highlights the similarities and differences between the mastheads of the four *zhuanti*:

Website	Title	Subtitle	Masthead image(s)
Tencent	The Escalation of the Diaoyu Islands Crisis 钓鱼岛危机升级	According to the Report of the PLA Think Tank, War Can Arise 解放军智库报告, 钓鱼岛存在擦枪走火的可能	Aerial view of two cruising warships on the left (taking up approximately one third of the space), Baodiao movement protesters in Hong Kong on the right (remaining two thirds).
NetEase	The Sino-Japanese Diaoyu Islands Crisis 中日钓鱼岛危机	Japan Signed a Purchase Contract; Anti-Japanese Demonstrations Break out across China 日本签订钓鱼岛合同; 中国多地爆发钓鱼岛反日示威	Aerial view of a part of an island's coastline.
Sina	The Sino-Japanese Diaoyu Islands Crisis 中日钓鱼岛危机	Purchasing the Diaoyu Islands Triggers Anti-Japanese Tide in China; Chinese Official Ships Continuously Cruise the Diaoyu Islands 日本“购买”钓鱼岛引发中国反日浪潮; 中国公务船持续巡航钓鱼岛	Sea view of the Diaoyu islands on the left; tempestuous sea, highlighted the contrast in a dark sky that implies a storm; warship approaching the islands on the right.
Sohu	Two Countries Fight for Small Islands 一座小岛, 两国争锋	[No subtitle]	The boughs of two warships in the front, on a blue sea and cut off by diagonal blue lines, framing the Diaoyu (Senkaku) islands in the background, set in warm, yellow-brown color tones.

Table 6.3 The styles of mastheads of *zhuanti* of four news portals

The mastheads of *zhuanti* on the four news portals were homogeneous. Tencent used the word “escalation” and explicitly predicted war in the subtitle, presumably to catch audiences’ attention. Sohu used the most subtle wording, not even naming China, Japan, or the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands in the title. NetEase and Sina used the same neutral title. Both subtitles mentioned the “anti-Japanese” demonstrations; Sina added information about the official action on the islands. The background images of the mastheads primarily showed the islands (NetEase, Sina, and Sohu) and/or warships

(Tencent, Sina, and Sohu). They used two kinds of views, aerial views (Tencent and Netease) and sea views (Sina and Sohu). These images and views implied the territorial conflicts between the two countries and some reactions to the conflicts.

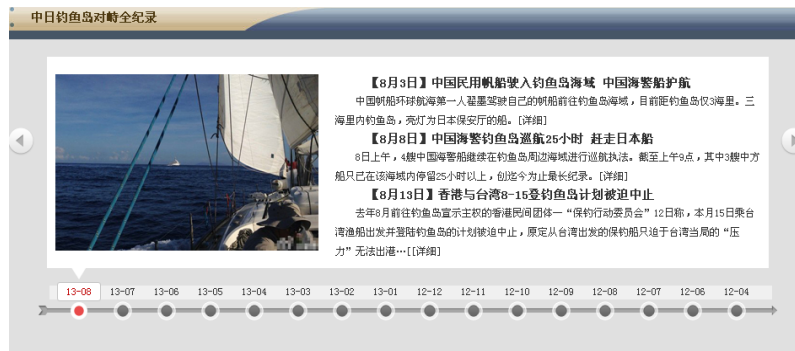
All *zhuanti* provided a timeline with a summary of the events from the very beginning (see Figure 6.2), based on information reported by official media outlets. News editors of media outlets operated within certain boundaries set by the CPD (Brady, 2008; Stockmann, 2010) to enforce authenticity in news coverage. Sometimes, authenticity proved to be a fluid concept, hinging on perspective. This reflects what Linus Hagstrom (2012) argues: “power shift” narratives in East Asia show that the “truth” in the 2010 Sino-Japanese dispute was very much a matter of perspective. Concerning the incident, the perspectives of the four news portals were arguably on the Chinese side, prompting them to construct the knowledge to the audiences in ways that supported the PRC and opposed Japan.



Tencent

NetEase

Sina



Sohu

Figure 6.2 A timeline of the incident on Tencent, NetEase, Sina, and Sohu<sup>127</sup>

Figure 6.2 shows that the contents of the four timelines looked similar, mainly recording Japanese activities subevents by subevents. Sohu was a bit different: it combined Japanese activities and the PRC's reactions within one timeline. The timelines of NetEase and Sina were the same with 12 sub-events. The timeline of Sohu covered more than one year (April 2012-August 2013), but during the main period of the incident (April-September 2012), it recorded 15 sub-events, including the PRC's reactions. Tencent summarized the 15 sub-events following the same clue. Thus, Sohu and Tencent (the same in terms of subevent number) have created a more detailed timeline followed by NetEase and Sina. Nevertheless, as all the storylines were almost the same, such minor differences would not create much deviation from the four websites' incident development. Audiences grab the plot of the incident in similar ways.

The layout of the four timelines also looked similar except Sohu. For example, NetEase and Sina created almost identical layouts. The top two timelines separately present two pictures (NetEase: a sea view; Sina: a map), indicating the territorial disputes (see Figure 6.2 NetEase & Sina). Tencent designed the timeline in a matrix with various sub-events. In each sub-event, a picture with description links allowed audiences to view the details of the sub-events (see Figure 6.2 Tencent). Only the timeline layout of Sohu was different. The timeline was displayed month by month, with two to three subevents on each time slot. If audiences want to view more details following the time slots, they had to click the slot contents. It meant that Sohu's timeline layout was not as obvious as what the other websites had done, but it was clearer to guide audiences to follow the established clue. Although the timeline layouts on the four websites were somewhat different, they did not change what the websites aimed to inform the audiences.

In summary, the four news portals similarly narrated the incident, in terms of the mastheads and the timelines. Although some differences, such as timeline layouts and titles, their narration of the contents was almost the same, telling the audiences about Japan's interruption of the unification dream of the Chinese.

<sup>127</sup> Image source: <http://news.qq.com/zt2012/dyd/>, <http://news.163.com/special/dydzd2012/>, <http://news.sina.com.cn/z/rbgd2012/>, and <http://news.sohu.com/s2012/baodiao/>, accessed 2 August 2014.

### *Tencent and its column: Jinri Huati*

As news content and form on the incident created the four news portals look homogenous, their influence on public opinion is also alike. To research these commercial websites, I chose Tencent as a representative for the following reasons. First, Tencent is the most popular website among the four. According to Alexa,<sup>128</sup> the four rank as follows: Tencent (qq.com): No. 2 > Sohu (sohu.com): No. 4 > Sina (sina.com.cn): No. 9 > NetEase (163.com): No. 38. Second, Tencent has developed two instant messaging apps: Tencent QQ (developed in 1999) and Wechat (*weixin*, 微信, developed in 2011), providing an extensive user base (798 million active QQ user accounts and over 300 million registered Wechat users in 2012.<sup>129</sup>) A miniature Tencent news website or a breaking news snippet pops up at times in the user interface of the QQ and Wechat apps, linking to Tencent's website and thus increasing traffic. Third, although not allowed to create news content in the form of reporting in a very neutral style, Tencent has its own opinion-giving columns that effectively function as a kind of "Tencent news." Compared to other news portals where opinion pieces on the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident are relatively scattered, Tencent creates the detailed column *Jinri Huati*,<sup>130</sup> providing systematic and in-depth analyses of the incident.

Established in 2005, *Jinri Huati*, one of the most influential columns of Tencent, has published over 2000 series of news topics. Unlike those official news reports, opinion pieces in *Jinri Huati* have a clear sense of what should or should not be done, and they provide constant analyses of current hot topics. This way, Tencent's attitudes about the incident become apparent, enabling us to understand how Tencent shapes public opinion on nationalism. What is more, audiences' online comments, visible on the news comment sections attached to these opinion pieces, provide direct evidence to investigate the interaction between Tencent's communication and online expressions of popular nationalism.

#### 6.1.3 News Comment Sections

With the expansion of Internet media, readers get used to reading online news through apps or

<sup>128</sup> See <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/CN>, accessed 20 December 2019.

<sup>129</sup> See <https://finance.sina.cn/usstock/hlwgs/2013-03-20/tech-ichmifpy3201182.d.html?fromtech=1&from=wap>, accessed 21 December 2020.

<sup>130</sup> See <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/rbyy/index.htm>, accessed 20 July 2014.

websites that are different from traditional newspapers. The online news is closely followed by comment sections where audiences can exchange knowledge and ideas. Tai-Yee Wu and David Atkin (2017, 75) indicate that “informing, exhibitionism, and obtaining feedback are found predictive of the frequency of commenting on online news comment sections.” News comment sections are an important communicative space for audiences to participate in political discussions, and it is found that “over 90% of newspapers and television news websites had a comment section in late 2013” (Stroud, Muddiman, & Scacco, 2016, cited in Stroud, Muddiman, & Scacco, 2017, 1728). Florian Toepfl and Eunike Piwoni (2015) indicate that comment sections on news websites construct counter-public spaces in democratic countries. However, as the PRC is an authoritarian country, counter-public discourse against mainstream ideology is normally censored. Online comment sections, established by mass media, nevertheless form part of the public sphere for political discussion among the audiences.<sup>131</sup> It does not matter whether comments are authentic or not, and it only matters that they are in the public sphere, shaping public discussions.

News comment sections are comparable to letters to the editor of traditional newspapers. However, in traditional newspapers, only a few letters are published due to limited space and editorial considerations. When they pass the selection to be published, letters to the editor undergo an editing process, which may tailor their size, tone, and content. Thus, it is hardly possible for readers to exchange ideas via traditional newspapers directly. In contrast, online comment sections enable readers to post comments not subject to selection and editing processes. In addition, time and place constraints interwoven with the traditional publishing process do not apply to online news. Therefore, theoretically, users are free to post as many comments as they want, on whatever they want—even if it is not applicable to the topic at hand. User-generated comments influence other users beyond the news items per se, as they can invoke a reply chain on their own, which is no longer relevant to the news the top-level comment reply to. Giving comments play an increasingly critical role in audiences’ news consumption process. For example, in the US, 37% of Internet users are involved in the news process by posting comments, reposting news items, etc.; 25% of Internet users comment on news stories (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010). In South Korea,

<sup>131</sup> As discussed in the theoretical chapter, Dean criticizes that the net is not a public sphere. Yet, in the PRC, the Internet, in principle, allows all people to discuss various legal frameworks, which constructs a platform functionally similar to the public sphere.

84.3% of online news users read others' comments at least once a week (Na & Rhee, 2008, cited in Lee & Jang, 2010, 826).

News comment sections provide a novel perspective to explore online public opinion directly after media communication. However, not everyone posts online comments after reading news stories. Wu and Atkin (2017) find that it is more likely for agreeable and narcissistic Internet users to post comments on news websites. Comments reflect how audiences think about issues. Henrich and Holmes (2013, 2) note that "comments yield real-time insights into public attitudes on issues, the factors that influence decision making on an issue, and the particular content that most strongly influences these decisions. These comments and responses serve as a gauge of public opinion that is immediate, spontaneous, and (presumably) honest." In addition, Manosevitch and Walker (2009) suggest that readers' comments create more diverse and authentic public deliberation than traditional letters to the editor. Online comment sections serve as a useful platform to analyze public discourses on the immediate news.

In this case study, I will examine popular nationalism expressed in online comments on Tencent's opinion pieces concerning the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident. Since news comment data are directly linked to the related opinion pieces, other topics beyond the scope of the news stories normally will not be discussed. In other words, unlike BBS discussions in which audiences post whatever they like in any thread, news comments mainly involve a few specific articles designated by media editors, significantly narrowing the focus. As these opinion pieces have passed the PRC's censorship regime, it stands to reason that the ensuing discussions fall within the realm of acceptable discussions, leading to less strongly censored debates than those on social media that concern a plethora of unvetted topics. Although the Fifty-cent Army may delete sensitive comments or add favorable opinions in comments on certain unfiltered issues, the comments on media-selected topics reduce the possibility of censorship and allow a clear insight into online opinion.

## **6.2 Tencent's Communication and Online Popular Nationalism**

The main research objects of this study consist of opinion pieces (Tencent's communication) and online comments (expressions of popular nationalism) on Tencent's *Jinri Huati* that require different

research methods to examine. In this study, I use discourse analysis to explore the attitudes towards news opinion pieces and figure out how Tencent edited the opinion pieces to shape public opinion. I then apply a computer-assisted method: an automated sentiment analysis program (ASAP, detailed below) to deal with half a million online comments. Concluding the analysis, I compare online nationalism with offline nationalism obtained from a second source to see if they are interrelated.

### **6.2.1 Tencent's Communication: Shaping Nationalist Discourse**

Even when functioning as bridges between the government and audiences, Chinese media, especially commercial media, do not merely boost or constrain nationalism in mass communication. They apply their own logic to political communication and shape nationalist public opinion. As the media have been commercialized since the 1990s, their priority is to seek revenue by catering to the audiences' interests (Stockmann, 2012; Zhao, 1998). One method to accomplish this is to present news in a surprising or interesting way, which may well entail stimulating nationalist sentiments. This strategy often overlaps with the government's goal of using controllable nationalism to maintain its legitimacy (Gries, 2004; Zheng, 1999). Ki Deuk Hyun and Jinhee Kim (2015) suggest that news consumption promotes online political expressions, including nationalism, that aims to boost popular support of the government. However, Zheng (1999) and Gries (2004) point out that nationalism is a mixed blessing: when uncontrollable, it can lead to social and political chaos and even threaten the rule of the government. News portals take this into account when creating and posting news stories. That way, even if they "constantly make small troubles for the authorities," they "will not fundamentally challenge the existing and political social order" (Zhao 1998, 162). In practice, this means that when popular nationalism manifests itself excessively on the Internet due to certain news stories, news portals such as Tencent switch to content that has a less inflammatory effect to avoid offending the government.

#### *Data selection*

The discussion of the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident in *Jinri Huati* is extensive, organized in a series of more than twenty opinion pieces. I chose the first eighteen (see Appendix 2) because they cover almost the whole scope of the incident from April to September 2012. The several remaining articles published after the climax of the incident were considerably less influential and

thus had little bearing on online nationalism, which is why I excluded them from the analysis.

### *Method and results*

First, I analyzed the publishing frequency of the opinion pieces to examine how Tencent made the incident noteworthy through agenda setting. I then identified the elements in these opinion pieces that constructed nationalist attitudes by looking at Tencent's attitudes towards nationalism. After that, I employed framing analysis to explore how Tencent portrayed the conflict issues. Finally, I examined the styles and organization techniques of the opinion pieces.

### *Publishing frequency and attitudes towards nationalism*

Tencent did not update the series of opinion pieces at a fixed frequency. The fluctuation in publishing suggested how Tencent set the public agenda. Table 6.4 shows that opinion pieces on *Jinri Huati* followed sub-events with a firm delay of up to almost two months. The first opinion piece followed the first sub-event in the incident, on 16 April, after two weeks. This shows that, after Shintaro Ishihara's plan to purchase the islands was reported, Tencent released the corresponding opinion pieces to guide public opinion not to arouse excessive nationalism. In May 2012, little actual incident development produced little news on this topic, so Tencent did not release any opinion piece. Another four sub-events were reported in June 2012 (opinion pieces 5 to 8), and only two related opinion pieces (opinion piece 2 and 3) emerged in July 2012. When the Japanese authorities detained 14 Hong Kong activists (15 August 2012), and massive demonstrations emerged across the PRC, symbolizing that the conflict reached a minor climax, Tencent rapidly released six articles (opinion piece 4 to 9). The emergence of multiple articles within a short period (13 days, 16-28 August 2012) strongly suggests Tencent's agenda setting. This is further evidenced by the following: when the dispute came to a climax in September 2012, Tencent released nine articles (opinion piece 10 to 18), the largest number within one month during the incident.

Comparing the publishing frequency and content of opinion pieces to the incident development suggests that, in the different phases of the incident, Tencent utilized different strategies in releasing opinion pieces. In general, the publishing frequency was positively correlated with the development of the incident. Tencent published opinion pieces at a relatively low frequency in the beginning;



later, corresponding to the development of various sub-events, the publishing frequency increased. The magic bullet theory assumes that audiences passively receive information from mass media, and the communication process is in a way that the media use a gun (messages) to shoot into audiences' heads (thinking or behavior) (Asa, 1995; Lasswell, 1927). Although this theory is criticized for the passiveness of audiences (Sproule, 1989), it still helps understand media strategies in the Chinese situation where propaganda mesmerize a large audience. In addition, most Chinese audiences can only read filtered digital information and hear just one voice from the government, which limited their recognition and understanding of various issues. This makes Chinese audiences more passive than many of their counterpart in the rest of the world. Therefore, the more opinion pieces published, the closer attention it would receive from audiences. This was also an indication of Tencent's agenda-setting strategy.

I mark the attitudes in the opinion pieces in Table 6.4 as below: the opinion pieces that promoted nationalism by attracting audiences' attention to the incident and directly or indirectly encouraging them to resist Japan, I marked as "stimulative;" for those creating a diversion from the incident or called for calming down when violent behavior emerged, I marked as "restrictive."<sup>132</sup> The incident development described in the summarization in *zhuanti* (listed in the third column) sets an informative timeline for editors of *Jinri Huati* to arrange the publishing frequency and content of opinion pieces. I compare the timeline (facts) with Tencent's attitudes towards nationalism in each opinion piece in *Jinri Huati* (opinions) and then plot its attitudes towards nationalists in the last column of Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 consists of three main parts: incident development, Tencent's reaction, and how the latter shapes attitudes. The first part, in column three, is an incident development summarization by

<sup>132</sup> For example, the first opinion piece (titled "how to view the Japanese people's support for purchasing the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?") discussed that Japanese nationalist right-wing groups (Uyoku dantai) were politically extremist and that the purchase of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) islands did not show Japanese nationalism was rising. The consensus was that the PRC and Japan maintained a normal relationship at this stage. The PRC had only to account for the potential extremism of Japanese right-wing groups. In this opinion piece, these Japanese right-wing groups were considered an outlet for nationalist emotions. Therefore, I marked it as "restrictive." Another example is the second opinion piece (titled "What is the purpose of Japan's nationalization of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?") that discussed Shintaro Ishihara's purchase aims and the Japanese government's nationalization of the Islands, indicating more strongly that nationalism was aroused among Japanese people. This opinion piece appealed to the Japanese and the Chinese to not react impulsively if both countries aimed to settle the dispute peacefully. In other words, it tempered excessive nationalist sentiments. Therefore, I marked this opinion piece's attitude as "restrictive" as well.

Tencent's editors in *Zhuanti*. Although this summarization, being news content, is not entirely subjective, it recounts facts, at least in part. The second part in column five lists article titles, illustrating Tencent's tone in reacting to these events. The third part is my evaluation of Tencent's nationalist attitudes displayed in the opinion pieces by adjusting three elements constructing nationalism (boundaries, collective memories, and people's engagement).

No.	Incident developments <sup>133</sup>		Tencent's reaction in opinion pieces		
	Date	Development in the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident	Date	Corresponding opinion piece in <i>Jinri Huati</i>	Tencent's attitudes towards nationalism
1	16 Apr.	Shintaro Ishihara proposes to buy the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands.	1 May	How to view the Japanese people's support for purchasing the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?	Restrictive: obscure boundaries
2	17 Apr.	Shintaro Ishihara claims that the Tokyo government and the owner have reached an agreement.	16 Jul.	What is the purpose of Japan's nationalization of islands?	Restrictive: obscure boundaries
3	19 Apr.	The Japanese Prime Minister claims that Japan would not interfere with the purchase by the Tokyo government.	28 Jul.	Implications of Major General's claim "The Ryukyu Islands <sup>134</sup> belongs to China."	Restrictive: decrease engagement
4	28 Apr.	The Tokyo government called on people to donate for the purchase of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands.	16 Aug.	How to view "defending the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands" among the populace?	Stimulative: increase engagement
5	4 Jun.	The donations reach one billion yen; officials plan to land on the islands in summer.	20 Aug.	Why does the South Korean government vigorously defend the Dokdo Islands (Takeshima) <sup>135</sup> ?	Stimulative: emphasize boundaries
6	11 Jun.	Six Japanese officials inspect the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands.	21 Aug.	Boycotting Japanese products: causing a no-win situation	Restrictive: decrease engagement
7	12 Jun.	Japan held a public hearing on the purchase of the islands.	23 Aug.	Should we fight for the islands?	Restrictive: decrease engagement
8	25 Jun.	Eight Tokyo officials land on the islands.	27 Aug.	A patriot: Shintaro Ishihara	Restrictive: obscure boundaries
9	6 Jul.	Two Ishigaki <sup>136</sup> officials landed on the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands.	28 Aug.	Is it deplorable to applaud the behavior of attacking the Japanese Ambassador?	Restrictive: decrease engagement
10	7 Jul.	The Japanese Prime	1	If we declare war, can we	Restrictive:

<sup>133</sup> This is based on the timeline I outlined in Section 6.1.1.

<sup>134</sup> The islands are currently under the administration of Japan.

<sup>135</sup> The Dokdo Islands (Takeshima) are disputed islands between South Korea and Japan. Tencent editors use this case as an example to encourage readers to join the protest actively.

<sup>136</sup> Ishigaki is a Japanese city.

		Minister asserted that the islands would be nationalized.	Sept.	beat the Japanese?	decrease engagement
11	24 Jul.	The Japanese government officially declares to nationalize the islands.	3 Sept.	Is it useful for Chen Guangbiao <sup>137</sup> to advertise for the islands?	Restrictive: decrease engagement
12	15 Aug.	Japanese authorities detain fourteen Hong Kong activists.	13 Sept.	Rare earth is not an army, so it is unwise to use it for the resistance against Japanese aggression.	Restrictive: decrease engagement
13	17 Aug.	The fourteen Hong Kong activists are set free.	14 Sept.	Why are the Japanese not patriotic enough?	Restrictive: decrease engagement
14	19 Aug.	The first wave of massive anti-Japanese demonstrations emerged in cities across the PRC, including Beijing, Jinan, Qingdao, etc.	15 Sept.	The Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands crisis: is the US the real manipulator?	Restrictive: decrease engagement
15	5 Sept.	The Japanese government has reached an agreement with the owner to purchase the islands.	16 Sept.	Those who exert violence with mendacious patriotism should be punished.	Restrictive: decrease engagement
16	10 Sept.	The Japanese government passes the policy of nationalization of the islands.	17 Sept.	Why is it difficult to break the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands deadlock?	Restrictive: decrease engagement
17	11 Sept.	The Japanese government signs the contract with the owner of the islands.	18 Sept.	Everyone is responsible for the rise and fall of the country.	Restrictive: decrease engagement
18	10-23 Sept.	The second wave of massive anti-Japanese demonstrations merged across the PRC and called for a boycott of Japanese products.	20 Sept.	It is unnecessary to be overly pessimistic about irrational anti-Japanese behavior.	Restrictive: decrease engagement

Table 6.4 Comparisons between incident developments and attitudes presented in opinion pieces

By analyzing the eighteen articles, I attempt to understand Tencent's general opinions shaping popular nationalism based on the incident development. I also identify how Tencent shaped such attitudes with the three nationalist elements. As discussed above, Chinese commercial media, in some sense, need to help the government guide public opinion and foster a stable society. It is reasonable to assume that Tencent's editors take potential nationalist sentiments into account before releasing the articles. Whether the selection of the articles aims to stimulate or discourage nationalist

<sup>137</sup> Chen Guangbiao is a Chinese recycling entrepreneur and philanthropist.

sentiments depends on the framing purpose.

It showed that in the reporting on the incident, Tencent was not enthusiastic about promoting popular nationalism. Among the eighteen articles, I have marked only two as “stimulative” and the other 16 as “restrictive,” indicating that most articles, in my opinion, attempted to maintain a modest nationalism. The conflicts seemed to spark nationalism among the Chinese on their own. In particular, the Japanese government signing the purchase contract on 11 September 2012 triggered the nationalist sentiments of many furious Chinese. The eruption of nationalism surrounding the incident caused violence towards the Japanese living in the PRC and even some Chinese who either work for a Japanese company or married a Japanese spouse (Weiss, 2014). This situation threatened state administration over society. Social chaos induced by excessive nationalism would ruin the government’s image or even legitimacy (Shirk, 2008). It was thus plausible that the shift in Tencent’s article analysis followed internal decrees by the authorities to curb nationalist sentiments. Tencent altered the contents of the opinion pieces 6 to 18 to shift towards a position as a voice of reason. Its attitudes towards popular nationalism on the incident were mostly restrained, not stirring radical nationalism. That would also meet the authorities’ expectation for maintaining legitimacy.

I have argued that the three elements that construct nationalism are boundaries, collective memories, and people’s engagement (see Chapter 1). Weakening or strengthening these will thus decrease or increase nationalism. I then identify to what degree these three elements are present in the eighteen opinion pieces. I labeled the results with the attitudes in column six of Table 6.4 and found that Tencent mentions national boundaries between the PRC and Japan but would not emphasize these (with one exception in opinion piece 5). Instead, Tencent tried to obscure the boundaries (to reduce antagonism) between the PRC and Japan by narrowing the definition of the enemy as the Japanese right-wing group rather than the Japanese government and people. In addition, the articles hardly mention past national humiliation brought by Japan, thus downplaying the factor of collective memories. They pleaded for less engagement in extremist nationalist expressions and activities such as violence and boycotts (13 out of 18 opinion pieces).

As it is difficult to satisfy the social demand of obtaining the sovereignty of the islands, a safe way

to deal with the rising social demand is to reduce and/or limit popular nationalism to a level that will not threaten the legitimacy of the authorities. When the incident approached the climax, Tencent’s major restrictive nationalist attitudes prove that they use this strategy.

*Framing analysis*

An analysis of Tencent’s attitudes is not enough to capture analytically the fundamental patterns that Tencent editors used to shape nationalist discourse. To look further into this issue, it is worth exploring how Tencent framed the incident to shape audiences’ perception. To do so, I will rely on Baldwin van Gorp’s (2010, 91) notion of “frame packages” that include “an integrated structure of framing devices and a logical chain of reasoning devices.” Van Gorp (2010, 92) argues that the core of doing a framing analysis is to “identify the framing and reasoning devices and to relate them to a condensing symbol, which is part of a shared culture.” Gamson and Modigliani (1989, 3) note that framing devices suggest how to think about the issue and reasoning devices justify what should be done about it. They identify five framing devices: metaphors, historical exemplars from which lessons are drawn, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images, and three reasoning devices: roots, consequences, and appeal to principle (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, 3). Reason devices are what Entman (1993, 52) identifies as “definition functions” of frames that directly interpret the problems, casual connections, moral evaluations, and solutions.

To do a framing analysis in this case study, I used three coding procedures: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (cf. Strauss & Corbin, 1990, cited in van Gorp, 2010, 93). I used open coding to identify the elements related to nationalism. I examined what framing and reasoning devices were employed with axial and selective coding and then grouped these elements. Finally, I identified a set of frames to analyze how Tencent constructed meanings they wanted to express. Table 6.5 shows my identifications of framing and reasoning devices in the opinion pieces.

Source text (examples)	Framing devices	Reasoning devices
1. 稀土不是部队，拿来“抗日”不靠谱。 It is unwise to use rare-earth that is not an army to resist Japan. 2. 日本战后，防“爱国主义”如	Metaphors 1. Metaphor “army” suggests that some people used rare earth as a weapon to protest against Japan, which is as irrational as boycotting Japanese products.	Causal connection—roots of the conflicts: Japanese right-wing groups who provoked the disputes

<p>洪水猛兽。 After WWII, Japan regards “patriotism” as fierce floods and savage beasts (great scourges). 3.钓鱼岛成为了日本政客们的“工具”。 Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands became a “tool” of Japanese politicians. 4.现代社会和平解决领土争端已成潮流。 Peacefully solving the territorial issue becomes a tide in modern society 5.“爱国”不是挡箭牌。 Patriotism is not a shield. 6.美国和日本联手，中国还谈何“洗刷耻辱”。 If the US is united with Japan, there is no way for the PRC to remove the disgrace. 7.仇恨、对立是中日关系毒瘤。 Hostility and antagonism are the tumors of Sino-Japanese relations.</p>	<p>2. Metaphor “fierce floods and savage beasts” depicts patriotism as a bad thing for people. 3. Metaphor “tool” suggests that Japanese politicians use the islands for their own political ends. 4. Metaphor “tide” refers to a strong force that prompts people to solve the territory issue peacefully. 5. Metaphor “shield” suggests that people should not do evil things in the name of “patriotism.” 6. Metaphor “disgrace” refers to the territory invasion that the PRC suffered from Japan in the incident. 7. Metaphor “tumors” indicates that the PRC should not hold an inimical and antagonistic attitude towards Japan, which is not good for bilateral relations.</p>	<p>Solution—appeal to the principle: 1. Shelving differences and seeking joint development</p>
<p>1.韩国国民在美国、澳大利亚等地登了非常多宣誓独岛（日称“竹岛”）主权的广告。 South Korean people advertised the sovereignty of the Dokdo Islands (Takeshima) in the US and Australia. 2.想想俄罗斯把天然气用作外交工具的前车之鉴。 Think about the lessons of Russia that used natural gas as a diplomatic tool 3.像美国[.....]也允许各种反战的声音充分表达自己的意见。 The US allowed people to express various anti-war views. 4.最早的一次抵制日货运动是在1908年 The earliest boycott of Japanese products took place in 1908.</p>	<p>Exemplars 1. This sets a good example for Chen Guangbiao’s advertisement for Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands in the <i>New York Times</i>. 2. Russian case teaches a lesson for the PRC to deal with conflicts. 3. The US example implies that different anti-war views should be allowed in the PRC. 4. This uses the example of the boycott in 1908 to explain the different situations nowadays and suggests that boycott is not applicable to protest against Japanese now.</p>	<p>2. Sovereignty advertisement is an acceptable way to express nationalism.</p>
<p>1.损敌八百，自伤一千 (A no-win situation) 2.中国元素 (Chinese elements); 不惜一战 (go to war at any cost) 3.爱国者 (patriots) 4.开战 (go to war) 5.天下兴亡，匹夫有责</p>	<p>Catchphrases The catchphrases are either idioms or words that arouse people’s attention. Words such as “Chinese elements” and “patriots” construct an imagined community for the audiences.</p>	

(Everyone is responsible for the rise and fall of the country) 6.非理性反日(irrational anti-Japanese)		
1.右翼势力“捣乱”只是中日关系支流。 Troublemaking of right-wing groups is not mainstream Sino-Japanese relations. 2.日本谋求正常国家。 Japan intends to act like a normal state. 3.日本在“实际控制”上，确实占优。 In terms of actual control (of the islands), Japan has an advantage over the PRC. 4.但是全球化让抵制不再可能成功。 Yet, boycott tends to be no success because of globalization	Depictions The depictions portray the issues of the conflicts in the aspects comprising 1. Who is the main actor in the conflicts? 2. What is the intention of Japan? 3. Compared to Japan, what is the advantage and disadvantage of the PRC in the conflicts? 4. Boycott is not a good way to express nationalist sentiments.	Problem definition: It defines that the island conflicts are caused by Japanese right-wing groups and implies that the conflict should not ruin Sino-Japanese relations.
An example of visual images (see Figure 6.3)	Visual images Tencent has posted at least three pictures in each of the eighteen articles to illustrate the texts and provide further information.	
1. 为袭击日驻华大使叫好令人叹息。 It is deplorable to applaud the attack of the Japanese Ambassador. 2. 不要做比日本右翼更不堪的“毒瘤”。 Do not become a malignant tumor that is even worse than Japanese right-wing groups. 3.借爱国之名释放人性丑恶是卑鄙。 Exhibiting the evil side of human nature in the name of patriotism is despicable.	Moral appeals: 1. Attacking the Japanese Ambassador is harmful to diplomatic relations, which should be blamed. 2. Committing violence should never be done. 3. Patriotism is not an excuse to commit violence.	Moral evaluation: Committing violence is immoral to express nationalism.

Table 6.5 Framing and reasoning devices in opinion pieces

Table 6.6 lists the eight frames I identified in these opinion pieces by frequency in descending order. These frames illustrate how the opinion pieces use the sub-events in the incident to construct nationalism. They also tell audiences how to express nationalism by suggesting mild protest ways.

No.	Frame	Frequency (n/18)	Description
1	Nationalist frame	18	The nationalist frame is common and exists in all selected opinion pieces since the core issue of the incident is framed as

			the PRC being invaded by Japan. The story unfolds to answer three questions that construct the nationalist frame: (1) who invades the PRC, (2) how to view the invasion, and (3) what to do with the invasion?
2	Rationalization frame	9	This is a keyframe to “teach” audiences how to express nationalism. Rationalization calls for calming down nationalist sentiments and stopping boycotts and violence.
3	Attitude frame	7	The attitude frame in the articles involves three aspects: first, the attitude towards the major provocateur (Japanese right-wing groups); second, the attitude towards the incident (should the PRC hold a harsh tone towards Japan?); <sup>138</sup> third, the attitude towards Sino-Japanese relations. An attitude of tolerance, cooperation, and sharing is suggested for future Sino-Japanese relations.
4	Anti-war frame	5	Anti-war frames are important content of Tencent’s attitudes. Tencent uses five anti-war frames to calm audiences down.
5	Economic frame	5	This frame is mainly related to protesting behavior that causes an economic loss for the PRC, such as boycotting Japanese products or cutting off trade with Japan.
6	Invader frame	4	The invader frame explains a few questions: who is the real invader? What roles did other countries (such as the US) play in the incident? Four articles define Japanese right-wing groups instead of Japanese people and the Japanese government as the major invader in the incident. In addition, the US is not regarded as a manipulator of the incident. By narrowing the scope of the enemy who causes the conflicts, it mitigates nationalist sentiment.
7	Consequence frame	3	The consequence frame is related to irrational expressions of nationalism. Two consequences may occur: in terms of the impact on the nation, it will incur an economic loss and harm diplomatic relations and bring about social disorder; for personal consequences, violent protest behavior harms the Chinese (in the economic and physical perspectives). Besides, those people who exert violence will be punished by law.
8	Solution frame	2	The solution frame provides ways that mitigate the conflicts. As it is difficult to satisfy the social demand by completely solving the problem, to meet the social demand in that situation, one way is to lower the public expectation. Tencent advocates solving the territory issue in a peaceful way, i.e., shelving differences and seeking joint development. Any violent behavior is particularly criticized. In addition, boycotting Japanese products is also seen as an irrational method. Publishing political advertisements (opinion piece 11) and landing on the islands to claim sovereignty are supported (opinion piece 4).

Table 6.6 Eight frames of opinion pieces

With the eight frames shown in Table 6.6, the opinion piece series reveals that the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident is an issue with no definite solution for the sovereignty at this stage. They portray

<sup>138</sup> The answer to which is no in most opinion pieces. For example, opinion piece 3 criticizes Chinese war hawks, and opinion piece 8 indicates that the Japanese support Shintaro Ishihara not because of his toughness but for his dedication to the country.



the incident in two conflicting ways: on the one hand, they draw audiences' attention with inflammatory frames such as the nationalist frame; while on the other hand, they mitigate nationalist sentiments by calling for rationalization, which promises to maintain the legitimacy of the authorities.

Tencent uses different perspectives to deploy the different frames listed above. In most articles, the central topics are elaborated upon from the PRC's perspective, which directly guides the audiences on how to view Sino-Japanese relations and behave in the incident. However, the Japanese side is also discussed in a couple of articles, shaping audiences' understanding of the conflict from different angles. The basic point of view is that Chinese people should be rational in expressing nationalist sentiments because the Japanese hold a relatively calm view, and it is the radical Japanese right-wing group instead of the Japanese people that provoke the conflicts.<sup>139</sup>

Besides Japan and the PRC, other countries, such as South Korea and the US, are covered in some opinion pieces. For example, opinion piece 5, attempting to promote popular nationalism, focuses on Korean nationalism. It discusses how the Korean President Lee Myung-bak went to the Dokdo Islands (Takeshima) to claim sovereignty in Japan-Korea conflicts. The article implies, in my opinion, the PRC should be as tough as South Korea. This is a strategy to increase popular nationalism.

Opinion piece 14 discusses what role the US plays in the incident brings the US and Japan in as a significant topic. It draws the conclusion that Japan is not controlled by the US, so the US is not the real manipulator of the incident. It furthermore indicates that the island dispute depends on Japan's political situation, warning that if the US wants to instigate the conflict, it will shoot itself in the foot. In addition, the opinion piece points out that the purchase of the islands by the Japanese government is caused by certain considerations of Japanese national politics rather than an independent initiative. Other opinion pieces further argue that Japanese right-wing groups are the major provocateur. This attempts to narrow the scope of the "enemy" to certain groups, i.e., the

<sup>139</sup> Opinion piece 3 presents an interesting point in this case: Tencent criticizes some official media that use hawkish discourse (*yingpai yanlun*, 鹰派言论). Official media, as the government's mouthpiece, likely adopt a military propagandistic tone sooner. Tencent balances such discourse to mitigate popular nationalism to a safer level.

Japanese right-wing groups, so that it mitigates audiences' antagonism towards the Japanese government.

In short, the different perspectives increase audiences' interest in the opinion pieces and broaden their horizon on how to view the incident. No matter what perspective the articles ultimately took, a strategy is to advocate being "rational" and "calm." This is the basic framing of the nationalist viewpoint established by Tencent.

#### *Editing styles: a specific example*

Besides attitudes and frames, editing styles, particularly how the articles are organized, also play a vital role in conveying meanings. I will discuss this point using a specific example: opinion piece 6, shown in Figure 6.3 screenshot A. It is about rational patriotism and argues that people should not act like radical nationalists using violence. A picture attached to the article shows several nationalists vandalizing a Toyota while a group of bystanders watches the nationalists' violent behavior. Below the heading is an outline of the anti-Japanese behaviors in this instance in three steps: the first is the expression of nationalist sentiments without much practical action. This is the lightest way of protesting and has no noticeable impact. The second is a boycott of Toyota and impeding Chinese workers in Chinese car companies that produce Japanese cars. Such radical nationalism, Tencent argues, harms the benefits of fellow citizens and the PRC, and is therefore judged unwise: this is expressed in the title, "Boycotting Japanese products: causing a no-win situation." The third is the damaging of Japanese products, in this case, the Toyota. This falls in the category of vandalism and is therefore illegal. Tencent condemns this behavior: the opinion piece does not neglect to mention that those who break the law will be punished.

A small picture of the Toyota logo is edited with additional information in Chinese "广汽 Toyota, 广州丰田成立于 2004 年 (Toyota GAC Group, founded in 2004 Guangzhou)," which demonstrates Toyota's connection to the PRC. This picture also describes that Toyota cars used in the PRC are manufactured by the Guangzhou Automobile Group Co., Ltd, a state-owned automobile company.

At the end of the opinion piece, an epilogue identity what is good or not for the expression of

nationalism (see Figure 6.3 screenshot B). With a concise summary, audiences can quickly grab the core point. In this case, by citing Voltaire's words, the epilogue implies that performing excessive nationalist behavior harms society, which should be prohibited.

To sum up, Tencent's editing strategies lie in analyzing news in a plain way. Without space limit, theoretically, Tencent can add as much background information as possible to explain the current news, which cannot be managed by traditional newspapers. Concerning the opinion pieces in *Jinru Huati*, each article has a clear, pointed position on how people should think about the incident or what people should do with the established "common sense," picturized analyses, and epilogues. To be specific, Tencent uses a certain "common sense" (an easy way for audiences to understand the news) to guide public opinion. Tencent's editors add pictures to display important information to make the opinion pieces more understandable. Besides the analysis, an epilogue presents the critical points to help audiences quickly catch the main idea. The epilogue clarifies what attitudes audiences should hold toward nationalism.

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今日话题 钓鱼岛事件系列策划六

用常识解读新闻

## “抵制日货”：损敌八百自伤一千

8月19日，10名日本右翼分子登上钓鱼岛一事使中、日两国民间对立情绪进一步加深。同日，许多民众高喊抵制日货的口号，局部出现了打砸中国人的日本车情况。— [详细]

每次“抵制日货”，丰田车总是首当其冲，不能说这是最为中国人知晓的日本品牌，但这是最显眼的日本品牌。打砸丰田车其实已经不属于“抵制”的规则内了，但这种损人的“抵制”行为背后的基本逻辑成立吗？

反日人群在打砸中国人的私家丰田车 2012-08-21 第 2162 期

Topic Today 当人们抵制丰田时，还抵制了什么

**抵制中国劳动者**

丰田在中国的事业分布可以分为三部分：在华独资公司（主要负责研发）；与一汽的合资公司（天津一汽丰田、四川一汽丰田），与广汽的合资公司；与一汽、广汽的三方合资公司。

截止2011年末，丰田已在中国的38个省和直辖市设立了11家合资公司。丰田公司在中国一共拥有大约500家经销商，3万多名中国员工，其中广汽丰田约9000人，一汽丰田约12000人。

资料区 怎样用手机浏览今日话题

相关专题

给小女孩的一封信 我们作为成人，也有一些“是非”想告诉婷婷 — [详细]

相关专题

丰田车该被嘲笑吗 数据证明日本车最厚道 — [详细]

Screenshot A



Screenshot B

Figure 6.3 Screenshots of an example opinion piece in *Jinri Huati*

### 6.2.2 Online News Comments: Expressing Popular Nationalism

To explore online expressions of popular nationalism, I use a computer-assisted program, the automated sentiment analysis program (ASAP), and run a quantitative (statistical) analysis on the collected half-million online comments. This analysis explores the interaction between audiences' online expression of popular nationalism and Tencent's communication. The idea is to understand public opinion on the related opinion piece in *Jinri Huati* and evaluate how Tencent's framing techniques affect public nationalist sentiments. Below is the procedures of the program.

#### *Procedures*

The program consists of three main operational procedures: data collection, hand coding for the training set, and sentiment analysis.

1. Data collection. Audiences' comments are more difficult to collect than opinion pieces. User comments are dynamically delivered to web browsers with limited contents (less than 100 records) per request. This means that, for example, ten thousand comments need a hundred

requests to collect all the data. As there are, in addition, multiple articles to cover (each with their own web address), each with their own comments, it becomes time consuming and thus unfeasible to collect all the comments by hand. Hence, I used a data collection system to collect this data automatically.<sup>140</sup> The data collection system consists of four basic processing units: URL scraping to gather the comments, downloading and preprocessing the comments, tokenizing and decoding the comments, and preparing the hand coding.

2. Hand coding. I code nationalist sentiments reflected in the comments by hand into five levels, based on the content and the tone expressed in them: “very high,” “high,” “neutral,” “low,” and “very low,” and score these levels at 2 points, 1 point, 0 point, -1 point and -2 points. The five types of coding rules are shown in Appendix 3.
3. Sentiment analysis. In this analysis, I use the ASAP to analyze audiences’ comments on the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident to evaluate nationalist sentiment. As introduced in Chapter 4, the ASAP, a supervised learning approach adapted from ReadMe proposed and developed by Hopkins and King (2010), serves as an automatic classifier for opinion mining.

#### *Analysis of online nationalism*

Applying the operational procedures as outlined above to the analysis of audiences’ comments, I attempt to interpret how audiences’ nationalist sentiments interact with media communication with the aid of framing theory. I provide a general analysis of how opinion pieces evolve on Tencent, followed by detailed content and sentiment analyses.

Online comments have to pass the CCP’s censorship regime before publishing in the PRC. As indicated by Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret Roberts (2013), the Chinese government mainly reacts to “collective action potential” for censorship. News comment sections occur in isolation, as users have no social connection to each other. Besides, they mainly center on the news itself that has already passed censorship, and (as discussed in Section 6.1.3) are thus much safer. The

<sup>140</sup>I made this collection system based on data collection software named Shuimiao. Retrieved 2 July 2014, from <http://www.shuimiao.net/>.

collective action potential may not exist, as the involved audiences normally do not know each other.<sup>141</sup> This makes the comment data set a suitable research object for online nationalist sentiment analysis.

Popular nationalism cannot be measured. However, it is possible to measure nationalist discourses presented in online comments and offline demonstrations. Audiences' engagement in online discussions on the incident is a preliminary reflection of nationalist sentiments, and their actual discussions are major presentations of nationalist sentiments. In addition, on Tencent website, when a new column is set up, a sharp increase in readers might happen. In the well-established column, *Jinri Huati*, the average number of readers is almost constant since it had established more than 2000 series when the incident took place in 2012. What is more, for a media event with substantial nationalist implications, most readers who write comments are likely motivated by nationalist sentiments. In the following part, I will conduct the preliminary study of the comment number and then a sentiment analysis of the selected comments.

*Comment number as an indicator*

As each opinion piece in *Jinri Huati* provided audiences with a comment section to air opinion, many wrote comments in response to the opinion piece. I present the comment number in the following table.

No.	Publishing date	Number of comments	Titles of opinion pieces
1	01-05-2012	12976	How to view the Japanese people's support for purchasing the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?
2	16-07-2012	17555	What is the purpose of Japan's nationalization of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?
3	28-07-2012	20650	Implications of Major General's claim: "Ryukyu belongs to China"
4	16-08-2012	60156	How to view "defending the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands" among the populace?
5	20-08-2012	3311	Why does the South Korean government strongly defend the Dokdo Islands (Takeshima)?
6	21-08-2012	59054	Boycotting Japanese products: causing a no-win situation

<sup>141</sup> It is contingent for commentators to comment on the same articles, so organizing a collective action would be very difficult. The groups from news comments sections are different from QQ or WeChat chat groups, as the latter ones are much more stable and established based on certain social connections such as shared hobbies. Some of the QQ or WeChat groups are acquaintances. Hence more censorship will exist in the latter groups than the former groups.

7	23-08-2012	70431	Should we fight for the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?
8	27-08-2012	4225	A patriot: Shintaro Ishihara
9	28-08-2012	65911	It is deplorable to applaud the behavior of attacking the Japanese Ambassador.
10	01-09-2012	93275	If we declare war, can we beat the Japanese?
11	03-09-2012	13869	Is it useful for Chen Guangbiao to advertise for the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?
12	13-09-2012	27786	Rare earth is not an army, so it is unwise to use it for resistance against Japanese aggression.
13	14-09-2012	14493	Why are the Japanese not patriotic enough?
14	15-09-2012	15149	The Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands crisis: is the US the real manipulator?
15	16-09-2012	37886	Those who exert violence with mendacious patriotism should be punished.
16	17-09-2012	22084	Why is it difficult to break the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands deadlock?
17	18-09-2012	6368	Everyone is responsible for the rise and fall of the country.
18	20-09-2012	12063	It is unnecessary to be overly pessimistic about irrational anti-Japanese behavior.

Table 6.7 Comment number of each opinion piece

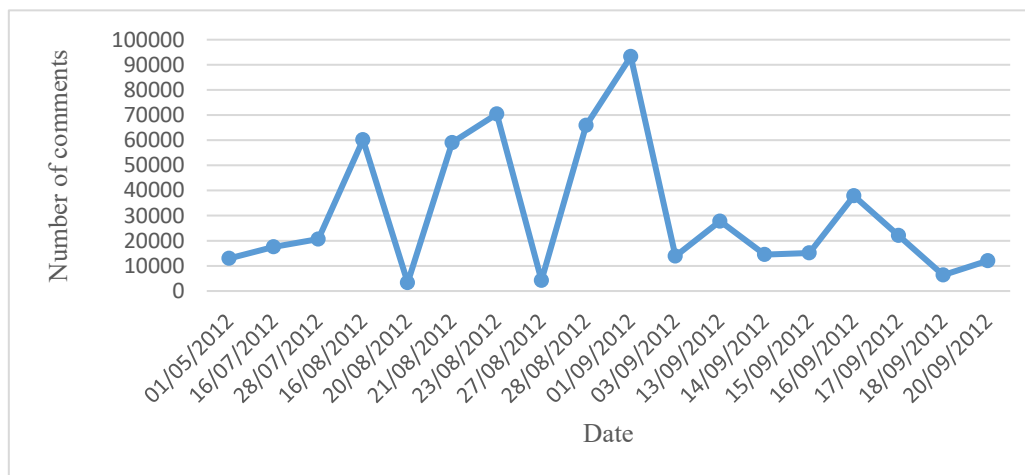


Figure 6.4 Comment number of each opinion piece

I obtain the publishing date and the comment number of each opinion piece, as shown in Table 6.7. To demonstrate the relationship between important events during the incident and the number of comments, I plot these on the y-axis (the x-axis holds the publishing date of the corresponding opinion pieces) of the graph in Figure 6.4. As shown in Figure 6.4, the highest number of comments is on the article published on 1 September, followed by the article published on 23 August. During that period, the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands conflicts approached a climax, so Tencent had an incentive to publish more opinion pieces to elaborate on the story, catering to audiences' demand.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>142</sup> More development in the incident arouses more curiosity of the audiences. Table 6.3 shows that Tencent published four articles from 23 August to 1 September, much more than its normal publishing tempo in the beginning.

These spikes in coverage and comments indicate inflamed nationalist sentiments.

The titles of opinion pieces 10, 7, and 4 (the articles with the top three comments) are in the form of interrogative sentences, a rhetorical device arousing reading interest. For opinion piece 10 (*If we declare war, can we beat the Japanese?*) and opinion piece 7 (*Should we fight for the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?*), incendiary keywords in the titles— “fight,” “declare war,” and “beat”—arouse audiences’ deep thoughts on nationalism. Many comments on these articles demonstrates that these strategies work in this regard.

#### *Online nationalist sentiments*

Only counting the number of comments is insufficient to determine the strength of popular nationalist sentiments because one netizen’s nationalist sentiments usually are different from those of another netizen. Therefore, I have conducted a sentiment analysis (aided by the ASAP, as discussed above) on these comments, the results of which are shown in Table 6.8. Figure 6.5 displays the data in a line graph, and Figure 6.6 shows the mean percentage values of comments for each level of nationalist sentiments.

No.	Very low	Low	Neutral	High	Very high
1	1.32%	2.01%	3.12%	80.97%	12.58%
2	0.00%	1.58%	10.59%	40.77%	47.06%
3	0.00%	2.87%	18.97%	71.42%	6.74%
4	0.00%	1.78%	6.76%	64.52%	26.95%
5	1.83%	1.33%	7.41%	77.41%	12.03%
6	0.00%	1.72%	17.65%	73.34%	7.29%
7	0.00%	0.00%	11.54%	48.04%	40.41%
8	0.00%	3.39%	13.62%	74.54%	8.45%
9	0.00%	0	17.48%	66.91%	15.61%
10	0.92%	2.47%	4.51%	68.11%	23.99%
11	0.00%	0.00%	5.71%	94.29%	0.00%
12	0.00%	2.71%	19.66%	70.44%	7.19%
13	0.00%	2.42%	15.31%	77.73%	4.53%
14	0.00%	0.63%	12.75%	64.39%	22.23%
15	0.00%	0.77%	6.59%	79.07%	13.57%
16	0.00%	0.00%	14.33%	75.26%	10.41%
17	0.66%	1.70%	13.59%	68.59%	15.46%
18	0.00%	1.40%	12.84%	74.50%	11.26%

Table 6.8 Percentages of comments on opinion pieces about the islands incident, according to



different levels of nationalist sentiments<sup>143</sup>

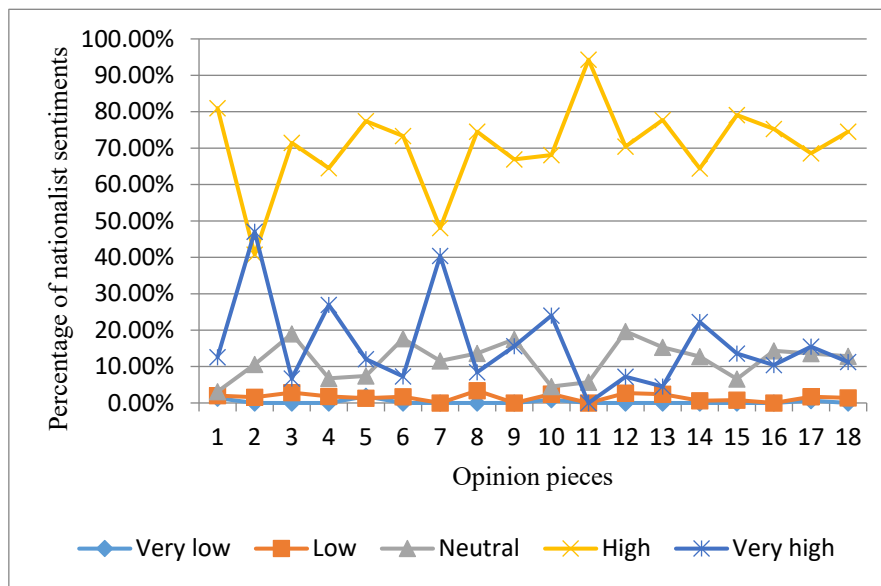


Figure 6.5 Percentage of comments on each opinion piece, according to the levels of nationalist sentiments

Figure 6.6 shows that nationalism in the comments at the low and very low levels occurs at the smallest percentages, and by far, the most score a high level of nationalist sentiment. This indicates that after reading the related opinion pieces, most audiences deployed a nationalist frame to make sense of the incident. While the “high” level is still regarded as within acceptable boundaries, the “very high” level is prone to lead to offline protests, potentially resulting in social and political chaos.<sup>144</sup> This level is relatively high at 15.88%, ranking second among the five levels. Nonetheless, online nationalist sentiments did not reach a point where violence emerges.

<sup>143</sup> The results are calculated in two decimal places.

<sup>144</sup> For details on the distinction between the levels “high” and “very high,” see Appendix 3. In general, the threshold is when nationalist sentiments cross the boundary from rational and restrained to irrational sentiments that might spur violent protests and challenge the legitimacy of the authorities.

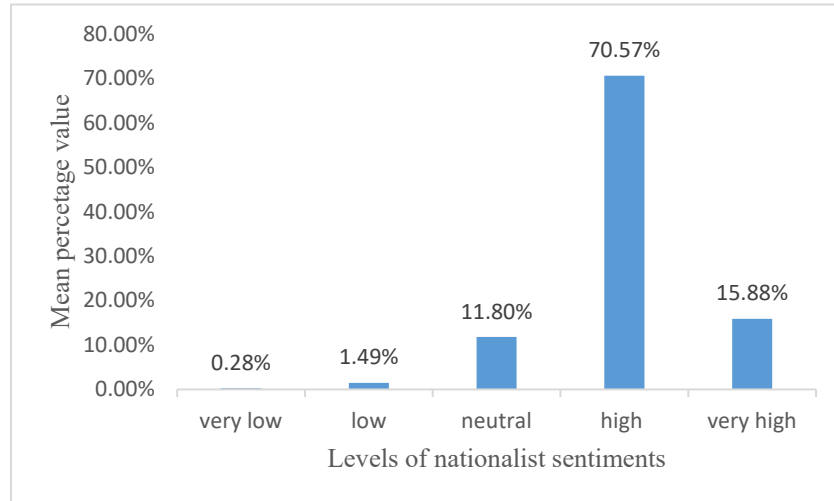


Figure 6.6 Mean percentage values of comments for each level of nationalist sentiments

The first and second massive demonstrations across the PRC in August and September 2012 led to a stronger emphasis on keeping calm towards the incident. Since 21 August 2012, Tencent has released a few opinion pieces calling for rationality (e.g., opinion piece 6: *Boycotting Japanese products: causing a no-win situation*). It suggests that the framing Tencent did in the opinion pieces had taken some effect within a period (27 August -14 September 2012), because, from opinion piece 8 to 13, the “very high” level of online nationalism was mostly below 10% (less than the mean at 15.88%). The only exception was opinion piece 10 that was over 20% (see Figure 6.5). Opinion piece 10 (*If we declare war, can we beat the Japanese?*) discussed the military powers of the PRC and Japan: it argued that while the PRC’s military strength was better than Japan’s, with support from the US for Japan, it would be difficult for the PRC to win the war. War was deemed an unfeasible option. However, the large number of comments at the “very high” level of national sentiments suggests that opinion piece 10, while supposedly aimed to calm down the audiences and decrease online nationalist sentiments, did the opposite for a large portion of its readers.

As demonstrated in Figure 6.5, from opinion piece 14 to 18 (published between 15–20 September 2012), the “very high” level of online nationalism was around the mean level (15.88%) but higher than the previous period (27 August 2012-14 September 2012) when the level was below 10%. Although the average “very high” level of nationalism increased (from below 10% to about 15.88%), it was still much lower than the “high” level (70.57%). The “high” level dominating online

nationalist discourses were safe for Tencent's communication.

To further understand nationalist sentiments in the comments through statistical analysis, I calculated the weighted values of each sentiment level. Then I calculate the sum of all levels of nationalist sentiments in each opinion piece. In the end, I normalized the weighted sum to compare the variation of total nationalist sentiment percentage with the development of the incident (see Table 6.9). The weighted sum normalization of online nationalist sentiments is depicted in Figure 6.7. It shows that the sentiment level decreased on 3 September 2012 (when opinion piece 11 was published),<sup>145</sup> even though the incident approached its climax. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 6.7, from 3 to 20 September 2012 (from the publishing date of opinion piece 11 to 18), the weighted sums of nationalist sentiment percentages were almost under 80%.<sup>146</sup> This signified that experiencing the climax of the incident, audiences' total online nationalism influenced by Tencent communication was kept at a controllable level, promising not to bring about serious troubles to Tencent and threaten the government.

No.	Very low	Low	Neutral	High	Very high	Weighted sum	Normalization of weight sum
1	-2.64%	-2.01%	0.00%	80.97%	25.16%	101.48%	76.13%
2	0.00%	-1.58%	0.00%	40.77%	94.12%	133.30%	100.00%
3	0.00%	-2.87%	0.00%	71.42%	13.48%	82.04%	61.54%
4	0.00%	-1.78%	0.00%	64.52%	53.90%	116.64%	87.50%
5	-3.65%	-1.33%	0.00%	77.41%	24.05%	96.48%	72.38%
6	0.00%	-1.72%	0.00%	73.34%	14.59%	86.21%	64.67%
7	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	48.04%	80.82%	128.87%	96.67%
8	0.00%	-3.39%	0.00%	74.54%	16.90%	88.05%	66.05%
9	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	66.91%	31.21%	98.12%	73.61%
10	-1.83%	-2.47%	0.00%	68.11%	47.99%	111.80%	83.86%
11	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	94.29%	0.00%	94.29%	70.73%
12	0.00%	-2.71%	0.00%	70.44%	14.38%	82.11%	61.60%
13	0.00%	-2.42%	0.00%	77.73%	9.07%	84.38%	63.30%
14	0.00%	-0.63%	0.00%	64.39%	44.46%	108.22%	81.18%
15	0.00%	-0.77%	0.00%	79.07%	27.13%	105.44%	79.10%
16	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	75.26%	20.83%	96.09%	72.08%
17	-1.32%	-1.70%	0.00%	68.59%	30.92%	96.50%	72.39%
18	0.00%	-1.40%	0.00%	74.50%	22.51%	95.61%	71.72%

Table 6.9 Weighted nationalist sentiment percentages, weighted sum, and normalization in the comments of opinion pieces

<sup>145</sup> As seen in Table 6.9, when opinion piece 10 was published on 1 September 2012, the normalization percentage was 83.86 %. After two days, the percentage influenced by opinion piece 11 went down to 70.73% (The exact publishing dates of the opinion pieces are stated in Table 6.4).

<sup>146</sup> The only exception is opinion piece 14 (published on 15 September 2012), and its weighted sum normalization percentage of 81.18%. However, it does not influence the level of nationalist sentiments during the whole period of the incident (from 3 to 20 September 2012).

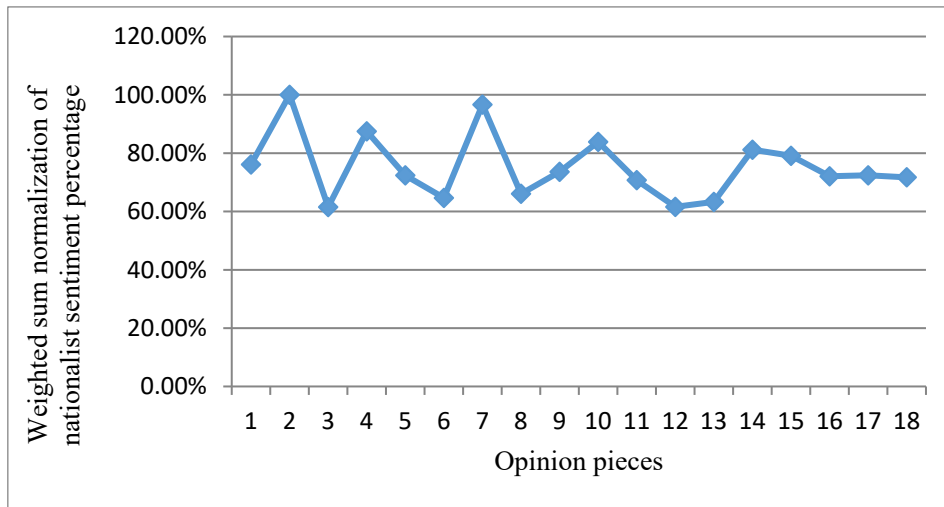


Figure 6.7 Weighted sum normalization of distributions of nationalist sentiments in the comments of opinion pieces

### 6.2.3 Online and Offline Interaction

It is interesting to examine if there is any interaction between online popular nationalism and offline demonstrations. For data on the offline nationalist demonstrations pertaining to the incident, I follow the study carried out by Wallace and Weiss (2015, 414-415). According to their study, two waves of demonstrations arose during the incident: a small wave around 19 August 2012, when the Japanese authorities detained activists from Hong Kong, and a big wave that took place from 11 to 23 September 2012 when the Japanese government signed the contract (See Figure 6.8).

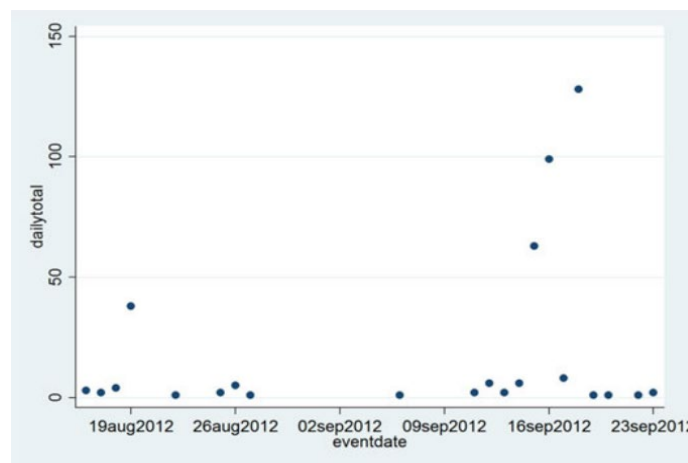


Figure 6.8 Daily count of anti-Japanese protests, August-September 2012, adopted by the author based on the data published by Wallace and Weiss (2015)

As discussed above, I marked the “very high” level of nationalist sentiments in the comments only when extreme nationalist sentiments were expressed with potential offline destructive activities in the streets.<sup>147</sup> I compared the peaks of the “very high” level with the peaks of the offline protests to see if there was a connection between online and offline expressions of nationalism.

Table 6.9, Figure 6.5, and Figure 6.6 show that the “very high” level of online nationalism reached its highest point in opinion piece 2 (47.06%, 16 July 2012) and opinion piece 7 (40.41%, 23 August 2012) compared to the mean value of the “very high” level (15.88%). This suggests that two waves of online nationalism existed. The first online wave was in July 2012 at the beginning/middle development of the incident. However, this first online wave did not bring about any offline activism. The second online wave on 23 August 2012 almost coincided with the first offline protest wave around 19 August 2012. On the Internet, Tencent started to frame opinion pieces with a restrictive nationalist view on 21 August 2012, so this was intended to dial back online nationalist sentiments to prevent offline collective activities. Since the second big offline protest wave was from 10 to 23 September, a related online wave was expected during the same period, and it emerged on 14 September 2012, but it was much weaker than the previous two waves (22.2% versus 47.06% on 16 July 2012 and 40.41% on 23 August 2012). The nationalist sentiment level decreased as the date approached the peak time of offline nationalist demonstration (10-23 September 2012). This suggests that media communication led by Tencent successfully calmed audiences down, which aided in decreasing nationalist sentiments in offline demonstrations.

In short, three waves of online nationalism and two waves of offline nationalism exist in the 2012 incident. The emerging dates of the second and third waves of online nationalism are close to that of the second wave of offline nationalism, suggesting that there could be certain interaction between online and offline nationalism. During the period of the last online wave, Tencent managed to dial back online nationalism by framing the opinion pieces in a restrained manner.

#### **6.2.4 Discussion**

<sup>147</sup> Sentiments that call for violence and offline collective activities, such as demonstrations, are viewed at the “very high” level because this causes social instability and is normally censored.

Tencent reported and analyzed the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident with its own opinion pieces that shaped online nationalist sentiments. Applying communication strategies, Tencent related the events with an agenda that instructed audiences on how to view and perform in the incident. Taking the nationalism expressed in the comments into account, Tencent switched its tone to a range that would not arouse violent offline protests. The results showed that Tencent did achieve this effect. For online and offline nationalism, the analysis suggested that they might have influenced each other to some extent.

In the whole communication process through Tencent's opinion pieces and audiences' responses in the comment sections, the Chinese government did not directly influence public nationalist sentiments. However, Tencent still have to follow the government's propaganda guidelines, so it had to find a balance between its audiences and the government. In other words, the government's power in mass communication should not be neglected.

*Tencent: teaching "knowledge"*

Foucault (1969/1972) indicates that discourse power creates knowledge. Tencent, a major news portal with a large audience, is seen as a media organization with discourse power that influences a broad audience by constructing certain knowledge that the audiences are eager to learn. By claiming to explain news with common sense, Tencent's opinion pieces teach audiences common sense as a kind of knowledge.

Overall, the results of this case study answer the research questions put forward at the beginning of this chapter. Regarding the first and second question sets,<sup>148</sup> I consider that the government has established the unification dream as a social demand in daily political propaganda with the help of mass media. This social demand sets up a common goal for the Chinese people to construct and strengthen a shared imagined community. However, as this goal is difficult to achieve within a short period, it can arouse unrest. Incidents like the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands crisis can arouse popular

<sup>148</sup> The first question sets are: what was the social demand established by the government and media in the incident? How was it established? The second question sets are: what were Tencent's attitudes towards the incident? How did Tencent set the agenda to draw public attention? What frames did it use to narrate this incident and adjust audiences' nationalism?

nationalism to such a level that it erodes government legitimacy. In this process, media companies such as Tencent play a critical role in mitigating radical nationalist public opinion.

Tencent deployed a set of communication strategies to construct “knowledge” shaping online nationalist public opinion. First, it arranged a series of opinion pieces systematically to analyze the media event. The systematic analysis of the incident incentivizes audiences to follow up on the opinion pieces. However, they were not daily updated as regular news reporting would be. Tencent adjusted the publishing frequency according to the development of the incident. To be more specific, the publishing of the opinion pieces was slow in the beginning; and when the incident approached a climax, Tencent published more articles to set its agenda and cater to public demand.

Second, Tencent guided audiences by emphasizing mild nationalism with various frames. It used eight frames (see Table 6.6) to construct online popular nationalism. It emphasizes rational behavior, which complies with the government’s demand for social stability: if media companies (such as Tencent) publish excessive seditious content, the CPD may challenge them, according to the communication “bottom line” pointed out by Zhao (1998). In addition, Tencent regarded the incident from the perspectives of Japan as well, as the other party involved in the conflict, and from the US and South Korea: South Korea had been in a similar conflict and was thus a model for behavior, whereas the US was seen as a (potential) ally to Japan. For instance, opinion piece 13 (Why are the Japanese not patriotic enough?) observed that compared to Chinese nationalism, Japanese nationalism was much more restrained during the incident. The Japanese attached more importance to their livelihood rather than to nationalism, so the argument went. This seemed to attempt to de-emphasize nationalism and persuade the audiences to express nationalist sentiments rationally. The varied perspectives made the “knowledge” look comprehensive.

Third, Tencent editors used several other communication strategies to construct “knowledge” within the established discourse of rational nationalism. For example, in the titles of the opinion pieces, they used interrogative questions and provocative words (such as “patriot,” “war,” and “fight for”) to draw audiences’ attention. Tencent editors structured the articles as a step-by-step explanation model to answer these questions: what is the (latest) event? Why does it happen? How is it related

to the PRC? What are its positive and negative aspects? This was then followed by a summary of core “knowledge,” i.e., a common-sense approach to the conflicts.

Fourth, my analysis shows that Tencent’s attitudes towards popular nationalism varied at different stages of the incident. Generally, Tencent advocated rational expressions of nationalism in most opinion pieces. I evaluated two of the selected opinion pieces as “stimulative” towards nationalism. These two opinion pieces were published to draw audiences’ attention in a relatively “safe” period. Yet, as popular nationalism became stronger (and as a result, massive street demonstrations emerged), Tencent attempted to calm down audiences and dial back nationalism by reemphasizing rational nationalism.

It is not difficult to see that Tencent’s attitudes towards nationalism switched from restrictive to stimulative and restrictive again. At first glance, it seems as if Tencent’s attitudes were partly contradictory by publishing stimulative opinion pieces. However, when Tencent employed a stimulative attitude, it did so subtly without directly calling for nationalism. It only showed the support for defending the islands (opinion piece 4) and drew a comparison with South Korea’s defensive activities for the Dokdo Islands (opinion piece 5). Furthermore, audiences may not notice that Tencent had contradictory attitudes in different opinion pieces and feel confused about such attitudes. This was because Tencent organized all the opinion pieces in a series that was not designed with a close connection between each other as series stories.<sup>149</sup> Most audiences may not read the series as a whole and draw comparisons between contradictory attitudes in different opinion pieces.

To sum up, to a certain degree, Tencent’s attitudes represented the authorities’ attitudes, since as a media company, Tencent have the obligation to follow the party principles in publishing news articles. Meanwhile, Tencent remained a commercial company and, as such, sought audiences’ attention by publishing on nationalism in an attractive but controllable way. This is the logic by which Chinese media companies compete in a media society.

<sup>149</sup> They were published as events unfolded, so when more sub-events took occurred, time between articles became shorter.



*News comment sections: a barometer of online popular sentiment*

Regarding the third question set,<sup>150</sup> I have shown that online discussions in news comment sections of *Jianri Huati* reflected modest nationalism that would not raise extreme activism. Tencent helped the Chinese government maintain legitimacy. News comment sections serve as a barometer of online popular nationalism. As a research object in this case study, comment sections established a direct link between news opinion pieces and public opinion.

Stereotypical political views, including the general level of nationalism, may influence audiences' commenting ways, which further affects their expressions of online sentiments. Stroud et al. (2017) argue that political comments trigger ambiguous stereotypical reactions and people's stereotypical political attitudes influence how they click the opinion buttons (Like, Recommend, and Respect) in comment sections. As different buttons have different meanings to people, they indicate that to promote less partisan behavior in the news, "respect" buttons are more likely to be clicked than the other two (Stroud et al., 2017). In my case study, the examined comments form a discourse created wholly and freely by the audiences instead of being the result of some choices set up by news editors. Audiences' stereotypical political ideas on nationalism affect their comments on a general level, but the content of news opinion pieces they comment on influences how they express their nationalist sentiments in these comments very directly. Online popular nationalism in news comments is a mix of stereotypical nationalism from daily official propaganda and stimulated sentiments by how media present the events at hand.

To explore online popular nationalism, I identified two indicators: audiences' engagement in online discussions, measured by the number of comments on each opinion piece and their level of nationalist sentiments, identified by a sentiment analysis on the comment discourse. The highest number of comments emerged when the incident approached a climax, and these showed a high level of nationalist sentiments. Besides the incident development per se, the media effect played a decisive role in garnering attention and stimulating online nationalism. This media effect entails that during an important phase of the incident, Tencent published more opinion pieces to influence the

<sup>150</sup> The third question set is: how did audiences react to the opinion pieces on the incident? To what extent was popular nationalism presented in the related comment sections? Did online nationalism reach an extent that aroused much offline activism? Did Tencent help the government maintain legitimacy?

public agenda.

In my sentiment analysis, I have demonstrated that most audiences displayed a “high” level of nationalist sentiments. This level was deemed to fall within a controllable scope for the authorities. The “very high” level of sentiments that would give rise to violent nationalist behavior was much less. Thus, it ensured fewer challenges of online nationalism to the authorities.

#### *Interaction between online and offline nationalism*

Let us now turn to the last question.<sup>151</sup> There is certain time overlap between online and offline nationalism waves, as different manifestations of national sentiments. However, this does not necessarily imply causation. It has to be admitted that the reasons for the emergence of the offline protests were complicated: the influence of Internet news media is just one source of many. Social media, traditional media, and social interactions in real life also influence offline nationalism. Offline nationalism could incite online nationalism, as in some sense, most of those protests in the streets tend to be younger people, a demographic that is more active on the Internet and thus more prone to air their nationalist sentiments.

Although my examination of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident suggests a correlation between online and offline nationalism, the extent to which the two influence each other still needs further research. Nevertheless, the role that Tencent played in shaping popular nationalism should not be neglected. My analysis also suggests that Tencent managed to maintain online nationalism to a “safe” level during the climax stage of the incident, which may have calmed down the nationalists in the streets to reduce offline nationalism. By doing so, “the Chinese Internet’s acerbic nationalism is ultimately non-threatening to the party-state” (Denemark & Chubb, 2016, 75).

### **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter showcased the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, an abrupt media event that ignited popular nationalism to fight for the Chinese nation’s unification dream, a social demand hard to fulfil. If inciting excessive nationalism, the incident could weaken the authorities’ legitimacy.

<sup>151</sup> The fourth question is: How did online nationalism interact with offline nationalism?

Media have motivations to help the authorities carefully appease public sentiments and confine the strength of online nationalism to a moderate level.

I examined two prominent aspects of mass communication on the incident: media communication strategies as exemplified by the major Chinese news portal Tencent (qq.com) and online expressions of popular nationalism in the comments of Tencent's opinion pieces. In addition, I probed the interaction between online and offline nationalism.

Drawing from Foucault's discourse analysis theory, I explore online news opinion pieces to understand media communication on the event and further explain how media companies such as Tencent used their "discourse power" to affect audiences' online nationalist expressions. As Zhao (1998) has noted, commercial mass media in the PRC, including news portals, have to follow two lines to edit and publish news content: one is to seek commercial profits, the ultimate goal of commercialized media companies; and the other is to follow the Party line, i.e., report the news in a politically correct way to maintain social order and help the Party bolster its legitimacy.

My analysis of this case study observed that Tencent presented the event in a way that did not only tell audiences about the nonfulfillment of the unification dream but also instruct them on how they should view and behave towards such an abrupt incident. It shared "knowledge" of nationalism with audiences to guide populace's behavior. Tencent used communication strategies to shape nationalist sentiments, reflecting in three aspects. The first was to set the public agenda by systematically releasing a series of opinion pieces that attracted public attention. The second was to apply a set of framing techniques. The third was to use news editing that highlighted Tencent's point of view.

In my analysis, I found that Tencent's editors largely adopted a restrictive nationalist attitude that was realized by adjusting the three elements of nationalism: national boundaries, collective memories, and people's engagement in the event. To be specific, they admitted the difference or conflict (national boundaries) between the PRC and Japan but seldom discussed Sino-Japanese conflicts of the past in a deep or heavy way to avoid evoking these events in the collective memories.

Overall, Tencent opposed hawkish discourse, violence, and boycotting, and proposed expressing

nationalism in a rational way to decrease part of public engagement in the event, especially when offline nationalism reflected in nationwide street demonstrations reached a high level.

Concerning online popular nationalism, I took the number of audiences' comments and the related opinions as indicators to scale the nationalist sentiment levels. The results revealed that during a specific period (reaching the climax of the incident), Tencent published opinion pieces at a higher frequency. It stands to reason that the motivation behind this was to satisfy the audiences' news consumption demand. Correspondingly, I found that the number of comments increased as well in this period. This suggested that Tencent had successfully set the public agenda.

For a further sentiment analysis of online nationalism, I did an automated, passive survey and devised specific levels of online nationalist sentiments. I found that nationalism in the climax period stayed at high but acceptable levels. This suggests that Tencent dialed back too strong nationalist sentiments. In addition, I probed the interaction between offline nationalism (street demonstrations) and online nationalism (online comments). It suggests that when the incident reached its climax, demonstrations in the streets increased, while online nationalist sentiments decreased. The highest spike of street demonstrations emerged when online nationalist sentiments only had a slight peak. This suggests that Tencent communication, in some sense, toned down audiences' strong nationalist sentiments.

In conclusion, although it was almost impossible to satisfy the social demand in the abrupt incident, the authorities still maintained legitimacy throughout. I contend that this was partly due to media companies such as Tencent successfully controlling online popular nationalism, prohibiting it from getting out of hand.

The applied method, the automated sentiment analysis program, used in the analysis of the comment sections, provides a new way to explore online nationalist sentiments with enough reliability and feasibility to process such big data. This paves the way for the analysis of online public discourse with large amounts of data, which will become a trend in political communication research.

## Chapter 7 Conclusion

Nationalism is a powerful social force for the construction and consolidation of a nation-state in modern times. In the last two decades, the Chinese government has staged a series of media events to promote state nationalism (exemplified by government-staged events). In addition, other media events automatically take place, stimulating popular nationalism (exemplified by abrupt events). By constructing nationalism in media events, the government attempts to strengthen or maintain legitimacy through political communication, and Chinese media companies have evidence to reinforce such political motivations.

This dissertation has examined the construction of Chinese state nationalism and popular nationalism in different types of mass media events in the reform era (2008-2012) by exploring three aspects: the operation of nationalism, mass communication of nationalism in media events, and the evaluation of audiences' nationalism reflected in online public opinion. It has answered the following questions:

### 1. The operation of nationalism in the PRC

What is nationalism? In what form and how does it operate in the Chinese context? What is its relationship with Chinese patriotism? Why does the Chinese government aim to propagate patriotism instead of nationalism?

### 2. Construction of nationalism in media events

How is nationalism narrated and constructed in media events? What communication strategies do the Chinese government and media companies use to construct state nationalism and adjust popular nationalism, i.e., how do they strengthen or maintain the authorities' ruling legitimacy through media events?

### 3. Evaluation of audience's nationalism reflected in online public opinion

How do audiences' online reactions shape online public opinion? How are the reactions presented

in online public opinion? What should we do to evaluate the effect of communication? Is it possible to know how effective efforts made by the Chinese government and media companies to guide public opinion are? Is ruling legitimacy strengthened or maintained based on the evaluation of nationalist public opinion?

## **7.1 Major Findings**

I investigated a government-staged media event, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, in Chapter 5 to explore how the Chinese government enhanced state nationalism by organizing and propagating the event. I then compared the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony's visual presentation with that of the 2012 London Olympics opening ceremony to explore the similarities and differences in the ways that two nations constructed national identity. I looked at how audiences reacted to the event communication on Tianya BBS to express nationalism.

I found that by establishing the Olympic dream, i.e., the hosting of the Beijing Olympics as a social demand, the Chinese government encouraged public engagement to boost state nationalism and strengthen legitimacy. The pre-Games propaganda through several subevents such as the torch relay and the volunteer recruitment program mobilized many citizens to participate in the event. As a typical top-down overwhelming way of political communication, the ubiquitous Olympic propaganda arguably raised public attention to the event. The solemn and majestic visual presentation of the opening ceremony witnessed the realization of the Olympic dream by creating a friendly, modernized, and powerful image of the Chinese nation. The London Olympics opening ceremony in a humorous and relaxed style shaped striking contrast with the former. Nevertheless, nationalism was not the political theme only stressed by the PRC, but instead, both countries similarly aimed at promoting national identity to (re)brand national image through the ceremonies. Concerning Chinese digital nationalism in the two events, audiences' engagement in online discussions signifies that their nationalism was higher in the Beijing Olympics than the London Olympics, despite the expansion of the number of BBS users from 2008 to 2012. Furthermore, Chinese nationalism in 2012 could be more confident in 2008, as China continuously made successes in terms of its economy and culture during these years. The discourse analysis of

nationalist sentiments expressed in threads on the opening and closing ceremonies further approved the previous result. In this sense, the social demand of the Olympic dream was satisfied in the Beijing Olympics, which meant the government successfully constructed state nationalism in the mass communication of the Beijing Olympics. With the enhancement of national identity and the satisfaction of the social demand, audiences potentially owed the success to the government, the organizer, thus strengthening the government's legitimacy.

I also examined popular nationalism triggered by the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident but presented in the opinion pieces of media company Tencent. This incident interrupted the unification dream, another social demand created by the authorities and the Chinese media. However, as it was difficult for the authorities to set down the territorial disputes to satisfy the public, the media, the primary information disseminators for contingent events, have the motivation to help the authorities maintain legitimacy, based on the "Party Principle" (Zhao, 1998). As a media company with discourse power, Tencent thus played a vital role in portraying the incident to shape popular nationalism.

I analyzed how Tencent portrayed the incident and how audiences expressed online nationalist sentiments. Focusing on eighteen opinion pieces published during on Tencent's website, I examined how Tencent guided online public opinion through various communication strategies. I also did a big data analysis of online public opinion by applying a statistic tool, the ASAP, to investigate online opinion that reflected popular nationalism. I then compared online and offline nationalist waves to see if an interaction existed. I found that Tencent transmitted "knowledge" of the incident to guide audiences' attitudes and behavior by applying a set of communication strategies such as agenda setting and framing. These strategies adjusted three nationalist elements (boundaries, collective memories, and people's engagement) that constructed nationalism. Tencent achieved to relieve nationalist sentiments in most of its opinion pieces by obscuring the boundaries (conflicts) between Japan and China, discouraging engagement in some nationalist activities (especially violence), and skipping humiliated collective historical memories about Japan's invasion of China in the 20th century. As it is hardly possible for the authorities to meet the social demand to achieve unification

by solving the disputes, toning down nationalism prompted to reduce the risk of ruining the authorities' legitimacy. Audiences' reaction in the attached comment sections suggested that most online popular nationalism was kept within a safe scope that would not pose a challenge to the authorities. The comparison between online and offline nationalist waves showed that online and offline interaction could exist, as the two emerged on similar dates.

## **7.2 Factors Impacting Online Nationalist Expressions in Media Events**

Online popular nationalism is reflected in the expressions of nationalist public opinion after perceiving and internalizing state nationalism. The following factors in political communication impacts Chinese online nationalist expressions: long-term and nationwide patriotic propaganda of state nationalism, media exposure of the events, and offline event engagement and nationalist activities.

First, long-term and nationwide propaganda of state nationalism

The long-term and nationwide propaganda of state nationalism creates a somewhat patriotism-saturated media or social environment. This continuous propaganda builds up a strong sense of national identity among the Chinese, entailing the Patriotic Education Campaign, CCP leaders' talks, commercialized patriotic films, and mass media events.

The Patriotic Education Campaign is the most influential official propaganda program for the construction of state nationalism. Drawing a lesson from political instability at the end of the 1980s, the authorities employed nationalism as a vital ideology to strengthen national identity for identity crisis and the challenge of CCP legitimacy. Since the launch of the campaign in 1994, the authorities have implemented this patriotic propaganda for about three decades across the PRC, widely and powerfully transmitting state nationalism to the populace. This campaign, integrated into moral and political education targeting the young Chinese generation, continuously boosts the populace's loyalty to the nation and the CCP.

Patriotism still plays a significant role in current school education in the PRC. In 2019, the CCP



Central Committee and the State Council (2019) issued a renewed version of an *Outline on Conducting Patriotic Education in the New Era*, based on the 1994 version<sup>152</sup>. Compared with the old version, the new version stresses more the leadership of President Xi and the Party by putting forward several vital points, including the Chinese dream,<sup>153</sup> as a distinct theme and the integration of love the country, the Party, and socialism as a core requirement (CCP Central Committee & State Council, 2019). It suggests that the CCP, in the Xi era, uses patriotism for the enhancement of legitimacy and mass support by obscuring the distinction between the Party and the nation. The campaign has exerted a long-term influence on the populace's perception of nationalism and nationalist behavior.

Nationalism has been a recurring theme in Chinese leaders' important talks in the past several decades. For example, former President Hu (2011) gives a talk on the 100th anniversary of the 1911 Revolution, indicating that patriotism is a strong aspiration for national rejuvenation. President Xi emphasizes the importance of patriotism in the 100th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement by addressing that patriotism is the duty and responsibility of the Chinese people; it is shameful if someone is unpatriotic.<sup>154</sup> It shows that patriotism becomes even more compulsory than ever before since it is considered citizens' duty and responsibility. As direct official patriotic propaganda, the talks suggest an increasing significance of nationalism in Chinese political communication.

Although the Patriotism Education Campaign and political talks mentioned above represent traditional pure propaganda methods with little aesthetics, the CCP's propaganda mechanism ensures extensive spread from top to bottom. With the emergence of more and more diversified online contents, audiences lose some interest in such traditional pure propaganda and pay attention to novel topics with more entertainment. In this situation, media reform and the popularization of the Chinese Internet have generated new patriotic propaganda in mass communication since the new millennia. In this stage, commercialized patriotism gains popularity among Chinese audiences. Patriotism propagated in the form of mass art instead of pure political preaching gains popularity.

<sup>152</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-11/12/c\\_1125223796.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-11/12/c_1125223796.htm), accessed 30 November 2019.

<sup>153</sup> President Xi put forward this term in 2013 to build a moderately prosperous society and realize national rejuvenation.

<sup>154</sup> The talk is available on [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2019-04/30/c\\_1124440193.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2019-04/30/c_1124440193.htm), accessed 15 September 2019.

Under these circumstances, staged mass media events and commercialized patriotic films are more acceptable for audiences because of the elements of mass art. What is more, in such events, mass mobilization, as a distinguishing feature of traditional Chinese propaganda since the Mao era, increases political engagement and turns audiences into information disseminators, or rather, propagandists. In mass mobilization, “intensive political propaganda, intended to arouse emotional enthusiasm and enlist widespread engagement, remains a central element” (Perry, 2011, 43).

Commercialized patriotic films favored by Chinese audiences have played an increasingly important role in constructing state nationalism in recent years. High-budget commercial films with government aid emerged as an alternative patriotic propaganda method (Aranburu, 2017, 12). Different from the main melody films in the 1990s, the recent films are more commercialized than political. For example, the film *The Founding of a Republic* (*jianguo daye* 建国大业) released in 2009 for the celebration of the PRC’s 60th national anniversary, tells a story about the founding of the PRC. It covers historical events to recall collective memories and creates an image of a great nation to stimulate national identification. The film increased mass consumption by enrolling superstars and won box-office success of 0.42 billion RMB<sup>155</sup>. This brought the PRC into an age of “main melody commercial blockbusters” (Tang, 2015, quoted in Aranburu, 2017, 15). The more recent patriotic action film, *Wolf Warrior 2* (*zhanlang 2*, 战狼 2, released in 2017), tells a story about a skilled ex-sniper of the People’s Liberation Army who rescues a group of Chinese medical aid workers in Africa. Its promotional poster says that “anyone who offends China, no matter how remote, must be exterminated (*fan wo zhonghua zhe, sui yuan bi zhu* 犯我中华者，虽远必诛),” inviting strong popular nationalism. This film is an unprecedented success in the Chinese box office (56 billion RMB<sup>156</sup>), which shows great public interest in consuming nationalist topics.

In short, official and non-official patriotic propaganda integrates state nationalism with the Chinese people’s daily lives, directly or indirectly building up popular nationalism.

Second, media exposure

<sup>155</sup> See <https://www.douban.com/doulist/226734/>, accessed 11 November 2019.

<sup>156</sup> See <https://qz.com/1169192/chinas-all-time-top-10-box-office-list-has-four-domestic-films-released-in-2017-including-wolf-warrior-2/>, accessed 11 November 2019.

As a major source to acquire information from a far distance, mass media have been instrumental in spreading nationalism (Anderson, 1991). In a media event, how media expose an event affects audiences' perception and expressions of nationalist public opinion, entailing two aspects: the frequency of media exposure and the frames that the media deploy.

Since mass media select "what to think about" (Cohen, 1963, 13), they guide audiences with a prearranged news agenda. Media set the news agenda by selecting the news topics that the propagandists intend to publish and adjusting the frequency and duration of reporting on the selected topics. Concerning media events, the more frequently audiences are exposed to related news information, the more attention they are likely to pay. As discussed above, heavy reporting and mass mobilization are standard methods for the media to make an issue salient, especially in a staged media event aimed to show the success of the PRC. In addition, the mass media use frames that further impact how audiences think about those highlighted issues. It limits the audiences' perception of the issues within the established frames to realize communication purposes.

In the PRC, state media and commercial media have established their own ways of portraying an event. The state media act as the mouthpiece for the authorities in mass communication. Despite having more flexibility, commercial media, in principle, have to report the news without challenging the legitimacy of the authorities. In staged media events, where little risks seem to threaten the authorities, all media will promote state nationalism to shape favorable public opinion that helps enhance the authorities' legitimacy. In abrupt events, state media are more cautious than commercial media to guide nationalist public opinion. Yet, commercial media act positively to help the authorities maintain social stability when popular nationalism turns to be out of control.

Third, offline engagement and nationalist activities

Mass communication through digital and traditional media impacts public expressions of nationalism in both staged and abrupt media events. Meanwhile, as more and more Internet users emerge and join online communication every year in the PRC, offline involvement in nationalist activities establishes a link to online nationalist public opinion. In this way, offline involvement also influences online expressions of nationalism. For example, the pre-game propaganda (e.g., the torch

relay in the Beijing Olympics) extends the duration and mobilizes the audiences to participate in the event. These activities broaden the communication of nationalism.

Engagement in abrupt events enhances online popular nationalism. Generally, two reasons lead to such events: natural disasters and international conflicts. Offline activities in natural disaster-based events include a donation for victims and onsite volunteer work. The donation and volunteer work generate a sense of belonging to the nation where the victims receive care and assistance. In addition, volunteer work in disasters is similar to that in government-staged events, providing the volunteers with chances to participate in the events. Thus, the related activities extend the duration of media communication of the events.

In abrupt events on international conflicts, antagonism, as a typical tune between involved nations, prompts the audiences to generate nationalist sentiments for the defense of their national interest. As the Internet becomes a popular platform for the public to voice themselves and participate in politics, online discussions facilitate offline activities such as boycott and street demonstrations. Likewise, offline activism promotes online expressions of nationalism, as the Internet is one of the major channels for the public to join nationalist activities. The authorities aiming to stop street activism for social stability may censor such online discussions (King et al., 2013), which will impact online expressions of nationalism.

To sum up, comprehensive factors, including long-term official propaganda and short-term event stimulation, influence online expressions of Chinese nationalism. As media events are at a national or international level that is connected to a sense of nationness, political communication arouses national identity. The Patriotic Education Propaganda Campaign is one of the most salient factors for the strengthening of Chinese national identity, systematically and massively promoting state nationalism. With the long-term and nationwide patriotic propaganda, the Chinese immerse themselves in the sea of banal nationalism. Internalizing this ideology, they spontaneously generate an extra sense of nationalism, especially when an external stimulus such as a mass media event occurs. Furthermore, media exposure through agenda setting and framing influences how the audiences understand the events and how they react to the events. Finally, online expressions of

nationalism may interrelate with offline nationalist activities. To be specific, in staged events, offline activities organized by the government strengthen online nationalism; in abrupt international-conflict events, online discussions that present popular nationalism facilitates the organization of popular nationalist activities.

### **7.3 Rethinking Nationalism and Mass Communication in the PRC**

In this digital age, information and communications technology (ICT) offers an important platform for public opinion expressions, greatly accelerating information dissemination and encouraging online participation in mass communication. “The digitization of communication has prompted the diffusion of a technologically integrated media system in which products and processes are developed on diverse platforms that support a variety of content and media expressions within the same global/local communication network” (Castells, 2009, 72). Online participatory nationalism thus creates various media content in digital mass communication, shaping netizens’ national identity.

The spread of nationalism is unprecedentedly fast in cyberspace. The ICT establishes the Internet as a new communication model for cyberspace cosmopolitanism (Ben-Porat, 2009, 150), which digitally connects people around the world and weakens spatial barriers set up by national boundaries. Beyond cyberspace, globalization in a large sense promotes the integration of nations in terms of economics, politics, and diplomatic relations also seems to raise tension against nationalism. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit Chinese nationalism in globalization and digital mass communication with participatory nationalism. I will focus on these questions: not considering strong censorship, will globalization and the ICT bring about cosmopolitanism, or more specifically, the decline of Chinese nationalism? How should we think about Chinese nationalism in times of ubiquitous digital media? How to consider mass communication under the influence of participatory nationalism in the PRC?

#### *Globalization & ICT: Impact on Nationalism*

As a popular topic in the 20th and 21st centuries, globalization has specific homogenizing effects by obscuring national boundaries and boosting corporation among world nations. As it is generally

believed that the PRC has dramatically benefited from globalization for its rapid economic growth in the past several decades, globalization is important for the PRC to increase its comprehensive national power. Concerning the intricate relationship between nationalism and globalization, Willy Wo-Lap Lam (2006, 223) argues that the PRC views “nationalism as an antidote to the harmful and destabilizing effects of globalization.” Zheng (2007, 161) indicates that globalization does not reduce Chinese nationalism; it instead makes the PRC “more pluralistic, and thus constitutes a source for Chinese nationalism.” When stressing corporation in globalization, it also implies competition with other nations, which may generate nationalism. For the PRC and other countries, globalization is primarily related to the integration of economy rather than politics. “The CCP leadership is still trying its level best to ensure that globalization will not vitiate the core of the political system—that is, one-party rule” (Lam, 2006, 221). Thus, as one of the most important CCP political themes for social stability, nationalism does not give way to globalization under the CCP leadership. Compared with the discourses of globalization and cosmopolitanism, nationalist discourse is still the most potent force in citizenship education in the PRC (Camicia & Zhu, 2011, 611). Strategically, the CCP tries to find a balance between economic globalization and the cultivation of domestic nationalism (Hughes, 2006, 110).

The Internet shapes cyberspace without clear national boundaries, just as McLuhan (1962) proposes “the global village,” which facilitates global communication and maintains a sense of nationalism among different nations. With the debut of the Internet, many people believe that it brings about fragmentation of online national identity. The Internet builds up transnational “net nationalism” that “identifies with the autonomy and freedom of the Internet” (Mueller, 2017, 80) or “virtual ethnic communities” (Conversi, 2012, 1360). Yet, this net nationalism will not displace nation-state institutions (Mueller, 2017). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2007, 8) suggests that the Internet will not weaken nationalism, but it “is fast becoming a major medium for the consolidation, strengthening and definition of collective identities.” Indicating digital diaspora nationalism connected with territorial issues, Daniele Conversi (2012, 137) argues that “new non-territorial bounds and networks have been built within virtual communities which are nevertheless obsessed by territorial imperatives, in the form of either defending territorial integrity or asserting more aggressive territorial expansion.” Similarly, Lukasz Szulc (2017, 70) indicates that the Internet does not create

banal cosmopolitanism; instead, it fosters banal reproductions of individual nations and the world as the world of nations. In the PRC, the explosive development of the ICT plays an increasingly important role in promoting audiences' political participation that enhances at least one of the three elements of nationalism: engagement in nationalist activities. Under these circumstances, popular nationalism can increase with more and more political participation in cyberspace.

Chinese nationalism is at one of the world's highest levels (Tang & Darr, 2012, 823). Yet, it will not stay at the same level. Specifically, it is currently high due to long-term official patriotic propaganda and the ICT efforts that technologically facilitate mass communication of nationalism and enhance online and offline nationalism. It goes up when a stimulus (such as a nationalist event) emerges, prompting more nationalist expressions. Tang and Darr (2012, 820) suggest that Chinese nationalism will experience two phases: it will stay at a high level with the continuous implementation of the Patriotic Education Campaign. Yet in the long run, it is likely to decline due to further urbanization and education and fading away of nationalist older generations.

#### *Commercialized Participatory Nationalism*

The ICT engenders online participatory communication through content sharing, posts, and comments, etc. User-generated content is an essential part of online communication, besides what media companies create for mass taste. Schneider argues that

The kinds of ICT developments that have taken place roughly during the past two decades have promoted a media rationale in which users receive network privileges to create media of their own, enter into novel network architectures that encourage them to spread such media, and carry their everyday social life into these digital interactions (Schneider, 2018, 171).

As participation nowadays becomes a trend in digital media usage, participatory nationalism gains popularity in mass communication of media events, consisting of online nationalist expressions and offline engagement of nationalist activities. In recent years, driven by a market economy, participatory nationalism goes beyond the political scope and becomes commercialized in Chinese mass communication. Specifically, Chinese advertisers take advantage of participatory nationalism

to brand products for mass consumption (Li, 2008). This leads to the emergence of various nationalist-themed consumer products and the change of nationalist discourse in abrupt events (For details, see the following part). With the impact of the propaganda of state nationalism and the popularization of participatory nationalism, radical nationalists regard nationalism as a critical element of moral value. Moral coercion of nationalism sometimes happens in Chinese society.

Commodified nationalism exists in staged and abrupt events, emphasizing Chineseness or claiming differentiation from other countries. For instance, in the Beijing Olympics, factories manufactured small national flags and T-shirts printed with nationalist symbols for mass consumption. During the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, some Chinese online shops claimed temporary close or refused Japanese clients to show their support for the nation. In addition, other shops utilized the incident to sell nationalist products, such as car stickers.<sup>157</sup> Although this is not a common phenomenon in the market, no matter what forms the commercial activities exist, they partially increase public involvement and exposure of nationalism to enhance national identity.

What is more, commodified nationalism affects how netizens assemble nationalist discourse on the Internet and how the authorities react to such nationalism. For example, some prominent websites use advertising pop-ups and clickbait to commodify nationalist symbols, which changes Sino-Japan nationalist discourse into chauvinistic directions (Schneider, 2018). As online expressions of nationalism facilitated by news consumption bolster state stability and legitimacy (Hyun & Kim, 2015), the Chinese authorities motivate mass consumption of nationalism. Although those websites post violent, pornography, and gambling offers, the authorities turn a blind eye to such content to allow the development of commodified nationalism (Schneider, 2018, 161).

Moral coercion of nationalism occasionally happens under the influence of mass communication of participatory nationalism, restricting the social behavior of citizens, especially celebrities whom the populace regard as social models. In the updated version of *An Outline on Citizens' Moral Construction in the New Era* (the CCP Central Committee & the State Council, 2019), the Chinese authorities advocate vigorously carrying forward patriotism, the core of national spirit for citizens'

<sup>157</sup> <http://www.ebrun.com/20120914/56483.shtml> accessed 12 December 2019.



moral construction. Patriotism is considered a moral trait to which Chinese culture highly values, showing that the authorities, to some degree, urge the citizens to be patriotic. Furthermore, some radical nationalists view patriotism as a practical and even compulsory moral value. For example, radical nationalists will fiercely blame the celebrities who perform unpatriotically in public (such as posting online messages about supporting Taiwan's independence). Conversely, taking this advantage, some celebrities may act in a patriotic way to attract public attention and gain wide support.

#### *Dilemmas of Future Chinese Political Communication*

Based on the results of the case studies in the dissertation, political communication carried out in the media events has by and large successfully promoted state nationalism or shaped popular nationalism as what the authorities and media intend. However, in the reform era, especially the recent years, as the Internet is ubiquitous, participatory popular nationalism is continuously triggered across the PRC. Dilemmas seem to have arisen in political communication, including the decreased authority of information disseminators in the communication chain, tighter control over media content, the ways of media event propaganda, and the controversy of nationalism.

The first dilemma is traditional information disseminators (i.e., the government, media outlets, and media companies) become less authoritative than the earlier period when audiences could not access the Internet in the communication chain. Digital communication is multi-directional, bearing an interactive feature between information disseminators and receivers. In a large sense, with the Internet, everyone can act as a broadcast station and participate in many-to-many communications. To be specific, in this digital age, when a large quantity of information is available, audiences can seek personalized content from diversified information rather than only passively trust certain information with strong guidance from authoritative information disseminators. The upgraded demand for media consumption may ruin most audiences' interests in old-fashioned, pure, repetitive political propaganda.

In addition, the rise of social media has led to even tighter control over media content. It is observed that Chinese political communication is characterized by having a firm grip on sensitive information

flows. As mobile-based online communication realizes faster information flow than ever before, it causes more media management difficulties. From 2008 to 2012, BBSs were one of the most popular media platforms for online discussions. However, in recent years, with the broad penetration of mobile devices and various applications, mobile-based social media such as Weibo (microblog) and Weixin (WeChat) have almost replaced the BBSs, becoming the most popular instant messaging apps in the PRC.<sup>158</sup> A major distinguishing characteristic of social media is the interactivity that is the revenue source of media companies (Stockmann & Luo, 2017, 193). Besides, social interactions among acquaintances<sup>159</sup> established by Weixin and succinctness<sup>160</sup> regulated by Weibo contributed to the improvement of communication efficiency. In other words, the mobile-based social networks “offer an effective channel for public discussion and civic mobilization in China” (Cheng, Liang, & Leung, 2015, 1097).

Nevertheless, this does not mean that audiences make entirely their own choice for news consumption. Instead, opinion leaders on social media, to a large extent, guide public opinion through agenda setting (Nip& Fu, 2016). The authorities indirectly influence media content, as the opinion leaders publish official announcements to describe events (Nip& Fu, 2016). For example, on Weibo, the social media platform that facilitates online opinion best in the PRC, “Big V” bloggers, the celebrities who have many followers on social media, are the most influential groups that guide public opinion (Stockmann & Luo, 2017, 199). The “Big Vs” played a significant role in shaping positive public opinion on Sino-Japanese conflicts in 2012 (Schneider, 2017).

Censorship over online media content still works for political stability and CCP legitimacy, since Xi “is not trying to suppress public opinion or the ‘public- opinion oversight’ role of the media but rather is trying to keep it within acceptable boundaries that do not harm the party’s core interests” (Brady, 2016, 11). However, despite the robust censorship mechanism, fast online message transmission sometimes makes it difficult for the authorities to filter out all adverse information,

<sup>158</sup> Although BBSes have gradually faded away, a new question and answer online community Zhihu (知乎) rises for online discussions, partly playing similar functions with BBSs.

<sup>159</sup> For example, in Wechat, a personalized messaging tool, users do not need to spend much time on information filtering because the information from acquaintances ensures trust and interest.

<sup>160</sup> The limitation of the character number of Weibo posts is 140. Although users have been allowed to publish up to 2000 characters since 2016, the characters over 140 will be hidden. This means audiences can read information rapidly.

including anti-government discourses. Censorship instead generates dissatisfaction among audiences.

As implicit political communication forms that promote state nationalism or adjust popular nationalism, propaganda in staged and abrupt media events respectively bears some characteristics that may reduce the intended media effect. Concerning staged media events, although they are more aesthetic than traditional pure political propaganda, they have inherited certain elements from traditional propaganda: first, positive propaganda is the most noticeable feature in a staged media event, as Brady (2008, 95) argues that “the goal of the emphasis on positive propaganda - positive accounts of the triumphs of Chinese — style socialism — has been to help Chinese citizens regain confidence in the political system after the crisis of 1989.” Second, overarching grand narratives, like typical Chinese political propaganda style, are used by MCs or announcers to create a spectacular scene and generate a sense of pride. However, sometimes such narratives are excessively used, but the discourse content is empty. Third, with a poetic sense, MCs’ narrations are lack of discussions and interactions. Following a grand narrative style, MCs usually narrate the events overpassionately to stimulate audiences’ mood. This way of propaganda could be acceptable when media resource was limited before the reform era. Nowadays, since diversified digital media content allows audiences to shift attention to non-political programs, such characteristics may be challenged by more and more critical audiences in the future.

Regarding abrupt media events about difficulties or disasters, it is expected that the media tell the stories in a stereotype way that would not challenge the government. Specifically, they frame the narratives of the difficulties or problems for crisis control (Zhang, 2015) but avoid mentioning the root cause for the outbreak of the events to criticize the incapability or irresponsibility of the government.<sup>161</sup> To shape favorable public opinion, media elaborate such events in two aspects: how the government attaches great importance to the raised problems and make efforts to overcome them and how people positively react to the events. Specifically, people are often described as united to face such abrupt problems, yielding a sense of solidarity to strengthen state nationalism. Moreover,

<sup>161</sup> Challenging a local government sometimes does happen on (a) provincial level but seldom to the central government and the CCP who wield paramount power, and this helps the central government create favorable public opinion (Chen, 2017).

media coverage emphasizes that if the crisis is relieved, it is because of the authorities' swift reaction and smart guidance. In this way, self-regulated media help the authorities maintain legitimacy in the events.

The last core issue for consideration is that nationalism, regarded as a somewhat controversial political ideology, does not have a positive reputation in political communication. A famous statement of Samuel Johnson (cited in Boswell, 1986, 125) goes like this: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." The overwhelming emphasis on patriotism may give rise to adverse effects for governance when the cognitive levels and international perspectives of the Chinese are improved in the future, allowing them to rethink the ideologies and generate alternative reflections on this issue. For example, more and more critical audiences will look for the truth behind the media reporters' official sources. This would, in turn, raise challenges to the authorities.

In short, mass media events, as a new media form for political communication popularized in the last decade, construct the "truth" to enhance state nationalism and shape the "reality" of popular nationalism with respective communication strategies applied by information disseminators. Although mass communication of nationalism in media events still works well in the PRC at this stage in terms of strengthening or maintaining state legitimacy, the controversy of nationalism, the possible decline of nationalism in the long run, and potential changes in people's way of thinking aroused by digital communication pose some challenges for future political communication. Excessive mass communication of state nationalism that reinforces popular nationalism may raise threats to the legitimacy of the authorities, as it can be difficult to handle social disorders engendered by radical popular nationalism in abrupt events.

#### *Contributions, Limitations, and Future work*

Three contributions to the dissertation worth mentioning. First, arguing that strengthening the legitimacy of the authorities is the ultimate goal of political communication of media events, this dissertation has applied the established theoretical framework to understand nationalism constructed in media communication and expressed in online public opinion and its complicated impact (positive or negative) on regime legitimacy. Second, through visual and discourse analysis, the

dissertation summarizes a set of communication strategies that guide public opinion. The strategies are the catalysts that shape the online perception of nationalism and exert an influence on governance. Third, besides qualitative methods, it also uses quantitative analysis to explore online nationalism. It is a novelty to apply a statistical tool (the ASAP) to big data analysis of online communication, which helps realize passive surveys that enable broad investigations into the corpus. It proves that the machine-learning method is workable for large-scale media communication research. Despite some possible limitations in big data analysis, such as lack of consideration of privacy and confidentiality, it can enhance the understanding of the research results, theory, and methods (White & Breckenridge, 2014, 337).

In recent years, social media facilitated by the ICT have become the primary messaging tools for information access, sharing, and social interaction in Chinese mass communication. Thus, I will focus on some of them to explore how information is accessed, transmitted, or reposted by audiences and how audiences interacted with each other to perceive and express national sentiments. I will also further investigate how online nationalist communication and offline nationalist activism facilitate each other to better understand social interactivity in digital mass communication.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

This dissertation aims to understand the construction of nationalism through online communication conducted by the Chinese government and media companies as well as online audiences' reactions to mass media events in the reform era from 2008 to 2012. Focusing on dream discourses, it examines how the government establishes and meets the social demand exemplified by the Olympic dream to construct state nationalism. It also investigates how Tencent uses discourses to shape online popular nationalism in the abrupt event by bringing audiences away from the established challenging social demand (the unification dream). The discourses assembled by the government and media companies, the representatives of power institutions, play an essential role in shaping online nationalist sentiments that are key to the legitimacy of the authorities. This study implies Foucault's (1969/1972) theory of "knowledge power", which indicates that the institutions with discourse power are capable of transmitting knowledge or "truth" to mass audience, can still be applied to understand mass communication of Chinese nationalism in various media events.

The two cases studies indicate that the authorities embrace ICT innovation to boost national identity and government legitimacy in media events through online communication where information dissemination speed is much higher than a decade ago. Mass media, as the bridges between the authorities and audiences, potentially help the authorities maintain legitimacy in conflict-based abrupt events by shaping public opinion that reflects participatory nationalism. Although ICT innovation facilitates the spread of nationalism and the emergence of collective actions through various Internet platforms, which sometimes poses challenges to information management and social stability, this dissertation shows that the authorities consistently use nationalism as a core theme for political communication to enhance national solidarity and promote or maintain legitimacy through media management and censorship mechanism. For the goal of bolstering legitimacy, staged mass media events will continue to emphasize top-down state nationalism, and abrupt events engendering bottom-up popular nationalism will be carefully managed with joint efforts of the media and the authorities.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Type 1: Very high

Score: 2

Content: The comments express excitement and strong love to the Chinese nation or show a negative opinion to foreigners or foreign countries.

Tone: relatively strong

Examples:

1. 支持北京奥运，期待！  
Support the Beijing Olympics, and I can't wait!
2. 中国加油！  
Go China!
3. 奥运真的来了啊，希望明天一切顺利！  
Olympics finally come. (I) hope everything goes well tomorrow.

Type 2: High

Score: 1

Content: Show concern about the event.

Tone: normal

Examples:

1. 记号，明天来关注。  
Mark. (I will) follow it tomorrow.
2. 留名。  
Leave a name.
3. 凑凑热闹吧。  
Just join in for fun.

Type 3: Neutral

Score: 0

Content: Irrelevant or insignificant

Tone: /

Examples: flaming war, advertisement, etc.

Type 4:

Score: -1

Content: showing indifference to the event or to the Chinese nation.

Tone: normal

Examples:

1. 办不办奥运跟我无关。  
To host the Olympics or not has nothing to do with me.
2. 人家都 400 大发明了，你 5000 年还只有 4 大发明，对人类文明的贡献有多少？  
Someone else (Britain) has made 400 great inventions, but you (China) only have made four great inventions within 5000 years. What is your contribution to human civilization?

P.S If the comment expresses resentment of the Olympics and shows its concern about state affairs, it will be coded as 1 or 2 point(s). The exact point will be based on the tone and content of comments.

Examples:

1. 我觉得最好取消奥运开幕式，劳民伤财啊!

I think it is better to cancel the opening ceremony. It is a vanity project.

This comment is marked 1 point.

2. 请问这关全国人民是什么事？十几个亿全砸在了北京，享受它的恐怕只有北京 户口的人吧？

Does it have something to do with people all over the country? More than one billion RMB was totally spent on (the) Beijing (Olympics), and I am afraid that only Beijingers can use the money.

This comment is marked 2 points.

3. 即使钱不花在百姓身上，好歹还能弄出几个舰队来，神马钓鱼岛、黄岩岛。。。神马高丽、扶桑、吕宋。。。舰队往那儿一摆，哪个敢放肆？这面子。。。这让国人震撼，让国人感动，岂是神马奥运能比的？？？！！？？？！！

If (the government) can build up several fleets, those who claim its sovereignty over Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands and Huangyan Island (Scarborough Shoal) ...will get frightened. Even if common people do not use the money, they will support for it. This is not what the Olympics can do!

This comment is marked 2 points.

Type 5:

Score: -2

Content: showing disgust to the event or to the Chinese nation.

Tone: strong

Examples:

1. 北京奥运算个 p(屁)啊!

The Beijing Olympics are nothing!

P.S. ditto



## Appendix 2

Data sources of the eighteen opinion pieces on Tencent website:

1. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/rbyy/index.htm>

怎看日本民众支持买钓鱼岛

Title: How to view the Japanese people's support for purchasing the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?

2. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/diaoyudao3/index.htm>

日本“国有化”钓鱼岛欲意何为

What is the purpose of Japan's nationalization of the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?

3. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/ypyl/index.htm>

少将放言琉球属于中国的背后

Implications of Major General's claim "Ryukyu belongs to China."

4. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/baodiao/index.htm>

怎看民间“保卫钓鱼岛”

How to view "defending the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands" among the populace?

5. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/dudao/index.htm>

韩国政府为何强硬保卫独岛

Why does the South Korean government strongly defend the Dokdo Islands (Takeshima)?

6. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/dzrbh/index.htm>

“抵制日货”：损敌八百自伤一千

Boycotting Japanese products: causing a no-win situation

7. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/zhan/index.htm>

钓鱼岛争端该不该“不惜一战”

Should we fight for the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?

8. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/systl/bak.htm>

“爱国者”石原慎太郎

A patriot: Shintaro Ishihara

9. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/ddanyu/index.htm>

为袭击日驻华大使叫好令人叹息

It is deplorable to applaud the behavior of attacking the Japanese Ambassador.

10. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/zrzz/index.htm>

若开战 中国能打赢日本吗

If we declare war, can we beat the Japanese?

11. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/cgbdyd/index.htm>

陈光标在美登钓鱼岛广告有用吗

Is it useful for Chen Guangbiao to advertise for the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands?

12. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/xt1/index.htm>

稀土不是部队，拿来“抗日”不靠谱

Rare earth is not an army and it is unwise to use it for resistance against Japanese aggression.

13. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/aiguo2/index.htm>

钓鱼岛争端：日本民众为何不够“爱国”

Why are the Japanese not patriotic enough?

14. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/diaoyudao4/index.htm>

钓鱼岛危机：美国才是背后黑手？

The Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands crisis: is the United States the real manipulator?

15. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/dzbx/index.htm>

“假爱国，真施暴”该严惩

Those who exert violence with mendacious patriotism should be punished

16. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/ccbr/bak.htm>

钓鱼岛僵局为何难以打破

Why is it difficult to break the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands deadlock?

17. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/pfyq/index.htm>

天下兴亡，匹夫有责

Everyone is responsible for the rise and fall of the country

18. <http://view.news.qq.com/zt2012/pifu/index.htm>

不必为“不理性反日”过分悲观

It is unnecessary to be overly pessimistic about irrational anti-Japanese behavior.

### Appendix 3

Type 1: Very high

Score: 2

Content: The comments include strong resentment of Japan or strong assertion of defending China's sovereignty. The comments support war with Japan or boycotting Japanese products with the potential offline destructive activities of such as smashing Japanese brand automobiles. Some radical or impolite words may be used.

Tone: relatively strong

Examples: 1. 打日本, 我捐命。

Fighting with Japan, I will devote my life.

2. 要打就把小日本他们彻底灭了!

If fighting, we should eliminate all the Japs!

3. 小日本可以买岛, 我们也可以从上帝那里把小日本买过来然后统统干掉。

The Japs can purchase the Islands, and we can also buy Jap from God and then eliminate them all.

Type 2: High

Score: 1

Content: The comments have some concerns about the incident. They express nationalism in a mild way instead of resorting to armed force such as waging war with Japan. The pejorative appellation for Japan is also used.

Tone: relatively even

Examples: 1...战争一爆发, 没有一个家庭是完整的, 希望和平解决.....

If the war breaks out, no families will be complete. (I) hope (the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands dispute) will be solved peacefully ...

2. 我们支持正义, 支持我们的国家。

We support justice and our state.

3. 我只是一个普通人, 我只能尽我微薄之力, 不买日货。

I am an ordinary person and what I can do is not to buy any Japanese products.

Type 3: Neutral

Score: 0

Content: Not show any tendency about the incident.

Tone: Relatively even or no special tone

Examples: 1. 顶 Ding (bumping)

2. 占座(Take a seat)

3. 坐看互喷 Watch the flaming (between other audiences)

Type 4: Low

Score: -1

Content: The comments show people's lack of concern about the incident.

Tone: Relatively even

Examples: 1. 买不买, 卖不卖与我无关, 哥只关心粮食和蔬菜, 因为活着要生活!

To purchase or sell (the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands) has nothing to do with me. As I

need to survive in society, what I care about is rice and vegetables (my own life).

2. 中国人连自己的房子都买不起，关心这个有用么，你统一世界又能怎么样，土地是你的么？

As Chinese people cannot even afford an apartment, why should we concern ourselves with the purchase of Islands? Even if we reunify the world, the land will not belong to us.

3. 关我们老百姓鸟事？中国什么时候是老百姓的中国，不一直是政府的吗？

It has nothing to do with us, ordinary people. When does China belong to the ordinary people? Isn't it always the government's country?

Type 5: Very low

Score: -2

Content: The comments express something unfavorable for China or say something favorable for Japan.

Tone: Relatively strong

Examples: 1. 打死不爱国。卖日本车的人，如果他坐牢我愿意养他的父母亲。

I would rather die than be patriotic. If a Japanese automobile salesperson is imprisoned, I would like to take care of his parents.

2. 我喜欢日本人，日本天(皇)万岁！

I like the Japanese. Long live the Mikado!

3. 世界上任何一个国家都比中国可敬可爱。

Any other country in the world is more venerable than China.

## Summary

This dissertation studies the construction of Chinese nationalism by the Chinese government and media companies through mass communication of government-staged and abrupt events in the reform era from 2008 to 2012. It examines how Chinese audiences express online nationalist sentiments, representing whether the communication of events meets the social demands established by “dream discourses.” If the social demands are gratified, the mass communication helps enhance the ruling legitimacy of Chinese authorities. If not, it may ruin the legitimacy.

I exemplify mass communication of nationalism with two case studies: the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2012 Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident. The former, organized by the Chinese government for the “Olympic dream,” transmits top-down state nationalism. The latter, erupting spontaneously and symbolizing the “unification dream,” triggers bottom-up popular nationalism. I use a mixed approach, including qualitative (critical discourse analysis) and quantitative methods (manual and automat data analysis), to explore nationalist communication implemented by the government and media companies and online reactions in the form of nationalist public opinion.

The study results show that the Beijing Olympics, presenting the realization of the Olympic dream, help the Chinese authorities strengthen ruling legitimacy through various communication strategies. However, in the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands incident, as it is hardly possible to fulfill the “unification dream,” more uncertainty in the incident development prompts the commercial media company (Tencent) to mediate popular nationalism by adjusting media content. Although the incident arouses excessive popular nationalism that raises challenges to the government, the legitimacy is finally maintained.

Chinese audiences have increasingly voiced themselves online with the expansion of ICT in recent years. However, the authorities and media companies, as the representatives of institutions endowed with “knowledge power” coined by Michel Foucault, still play an essential role in shaping nationalist sentiments. As nationalism is a mixed blessing, the authorities will continuously take advantage of its benign aspects by staging media events to enhance national solidarity and promote legitimacy. Through media management and censorship mechanism, they will also carefully deal with popular nationalism in abrupt media events with the joint efforts of media companies to maintain ruling legitimacy.

## Samenvatting

Deze scriptie bestudeert de constructie van Chinees nationalisme door de Chinese overheid en mediabedrijven door middel van massacommunicatie van door de overheid geënceneerde en spontane gebeurtenissen in het hervormingstijdperk van 2008 tot 2012. Het onderzoekt hoe het Chinese publiek online nationalistische sentimenten uitdrukt, wat aangeeft of de communicatie van gebeurtenissen voldoet aan de sociale eisen die door “droomdiscoursen” zijn vastgesteld. Wanneer aan de sociale eisen wordt voldaan, helpt de massacommunicatie de heersende legitimiteit van de Chinese autoriteiten te versterken. Als dat niet het geval is, kan het de legitimiteit teniet doen.

Ik laat voorbeelden zien van massacommunicatie van nationalisme met twee casestudies: de Olympische Spelen van 2008 in Peking en het incident op de Diaoyu (Senkaku)-eilanden in 2012. De eerste, georganiseerd door de Chinese regering voor de “Olympische droom,” straalt staatsnationalisme van bovenaf uit. De laatste, die spontaan tot uitbarsting komt en de “eenwordingsdroom” symboliseert, veroorzaakt volksnationalisme van onderop. Ik gebruik een gemengde benadering, waaronder kwalitatieve (kritische discoursanalyse) en kwantitatieve methoden (handmatige en geautomatiseerde data-analyse), om nationalistische communicatie geïmplementeerd door autoriteiten (de overheid en mediabedrijven) en online reacties in de vorm van nationalistische publieke opinie te onderzoeken.

De onderzoeksresultaten tonen aan dat de Olympische Spelen in Peking, die de verwezenlijking van de “Olympische droom” voorstellen, de Chinese autoriteiten helpen de legitimiteit van de regering te versterken door middel van verschillende communicatiestrategieën. Bij het incident met de Diaoyu (Senkaku)-eilanden echter, omdat het nauwelijks mogelijk is om de “eenwordingsdroom” te vervullen, zorgt meer onzekerheid in de ontwikkeling van het incident ervoor dat het commerciële mediabedrijf (Tencent) het populaire nationalisme bemiddelt door de media-inhoud aan te passen. Hoewel het incident buitensporig populair nationalisme oproept dat de regering voor uitdagingen stelt, wordt de legitimiteit uiteindelijk gehandhaafd.

Het Chinese publiek heeft zich de afgelopen jaren steeds meer online uitgesproken vanwege de uitbreiding van ICT. De autoriteiten en mediabedrijven, als vertegenwoordigers van instellingen begiftigd met “knowledge power,” bedacht door Michel Foucault, spelen echter nog steeds een essentiële rol bij het vormgeven van nationalistische sentimenten. Aangezien nationalisme een gemengde zegen is, zullen de autoriteiten voortdurend profiteren van de goedaardige aspecten ervan door media-evenementen te organiseren om de nationale solidariteit te vergroten en de legitimiteit te bevorderen. Door middel van mediabeheer en censuurmechanismen zullen ze ook spontane media-evenementen met de gezamenlijke inspanningen van mediabedrijven om de heersende legitimiteit te behouden.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

Qiaoqi Zhang was born on 12 December 1984 in Shaoyang, China. She received her upper secondary school diploma from Shaoyang No.2 Middle School in 2003. In 2008, she obtained her bachelor's degree in English at Central South University. She received a master's degree in British and American Literature at Hunan University in 2011. She has been doing her PhD Project funded by China Scholarship Council (CSC) at the Institute of Area Studies of Leiden University (LIAS), under the supervision of Prof. dr. Stefan Landsberger and Dr. Florian Schneider since September 2011.