

# Chinese Cyber Nationalism

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# Chinese Cyber Nationalism

*Evolution, Characteristics, and  
Implications*



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*To my beloved homeland—China*

國家圖書館



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### **Direct Confrontations with Japan (2003.6–2006.8)**

Japan and the United States care a lot about people's voice. Our action at least lets those so-called democratic countries consider Chinese people's voice. We should let them know that "Chinese people have stood up" is no empty words.

—Feng Jinhua, the organizer of China's "Defending Diaoyu Islands Campaign," in an interview in August, 2003<sup>1</sup>

According to CNNIC's eighteenth semi-annual report, by the end of June 2006, mainland China's online population grew to 123 million, and 77 million of them used broadband to surf online.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, the largest online country in the world, the United States has over 140 million active online users, and 95.5 million of them use the broadband.<sup>3</sup> The growing importance of Internet as a major medium and communication channel in China was reflected in these statistics: on average, Chinese online citizens spend 16.5 hours per week on the Internet (as compared to 7 hours per week for average American Web user); the most frequently used online service is "searching and reading news"; about one fourth of them use the Web blog service to express their opinions; the Internet was ranked as the top information channel by 82.6% of the correspondents, television was the second with 64.5%, and newspaper the third with 57.9%, respectively.

One significant feature of Chinese netizens is the age distribution. The 18-24 age group led all other age groups, and accounted for more than one-third (38.9%) of all the online population. The 25-30 age group ranked second, with 18.4%; followed by the under-18 age group, with 14.9%.<sup>4</sup> In sum, about 72% of China's 123-million online users were under the age of 30. In other words, the majority of Chinese online population was born after the devastating Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). When most of them reached the primary school age, China had already begun its historic journey toward market economy and globalization. Historically speaking, they are too young to witness Mao's "revolu-

tionary experiments" as well as the subsequent chaos; yet politically speaking, they are too self-confident and independent to be restricted.

In addition to the higher living standard, more career choices, and more relaxed political atmosphere, online technology also added two golden wings to the younger generation's limitless energy and imagination. On October 2004, *Forbes* and *EntrepreneurChina* released their updated Chinese rich people list, respectively. Chen Tianguo, a thirty-one year old Shanghai citizen, was ranked second with a personal net worth valued at US\$ 1.27 billion.<sup>5</sup> Chen founded in 1999 China's largest online games company—Shanda Networking Group, a Nasdaq listed company with a market value now over US\$ 2 billion. As China's billionaires became younger, their wealth nonetheless grew bigger. For instance, EntomoneyChina has raised the minimum requirement for a spot on its China's top-100 rich list from US\$ 6 million in 1999 to US\$150 million in 2004.<sup>6</sup>

### Surfing into the Sea

If Zhao Wei's military dress incident in 2001 and Jiang Wen's shrine visit controversy in 2002 showed a turn of tide in China's online sentiment, they seemed to be just a short overture in retrospect. The summer and fall of 2003 witnessed an unprecedented flurry of anti-Japanese activities across China, most of which were initiated, stimulated, and organized online.

"Diaoyu Islands are Chinese territory!" On 22 June 2003, fifteen Chinese protestors shouted slogans, waved goodbye to friends, and boarded a small fish boat in Yuhuan County, Zhejiang Province. Their destination was a group of small islands, a disputed territory in the East China Sea claimed by China, Japan, and Taiwan since the end of World War II. The Diaoyu Islands, which are known as Senkaku Islands in Japan, consist of five uninhabited, volcanic islets and three rocky outcrops. When China and Japan established formal relationship in early 1970s, the two countries agreed to postpone the sovereignty dispute indefinitely and explore the resources together. On 14 July 1996, the century-old dispute was rekindled when the right-wing group Japanese Youth Association built a lighthouse on one of the islets. Chinese activists in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas have been protesting Japan's aggressive behavior for a long time, including several failed voyages to demonstrate Chinese sovereignty in late 1990s. Chinese government has been extremely cautious in dealing with Diaoyu Islands-related issue, squeezed by two incompatible concerns. On the one hand, it didn't want to sacrifice a beneficial Sino-Japan relationship for several uninhabitable islands; but on the other hand, it also feared that a weak response might cause more damage to its ruling legitimacy, not to mention the potential rich oil reserve near the islands.<sup>7</sup>

This "Defending Diaoyu Operation" (*bao diao xing dong*) in June 2003 was the first voyage that was sponsored, organized, and participated by Chinese mainland volunteers.<sup>8</sup> Two Chinese websites, "Patriot Alliance Net" ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)),<sup>9</sup> and "Chinese 9.18 Patriot Net" ([www.china918.net](http://www.china918.net)) were behind all the preparatory efforts, including fund-raising, press release,

personnel recruit, and logistic assistance. When Japanese coastguard forces dispatched six battleships and several helicopters to stop these Chinese protestors near the Diaoyu Island, a direct confrontation seemed inevitable. The backers up group at home reported this situation to Chinese Foreign Ministry, and also called for public support on their websites. A small online appeal was quickly magnified by online communication's immerse reach capability. Hundreds of online chat rooms exploded on this breaking news.

The Chinese government neither endorsed, nor prepared for, this type of spontaneous activity by Chinese citizens. This time, although a bit reluctantly, it took a firm stance in the wake of growing pressure from China's online community and the increasingly formidable public opinion. The Chinese Foreign Ministry formally sent a note to Japanese government, asking them to ensure the safety of these Chinese citizens. After singing China's national anthem and holding a small ceremony to declare China's sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands, fifteen Chinese protestors returned home safely. They were welcomed as brave heroes by the online supporters.<sup>10</sup> Chinese official media, such as *Beijing Youth Daily* and the website edition of *People's Daily*, covered this event matter-of-factly. It neither overtly encouraged it, nor squarely rejected it. In a news report published by *Beijing Youth Daily* on 23 June 2003, the title was "The Whole Story of Fifteen Chinese Patriots' Defending Diaoyu Islands Voyage."<sup>11</sup> While telling this story, the author walked a delicate line,

This activity was sponsored by some non-governmental organizations, and joined by volunteers. The entire operation was strictly restrained within the legal boundaries, and no extreme move was taken. . . . However, the "Defending Diaoyu Islands" operation was obstructed and interfered by Japanese forces. According to our sources, Chinese Embassy in Japan has presented note to Japanese foreign ministry, hoping they will handle this issue with calm. When asked by reporter during a press conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Kong Quan reiterated that China has undisputable sovereignty over Diaoyu Islands and the surrounding areas.

Many Western media and Japanese pundits speculated that this type of action might have been a calculated maneuver supported by the government. Their evidence, aside from the logistic assistance, money support, and media cooperation, rested mainly on the stereotypical logic that no independent activity of this magnitude was possible in China without the government's tacit approval. This thinking pattern proved to be somewhat outdated in understanding the Internet-based cyber nationalism activities (see the interviews with Wu Zukang and Lu Yunfei in Chapter 13). In an interview with *Ban Yue Tan* (a semi-monthly journal published by *Xinhua News Agency* in Beijing), Feng Jinhua, the spiritual leader and key organizer discussed how they prepared for this operation,

Reporter: It needs a lot of money to carry out this voyage. How did your people raise the money?

Feng: On behalf of my organization, I wrote a letter calling for help, and then posted it on the Internet. Within two months, we raised a total of 100,000

yuan (12,500 US\$). After all the money, boat, and staff were ready, we set off to sea. It was 23 June.

Reporter: Did you know all the other volunteers?

Feng: No. I only got to know them via the Internet. I disclosed my mobile phone number and my personal ID. card number in the letter. Our actions demonstrated a united and inspiring Chinese new image to the world. All volunteers participated in this operation on the basis of patriotic feeling, not for personal reputation, not for money, and without one complaining word.

Reporter: Will you keep up this "Defending Diaoyu Islands" campaign?

Feng: We must continue. Why? Japan and the United States care a lot about people's voice. Our action at least lets those so-called democratic countries consider Chinese people's voice. We should let them know that "Chinese people have stood up" is no empty words.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to Feng and his fellow activists' enthusiasm and dedication, the overall reaction in China's cyber sphere toward the final result of this voyage was mixed. In a live online interview organized by "Sino-Japan Forum" at the *People's Daily's* website several days after their return, Feng and two other participants answered Chinese online users' questions. Though recognizing their patriotic motive, more than half of those in the online forum were critical of their behavior. Here are some examples.

- Mr. Feng, have your actions benefited our country at all?
- How do you think China's civilian organization can outmatch Japanese military?
- It should be our government's responsibility. There must be something wrong with our government if normal citizens had to do this.
- China doesn't need raging youth any more. The Boxer Movement was a big lesson!
- Is there any difference between your actions and those provocative actions that cause diplomatic conflict?
- Mr. Feng, this is a government affair. It is none of your business.<sup>13</sup>

More than 8,000 online users visited the live online interview on 27 June 2003. Apparently, not all of them agreed with the tactic and strategies used by those Diaoyu Islands defenders. However, as pointed out in a reply by Lu Yun-fei, one of the founders of the "Patriot Alliance Net" ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)), "this operation set a valuable precedent for China's self-organized patriotism movement. It is an ice-breaking event in new China's fifty-year history. It is the first footsteps in the Long March. In the foreseeable future, this type of movement will get more people's attention and support."<sup>14</sup> Lu's prediction proved to be deadly accurate and serious.

### A Chain of Events

In July 2003, an unconfirmed message began to circulate on China's cyber sphere. It disclosed that China might award the contract of building a high-speed

magnetic bullet train between Shanghai and Beijing (over 1,000 miles) to a Japanese company. Several factors that were imbedded in this \$12 billion contract struck the sensitive nerve among Chinese cyber nationalists. First, the winning bidder was a Japanese company. Second, this company had been a military production base for Japanese army during the World War II. Third, the geological survey for this construction may reveal China's strategic secrets. Fourth, China's native research institutes and production companies needed this money and had the capability to handle this project.<sup>15</sup>

On 19 July 2003, the "Patriot Alliance Net" ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)) introduced an innovative cyber-protest tactic—online petition. This new application of Internet was so attractive and effective that it drastically changed the pace, scope, and image of Chinese cyber nationalism movement ever since. Within ten days, over 90,000 Chinese online users signed their name on the "Ten Thousand Signatories Opposing Japan's New Lines Technology and Supporting China's Own Technology" public petition letter posted on the website. On 4 August, the representative of the "Patriot Alliance Net" presented the petition letter and the signatories to the Ministry of Railway, the department that was in charge of this project.<sup>16</sup> No indication that this online petition campaign led to any direct policy change in the government. However, according to a report by *New York Times* on 12 August 2003,

Bitter history is also complicating China's choice of Japanese or European technology for a high-speed rail link between Shanghai and Beijing. Tens of thousands of Chinese signed Web-based petitions in recent days calling on the government not to award the \$12 billion contract to Japan. . . . And as the decision looms, officials gave a cool reception to Chikage Ogi, Japan's transport minister, who visited China last week but failed to meet with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao or any Railway Ministry officials. That was widely reported as a snub in the press in both countries.<sup>17</sup>

The organizer of this petition, the "Patriot Alliance Net," covered live the whole process of the letter submission on their website. It went smoothly and all participants were inspired by this new form of capitalizing online public opinion. On 4 August 2003, one Chinese worker died and more than forty construction workers were injured when mustard gas was found at a construction site in Qiqihar, a city in the northeastern China. These mustard gas bombs were among an estimated 700,000 chemical weapons left behind by the retreating Japanese army during the World War II. Some 2,000 Chinese people have died since 1945, after coming into contact with the buried or concealed weapons.<sup>18</sup> The gruesome pictures of those victims, coupled with Japanese government's initial indifferent response, sparked widespread online protests in China's cyber sphere. On 15 August 2003, six Chinese websites ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org); [www.china918.net](http://www.china918.net); [www.publiclaw-events.com](http://www.publiclaw-events.com); [www.chinaeagle.org](http://www.chinaeagle.org); [www.918war.tonghua.net](http://www.918war.tonghua.net); [www.sohu.com](http://www.sohu.com)) cosponsored an online petition demanding that the Japanese government apologize to those victims, make compensations, provide information about those buried chemical weapons, and clean those weapons up.<sup>19</sup>

Within one month, 1,119,248 Chinese online users signed the online petition and a total of 12,518 websites offered their moral support by providing a hyper link to this campaign on their websites.<sup>20</sup> On 18 September 2003, the 72nd anniversary of the "Mukden Incident" (a bomb attack plotted by Japanese Army to justify its invasion and occupation of northeast China), online petition organizers presented over one million online signatures to the Japanese Embassy in Beijing.<sup>21</sup> On 29 September 2003, a Tokyo local court issued a verdict, ordering that Japanese government pay 190 million Yen (1.8 million US\$) to those victims in China.<sup>22</sup> In a public thank-you note, the petition organizers expressed both their gratitude and excitement to the overwhelming response from Chinese online community,

Although there was no publication and promotional assistance from the traditional TV and print media, our online petition appeal nonetheless was embraced by over one million signatories from all provinces, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities within one month. It not only set a precedent in China's Internet developing history, but also demonstrated Chinese people's determination and dedication to peace and justice. We should thank today's Internet technology, which enables us to rally our voice and accumulate our power.<sup>23</sup>

The Chinese government's reaction to this event revealed both its weakness and its dilemma in dealing with spontaneous and well coordinated online activities. In the cyber sphere, a small incident could trigger a nuclear chain reaction in a matter of two to three days, which made any government preventive and prohibitive measures inefficient, if not impossible. Certainly, the government would like to use this manifest public opinion as leverage in their negotiations with Japan. On 23 August, Tang Jiaxian, State Council member and former Foreign Minister of China, told his Japanese guests in a Great Hall meeting that the poisonous gas weapon incident "stirred up tremendous indignation among Chinese people."<sup>24</sup> Apparently, he was referring to the online petition campaign and the emotion expressed by Chinese Internet users. Nonetheless, the government seemed to have drawn a clear line between the petition in the cyber sphere and the demonstration on the street. For example, when Lu Yunfei and fifty activists applied for a small public protest march in Beijing on the day of their signature submission, their request was rejected by local police department. According to the official refusal notice, "there is concrete evidence that the applied rally will do direct harm to public security and severely interrupt societal order."<sup>25</sup> As noted by Lin Junming, a dissident scholar in Beijing, "the petition is something of significance between the Chinese government and its people rather than between China and Japan."<sup>26</sup>

The mustard gas incident hadn't subsided, another more embarrassing event surfaced in Zhu Hai, a rising tour city in southern China. On the weekend of 16-18 September 2003, more than 300 Japanese tourists held an open orgy with some 500 local Chinese prostitutes in Zhu Hai's most luxurious hotel, Zhu Hai International Conference Hotel. One hotel resident was so disgusted by what he saw and he made dozens of calls to the hotel managers, local police, and the Zhu

Hai government in the following days, but to no avail. One week later, when a local newspaper finally picked up this story and put it online, this orgy instantly became a "national humiliation" in China's highly sensitive cyber sphere.<sup>27</sup> The orgy sparked a national outpouring of fury and disgust, not only because of the scale of the scandal, but because it occurred on the 72nd anniversary of the 1931 Mukden Incident which led to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. "18 September" (or "9/18") has been the most sensitive date to most Chinese people, just like "9/11" is to most Americans. Since the late 1990s, it has become a solemn ritual in many large cities that sirens will be set off on every 18 September to commemorate the war victims. In fact, many Chinese nationalism-oriented websites specially included "1931-9-18" in their domain names, for example, "Patriot Alliance Net" ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)) and "Chinese 9.18 Patriot Net" ([www.china918.net](http://www.china918.net)).

Intuitively, many Chinese saw this event as a deliberate act by some Japanese people to humiliate China once again. From 26 September, when this incident was first reported by online media, to 29 December, when the two Chinese orgy organizers were sentenced to life in prison, a total of 27,000 entries were posted in Sina.com's special talking board on this issue alone.<sup>28</sup> The most often used phrases included "Burn this hotel!" "Double national humiliation!" "I have to give up my Chinese nationality, since I can not bear this any more!" "Kill those Chinese traitors!" or "Boycott Japanese goods!" etc. The Chinese central government took a swift and tough stance on this issue. The Foreign Ministry publicly denounced this orgy as "an extremely odious criminal case," and required the Japanese government to "better educate" its citizen.<sup>29</sup> The government also issued arrest warrants for three Japanese who arranged this event and sought their extradition through the international police network. As *Daily Telegraph's* (London) correspondent Richard Spencer pointed out, the life sentences given to the two Chinese organizers, "far longer than any served by those Japanese war criminals who escaped the death penalty after the war, show the extent to which the Chinese authorities are prepared to give vent to nationalist feeling."<sup>30</sup>

The anti-Japanese sentiment in China was so vehement in the later half of 2003 that any small incident could trigger an online avalanche. In October 2003, three Japanese students offended thousands of Chinese students during a cultural festival at China's Northwest University in Xi'an. They performed a skit that was obscene and insulting by any cultural standards. Several thousand Chinese students joined a large demonstration in Xi'an and some Japanese restaurants were stormed in that city. This episode finally died down after the offenders posted a signed repentant letter on the university's website, acknowledging their "lack of understanding of Chinese thinking, ethnicity, culture, manners and customs."<sup>31</sup> To add new injuries to the old wounds, Japanese Premier Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited the Yasukuni shrine on 2 January 2004, his fourth such visit as the top leader of Japan to the highly controversial site. Moreover, when the Chinese government angrily protested and postponed the summit meeting between the two countries, the response from a senior Japanese official was:



When, where and how the leader of a state chooses to honor the memory of that state's war dead is the business of that country, based on its own traditions and customs. It may arise as a source of contention among citizens of this nation, but foreign countries do not have the right to comment.<sup>32</sup>

As the bilateral relationship deteriorated, the political hostilities inevitably extended to other areas. For example, Japan's largest motor maker Toyota and Nippon Paint had to withdraw two advertisements aired in China in 2003 and 2004 respectively, as they were accused of insulting China's cultural symbols of "lion" and "dragon."<sup>33</sup> The final match of Asian Soccer Cup between team Japan and team China ended with a massive protest in Beijing that the authorities had to send anti-riot police to dismiss thousands of angry soccer fans.<sup>34</sup> In almost all the online chat room, a Japan-related talking thread usually attracted the largest audience and netted the most fervent anger. For one example, the news of Kozumi's shrine visit in 2004 on [www.sina.com](http://www.sina.com) was followed by as many as 1341-page commentaries, with about twenty-five postings on each page.<sup>35</sup>

### CCP's "Evil" Dilemma

In stark contrast to the rampant political animosity, the economic relationship between China and Japan has been thriving in the past decade. China's huge market and surging domestic demand for industrial products propelled Japan's ailing economy out of its decade-long stagnation. In 2004, China replaced the United States as Japan's largest trading partner in the world. Meanwhile, Japanese investment and industrial exports helped speed up China's modernization process. According to the data from China's Ministry of Commerce, Japan has invested about 50 billion US\$ in China in the past decade and the bilateral trade between Japan and China reached a record 168.4 billion US\$ in 2004.<sup>36</sup> This uncomfortable, if not awkward, "cold in politics and hot in economics" (*zheng jing re*) relationship posted a daunting threat to the CCP's ruling credentials. On the one hand, the economic development has been the overriding goal for the ruling party in the past two and a half decades; on the other hand, no political party in China's modern history ended up well if it sat against the nationalistic tide.

The growing influence of the online public opinion made Chinese government's Japan policy decision making more complicated. In addition to politics and pride, the CCP leaders had to consider economics and stability. When these two forces collide, as it is often the case in the Sino-Japan relationship, the leaders had to make a tough decision, quickly and unequivocally. However, no option seemed to be both politically correct and economically beneficial. In reality, the Chinese leaders had to play a tricky and double-faced political game. Publicly, the CCP government stood firmly behind the cyber nationalist groups. Privately, however, the leaders managed to put a leash on those increasingly unruly activists. The following three examples demonstrated the government's stealth strategy.

Example I. After three failed attempts, on 23 March 2004, activists of "Chinese Civilians Alliance for Defending the Diaoyu Islands" zigzagged around Japanese coast guard vessels and successfully landed on the Diaoyu Islands, an uninhabited island in the East China Sea claimed by both China and Japan.<sup>37</sup> Hours later, they were arrested by Japanese authorities for illegal entry. This incident triggered a flag-burning protest in Beijing, a similar protest by Japanese nationalists in Japan, and several days of intense confrontation over territorial rights by the two governments. After China's Foreign Ministry lodged nine diplomatic protests over the detentions, Japanese government released the seven activists three days later. This "Defending Diaoyu Islands" voyage, like the previous ones, was sponsored and organized by several Internet-based nationalism groups. They raised money online, recruited members online, and reported their progress step-by-step online.<sup>38</sup> On 19 July 2004, when a regional branch of this organization tried to repeat the "successful landing" once again, the Chinese authorities at the last minute "sent 20 to 30 plainclothes policemen and 10 cars" to block the sail for "safety reasons."<sup>39</sup> Obviously, the cyber nationalists' restless attempts really pushed the Chinese leaders to a dangerous corner. At this juncture, some online users discovered by accident that phrases like "Defending Diaoyu" (*baowei diaoyu*), "Diaoyu Islands" (*diaoyu dao*) "Safeguarding Diaoyu Islands" (*baowei diaoyu dao*), and "Nanjing Massacre" (*nan jing da tu sha*) were on the government's secret list of "uncivilized words online" that should be censored by the Internet Service Providers.<sup>40</sup> This finding, though seemed embarrassing for the Chinese government, was telling evidence of the government's cyber nationalism dilemma.

Example II. On 30 August 2004, an urgent "SOS" letter was posted on many Chinese chat rooms and political forums. It was written by the founder of China's most active anti-Japanese website, the "Patriot Alliance Net" ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)).<sup>41</sup> This website was responsible for the first online petition in 2003 against the high-speed railway contract, the one-million signatories petition on poisonous gas incident, and several "Defending Diaoyu Islands" voyages.<sup>42</sup> When this website called for a new round of "Chinese Railroad Built by China" online campaign in 2004, according to the organizer nicknamed "Hunan Platoon Leader,"

Some powerful department sent out a clear message just moments ago, requiring us to halt this activity immediately, and indicated the possible consequences if we don't comply. We are on the verge of being shut down. However, our stances are: stick to the truth and stay the course!<sup>43</sup>

This message turned out to be the swan song of a once-popular nationalistic website. In an online chat room, hundreds of Chinese users expressed their outrage, disappointment, shock, and reflection toward this news. Roughly 90% of the postings were angry curses toward the government, such as "Our government is as weak as a sheep!" "Shift! How can the government shut down a patriotic site?!" "History will prove the stupidity of our weak policy!" and "We are missing Chairman Mao." A few others, however, pointed to the downside of the

irrational ultra-nationalism that might hurt China in the long run. But this kind of message was quickly submerged by more emotional protests.<sup>44</sup>

Example III. To quell the anti-Japanese sentiment online, the Chinese government resorted to a communication channel that was non-existent and almost unimaginable in the past. It was a type of informal online chats between the officials who were directly responsible for the Sino-Japan policy making and the common online citizens who were interested in this topic. The purpose of this "internal public diplomacy" approach was to explain the rationale and complexity of the government's policies. For example, on 21 January 2005, China's Deputy Foreign Minister Wu Dawei participated in an online forum about the "Diaoyu Islands Issues" with online users on the official website of the ministry. He answered various questions raised by discussants in a two-hour long session.<sup>45</sup> On 23 April 2005, the "Government Online" program of [www.xinhuanet.com](http://www.xinhuanet.com) (the official website of *Xinhua News Agency*) interviewed Bo Xiaoli, the Minister of Chinese Ministry of Commerce on the issue of "boycotting Japanese products."<sup>46</sup> He emphasized the "mutual beneficial and complementary" trade relationship between China and Japan.<sup>47</sup> According to Minister Bo, it was estimated that Japanese-funded companies in China absorbed some 9.2 million workers, and paid a total of over 6 billion US\$ taxes to China's central government in 2004. "In fact, against the backdrop of economic globalization, every country has to reposition its economy in line with the market rules and value principle. The world economy now is deeply intertwined and interdependent," cautioned Minister Bo.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the choppy year of 2003, an interview with China's ex-Ambassador to Japan, Yang Zhenya, was also reported prominently by China's major commercial portals.<sup>48</sup> Ambassador Yang's central position reflected the government's overall concern on this issue, "the two nations should learn from the past, but look forward to the future. Because Sino-Japan relations are easy to destroy, but difficult to rebuild."<sup>49</sup>

The government's approach was a well-intentioned attempt to reconcile the online public opinion with its foreign policy toward Japan. However, their tactical maneuvers, overt and covert, persuasive and coercive, were easily blown away by Japan's antagonistic behaviors in the spring of 2005. Japan's newly revised middle-school history textbook, its aggressive policy on Taiwan and on Diaoyu Islands, provoked the largest demonstrations in China since 1989, and the largest online petition in the world.

#### Case Study: 40-Million People Online Petition

In March 2005, Secretary General of the United Nations (U.N.), Kofi Annan gave an important speech, titled "In Larger Freedom: Toward Development, Security and Human Rights for All." In it, he formally outlined the long-awaited U.N. reforms and lifted the curtain for the highly contested permanent member enlargement campaign.<sup>50</sup> In a later press conference, Mr. Annan signaled that Japan and Germany would be prime candidates for a revised Security Council. According to him, the council should "increase the involvement in decision-

making of those who contribute most to the United Nations financially, militarily and diplomatically, specifically in terms of contributions to the United Nations assessed budgets."<sup>51</sup> As the second largest economy in the world and the second largest contributor to the U.N., Japan has been the front runner in the race for the permanent membership on the U.N. Security Council.

A small interest group in Los Angeles, the Alliance to Preserve the History of WWII in Asia (ALPHA), stood up first to oppose Japan's bid and Mr. Annan's proposition. This multi-ethnic organization was founded in 2002 mainly by immigrants from Asian countries. Its mission was to "preserve the historical truth of Japan's aggression in Asia and by doing so help prevent recurrences of similar atrocities."<sup>52</sup> To promote their position and rally people's support, it organized an online petition against Japan's bid on its website. Since the petition only targeted the Asian communities in the United States, the initial response was slight. On 19 March, when ALPHA found a partner inside China, the "Chinese 9.18 Patriot Net" ([www.china918.net](http://www.china918.net)), and translated their appeal into Chinese, things changed dramatically.

After an announcement by the "Chinese 9.18 Patriot Net," the online signing traffic was so heavy that it quickly jammed and paralyzed the major service center of the web site. Unable to cope with the mountainous signing request, the web master Wu Zulkang asked for help from those Chinese commercial portals.<sup>53</sup> Three days later, China's three major Internet portals, [www.sina.com](http://www.sina.com), [www.netease.com](http://www.netease.com), and [www.sohu.com](http://www.sohu.com) answered the call and established on their web pages mirror linkage to this petition. "At first, we only allocated one service center to this petition, but it can not handle the task, almost at a pace of one-to-two hundred signatures per second, and over 10,000 within ten minutes," recalled Liang Chunyan, the Chief Editor of the News Division at [www.sina.com](http://www.sina.com).<sup>54</sup> Within twenty-four hours, the total number of online signatures skyrocketed to one million. On 27 March, the total count quickly reached a stunning ten million. Since there were many fake names and repetitive signing attempts by some users, a verification check-point was established by the organizers to filter those invalid entries. As of 10 May 2005, a total of 286 Chinese web sites voluntarily participated in this "Global Chinese Online Petition against Japan's Bid for UN Security Council Permanent Member," and the verified total signatures stood at 41,785,544.<sup>55</sup> On 30 June, two months before the crucial U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York, the representatives from ALPHA presented the forty-two million signatures signed by people from forty-one countries to Mr. Annan's secretary. "No one—not the United Nations nor the Chinese government—can ignore so many people expressing their views," said Lu Yuntao in an interview on this petition.<sup>56</sup>

The record-setting online petition in the virtual sphere reflected and was largely stimulated by what happened in the real world. On 5 April 2005, the Japanese government granted the publication of a highly controversial middle school history textbook. This was the last straw that broke the nerve of those Chinese cyber nationalists. In this newly revised textbook, it portrayed Japan as a benevolent liberator who intended to salvage Asian people from Western colonization, rather than a brutal invader during the World War II.<sup>57</sup> It also

glossed over many historical events, such as the wartime “comfort women”—Korean and Chinese women forced to work as sex slaves for the Japanese military—and the Nanking Massacre in China, in which an estimated 300,000 civilians in China’s then capital were brutally murdered, and tens of thousands of women were raped in December 1938. The new textbook dismissed the Nanking Massacre merely as a “disputed incident,” indicating that all nations, without exception, committed crimes during wartime. As Philip Cunningham pointed out in an editorial on *Los Angeles Times*,

This is an offense to Chinese sensibilities comparable with Holocaust denial in Europe. . . . To borrow a phrase from the late writer Iris Chang, the abused women are being raped a second time, this time by defenders of the Japanese army who attempt to erase them from memory.<sup>58</sup>

The first large-scale street demonstration broke out on 9 April 2005 in Beijing. As many as 10,000 Chinese people marched through Beijing calling for a boycott of Japanese goods and opposing Japan’s bid for a permanent membership on the U.N. Security Council.<sup>59</sup> The protest was mainly organized by Beijing’s college students through Internet communications. They posted the demonstration announcement, protest route, slogans, and precautions on many Chinese Internet chat rooms and universities’ BBSs.<sup>60</sup> Although thousands of municipal and riot policemen followed the demonstrators and guarded the Japanese Embassy, scores of emotional protesters turned violent, throwing paint and bottles at the Japanese Embassy and at Japanese restaurants and businesses en route. The official media, apparently under the guidance from the central government, didn’t cover this event; the largest demonstration in Beijing since the 1999 anti-NATO bombing protest. However, the numerous online chat rooms spread the news across the cyber sphere in real time. The next day, when Japanese Foreign Minister summoned China’s ambassador in Tokyo to demand an apology and compensation for the protest in Beijing, thousands of Chinese demonstrators were marching on the Japanese Consulate in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, two of the largest cities in southern China.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, beer consumers across China began to reject drinking Japanese beer *Asahi* as well as its Chinese partner brands, because the Asahi Corp sponsored Japan’s right-wing group which drafted the new history textbook.<sup>62</sup> In response to the online calling for a boycott of Japanese goods, an electronic appliance supermarket in Zhengzhou, Henan province withdrew from its shelves all the Japanese brand products.<sup>63</sup>

As if the tension was not severe enough, Japan’s Trade Ministry announced on 13 April 2005 that it would allow Japanese companies to start drilling for oil and gas in the disputed area near the Diaoyu Islands.<sup>64</sup> The Chinese government reacted angrily and warned that China “reserves the right to take further reaction.” The Chinese online population, however, wasted no time to “take further reaction.” Encouraged by Beijing protesters’ model, online activists were busy planning a new wave of larger, broader, and nationally collaborated protests. In various local community-based chat rooms, the organizers discussed the general plan, time table, protest strategy, and other preparatory issues with their cohorts.

For example, on a widely circulated poster—“The Detailed Direction for the Protest against Japanese Right-wing Activities (Shanghai Area),” it explicitly specified that the protests in Shanghai area would be held at 9:00 AM, 16 April, along three different routes toward the Japanese Consulate in Shanghai. It cautioned the prospective participants: bring water and food; don’t take precious items with you; don’t throw stones or metal materials at the embassy; bring a Japanese flag or Koizumi’s picture if you want to burn them; etc. It also called for cooperation with the policemen, and showing a rational, non-violent manner in line with Shanghai’s global cosmopolitan status.<sup>65</sup>

To prevent the online-organized anti-Japanese demonstrations from running out of control, the Chinese central government in late March had taken some precautionary measures. It ordered China’s major universities to block outside access to their campus BBS, where the fiercest nationalistic sentiment was fermenting.<sup>66</sup> For several weeks after the first street protest, there was no coverage in the state-owned media. However, an endless flow of information, including text messages, photos, audios and videos, channeled back and forth via e-mail, instant online messaging, BBS, mobile phones, and chat room discussions in China’s invisible cyber sphere. Knowing at the last hour that some online discussions called for a large demonstration on Beijing’s Tiananmen Square on the weekend of 16 April, hundreds of police blanketed the large square in the heart of China’s capital on that day. In Shanghai, the local police sent out a text message to all the cell phone users before the proposed protest: “We ask people to express your patriotic passion through the right channel, following the laws and maintaining order,” the message said.<sup>67</sup>

Defying government’s urgent call for restraint and stability, on 16 April 2005, the day when Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura arrived in Beijing for an emergent diplomatic meeting, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in Shanghai, China’s financial capital, in Tianjin, the municipal city near Beijing, and in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province. As many as 20,000 demonstrators marched through Shanghai’s main arteries, shouting slogans, and smashing the Japanese Consulate with rocks and bottles.<sup>68</sup> The local government at one point had to cut off cell phone service near the Japanese Consulate in Shanghai in an effort to stop the protest from escalating.<sup>69</sup> The next day, this wave of demonstrations extended to Shenyang, the largest industrial base in northeastern China; Nanjing, the capital of Guangxi Autonomous Region; Chengde, the capital of Sichuan Province in southwestern China; Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province in southern China, and other large cities including Zhuhai, Dongguan, Kunming, and Hong Kong.

The scale and the severity of the nationwide campaign apparently took the CCP government aback. Although the Japanese government and its provocative policies were the major targets of these protests, the CCP government’s ambiguous and mealy-mouthed stance toward Japan also stimulated a lot of anger and frustration. Facing the mounting domestic pressure, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, clarified for the first time China’s formal stance on Japan’s bid for the U.N. Security Council permanent membership on 17 April 2005. In a blunt statement, Premier Wen said, “only a country that respects history, takes responsibility for

history and wins over the trust of peoples in Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibilities in the international community."<sup>70</sup> One week later, during the APEC summit meeting, Japanese Prime Minister apologized for the sufferings that Japan inflicted on other Asian countries during the World War II.<sup>71</sup> This softening gesture temporarily cooled down the anti-Japanese sentiment in China's cyber sphere. However, it didn't last long. On 23 May 2005, China's deputy Premier abruptly cut short her visit in Japan, only hours before the scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. As a fence-mending trip, Wu intended to repair the simmering relations after the biggest crisis in Sino-Japanese ties in decades. But, Koizumi's untimely reassertion about his stance on the Yasukuni shrine visit dashed any such hope. In a remark made to a parliamentary committee days earlier, he said,

Naturally, every country wants to remember and honor its war dead. It is not right for other countries to meddle and tell us how we should go about it. . . . The issue of Class A war criminals is often brought up. But remember the saying by Confucius, "condemn the offense, but pity the offender."<sup>72</sup>

His remark and misinterpretation of Confucius's saying closed all the doors for China's "face-saving" diplomacy. The Sino-Japan relationship has been in a downward spiral ever since. On 17 October 2005, Koizumi paid a visit to Yasukuni shrine once again, making it an annual ritual for his administration. At a rare national press conference in March 2006, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing quoted a German diplomat who called Japanese Prime Minister's visits "stupid and immoral." When Japan officially summoned Chinese Ambassador Wang Yi the next day in Tokyo to protest the extremely undiplomatic words, Mr. Wang refused to go.<sup>73</sup> These two big powers in East Asia have been literally in a regional Cold War since 2003. No summit meeting was held during this period. Chinese government took a tougher stance against Japan, and drastically reversed its previous policy orientation. It is debatable whether Chinese cyber nationalism movement forced the government to abandon its past approach, or the provocative behaviors by Japanese policy maker caused this deteriorating relationship. Regardless of the reason, one thing is certain: the cyber nationalists have long been advocating a tougher policy toward Japan, and they achieved their goal now.

### The Beginning of the End or the End of the Beginning?

Two new features of Chinese cyber nationalism in this stage are worth noting. First, Chinese cyber nationalism completed the transformation from an ivory-tower ideology to a grassroots political movement. The cyber nationalism discussions shifted from the elite circle to the grassroots public, and the nationalism activities from sporadic online vandalism to well-organized nationwide campaigns. For example, the new form of online petition was a creative and effective strategy that virtually mixed together the elite nationalists' advocacy, the general public's enthusiasm, and online technology's special features. Mean-

while, the nationalist activists formed a non-governmental national network to consult their strategies, coordinate their actions, and formulate their future objectives. Since 2000, the "Internet & Patriotism Education Symposium" has been held regularly among China's major nationalism web sites.<sup>74</sup> As a result, online nationalists were not satisfied with merely talking, chatting, or petitioning; instead, they were utilizing the online network to impose influence on the political agenda. For example, when the online petition against Japan's bid for the UN Security Council membership gathered more than 40 million signatures worldwide, not only the Chinese and Japanese governments, but also the United Nations and the world community had to pay attention to this formidable online opinion. Although there was no direct correlation between the online petition and the final policy, Chinese cyber nationalists did find an innovative way to rally people's support, keep the issue on the agenda, and force the government to take a stronger position.

Second, the maturing of Chinese cyber nationalism complicated China's foreign policy making in general and the Sino-Japan bilateral relationship in particular. Although the salient online public opinion offered the central government some legitimate basis for its tougher policy, it nonetheless narrowed down its room for flexible diplomacy or secretive negotiation. To China and to the CCP, it was a new phenomenon, and it was the direct result of cyber sphere and cyber nationalism. After the massive demonstration in April 2005, the CCP leaders had to tighten the grip over the Internet. For one example, the Ministry of Information Industry issued a new regulation in mid-2005, requiring bloggers and owners of personal Web sites to register with the government or be forced offline.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, users of Internet cafes were issued user identification numbers, which enabled the government to trace certain information or individual activities. As a way of self-protection, the chat room managers and forum organizers regularly deleted those messages deemed politically sensitive in their cyber sphere since mid-2005 (see Chapter 10 for an in-depth review of China's online media order). However, Chinese cyber nationalism is not something that you can easily put back into a bottle and throw it into the sea. It has been a message imbedded in the networked new medium in China, and it will accompany China in the foreseeable future.

Here comes to the end of this historical review. It is certainly neither the end of Chinese cyber nationalism, nor the end of its evolution and transformation. In the Part One, much of the focus was to answer the research questions of "when," "where," "who," and "how." To better understand this important phenomenon, the questions of "why" and "what" were equally necessary to be explored. In the next several chapters, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on three primary concepts, namely, Chineseess, cyber public sphere, and nationalism, and three secondary concepts, Chinese nationalism, Chinese cyber sphere, and cyber nationalism. The final definition of the core concept "Chinese cyber nationalism" was given and discussed in Chapter 12.

## Chapter 7

### Cyber Public Sphere

If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased.

—Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835, p.138

What makes Jürgen Habermas's construct of "public sphere" so persistently attractive among historians, sociologists, philosophers and communication scholars lies in the simplicity of the concept and the complexity of the context.<sup>1</sup> By using a single concept, Habermas intended to summarize and explain the grand social and political changes taking place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, a period so important that it literally shaped subsequent human history. Although he built up the theoretical construct of bourgeois public sphere mainly on the basis of capitalism development in Western Europe, his major envisions about politics, communication, and the role of civil society have resonated worldwide and triggered comprehensive debates among varying academic disciplines.<sup>2</sup>

According to Habermas, a genuine public sphere should have the following common features. First, the focus of the discussion in the public sphere is on issues of common concern to the public. Second, such a place or sphere is equally accessible to all who may be interested in those issues or may be influenced by those issues. Third, the proceeding of this communicative action is based on rational-critical deliberation. Fourth, the deliberation itself is subject to normative standard of evaluation. In other words, the merit of argument will be solely judged on the validity and rationality of the communication, rather than on the identity of the speaker or the decision from an arbiter.<sup>3</sup>

The advent of another round of communication technology revolution in the late twentieth century has not only rekindled Habermas's ideal model of public sphere, but also extended its domain to a virtual public sphere. Just like printing technology triggered the nuclear fission of knowledge in Europe some 500 years ago, online technology elevated people's communication capability to a time-

less, boundariless, and almost limitless realm. Never before can so many people communicate with each other in such fast time, across such far distance, and at such cheap cost. Inevitably, the interactive nature of online communication, the decentralized structure of cyberspace, and the growing accessibility of online technology have prompted scholars from various disciplines to proclaim the arrival of a new era of political communication.<sup>4</sup>

### The Origin and Disintegration of the Bourgeois Public Sphere

Since the German inventor Johannes Gutenberg first introduced the printing technology that entailed the use of movable metal type, oil-based ink, and wooden hand press around 1450s,<sup>5</sup> every scientific discovery, new political thought, or innovative religious belief seemed to be instantly magnified or revolutionized. Though it is difficult for current researchers to estimate a reliable number of books printed in the first fifty years of the industrial printing, some set this figure as high as "more than nine million books."<sup>6</sup> The mass copies of printed books helped disseminate the social and scientific discoveries, as well as the ancient Greek philosophies that had been intentionally disguised by the medieval theocracies. Moreover, "to consult different books it was no longer so essential to be a wandering scholar,"<sup>7</sup> a fact directly engendered an invisible college of scientists. The wide circulation of printed books also increased the literacy rate in Europe. For example, "in the town of Durham, England, around 1570 only 20 percent of all people were literate, but by 1630 the figure had climbed to 47 percent."<sup>8</sup> The proliferation of knowledge, a large group of literate people, and a fast industrializing society drew the curtain for the Enlightenment movement.

By the end of the seventeenth century, West Europe was on the eve of a series of gigantic social and political revolutions. Ever since Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1627) declared that knowledge is power and it can be mastered by human beings, the European class of merchants, lawyers, professionals, scientists and artisans challenged existing doctrines from nearly every possible angle. Galileo's (1564–1642) telescope discovered motions of the planets and proved the inadequacy of traditional ideas about the universe. In 1687, Isaac Newton (1642–1727) published his *Principia* setting forth the basic, simple, general principles of all motion. Such scientific discoveries and the proliferation of this scientific knowledge accelerated the religious reformation movements which eventually ended the Christian unity in the West and bred the advent of modern nation-states. Meanwhile, the navigational expeditions yielded unprecedented discoveries, wealth, and expectations for the host countries. The colonial expansion brought considerable Western dominance over a variety of peoples and cultures. It opened up a global market which paved the way for Western merchants and their manufactured goods to control those new found lands. The agricultural changes, commercialism, and increased manufacturing productivity not only produced a rapidly growing population in the West, but also created an increasingly prosperous and ambitious middle class—the *bourgeoisies*.<sup>9</sup>

The feudal monarchy and the aristocracy that had defined Western politics for hundreds of years eclipsed in the face of growing economic and ethical challenges posed by middle-class revolutionaries. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), in his realistic political survey *Leviathan*, presented a highly materialistic and mechanistic view of humanity and political reality. Hobbes, in contrast to the dominant religious indoctrinations, argued that human beings are rational machines living in a competitive market jungle. Each individual is like a self-directed and self-interested atom trying to maximize its power, wealth, and influence through a rational bargaining process. John Locke (1632–1704), instead, painted a rosier picture about human nature, market society, and political ethics. His emphasis on those inalienable rights of life, liberty, and possession of property (Thomas Jefferson replaced "property" with "the pursuit of happiness" in the *Declaration of Independence* for the United States) justified the emerging middle-class's pursuit of political power. His political principles of constitutionalism, majority rule, individualism, and representative government provided bourgeois class the much-needed rhetoric and a series of systematic democratic theories. Thus, the rule of the few or the rule of the nobles had been changed to the rule of the people and the rule of law.<sup>10</sup>

It was against these social and political backdrops that Jürgen Habermas's "ideal" and "stylized" model of bourgeois public sphere came into being.<sup>11</sup> The public sphere, according to Habermas, is

the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason.<sup>12</sup>

The *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was originally published in German in 1962. Habermas's motivation to present such "a historical-sociological account of the emergence, transformation, and disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere"<sup>13</sup> derived from not so much the desire to rebuild a perfect past as the disenchantment with German's liberal welfare society in the 1950s. As a social and political phenomenon, bourgeois public sphere took shape in the particular historical circumstances of a developing market economy in which emerging middle-class existed as a revolutionary power rather than a *status quo* power. However, such preconditions had diminished by the end of nineteenth century when the state and civil society began to merge and intermingle with each other. The disappearance of the private sphere and the penetration of highly commercialized mass media had eroded and diluted both the means and the ends of political discussion. In Habermas's words,

The sounding board of an educated stratum tutored in the public use of reason has been shattered; the public is split apart into minorities of specialists who put their reason to use nonpublicly and the great mass of consumers whose recep-

tiveness is public but uncritical. Consequently, it completely lacks the form of communication specific to a public.<sup>14</sup>

According to Habermas's argument, one salient yet disappointing result of this degradation of public discussion is the loss of the real "public opinion." As the constitutional basis for a representative democracy, public opinion should be formed upon the critical-rational public discussions on widely concerned issues. In contrast, in a manipulated and commercialized public sphere, public opinion is no longer the identifiable result of the public itself. It has been substituted by the concepts such as "public opinion research," "publicity," or "public relations practice." Meanwhile, "the press and broadcast media serve less as organs of public information and debate than as technologies for managing consensus and promoting consumer culture."<sup>15</sup> Stripped of the major feature as "public" opinion, it turns into a form of "mass opinion"—"a product of a communication process among masses that is neither bound by the principles of public discussion nor concerned with political domination."<sup>16</sup> As a result, the public sphere disintegrated.

### Cyber Sphere as a Real Public Sphere

Simply put, the public sphere is a space, a process, an institution, and a mandate. A genuine public sphere is a space accessible to all the public in a society but independent from both state control and economic power. Within this sphere, participants engage in public, rational, and critical discussions that help form the public opinion. The results of the discourses will be judged by the merit or the validity of the argument rather than by manipulation, coercion, or social status. The success of a public sphere will be evaluated by both the quantity and the quality of the discussions.

Although Habermas has revised some of his arguments since the first edition of his classic monograph, the core features of this theoretical model of the bourgeois public sphere can be summarized into the following nine characteristics.<sup>17</sup> They are:

*Inclusiveness.* People in the public sphere "preserved a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether. The tendency replaced the celebration of rank with a fact befitting equals."<sup>18</sup>

*Accessibility.* "The public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access. A public sphere from which specific groups would be *eo ipso* excluded was less than merely incomplete, it was not a public sphere at all."<sup>19</sup> "The issues discussed became 'general' not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility: everyone had to be able to participate"<sup>20</sup> (italics in original);

*Autonomy.* In the public sphere, "economic dependencies also in principle had no influence. Laws of the market were suspended as were laws of the state."<sup>21</sup>

*Rationality.* "The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason."<sup>22</sup>

*Interactivity.* "The degree to which an opinion is a public opinion is measured by the following standard: the degree to which it merges from the intraorganizational public sphere constituted by the public of the organization's members and how much the intraorganizational public sphere communicates with the external one formed in the publicist interchange, via the mass media, between societal organizations and state institutions."<sup>23</sup>

*Criticalness.* The public sphere "was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority"<sup>24</sup> and "the degree of the public sphere's development was measured by the state of the confrontation between government and press."<sup>25</sup>

*Commonness.* In the public sphere, "discussion within such a public presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned. The domain of 'common concern' which was the object of public critical attention... became in principle generally accessible."<sup>26</sup>

*Privacy.* In the public sphere, "private people interpreted their new form of existence which was indeed based on the liberal relationship between public and private spheres. The experience of privacy made possible literary experimentation with the psychology of the humanity common to all, with the abstract individuality of the natural person."<sup>27</sup>

*Social Integration.* The public sphere offers "specific institutional power that had ensured the interconnectedness of sociable contacts as the substratum of public communication."<sup>28</sup> "The importance of the public sphere lies in its potential as a mode of social integration."<sup>29</sup>

These nine features were drawn from Habermas's original conceptualization of the public sphere. It is not a universal summary, nor is it an exhaustive one. However, it provides a much more applicable check-list for communication scholars to compare and evaluate different political realities against different cultural or historical backgrounds.

Most of Habermas's definitions and descriptions of public sphere were based on the eighteenth century West Europe bourgeois sphere where the printing technology and printed publications were the defining medium for public discourse. Compared to the printing-age public sphere and the subsequent broadcasting-age public sphere, the current online sphere, though still at its juvenile stage, demonstrated much more potential than its predecessors as a true candidate for a genuine public sphere. A one-by-one comparison of the nine public sphere characteristics certainly verified this impression.

*Inclusiveness:* The ideal public sphere calls for the inclusiveness of all the public without discrimination. It was obviously not the case in eighteenth century Europe. Only those well-educated, "privileged" though less "noble" property-owner group had the means and desire to engage in critical-rational discussions on political issues. At best, this was a small group of elite reading public. Commercialized mass media in the twentieth century, especially the maturation of radio and television industry, broke down much of the social and economic barriers segregating the civic society. In the past decade, the fast-changing

online technology has dramatically lowered the cost of online communication. It took roughly four years for the Internet technology to reach its 50 millionth user, whereas it took television thirteen years, and radio forty years. More significantly, online sphere has been the only affordable medium in history that individuals can establish their own platform, be it a self-monitored blog site or a chat room discussion thread.<sup>30</sup> Research also showed that Internet has tremendous potential to achieve greater social and political equity for those minority people and marginalized users.<sup>31</sup>

*Accessibility:* The ideal public sphere requires universal accessibility. In eighteenth century's London, however, "only men were admitted to coffee-house society."<sup>32</sup> The bourgeois public sphere at that time only opened its door to the "elegant world." The mass media development in twentieth century lowered the access threshold for the general public. In all the developed countries and most of the developing countries, televisions sets and radios are the most frequently used media commodities for general public. The ongoing information revolution is still on its way to stretch its antenna to every corner of the world. Nonetheless, the evidence around the world has supported a moderately optimistic perspective regarding online sphere's global proliferation.<sup>33</sup>

*Autonomy:* A genuine public sphere should be autonomous from both state control and economic interests. Although restricted and sometimes censored by the aristocratic government, the public sphere in West Europe some 200 years ago was exposed, to a lesser degree, to the economic vested interests than its counterpart in late twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the commercialized public sphere "developed into an arena infiltrated by power in which, by means of topic selection and topical contributions, a battle is fought not only over influence but over the control of communication flows that affect behavior while their strategic intentions are kept hidden as much as possible."<sup>35</sup> Online public sphere faces the similar type of challenge from the political front and the economic front. However, the globally connected networks have made such an intervention much more difficult, if not totally impossible.<sup>36</sup>

*Rationality:* Although Habermas emphasized the "rationality" or "rationalism" in the process of public opinion formation, this concept has never been practically defined. Considering the normally well-educated participants in club, salon, and reading clubs, combined with the general enlightenment social spirit in the eighteenth century, the emerging bourgeois class had more interests in and more gains from promoting the discussions based on logic and reason. Online public sphere revived people's expectation for the rational-critical discussions. Such an intellectual rationalism yielded to commercialism and marketing politics in the twentieth century. In Habermas's word, "The public sphere in the world of letters was replaced by the pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption."<sup>37</sup> However, some research suggested that such an expectation may not be easily realized on the online sphere.<sup>38</sup>

*Interactivity:* It needs to be clarified that Habermas never defined the discourse in the public sphere to be a face-to-face one. In contrast, he highlighted repeatedly the interpersonal writing correspondence was an integral part of the critical communication.<sup>39</sup> In late eighteenth century, correspondence among the

elite public, either verbal or written, was pretty frequent than later times. The television and radio, though brought the vivid image to people's living room, deprived the audience's opportunity to argue, to respond, or to disagree. However, the emerging online medium fundamentally altered this trend. Interactivity has been regarded as the hallmark of online communication.<sup>40</sup> Short-messaging service, e-mail service, and instant online feedback function, all these new developments have elevated online interactive communication easily to an unprecedented level.

*Criticalness:* The criticalness of public sphere discourse to a large extent relies on the autonomy of the medium. Besides that, the civic awareness of the participants also contributes to individual's critical spirit. In late eighteenth century, bourgeois class was a revolutionary social and political force. For them, criticalness was not only a demographic trademark, but also a political necessity. The intermingling trend of state and society in the social welfare states diluted the confrontational momentum from the public. Both the target and aspiration of the critical discourse were lost. Some scholars claim, that through returning part of the communicative venue to the public, the online sphere may have the potential to stimulate individual's civic awareness and social group's critical responsibility.<sup>41</sup>

*Commonness:* In the genuine public sphere, the discussion topic should be of common concern and of general significance to the whole public. In the eighteenth century Europe, however, this common concern only derived from, and mostly referred to, the private property and the perpetuated middle class – the bourgeoisie. When John Locke argued that the "majority" can rule without a self-perpetuating sovereignty, his majority didn't even include the massive laboring class.<sup>42</sup> The commercialized mass media model in twentieth century expanded its "majority" realm to a much wider spectrum. Still, according to Habermas, the general mass existed mostly in the form of passive consumers, rather than active agenda-initiators.<sup>43</sup> However, online public sphere enables common people to raise their private concern to a public domain, though no guarantee of its eventual publicity.<sup>44</sup>

*Privacy:* According to Habermas, no public sphere would be possible if people's private sphere can not be fully protected. For example, in the eighteenth century German table societies, "its sphere of publicity had still to rely on secrecy; its public, even as a public, remained internal."<sup>45</sup> The highly commercialized mass media in twentieth century obviously made impossible any true privacy issue in the public domain. The omnipresent state power, on the other hand, penetrated into every corner of person's private life. From this perspective, the anonymity capability provided by online communication and online technology, though still too early to tell, offers a slight leverage for the private citizen over governmental power and media scrutiny.<sup>46</sup> However, some researchers caution that what online technology provides is anonymity, but not confidentiality or unreachability.<sup>47</sup>

*Social Integration:* The political discourse itself, according to Habermas, is a process of social integration. The public sphere is "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the



state."<sup>48</sup> The earlier bourgeois public sphere did serve as a consolidating platform that initiated the strong wave of political grouping and political movements. But as mass media began promoting political issues as a commodity, people's cynicism, suspicion, and distrust toward politics drove them out of the public sphere. Mass media's focus on episodic as opposed to thematic reporting, on politician's private life instead of their policy position, and on horse-race-like campaign coverage alienated the public.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, online communication and online community have exhibited a promising capability to cultivate and reinforce social integration.<sup>50</sup> For example, some scholars found that heavy Internet use is associated with increased participation in voluntary organization and politics.<sup>51</sup> Others also suggested that online communication and Internet press help strengthen social ties among ethnic groups or Chinese diasporas.<sup>52</sup>

It needs to note that judged by Habermas's own definition, the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century was less qualified to be called a genuine public sphere. As far as the nine characteristics are concerned, the online public sphere emerging in late twentieth century literally paints a much brighter picture for the future public sphere development than the previous printing-age and broadcasting-age public sphere. However, some communication researchers cautioned that the increasing control of cyber sphere by state and corporate interests, a lack of rational and critical communication environment, and the digital gap among different strata of social groups hindered online sphere to become a genuine public sphere.<sup>53</sup>

"One cannot not communicate," as declared by the Palo Alto school of communication scholars.<sup>54</sup> In the entire human history, people consistently create new communication technologies, such as paper, writing, printing, television, online communication, etc. In the meantime, less noticeably, people themselves have been recreated by these communication creations. The printing technology and print media literally cultivated, facilitated, and bolstered the formation of bourgeois public sphere. Similarly, the advent of another round of communication technology revolution in late twentieth century has not only rekindled Habermas's ideal model of public sphere, but also extended its domain to a virtual online public sphere. Some evidence even suggests that this new type of online communication sphere may very well be the "real public sphere" that has ever existed.

In 1835, young Alexis de Tocqueville proclaimed in *Democracy in America*,

Among the laws that rule human societies, there is one which seems to be more precise and clear than all others. If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased.<sup>55</sup>

If this statement was true for the earlier print media era of 1835, then it must be much more revealing now in a world penetrated with the networking communication technology.

## Chapter 8

### Nationalism

The great, but valid, paradox is this: nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than, as you might expect, the other way round.

—Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1983, p. 55

Nationalism is in the limelight once again. As a formidable political ideology and social movement, nationalism experienced ebbs and flows in the past several hundred years of world history. Nonetheless, it has never faded away since it jumped onto the world political stage. It surely will be staying there and playing an important role for a long time, if not indefinitely.

Although nationalism scholars have contested on many components of this important concept, most tend to agree that either as a mature ideology or as a conscious movement, the first appearance of nationalism in West Europe coincided with a series of historical occurrences, including the collapse of the political dominance by theocratic and monarchic entity, the Enlightenment movement, the spread of the idea of public sovereignty, the formation of modern industrial society, the cyclical interstate wars, and the advent of mass communication technology.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to tell, though, whether nationalism was the by-product of those parallel developments or was the catalyst for them. The next round of nationalism movements in Europe brought about two destructive World Wars in the twentieth century which broke down many old empires and at the same time gave birth to many more sovereign nations. Such a trend quickly spread to the rest of the world which eventually triggered the decolonization and self-determination movement in Asia and Africa. The subsequent Cold War, which "fought" between two camps of ideological rivals for more than forty years, seemingly overshadowed, at least temporarily, the nationalism current. However, the demon was once again out of the bottle after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991. Nationalism quickly filled the ideological void left by Communism in those former Soviet states and its former Eastern Europe satellite states. Meanwhile, in Asia as well as in South America, the economic miracles and new communication technology not only engendered prosperous societies, but

Therefore, a compromise, some called the "marriage of convenience,"<sup>35</sup> seems to be the best choice between the empowered public and the endangered leaders. Among China experts in the West, a widely accepted understanding about this temporary compromise is the following: as long as CCP can sustain the current economic miracle, it can retain its political legitimacy. In other words, the CCP's fate solely rests on the nation's annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate. This seems to be a convincing argument. The untold logic of this reasoning is that no nation can sustain forever a growth rate achieved by China in the past two decades. Therefore, CCP's life is numbered. However, that is a typical Western-style misinterpretation of China's political reality. In fact, there is a compromise between the party and the public. But it is not a compromise based solely on economic growth. It is a strong alliance aiming to bring China back to a strong, respectable, and great power status. Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin's so-called "great power" diplomacy and the current leadership's "peaceful rise" slogan stemmed from, resonated with, and appealed to this national mindset. The congruence of the strategic agendas between the ruling party and the ruled public has diminished the possibility of any massive anti-government movement, so long as the party stands firm on issues involving territorial sovereignty and national interests. Certainly, economic factor has always been a necessary premise for any stable governance. But, in the case of China, it is neither a sufficient nor a guaranteed condition for political legitimacy.

## Chapter 11

### Cyber Nationalism

Like a mothball, which goes from solid to gas directly, I expect the nation-state to evaporate without first going into a gooey, inoperative mess, before some global cyberstate commands the political ether.

—Nicholas Negroponte<sup>1</sup>

Canadian social scientist Marshall McLuhan was not the first techno-determinist in history, but he surely was one of the most famous spokespersons for the communication technology evolution in the twentieth century. As early as in 1964, he envisioned that the new telecommunication media and electronic technologies would amplify and extend the social and political functions of individuals as well as societies "in a sudden implosion."<sup>2</sup> As the consequence of this electrical extension of man, McLuhan proclaimed, "the globe is no more than a village."<sup>2</sup> Forty years later, McLuhan's "global village" is more like a reality than a concept.

Unlike most other pioneer mass communication scholars who were rooted in sociology (such as Charles Cooley and Paul Lazarfeld), or psychology (such as Carl Hovland, Harold Lasswell, and Kurt Lewin), McLuhan was a Canadian professor of English Literature. This academic background underscored his frame of references and his metaphorical writing style. For example, he likened telegraph to "the social hormone," radio to "the tribal drum," and television to "the timid giant." However, the most famous and the most influential of McLuhan's analogy was the title of the first chapter in his *Understanding Media*: "the medium is the message."<sup>3</sup> According to his analysis, the design and pattern of the medium would impose more impacts on the societal psychic and social structure than the contents carried by the medium. As McLuhan stated, "the effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance."<sup>4</sup> For example, the printing technology developed in the sixteenth century Europe led

to the bourgeoisie of nationalism, industrialism, individualism, and education reform in Western Europe. According to McLuhan, those social consequences were not the direct results of what had been printed in the books. Instead,

Psychically, the printed book, an extension of the visual faculty, intensified perspective and the fixed point of view. . . . The linearity precision and uniformity of the arrangement of movable types are inseparable from these great cultural forms and innovations of Renaissance experience. . . . For print presented an image of repeatable precision that inspired totally new forms of extending social energies.<sup>5</sup>

Nationalistic feelings were only possible when people could visually see their native language and cultural identity in the printed, standardized, and persistent form. In this sense, what was printed in the book was secondary to the printing technology in shaping people's mentality. The medium, therefore, is not the messenger, but the message.

It is rather exaggerated to attribute the emergence of nationalism, individualism, and capitalism to the form of the medium rather than to the contents on the medium. However, McLuhan did tap a very significant aspect in mass communication research—the long-term social and psychological impact of communication technology. The printed books in the sixteenth century not only restored people's memory of the ancient wisdom, but also molded the senses of uniformity, homogeneity, repeatability, and detachment into people's minds. Similarly, the television technology in the mid-twentieth century not only brought the fierce battles fought in the Vietnam jungles into people's living rooms, but also reshaped their mindset, and their understandings of war, world, and themselves. Following this logic, Nicholas Negroponte, one of the few WWW (World Wide Web) founding fathers in the famous MIT Media Lab, speculated that the "old-fashioned" physical nation-states would eventually evaporate under the reign of the cyber-technology. He proclaimed ten years ago that "the role of the nation-state will change dramatically and there will be no more room for nationalism than there is for smallpox."<sup>6</sup>

If the medium is the message, then what kind of message can the online medium brought to the cyber world and to the real world? Is there any room or time left for the continual existence of nationalism? Will nationalism end up like "an almost dead fish flopping on a dock," as claimed by some techno-determinists? Moreover, what nationalists can do and have been doing—in using the online technology to promote their causes?

### Cyber Nationalism as a McLuhanite Message

Before reviewing online technology's interactions with nationalism, some misperceptions about information communication technology should be briefly clarified.

First, the innovativeness of the information technology refers to the technology, not to the information. Socially desirable ideas can be disseminated

faster, cheaper, and wider by the online media, so are the socially undesirable ideas, such as the extreme racism, terrorism, and child pornographic materials. An old Chinese saying goes, "A new bottle can contain the old wine, and a pair of new shoes can always walk on the old path." As far as the communication technology is concerned, neo-Nazism and neo-moralism are equally conveyable, and reachable. Second, information technology can facilitate communications among people, as long as people share the same cultural backgrounds. Although the current technology can translate a message from one language to another, no technology can implant instantaneously the knowledge of history, tradition, and culture about another culture into people's mind. Therefore, people cannot not communicate, but only by using the same language, and about their familiar culture and experiences. Even when people use English as a lingua franca in business or intellectual communications, "it is a tool for communication not a source of identity and community. Because a Japanese banker and an Indonesian businessman talk to each other in English does not mean that either one of them is being Anglofied or Westernized."<sup>8</sup> Third, information overload is as bad as information underload. The white noise of the online junk information is the symbol of lack of quality information rather than the sufficiency of information. Unless the information is picked up by the attentive mind, the immenseness equates meaningless. In other words, the self-motivation and dedication of the information seeker is more important than the quality and the availability of the information in the cyber sphere.

That said, online technology's potential as a catalyst for nationalistic ideology and nationalist activities takes at least three forms. First of all, it serves as an information center for gathering and disseminating nationalism-related material. Such a feature is more salient in those countries where the traditional mass media can not be accessed freely by the nationalist groups. Second, it serves as an organizational platform for those nationalistic movements which otherwise have no other means and options to exist, survive, and expand. Third, it serves as an execution vehicle to fulfill nationalism group's actionable objectives. To illustrate these points, three well-known world incidents, the Kosovo War in 1999, Mexico's Chiapas Uprising in 1990s, and China's Honker cyber wars in 2001 are discussed below.

#### Information Center for Nationalism Information

NATO's bombing of Kosovo in 1999 was "the first major international conflict to be extensively reported and, arguably, fought on the Internet."<sup>9</sup> The death of former Communist Yugoslav leader Josip Tito in 1980 opened the lid on a bottle filled with nationalism explosives. The revived conflicts between Serbs and Albanians over Kosovo resulted in an eighty-day bombing campaign initiated by NATO. Though the tragedies and bloodiness of war remained the same, the presence of online technology and Internet communication overhauled the traditional war-time propaganda strategies, and sometimes even tilted the power-balance toward those traditionally disadvantaged groups.<sup>10</sup>

In retrospect, it seems that nationalist groups were the beneficiaries of this Web war fought in an area historically saturated with nationalist confrontations. Online technology's role as a war-time information center for nationalism groups was embodied in three aspects. First, as the outside journalists were expelled from Serbia and barred from Kosovo at the beginning of the bombing, individuals living in the war zones could use the Web to communicate directly with each other and literally with the online world community. Those live, unedited, on-the-spot, eyewitness reports from the war zone provided an unprecedented perspective among those fellow "countrymen" as well as those outside observers. Thanks to the Internet's speed and reach, an individual's voice can be heard, magnified, and resonated among an ever-larger population. Second, the opposition groups that had been suppressed by the Slobodan Milosevic's regime could promote their anti-Milosevic but nonetheless nationalistic appeals online. Radio B92, a radio station inside Serbia, was a telling example of such a new phenomenon. Highly critical of Milosevic's policies both home and abroad, B92 was often jammed and interrupted by the government. In response, the station "had established itself as the first ISP inside the country and it responded by sending its broadcasts abroad over the Internet and then having them rebroadcast back into Serbia from sympathetic stations in Montenegro, and later by CNN, the BBC and others."<sup>11</sup> During the time of war, B92 online website received about two million hits and over 700 emails per day from its audiences.<sup>12</sup> Third, while Milosevic's government was in no position to compete with its enemy (NATO) in the propaganda war fought on the traditional media, "they were able to conduct an alarmingly effective Netwar which left NATO looking outdated, out of touch and even vulnerable."<sup>13</sup> Serbia nationalists volunteered to keep updated the government websites, translated new information into English, argued about the war in numerous online chat rooms, and called for Serbian expatriates around the world to contribute to their common cause. Online technology indeed empowered those who are the most determined and dedicated.

Overall, nationalism was certainly not the only online theme during the Kosovo war. However, without the online technology, nationalism groups would never have found such a cheap, efficient, and controllable means to fight an asymmetrical information war. Their nationalism zealot was magnified by the virtual public sphere.

### Operational Platform for Nationalism Organization

On 1 January 1994, when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect, thousands of Mexico peasants who led by Subcomandante Marcos seized control of the main urban areas in the province of Chiapas. When the Mexican government sent military to repress the uprising, the guerrillas—the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN)—retreated to the nearby rainforest and started a ten-year long confrontation with the government forces.

It is hard to define the identity of the Zapatistas and the nature of this movement. The movement's rhetoric was an intermingling of class struggle

against capitalist exploitation, protection of indigenous tradition and culture, and Mexico's past models of heroism and nationalism.<sup>14</sup> However, what made this event so well-known and significant was its symbolic meaning. A group of primarily low-waged, indigenous Mexican peasants rose up against the seemingly unstoppable trend of globalization, and eventually it was the champion-product of the globalization—the Internet and the global communication network—helped Zapatistas achieve their goal.

Communication scholar Manuel Castells commented the significance of this event in his *The Power of Identity*,

Extensive use of the Internet allowed the Zapatistas to diffuse information and their call throughout the world instantly, and to create a network of support groups which helped to produce an international public opinion movement that made it literally impossible for the Mexican government to use repression on a large scale.<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, the globalized network facilitated the existence, spread, and success of an anti-globalization movement. The Internet's indispensable role in the development of the Zapatistas movement was showcased in the following areas. First, when most national and international commercial media refused to publicize EZLN's communiqués and letters, supporters of the movement uploaded those messages onto various Usenet groups, Paracat conferences, and Internet lists related to Mexican issues. Such a maneuver was so successful that it helped create the popular tale of the "spokesman Sub-commander Marcos in the jungle, mobile phone in hand, uploading communiqués directly to the Internet."<sup>16</sup> Second, the leaders of the Zapatistas utilized the Internet technology and online community as a platform to rally support, mobilize sympathetic groups, and sway international public opinion online. Knowing that the Mexico government could not afford a negative world image in the face of the international financial assistance, the EZLN directly appealed to the "emerging transnational public sphere supported in part by the growth of the Internet, where it sought the leverage necessary to neutralize the Mexican government's tactical advantages."<sup>17</sup> Third, the Internet's organizational power also embodied through the plebiscite called on by the EZLN in 1995. Among those one million votes, 80,000 people, most of them living outside of Mexico, cast their vote via the Internet.

Although Zapatistas is not a strictly typical nationalism movement, its evolution and development may point to some possible patterns in future social movements. Online technology enables the non-mainstream or non-government ideological movement to exist, grow, and spread as a physically invisible whereas practically functional social force. In this sense, the Internet is not only an information center, it is also an organizational platform for daily meetings, recruiting, advocating, and operating.

### Execution Vehicle for Nationalism Activity

On 26 April 2001 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States issued an unusual national warning that Chinese hackers might mount online strikes against American government websites over the next few weeks.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, Pentagon officials ordered all their computer service systems to take additional precautions to protect against any attacks from Chinese hackers into the Defense Department systems. Two days later, on the Department of Labor's official website, a hacker posted a homage to Wang Wei, the Chinese pilot who lost his life in a collision with a United States Navy spy-plane on 1 April 2001. The official websites of Department of Health and Human Services ([www.health.gov](http://www.health.gov)) and Surgeon General Office ([www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov)) were also defaced.

While the crew members of the damaged EP-3 reconnaissance plane were held in a military base in China's Hainan Island, American hackers initiated a wave of cyber attacks on websites based in China. Weeks later, as Chinese government and American government were wrestling over what was the best way to say sorry, thousands of Chinese hackers held their first general online meeting organized by a newly established nationalism-oriented group: "Honker Union of China." As the revenge toward the spy-plane collision and the Bush Administration's handling of the post-collision relations with China, the Honker Union of China declared online warfare against America's government websites and set out their objectives and attacking strategies. From 1 May to 9 May, nearly a hundred American's websites in government, military, and education sectors were defaced or taken out of services. The peak of the battle occurred in the morning of 4 May 2001, when hundreds of thousands of well-coordinated online service requests jammed and eventually brought down the service of the White House's official website at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov). According to a report posted by the Honker Union of China, an estimated 80,000 or so Chinese hackers participated in the collective attacks on the White House's website.<sup>20</sup> *New York Times* correspondent Craig Smith used a sensational title for his coverage of this online conflict between Chinese hackers and American hackers: "May 6-12: The First World Hacker War."<sup>21</sup>

Many China experts in the United States quickly drew the conclusion that the Chinese government was somehow behind this people's online war. As James Adams, the Chief Executive Officer of iDefense and member of the advisory board of the U.S. National Security Agency, pointed out that "there is no question that China is sponsoring these attacks. The difference between American hackers and Chinese hackers is that the Chinese government has a pretty good history of sponsoring attacks using surrogates."<sup>22</sup> Apparently, James Adams didn't have the opportunity to visit numerous online chat rooms before the attacks. In the days immediately following the spy-plane collision, China's hundreds of online chat rooms filled with not only anti-American rhetoric but also harsh criticism toward Chinese government's weak response.<sup>23</sup> It was the double-resentment toward American government's "arrogance" and Chinese gov-

ernment's "impotence" that prompted this highly coordinated nationalism activity.

From this brief online cyber-war fought between two groups of "virtually" organized nationalists, online technology's potential role as an execution vehicle was evident. Hackers, driven by unsatisfied nationalism feeling, turned online technology's interactive and borderless feature into a lethal weapon. Individuals around the world can rally behind a common cause, share information, coordinate timetable, set objectives, adjust strategy, launch attack, and report victory. Even if the Chinese government has the total control over online activities taking place within its physical border, there are more than three million Chinese students studying abroad and about fifty million diaspora Chinese living abroad. How can any government control these "virtually nationless" nationalists? From this perspective, online medium is not only a message, it is an invisible army.

### Cyber Nationalism and Some Reflections

Nationalism is an exclusive, unsettling, and super ideology. Cyber space is an all-embracing, dynamic, and unconventional sphere. It seems counterintuitive at the first sight to think that the globalizing cyber technology would promote an exclusive ideology or movement. Further scrutiny of the internal linkage between this innovative communication technology and the old-fashioned ideology revealed something noteworthy.

First of all, online technology possesses more subversive power in those societies where information can not flow freely through traditional mass media. Online technology became the only viable and affordable means for those non-mainstream or non-government groups to communicate, to function, and to grow. Coincidentally, in those politically authoritarian societies, nationalism sentiment is historically strong. The nationalistic appeal was so attractive and popular that even the most repressive government could not simply turn it off. Therefore, in those well-developed democratic societies, citizens will naturally focus on the democratic functions imbedded in the online technology and online sphere. In contrast, in those pre-democratic countries, the Internet's communication and organizational functions would be magnified to serve the nationalistic ends. For example, Serbia's Radio B92, Mexico's Zapatistas, and China's honker groups demonstrated such a tendency.

Second, nationalism is an ideology developed in the process of one nation interacting with another. The Internet has provided individuals with a cheaper and faster means to interact with people from other countries like no other communication technologies. For example, people can get information about a foreign nation from local newspaper, radio, or TV news report, as long as those media carry information about foreign countries. However, using traditional news media, the general public can never have a chance to search information from the foreign sources by themselves, or talk directly with a foreigner, or engage in a direct conflict with a foreigner. The Internet has forever overcome these restrictions. Online technology enables individual to act as an active sub-

ject rather than a passive object in the cross-national interactions. The diplomacy is no longer the privileged turf occupied only by professional diplomats. In the online age, diplomatic negotiations take place not only among diplomats behind the closed doors, but also among fervent online surfers in chat rooms, BBS, or on the online battlefield. For example, the Muslim Hacker Club and Pakistan Hacker Club could engage in an "e-jihad" on the India-Pakistan border conflict over Kashmir.<sup>24</sup>

Third, online technology directly gave rise to the formation of a virtual nationalist community which no longer relied on a physical entity to exist. Ten years ago, a wild accusation against China aired by a U.S. domestic television program could never arouse any reaction from China. Today, due to the Internet, such news would immediately spread across over 100 million Chinese online population and the next day, that television program's web service would be flooded with angry protests coming from every corner of the world. As online communication technology helped shrink the world into a global village, nationalism feelings may also be globalized.

Stanley Hoffmann, political scientist at Harvard University, once commented on the propaganda power of nationalism that "ideologies need mobilized believers who will propagate it and do battle for it. Few ideologies have been so resourceful in their choices of vehicles of propagation."<sup>25</sup> Another Harvard professor Samuel Huntington put the cyclical human interactions in a concise way, "people are discovering new but often old identities and marching under new but often old flags which lead to wars with new but often old enemies."<sup>26</sup> In other words, although we are living in a global village, we still quarrel about the same old trifles. Returning to Negroponte's confident declaration that "without question, the role of the nation-state will change dramatically and there will be no more room for nationalism than there is for smallpox,"<sup>27</sup> the first part of his statement is truly "without question," but for the second part, it is still too early to tell. Actually, according to the present evidence, the traditional nationalism has been expanding from a physical "room" to a virtual cyber sphere.

## Chapter 12

### Chinese Cyber Nationalism

Having reviewed the literature on "Chineseness," "cyber public sphere," "nationalism," "Chinese nationalism," "Chinese cyber sphere," and "cyber nationalism" respectively, this theoretical exploration came to a crucial conjuncture that the conceptual and operational definition of the "Chinese cyber nationalism" should be clarified.

#### Definition

Chinese cyber nationalism is certainly not the simple addition of the three separate concepts: Chinese, cyber sphere, and nationalism. Instead, it is a distinct phenomenon derived from the intermixing of multiple factors, including but not limited to, culture, technology, politics, history, and various ideologies. A comprehensive literature review on these components put this new phenomenon back into its specific cultural, political, and historical context.

What is Chinese cyber nationalism?

Chinese cyber nationalism is a non-government sponsored ideology and movement that has originated, existed, and developed in China's online sphere over the past decade (1994-present). It is a natural extension from China's century-long nationalism movement, but it is different from both the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) official version of patriotism, and the traditional Chinese nationalism movement. Taking advantages of the online communication technology (Internet media, online chat rooms, online forums, bulletin board systems, personal blogs, etc.), Chinese cyber nationalists have been utilizing the Internet as a communication center, organizational platform, and execution channel to promote the nationalistic causes among Chinese people around the world. They focused primarily on those international issues involving China and strived to retain China's historical status as a respectable power. The waning Communism doctrine, the reach and power of online technology, and nationalism's inherent grassroots appeal, made Chinese cyber nationalism a new and powerful factor in China's overall policy decision-making process.

Three circumstantial factors contributed to the formation of this nascent movement. First, the end of the Cold War forced China and Chinese people to search and redefine their new identity in a drastically different world. Over the past half century, the impact of a lasting and comprehensive confrontation between two ideological camps was both physical and psychological. During the Cold War, people were used to identifying themselves by both who they were and who their enemies were. The sudden disappearance of a formidable enemy brought about not only a long-expected sense of security, but also an unfamiliar sense of lost identity. If Americans began to ask themselves, "without the Cold War, what's the point of being an American,"<sup>11</sup> Chinese people were also bewildered by the new world reality and their true identity. The process of searching for its national identity motivated the resurgence of a strong wave of nationalism sentiment. Second, China's breathtaking economic reform really took off in the early 1990s. Deng Xiaoping's timely policy initiative in 1992 dismantled the lingering ideological straightjackets. Chinese people's long-repressed entrepreneurial spirit was unleashed. The quickly improved living standards boosted people's self-confidence and its growing identification with their homeland. This regained confidence nurtured the growth of a strong sense of nationalism across the country. Third, the advent of Internet and online community provided this emerging nationalistic sentiment a place to exist, to grow, and to radiate. The Chinese cyber nationalism differs from the previous forms of Chinese nationalism in its popularity, persistence, and independence. All these characters can be attributed to the online communication and networked online community. In sum, the end of the Cold War and the beginning of China's modernization campaign required and validated China's self-identification process. The advent of Internet facilitated and emboldened this process.

### Characteristics

Like any ideological movement, Chinese cyber nationalism has its own factions. It has a radical front, which calls for aggressive policies and confrontational approaches toward Taiwan, Japan, and the United States; it also has its moderate branch, which prefers strategic, long-term and calculated policies toward other countries, especially the United States (see Chapter 13 for details). The anonymous nature of online communications made the radical front of this movement more visible and salient, but this radicalism is neither a complete nor an accurate representation of the entire movement. It is simplistic to regard Chinese cyber nationalism as a monolithic and homogenous entity and lump all factions together. However, it is also erroneous to ignore their shared cause and similar features. The following four characteristics summarized the fundamentals of Chinese cyber nationalism.

First and foremost, Chinese cyber nationalism is a non-government movement. Its orientation, structure, and operation are independent of the CCP government's political system. This does not mean that the CCP government could not intervene, interrupt, or restrict its activities. In fact, the evolution history of

Chinese cyber nationalism is also a history of CCP government trying to contain this social and political movement. In spite of these external pressures, the Chinese cyber nationalists kept their issue agenda, applied their own campaign strategies, and most importantly, followed their own national interest guidance. All these agenda, strategies, and guidance may comply with the CCP government's existing policies. However, they may also conflict with those policies. For example, the fervent reactions in China's cyber sphere toward NATO's bombing of Chinese Embassy in 1999 was in line with the government's stance; but the voyages to the disputed Diaoyu Islands by Chinese cyber nationalists were apparently at odds with the government's designed strategy toward Japan. The CCP government may consider the ideologies of communism or internationalism in its overall foreign policy design, but the Chinese cyber nationalists only have China's national interest in their minds. For example, the CCP government may feel obliged to give Cuba or North Korea material and moral support on the basis of shared political beliefs, though it is debatable how much common ground they actually share. Most Chinese cyber nationalists don't think it is necessary and wise to do that (see Chapters 13 and 15 for references). This kind of deviation also existed in other foreign policy areas, such as the relationships with Russia, African countries, and Middle Eastern countries. Failing to recognize the independent nature of Chinese cyber nationalism may cause tremendous trouble while dealing with the CCP government (see a full discussion on this issue in the Inconclusion section).

Second, Chinese cyber nationalism is a grassroots movement. As the Internet transformed from an educational tool in the ivory tower to a household communication medium, Chinese cyber nationalism extended its appealing power to the average citizens both inside China and outside its geographic sphere. The unlimited reach and organizational power of online networks turned those otherwise scattered talks into a coordinated force. The elite theorists may debate their ideological stands on various issues through scholarly publications, but Chinese cyber nationalists were more interested in showing their position through actions. The Internet provided them with both the platform and the weapon. The massive cyber war with American hacker groups over the spy plane collision incident in May 2001 mobilized tens of thousands of Chinese online users to join into a common cause. The stunningly large number—more than forty million—of China's anti-Japanese online petition signatories in 2005 indicated the rallying power of this nationalistic cause and its supporting base in China's cyber sphere. Even after deducting some redundancies in the signatures, this campaign must have motivated about one-third of China's overall online population. That is a formidable political force by any standards, and to any government. Since it is a grassroots movement, it also has all the trademarks of a grassroots movement. For example, its participants are diverse and scattered, its objectives are volatile and emotional, and its operation is multifaceted and decentralized. In other words, it is both powerful and unpredictable.

Third, Chinese cyber nationalism is primarily a *modern* ideological movement. Here, the concept "modern" refers to the basic progressive, liberal, and democratic principles. This is a rarely noticed but nonetheless very significant

characteristic of Chinese cyber nationalism. For one example, unlike previous Chinese nationalism movements in the past century, Chinese cyber nationalism is not xenophobic or indiscriminately anti-Western. In fact, some of the leading figures of this movement were either educated in the West, or inspired by the Western thoughts or ideologies. The constant communication between people inside China and outside China in a common online sphere further diminished the extreme xenophobic tendency. In the online discourse, the isolationism school of thought has been consistently ridiculed by China's mainstream online opinion. Moreover, although the nationalistic movement seemed to some extent chaotic and radical, the participants actually followed the basic democratic procedures in their planning and operation process. For example, most of the online chat room masters were elected by the registered users in a public vote. Many of the online activities, such as the cyber warfare and online petition, were the results of public discussions and endorsed by the majority of the participants. This is not to say that all online discussions are rational, meaningful, or critical. However, what is significant is that the basic liberal democratic principles have been accepted, and consciously observed by this group of cyber nationalists. This online environment may not be a full-fledged democratic public sphere, but it is proceeding in the right direction. Believe it or not, the cyber nationalists' discussion on foreign policy issues did serve as a check-and-balance factor in the CCP's overall decision making process (see Chapter 14 for a detailed discussion).

Fourth, Chinese cyber nationalism is by and large a reactive movement. In other words, it has been event-driven and case-sensitive. Almost all of the online activities organized by Chinese cyber nationalists in the past decade were triggered by an event or incident that was forced upon China by a foreign force or party. From Indonesia's anti-Chinese riot, to the embassy bombing in former Yugoslavia; from the spy-plane collision incident, to the Yasukuni shrine visit, what Chinese cyber nationalists did was to react to a situation where, in their judgment, China's national interests had been damaged. In fact, the issue agenda of Chinese cyber nationalists has been changing all the time, much in sync with the shift of external pressure during the same period. For example, when the United States elevated its threat level against China, such as during the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996, the embassy bombing in 1999, and the spy-plane collision in 2001, so did the anti-American cyber nationalistic movement in China's cyber sphere. By the same token, when the United States redirected its focus to the so-called "Axis of Evil" after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Chinese cyber nationalists toned down their anti-American rhetoric and turned their attention toward other fronts. The growing anti-Japanese sentiment since 2003 in China's cyber sphere was the result of a rain of provocative gestures from the Japanese government, including the repeated shrine visits by Japan's Prime Minister, the whitewashed history textbook, and the belligerent move by Japan's right wing group over the Diaoyu Islands, etc. Most importantly, there is no religious, racial or ideological predispositions imbedded in Chinese cyber nationalists' considerations. Unlike the Islamic fundamentalists, Chinese cyber nationalists don't have a religious mission to accomplish. Unlike the Nazi Germany and militarist

Japanese Empire in the 1930s where an aggressive nationalism was also race-driven, Chinese civilization contains fifty-six different nationalities and there has been no serious racial infighting among them over the past century. Unlike Cuba or North Korea where an ideological line still dominates foreign policy making, Chinese cyber nationalists put national interests and national security over any ideological barriers. In sum, the secular nature of Chinese cyber nationalism made it a passionate but nonetheless pragmatic force.

### Organizations

The decentralized nature of Chinese cyber nationalism movement, coupled with the fast changing reality of the cyber sphere, increased the difficulty of compiling a complete list of the major cyber nationalistic organizations in China's online sphere. However, a small number of websites and online organizations did play an irreplaceable role in the short history of Chinese cyber nationalism movement. Over the past decade, some of these organizations have changed their names, some have changed their objectives, and some have ceased to operate. Nonetheless, their name and brief history are worth repeating. Below is a short list of candidates.

#### "Green Corps" (*lǜ se bīng tuán*)

"Green Corps" was one of China's earliest and largest grassroots hacker organizations. It was first founded by "Goodwell" (*Gong wei*) and several Chinese hackers in 1997.<sup>2</sup> During its heydays, it claimed that it had about 3,000 registered members. The original purpose of "Green Corps" was to exchange and explore computer security technology among fellow computer fans. I gained its fame and popularity among Chinese Internet users during the retaliation campaign against Indonesia's anti-Chinese riot in 1998. On 23 January 1999, the "Green Corps" held its first offline convention in a Web café in Shanghai, and within months, it quickly transformed to a venture capital supported web security company—"Shanghai Green Alliance Computer Safety Technology Co, Ltd."

#### Honker Union of China (*H.U.C.*)

H.U.C. was founded by a twenty-two year old Chinese hacker nickname "lion" at the end of 2000 and was dismissed four years later (the official web sites [www.chonker.net](http://www.chonker.net) and [www.chonker.com](http://www.chonker.com) are no longer accessible).<sup>3</sup> I was one of the leading forces behind the Sino-U.S. cyber warfare in May 2001. At the peak of its development, H.U.C. boasted that it had more than 80,000 regular members, which made it the largest Chinese hacker group and world's fifth largest hacker group by then.<sup>3</sup> One of the important contributions of H.U.C.



was the concept it created during its massive online campaign—*Honker* (*hong ke*), meaning “red hacker.” After the dismissal of the original H.U.C., many Chinese computer security groups still kept “honker” in their names, such as [www.chinahonker.net](http://www.chinahonker.net); [www.honker.cn](http://www.honker.cn); [www.honkerunion.com](http://www.honkerunion.com), etc.

### *China 9.18 Patriot Net*

China “9.18” Patriot Net (*9.18 ai guo wang*) was first founded in Shanghai by a retired factory manager Wu Zikang (nicknamed *Lao Wu*) in March 2000 ([www.china918.net](http://www.china918.net)). The purpose of this website was to gather, exhibit, and study the historical records of Japan’s invasion of China from 1931 to 1945. As outlined in its mission, the website aims at “remembering the national humiliation, reflecting the history, discussing ways to strengthen our country, building up the spirit of Chinese people, promoting understanding between nations, and advocating the world peace.”<sup>4</sup> So far, Mr. Wu’s website has compiled thousands of historical documents, pictures, videos, films, and academic publications on this topic and become one of the most comprehensive nationalism education centers in China’s cyber sphere. In 2005, the “9.18” Patriot Net led the effort in the global online petition against Japan’s bid for permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council and collected over forty million signatures within four months.<sup>5</sup>

### *China Eagle Union*

China Eagle Union ([www.chinaeagle.org](http://www.chinaeagle.org)) was first founded by Wan Tao, known for his online nickname “Chinaeagle,” on 8 May 2001, the second anniversary of NATO’s bombing of Chinese embassy. Its members took part in the Sino-U.S. cyber warfare during the spy-plane collision incident in 2001. Since 2002, China Eagle Union voluntarily gave up the “aimless” cyber attacks as its operation strategy, and changed its focus to “building up a unique hacker culture with Chinese characteristics.”<sup>6</sup> It has held several annual conferences in Guangzhou, Shanghai among China Eagle Community members. Its online communities on culture, computer security, military, history, and partnership were among the most vibrant, collaborative, and constructive groups in China’s cyber sphere.

### *Patriot Alliance Net*

Patriot Alliance Net ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)) was a non-profit, volunteer-based online community founded on 1 May 2002 in Beijing. Its mission is to “safeguard national interest and promote social justice,” and its goal is to “build up a spiritual cyber homeland for the new generation of Chinese patriots, and oppose Japanese right-wing, militarist groups and all the other anti-China reactionary forces.”<sup>7</sup> In the past four years, Patriot Alliance Net sponsored and or-

ganized dozens of large scale online campaigns, including the first and second protecting Diaoyu Islands voyages in 2003 and 2004, the online petition against Japan’s construction contract of a major railway line between Beijing and Shanghai in 2003 and 2004, the “One Million Signatures Protest” over the poisonous gas incident in 2003, etc. Their steadfast online campaigns over the railway project and the Diaoyu Islands voyages caused the CCP government to shut down its website twice. Although under close surveillance and receiving constant warnings from the government, Patriot Alliance Net has strived to survive operate, and make their voice heard. In fact, the key figures of this website, Feng Jimhua and Lu Yuntei, have been the most vocal and visible spokespersons in China’s grassroots anti-Japanese movement.

### *Internet and Chinese Patriotism Education Symposium*

The “Internet & Chinese Patriotism Education Symposium” is a non government annual conference organized by several major Chinese nationalist websites. The first meeting was held on 9 December 2000 in Nanjing, Jiangsu the historic site of the Nanjing Massacre in 1937. Since then, it has organized five annual national symposiums. The participants normally included the We masters of China’s leading nationalism-oriented websites, representatives from various Chinese online communities, scholars on Sino-Japan relationship Japanese scholars and veteran soldiers, etc. During the two-day conference, participants reported their activities over the past year, shared their experience discussed future strategies, and signed a common mission statement to be released by the involved websites.<sup>8</sup>

So far, the historical evolution and the theoretical orientation of Chinese cyber nationalism have been reviewed and discussed. The previous chapter addressed the questions of when, where, who, how, what, and why, regarding this important online movement. However, the questions of “who cares” and “what” are still left unanswered. For example, how do those cyber nationalists envision their future objectives and influences? How do those foreign policy decision makers in China view this type of online activities, and most importantly, how did they deal with the pressure coming from cyber nationalist activities in the past? Also, how does Chinese general online public evaluate those cyber nationalists’ campaign and strategies? Most of all, how do all the factors weigh into China’s overall foreign policy making and its modernization process? The answers to these questions will be the focus of the Part Three.

## Chapter 13

### Key Players

"Peaceful rise"? Is it a slogan, or a strategy? If it is a slogan, I have no problem with that. If it is a strategy, then we should first ask ourselves, "Is it possible?" Do we have the leverage to guarantee a peaceful development environment?

—Wang Xiaodong, a personal interview in Beijing, 31 May 2006

Who are those leading Chinese cyber nationalists, why do they devote to such a cause and how do they evaluate their activities? To answer these questions, the method of face-to-face in-depth interview was employed here. Four individuals, Wan Tao (the founder of China Eagle Union), Wu Zukang (the founder of China 9.18 Patriot Net), Wang Xiaodong (the leading scholar and vocal advocate of Chinese nationalism movement), and Lu Yunfei (the founder of Patriot Alliance Net), were chosen as the spokespersons for Chinese cyber nationalism movement. Their affiliated online organizations took charge of the major Chinese cyber nationalistic campaigns in the past decade, including the cyber attacks against Indonesia's anti-Chinese riot in 1998, the cyber wars with the United States in 1999 and 2001, the protecting Diaoyu Islands voyages in 2003 and 2004, and the massive online petition against Japan's bid for U.N. Security Council permanent membership in 2005.

Their representation was exemplified not only by their diverse personal profiles, such as age (from early thirties to mid-fifties), education level (from some college to graduate degree), and work experiences (from five-year computer programmer to thirty-year factory manager), but also by their different geographic location (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou) and ideological stance in the movement (from moderate to radical). From March 2005, a series of long distance telephone interviews were conducted by the author with Wang Xiaodong and Wu Zukang. From May to June 2006, the author interviewed face-to-face with these four individuals in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, respectively. The interviews ran from one and a half hours to four hours, and the conversations were recorded with the consent of the interviewees.

### Wan Tao (*China Eagle*)<sup>1</sup>

Wan Tao, best known by his online nickname China Eagle (*lao ying*), was born in 1971 in China's Jiangxi Province. He graduated in 1993 from Northern Jiaotong University in Beijing with an accounting major. "I barely took classes during the last two years of my undergraduate study, and devoted all my time to learning various computer programming languages," Wan recalled. Upon graduation, his talent in computer hacking and security programming was shown through several primitive computer viruses he created for fun.

#### "Ideals at the Tip of Bayonet"

In June 1997, Wan Tao, then a professional computer programmer in Changzhou, established his first online site "Chinawill" aiming to promote "China's will" in the new information age. The next year, he joined China's earliest hacker group—the Green Corps—and became a core member in China's first organized cyber attack against Indonesia's anti-Chinese riot. When asked why he chose "eagle" as the key symbol for his nickname, in his organization's name, and on the group's logo, Wan explained passionately,

All peoples and nations in the world worship symbols with strong characters. Eagle represents the character and capability that I like the most. In Chinese culture, dragon and phoenix are the totemistic symbols. But, they are mystic creations, not real creatures. Besides, dragon is an evil and satanic monster in the Western culture. Some people criticized me, saying that I borrowed an American symbol here. That is not accurate. Eagle has long been a well-respected animal in Chinese tradition too, and we have numerous fairly tales, popular maxims about the divine eagle. What I like the most of eagle is its pride, strength, self-reliance, skill, and far-reaching vision. For example, eagle's eyes are sharper and brighter than other animals'. It flies higher, sees farther, and relies on its own strength to protect its territory. Also, eagle is brave, but it is not aggressive. In English, aggressive means hawkish, which is not my message for this title.

Wan Tao was a pioneering computer security practitioner in China's cyber sphere, a creative thinker of China's geopolitical strategy, and an active promoter of "the hacker culture with Chinese characteristics."<sup>2</sup> In May 2000, Wan Tao came up with the idea of establishing a computer specialists-based cyber community—China Eagle Union. The subsequent events across the Taiwan Strait in 2000 and the spy-plane collision in early 2001 facilitated the formation of this well organized online community ([www.chinaeagle.org](http://www.chinaeagle.org)). On the welcome page of its website, a black eagle extended its huge wings against the blue sky, with a line of slogan written in red, "Ideals at the tip of bayonet; we are a powerful force on the Internet." As to the history, structure and vision of this organization, Wan revealed some inside stories,

After reviewing our online discussions and activities, an American computer research agency *R-Defense* concluded that we were not a hacker group, but a security political group, and a grave threat to the U.S.'s and Japan's national security. Because they thought we must be a government-sponsored organization. It couldn't be farther from the reality. Actually, I would say, the opposite is true. The government has been persistent and consistent in impeding our development. It is true that under certain circumstances, the government and some non-government groups might resonate with each other—take the present environmental issues promoted by some social groups as an example. At the surface level or from the outside, it may seem these two parties must cooperate closely or follow the same guidelines. In fact, there is no real linkage whatsoever. We are operating purely on our own. Within the Eagle Union, we have two levels of membership, the volunteer level and the formal member level. Although right now China doesn't have a clear definition and regulation for non-government organizations, we try to abide by the rules in line with the Western model. For example, like Western non-profit organizations, we follow the normal fiscal year calendar and report our revenue and expense to our members regularly. The real problem is that China doesn't have a clear legal status for non-profit organization. Therefore, we can not raise money or collect membership dues. What has been left for us to survive is donations from our members. This is a very awkward situation right now. Without a clear regulation, it is very difficult for us to operate.

In early 2002, Wan Tao and his China Eagle Union made a significant move in China's overall cyber nationalism movement—they announced publicly that they would stop any cyber attacks in their future operations. This decision, which was in compliance with the government's requirement, nonetheless stirred up some disputes and controversies among those fervent cyber warriors. Wan explained this decision,

Several factors led to this. Of course, the government's pressure played a role, but not as much as some people speculated. In fact, our government had in the past withheld a lot of historical accounts away from the public eyes. For example, I didn't know the Nanking Massacre until I was a middle school student. So, the government has never supported the self-organized nationalism activities all along. Second, during this period, I traveled across China, from North to South, to meet face-to-face with those online friends. I paid the trip out of my own pocket. I found, to my disappointment, that people's motives were too diverse and too disarrayed. Some for money and some for personal fame. Meanwhile, the mass media began to join in the chorus, provoking the nationalism sentiment blindly. I knew the whole cyber warfare had span out of our original purpose and might backfire. So I decided to quit. And lastly, to be frank, our hacking skill and technology still lagged behind that of the U.S. hackers'. Most of our attacks either inflicted no impact at all, or helped them correct the weak points. It is better to sharpen our skill first.

### *I Have a Dream*

During the widely covered 2001 cyber warfare between Chinese hacker groups and American hacker groups, Wan Tao wrote a public letter to President Bush, imitating sentence-by-sentence Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech *I Have a Dream*. In it, he outlined his vision and his dream,

The Eighth of May has become an unforgettable date in Chinese people's memory. Over the last one hundred years, China's calendar was filled with too much suffering and resentment. To those who consoled us, we will appreciate forever. To those who spilled salt to our wounds, we will never forget. China's next generation has become accustomed to eating Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's, and going to see a Hollywood blockbuster every month. Ironically, as the older generation was worried about the new tendencies among the youngsters, it is the U.S.'s policies that awaken them. . . . It is time for us to reject the miscalculated crimes. We shouldn't use the bitter wine of hatred to ease our thirst for freedom. As a great nation and proud people, we should stand atop the history mountain, igniting the world's hope by holding high the torch of freedom. Like the Goddess of Liberty, we should spread love, wisdom, morality, integrity, peace, and freedom. Mr. President, I want to tell you today: although there are so many difficulties ahead of us, we still have a dream. This dream is rooted deeply in Chinese people's mind. We dream that one day, our two nations can hold hands in hand, realizing the creed that "nation and people, regardless of size, are born equal." We sincerely hope that we can join together with the great nation on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, and with all the other peace-loving nations in the world, to respect our common mother—this great, beautiful and energetic earth.<sup>5</sup>

This passionate letter was circulated widely in China's cyber sphere amid the growing tension between China and the United States in the real world. Asked how he came up with such an idea, Wan revealed his complex feeling toward the United States,

I have more than 2,000 video tapes at home, most of them American movies. To be frank, I can operate an American movie shop in Beijing with my collections. As I observed, American people have very strong ideological beliefs, which dominated their culture and political system. They are self-centered, but they are also very mission-driven. The America's society pays much attention to patriotism education, far better than our country's system does. Although they promote democratic ideas throughout the world, we all know that all democracies, American's included, are relative. The national interest has always been the paramount concern. In comparison, although China has fallen behind in the past two hundred years, it is only a blip in its historical course. So far as China preserves its value system and cultural essence, it will definitely regain its footing in the near future. In the past, you may categorize me as a China-centered ideologue, because I regard our culture as the best. But, after traveling to other cultural centers in the world, India, Egypt, and Europe over the past years, I changed my mind. I respect all other cultures, and believe they all have their positions in human history.

### *The Big Chess Board*

Wan Tao has been thinking and writing about the topic of how China should prepare for the upcoming transformation of geopolitics in East Asia region in particular and in the world in general. When we walked toward the cafeteria where this interview was conducted, he threw a question to me unexpectedly, "How do you assess our current policy toward North Korea?" Below is his take on this issue,

We should change our current North Korea policy. It doesn't work, and in the long run, it will hurt us. Instead of the current short-sighted approach, we should ally with South Korea, and force the North to reform. Sooner or later, the Koreans will reunite. Our pro-unification stance will help us expel the American influences in the Korean Peninsula, and use the new Korea as a counterbalance against Japan and the United States. After a peaceful unification of two Koreas, the Taiwan problem will be solved naturally and easily. The cultural inclination of these areas to China will inevitably lead to a European Union-type pan-Asian community, in which China will play a leading and indispensable role. The current pro-North position, however, put the party's ideological interest above our nation's strategic interest. It is wrong, it is short-sighted, and it is dangerous.

According to Wan, he was the first Chinese mainland citizen that ever sent an e-mail to Taiwan's two major parties, the Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). It was in 1995, a full year before the first Taiwan presidential election and the Taiwan Strait crisis. As to the Taiwan unification issue, Wan has its own understandings,

Taiwan's opposition to unification was based partially on ideology, because they reject mainland China's political system. Our current approach is to promote infightings among Taiwan's parties and hope to get benefits from the chaos. In fact, we can never benefit from that. China is a large country. As a large country, you must have a long-term strategy. A better option may be to gradually democratize and legalize the current party system in China. China doesn't need a strong party, but China always needs a strong leader. Like Russia's President Putin. Just like playing China's chess game *weiqi*, we should have a grand vision and strategy. We should aim at the future changes decades down in the road. Maybe we need another one hundred years to get there, but we should be prepared and determined. All in all, in the long run, I am optimistic, but in the short run, I am not so sure.

### *Wu Zukang (Old Wu)*<sup>4</sup>

Wu Zukang (nicknamed *old Wu*), a fifty-eight year old former factory officer, doesn't seem to fit the profile of a "Chinese cyber nationalist" very well. He was born in 1949 in Shanghai, and was sent with tens of thousands of students to China's remote northeastern rural area in 1968 to "receive reeducation." After the Cultural Revolution, Wu returned to Shanghai and worked in a state-owned

factory for twenty years. Since March 2000, Mr. Wu devoted much of his time and income to an online patriotism expedition: the founding and daily operation of China 9.18 Patriot Net ([www.china918.org](http://www.china918.org), initially registered as [www.china1937.net](http://www.china1937.net)). In February 2004, Mr. Wu was forced by his employer to sign a "layoff contract." Since then, he became an unemployed worker and a full-time Web master.

### *Building an Online Patriotism Education Base*

Living in a tiny and extremely simple apartment with his wife and daughter, Wu Zukang built up China's largest online museum of Anti-Japanese War historical archives. The operation expenses of the website came mainly from the donations by online users and Mr. Wu's quickly shrinking retirement savings. He kept a detailed balance sheet for the website operation and posted it online for public review. For much of the operation period since 2002, *Old Wu's* online education base was in red ink. What motivated a common Chinese citizen to take up this ambitious mission at his senior age?

In the spring of 1998, I visited my relatives in Anhui, *en route* Nanjing. By accident, I went to the Memorial Museum of Nanjing Massacre located just near the bus station. I was so shocked and enraged by the content of the exhibition that I could not eat my lunch—for me, this was the first time facing directly with a piece of almost forgotten history. In January 2000, Japanese right-wingers organized a notorious public conference titled "The Biggest Lie in the Twentieth Century: Reexamining Nanjing Massacre." I felt I was responsible, as a Chinese citizen and in the name of thirty million Chinese victims, to do something to rebuke those distortions and whitewashings. After consulting with some friends online, [www.china1937.net](http://www.china1937.net) was up and running. The first project we did was to upload all the 400 pictures of a pictorial publication *Nanjing Massacre* online.

For Mr. Wu, establishing a patriotism education base online is a noble cause, but it was surely not a smooth journey. At first, he found that there was not so much information available in China about this very important piece of history. The existing documents were either too sketchy or too superficial. This lack of proper documentation nonetheless hardened *Old Wu's* determination. However, what really caught him off guard was the intervention from the Japanese government and Chinese administrators.

Only six months after our opening, one of the articles posted in our chat room brought us big trouble. It was a poster discussing China's military strategy with strong anti-Japanese rhetoric. Since we rented our web space from a computer center affiliated with China's Ministry of Culture, Japanese government accused China of supporting this type of anti-Japanese activities. As a result, Chinese officials decided to shut down our website, delete all the materials, and investigate my personal background. That was a heart-wrenching moment. After several appeals to the Beijing's administrators, our website was reopened a month

later. But we had to de-link any ties to the government agency. It turned out positive for us actually, because we have been a non-government group from the very beginning. All editors and BBS masters of our website, about thirty of them, are volunteers. They spread across the country and contribute to the web operation in their spare time through online communication.

Till August 2006, Mr. Wu and his China 9.18 Patriot Net have sponsored dozens of memorial activities under the major theme of "remembering history, and consolidating national spirit." These activities included online exhibitions, online essay competitions, research conference, online charity auction, online petitions, etc. Among them, the worldwide online petition against Japan's bid for the UNSC membership, and a series of Internet and Patriotism Education Symposiums were the most influential.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Message to Next Generation*

More than half a century has passed since Japan's invasion of China. What kind of message should we send to the next generation of Chinese and Japanese youngsters? *Old Wu* kept asking this question to himself. Should it be a message of hatred or a message of love? "I believe," *Old Wu* summarized his thought, "if we can not face our history truthfully and honestly, we may repeat the tragedy again and again." In an interview with Japan's major TV network NHK in July 2002, some of *Old Wu's* responses are worth repeating.<sup>6</sup>

*NHK:* In your opinion, what is Japan's problem?

*Wu:* First and foremost, Japan's view of its aggressive past is problematic. For example, Japanese prime minister repeatedly visited the Yasukuni shrine during his term. Japan's revised history textbook was filled with distortions and whitewashings. All these irresponsible moves inevitably offended Chinese people. Moreover, many Japanese politicians even denied the existence of those massacres committed by Japanese army during the invasion. This tendency reflected Japanese government's unrepentant stance. It is hard to develop a friendly relationship if we can not resolve this issue. In addition, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Japan modified its peace constitution. It not only sent troops overseas, but also increased military spending in response toward the so-called "China Threat." Asian peoples had suffered tremendously in the hands of Japanese militarists. This new phenomenon naturally arouses people's resentment and alertness.

*NHK:* What do you want to tell your daughter and Chinese youngsters via the website?

*Wu:* Our website is a patriotism and history education base. What I want to speak to the youngsters is, "history should not be forgotten; moreover, history should not be distorted or denied." Nowadays, China's young generation has become increasingly apathetic of history. That is troublesome. The blood of our ancestors should not be shed in vain. Only if we learn the lesson from the past, can we build a better and stronger nation. We should also notice that Japan's right-wingers are using a variety of advanced communication methods,

including cartoon, video game, and animation, to distort and rewrite history. This is dangerous, and we should not let the lies overshadow the true history.

NHK: Don't you think that your actions may hurt Chinese people's feeling toward Japan, and Japanese people's feeling toward China?

Wu: Our website is basically a history education base. It is strange if an educational website which intends to tell the truth would hurt somebody's feeling. If telling the truth would discomfort somebody, then denying the true history is committing a hideous crime. If we don't tell the truth, history will be rewritten by some irresponsible parties.

At the end of the interview, *Old Wu*, on behalf of the editors and China 9.18 Patriot Net, thanked NHK network for providing such an opportunity to communicate directly and honestly with Japanese people. According to Mr. Wu, he agreed with former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's approach here. "Deng Xiaoping put it wisely, 'the best way to deal with Japanese right-wingers is to strengthen the exchange and communication between Chinese people and Japanese people.' All in all, Japanese problems rest on their own people's shoulder to solve."

### "Devote to the Web for Our Nation"

*Old Wu* has a motto posted prominently on the China 9.18 Patriot Net. It says, "devote to the Web for our nation; show my loyalty with my heart." (*ton shen wan wei wei min zu, wo yi wo xin xian zhong cheng*). Needless to say, *Old Wu's* understanding of nation and loyalty was shaped largely by his personal background and experiences. Compare with the younger generation of cyber nationalists, Mr. Wu's strategies and tactics were considerably different. As to the interactions between the government authority and the grassroots online movement, Mr. Wu noted,

It is necessary and beneficial for our country to have a civil cyber sphere that presents people's voice and demands. The spontaneous online nationalism movement built a bridge linking the party's foreign policy and the general public's concerns. In the end, this new channel not only serves as a huge grassroots think tank, but also offer our government some leverage in negotiations. For example, in the case of Japan's bid for UNSC membership, our government was in a much better position to take a tough stance on this issue because of the tremendous support shown through the online petition campaign in 2005. That said, the cyber sphere should be an auxiliary and complementary instrument. Otherwise, it may disrupt and cause trouble to our country's grand strategies.

Though a passionate patriot himself, Mr. Wu doesn't agree with some of the aggressive rhetoric and confrontational tactics adopted by some young cyber nationalists. He emphasized,

Nationalism should be an inspiring power that guides our country's renais-  
sance. Most of China's online people are youngsters or college students. They  
are active, energetic, and self-motivated. But they also lack in-depth under-

standing of society and politics. Online sphere provides them a place to vent whatever opinion they may have. However, some irrational and irresponsible rhetoric may be counterproductive. Also, before taking any action, people should inform and consult with the government for understanding and cooperation. In the end, we can deceive the Japanese government, but we should never deceive our own government. Of course, Chinese officials should also adjust their mindset—be more participative, not too judgmental. Blocking or censoring a website is neither a long term nor a cost-efficient management policy.

Facing various problems, ranging from lack of financial support, lack of editorial personnel, and periodic government pressure, Mr. Wu is nonetheless optimistic and forward-looking. "I am an old revolutionary," he joked, "I am in shortage of everything but confidence and patience." In addition to the mountainous task of maintaining the China 9.18 Patriot Net, Mr. Wu has been actively involving a new social activity, "Shanghai Intellectual Youth Arts Assemblage" (*Shanghai zhi qing yi shu tuan*). This self-organized social group consists of Shanghai natives who had been working and living in Heilongjiang Province as the so-called "intellectual youth" (*zhi shi qing nian*) during the Cultural Revolution in 1960s. Hundreds of them, now in their senior ages, reconvened together to present an arts festival for their second hometown. Mr. Wu, a former "intellectual" youth who had lived in Helongjiang for nearly a decade, stood out on another stage.

### Lu Yunfei<sup>7</sup>

Lu Yunfei, the chief editor of Patriot Alliance Net ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)), has an unusual online pseudonym: *Yang Jingyu*. Yang was a legendary Chinese hero who led a fierce resisting campaign against the Japanese invasion in 1930s in the northeastern part of China. He was killed after a close encounter with Japanese army in early 1940. To scare off other followers, the Japanese invaders chopped off his head and exhibited it as a trophy across China's Northern provinces. "Yang Jingyu is a great hero in my mind," said Lu, "I use his name to show my respect to him, learn from him, memorize him, and hope we have more Yang Jingyus in China."

Patriot Alliance Net was founded on 1 May 2002 in Beijing by a group of youngsters, such as Lu, who were strongly opposed to Japanese government's policies on a wide range of issues. It was a non-profit, volunteer-based online community which consists of twenty-four discussion sessions, nineteen special net-friend communities, and some seventy voluntary web editors. Lu recalled the early stage of this soon-to-be anti-Japanese campaign headquarter,

When we first started, we had little money and resource. In fact, during the first year, we had to borrow the equipments, servers, and online space from our friends. Nobody paid attention to us. After our first "Protecting Diaoyu Islands Voyage" campaign and the online petitions against Japan's bid for the high-speed railway project, tens of thousands of fellow net-friends began to pour their support toward us. As the donations grew, we finally established our own

cyber space. However, we were temporarily shut down by the government because of the online petition in 2004.

Because of its uncompromising stance, coordinated online and offline campaigns, and well organized national networks, Patriot Alliance Net quickly became the leading force in the unfolding anti-Japanese campaign in China's cyber sphere. Like many of his fellow organizers, Lu was born in the 1970s. They shared some common characteristics that distinguish them from other similar groups. They are politically determined, technologically sophisticated, and most important, media savvy. Most of their campaigns and street protests were widely covered by foreign media stationed in Beijing. They used some eye-catching tactics, such as flag-burning, blood donation, public signature collecting campaign, patriotism song competition, to draw mainstream media's attention. Lu himself was interviewed by *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, BBC, the *Strait Times*, among other prominent media outlets in many occasions. In response to the accusation that they staged these events purely for personal fame, Lu answered,

The Diaoyu Islands and the abandoned poisonous gas weapons are not issues relating only to a few people like us. They may impact and hurt hundreds of thousands of Chinese people tomorrow or in the near future. Through the online petition and the protecting Diaoyu Islands voyage, we made a lot of people beware of the urgency and significance of these issues. For us, we learned a lot too, since we need to search a lot of documents, and wrote many opinion pieces online. At first, my will was not that strong and resolute. However, as time passes by, I became more determined. Right now, many net-friends, including myself, are willing to make this cause as our lifetime mission.

The organization structure showcased the potential of the self-sponsored online communities in China's future political landscape. For example, the headquarter of Patriot Alliance Net is located in Beijing, but its local branches spread across over twenty provinces, including Shanghai, Sichuan, Shandong, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, etc. In addition to the frequent online communications and collaborations, the individual sub-groups routinely carried out various nationalism-oriented activities, such as paying respect to Chinese war heroes, visiting old soldiers, planting trees at memorial park, and advocating boycott of Japanese goods. After each of these events, they shared their pictures, videos, and stories with other members on the Web.<sup>8</sup> In time of major events, such as Japanese prime minister's shrine visit, its well established cyber network became an efficient mobilizing machine. Lu talked about a real story,

On 5 April 2005, the news broke out that Japan once again revised its history textbook. People were outraged. Somebody called for a public demonstration the next day. But, nothing was worked out in detail. Next morning, some people began to gather around the location mentioned in an online rally poster. Most of them actually were bystanders who wanted to see what was going to happen. As the crowd grew, some people took pictures of the crowd and up-

loaded them onto many websites, shouting, "There is a demonstration! It is real! Here are the pictures." The message was quickly copied, forwarded, reposted, and became a lightning rod. Eventually, it turned out to be one of the largest public demonstrations in Beijing since the Tiananmen incident. During the course of the demonstration, a short messaging company broadcast the event live to millions of mobile phone users in Beijing. In the end, the government could not trace down who was the initial organizer.

In contrast to Wu Zulkang's primarily cooperative approach toward the authority, Lu and his partners have been more independent and self-determined. However, they had to pay the price for their unruly nationalism impulse. Their website was shut down during their second online petition against the high-speed railway project, and their application for protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Beijing was repeatedly turned down by local authority. After the massive anti-Japanese protest in 2005, the restrictions were tightened. According to Lu, among the regular traffic on their website, a considerable amount now came from the Internet police who closely monitored their activities. Lu was disappointed, if not totally frustrated, by the government interventions,

What we did was part of China's public diplomacy. We hope we can accomplish something that is not suitable for our government to do. The government should have government's policy and strategy, but the civilians should express their own opinions in their own way. Our position was in line with the government's long-standing position on many issues. In fact, our actions not only drew attentions from normal Chinese people, but also sent a strong signal to the world community. It actually united all Chinese across the world. There is nothing we need to hide, so we made public and transparent all the information regarding the donation accounts, equipment arrangement, and volunteer names. All of our partners are volunteers. We have our full-time job, and only contribute to this cause during our spare time. Frankly, we spent a lot of money out of our own pocket. But, we want to find a path for China's non-government and non-profit organizations.

Though deeply disappointed, the external pressure doesn't seem to dampen Lu's determination. As he said, "as long as the Diaoyu Islands is not under China's control, we will keep on our protecting Diaoyu Islands efforts. Even if we can not accomplish this in our life time, the following generations will carry on our mission." On 15 August 2006, hours after Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi made his sixth visit to the Yasukuni shrine, Lu Yunde and several members of Patriot Alliance Net staged a protest in front of the Japanese Consulate in Chongqing, his hometown. Meanwhile, similar protests were also carried out in other cities.

### Wang Xiaodong<sup>9</sup>

Wang Xiaodong's personality contrasts many stereotypes that people may have in their minds about a Chinese scholar. He talks fast, eats fast, and walk fast. He is outspoken, point-blank, and a little combative. Even more rebellious than his

personality are his series of theses on Chinese nationalism and China's long term national strategies. In 1988, when the Chinese intellectual circle was overwhelmed by Western ideologies and pro-democracy sentiment, Wang was among the first group of scholars, if not the first scholar, to publicly challenge what he later characterized as the "reverse racism" tendency. In 1996, Wang published a long paper on "Chinese Nationalism and China's Future," which was later posted online and spread across the Chinese cyber sphere by a major online journal *China News Digest*.<sup>10</sup> His persistent advocacy of Chinese nationalism and his hard-line position on China's security issues won him the reputation among Chinese youngsters as the "Godfather" of China's new nationalism.

### *The "Reverse Racism" and the Return of Nationalism*

Wang was born in 1955 and graduated from China's elite Peking University in 1982. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Wang received solid Western academic training in Japan and Canada. He went to Japan in mid-1980s and got a master's degree in Business Administration, and then went to Canada and the United States as a visiting scholar. Because of his academic background, Wang was also among the first group of Chinese who had access to the Internet. "It was 1991, and I was a visiting scholar in Canada. The technology was still primitive, but sufficient for us to communicate with fellow friends studying in Europe or in the United States," Wang recalled. It was three years before China was officially connected to the World Wide Web. During that period, Wang began to systematically think about nationalism-related issues.

After the CCP came into power in 1949, nationalism has lost its ideological position in China. Because the official ideology was Marx-Leninism, so there was no room left for the so-called "provincial and parochial" nationalism. Believe it or not, I had never heard of the word "nationalism" until I was thirty years old. For a long time, I had no idea what this word meant, let alone to think about being a flag-carrier of China's nationalism.

China's "reform and opening up to the world" policy introduced by Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s exposed a generation of deeply depressed and bewildered intellectuals to a shockingly prosperous capitalist world. The sudden realization of backwardness and poverty pushed many Chinese elites toward the edge of self-doubt and self-demigration. As a first-hand observer, Wang summarized this across-the-society psychological transition.

The disillusionment of Communism in the 1980s led to the short-lived pro-Western impulse. After Tiananmen, many intellectuals lost faith to CCP, even to China's future. However, China is a huge nation and a resilient civilization. After a short slip, it regained confidence and began to relocate its position in the world. The resurgent of nationalism movement in 1990s was an answer and rebuttal to the previous reverse racism tendency among a small group of elite intellectuals. This is returning to the normal, not something irregular. Even till today, China's mainstream media still have the tendency to beautify the West-

ern world. This type of thinking style is more prevalent among elite intellectuals and some so-called think tanks. This undercurrent of pro-Western mindset among a considerable group of media gatekeepers in China resulted in the flourishing development of Chinese nationalism in the cyber sphere, where the government control has been the least effective.

As to the widespread notion in the West that the CCP has purposely used nationalism to replace the waning Communism, Wang dismissed this argument as "nonsense." Instead, Wang argued that the CCP has never given up the Communism ideology. He further challenged the argument that the ongoing cyber nationalism was a result of government's manipulation.

If Chinese government really wants to promote nationalism, why don't they use traditional media? After all, the traditional media are totally controlled by the government, unlike the cyber sphere. Take me as an example. There are very few channels for me to publish my paper in China's traditional media. Most of my publications were through personal relations, and often under tremendous pressure from above. In fact, in my mind, nationalism is not contradictory with democracy. I myself have supported political reform and democracy all along. The question for China is not whether we should have democracy or not, but how and when we should have it. From 1990 to 2000, in merely ten years, more than 100 million Chinese peasants became urban citizens. This urbanization process is faster than any other nation-states in human history, and it is accelerating. The real threat to the world peace and stability is not an undemocratic China, but an unstable China.

Wang's harsh criticism on the liberal faction of China's intellectuals, coupled with his outspoken manner, made him an outlier in China's overall political spectrum. He was sacked from his posts as an editor in the *Strategy and Management* magazine, and as a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in late 1990s. Now, he works as an associate research fellow at the Research Center of Chinese Youth and Children in Beijing. He established his personal blogs on dozens of commercial portals, posting all his previous publications online for review.<sup>11</sup>

### *China's "Splendid Isolation"*

Wang borrowed another Western political concept—"splendid isolation"—to illustrate his grand proposal for China's future position. During the late nineteenth century, the British Empire introduced the so-called "splendid isolation" policy to maintain the balance of power with its European rivals. Wang outlined his Chinese version application.

The geopolitical circumstance surrounding China has changed drastically since Deng Xiaoping's death. Deng's judgment in early 1980s that the Soviet Union-U.S. confrontation was the major power struggle and China could and should take this strategic time window to concentrate on its economy was a far-reaching and brilliant one. It won China a decade to recover. But now, China