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Assertive Nationalism and China's Core Interests

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Introduction

After 2008, many scholars noticed that Beijing became more willing to respond to popular nationalist calls in pursuing the so-called core national interest and to adopting tougher measures in maritime territorial disputes with its Asian neighbors. Scholars pointed out that the main reason is that pursuing core interest became the common goal of state nationalism and popular nationalism. The characteristics of the studies on Chinese nationalism in the field of political science and area studies is that the scholars tend to be more interested in the transformation of Chinese nationalism and its impact on Chinese foreign policy, instead of adopting general theory on nationalism or analyzing the substance of Chinese nationalism and how it differs from other states. In this bibliography, the authors first trace the studies on Chinese nationalism to see how these works reflect the actual development of Chinese nationalism. Second, it introduces the recent trend of studies on assertive nationalism. The third section introduces scholars' works that focus on how China defines and pursues its core interests and how assertive nationalism brought impacts to the territorial dispute. In the last section, the authors focus on those works that link Chinese assertive nationalism to China's foreign policy toward the United States and Japan.

Literature Review of Chinese Nationalism

In this bibliography, the authors adopt Zhao's (Zhao 2008, cited under Typology of Chinese Nationalism) definition of nationalism as "a set of modern ideas that centers people's loyalty upon the nation-state, either existing or desired." Thus most scholars argue that it did not exist in China before the 19th century because China was an empire, not a nation-state. However, the definitions of Chinese nationalism and the content of national identity in China remain contentious in the existing literature. As Carlson 2009 and Shen and Cheung 2007 indicate, China specialists tend to treat Chinese nationalism as a particular case and do not adopt the general theory of nationalism. Scholars argue that it is because of the historical uniqueness of China. First, China was never fully colonized, unlike most developing countries. Second, China inherited the legacy of an empire, indicated by Tang and Darr 2012. The literature of Chinese nationalism first appeared in the 1950s, when scholars analyzed the nature of the Chinese communist revolution. Schwartz 1951 is a pioneer work in the effort to point out the crucial importance of nationalism in the Chinese communist-led revolution. Johnson 1962 argues that mass nationalism was an integral part of the communist revolution. The importance of nationalism to the Chinese communist revolution became conventional knowledge. The following sections review the literature on Chinese nationalism chronologically.

Carlson, Allen. "A Flawed Perspective: The Limitations Inherent Within the Study of Chinese Nationalism." *Nations and Nationalism* 15.1 (2009): 20–35.

The author points out previous work on Chinese nationalism has been undermined by a number of major flaws and then advocates that scholars turn to study the broader question of national identity formation.

Johnson, Chalmers. *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962.

Based on secret Japanese archives, the author provides a more systematic explanation of the success of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in mobilizing mass support during the Anti-Japanese War. He argues that the structural or institutional factor permitted mass mobilization by the CCP was nationalist identity and a patriotic desire to resist the Japanese invaders.

Schwartz, Benjamin. *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

This is one of the early works referring to Chinese nationalism. The author argues that nationalism played an important role in the Chinese communist-led revolution.

Shen, Simon, and Mong Cheung. "Reshaping Nationalism: Chinese Intellectual Response Towards Sino-American and Sino-Japanese Relations in the Twenty-First Century." *The Pacific Review* 20.4 (2007): 475–497.

This paper argues that three separate nationalist processes are occurring concurrently but independently of each other: the construction of civic nationalist values, the development of an international relations strategy assigning responsible power to China, and the detection of alleged anti-Chinese conspiracies.

Tang, Wenfang, and Benjamin Darr. "Chinese Nationalism and its Political and Social Origins." *Journal of Contemporary China* 21.77 (2012): 811–826.

This article first analyzes the unique political and social origins of Chinese nationalism. Then, using the 2008 China Survey, it examines Chinese respondents' feelings toward their country and how such feelings are related to their democratic values. The findings show that nationalism in contemporary China serves as a powerful instrument in impeding public demand for democratic change.

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