

**Reflections on State Nationalism in Chinese Historical Pedagogy:
Accounts of the Second Opium War in Chinese Middle-School History Textbooks from
1912 and 2007**

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Abstract

Scholars tend to assume the link between Chinese education and nationalism, without looking at the specific ways in which the connection is made. An assessment of the way in which the Second Opium War (1856-1860) is depicted in two Chinese middle-school history textbooks, one from 1912 and the other from 2007, illustrates how the historic event may be used to conjure nationalist responses to an event that brought China into a new world order of sovereign nation-states. Based on the research presented in this paper, it can be shown that since the founding of a public education system in 1902, the Chinese government – whether late imperial, nationalist, or communist – has used history textbooks to express a specifically “national” history that brings the Chinese together behind a strong state that portrays itself as the guardian of a nation’s sovereignty and cultural identity. This paper first assesses the importance of state legitimacy and the role of promoting a specific national narrative that supports the state’s authority in the creation of state-endorsed nationalism, then considers the role of the state in the establishment of a national education system and the production of history textbooks, and finishes with a comparison of passages about the Second Opium War in a textbook from 1912 and one from 2007. Whereas the 1912 passage reinforces the new Republic of China’s claim to legitimacy by focusing on the imperial government’s ineptitude at handling foreign incursion during the Second Opium War, completely overlooking the role of Western interests and aggression in China, the 2007 passage condenses the whole war to the looting and burning of the Yuanming Yuan in order to create a shared memory of humiliation that reminds students of the Chinese Communist Party’s historic victory over imperialism and that may impel Chinese youth to redress the problem of China’s inequality on the world stage. An analysis of the passages about the Second Opium War in these two textbooks demonstrates in a concrete way the role of teaching the country’s “imagined” past in inculcating a contemporary national identity that can then be used to legitimize those in power.

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Introduction

In Paris, Christie's February 2009 auction of "stuff" collected by Yves Saint Laurent,¹ identified as "the auction of the century,"² planned to sell, among its 733 lots, two bronze statues representing a rat's head and a rabbit's head that had somehow come into Mr. Saint Laurent's possession during the course of his life. Chinese representatives launched a legal proceeding, asking a court in Paris for an injunction to stop the sale of the bronzes on the basis that these were Chinese cultural relics that should be restituted and kept in a museum on Chinese soil. In a March 2009 article, Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, quoted Ouyang Jian, the Chinese Deputy Cultural Minister, as declaring the bronze statues "stolen," and their possession by foreigners "illegal." According to Ouyang, "The auction has violated international conventions, and has hurt the cultural rights and interests and the national sentiment of the Chinese people."³

Newspaper articles about the auctioning off of these bronze statues, that were allegedly looted by Anglo-French forces from the *Yuanming Yuan* – a majestic Imperial residence on the outskirts of Beijing – at the tail end of the Second Opium War in 1860, reminds readers of the continuing importance conferred on this historic event in the public memory of the Chinese people. The Beijing government has leveraged this kind of incident to broadcast the image of China as victim, persecuted by the global community, both in the past, with the sacking and burning of the symbol of China's ancient civilization, the Yuanming Yuan, and the present, with the auction on the world market of bronze statue heads that, as once having been a part of the magnificence of an Imperial residence, the Chinese Community Party (CCP) considers "national treasures" that ought to be returned to their rightful owner – the Chinese nation. At the same time, the episode is also used to champion China as great power, ready to take her rightful place on the world stage, by emphasizing resistance to the global sale of its cultural relics and attempts to recover possessions of historical – and national – significance. Part of this narrative involves reminding the Chinese population of former imperialists' aggression and the present-day need to overcome that humiliation and show the

¹ Yves Saint Laurent died in June 2008 and the auction was organized by his partner, Pierre Bergé, with Christie's auction house.

² "In Pictures: Yves Saint Laurent auction," BBC News: 23-02-2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/7903621.stm. retrieved 26-02-2009.

³ "China to seek return of looted relics," Xinhua News Agency: 13-03-2009. http://www.china.org.cn/government/NPC_CPPCC_2009/2009-03/13/content_17435058.htm. retrieved 13-03-2009

world China's strength. The recollection of one of the most humiliating and distressing experiences in Chinese history – the destruction of the country's symbol of ancient culture and refinement at the hands of the world's Great Powers during a time of vulnerability – fits nicely into a narrative that legitimizes the role of the CCP as defending the interests of a unified and eternal "nation." The nationalistic rhetoric found in these newspaper articles⁴ supports the legitimacy of CCP rule in the face of the gradual collapse of Marxism's ability to garner popular deference and respect in the People's Republic of China (PRC).

How does the state uphold and maintain its nation-ness: this idea that a harmonious "China," with a "national sentiment" and "national treasures," exists? How does the symbolic power of the Yuanming Yuan as representative of national humiliation and salvation persist to this day? Unexpectedly, a look at the Chinese compulsory education system may offer an answer. In a commonly distributed grade 8 history textbook for Beijing middle-school students,⁵ an optional reading text in a chapter entitled "The Colonial Powers' devastating crime during the Second Opium War," tells its readers that after the plunder of the Yuanming Yuan, there was a public, low-priced auction, which sent the looted cultural relics all over the world into the possession of various museums and private collections, even so far as to later appear on the auction-house market. Three out of the twelve zodiac bronze animal heads from the fountain decorations behind the Haiyan Hall – one monkey head, one ox head, and one tiger head that were part of the same series as the rat and rabbit heads selling at Christie's 2009 auction – were bought and returned for the high price of several tens of millions of *yuan* by "concerned Chinese members" (中国有关方面). In this way, a compulsory middle-school history textbook reminds students of the ongoing injustice inflicted on a united "China" that is obligated to "buy back" property at high prices that was,

⁴ See "China to seek return of looted relics," Xinhua News Agency: 13-03-2009; "Seek return of looted relics through 'all necessary means,'" Xinhua News Agency: 12-03-2009, http://www.china.org.cn/china/news/2009-03/12/content_17433928.htm, retrieved 13-03-2009. "NPC spokesman reprimands Christie's auction," Xinhua News Agency, 4-03-2009, http://www.china.org.cn/government/NPC_CPPCC_2009/2009-03/04/content_17373198.htm, retrieved 13-03-2009. This kind of auction and Chinese response occurred before, in the 2000 auction of another pair of bronze statues from the same fountain: "'Looted' Chinese treasures auctioned," BBC: 2 May 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/733543.stm>, retrieved 26-02-2009. The price of the statues has risen tremendously in the past nine years. According to the 2 May 2000 BBC article, the monkey head and the ox head "sold for about \$2.05 million." It's unclear whether that was the price for one or both. A boar's head was bought at an auction market in 2003, and in 2007, a horse head was bought for \$9m (£6.3m). In the 2009 auction, the bronze heads were expected to sell for \$12.6m (£8.8m), but ended up going for \$19m (£13m) each. One wonders what it is that makes these statues' market value rise so steeply over such a short period of time.

⁵ Lynn Paine, "Teaching and Modernization in Contemporary China," *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience*, Ruth Hayhoe, ed., (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992).

nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, forcibly taken and wrongfully sold at cheap prices.⁶

Nationalism “is not a thing-in-itself but is an ever-changing dynamism,” and this dynamism is mnemonic in that it recalls certain parts of that nation’s past – whether true or invented or modified – in shaping and sustaining the nation’s history and identity.⁷ In an increasingly globalized world where multiple identities contrast and contest each other, Toming Jun Liu suggests that “the very long and richly complex Chinese culture and history have been selectively invoked to induce desired – and designed – national sentiments.”⁸ These national sentiments are then used to differentiate China from other nations, to reaffirm the nation’s identity and therefore autonomy. It is argued in this paper that the Second Opium War is one such “selection” from China’s history that has been chosen by Chinese authorities to invoke national sentiments.

The connection between education and the promotion of a state-sponsored nationalism that seeks to reinforce popular cohesion and harmony, exists within the literature on nationalism⁹ as well as the literature on Chinese nationalism¹⁰ in particular. Yet very few scholars have taken up the project of actually looking into textbooks to see *how* this link between Chinese education and nationalism is actually formed, usually only addressing textbooks in a sentence or two, if at all.¹¹ Only recently has the lacuna been tentatively attended to with an anthology published in 2007 that focuses on the production of historical knowledge in the late Qing and Republican era, specifically associating history textbooks

⁶ In a recently-built museum in the Yuanming Yuan, commemorating the destruction of the Palaces, there is a display that includes pictures of imperial objects collected by French General Montauban in 1860 for Empress Eugenie’s Oriental Collection, now shown at the Château de Fontainebleau (near Paris). Hevia remarks: “The message seems clear: As China reconstructs itself as a modernized nation-state and global power, can it tolerate the presence of objects marking national humiliation outside of China?” James L. Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 343.

⁷ Toming Jun Liu, “Restless Chinese Nationalist Currents in the 1980s and the 1990s: A Comparative Reading of *River Elegy* and *China Can Say No*,” in *Chinese Nationalism in Perspective: Historical and Recent Cases*, C.X. George Wei and Xiaoyuan Liu, eds., (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 212 and 215

⁸ 历史课程标准 (*lishi kecheng biaoazhun – Standard History Curriculum*), (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2007 [2001]), 1. Although the textbook does not say, these bronze heads were recovered in 2000 at a Sotheby’s auction in Hong Kong, amid protests. See BBC 2 May 2000 article.

⁹ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), specifically 32-34; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), specifically 113-114.

¹⁰ See especially Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The search for national identity under reform*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 25-28.

¹¹ Irving Epstein, ed. *Chinese Education: Problems, Policies and Prospects*, (New York: Garland Publishers, 1991); Ruth Hayhoe, ed. *Education and Modernization: The Chinese Experience*, Ruth Hayhoe, ed., (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992); Ruth Hayhoe and Marianne Bastid, eds. *China’s Education in the Industrialized World: Studies in Cultural Transfer*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1987); Marianne Bastid, *Educational Reform in Early Twentieth-Century China*, (Ann Arbor: Centre for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan: 1988); Stig Thøgersen, *Secondary Education in China after Mao: Reform and Social Conflict*, (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1990).

with Chinese nationalism.¹² This paper endeavors to contribute to this relatively recent scholarship and investigate how the state – the governing body and the institutions at its disposal – involves itself in the education system and the production of national narratives in compulsory history textbooks that ultimately support and legitimize the state. A comparison of the way the Second Opium War (1856-1860) is recounted in two different history textbooks made for about the same age group and for dissemination in the public school system, one from 1912 and the other from 2007, allows an examination of the particular ways in which historical narratives can transmit national sentiments. James L. Hevia places the Second Opium War at the beginning of a larger story on how the British taught the Qing Court “lessons” in imperialism: the British used brute force and then treaties to teach the Qing regime “how to function properly in a world dominated militarily and economically by European-based empires.”¹³ 1856-1860 is a period when nations of the industrialized West, especially the British contingent, were beginning to finally get their “lesson” across that the Chinese Empire should no longer regard itself or be regarded as the “centre of the world.” An assessment of the different ways in which the Second Opium War is depicted in Chinese middle-school history textbooks illustrates how the historic event may be used to conjure nationalist responses to an event that brought China into a “new world order [...] in which the only recognized actors on the world scene were sovereign nation-states.”¹⁴

The 1912 textbook was chosen because of its temporal proximity to the establishment of the Republic of China, when the Nationalist government (also known as the Beiyang regime to differentiate this period from Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government during the Nanjing Decade, 1927-1937)¹⁵ replaced the Qing Court’s rule and affirmed its own authority. Under the clout of the new republic’s martial president, Yuan Shi-kai, the republican government “generated support for a strong centralized state capable of defending (and defining) the borders of the nation from the imperialist powers [such as Great Britain, Russia,

¹² Tze-Ki Hon and Robert J. Culp, eds., *The Politics of Historical Production in Late Qing and Republican China*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007). The editors themselves lament the gap in the literature. See specifically the “Introduction,” 1-17.

¹³ Hevia (2003), 13.

¹⁴ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 158.

¹⁵ The Beiyang regime is named after the imperial army of the same name that organized during the late nineteenth century and came under Yuan Shikai’s command in 1901. Although he was dismissed from his position in 1909, Yuan kept personal alliances with important officers who preferred to follow his orders than that of the army’s official Manchu commander. See Immanuel Chung-yueh Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 429-430.

and Japan].”¹⁶ As well as working to enhance China’s independence and sovereignty, Yuan’s state-building projects included establishing the state’s influence in areas such as the press and education.

The 1912 textbook’s publishing house, Shanghai’s Commercial Press, was one of the most reputable and established, at a time when the marketability of a history textbook depended on its ability to conform to the new regulations set down by the Beiyang regime.¹⁷ As well, after the 1911 Revolution, the national public school system, which mostly remained an urban phenomenon, was beginning to gain acceptance among the educated elite as the new means for career advancement after the 1905 abolishment of the civil service examinations.¹⁸ These state-sanctioned public schools were therefore becoming relevant for more and more people, and as Weber notes for the establishment of a national school system in France, “People went to school not because school was offered or imposed, but because it was useful.”¹⁹ Consequently, increasing numbers of people were going to such schools and buying the appropriate republican history textbooks making it in the government’s best interest to monitor what was being taught. The continuation of the Qing dynasty’s education bureau (学部), set up during the New Policy reforms at the beginning of the twentieth century (the “Xinzheng Revolution”), ensured that there was some regularity and systematization in the contents of textbooks that followed the Beiyang regime’s regulations. As the “number of students increased by leaps and bounds and the school system grew in size, educators and scholars quickly discovered that writing textbooks and popular works was a fast way to reach a huge audience.”²⁰

It is necessary to recognize that despite the state’s attempts to convey their new national vision to the population through such institutions as schools and the press – avenues

¹⁶ Duara (1995), 159.

¹⁷ “Part II – The Education System and the Publishing Industry” goes into some detail about the textbook market and the role of the state in determining a book’s popularity. Christopher Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese print capitalism, 1876-1937*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), see especially chapter 5: “The Three Legs of the Tripod: Commercial Press, Zhonghua Books, and World Books 1912-1937,” 203-256; Tze-ki Hon, “Educating the Citizens: Visions of China in Late Qing History Textbooks,” in Hon & Culp (2007), 90-91; Peter Zarrow, “The New Schools and National Identity: Chinese History Textbooks in the Late Qing,” in *Ibid.*, 21-54.

¹⁸ Xiaogun Xu, *Chinese Professionals and the Republican State: The Rise of Professional Associations in Shanghai, 1912-1937*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 68; Hon & Culp, (2007), 4; John Bailey suggests that many “parents did not transfer their sons from a traditional school to a modern school until 1912,” after the establishment of a Republic, when parents realized that “everything was new and different.” John Bailey, *Popular Education in China 1904-1919: New Ideas and Developments*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1982), 59, endnote 5.

¹⁹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 303.

²⁰ Hon & Culp (2007), 4.

addressed to the educated elite in order to garner their support during this period of transition²¹ – “any generalized popular national consciousness took several decades to take hold.”²² Although the Beiyang regime did not necessarily have the means or authority to influence every school in China’s cities, let alone in the countryside, what is evident is that the education system and its curricula were important enough to the new republican government to be controlled and propagated with the intent of forming new citizens who cherished the Chinese nation and were loyal to the state.

More recently, the 1986 establishment of nine years of compulsory education under law in the PRC has greatly augmented the number of students receiving central state-sponsored education. As in the early republican period, state policy allows local authorities to manage educational budgets and curriculum, yet now it is easier to make sure that every classroom textbook follows rules stipulated by the central Ministry of Education.²³ In the face of reforms and “opening-up,” over the last thirty years the CCP has loosened its grip on the ideological indoctrination of the Chinese people, who now have access to a wider range of information from a variety of sources, such as the internet, travel, and black market books and movies.²⁴ As a result, monitoring schools and textbook production remains an important area left to the CCP to influence the younger generation’s outlook and maintain the state’s authority. Even if students do not necessarily heed their teachers or their classroom texts,²⁵ it is interesting to look at a state-endorsed textbook’s narrative to see how it reflects the contemporary Chinese state’s circumstances and position. The recent 2007 textbook’s account of the Second Opium War can be interpreted as evoking the current impression found in China that there exists an international scheme – headed by the United States – set out to hinder China’s ascent to world power status.²⁶ In emphasizing the West’s colonial

²¹ See Xu (2001), especially “Chapter 3: The Republican State and Urban Associations,” 83-106.

²² Joseph W. Esherick, Hasan Kayali, and Eric Van Young, *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 23. For the importance of the press, see Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai’s News Media, 1872-1924*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

²³ Ministry of Education for the People’s Republic of China, “Development of Teaching Materials,” http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/basic_b.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009.

²⁴ See, for example, Stanley Rosen, “The Effect of Post-4 June Re-education Campaigns on Chinese students,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 134 (Jun., 1993), especially 323, 328, and 333.

²⁵ Stanley Rosen in his 1993 article concludes that the CCP’s attempts at instilling “regime-sponsored values among Chinese youth” after June 1989 were unsuccessful (331), and surveys indicated that university students (unsure about secondary students) tended to ignore teachers and political counselors, and turn to friends and classmates for knowledge and support (333). This article, however, focused on the CCP’s efforts right after 4 June 1989, so the situation could be different now.

²⁶ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 207.

subversion of China's culture and power by focusing on the looting and destruction of the Yuanming Yuan, the passage in this textbook echoes contemporary fears of alleged foreign attempts at "containing" China.

Despite the major differences in time and government orientation, excerpts about the same historical event – the Second Opium War – from both textbooks, attempt in different ways to create a vision of a unified "China," an indivisible, historic entity worthy of students' esteem and respect. Based on the research presented in this paper, it can be shown that since the founding of a public education system in 1902, to the present, the Chinese government – whether late imperial, nationalist, or communist – has used history textbooks to express a specifically "national" history that "secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time."²⁷ An analysis of the passages about the Second Opium War in these two textbooks demonstrates in a concrete way the role of teaching the country's "imagined" past in inculcating a contemporary national identity that can then be used to legitimize those in power.

Part I, "Nationalism and the Role of the State," investigates why nationalism is an important concept for "modern" states and why the Beiyang and Communist governments both appealed to nationalism to buttress their legitimacy and authority. Both forms of government distanced themselves from preceding ideologies, as well as continuing the promulgation of the potential threat of foreign aggression and intervention to bolster the necessity for a strong and capable central government that preserves the peace and security of the nation. There exists at any one time diverse visions of the Chinese "nation," held by different groups of people, which calls into question even the notion of a uniform "master narrative" that emanates from a central authority. Writing history, however, has long been used by leaders as a means of appropriating the past to legitimize the present forms of power and control,²⁸ so certain works of history-writing are approved by the state to endorse its own forms of nationalism that uphold its dominance, a practice that is undertaken by scholars and educators in the state-sponsored public education system.

Part II, "The Education System and the Publishing Industry," attempts to show the link between the authority of the state and the message found in the textbooks by examining the

²⁷ Duara (1995), 4.

²⁸ For some examples, see Jonathan Unger, ed., *Using the Past to Serve the Present*, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1993).

role of the central government in the national education system and the publishing industry that prints the textbooks, both at the turn of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first. Many parallels may be drawn between these two time periods, the most relevant being the government's focus on the country's modernization and economic growth in order to strengthen the nation, achieve national security, and attain equal status with the most powerful nations of the world.²⁹ The central government has always viewed the national education system as an important component towards achieving these national goals, providing guidelines and funding for its constant improvement.³⁰ The contents of the school's textbooks continue to be seen by the state as valuable in formulating and instilling the nation's sense of purpose and direction among Chinese students.³¹

Part III, "National Narratives and History Textbooks," begins with a brief overview of the Second Opium War, followed by an analysis and comparison of selections from the 1912 and 2007 textbooks.³² Such a comparison allows the reader to inquire into the "unexamined assumptions and unrealized possibilities of the past"³³ from both passages, and makes certain conclusions possible about why the narrative was written in such a way at that moment in time. Comparisons of these excerpts with more general accounts written in the West³⁴ allows stronger conclusions to be drawn about how Chinese nationalism works in these compulsory middle-school textbooks – how certain events are remembered or forgotten in order to create a sense of nationhood. Prasenjit Duara's work on a "bifurcated history," which looks at the master narrative's appropriating efforts, constructed representations, and reworking of historical meanings, influences the analysis of the passages. Important consideration has been given to Toming Jun Liu's advice to look at

²⁹ C.X. George Wei, "Economic Nationalism versus Capitalist Economic Liberalism: The Negotiation of the Sino-American Commercial Treaty," in Wei & Liu (2001), 152. Baogang Guo, "Political Legitimacy in China's Transition Toward a Market Economy," *China's Deep Reform: Domestic Politics in Transition*, Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu, eds. (Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 166.

³⁰ Thøgersen (1990), 156-157.

³¹ See Bailey (1982), 8 and 54, Hon & Culp (2007), and the 1912 Book 1 textbook, 1-2, for the twentieth century, and Lanqing Li, *Education for 1.3 Billion: Former Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing on 10 Years of Education Reform and Development*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2004), for the twenty-first.

³² The age range for the 2007 textbook is 12-14, while that of 1912 is 10-14. See Thøgersen (1990) and Bailey (1982), 170.

³³ Dominick LaCapra, "Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts," *History and Theory*, No. 19 (Oct. 1980), 251.

³⁴ Hevia (2003); Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1975); Douglas Hurd, *The Arrow War: An Anglo-Chinese Confusion 1856-1860*, (New York: Macmillan, 1967); Michael Mann, *China, 1860*, (The Chantry, England: Michael Russel, Ltd., 1989); Nora Wang, et al, *Victor Hugo et le sac du Palais d'été: visions d'artistes*. (Paris: Indes Savantes, 2003); Garnet Wolseley, *Narrative of the War with China in 1860*, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1972); J. Y. Wong, *Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism, and the Arrow War (1856-1860) in China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). These are considered "general accounts" to differentiate them from those found in the textbooks. Their descriptions of the events tend to be much more detailed and thorough than those found in the textbooks, giving a more "general" picture.

“some of the criteria with which we identify the symptoms and agenda of any given narrative of nationalism,” such as “what segment of the nation’s past is selected, how it is remembered in a narrative, what present needs such an act of remembrance is trying to address and why.”³⁵ Although it is not always possible to determine exactly the intentions of the authors of the textbooks – let alone the state’s involvement in the process – it is possible to draw some conclusions about the extent to which the construction of historical narratives in textbooks is conducive to the production and maintenance of a “nation.”

³⁵ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 211.

Part I – Nationalism and the Role of the State

The use of “nationalism” – the concept of an eternal “imagined community”³⁶ that is an inevitable product in the linear movement towards “modernity” – as a tool to prop up state legitimacy, is a meaningful and valuable way to look at how both the 1912 government and the current government uphold their authority. Prasenjit Duara’s concept of nationalism becomes very relevant at this point. For him, nationalism “is rarely the nationalism of *the* nation, but rather marks the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other,”³⁷ contradicting the unitary claim of the nation. The state – the governing body and the institutions at its disposal – seems to project a general view of the nation, what one might term the master narrative, that comes to the fore only as one part of a multifaceted complex of visions. The examination of passages from history textbooks – discussed in Part III – sheds light on what a state-sanctioned national narrative consists of at a certain point in time. It is not the intention of this paper to present a totalizing and conclusive view of the central government’s stance on Chinese nationalism, but more a consideration of how narratives are constructed and historical meanings manipulated for the purpose of instructing children a specific story with the intention to influence the way they perceive their nation.

As the state projects itself as representing the nation, at least in theory, it conflates the nation and the state in what can be termed the “nation-state.” Both the Beiyang regime in 1912 and the CCP of the PRC in the twenty-first century, use the act of writing historical narratives in an attempt to differentiate themselves from previous forms of government in order to establish their superiority as guardians of the nation, rationalizing their claim to authority. Historical works are also written under these regimes to uphold the idea that only under a strong central government can China as a unified nation survive persisting threats to its sovereignty and integrity coming from the outside world, especially the West, in order to justify the governing bodies’ claim to power and control. Rather than presuming that it is the monopolization of power that produces legitimacy, the monopolization of legitimacy – achieving control over the production of knowledge – could in turn be part of producing and

³⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]).

³⁷ Duara, 8.

maintaining power.³⁸ Eugen Weber, in his account of nation formation in France, recognizes that teaching history is one of the best “instruments of indoctrination and patriotic conditioning,” because it evokes memories of past events that could attach students to their homeland, and show how strong and powerful the nation could be as a unified whole.³⁹ History can provide a strong legitimizing function for those that control the way in which it is written; writing history can therefore help the state justify its right to rule.

“Modern history was invented as a way of promoting the nation-state in both the West and China, where it was part of the local appropriation of modernity.”⁴⁰ As the idea of the “nation-state” gained acceptance in Europe over the course of the nineteenth century⁴¹, the writing of history was seen as a means to prove the rise of the nation-state paradigm as a universal and ultimately inevitable accomplishment. Historical narratives written in the West confirmed this notion of progress was indeed true, which in turn legitimized Europe’s project of bringing “modernity” to the rest of the world.⁴² In effect, despite the ambiguity and vagueness of its meaning, “modernity” was used – and remains in use today – as a barometer of world power: the more a nation is “modern,” the more it is taken seriously by the rest of the global community. By undertaking major reforms during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the Qing dynasty and then the Republic of China (founded in 1911),⁴³ gradually submitted to the world order imposed by the West in order to gain some agency within the new system.⁴⁴ Over the twentieth century, “[in] the move to appropriate and participate in modernity, the use of history as part of the effort to transform China into a nation-state was a matter of survival.”⁴⁵ Historical narratives began to describe the

³⁸ Patricia M. Thornton, *Disciplining the State: Virtue, Violence, and State-Making in Modern China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.

³⁹ Weber (1976), 333.

⁴⁰ Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 30.

⁴¹ To use Benedict Anderson’s terminology: “a fundamental change was taking place in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to ‘think’ the nation,” Anderson (2006), 22.

⁴² “Chapter 11: Memory and Forgetting,” in Anderson (2006), 187–206. See also Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 20.

⁴³ See Esherick *et al* (2006), for further arguments on how old Imperial ideas live on in the present-day “Nation,” and that the change between empires to nations was not that significant.

⁴⁴ Duara (1995), 8; Guoqi Xu, “Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity: China from 1895 to 1919,” in Wei & Liu (2001), 106. Rebecca E. Karl has recently argued that Chinese nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century grew out of the Chinese intellectuals’ awareness of the unevenness of national development in the nations’ drive towards “modernity” and a consciousness of the general power structure of the world, forming a sense of solidarity with other oppressed countries experiencing the yoke of more “modern” and developed nations with imperial and/or colonial interests. Her book reinforces the idea that China looked for ways to find agency within the new nation-state system. See Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁴⁵ Berry & Farquhar (2006), 20.

inevitability of Chinese nation-hood.

Based on Benedict Anderson's remark that "history is the necessary basis of the national narrative,"⁴⁶ Wimal Dissanayake introduces the dialectic between nation and history: "History has played a pivotal role in the production of modern nationhood while nationhood has urged a re-definition and re-appropriation of the discourse of history."⁴⁷ In order for a nation to exist, the notion of the nation must be fostered and spread among a targeted group of people, and in order to validate this concept of the nation, historical events are re-told as proof of past collective agency, and ultimately as justifying present-day collective agency as well as reinforcing an everyday sense of belonging. The national narrative relies on history for the explication of its existence, while at the same time shaping the way the past is recounted in order to ensure the version buttresses the existence of a nation-state.

To use Prasenjit Duara's words, the linear, teleological model of Enlightenment History "allows the nation-state to see itself as a unique form of community which finds its place in the oppositions between tradition and modernity, hierarchy and equality, empire and nation."⁴⁸ From a variety of sources, such as print media and schools, binaries form in the minds of people, positioning the nation as modern and egalitarian, and therefore beneficial to society, even if in reality, such binaries are never as definite and straightforward as in historical narratives. Leaders then maintain the nation's value in order to uphold the population's devotion. Within the modernization paradigm, where the present is always better than the past and the future holds even greater hope and potential, the nation sustains its significance as worthy of people's attention and loyalty by contrasting itself to whatever previous entity occurred before it, therefore using History to prove the nation's superiority and supremacy as the most modern entity yet on the linear path to the future. By being able to control the way in which the past is told, the governing body in power can justify its existence and therefore legitimize its presence as the leader of the Chinese people.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Wimal Dissanayake, "Introduction," *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*, Wimal Dissanayake, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), x.

⁴⁷ Ibid., xi. The difficulty some groups had to adjust their way of viewing the past to the West's critical methods of historiography that originated in the nineteenth century, are well-known. For an example, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), in which the author argues that the Jewish identity is put into question by the very process of modern historical explanation, because such a process neglects to incorporate Jewish collective memory – what is at the vital core of Jewish identity.

⁴⁸ Duara (1995), 4. Lloyd Kramer also notes nationalists' tendency to describe their nations in terms of "dichotomies (self/other) that create hierarchies of value," in Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Jul., 1997), 541. "Us" versus "them" in Hon & Culp (2007), ix.

⁴⁹ Harold Kahn and Albert Feuerwerker, "The Ideology of Scholarship: China's New Historiography," *China Quarterly* 22

For China, official histories tend to view the 1911 Revolution and the founding of the Republic of China as corresponding to the establishment of a Chinese nation, arguing that an Empire – at least the Chinese Empire – was incongruent with the idea of the “nation.” After the Revolution, the Emperor no longer had any political power, and the Beiyang government could define its new form of rule as a “modern” Republic more compatible to the notion of the modern nation and therefore superior to the out-of-fashion, traditional, hierarchical rule of the Imperial Court.⁵⁰ Recently, however, scholars have come to question the tidy transition from empire to nation in China, claiming that the process is much more complicated.⁵¹ The late Qing Empire underwent drastic reforms that are usually viewed in retrospective historical accounts as signs of the Empire’s weakness and vulnerability rather than as long-lasting developments that continued to influence the country’s progress long after the founding of the republic.⁵² “In the case of China, the late-Qing revolution involved not mere political overthrow, but, more profoundly, China’s intellectual and institutional transformation.”⁵³ Part of those changes, as will be seen in Part II, included the Qing Court’s transformation of the country’s education system, setting up an education bureau and discarding the civil examination system, making education more universal and accommodating the demands of a “modern” workforce consisting of a wider range of jobs than simply government bureaucrat. Arguably, by going through with these modifications to its education system, the late Qing Empire took on the trappings of a modern nation.⁵⁴ Just as relevant, the new republican president’s efforts at centralizing decision-making power into the hands of the Beijing executive branch resembled the central authority found under the previous imperial system of rule, blurring the distinction between late empire and early nation.⁵⁵ Despite its complex genesis, the notion of the modern Chinese nation was a

(Apr-Jun, 1965), 13. See also Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) for an account of the Confucian assumption that history provided a paradigm that could and should be applied in the present.

⁵⁰ Esherick *et al* (2006), 23; Mary G. Mazur, “Discontinuous Continuity: The Beginnings of a New Synthesis of ‘General History’ in 20th-Century China,” in Hon & Culp (2007), 110.

⁵¹ Douglas R. Reynolds, *China, 1898-1912: The Xinhai Revolution and Japan*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Joseph W. Esherick, “How the Qing Became China,” in Esherick *et al* (2006), 229-259.

⁵² Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China: From Revolution Through Reform*, (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., 1995), especially 26.

⁵³ Reynolds (1993), 2-3.

⁵⁴ John Boli, Francisco O. Ramirez, John W. Meyer, “Explaining the Origins and Expansion of Mass Education,” *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (May, 1985); Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli, “The Political Construction of Mass Schooling: European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalization,” *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Jan. 1987); Weber (1976), especially “Chapter Eighteen, Civilizing in Earnest: Schools and Schooling,” 303-338.

⁵⁵ Esherick *et al* (2006), especially Esherick’s chapter, “How the Qing Became China,” 229-259.

valuable concept called on by the Beiyang regime to legitimize its role as the head of that nation.

Baogang Guo divides political legitimacy into two categories: original justification, which gives the ruler the right to rule, and utilitarian justification, which maintains the ruler's right to rule in the interest of the people. According to Guo, the traditional Chinese conception of original legitimacy is characterized by the mandate of heaven (the right to rule derives from supernatural forces), virtue (in the Confucian moral order, the emperor is supposed to be the most virtuous man on earth; since such virtue can be nurtured through education, he surrounds himself with learned men), popular consent (not by way of expressed public opinions, but through "winning the hearts and minds of the people" by "looking out for their best interests and respecting their needs and following their will"⁵⁶), and legality (based on family rules, clan norms, community customs, and social traditions that the emperor needs to follow, but his power is in no way curtailed by such practices).⁵⁷ Utilitarian justification, for its part, entails the concepts of benefiting the people (primary concern given to people's welfare, or livelihood) and equality of wealth (a fair and equal distribution of economic wealth among the population). Guo argues that this "unique cognitive model" has influenced every Chinese government throughout history, including the present one.⁵⁸

One very important aspect of legitimacy that Guo overlooks in his analysis of political legitimacy is that of the significance of the international environment on how the state fashions its role as the defender of the nation.⁵⁹ Both the Nationalists and the Communists specifically used the threat of foreign interference and the necessity of a unified "nation" headed by a strong leadership to legitimize their rule. Dittmer and Kim emphasize that the authority and legitimacy of the state is based on how it defines its roles *vis-à-vis* the nation,

⁵⁶ Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 151-152.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 153.

⁵⁹ Karl is an important advocate of the internationalist approach to nationalism, claiming that it was an awareness of the unevenly developed modern world order that influenced Chinese intellectuals to formulate a nationalism that joined with other "oppressed nations" to critique Western capitalism at the turn of the twentieth century. See Karl (2002). Culp notices that world history textbooks made in China start reflecting a kind of globalized form of anti-imperialism in the formation of an alternative political community of "weak and small peoples" who could join together in much the same way as Karl suggests, but whereas Karl focuses on the late Qing period, Culp uses textbooks from the 1920s and 1930s, thus complicating *the extent* to which internationalism was a factor in government policies right at the turn of the century, but not taking away from the fact that it did have an influence. See Robert J. Culp, "'Weak and Small Peoples' in a Europeanizing World": World History Textbooks and Chinese Intellectuals' Perspectives on Global Modernity," in Hon & Culp (2007).

especially in the international arena. In other words, how the state represents the nation, the “imagined community,” with one of the most effective ways being to contrast one’s own nation against other nations. As Benedict Anderson argues: “nations...cannot be imagined except in the midst of an irremediable plurality of other nations.”⁶⁰ Nationalism’s meaning and importance changes in proportion to the nation’s contact with and handling of the “foreign.” How the Chinese state deals with other nations and manages its role on the world stage is an ongoing process, especially since delineating what features remain crucial to the integrity and preservation of a sovereign “nation” continues to be a point of contestation.⁶¹

International enmity is well-suited to the formation of a national identity because it defines a national purpose for the members to accomplish collectively.⁶² One of the recurring national narrative themes that can be perceived in both the 1912 and 2007 history textbooks is that of the victimization of China at the hands of the “West,” which is a method that, as Sheldon Lu points out, obscures the inequalities found within China itself.⁶³ Rey Chow underlines the complicity between the propagation of this kind of national narrative by intellectuals and the ability of an authoritarian government to dominate over the population. “Preoccupied only with China’s ‘victimization’ and ‘marginalization’ vis-à-vis *the West*, contemporary Chinese intellectuals specialize in cultivating the form of primitive passion that is sinocentrism or Chinese chauvinism.”⁶⁴ Hence, past historical events reflecting moments of national humiliation can be chosen and manipulated to reinforce present-day needs for a strong, capable state that will safeguard the nation against foreign threats. As will be seen in the following examination of the 1912 and more recent government systems, appeals to both Guo’s original and utilitarian justifications, as well as allegations of the existence of a hostile international environment, exist in both cases.

The shift in power inherent in a change of government system like that seen during the autumn, winter, and spring period of 1911 to 1912, which witnessed the fall of the dynastic system and the inauguration of at least the appearance of a republic, produced a momentous change in the way a central power legitimized its right to rule in China. Under the dynastic

⁶⁰ Anderson (2006), 55.

⁶¹ For a discussion on the role of Chinese “sovereignty” in international relations, see Allen Carlson, *Unifying China, Integrating with the World: Securing Chinese Sovereignty in the Reform Era*, (Stanford: University Press, 2005).

⁶² Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, *China’s Quest for National Identity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 24.

⁶³ Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, ed., *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 7; Gregory Jusdanis, *The Necessary Nation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 33.

⁶⁴ Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 51.

system the emperor ruled on the basis that he was the Son of Heaven fulfilling the Mandate of Heaven, obliging rulers to establish their claim to but also their acquiescence to the Mandate.⁶⁵ The rise and fall of dynasties was the result of the Emperor's ability or inability to successfully fulfill that mandate, and was therefore ultimately in the hands of the cosmos rather than the people. The nationalism of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionaries sought to "contest and negotiate with" the national identity promoted by the Imperial Court during the end of the Qing's reign. The Emperor's "universal rule" that claimed that the Chinese Empire's supremacy was reflected in its universality throughout the world no longer made sense in an environment of nation-states of supposedly equal status. This new national system exacted individuals' allegiance to the nation-state rather than to the emperor.

At the same time, foreign aggression and intervention in Chinese affairs and the imperial leadership's vulnerability and incompetence at the hands of the world's Great Powers was still very much in the minds of the Chinese élite.⁶⁶ Indeed, Joseph Esherick claims that the "fundamental cause" of the Chinese peoples' disaffection with the imperial system was "the dynasty's ineffective defense against the assaults of Western and Japanese imperialism."⁶⁷ The establishment of the Republic promised to safeguard the Chinese "nation" against foreign encroachment in a much more effective way than the unsuccessful and outmoded Imperial Court.⁶⁸ Only by changing to a form of government where "everyone" could theoretically participate politically and have a stake in their country's well-being would the state "inspire the political, economic, and military commitment necessary to strengthen the country against foreign threats,"⁶⁹ and restore China's national sovereignty. The founding of a republic established a parliament that was theoretically elected by the people and from which would be selected a president, whose mandate would now be defined in a constitution that bound him to his responsibilities to the people and the functioning and maintenance of the nation. "China no longer belonged to any 'Son of Heaven,' or any imperial family, but to

⁶⁵ The capacity to wrest power from the emperor automatically suggested that the old ruler had not been able to rule properly and that the new ruler's ascension reflected Heaven's sanction and therefore claim to the Mandate of Heaven. See Elizabeth Perry, *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), ix-x.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Esherick (1976), 108.

⁶⁷ Esherick in Esherick *et al* (2006), 234.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 234-235; Young-tsu Wong, *Search for Modern Nationalism: Zhang Binglin and Revolutionary China 1869-1936*, (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989), 64.

⁶⁹ Esherick in Esherick *et al* (2006), 235.

all the people.”⁷⁰

With the establishment of a Republic of China after the revolution in 1911, members of the republican government found it useful to distance themselves from the weak and vulnerable imperial government. The new government wished to revitalize China and grant it equal status in the world community.⁷¹ One of the ways Yuan Shikai hoped to establish China’s strength and recognition was to promote an “internationalist nationalism” policy, where China “would ‘completely discard all old ideas from her isolation era’ and join the family of nations. [...] The new approach focused China’s energies on the present in an attempt to use Western concepts to join the Western-controlled international system.”⁷² A document entitled “Manifesto from the Republic of China to all friendly nations,” signed by Sun Yat-sen on 5 January 1912, argued that the new republican government would act on the lessons taught by foreign powers during the nineteenth century that the Manchu regime had failed to learn. “China would rid itself of all policies that had dishonored it under the Qing dynasty, and of all isolationist policies” in the hopes of being accepted into the world order of nations.⁷³ Rejection of “traditional Chinese culture” and the “Chinese way of life” was the new order of the day.⁷⁴

Another way that the central Chinese state aimed to gain equal status among other powerful nations was by focusing on economic development to raise China’s image, which entailed an increase in state intervention and in turn expanded state power.⁷⁵ In a sense, the Beiyang regime hoped to legitimize its political power by underlining its “nation-ness” – its state-building (increase in state responsibilities), its territorial sovereignty (keeping foreigners out and holding onto territory mainly populated by minorities, such as Tibet and Inner Mongolia), its outgoing and sociable stance (wishing to participate in world affairs, such as the First World War, in order to gain some international recognition) – in contrast to the previous political system that had existed before it. The writers of history at this historic time wished to “demonstrate the autonomous existence of a Chinese cultural identity,

⁷⁰ Hsü (1995), 475.

⁷¹ Xu in Wei & Liu (2001), 106.

⁷² Bai Jiao, *Yuan Shikai yu Zhonghua Minguo (Yuan Shikai and Republican China)* (Shanghai: Renwen Yuekanshe, 1936), 65–66. As quoted in Xu in Wei & Liu (2001), 107.

⁷³ Xu in Wei & Liu (2001), 108.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁷⁵ Wei in Wei & Liu (2001); Xu (2001).

separate from the dynastic state framework of past histories,”⁷⁶ that would help consolidate at least the idea of a specifically Chinese nation. The state may then always claim its indispensability by projecting itself as the “guardian” of that nation, the keeper of its morality and stability.⁷⁷

It is difficult to say with any certainty how the early republican state conceptualized the nation and how this vision differed from that of an imperial China, because neither side held an unambiguous, all-encompassing position on the subject, and even among particular factions, different members proposed various visions, which were often changing with the circumstances of the time. Before the revolution in 1911, attempts were made by members of the Chinese educated elite to reform the dynastic system towards a constitutional monarchy that would maintain the position of the emperor, but would also have his authority legally restricted to the confines of a constitution.⁷⁸

Duara spends two chapters discussing how a type of federalism could have been possible in China if the group promoting constitutional monarchy had been able to overcome the challenges of persuading the imperial throne to limit its power and the revolutionary forces under Sun Yat-sen that the throne would eventually give way to the demands of the people. Duara and Kuhn both explain the late Ming and early Qing principle of *fengjian* – a kind of “feudal monarchy” – as the basis for the late Qing constitutional monarchists’ arguments that hoped to restrict the authority of the imperial state by restoring power to governments at the community level. Late nineteenth-century reformers such as Feng Guifen, Kang Youwei, and Liang Qichao, appealed to the early Qing *fengjian* tradition to support their plans for a constitutionally-based local self-government. Despite their focus on

⁷⁶ Mazur in Hon & Culp (2007), 110.

⁷⁷ John Fitzgerald argues convincingly that in the case of China, it is the state, by sheer victory of having achieved the power to govern, that dominates over what the nation means for the people. See John Fitzgerald, “The Nationless State: The Search for a Nation in Modern Chinese Nationalism,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 33 (Jan, 1995).

⁷⁸ The extent to which a constitution differs from the Mandate of Heaven remains debatable (the one evident difference being that a constitution derives its authority from the establishment of a legal system, while the Mandate of Heaven procures its legitimacy from the cosmos). See Pierre-Etienne Will’s lecture at St John’s College, UBC, 25 Oct. 2005, entitled “Constitutional Control in Late-Ming China,” for the argument that there did exist a “constitutional control” mechanism in the late Ming period formed from the Classics, the ancestral instructions, as well as the administrative and penal jurisprudence. For an overview of the debate surrounding constitutionalism and its effect on nineteenth-century China (and late Qing) see Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese State*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). Kuhn argues against the “oriental despotism” position by showing how certain reforms and state-craft during the nineteenth century could be considered “constitutional” because they act as counterweights to despotic power. Kuhn concludes, however, that twentieth-century Chinese politics “is a story about the relentless march of the central state,” (132) and theories of universal participation designed in the early twentieth century gave way to the “continuing force of the old objection to political competition” (135). See also Duara’s (1995) discussion of civil society – an associational life that is autonomous from the state – and the state in Chapter 5, 147-175.

regionalism, these reformers were and are considered nationalists because they wanted to build national power from the bottom up, reasoning that a common social conscience and internalized social discipline would maintain community self-government and render any pressure from an external bureaucracy pointless.⁷⁹

With the advantages that come with hindsight, Hon and Culp surmise that this late Qing “practice of rooting national political identity in a local community identity triggered interethnic controversies,” and complicated formulations of a cohesive whole at the national level.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, at the time, constitutional monarchists persisted with the idea that a system of local governments could produce an effective and harmonious “whole.” Kang Youwei reasoned that constitutional monarchy would help achieve the Classical Chinese utopian vision of the world, *datong* (大同), or Great Unity, where everyone lives in harmony and at peace. The constitutional monarchists tended to therefore reflect a hybrid ideology, by combining the ancient principles of *fengjian* as well as the Confucian faith in the Great Unity, with Western laws that would keep in check “the unpredictability and irregularities on the part of those who held power” – the idea of checks and balances within the government.⁸¹ Duara focuses on the movement’s hybrid qualities, and in the process overlooks the differences that can be found among the various proponents of constitutional monarchy.

Although the Empress Dowager Cixi was totally against even the idea of limiting the power of the imperial throne, public pressure obtained the imperial consent to the principle of constitutionalism in 1906. It seems nobody saw the irony of asking members of the Manchu imperial Court – those who only saw an advantage in maintaining the power of the imperial system of rule – to formulate a constitution. The dowager never fully considered compromising her own power, and only used the idea of a constitution to placate the public, while delaying its effectual implementation as much as possible. Frederic Wakeman argues that Constitutional reforms were decided on by the Empress Cixi, “based on the Chinese monarchical ideal of strengthening the bonds between the imperial throne and the minds (*hsin*) of the masses,” and in admiration of the Japanese model of parliament (*diet*) that “welded the Meiji Emperor and his subjects together, and seemingly coordinated a single

⁷⁹ Kuhn (2002), 126-132.

⁸⁰ Hon & Culp (2007), 8.

⁸¹ Duara (1995), 154-155. Duara suggests that “we are unable to determine if the discourse of modernity assimilated the historical narrative of *fengjian*, or if the promotion of associational life [“modern” discourse; seen as civil society] could be seen to further the goal of the Great Unity [“traditional” discourse]” (158).

body politic.”⁸² However, how could sincere, everlasting political reform that diminished the Emperor’s already precarious position of authority have been the Empress’s intention when the imperial Court moved with such reluctance and slowness? The provincial gentry saw the setting up of provincial assemblies and political bureaus as devices designed to give them more local administrative responsibilities, increasing their local and national power. Actual imperial regulations on reforms, conversely, ensured that these assemblies functioned only as advisory councils to the imperial administration, rather than constitute a new form of government, frustrating the hopes of the constitutional monarchists.⁸³

In contrast to the *fengjian* ideal, the Manchus – those dominating the Imperial Court – viewed a constitution as an instrument of executive power and an anti-Han device, maintaining enough control to weaken regional governments under Han leaders by centralizing government control and to exclude the Han from inner circles. On the other hand, for many Chinese (i.e. Han) educated in political theory, “constitutionalism provided hope of liberation from unfair, oppressive Manchu discrimination and domination,”⁸⁴ because of its supposed system of provincial assemblies as well as checks and balances. Thus there existed, among the groups that all purportedly supported a constitutional monarchy, a variety of visions of what “China” should look like. On 1 September 1906, Cixi pronounced the landmark Proclamation for Preparing a Constitutional Government, and Principles of the Constitution, made up of twenty-three articles, were adopted on 27 August 1908, but such declarations were insincere: the Imperial Court betrayed people’s expectations that constitutionalism would give reformers a meaningful voice in government and a share of the power. In the end, China became the “most restrictive constitutional monarchy of its day,”⁸⁵ and Manchus reserved high positions for themselves, eventually compelling many constitutional monarchists to join forces with the revolutionaries.

The revolutionaries promoted a rather statist ideology. They envisioned the national community “as the community of citizens, the constituency which creates the state, united in freedom, equality and universal affection.”⁸⁶ The “general will” of the Chinese people, embodying what Wang Jingwei called the “spirit of China’s moral law,” would naturally

⁸² Frederic Wakeman, Jr. *The Fall of Imperial China*, (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 235.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 236-237.

⁸⁴ Hsü (1995), 414.

⁸⁵ Reynolds (1993), 190-191.

⁸⁶ Duara (1995), 160.

appear after the overthrow of the Manchu reign.⁸⁷ Sun Yat-sen, as leader of the revolutionaries against the Manchu imperial reign, is remembered among both the Nationalists who are now in Taiwan and the Communists on the Mainland, as a national hero. Sun propagated his Three People's Principles: the Chinese people's national consciousness, or nationalism (freedom from imperialist domination, both domestic and foreign), democracy (government by the people), and people's livelihood (ensuring every person has enough food, clothing, housing and transportation to live by). However, many of his contemporaries viewed such a policy as too idealistic and mainly focused on the principles of nationalism and democracy.⁸⁸ Furthermore, many within Sun's revolutionary following perceived the overthrow of the Manchus as their primary objective, so that when the dynasty was actually overthrown, "they discarded the second and third [of Sun's Three People's Principles] totally and accepted only part of the first – nationalism against the alien Manchu rule – without realizing that after the establishment of the republic they must continue to struggle against foreign imperialism."⁸⁹ The result was that some of Sun's supporters compromised with Yuan Shikai, the leader of the strongest army in China at the time.

Yuan Shikai was not a follower of Sun Yat-sen, and yet he managed to come out on top of the hierarchical order during the revolution instigated by Sun, mostly as a result of his formidable military might. Called on by the Imperial Court to defend the Empire menaced by the progress of the revolution in the autumn of 1911, Yuan was able to obtain an increased political status and greater influence in return for his loyalty to the imperial throne. He then used the threat of his faithful Beiyang forces to pressure the widowed empress dowager and the boy emperor Puyi – the remnants of the Qing court after the "retirement" of the regent, the Second Prince Chun, in December 1911 – to abdicate in February 1912.⁹⁰ At the same time, he shrewdly manipulated political documents and statements put forward by the revolutionaries to suit his own interests in achieving and maintaining sole political control from his power base in Beijing. The provisional parliament set up in Nanjing that had chosen Sun as president of the Republic of China in December 1911 could not uphold its political

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Hsü (1995), 469.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 475.

⁹⁰ See Wakeman (1975), 231-232, for a description of how Yuan Shikai was able to depend on his former cadres, who during training, had been encouraged to devote their undivided loyalty to the supreme commander – Yuan Shikai – and the military cause, rather than just the commander above him and the failing political system.

power in the face of Yuan's military intimidation. In his endeavor to see the principle of a republic established no matter who was the leader, Sun formally relinquished his duties as provisional president in April 1912, with Yuan inaugurated as the full-fledged head of state shortly afterwards.

Despite Yuan's search for dictatorial powers, he did understand the importance of utilitarian justification by advancing his own interpretation of a constitution to legitimize his ascendancy within the confines of a so-called republic. He promulgated the Constitutional Compact of 1914, which effectively annulled the constitution of 1912 with its democratic principles, and gave Yuan the legal basis to act as the supreme ruler over China. The importance of popular support for the maintenance of a regime can be seen in Yuan's later attempt to reinstate the imperial system with himself as the absolute leader, his intentions becoming known in 1915. The provincial assembly leaders and generals banded together against Yuan's imperial plans.⁹¹ "His betrayal of the republic and his shameless drive for the emperorship went beyond the point of tolerance of his countrymen – not only his critics but even his own followers."⁹² A revolutionary group in Yunnan set up its own army, the National Protection army, in order to depose Yuan, "the country's thief," defend the republic, uphold democracy, and develop the spirit of popular sovereignty.⁹³ One after the other, regions began to declare their independence from Yuan's government, followers and generals disowned him, and in view of the situation, Japan withdrew its recognition of Yuan as the official leader of a unified China. Yuan died suddenly in June 1916 without ever having gotten the chance to officially become emperor. His actions were intolerable for the Chinese revolutionaries who had had such high hopes and expectations for the realization of an effective republic. Their opposition and conspicuous formal attack destabilized Yuan's hold on power by undermining his rationalization for his behaviour, hindering his plan to become emperor. This rebel group was able to influence the actions of people – even Japan's government – to withdraw their support. Although it is impossible to say what would have happened had Yuan lived longer, it is possible to conclude that his authority to govern was seriously weakened as a result of his inability to legitimize satisfactorily his right to rule.

Another problem in the attempt to pinpoint how the nation was perceived before and

⁹¹ Wakeman (1975), 253.

⁹² Hsü (1995), 480.

⁹³ Ibid., 481.

after the 1911 revolution is the gap that exists between intention and reality: the inability of realizing the vision. An interesting aspect of Sun Yat-sen's original national vision was its elitism – in the process of discarding the Manchu regime, the Chinese nation would become exclusively Han. This differed from the position of the Manchu dynasty and the imperial houses before it that had been rather inclusive of different groups, following Confucian cosmopolitanism that had allowed the Manchus to claim the Mandate of Heaven in the first place. As racial ideology and Social Darwinism entered the mindset of educated Chinese during the latter half of the nineteenth century, mixed with an old ethnocentrism that viewed only the Han as the sons of the Yellow Emperor and anyone else as barbaric, distinctions among various races were made and clashes appeared between the ruling Manchu elite and the resigned Han majority.⁹⁴

Despite this racial slant on Sun's revolutionary vision of a Chinese nation, once the republic was founded, Sun realized the importance of including other "nationalities" (民族) in order to maintain China's vast territory. At the time of the 1911 revolution, non-Han minorities such as the Mongols and the Tibetans saw the revolutionaries' rhetoric of race-based nationalism as an opportunity to realize their own dreams of independence. As the threat of a fragmented China along racial lines increased, Sun quickly changed his stance to espouse the idea of a nation with five races, with the first flag of the Republic of China displaying five colours that reflected these groups: the Han, Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, and Muslims. Prasenjit Duara nevertheless argues that even though Sun's national rhetoric changed from race and assimilation to autonomy for different races over the first few months after the founding of the republic (before Yuan Shikai established his supremacy), the new government proposed policies of assimilation and the rapid Han settlement of borderlands to secure Chinese territory in March and August of 1912, illustrating Sun's continued identification of race with the Chinese nation.⁹⁵ The way in which various groups viewed the nation before and after the winter of 1911-1912, even among those in a position capable of achieving their visions, such as Sun Yat-sen, was not fixed. Unveiling these variations complicates the national narrative.

The shift in government position from imperial to republican might have been swift if

⁹⁴ Duara (1995), 74-76.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 76-77 and 142-143.

looking at specific dates, but bringing about an actual change in perceptions and behavior is a much more thorny and long-lasting process. Supporters of Sun Yat-sen compromised with Yuan Shikai's exigencies so that neither the revolution nor the ensuing republic brought about the anticipated peace and order.⁹⁶ Although a working parliament existed and a constitution was written up, the parliament's actual authority and the constitution's implementation and enforcement were harder to realize. Yuan succeeded in manipulating these legitimizing tools to his advantage, for all intensive purposes re-establishing a form of government very similar to that of the recently discredited empire, and the extent to which the founding of a Republic of China was noticeably completed during this time period remains undefined.

Paul Cohen nevertheless points out a dramatic change in the Chinese educated elite's "mental landscape" over the course of the nineteenth century.

Chinese [the educated elite], in 1800, had the sense of being a universe unto themselves, of literally encompassing the world. This sense was still alive in 1840. But by 1900 it had become moribund. [...] The unthinkable had happened. The civilization whose eternal validity no Chinese of the pre-Opium War period had for a moment doubted stood on the verge of disintegration.⁹⁷

In the same way that Benedict Anderson suggests that people needed to be able to "think" the nation before the nation could manifest itself, here, the establishment of a republic first necessitated the *possibility* of thinking a form of government other than a dynastic family ruling under the Mandate of Heaven. "China" could no longer be envisioned as an Empire bestowing universal rule. Those in government had to contend with militarily powerful foreigners who were used to working within the nation-state system (although countries such as Russia and Japan were not formally known as nation-states at the time, it could be argued that their governments were also feeling the pressure to conform and submit to the conditions of the nation-state), and their dominance in world affairs affected the imperial throne's bid to legitimacy.⁹⁸ "Imperial sovereignty, gutted by the Western powers of its material and symbolic force, could no longer remain a viable political entity."⁹⁹ The

⁹⁶ Hsü (1995), 486.

⁹⁷ Paul A. Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 25-26.

⁹⁸ See Hevia's (2003) argument on how the British taught the Chinese "lessons" on how to behave in a world of nation-states.

⁹⁹ Hevia (2003), 332.

revolution's promise of enabling the founding of a more egalitarian form of government allowed the revolutionaries to push the last dynasty out of power and establish the Republic of China. How "China" as a nation was conceptualized varied according to who was doing the defining, but a palpable change in the way it was conceived among the educated elite – from a glorious, unquestioned and untouchable universe unto itself into an exposed and insecure nation competing against others – could nevertheless be noted throughout the long nineteenth century.

The fall of the Qing dynasty caused the incoming government to radically change the way it rationalized its legitimacy, in turn affecting the way the government recounted the national narrative, as reflected in the Chinese school system's history textbooks discussed in Parts II and III. Similarly, the death of Mao Zedong and the CCP's gradually declining reliance on communist revolutionary ideals as the Party's legitimizing basis also influenced the ways in which the national narrative could be related in middle school history textbooks. Because nation-state legitimizing narratives included historical accounts of the development of the nation to support their argument, changes in how the state could legitimize its rule affected the national narratives recounted in history textbooks.

Under Mao Zedong, the Communist revolution itself became the primary means for political legitimacy. On utilitarian grounds, Mao justified the party's control by focusing on national independence, that China was now liberated from "one hundred years of imperialism" and that China was unified for the first time since the collapse of the Qing.¹⁰⁰ A "new China" under the Communists would put the feudal ways¹⁰¹ of the past behind and bring modernity, social economic equality, and fraternity to the people of China.¹⁰² The CCP's "postulation of the persistence of class struggle [the defence of the 'proletarian dictatorship' against 'bourgeois elements'] after a successful socialist transformation did function as a means to maintain the political status quo of China's Communist Party as a *revolutionary movement* after its revolutionary political purpose had been effectively exhausted."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ "One might argue that the very foundation of the People's Republic was established on a unity forged through liberation (*jiefang*) from the humiliations of Western imperialism." Hevia (2003), 334.

¹⁰¹ Here, "feudal" connotes "local self-rule." From Joseph Fewsmith, "Historical Echoes and Chinese Politics," in Dittmer and Liu (2006), 321.

¹⁰² Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 153-157.

¹⁰³ Charles Burton, "China's Post-Mao Transition: The Role of the Party and Ideology in the 'New Period,'" *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn, 1987), 432. [431-446]

After Mao's death, however, Deng Xiaoping quickly realized that the Party's failure to provide significant improvements to the people's living standards had eroded people's confidence in the CCP, weakening its legitimacy.¹⁰⁴ Deng redirected people's energies from class struggle and mass movement to business and economic development, in effect strengthening the CCP's utilitarian justification by increasing some people's wealth, but weakening its moral capital. It is possible to argue yet once again of the importance of popular support and validation in the maintenance of political control, since "effective governance requires official value systems which are congruent with the norms and expectations of the society."¹⁰⁵ In order to uphold control and stability, the political priorities of the government need to follow the change in the social value system.¹⁰⁶ Charles Burton convincingly suggests that the post-Mao reforms of the 1980s reflected the CCP's realization that "should no change be forthcoming, the CCP could lose its mandate to rule China," which was a key reason among a complex of other factors that influenced the decision to restructure.¹⁰⁷ A class struggle and politics-first mentality lost ground in the face of government policies promoting the efficiency and profit-making capabilities of industry, commerce, and public services. At the Fifth Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in February 1980, the Party rejected Mao's "politics in command" for Deng's "economics in command."¹⁰⁸ In other words, "the effective function of the post-Mao reform programme [was] to preserve the status quo of party rule by its disassociating the party from its previous ideological *raison d'être* and establishing a more relevant, viable, and appealing doctrine for China's modernization."¹⁰⁹

The crisis faced by intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century of how Chinese culture should be modified to adapt to the changing environment, has remained a constant concern among Chinese leaders throughout the twentieth century. After Deng Xiaoping's implementation of his "open door" policy, when "China's door was finally wide open...the experience of the 'foreign' became more direct and intense than ever, causing shock waves

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 431.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 435.

¹⁰⁶ Zhixin Su references Talcott Parsons for suggesting that the main basis for analyzing the structure of a social system is its value patterns, which legitimize the orientational goals and activities of participating individuals. Zhixin Su, "An Organizational Analysis of Central Education Administration in China," *Chinese Education: Problems, Policies, and Prospects*, Irving Epstein, ed., (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 375.

¹⁰⁷ Burton (1987), 435.

¹⁰⁸ Hsü (1995), 777.

¹⁰⁹ Burton (1987), 431.

felt in all sectors of society.”¹¹⁰ Just as at the turn of the twentieth century, increased exposure to the international order forced a comprehensive and fundamental questioning among intellectuals of the Chinese culture’s ability to revitalize China in order to compete economically with more industrialized nations.

During the 1980s, in order to advance the CCP’s undertaking to participate in the world capitalist market, the central Communist government devolved its powers over the economy, culture, and politics, in order to foster local economic progress that would ultimately enrich the whole nation.¹¹¹ The opening up process allowed young Chinese intellectuals to compare the effect of the Party’s acceptance and exercise of Marxism in China’s modernization process to the economic success of other nations, such as the “Little Dragons” of Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and Hong Kong. The conclusion was that Marxism had failed to turn China into an economic success story.¹¹² Intellectuals in the 1980s presented similar arguments heard at the turn of the twentieth century that ancient Chinese civilization – in this case China’s isolationist tendency – somehow presented a kind of obstacle to modernization and that only total emulation of the West, the only civilization to survive and succeed, would enable Chinese civilization to continue.¹¹³ Renewed interest during the “culture fever” (*wenhuare*) movement saw many Chinese adopting the “West” as the model for Chinese development, reflected in the popular TV mini-series *River Elegy* (*Heshang*), that depicted the Yellow River, a conventional symbol of China, flowing into the “blue” ocean, interpreted as the “West.”

Deng had no intention of abandoning Marxist-Leninism, but rather intended through reforms and revisions to fashion “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” where “private ownership must be accepted, protected, and promoted to advance China’s economic development” and establish a strong economic foundation for the realization of a socialist society.¹¹⁴ Immanuel Hsü points out that the CCP’s ability to remain in control hinges on its promise of providing economic prosperity and political stability, especially after the

¹¹⁰ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 216.

¹¹¹ Naughton & Yang (2004), especially Dali L. Yang’s chapter, “Economic Transformation and State Rebuilding in China,” pp120-145. See also Tu Wei-Ming, ed., *China in Transformation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), especially his “Introduction,” x-xxv.

¹¹² Q. Edward Wang, “Encountering the World: China and Its Other(s) in Historical Narratives, 1949-1989” *Journal of World History*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Sep., 2003) 354. (327-358)

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹¹⁴ Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 161.

upheavals of 1989, when the Chinese leadership openly decided that to achieve domestic stability “economic development must continue and the people’s livelihood must improve.”¹¹⁵

After the international exposure of the harsh government crackdown on the protests of May and June 1989, other nations became less willing to facilitate trade with China, which the CCP interpreted as a continuation of the West’s Cold War “containment” policy towards China.¹¹⁶ During the 1990s, the atmosphere changed greatly from the 1980s, with a large number of the Chinese population increasingly wary of the West’s attempts to “keep China down,” while at the same time paradoxically taking a stand against the onslaught of “Westernization,” a sentiment reflected in the popularity of the book *China Can Say No* (*Zhongguo keyi shuobu*) and *China Can Still Say No* (*Zhongguo haishi neng shuobu*).¹¹⁷ In these popular books written in collaboration by several independent authors (that is to say, not officially tied to the CCP) in 1996, the main argument proposes that the antagonistic stance of the Cold War is continuing in an international effort headed by the United States to isolate China. Even if the central government did not have a direct hand in the production of these books, government sanction quickly followed their publication.¹¹⁸ In this way, the CCP endorses a movement that offsets international disapproval by forming a unifying ideology and a form of consensus among all Chinese people of the need to defend China against the hostile external forces haranguing it.¹¹⁹ The argument follows that, for the sake of economic efficiency, a strong state under a strong autocratic ruler is needed to propel China into the international economy. Despite the state’s decentralization of decision-making powers and promotion of privatization, the state maintains that the on-going economic growth China is experiencing requires a strong state to be able to implement policies quickly and absolutely. Just as important for the continuation of a strong economy is internal stability and defense against foreign attempts at intimidation and containment, which are allegedly provided for by the CCP’s effective rule. In order to maintain the CCP’s power as the legitimate master of the PRC, leaders carry on the assertion of the existence of a Chinese

¹¹⁵ Ibid., vii.

¹¹⁶ Fewsmith in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 325.

¹¹⁷ “Saying ‘no’ to political, economic, and cultural influences from the US, Britain, Japan, and other nations,” Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 224. For other reflections of this type of nationalist sentiment, see Fewsmith in Dittmer & Liu, (2006), 326.

¹¹⁸ Fewsmith in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 326.

¹¹⁹ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 224; Wei in Ibid., 152.

“nation” in need of a strong, central state to uphold stability and the status-quo.¹²⁰ The idea prevails that without the CCP, the Chinese nation would disintegrate.¹²¹

Guo predicts that the socialist legal system, established in the 1980s, will continue to be used by the CCP to legitimize its rule. He expects Hu Jintao and other Fourth Generation leaders will continue this “rationalization” of legitimation, “by focusing on developing rules, norms, procedures, and institutions to codify the policy breakthroughs catalyzed by their predecessors.”¹²² As Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggests, systems of domination tend to proclaim their own normalcy so that their supremacy becomes less and less questionable.¹²³ Legal means, as well as producing specific historical accounts, are effective ways of normalizing the state’s political system and actions, accustoming people to the state’s outlook and making other forms of government look foreign and therefore strange and inappropriate.

Guo’s argument is that although China’s economic system has experienced extensive transformations in the past thirty years, its political system has remained largely the same. Hu Jintao has stressed that the Chinese government rules “for the people,” rather than “by the people,” which calls into question the viability of having an ever-increasing educated middle-class exist alongside a non-elected small elite that continues to rule over the masses. The Party remains skeptical of the benefits of political reform, focusing on the utilitarian advantages brought by the CCP’s current economic policy and suggesting that any changes to its political system *will* disrupt economic reform.¹²⁴ The current CCP leaders all joined the Party after 1949, and therefore lack revolutionary credentials, although they continue to accept Marxist ideology as their guiding theory. They have become the “pragmatic technocrats whose chief concerns will be economic progress and the raising of living standards,” predicted by Hsü in 1995,¹²⁵ rather than revolutionaries joining the masses in a constant struggle for a more egalitarian society.¹²⁶ The existing gap between the CCP’s policies’ alleged attractiveness and the present reality, now that more and more problems with the current system have arisen, has affected the Party’s ability to maintain its appeal.

¹²⁰ Wei in Wei & Liu (2001), 152.

¹²¹ Ibid.; 历史课程标准 (2007), 12.

¹²² Wei in Wei & Liu (2001), 165.

¹²³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 84.

¹²⁴ Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 165.

¹²⁵ Hsü (1995), 974.

¹²⁶ Burton (1987).

With the existing system of justification – that the CCP is a revolutionary party that can make China wealthy and internationally powerful – under threat, legitimacy has become a major concern of Beijing political leaders.¹²⁷

As recent CCP leaders regard “opening up” to the capitalist-dominated world market the most effective way to participate in and achieve “modernization,” the Party distances itself from the socialism-soaked ideology found during the Mao Zedong era. In an interesting take on how the current CCP ideology distinguishes itself from previous dogma, Michael Schoenhals notes the waning importance the Party places on formal language and “formulations” (*tifa*) in its political expressions.¹²⁸ Under Mao Zedong, Communist politicians spent a lot of time and energy discussing the wording of these formulations, ensuring their “correctness.” The use of “scientific criteria” to determine the correctness of one of these set phrases, means that “what is being judged is not the scientific verifiability or truthfulness of a formulation but its political utility.”¹²⁹ The policies of reform and “opening up” under Deng Xiaoping put “intolerable stress” on the Party’s conventional emphasis on formalized language and oratory to maintain social cohesion and national unity.¹³⁰ The younger generation within the Party views such formulations as outmoded, inflexible, and ill-adapted to solving the specific problems of the present – “the modernization of industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defense” (Deng Xiaoping’s “four modernizations”)¹³¹ – and Schoenhals predicts their eventual decline. Although formulations remain as a means for leaders to express concisely state ideology (notice Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents” – *sange daibiao*, 三个代表 – or Hu Jintao’s “Scientific Development” – *kexue fazhan guan*, 科学发展观), their vagueness and ultimately, impracticality, causes more frustration among Party members than support.¹³²

Academics who study this transitional period in Chinese history – Arif Dirlik, Tu

¹²⁷ Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 148-167; Tu (1994), xx; Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 207.

¹²⁸ Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies*, (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, Regents of the University of California, 1992). Burton (1987) notes that the April 5th (1976) Tiananmen demonstrations were partly an expression of people’s frustration at the state’s focus on ideology. One of the posters apparently read, “empty words about communism is not able to satisfy the people’s desires,” in Burton (1987), 435.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

¹³² Manoranjan Moharty, “CPC’s Fourth Generation Ideology,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 14 (Apr. 5-11, 2005), 1365-1369, especially 1367; Joseph Fewsmith, “Promoting the Scientific Development Concept,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 11.

Wei-ming, James Townsend, and Liu Kang, to name but a few – call attention to the CCP’s repudiation of socialist modernization in the name of capitalist modernization as a condition of development, playing down the nation’s socialist identity in order to rewrite the narrative of Chinese history to fit the “road to capitalism” model. Arif Dirlik argues that socialist identity is not as important to the Party-state’s nationalist rhetoric anymore, attributing this change to the globalization of capitalism and its effect on how China sees itself and how it is viewed by the outside world.¹³³ Since the “historians’ present shapes perspectives on the past,”¹³⁴ the recent emergence of capitalism on a global scale has led historians in the Chinese field to focus on capitalism and its development in China over time. Rather than remembering the Communist regime under Mao as the instigator of China’s transformation for a brighter socialist future, Communism is now “rendered [as] an obstacle to China’s modernization,”¹³⁵ and this period is viewed as an “interregnum” in China’s path to progress. “Capitalist development...still retains its force as a standard of development against which to judge the development or nondevelopment of other societies.”¹³⁶ In its efforts to claim world power status, the Chinese state now relies on its sanction and encouragement of a capitalist economy to achieve its national goal of prosperity. By rewriting the narrative of Chinese history to fit the “road to capitalism” model, historians are “[p]rojecting present conditions upon the past, or reading the present from the past, [which] may serve ideological affirmations of contemporary capitalism.”¹³⁷

Liu Kang parallels the decline of the idea of “revolution” in political discourse in the PRC with the rise of the concept of “nationalism.” Kang writes of the “radical metamorphosis of nationalism from a discourse of resistance to a discourse of domination,” and views this transition as problematic for the PRC, given that revolution (“discourse of resistance”) remains – historically at least – so integral to the CCP’s legacy and legitimacy.¹³⁸ Because revolution has played such a fundamental role in the formation of an alternative “Chinese” modernity (vis-à-vis the modernity of European origin), the “assertion

¹³³ Benedict Anderson argues that capitalism, alongside print-language, is of primary importance in the evolution of the “nation” and its popularity. See especially chapter 3: “The Origins of National Consciousness,” in Anderson (2006), 37-46.

¹³⁴ Dirlik, 247.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 260.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 277.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 262.

¹³⁸ Liu Kang, “Is there an Alternative to (Capitalist) Globalization? The Debate About Modernity in China,” *The Cultures of Globalization*, Frederic Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p173. Tu Wei-Ming also notes the waning of “revolution” as a key term, but finds it has been replaced with “reform.” See Tu (2004), xvi.

of nationalism as an ideological substitute for revolutionary hegemony cannot eclipse its historical legacy.”¹³⁹ In the 1980s and 1990s, the CCP faced a “delegitimation crisis,” where the CCP hoped – and hopes – that “money-making will absorb the energies of China’s people,”¹⁴⁰ and mask the growing paradox between maintaining socialism as the Party’s ideological basis and promoting capitalism as the nation’s economic plan. Indeed, the 1980s witnessed a historic retreat of the Chinese central government in order to encourage local economic development, and especially after 4 June 1989, when central authorities used brutal force rather than legitimate institutional mechanisms at their disposal to maintain order, throughout the 1990s both Chinese and non-Chinese writers lamented the inability of the central government to withstand centrifugal forces and uphold the integrity and sovereignty of the nation.¹⁴¹

Repudiating the “disintegration” thesis, the authors of *Holding China Together*, published in 2004, suggest that the central government under the effective leadership of the CCP has successfully achieved a “middle ground for reorganizing the framework for state action,” constructing a relatively feasible regulatory state where “the center has to step in where the local authorities are likely to shirk.”¹⁴² Scholarship has thus turned to the “middle-course” thesis, which proposes relaxation where it is possible and desirable, but repression where it is required and necessary.¹⁴³ This anthology challenges the thesis from a variety of perspectives, the overarching argument being that China shows no signs of actually breaking up, and that the efficacy of national institutions, “which have also undergone adaptations and transformations,” became more apparent during the 1990s.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Kang in Jameson & Miyoshi (1998), 168 and 171.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Friedman, “A Failed Chinese Modernity,” in Tu (2004), 1.

¹⁴¹ Naughton and Yang, “Introduction,” in Naughton & Yang (2004), especially 1-6.

¹⁴² Yang in Naughton & Yang (2004), 121. Joseph Fewsmith also supports the idea that the CCP has reached a “middle ground,” since central state supervision reinforces internal stability, which in turn facilitates economic growth. See Fewsmith (2001).

¹⁴³ Fewsmith (2001), especially his “Introduction.”

¹⁴⁴ Naughton and Yang, “Introduction,” 6. The authors underline the CCP’s monopoly of the *nomenklatura* personnel system, under which “the higher-level leaders determine the appointment of lower-level officials, and...also structure the incentive systems that apply to the entire hierarchy” (9), which they see as “the most important institution reinforcing national unity,” and “is one of the most important bases – perhaps the ultimate foundation – of Communist Party power” (9-10). In order to ensure general compliance to CCP objectives, the “hierarchical structure has been strengthened by stronger incentives that more consistently align the interests of local politicians with central government,” as well as the reorientation of the administrative system to develop “stronger resources, more capabilities, and more differentiated capabilities,” (11) which consolidates the overall power and preservation of the central government. Jeremy Paltiel, however, as a supporter of the disintegration thesis, suggests in an article that “the centralized *nomenklatura* personnel system has nonetheless declined in importance as a lever of power and as a locus of centralized control,” because of two factors: economic reforms have strengthened the position of regional governments, diminishing the attractiveness of promotion to the centre, and also by changes to the ways in which personnel are selected since 1996, which reflects a decline of central control over the process. Jeremy Paltiel, “Jiang Talks Politics: Who Listens? Institutionalization and Its

Charles Burton quotes a report delivered by Liu Shaoqi in 1945 Yanan that demonstrates the CCP's historical flexibility as a "creative Marxist political Party" capable of adapting to the circumstances in which it finds itself.¹⁴⁵ In his chapter, "Economic Transformation and State Rebuilding in China," Dali L. Yang concludes that the rebuilding of a strong central authority monitoring local development should not necessarily be considered negative to China's growth, because such a system provides "the means for implementing the will of the central government while leaving room for local initiatives."¹⁴⁶ The constant tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces complicates the ability to describe the Chinese state as either an all-powerful central government or as the nominal head of a society in disintegration,¹⁴⁷ and calls into question the extent to which China can be uniformly called "despotic" or "splintered." For this paper, it allows one to conclude that the central state is flexible enough to adapt to the changing situation – for example overseeing education as a whole to ensure that national standards and objectives are achieved, while allowing local governments to mold the system to regional needs and abilities.

At the same time, it is important for the state to uphold its position as the head of the nation moving forward towards modernity. Jiang Zemin, who dominated CCP leadership in the 1990s, serving as General Secretary of the Communist Party of China from 1989 to 2002, and as President of the People's Republic of China from 1993 to 2003, prescribed in a speech entitled "Carry On and Develop the Tradition of Patriotism In New Historical Circumstances" (1997), that the CCP deserves the people's love and loyalty because "our Party has carried on and developed the outstanding tradition of the Chinese nation, has sacrificed the most and made the most contribution in the struggle for national independence and in defense of national autonomy."¹⁴⁸ In the PRC, therefore, "the Party [is] the embodiment of the nation's will and the object of national loyalty and claims the right to name the nation."¹⁴⁹ In other words, the state is the "sovereign judge of the national interest."¹⁵⁰

The twin historical tasks of the nation as proposed by the Communist Party are

Limits in Market Leninism," *The China Journal*, No. 45 (Jan., 2001), 113. (113-121)

¹⁴⁵ Burton (1987), 442.

¹⁴⁶ Yang in Naughton & Yang (2004), 143.

¹⁴⁷ Naughton and Yang in *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁴⁹ Guo (2004), 17. Suisheng Zhao also argues that the Chinese state's elite embodies the nation-state, in essence speaking for its citizens who identify with the state. In Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*, (Stanford: Stanford California Press, 2004). See especially chapter 6.

¹⁵⁰ Zhao (2004), 26.

“preventing China from being victimized by foreign powers and internal enemies and building a strong and prosperous country.”¹⁵¹ The CCP’s “rationale is that those historical national tasks cannot be accomplished without a strong state, and there cannot be a strong state without a strong CCP; if the Party is weakened or overthrown, China will plunge into chaos and fall prey again to foreign predators.”¹⁵² Especially after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, the CCP viewed achieving “stability” as one of its most pressing functions.¹⁵³ And since “stability can only be guaranteed if the authority of the CCP is secured [...] to safeguard the authority of the Party also ‘represents the fundamental interest of the whole nation.’”¹⁵⁴ Legitimacy is now based on the state’s performance in improving the economy and raising Chinese people’s standard of living, rather than its success at “socialist transformation.”¹⁵⁵ Under the umbrella of “stability,” people’s political differences and demands for reforms or human rights, because they “destabilize” the status quo, can be accused of interfering with the state’s ability to carry out its twin tasks, becoming ruinous for the whole nation and therefore illegitimate.¹⁵⁶

In order to counter internal dissent, the CCP has once again turned to the idea of a “foreign threat” to bring the Chinese people together in backing the state as the defender of the Chinese nation.¹⁵⁷ During the 1990s, amidst its renewed efforts to focus on the strengthening of the Chinese economy in order to successfully compete in the world economy, the Chinese central government felt isolated in a world community that did not easily forget the events of 1989,¹⁵⁸ and increasingly feared China’s growing economic and military power. China’s change in its economic management system created wide-spread unemployment, among other negative consequences, during the 1990s, and popular discontent was in search of an outlet.¹⁵⁹ While in the 1980s obstacles to China’s progress

¹⁵¹ Guo (2004), 35.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Mary E. Gallagher, “China in 2004: Stability Above All,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Jan.-Feb., 2005), 21-32. Rosen (1993), 311.

¹⁵⁴ Guo (2004), 33.

¹⁵⁵ Zhao (2004), 29 and 214.

¹⁵⁶ Tu (2001), xxi. Zhao (2004), 214-224. Rosen (1993), 311. Charles Burton actually notes a newspaper article from as early as 1982 that accuses those who wish to bring to China “Westernization,” such as “the entire Western political system,” are “endangering our socialist cause,” hence jeopardizing the legitimacy of the CCP’s claim to power. See Burton (1987), 438.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, Zhao (2004), “Chapter 6: The Rise of State-Led Pragmatic Nationalism: An Instrumental Response to the Decline of Communism in China,” 209-247.

¹⁵⁸ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 208. Fewsmith in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 324-325. Cohen, (2003), 167.

¹⁵⁹ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 208.

were viewed as coming primarily from within, that perception changed in the 1990s.¹⁶⁰ A more “nativist” approach was considered, a trend that saw a return to a unique national “culture” as the means through which China would not only survive the rapid economic and social transformations taking place throughout the country,¹⁶¹ but also “fight back” against what was viewed as Western imperialism.¹⁶²

This idea that the “West” is attempting to “contain” China – harking back to the Cold War – and somehow holding China back from succeeding, mirrors in a way the “English lessons” taught to the Qing Empire under British imperialism during the last decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁶³ Mimicking the feelings suffered when the Great Powers forced the Chinese empire to comply with Western trade customs, the argument now maintains that Western forces are currently attempting to impose their ways onto China. The deep impact of British imperialism on the Chinese psyche has allowed the current central government to evoke foreign threats and project them as similar to those of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in order to undermine the authority of the foreign voice. By shaping foreign policy in terms of a Chinese nation deserving equal status among the family of nations, while foreign nations – especially the United States – attempt to suppress or somehow invalidate China’s growing power in the international arena, gives the CCP legitimacy not only to silence internal concerns about its system of rule, but to weaken the views coming from the outside that argue that the CCP is nothing but an authoritarian Party crushing all rights within the country. In promoting itself as the defender of the nation and casting the foreigners as threatening to the stability of that nation, the CCP solidifies its position while destabilizing and weakening the external points of view.¹⁶⁴ This overview of succeeding governments and their problems of legitimacy provides a good indication of the importance of popular validation in the maintenance of a government’s form of rule. Through the production of historical knowledge, the state legitimizes not only the emergence and perpetuation of the notion of the nation, but also the necessity of the state as its guardian.

In the face of increasing international and domestic pressures to adapt to and find agency within the capitalist, nation-state system that dominates the world, “Chinese

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 210-211.

¹⁶¹ Fewsmith in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 322.

¹⁶² Zhao (2004), “Chapter 4: The Challenge of Chinese Liberal Nationalism: Personal versus National Rights,” 120-164.

¹⁶³ Hevia (2004). Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 211. Zhao (2004), especially Chapter 4, 120-164.

¹⁶⁴ See Gallagher (2005), 21; Liu in Liu & Wei (2001), 207-210.

nationalism is officially sponsored and sanctioned by the state, which considers political and cultural reconstruction as China's only road to political and economic security."¹⁶⁵ Political reconstruction has so far involved mainly the decentralization of decision-making powers. "Cultural reconstruction" is more difficult to define. According to Gregory Jusdanis, by involving "culture," nationalism maintains a group's difference while ensuring its survival in modernity; "national culture serves as both the manifestation of uniqueness and its guardian."¹⁶⁶ Although difficult to delineate exactly what "Chinese culture" actually consists of, the belief that it remains important in the construction of a notion of the nation is not lost on the authors of Beijing's public schools' curriculum. The standard curriculum for history, published by Beijing Normal University in 2001 (republished in its twelfth edition in 2007) and meant for Beijing middle-high schools (grades 7-9), assures teachers that through the study of history, students will "inherit the excellent cultural traditions of the Chinese nation (*minzu*)," but without divulging the details of China's "cultural traditions."¹⁶⁷

This standard history curriculum booklet of 47 pages is interesting for its concise linkage of the study of history with the promotion of nationalism. It is evident from this booklet that studying history is a means of bridging the gap between the traditions of the past and the needs of the future. According to the preface of the curriculum, "as mankind enters the 21st century, [and] the progress of the globalization of the economy is daily increasing [in speed]," teaching history cannot help but face the problem of "maintaining and developing the Chinese nation's culture and traditions, stimulating students' patriotic feeling (爱国情感)." ¹⁶⁸ The teaching of history should also "deepen the profound love for one's country and understanding of the world," ¹⁶⁹ a direct intimation that one of the purposes of the national education system is to foster a nationalist sentiment among students.

Those who create and support national narratives aim to foster and privilege the "Chinese" identity as the "master identity" that subsumes or organizes other identifications, helping to counter separatist forces and uphold the claim of a united people that all have a similar and timeless identity. Dittmer and Kim, however, warn against an overly

¹⁶⁵ Baogang He and Yingjie Guo, *Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000), 10.

¹⁶⁶ Jusdanis (2001), 7.

¹⁶⁷ 历史课程标准 (2007), 1.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

state-centered notion of national identity in today's world of information and communication technology, where "political rulers no longer enjoy the hegemonic power to remold national identity with a minimum of external interference."¹⁷⁰ Deng Xiaoping's "open door" policy not only opened China's door to the world, but also opened the world to China.¹⁷¹

Nowadays, the Internet, as well as foreign entertainment and media, are quite easily accessible to residents in China, reducing people's reliance on government-run media and making government control over the flow of information increasingly difficult.¹⁷² The recent membership to the WTO and international trade agreements means the flow of imports and foreign ideas will not readily decrease in the near future.¹⁷³ Although it is important to remember that the "state is never able to eliminate alternative constructions of the nation among both old and new communities,"¹⁷⁴ which means that a variety of ways in which the nation is represented and voiced do indeed exist, focusing on how the vision of the nation is fashioned in public school history textbooks is one way of getting at how a master Chinese national narrative is formed and maintained.¹⁷⁵ As Naughton and Yang suggest, China remains an autocratic state, so many of the changes to the national education system have been driven from the top down, making it interesting to look at how the state endorses a certain vision of the nation in the minds of its youth.

At the end of the Second Opium War, after being confronted with unbending Western forces who had the audacity and capacity to humiliate China by forcing the imperial Court to comply to their demands rather than the other way around, the late Qing regime went through decades of reform in an attempt to sustain its authority. One of the ideas that emerged at this time was the concept of a Chinese *nation* that the Qing Court proclaimed it was working hard to improve and fortify. With time and continuing disappointments, however, faith eroded in the Empire's ability to propel China as a nation towards "modernity"

¹⁷⁰ Dittmer & Kim (1993), 282.

¹⁷¹ This concern for potentially malevolent foreign influence entering China has been termed "letting flies in," by Deng Xiaoping.

¹⁷² Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 148. Rosen (1993), 333.

¹⁷³ Quite the contrary, it has been argued that the more China increases its contacts with other nations and integrates in the national world arena, the more pressure the nation will feel to conform to international standards. See, for example, Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer (1985), 158 and 167; Ramirez & Boli (1987), especially 15.

¹⁷⁴ Duara (1995), 9.

¹⁷⁵ Naughton and Yang point out that China remains an autocratic state, so many of the changes to the national education system have been driven from the top down. Barry J. Naughton and Dali L. Yang, *Holding China Together: Diversity and National Integration in the Post-Deng Era*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8.

and claim world status. By founding of a republic, revolutionaries claimed such objectives could be achieved.

In 1912, the newly-formed Republican government based its nationalism on the idea that the central state, while increasing in size and responsibilities, would, in theory at least, work for the *people* of China, who in turn would realize the importance of working together as a nation in support of a strong government that would defend Chinese civilization from obliteration. The Beiyang regime distinguished its form of government from its imperial predecessor, promoting the claim that the founding of a Republic would help China get rid of its image as the “sick man of Asia.” The suggestion was that China needed to get rid of its imperial handicap in order to move forward towards “modernity,” so that the Great Powers would no longer be able to intimidate China.

Whereas the late imperial and early Republican regimes were concerned with state-building in order to gain more power to be able to modernize China, willingly imitating foreign models of development, the current CCP government must cope with a weakened centre and a decline in its ability to use socialism to legitimize its form of rule, making appeals to support a unified Chinese nation among hostile nations a convenient tool to bring the Chinese people together under its rule. The leaders of the CCP continue to call for China’s equal status among the world’s most influential powers. They have turned the global community’s reluctance to acknowledge the Chinese nation’s position into an international conspiracy to keep China low, a narrative that legitimizes the CCP’s form of government and portrays it as defending China’s best interests.

In the necessity for the central government to justify its claims to power, both the Beiyang regime and the current CCP use the education system to foster nationalist feelings that support the existence of a strong centralized governing body. Government supervision of a national curriculum and textbook production ensures that the state’s vision of the nation remains alive in the minds of students in the Chinese public school system.

Part II – The Education System and the Role of the State

Part I examined the evolving nature of nationalism according to its uses by the central state to legitimize its rule. Part II investigates the role of the national education system in the promulgation of these types of nationalism in the early twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first. During both eras the central state viewed education as a means to prepare more people to meet the national needs of the present, as well as to inculcate in students from a young age the importance of feeling part of a harmonious nation and supporting a strong state that safeguards that great nation. In other words, education would create what Benedict Anderson calls “an imagined community” that would give Chinese students a sense of belonging to their nation.¹⁷⁶ The state also had some influence over the publishing industry in order to ensure that the “quality” of the textbooks printed for and used in the schools conformed to the state’s regulations.

Ernest Gellner, in describing the unifying aspects of nationalism, argues that a widespread national education system and its linguistic medium (use of one language) play a crucial role in understanding nationalism. He states that it is only through a “nation-sized” educational system, because it has the requisite resources, that people can become “effective moral members of a modern community.”¹⁷⁷ In his enthusiasm for the power of education to underpin state power, Gellner goes so far as to assert that the “monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central [as a tool and symbol of state power] than is the monopoly of legitimate violence.”¹⁷⁸ It seems that the widespread adoption of national educational systems by states across the globe over the last two centuries would support Gellner’s theory.

Francisco O. Ramirez and John Boli attempt to explain why state-endorsed education systems became so popular. Despite its European origins, their thesis explains quite well China’s development of its national education system: European states became seriously involved in national education programs over the course of the nineteenth century not only as a response to the demands of an industrializing economy, but to revitalize a nation and

¹⁷⁶ Mazur argues: “Broadly speaking, all of the general histories created in the first half of the 20th century were narratives with the same mission: to give readers a sense of the historical roots from which China, now becoming a nation, had come, and to create knowledge and appreciation of the nature of the present society, nation, and culture.” Mary G. Mazur, “Discontinuous Continuity: The Beginnings of a New Synthesis of ‘General History’ in 20th-Century China,” in Hon & Culp (2007), 138.

¹⁷⁷ Gellner (1983), 34.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

avoid losing more power and prestige. The authors note that less developed and less dominant countries, maybe as a result of military defeat or failure to keep pace with industrial development, were (are?) stimulated by inter-state rivalries to find ways of becoming more competitive, which includes, of course, the setting up of a mass schooling system.¹⁷⁹ The case contends that it was the larger environment of nation-states – discussed in Part I – that modeled what a nation *should* look and feel like, and that therefore influenced individual nations to adopt a state-sponsored education system, which was seen as an opportunity to enhance the nation-building effort.¹⁸⁰ A “state educational system increasingly became what a national society *must* develop when faced with challenging or adverse circumstances,” and its establishment became an institutional imperative for nation-states.¹⁸¹ Mass schooling became legitimated as a result of the formulation of a world model of a national society over the course of the nineteenth century.¹⁸² In their efforts to adapt to the changing circumstances of the times, the Chinese imperial Court oversaw massive changes to its education program at the beginning of the twentieth century, not because élites necessarily saw China as “backward” or “behind,” but in order to adapt to the competitive world order of nation-states.

According to Ramirez and Boli, humiliation, such as defeat in war, provokes a strong national revival movement, during which the founding of a national education system enables the nation to regain spiritual and national strength, and increase its power and prestige.¹⁸³ Since the nation was believed to be the responsibility of the state (see Part I), it was up to the state to rejuvenate the nation and keep it strong during trying times.¹⁸⁴ As the Western powers defeated China twice during the Opium Wars of the nineteenth century, and China came into more regular contact with the outside world, a Self-Strengthening Movement was launched by the Qing government during the 1860s that included reforms to the national education system. Successful models of military might, such as Prussia and Japan, influenced China’s road to reform. These countries’ military successes were traced to

¹⁷⁹ Ramirez & Boli (1987), 3.

¹⁸⁰ Boli, Ramirez, Meyer (1985), 146.

¹⁸¹ Ramirez & Boli (1987), 3; own emphasis.

¹⁸² This idea fits Anderson’s theory of national development over time. See Anderson (2006).

¹⁸³ Ramirez & Boli (1987), 6. See also Hevia (2003), for example 337, for the idea that national humiliation, “a general outcome of Western imperialism and colonialism for the colonized, is here turned into something positive and productive, the impetus for leading the Chinese people and other oppressed peoples of the world to stand up.” In this particular quote, Hevia is making reference to the CCP’s use of humiliation during the years under Mao.

¹⁸⁴ Ramirez & Boli (1987), 6.

their school system, where discipline and patriotic feelings were encouraged. In addition, the idea that popular literacy was the foundation of a nation's wealth and power was disseminated throughout educational circles in turn-of-the-century China as the bedrock of industrialization that would propel China towards "modernity" and international recognition.¹⁸⁵ Such ideas reinforced the necessity of a state-sponsored school system that would play a role in the socialization of children and help the nation to achieve unity as well as progress.¹⁸⁶

New Policy reforms of the late Qing (1902-1911) established a "modern" public school system with a tentative standardized curriculum, the construction of new and transformation of old buildings into schools, and the employment of professional teachers (at least that was the goal with the funding of teacher-training facilities) who taught in classrooms as opposed to local "learned men" teaching in private homes under the old system. In 1905, after repeated calls for reform, came the abolishment of the revered examination system that had existed in China for hundreds of years to test potential government officials according to Confucian principles.¹⁸⁷ The ability to even take the examinations demanded years of study, first to gain literacy and then to memorize the Classics, but successful completion of the examinations offered candidates at least the possibility of entering officialdom, and earning the corresponding prestige and status that came from belonging to the "scholar-official" class. Under the imperial system, the "ruling group thus remained small, and admission to it required learning a doctrine that justified the right of the few to rule the many."¹⁸⁸ During the time, the state had been more concerned with "organizing and codifying examination competitions than it was with setting up schools or training teachers."¹⁸⁹ After the 1905 reforms, the newly established Ministry of Education (MoE) could focus on setting up a more universalized mass schooling system.

"The awareness of the importance of general education in creating a strong, united and

¹⁸⁵ Alexander Woodside, "Real and Imagined Continuities in the Chinese Struggle for Literacy," Hayhoe (1992), 39; Bailey (1982), 39.

¹⁸⁶ Ramirez & Boli (1987), 11. Boli, Ramirez, Meyer (1985), 148-149.

¹⁸⁷ The imperial civil service examination system existed since the T'ang dynasty (one could argue that its 'precursors' – for example textual expertise on a particular Classic to enter government – originated in the Han), but became the sole source of bureaucratic recruitment – its 1905 form – only in the fifteenth century, when the Ming Court restricted the possibility of inheriting such posts. Benjamin A. Elman, "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 50, no. 1 (Feb., 1991), 7-28. See also Ichisada Miyazaki, *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China*, Conrad Schirokauer, trans., (New York: Weatherhill, 1976).

¹⁸⁸ Lieberthal (1995), 7.

¹⁸⁹ Elman, (1991), 11.

wealthy country (inspired by the example of Japan), in addition to a traditional belief that everyone could benefit from education, provided the necessary motivation for the promotion of a more widespread education,” which continued to occupy an important place in the work of the early Republic.¹⁹⁰ Douglas R. Reynolds convincingly argues that the “Xinzheng Revolution” of the late-Qing period, greatly influenced by Japanese models, was of much more long-lasting importance for China’s future development than the quick-lived political revolution of 1911. Japan sent advisers to counsel and oversee government officials’ decisions to help China meet the sudden demands for expertise and training that the founding of a new education system entailed. Japanese translations of Western works into a Kanji-based idiom directly transferable to China also greatly aided the Chinese intellectual breakthrough.¹⁹¹ Professional Japanese teachers, as well as less well-trained volunteers, proudly went to teach in Japanese-funded schools in China, as part of Japan’s “civilizing” work abroad.¹⁹² “From Japan came an entire system of schools, with regulations, courses, teachers, and textbooks,”¹⁹³ as a result of China’s willingness to seek out and accept Japan as a model for its educational reforms, perhaps due to their joint fear of renewed Western aggression,¹⁹⁴ perhaps due to their common Confucian culture that emphasized the importance of morality in education.¹⁹⁵ At the turn of the twentieth century, Reynolds suggests that “a considerable Chinese dependence upon Japanese teachers and advisers [existed] in this brief but critical stage of establishing and consolidating its new modern education system.”¹⁹⁶ The 1901-1911 Xinzheng years, during which a national education system was established and ameliorated, were fundamental to the formation of a Chinese nation.

“Politically speaking...educational changes were part of China’s transformation from an empire to a nation-state.”¹⁹⁷ As opposed to the imperial civil service examination system that focused only on the fostering of government officials, the establishment of a modern school system in 1905 prepared students to serve society in various ways, fulfilling the needs

¹⁹⁰ Bailey, 111.

¹⁹¹ Reynolds (1993), 127.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, “Chapter 5: Japanese Teachers and Advisers in China,” especially 72-73, 78, 90-91.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 145-147.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁹⁷ Hon & Culp (2007), 3.

of a nation whose members needed to be familiar with languages, the latest technology, and other relevant fields such as mathematics, science and geography, to participate and compete in world affairs.¹⁹⁸ Hon and Culp conform Eugen Weber's assertion that schools were a major agent of acculturation in the creation of a French nation to fit the case in China.¹⁹⁹ "Through a standard curriculum with clearly defined stages of learning, schools would gradually integrate educated youths to a bigger realm beyond family, lineage, hometown, and province," linking students to a social whole, China, "despite their differences in ethnic backgrounds, languages, customs, and religious beliefs."²⁰⁰ Educational reforms were not only a part of nation formation – a way to improve the prestige of the nation within the international arena – but also an integral element in state building.

While in 1904 "the official aim of education had been 'to foster loyalty to the emperor and veneration for Confucianism, and to promote public spirit, martial spirit, and practical (in contrast to book-ish) learning,'" in 1912, the official aims were changed to "fostering moral education, and supplementing it with utilitarian, military, and aesthetic education."²⁰¹ Peter Zarrow suggests that "Chinese history textbooks of the late Qing tended to emphasize the theme of political unity," and this focus on the state's management of society meant that the "textbook narrative of the Chinese nation was a story that revolved around the putative Chinese state," in other words, around the Emperor and his court.²⁰² The Republican education system naturally wished to end imperial veneration, but Paul Bailey argues that "honouring the monarch" was the only educational aim set down by the Qing regime that was easily discarded by the incoming Beiyang government.²⁰³

It is important to recognize that until 1912, there were two education ministries, reflecting the north-south division, with Sun Yat Sen's southern education system based in Nanjing taking the initiative in proposing changes to the existing education system. Nevertheless, while waiting for a unified education system, temporary measures were sent out to all provinces concerning general education as well as curricula for primary and middle

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 1. Wakeman (1975), 233-234.

¹⁹⁹ Schools play a primary role in "shaping individuals to fit into societies and cultures broader than their own and persuading them that these broader realms are their own, as much as the pays they really know and more so," in Weber (1976), 331. In China's case, *pays* may be translated as "hometown."

²⁰⁰ Hon & Culp (2007), 1 and 3.

²⁰¹ Y. C. Wong, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West 1872-1949*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 362-363.

²⁰² Zarrow in Hon & Culp (2007), 24.

²⁰³ Bailey (1982), 148.

schools, although the curricula of 1912 did not change much from that of 1910.²⁰⁴ Many of the people involved in education discussion and administration who worked under the Qing regime continued to work in the same domain under the Beiyang regime, which may explain the perseverance of a certain attitude towards education that had emerged during the last years of the Qing, which viewed education as a means to “create a united, patriotic, and hard-working citizenry.”²⁰⁵ After the 1911 Revolution, education would foster a republican citizenry, loyal to the nation rather than to the Emperor.

A national public education system was seen as an effective way to inculcate national sentiments among youth. Government faith in the education system to spread a specific collective memory of past events could be seen in 1915, when government efforts to remind students of the humiliation of Japan’s 21 Demands began by incorporating the event into the curriculum and holding school assemblies.²⁰⁶ The school and its message, therefore, was seen as an important part of transmitting national sentiments that the intellectuals and state deemed worthy. The creation of a *patriotic* citizenry was as important as a *productive* citizenry, and education was viewed as playing a critical role in the fulfillment of each. At the same time that the national education system could be used to disseminate state ideology, there existed (and still exists) much confidence among the Chinese people in the power of education to achieve national goals, especially the creation of a strong, wealthy country capable of maintaining China’s sovereignty.²⁰⁷

The “spread of modern education in China has been closely intertwined with the process of state formation.”²⁰⁸ For both the late Imperial and Republican governments “controlling the school system became a key function of modern Chinese government,”²⁰⁹ because it was a means of increasing state responsibilities and influence. Before the New Policy reforms of the early twentieth century, “the imperial state played a very limited role in the planning and provision of education, particularly at the elementary level.”²¹⁰ After the early twentieth-century reforms, more concern was shown to educate all the people, “both as a

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 133-134.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 167.

²⁰⁶ Cohen (2003), 155.

²⁰⁷ Bailey (1982), 9-16.

²⁰⁸ Stig Thøgersen, “State and Society in Chinese Education,” in *Education, Culture, & Identity in Twentieth-Century China*, Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe, Yongling Lu, eds., (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004 [2001]), 188.

²⁰⁹ Hon & Culp (2007), 3.

²¹⁰ Thøgersen, in Peterson, Hayhoe, Lu (2004), 188. Before 1905, “primary education had never traditionally been considered as a function of the state,” Bailey (1982), 32.

means to foster patriotism and to provide practical knowledge for the general populace.”²¹¹ The MoE’s responsibilities now included building elementary schools and issuing guidelines for education at the elementary level, as well as establishing a textbook bureau where textbooks produced by such publishing centres as the Shanghai Commercial Press had to be sent for approval.²¹² The imperial state’s interference into education at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the establishment of a MoE and the abolishment of the civil service examinations, began the gradual shift in perception of the state’s role in the lives of its people. As more and more people attended the state-endorsed public school system, the state saw an opportunity and reason to exert more control over mass schooling: to promote a better education system, and in the process, cultivate better citizens of the nation.

One of the ways the state implemented its control over education was its involvement in the publishing of school textbooks, specifically setting up regulations concerning content. This paper stresses the point that the existence of these regulations, no matter what they were, signifies the value the central state placed (and places) on keeping the education system and the publishing industry in line with its reforms. The late Qing and succeeding governments repeatedly stipulated new regulations on textbooks, beginning with the first official Ministry of Education’s approval of specific textbooks in 1906.²¹³ Paul Bailey states that it was Western educational practices of having primary school texts checked and edited by government authorities that influenced the establishment of a textbook bureau in 1906 in Shanghai, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.²¹⁴ Supervising textbook production was part of the Beiyang government’s endeavors to increase its power and legitimacy.²¹⁵ “Government regulations imposed restrictions and conferred legitimacy at the same time.”²¹⁶ Most of the approved textbooks were published by the Commercial Press in Shanghai, the leader in Chinese textbook publishing at that time, and the publisher of the 1912 textbook analyzed in Part III. Nevertheless, the extent to which state regulations were followed remains unclear, despite the knowledge that both under the Beiyang regime and the current CCP regime, inspections were ordered by the Ministry of Education to supervise and

²¹¹ Bailey (1982), 16.

²¹² Ibid., 108.

²¹³ Reed (2004), 211.

²¹⁴ Bailey (1982), 107-108.

²¹⁵ Xu (2001), 89-90.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 272.

ensure the schools' adherence to its conventions.²¹⁷

Many authors emphasize the significance of the 1905 Imperial abolition of the civil service examinations on Chinese society. Mary Mazur goes so far as to suggest that as “the examinations ceased to structure the minds and lives of the leaders in the polity,” there came about the possibility for “expansion and broadening, rethinking and questioning the political culture and its basis in past as well as present thought and values,”²¹⁸ which caused “deep change, even iconoclasm” in the Chinese people’s ways of thinking, a process she contends started much earlier than usually acknowledged and that lasted long after the May Fourth era.²¹⁹ Continuing the idea that education broadens people’s horizons, which allows students to question those who are in power, Joseph W. Esherick contends that it was the reforms to the education system more generally, including the increased numbers of schools and educated students, that created a volatile group that fueled the 1911 Revolution.²²⁰ For Frederic Wakeman, it is the fact that so many “other sources of status – Western learning, local political prestige, wealth – now had a chance to compete with, and quickly overcome, the prestige conferred by the old metropolitan decree,” that attenuated the élite’s ties to the imperial centre and facilitated their estrangement.²²¹ More relevant here is that the end of these civil examinations forced potential scholars to find new functions to play in a changing society that no longer designated a special place for them.

Printing and publishing was an industry to which many drifting intellectuals flocked as a way to re-position themselves into a station of some power and influence – or maybe just to find a steady job. Educators and academics realized that book-writing, just as classroom teaching, “was an important avenue for expressing views and disseminating ideas.”²²² Historical writing in particular, because of its narrative format that facilitated the transmission of the intellectuals’ views, became a key subject for the publishing companies at the turn of the twentieth century, reinforcing a connection between intellectuals and an increasing public of educated readers.²²³ Here was a revered niche where the educated elite

²¹⁷ Ibid., 174; “Compulsory education law enforcement comes under inspection,” Xinhua News Agency, 2008-09-16, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-09/12/content_10038902.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009.

²¹⁸ Mazur in Hon and Culp (2007), 113.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 115.

²²⁰ Esherick (1976), 7.

²²¹ Wakeman (1975), 234.

²²² Hon and Culp (2007), 5.

²²³ Ibid.

remained useful and esteemed. “No other cultural industry was as central to the self-identity of the Chinese élite as the one that produced books, and no other was as close to the heart of the Chinese state.”²²⁴

Christopher Reed, one of the leading researchers in Chinese printing and publishing, dates the “discovery of the remunerative modern textbook market” to between 1900 and 1905,²²⁵ and Peter Zarrow claims that there was a “veritable explosion” of textbook publishing around 1906,²²⁶ right around the time the Qing Court reformed the education system and established its MoE with its textbook bureau. Reed asserts that at the turn of the twentieth century, textbooks “were at least as important as periodicals in shaping long term Chinese opinion,” and “consistently reached more people than periodicals, and presented a more stable message.”²²⁷ Mary Mazur suggests that the textbooks of the day, even though they were written with specific age groups in mind, actually had a readership “far beyond the classrooms,” and reminds readers not to transfer their current specific cultural view of “textbooks” onto those of the turn of the twentieth century in China.²²⁸ An example of how influential history textbooks were deemed can be taken from Zarrow, who recounts how an anti-Manchu organization based in Shanghai’s foreign concessions, the Association for Preservation of National Learning, financially supported by private means, designed and published its own history textbooks, intending “to plant revolutionary seeds in the minds of young students.”²²⁹ The fact that this group believed that history textbooks could make enough of a difference in popular thinking that it was worthwhile to write and publish their own, supports the contention that history textbooks had a significant hold on the imaginations of the Chinese public at the turn of the twentieth century. It was thus in the best interests of the state to formulate textbooks that reflected their own position.

The abolition of the civil-service examinations changed the way textbooks were thought about, used, and printed. No longer were they just for a specific audience geared to pass the civil examinations, but now they could be propagated amongst a much larger public. Private readers, as well as schools and libraries that were increasingly being built and reformed at

²²⁴ Reed (2004), 11.

²²⁵ Ibid., 204.

²²⁶ Zarrow in Hon & Culp (2007), 21-22.

²²⁷ Reed (2004), 11.

²²⁸ Mazur in Hon & Culp (2007), 137-138.

²²⁹ Zarrow in Ibid., 96.

the turn of the century, were a big market, and Shanghai publishers supplied books for *all* of China, as well as to Chinese communities overseas.²³⁰ The Qing reforms to the education system inspired interest in “modern Western-style educational commodities,” of which the modern textbook “now appealed to those who sought literacy.”²³¹ Since the new school system of 1905 was now the “sole route to an official career,”²³² the textbook replaced the private tutor, and the state-endorsed textbooks became a part of the new road to career-advancement.

The most profitable new-style²³³ book commodity to emerge in this turn-of-the-century period was the modern textbook. Although reliable statistics of school enrolment before the 1930s are rare, Reed suggests that the expansion of educational opportunities from 1905 to 1937 “represented an enormous educational and commercial opportunity for responsive publishers,” and links the increase in school enrolments to the growth of publishing.²³⁴ The development of the profit-making textbook industry meant that by 1906, schools could choose among dozens of competing textbooks.²³⁵ As new textbooks proliferated, governments needed to reaffirm at least to some extent their control over the contents.

For Peter Zarrow, textbooks “represent ‘official knowledge’ in the sense that they are approved by political and intellectual elites to form the basis of mass education of the young,”²³⁶ but concedes that some of the leadership’s goals were not fulfilled. “Leo Ou-fan Lee and Andrew J. Nathan have estimated that in the first decade of the twentieth century, the reading audience in China was two to four million,”²³⁷ which limits the reach of these textbooks to an educated minority. Educational developments during this time mostly took place in urban areas and schools were mainly directed at boys.²³⁸ While the Education Ministry created policies and methods for general education (primary, middle, and vocational schools), the provinces and districts managed and financed the schools, bearing

²³⁰ Reed (2004), 212.

²³¹ Ibid., 201.

²³² Esherick (1976), 46.

²³³ For Reed, “new-style” refers to the Western technology that made books cheaper and more widely distributed, as well as the Western ideas that were included in the contents. Zarrow describes “recognizably modern textbooks” as: “short books devoted to particular subjects and aimed at specific age groups.” Zarrow in Hon & Culp (2007), 21.

²³⁴ Reed (2004), 211.

²³⁵ Zarrow in Hon & Culp (2007), 22.

²³⁶ Zarrow in Hon & Culp (2007), 23.

²³⁷ Xu (2001), 47.

²³⁸ Bailey (1982), 6.

the brunt of educational expenditures during the early years of the Republic,²³⁹ which served to generate an unequal system where affluent areas could afford to fund an effective school system, whereas poor areas were left without.²⁴⁰ Although the maximum amount a textbook could sell for was decided upon by the Ministry of Education, “modern schools, because of their urban location and high price, catered to an élite few.”²⁴¹ It could be argued that this suited the Beiyang government, as the élite was precisely the group of people it wished to influence and bring under its authority in order to create an economically viable nation, but it does challenge the idea that there existed anything closely resembling a universal school system at the time.

Reed points out the fragility and weakness of the publishing industry, which saw publishing companies pitted against each other in a fierce competition for monopoly of the potential book market. Competition demanded “constant courtship of various forms of government patronage in the textbook market that underwrote all their other activities.”²⁴² A mentality of state dependence remained strong among “bookmen” even during the absence of a unified state from 1912 to 1928.²⁴³ State endorsement came mostly in the form of financial investment in the companies, which was crucial for such “undercapitalized” businesses.²⁴⁴ This reliance on state support can be seen in the scramble among Commercial Press editors to publish a new textbook that would fit the new standards of the Republican government in 1911. The company had apparently been partial to monarchical constitutionalism, and was caught off-guard by the success of the Nationalist Party during the Republican Revolution, while the editor of Zhonghua Books, the Commercial Press’s rival, had anticipated the change in government and therefore the correlating change in textbook guidelines. “Forced by both [the Republican Revolution and Zhonghua Books] to withdraw its successful late Qing textbook series from the market the press’s editors gradually worked their way back into the schools with a new series, the *Gonghe zhong xiaoxue jiaokeshu* (*Republican Textbooks for Middle and Elementary Schools*).”²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Ibid., 175.

²⁴⁰ Eugen Weber’s description of the effect of poverty on people’s access to an education may be useful here. Regional conditions also surely affected school attendance and quality. See especially Weber (1976), 318-323.

²⁴¹ Bailey (1982), 124.

²⁴² Reed (2004), 204.

²⁴³ Ibid., 206.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 204.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 215.

Zhonghua Books did not have the means (machines and funding) to satisfy the sudden surge in demand for their textbooks when the Commercial Press's were no longer acceptable, allowing the Commercial Press to gradually recover its monopoly of the textbook market when it got its new version out that conformed to the new regulations.²⁴⁶ This is the 1912 textbook examined in Part III of this paper. It was published by the Commercial Press, which was established in 1897, the oldest and most productive of the three major publishing companies in Shanghai – China's publishing centre – at the turn of the twentieth century.²⁴⁷

The specific textbook under consideration is Book 4 of 6, a series that spans the three years of junior high school (the last three years of mandatory schooling at the time). Book 1 starts with remote antiquity (太古), and Book 4 begins with the reign of Kangxi. The titles of events are placed in the margins above the text. Simple images and maps can be found throughout the text, but the text is quite densely packed.

The 1912 textbook's "mission statement" (大意), which can be viewed as the editor's reasons for publishing such a book, sheds light on the effects being under a republican government, as well as the changes in the larger international environment, produced on the publication of school textbooks. The statement reveals the new republic's endeavor to establish a nation that included China's five nationalities (五大族) – the Han, Manchus, Tibetans, Mongols, and Muslims – for which the textbook hoped to foster respect and "harmonious love." The passage points out that this textbook is for the use of all five nationalities and will accentuate unity of the national territory and ethnic harmony. The textbook's role in shaping the students' outlook goes unquestioned, since it is made to "foster children's impressions and cultivate moral character." It takes as its mission to give children an understanding of national culture and develop their patriotism, as if these functions were evident for a history textbook. Influences from the outside world are reflected in the textbook's use of the "less tiring" Western calendar in its dating (rather than using reign names), its provision of an understanding of Sino-foreign relations at a time when world history holds an important place (at least in the editor's view), and the use of pictures and maps to appeal to the reader's interest.²⁴⁸ Hence, education was increasingly linked to the

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 231.

²⁴⁷ See Reed (2004) "Introduction," 3-24.

²⁴⁸ 共和國教科書新歷史— (*gongheguo jiaokeshu xin lishi* – Republican Textbook New History Book 1), (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1912), 1-2.

nation-building project, “and is now a virtually indispensable element of national development,”²⁴⁹ as will be seen in the overview of the current CCP’s education system.

Despite the repeated reforms to the public education system over the course of the twentieth century, the current CCP’s objectives in restructuring and improving China’s education system remain relatively similar to those of the central state of a hundred years ago.²⁵⁰ Just as the intellectuals and educators of the early twentieth century bemoaned the inadequacy of traditional concepts of educational theory and practice – the civil service examinations and emphasis on the Classics – to meet the needs of the supposed drive towards modernization, so too do critics of today’s system castigate the “remarkable stability and consistency of traditional patterns” of teaching and learning found in present-day China.²⁵¹

Under Mao, the “primary aim of education was seen as serving the needs of politics, transforming students ideologically and enabling everyone who received an education to develop morally, intellectually, and physically, so as to become a well educated worker imbued with socialist consciousness.”²⁵² The Party established a new unified Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1949, whose work reflected China’s political ideology. The MoE, among other duties, oversaw the writing, publication, and distribution of textbooks and instructional material, up until the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution. During the time it resumed its functions in 1977 to the educational reforms of the mid-1980s, the MoE became over-bureaucratized and internal political factionalism impeded its work.²⁵³ Similar to the importance placed on the 1905 educational reforms that changed China’s direction, the mid-1980s reorganization of the central educational administration, “occurred in part, as a strategy to draw the entire country’s attention to the importance of education as a key element in facilitating modernization.”²⁵⁴ The reforms gave the new administration more responsibilities over a wider range of institutions, increasing its influence; its directors were placed higher up in the political hierarchy, giving the department more prestige as well as

²⁴⁹ Ramirez, Boli, Meyer (1985), 147.

²⁵⁰ Glen Peterson and Ruth Hayhoe have already pointed out this “more or less permanent sense of dissatisfaction with the actual state of education in each succeeding period,” but only briefly note that the critiques ranged from “allegations of its imported nature, urban bias, and elitist character to charges of chronic underfunding and even deliberate official neglect,” in Glen Peterson and Ruth Hayhoe, “Introduction,” Peterson, Hayhoe, Lu (2004), 3.

²⁵¹ Lynn Paine, “Teaching and Modernization in Contemporary China,” in Hayhoe (1992), 203.

²⁵² Su in Epstein (1991), 376.

²⁵³ Ibid., 377-384.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 384.

authority; and the administration's goals demonstrated a shift from focusing its work on "micro-management" to "macro-management,"²⁵⁵ a trend that continues to this day in the administration's efforts at devolving decision-making powers. Writing in the late 1980s, early 1990s, Su finds that the state institution that controls education in China "still holds tremendous power in its own hands," and wishes to see the distribution of power within the educational administration decentralized in order for educational reforms to be more efficient and relevant to local needs.²⁵⁶

During the post-Mao reforms, the central Beijing government encouraged rapid market expansion, while holding tightly to political power,²⁵⁷ so the public education curricula reflected these two goals, satisfying the needs of the changing Chinese economy, while simultaneously reinforcing the Party-state's authority and legitimacy. The implementation of educational reforms serves the immediate needs of the country's economic development in forming "a new generation of citizens, people who are competent enough to serve China's modernization drive."²⁵⁸

In the push to modernize China and make the education system more efficient in producing professionals that could serve the nation more effectively, in 1985, local governments became responsible for basic education.²⁵⁹ The Chinese Ministry of Education's 1986 reforms established nine-year compulsory education throughout China. The central and local governments shared the financial burden of aiding families and students that could not afford tuition fees. In contrast to Mao's dismissal of book-learning in favour of manual labour and "learning from the peasants," an ever-stronger correlation between education level and social status is re-emerging. Perhaps in reaction to the Cultural Revolution's "re-education" program, which saw millions of youth being forcibly sent to the countryside during the sixties and seventies, "the distaste for rural life has never been stronger than during the 1980s," and "working with one's brains rather than one's hands has again become a source of pride."²⁶⁰ In fact, the reforms of 1980s to the education system

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 385-386.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 386.

²⁵⁷ Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 147.

²⁵⁸ "Hopes high for curriculum reform," Xinhua News Agency, 03-11-2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-11/03/content_3723311.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009.

²⁵⁹ Ministry of Education for the People's Republic of China, "A Survey of the Development of Basic Education," http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/basic_b.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009. Thøgersen discusses the urban/rural divide in financing and control in Thøgersen (1990), 59.

²⁶⁰ Thøgersen (1990), 44-45.

directly reflected economic reforms, in the sense that gifted students were placed in privileged schools and classrooms just as in the larger society, some were allowed to “get rich first” in a privileged environment as a motivating factor to get China’s economy rolling.²⁶¹ Nowadays, a college education has become an important factor for joining the Party, with all major leaders now holding a college diploma.²⁶² As those with “revolutionary credentials” pass away, a college education is a must to move up the Party’s political ladder.²⁶³

At the same time, attempts continue to be made to universalize education. In September 2008, education became free in both urban and rural areas,²⁶⁴ with additional aid given to the poor to cover the costs of boarding, uniforms, and textbooks, for which students normally have to pay. Regular nationwide “crackdowns” and inspections initiated by the Beijing government ensure that illegal education fees are eliminated and that local governments are following the Compulsory Education Law adopted in 1986 and amended in 2006.²⁶⁵ These inspections monitor local government’s spending, as well as the quality of teaching and the safety of the schools.

It is evident from these measures that despite the devolvement of certain powers, the CCP wishes to maintain its extensive control over the national education system at the macro-level. The Ministry of Education is constantly looking at ways to improve the curriculum and the school system to meet what it deems to be the challenges of the present. In 1986, the central government no longer monopolized the production of textbooks, allowing regional governments to control the publishing of local textbooks “to meet the needs of different localities.”²⁶⁶ The diversification of the preparation and production of school textbooks, “under the condition that unified basic requirements must be complied

²⁶¹ Ibid., 92.

²⁶² Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 165.

²⁶³ Ibid. Thøgersen (1990), 46-47.

²⁶⁴ Du Guodong, “Free compulsory education to spread to urban children,” Xinhua Agency, 24-12-2007. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-12/24/content_7301944.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009. The central government would provide half of the education funding for central and west China’s provinces, while only “supplementing” the funding in eastern provinces.

²⁶⁵ “China to initiate nationwide crackdown on illegal education fees,” Xinhua News Agency, 12-09-2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-09/12/content_9958419.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009, and “Compulsory education law enforcement comes under inspection,” Xinhua News Agency, 16-09-2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-09/12/content_10038902.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009.

²⁶⁶ Ministry of Education for the People’s Republic of China, “Development of Teaching Materials,” http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/basic_b.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009.

with,”²⁶⁷ encourages competition for readership, which in turn promises to increase the quality of the texts, according to the logic of the Ministry of Education. The system sounds very familiar and similarities may be drawn between it and the system set up under the Beiyang regime. “To ensure the quality of textbooks and other teaching materials produced, a system of examination and approval of textbooks has been established in China. All textbooks for obligatory subjects taught in primary and secondary schools have to be examined and approved by the State Textbooks Examination and Approval Committee before publication in terms of ideological content, scientific spirit and adaptability to classroom instruction.”²⁶⁸ It is not really necessary to know exactly what these regulations consist of, because more important here is the knowledge that this process of checking and authorizing textbooks exists at all. Both the central government in 1912 and the current government expect that publishing houses will follow the rules and conventions set down by the Ministry of Education, and that publishing businesses will compete to produce first-rate, recognized products. This system fits nicely into the argument that the CCP has succeeded in finding a balance of power between local and central administrations, creating a system that permits local ingenuity and resourcefulness as long as the principles of the centre are adhered to.

The continuation of textbook approval by a central authority is evidence of the persistent centrality of texts and textual knowledge as the means to succeeding in and advancing through the education system. The same preoccupation with examinations endures, with teachers adapting their teaching methods to suit the demands of the university-entrance examinations that mostly call for memorization of knowledge.²⁶⁹ The reforms to the national education system put in place in 2001 aimed to end the text-based learning so prevalent in schools because of the insistence on and importance of passing examinations in order to advance to the next level.²⁷⁰ The new textbooks produced out of the 2001 reforms to the curriculum (including the one discussed further on in this paper) are not “too easy,” but simply directed at the majority of students rather than the elite, making them more accessible

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. Schoenhals observes that when the CCP uses “‘scientific’ criterion,” what is being “judged is not the scientific verifiability or truthfulness of a formulation but its political utility.” Schoenhals (1992), 9.

²⁶⁹ Thøgersen (1990), “Chapter 7: Selection and Competition,” 70-93; especially 75.

²⁷⁰ “Hopes high for curriculum reform,” Xinhua News Agency, 03-11-2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-11/03/content_3723311.htm, retrieved 26-02-2009.

to a greater number of students.²⁷¹ Nevertheless, the Party still claims to know the absolute “truth” in ideological and moral matters, and this is reflected in the curriculum, the textbooks, and the way teachers are to teach history.²⁷²

Today, entrance examinations to higher-level schools (whether better high schools or universities) have the power to “define knowledge, knowledge acquisition, and teaching,” legitimizing a valuing of one form of knowledge – that required for the examinations – over others.²⁷³ The authority of the required texts looked at in the classroom – textbooks endorsed by the state – goes unquestioned in the teachers’ duty to get as many students to pass the examinations as possible, and the students’ desire to succeed and progress through the system.²⁷⁴ The persistence of hierarchical ways of thinking, where high-schools and students within classrooms are ranked according to how many students passed the examinations, or how well students passed those examinations, gives credence to Paine’s questioning of how much these government attempts at change have affected reality.²⁷⁵ This means that the passage on the Second Opium War examined in Part III, is most likely presented as the absolute “truth” without a discussion of possible variations. The students realize that if they wish to pass the next examination, this is the way they should remember the Second Opium War.

Lanqing Li, who as Vice Premier from 1993 to 2003 was most responsible for national education policy in China, admits in his book on Chinese education that only “competent” people can understand and follow government principles and policies and therefore be of benefit for the nation, and only through education do people become so qualified, “so education must be a strategic priority” of the government.²⁷⁶ Li specifically associates China’s changing economy with the national education sector’s need to adapt. China’s “whole economy is in fundamental transition from central planning to a socialist market economy,” and this necessitates reform in the national education system to “bring on more

²⁷¹ “Hopes high for curriculum reform,” Xinhua News Agency, 03-11-2005.

²⁷² Thøgersen (1990), 42. 历史课程标准 (2007), 12.

²⁷³ Paine in Hayhoe (1992), 200.

²⁷⁴ Thøgersen (1990), 76 and 88. “Access to university was still very restricted, and as selection was still based on examinations, examinations continued to constitute the vital stepping stones in a person’s educational career and to dictate the form and content of education,” (88).

²⁷⁵ Paine in Hayhoe (1992), especially 205.

²⁷⁶ Lanqing Li, *Education for 1.3 Billion: Former Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing on 10 Years of Education Reform and Development*, (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2004), 5.

highly qualified people to meet the needs of the changed situation.”²⁷⁷ David Chan and Ka-Ho Mok argue that the post-Mao government’s emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency, and economy in the delivery of public services, has brought about the privatization and marketization to the PRC’s education system. The shift from a “centrally planned” economy to a “socialist market” has directed China’s education toward a market-oriented approach.²⁷⁸ “Instead of relying upon the state for provision of educational services, as was the case in the Mao era, people nowadays rely more on themselves and on the market than on the government,” which has allowed far more flexibility and diversity in the devlivery of educational services.²⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the private sector still plays a “very limited and peripheral role” in the provision of educational services, and privatization is more noticeable in higher education (at the university level) than at the primary and secondary levels.²⁸⁰ The existence of more options, both in the private and public sector, simply means that the state has taken different forms of intervention. The state remains a considerable force in the direction the education system takes because of its control at the macro level.

Li reaffirms the state’s agency by enumerating the reforms it has made to the education system during his time in office. Reforms include “making teaching an enviable profession” by raising teachers’ pay and ensuring housing, “implementing government responsibilities and increasing spending on education,” improving higher education to “meet the needs of the twenty-first century,” “laying the groundwork for great national rejuvenation,” which mostly calls for endorsement of compulsory rural education and attempting to equalize rural and urban education, but it also includes “reform of curricula, textbooks, testing and evaluation systems,” which asks for a decrease in workload for primary and secondary students, the revision of textbooks “to eliminate complicated, difficult, obscure, antiquated or incorrect contents,” and the promotion of teaching and learning foreign languages. Here, the link between the state, education, and national rejuvenation is made explicit, because it is implied that it is the government’s responsibility to fund education, which in turn will foster nation-building. The inclusion of foreign languages demonstrates China’s endeavours (and willingness) to open up further to the world outside. These reforms reflect the current central

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 21.

²⁷⁸ David Chan and Ka-Ho Mok, “Educational Reforms and Coping Strategies under the Tidal Wave of Marketisation: A Comparative Study of Hong Kong and the Mainland,” *Comparative Education*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Feb., 2001), 22 and 26.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 26.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 37.

government's endeavors to produce an effective education system that serves the needs of a modern nation that has a modern workforce that is open to the wider world and its competitive mechanism, in a very similar fashion to what was witnessed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

These points support Ramirez, Boli, and Meyer's hypotheses that a country's "increasing integration of the world structure promotes educational development," because nations feel pressured to follow international standards, and that "educational development is directly related to the degree of national linkage to the world system,"²⁸¹ so that the extent to which a nation is entwined in the world system affects the extent to which the nation feels compelled to develop its education. China created more and more links through trade, treaties, diplomatic representation, and joining international organizations, at the turn of the twentieth century, turning away from the Empire's early isolationist policies, as well as at the turn of the twenty-first, after Mao Zedong's promotion of self-sufficiency. China has therefore become increasingly subject to pressures to conform to world standards, which are reflected not only in the reforms, but also in the curricula and textbooks themselves.

A look at the 2001 (reprinted in its twelfth edition in 2007) standard history curriculum for Beijing middle schools, that depicts the way in which the Second Opium War *ought* to be taught in the classroom as well as giving the overall context of foreign aggression and Chinese modernization in which the war is to be placed, allows conclusions to be made about the way in which educational authorities expect the teaching of the Second Opium War and its general time period will instill a sense of Chinese identity. Those learning under the standard Chinese schooling system (the vast majority of the young population) need to remember past national humiliation in order to sustain the CCP's narrative of national liberation from imperialism, and the current need to show the world that China is no longer going to be bullied by external forces.

The curriculum is published by the same publishing company – the Beijing Normal University Press²⁸² – as the textbook. This press was established in 1980, and it started to publish education materials for compulsory education in 1992. Beijing Normal University is a leading institution of higher learning in China, and its press is widely recognized. As the

²⁸¹ Ramirez, Boli, Meyer (1985), 167.

²⁸² "Beijing Normal University Press," <http://www.bnu.edu.cn/bnueng/Administration/press.html>, retrieved 20-03-2009.

press for the institution where China's future professional teachers are formed, the Beijing Normal University's curriculum and textbooks are like models for the rest of the country. The curriculum looked at in this paper not only outlines the contents and objectives for all history classes in middle schools from grade 7 to 9, but also gives guidelines for the creation of history textbooks at this level. The particular textbook examined here is popular among Beijing's middle schools, although the specific number of schools and classrooms which use it remains unknown.²⁸³

Despite the declarations of reform and autonomy found in the curriculum, that demand that students should not be passive learners nor learn by rote,²⁸⁴ there remains a "correct" (正确) historical outlook that must be fostered in the history class. This "correct" view of history comes in the third section of the standard curriculum, "Standard contents," that is then subdivided into three temporal parts: ancient Chinese history (the rise of mankind until 1840), modern Chinese history (1840-1949), and contemporary Chinese history (1949-present). For China's modern history, the authors write:

In the middle of the nineteenth century, British, French, and other western powers successively mobilized wars of aggression against China, China's independent sovereignty and territorial integrity unceasingly suffered challenges, only aggravating the opposition between the Western powers and the Chinese nation. After the 70s [1870s], the powers' aggression against China intensified, increasing the seriousness of the Chinese nation's crisis. China's people resisted the powers' aggression, striving for an independent nation, carrying out a heroic fight, beginning to look for a plan of liberation.²⁸⁵

Such a narrative employs familiar ideas of "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity," concepts that assume the existence of an undisputed autonomous and bounded entity. It pits the "Chinese nation" (中华民族) against "Western colonial powers" (西方列强), and accuses the powers' aggression against China as deepening the nation's "crisis." At this point it might be worthwhile to view the "wars of aggression" (or Opium Wars) as a "founding trauma," to use Dominick LaCapra's terminology, that "poses in accentuated fashion the very question

²⁸³ "There are annually millions of students who use education materials published by BNUP," Ibid.

²⁸⁴ 历史课程标准 (2007), 1.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 11.

of identity yet may paradoxically itself become the basis of an individual or collective identity.”²⁸⁶ In this twenty-first-century standard curriculum’s view, the Western countries’ belligerence against “China” rocked China’s identity to its foundations, but at the same time, helped the Chinese people struggle heroically for a liberated and “independent nation.”

The text in the standard history curriculum also suggests that Western intrusion into China encouraged the expansion of capitalism in the country. The Westernization Movement (洋务运动), initiated within China as a response to the intensification of Western aggression in the 1870s, spurred the bourgeoisie to develop capitalism and carry out political reform “in order to save the nation from its perilous expiration” (为了挽救民族危亡).²⁸⁷ Here is an extraordinary intimation that in the face of foreign hostility, the development of capitalism protects the nation from extinction, and corroborates with those historians mentioned in Part I who argue that official histories in China tend to down-play Mao’s socialist policies as an “interim” within a broader narrative of how capitalism unfolded in China. It also follows the argument found in Part I, that the Chinese state viewed the nation’s economic development as a priority in order to safeguard the nation from further foreign intimidation, and even to be able to compete with other economically-successful powers. The curriculum points to the advancement of capitalist progress in turn-of-the-century China, including the “self-strengthening” (自强) and “aspire to wealth” (求富) movements of the late nineteenth-century, serving to justify similar contemporary government measures that promote the marketization of China’s socialist economy.²⁸⁸

Only one sentence in the curriculum refers to the disruption of the 1911 Revolution: “The Xinhai revolution overthrew the rule of the Qing dynasty, concluding China’s more than two thousand years under the absolute sovereign system, instigating the significance of the modern national-democratic revolution.”²⁸⁹ In this interpretation, the founding of the Republic represents a turning point from which China is seen as a modern, national, and democratic. The passage mentions the New Culture Movement’s liberating effect on Chinese

²⁸⁶ Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 56.

²⁸⁷ 历史课程标准 (2007), 11.

²⁸⁸ 中国历史八年级上册(zhongguo lishi banianji shangce – Chinese History Grade 8 Part I), (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 2007), Part II, Section 1, 28.

²⁸⁹ 历史课程标准 (2007), 11.

thinking, morality and culture, and finishes the paragraph with: “China, satiated from suffering the powers’ bullying, was forced to open up to the outside world, a process that caused the unceasing progress of the economy, reforms in politics and cultural ideology, and after China’s difficult start in modernity, the societal structure started to progressively go from a traditional society towards a modern society.”²⁹⁰ This is an example of a triumphal narrative that lays out an unabashedly linear view of history as a march from “tradition” to “modernity.” The foreign powers’ aggression, despite having preliminary negative influences, in effect paved the way to “progress,” “reforms,” and “modernity,” expressed as an inevitable part of China’s development.

Under the third section, part two (modern Chinese history, 1840-1949), the curriculum suggests that by studying this part of China’s history, students will

know of the foreign powers’ aggression, that the decline of the feudal authoritarian system and the general decline of the nation’s strength are the fundamental causes of China’s step by step descent to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society; be able to recognize the resistance to foreign aggression, the defense of the country’s sovereignty and national people’s dignity being the excellent tradition of the Chinese nation; establishment of the nation’s pride and self-confidence, advancing and strengthening a feeling of patriotism, learning that without the Chinese Communist Party there would be no new China, strengthening China’s faith in national revival and struggle.²⁹¹

The reasons behind teaching this segment of China’s history are clearly defined: the decline of the dynastic system and overall weakness caused China’s gradual sink into a “semi-colonial, semi-feudal society,” but resistance to foreign hostility and the safeguarding of the nation persisted, emphasizing the present-day need for students to continue believing in the capabilities of the nation to overcome challenges to its sovereignty.

The inclusion of the CCP in this part of China’s history reveals the Party’s wish to present itself as part of the solution to the nation’s historic confrontation with the Western powers. “An important source of legitimation for China’s ruling Communist Party was its part in vanquishing imperialism in the 1940s – and the closure this brought to the country’s ‘century of humiliation.’”²⁹² With the weakened faith in Communism described in Part I,

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 12.

²⁹² Cohen (2003), 149.

educators wished to “fill the minds of the young with narratives of the suffering and humiliation of the imperialist interval in China’s history and entreat them to ‘not forget.’”²⁹³ All the events described in this one paragraph are found throughout the contents of the textbook for a whole semester of grade 8 history, but to summarize the knowledge to be culled and emphasized in this way, finishing with the importance of the CCP, relates the Communist Party to the “establishment of the nation’s pride and self-confidence” that comes from “resistance and defense,” attributing to the Party all the benefits to the nation that are learned from this period of history. In the end, the CCP is indispensable to “China’s revival and struggle.” There is no mention that the struggle is over, suggesting that the threat remains. In this way, out of the trauma originating in the Opium Wars (often understandably referred to as the “wars of aggression” against China), the CCP takes on the role of creating a new national identity highlighting “struggle” (without any specific mention of class struggle) for the Chinese nation. In its description of this decisive turning point in China’s history, the authors recast the past as a linear progression from humiliation at the hands of foreigners leading inexorably to modernity and Communism’s triumph.

The actual 2007 history textbook itself is for students in the first semester of a grade 8 course. There is another textbook for the second semester. The first one covers the time period from 1839, the First Opium War, to the end of the Civil War in 1949, ending with two general chapters, one on the “economic and social life” of China and the other on the changes brought on by new ideas (ideology) and technologies at the turn of the nineteenth century. Very appropriately, therefore, on the cover of the textbook is a photo of the Monument to the People’s Heroes, erected in 1958 in Tiananmen Square, and on which can be found eight bas-reliefs depicting revolutionary struggle from the First Opium War to the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 (see Illustration 1), which happens to be the time period covered in the textbook as well as the period known as the “one hundred years of humiliation” that the arrival of the CCP put to an end. The second semester textbook covers events in Chinese history from the arrival of Communist rule in 1949 to the present-day, with a blurb on how China succeeded in getting the 2010 Summer Olympic bid. The grade 8 textbooks are full of short passages of text with titles in blue, even shorter blurbs – usually extracts from primary sources – printed on different-coloured backgrounds,

²⁹³ Ibid.

photographs, drawings, and colourful maps. The textbooks are engaging and definitely try not to overburden the students with information.

To give an idea of where and how the chapter discussed in this paper fits in the larger context of this section, it is placed in the first part of the textbook, entitled “invasion (侵略) and resistance (反抗).” Five sections are presented: the First Opium War; the burning of the Yuanming Yuan; recovery of borders; the Sino-Japanese War (of 1895); and the “Eight countries’ allied armies’ invasion,” which also describes the treaties forced upon China after the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.²⁹⁴ This dating and name underscores the entire textbook’s focus on China’s “100 years of humiliation” in preparation for the next textbook’s triumphal narrative of how the CCP liberated China starting in 1949.

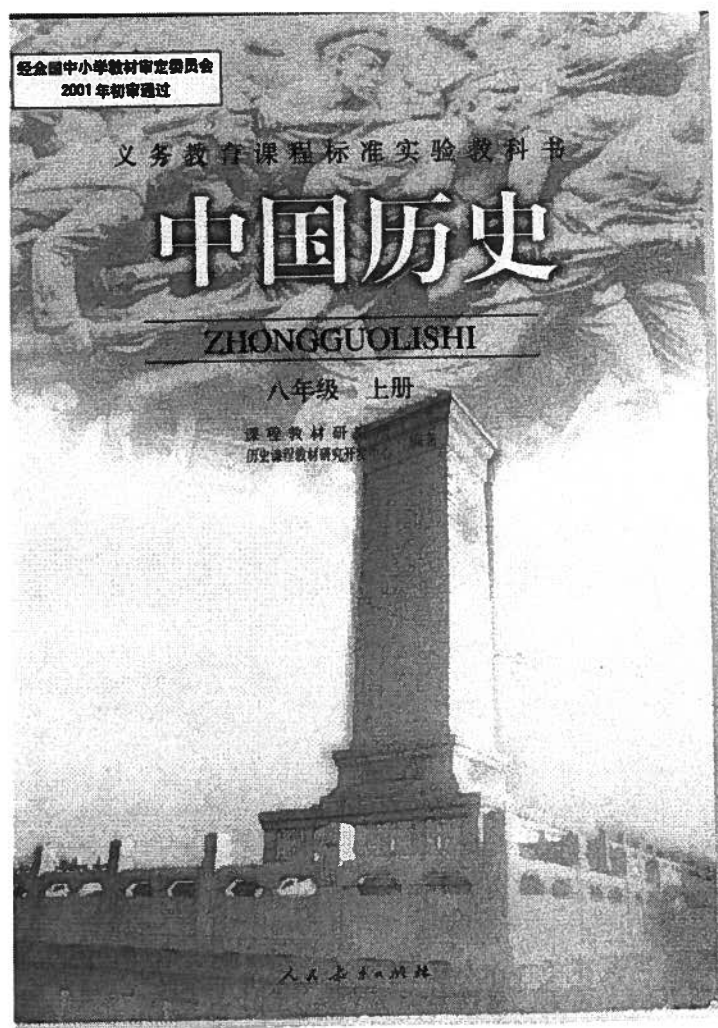


Illustration 1 – Cover of 2007 Textbook

²⁹⁴ 中国历史(2007), 2.

Since the founding of a public school system under the leadership of the central government's Ministry of Education at the beginning of the twentieth century, the government in power, whether imperial, nationalist, or communist, has viewed education as indispensable for the construction of a functioning and prosperous nation. The focus has always been on the ability of an education system to serve present needs, especially concerning the promotion of economic development. The emphasis on the "practical" and "utilitarian" aspects of learning, found among the aims of the new Republican education system, persists in the advocacy of universal education as the underpinning of China's modernization drive under the current CCP. Indeed, "every step of educational reform has involved attempts on the part of the state to penetrate society and transform those norms and values that were seen as blocking the way of progress, variously defined."²⁹⁵ At the same time, "every episode of intervention in the name of modernity often ended with a significant expansion in the power of the state."²⁹⁶ Efforts at legitimizing the authority of the state, discussed in Part I, involved establishing the current regime's superiority over the last one, and that included the appropriation and distribution of knowledge. In the name of "progress," the central state justifies valuing certain types of knowledge over others, dismissing "old" knowledge as no longer relevant to present-day needs. As suggested in Part I, it is just as important to monopolize forms of legitimacy to enhance power as it is to monopolize power in order to produce legitimacy.²⁹⁷ The state, through its overarching regulations on textbooks and schools, continues to influence the kind of knowledge taught to Chinese students.

²⁹⁵ Thøgersen in Peterson, Hayhoe, Lu (2004), 189.

²⁹⁶ Duara (1995), 111.

²⁹⁷ Thornton (2007), 2.

Part III – National Narratives in History Textbooks

Part II established that an education system and its textbooks play a role in the construction and perpetuation of the state's view of the nation. What is it exactly in the education system and its textbooks that reinforces among students a sense of belonging to an "imagined community"? In Part III, an analysis of the way in which two history textbooks, one published in 1912 and one published in 2007, relate the effects of the Second Opium War on the Chinese nation, offers a case study of the particular ways in which historical narratives diffuse national sentiments. These passages, as narratives, purport to be straightforward representations of the events that occurred during the Second Opium War., so looking at the differences between each reflects the changes of the larger environment within which the texts were written.

According to Hayden White, the extent to which events in the narrative appear "real," or realistic, depends on the extent to which they belong to an order of moral existence, on whether they integrate well into the established social order.²⁹⁸ This is an important aspect to remember when looking at these passages from textbooks that were written during periods of change in the social order. The extent to which the readers found the depictions plausible depended on the extent to which the narrative could convince the reader that this representation of the past was conducive to the present established social order. The purpose of this analysis is to help identify the patterns of moral code shifting to get at the ideological implications of writing the text in the way it was written.²⁹⁹

The change in the description of the Second Opium War, from a brief recounting of all the major episodes over the five-year war (1856-1860), to reducing the confrontation to the looting and destruction of the Yuanming Yuan by Anglo-French forces that took place in October 1860, allows conclusions to be drawn about the significance of the event for the dominant national narrative of the time period of each history text. Looking at the images that go along with the text further illuminates the type of message the authors hoped to convey and the lasting impression they wished to leave with the students. This consideration of how the passages express national narratives offers insight into why the Second Opium War continues to hold such power over the imaginations of the Chinese people, and why the

²⁹⁸ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 23-24.

²⁹⁹ See White (1987), "Chapter 8: The Context in the Text: Method and Ideology in Intellectual History," especially 196.

CCP can still use the event as a marker of national humiliation that deserves redress.

First, an overall impression of the Second Opium War's significance in China's history should be given. Nowadays, the Opium War (1839-1842) holds a special place in most official versions of Chinese history as marking the beginning of its "modern history,"³⁰⁰ as well as the beginning of China's forced entry into the international arena. The 1912 textbook itself quotes the Opium War as having "the most enormous and longest-lasting sorrowful influence" on the Qing period.³⁰¹ After the Opium War, however, during the 1840s and 1850s, the Qing Court continued to cope with the foreign incursion the way it always dealt with "barbarians": "to limit their access to China, cloak that access in rituals of the tribute system, and thereby make the necessary concessions in a fashion that affirmed the basic Confucian view of the world."³⁰² The Second Opium War (1856-1860; also known as the *Arrow War*),³⁰³ as the *second* war lost to Western powers, confirmed the Qing Empire's vulnerability to Western invasion. The Great Powers nevertheless wished to keep the Imperial government in a position of relative strength in order to wring concessions from it, going so far as to organize an "Ever-Victorious Army" to guard the Imperial Court in Beijing against the Taiping rebels.³⁰⁴ It was only until after the Second Opium War, during the 1860s, that reformers at the Imperial court launched the Self-Strengthening Movement that focused on the revitalization and strengthening of the military.³⁰⁵ As China reacted and adapted to the Western nation-state system, many other wide-ranging reforms – from the economy to education – took place during the last half of the nineteenth century.³⁰⁶

One of the most fundamental changes to China's foreign policy that evolved from the Second Opium War was the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, the official government

³⁰⁰ Many Chinese and Western historians, including Mao Zedong, define the Opium War as the beginning of "modern Chinese history." The 2001 standard curriculum for middle-school history uses 1840 and the launch of the Opium War as the beginning of China's "modern" history, and the 2007 textbook itself relates this on page 5. The 1912 textbook does not have such a dating scheme set in place. The Opium War occupies its own section in the textbook, with a title in the table of contents, distinguishing it as a major event in China's "recent past" – 近史.

³⁰¹ 共和國教科書新歷史四(*gongheguo jiaokeshu xin lishi* – Republican Textbook New History Book 4), (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1912), 7.

³⁰² Lieberthal (1995), 22. See also Hurd (1967), especially 14-16 & 20; Beeching (1975), 206 & 209.

³⁰³ Although scholars have questioned the names given to this conflict, the author chose the Second Opium War to underline the fact that it was the *second* major war China lost to Western forces. See Wong (1998), 1-2.

³⁰⁴ Lieberthal (1995), 22. This army lasted until the mid-1890s.

³⁰⁵ 中国历史 (2007), 28-29.

³⁰⁶ There are a number of sources on late-Qing reforms. See, for example, Reynolds (1993); Esherick (1976); "Part II: Late Imperial China," in John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), and specifically on the reforms' influence on ways of thinking see Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

office for foreign relations in Beijing. This made it possible for foreign delegates to not only live in Beijing, but to deal directly with representatives of the Emperor.³⁰⁷ With the founding of this institution as stipulated in the Treaty of Tianjin, finally ratified in the Convention of Peking on 18 October 1860, the Imperial government formally ended the traditional principal of inequality between the Chinese Empire and all other political powers (reflected in the tributary system so hated by the British)³⁰⁸ and acknowledged equality with other states.³⁰⁹ “British representatives living permanently in Peking would be the clearest possible sign that the Chinese Empire had agreed to treat the British as equals.”³¹⁰ Although this formality did not readily result in an immediate change in the official mindset, one could argue that this public concession of parity was a first step on the way towards re-envisioning China as part of a world system of nation-states.

The 1912 textbook calls the 1856-1860 war the “Hostilities with Anglo-French Allied Armies,” and blames its outbreak on the persistence of “mutual distrust” between China and Great Britain (彼此猜嫌) despite the signing of a treaty, presumably the 1842 Treaty of Nanking that ended the First Opium War.³¹¹ One sentence refers to the Arrow Incident, where Chinese officials boarded a British lorcha, the *Arrow*, and exposed an opium smuggling operation, allegedly pulling down the British flag in the process (拔其旗).³¹² The 1912 passage does not mention the opium smuggling, simply remarking that Guangdong functionaries caught criminals on a British boat and pulled down the British flag, which the British “regarded as humiliating” (英人以爲辱會). The text also alludes to the death of a French missionary (有法教士被害).³¹³ Although very briefly described, the start of the war is

³⁰⁷ For in-depth analysis of the Zongli Yamen, see S. M. Meng, *The Tsungli-Yamen: Its Organization and Functions*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). Hurd also describes the blow to imperial authority that foreign representatives living in Beijing would accrue for the Imperial Court. See Hurd (1967), chapter 14, especially 160.

³⁰⁸ Hurd (1967), 72. The kowtow was an especial mark of respect for the Emperor that Western officials seemed to particularly abhor. See Beeching (1975), 276-277 & 298.

³⁰⁹ “An attempt by those powers [British and French] to make the Chinese abandon their claim to superiority and enter the Western system of international law based on the idea of equal sovereign nations,” Hurd (1967), 27.

³¹⁰ Hevia (2003), 167.

³¹¹ 共和國教科書新歷史四 (1912), 13.

³¹² Wong argues that Parkes’ assertions that the flag was brought down are “dubious,” even questioning whether the flag was flying or not while anchored at port, in Wong, (1996), 9-10, 16, and “Part II: The Pretext for Imperialism,” 43-66. Hurd writes: “There is a direct conflict of evidence here which can never be finally resolved, but the weight of the evidence is against Yeh [Ye],” implying that the flag was flying. Hurd (1967), 12, 21 & 30. Beeching also expresses confusion, stating that there is evidence supporting both sides. Nevertheless, he seems to be of the opinion that it was not flying. Beeching (1975), 214 & 218. According to Hevia, the British flag is flying, but there is no mention of it being pulled down, in Hevia (2004), 32.

³¹³ P. Chapdelaine in 1856, Wang *et al*, 51; Beeching (1975), 212; Mann (1989), 2. His execution had been ordered by imperial officials. The Chinese government was apparently wary of the missionaries because of their possible ties with the rebellious sects and secret societies of the time that threatened stability. As there were hundreds of missionaries who had

not as simplified as in the twenty-first century textbook. The British experienced humiliation, the French suffered a human loss. The opening up of the opium market, and even the expansion of the larger Chinese market more generally, go unmentioned. The title of the event, “Hostilities with Anglo-French Allied Armies,” does not even place any blame, whereas the title in the 2007 textbook, “Burning of the Yuanming Yuan,” is much more provoking, immediately conjuring up questions of who would do such a thing and why. The vagueness of who the culprits are in the 2007 title is significant, as the rest of the passage tends to put the responsibility more generally on the “West,” rather than on the Anglo-French allied armies, which is specified in the 1912 title.

In the 2007 textbook, the cause of the war is summed up in the first sentence: “After the [First] Opium War, Western colonial powers were not satisfied with its advantages, so they attempted to go a step further to open the Chinese market, expanding their aggressive interests,” (扩大侵略权益).³¹⁴ The 2007 textbook’s focus is on the looting and burning of the Yuanming Yuan, so the narrative practically skips over the reasons for the start of the conflict. The explanation given for the beginning of the war is simplified to the greedy caprices of Western merchants, who only wished to “expand their aggressive interests.” Whereas in the 1912 textbook the start of the war is based on the vague environment of “mutual distrust,” in the 2007 textbook the war erupts as a result of the Western colonial powers’ vested interests in imperialism and profit-making. The 1912 passage does not refer to any wrongdoing on the part of the Anglo-French forces, practically giving them reason for starting a war with China after the humiliation of the *Arrow* incident and the harm done to a French missionary.

The 1912 passage is unconcerned about the role of commerce in the eruption of the war. The possibility of foreign covetousness and insatiability would not fit into a narrative where foreigners remain relatively innocent. The fact that the opening of the Chinese market becomes the main reason for the start of the war in the 2007 version might not just be a way to accuse the foreigners for the start of the war, but could be a reflection of the contemporary concern over the current international interest in exploiting the Chinese market – a hint at the persistence of foreign aggression. The 1912 passage’s neglect of commercial interests is in

overstepped the boundaries set in the Treaties of 1842-44 by proselytizing in the interior, it should come rather as a surprise that only one was punished. See Hurd (1967), 90-91 & 135.

³¹⁴ 中国历史 (2007), 7.

contrast to more recent Western accounts that tend to blame the start of the war on specifically Great Britain's (rather than "the West") interest in exploiting the Chinese market.

Western sources concede that the facilitation of commerce and trade in China, which was seen as potentially benefitting both China and the West, was the most apparent reason for starting the war, even though there were British officials who realized the limits of trading with a country that already appeared quite self-sufficient.³¹⁵ The "myth of the China market" was hard to dispel, and British merchants especially, plied their government to fight for their "rights" in the pursuit of free trade on a global scale.³¹⁶ Nore Wang, Wang Lo and Ye Xin, in their collaborative work on the sacking of the Yuanming Yuan, turn the British endeavour to open the Chinese market into a "plot." Behind Great Britain's claims to be enforcing the international right to relations on an equal footing among all countries, the British were at liberty to impose its form of relations between states, paralleling Hevia's argument that the British were teaching the Chinese "lessons in imperialism."³¹⁷ The general Western narrative suggests that the British government used the war to satisfy the merchants' demands and at the same time to make China submit to the world of nation-states. Some of the British superintendents who regularly dealt with Chinese imperial officials did not find that the First Opium War had produced a profound enough effect on their demeanor, and believed that a second war might quell their haughty manner and achieve diplomatic gains for England.³¹⁸ To secure satisfactory trading facilities and services – or, put another way, to develop free trade in China – necessitated the Chinese acceptance of Western ways of performing foreign policy.

The ability to enter the city of Canton freely – a 1842 treaty right not yet yielded in the 1850s – came to be viewed as a symbol of what the British wanted from China: for foreigners to be treated on British terms, where Chinese officials had to deal with them on an equal footing and take British counsel and requests into consideration, rather than on Chinese terms, where Chinese officials could avoid contact with the British and ignore their appeals, treating them as a nuisance instead of as a force to be reckoned with.³¹⁹ It became an obsession for the "old China hands" living and working in the port of Canton, as well as

³¹⁵ See, for example, Hurd (1967), 132-134.

³¹⁶ Wakeman (1975), 182.

³¹⁷ Wang *et al.*, (2003), 50.

³¹⁸ Wakeman (1975), 141.

³¹⁹ Beeching (1975), 208-209.

nearby Hong Kong, to achieve the right to enter the city of Canton and get the reluctant Chinese officials, such as Ye Mingchen, to yield to British pressure.³²⁰

Western sources claim that the Second Opium War began when the British side recovered their resources after the end of the Crimean war (February 1856), and pursued a renegotiation of the Treaty of Nanking of 1842, which the Chinese side was not prepared to renew.³²¹ The French government committed itself to cooperate with the British, as they had in the Crimea, and jointly asked the Chinese imperial throne for a revision of the treaties from the First Opium War. The French participated in the war to assure a French sphere of influence in China. At the end of the war, the French made certain that greater freedoms were given to Catholic missionaries in the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin, ratified in Beijing in October 1860. Despite the war's affront to the imperial throne, it remained essential to maintain the Emperor's authority. If the Manchu government collapsed, there would be no one for the allies to deal with and from which to obtain concessions, making the continuation of a recognized and solid empire indispensable.³²²

The 1912 Chinese textbook's account of the Second Opium War, however, is not interested in blaming the West for initiating the conflict. Rather, it focuses in more detail on how the Chinese side – specifically the imperial Court – caused the spiraling of events that led to the war and its outcome, accusing the imperial form of government of ineptitude and implicitly supporting the establishment of a modern, effective republican government. The 2007 textbook's explanation, although very brief, does not stray far from Western sources' explanations – that the opening of the Chinese market was the primary aim of the allied forces. The passage does accuse the Western colonial powers rather sweepingly, without marking the relatively greater accountability given to the British for starting the war that Western sources tend to make. This tendency to draw one large, imprecise “Western” enemy and not make distinctions between the differing roles of the British and the French sides continues throughout the text, as will be seen later. Its effect is to suggest to present-day students that the “West” in general, including the United States, may still be plotting against China.

³²⁰ See Beeching (1975), “Chapter 7: The City Question,” 206-257.

³²¹ Hevia (2004), 32; Wong (1998), 263-264; Hurd, (1967), 26-27; Beeching (1975), 206-211 & 215; Mann (1989), chapter 1; Wang *et al.* (2003), 51.

³²² Beeching (1975), especially 273 & 303.

The only effect of the war on China, as far as one can tell from the beginning of the passage from the 1912 textbook, is that Guangdong's Governor, Ye Mingchen, "ill-prepared" (不設備) for the coastal attack, was captured (虜) by the British and met his death in India.³²³ The insertion into the 1912 narrative of the capture and death of Ye, because he was "ill-prepared," reminds students under the newly-formed republic of the inability of the old officials under the imperial regime to defend Chinese territory. Rather than blaming the allied forces, from the perspective of this narrative it was Ye's fault he was caught and died because he was "ill-prepared." As the Governor of Guangdong, his is the only death worth mentioning. There is no evidence of the wider grief and turmoil the average Chinese person might have experienced during this time, as the "people" do not yet have a role in the recounting of Chinese history. The focus is only on Ye, with no mention that the "West" was at least partially responsible for having instigated a crippling war with its ensuing unequal treaties oppressing the Chinese population as a whole.

Aside from Ye's imprisonment and death, the only other consequence of the war for China noted in this passage is the burning of the Yuanming Yuan. In this case, the 1912 textbook does indeed hold both the British and French sides responsible, although there is no mention of looting or pillaging. This is a great divergence from the 2007 textbook, which spends considerable time discussing the horrific acts committed by the allied forces on the Yuanming Yuan. The 2007 textbook cites excerpts of a contemporary British newspaper detailing the loot, and of Victor Hugo's condemning letter written in 1861, as well as adding at the end of the chapter the optional reading about the unfair fate of the "stolen" bronze statue heads discussed at the beginning of this paper. It seems that the 1912 textbook does not view the pillaging to be worthy of notice, since the focus of this account is not on generating anti-foreign sentiments but on blaming the dynastic regime for China's vulnerability. The 1912 text explains that the burning of the Yuanming Yuan occurred because China reneged on its promises set out in the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin (end of story). In this account, the imperial court's incompetence is emphasized. Because the Treaty of Tianjin was ignored, the burning of the Yuanming Yuan took place, turning this into a cause-and-effect event that made the Qing government responsible for the allied forces' actions.

³²³ Interestingly, maybe as a result of being a textbook geared for children, the character used for death is "四."

The humiliation of the imperial Court continues in the 1912 version with the assertion that the Xianfeng Emperor fled to Rehe (Jehol – a mountain resort in Chengde) and sent his brother, Prince Gong, to plead for peace with the foreigners. That marks the end of the passage “Hostilities with Anglo-French Allied Armies.” The Emperor’s escape during the burning of the Yuanming Yuan is not mentioned in the present-day textbook. Its role in the 1912 textbook is most likely to reinforce the image of the Emperor as coward and highlights the utter failure of his imperial Court to defend Chinese territory in the face of foreign invasion. Although the Beiyang regime goes unmentioned at this point, because it focuses on the humiliating actions of the imperial government, this passage subverts the Emperor’s authority, implying that any form of government would be better at defending China and its territory than the imperial Court.

Because the 2007 textbook focuses so much on the looting and burning of the Yuanming Yuan, a brief description of the residence is in order. Although not described in the student textbooks, the Yuanming Yuan is a large complex of gardens and palaces that extends over 350 hectares³²⁴ not far from Beijing to the northwest. Construction began in the early eighteenth century and the residence was originally built as a secondary palace for Qing rulers, but “over a period of 150 and more years, it had become a custom for the emperor to live, handle state affairs and give audience to ministers in the garden,”³²⁵ rendering the Yuanming Yuan a place of particular importance and significance for the Emperor and his Court. Within the park there were dispersed around two hundred buildings, thirty of them palatial Imperial residences. More than just living quarters and a political and ceremonial centre, Yuanming Yuan was a reflection of Chinese culture in all its glory. Landscapists recreated scenes depicted in famous poetry in the gardens, architects erected rare and innovative forms of buildings, and “displayed and stored in the beautifully decorated and elegantly furnished halls and rooms were the most valuable books, paintings and calligraphic works of various dynastic periods together with jade articles, porcelain ware, bronzes, cloisonné and other rare treasures from all parts of the country and the world.”³²⁶ Special plants and animals from around the country were brought to represent the diversity and

³²⁴ Hevia estimates 857 acres, Hevia (2004), 108.

³²⁵ Zhu Jie, *Yuanmingyuan Garden*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2000), 2.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

distinctiveness of different regions of China.³²⁷ Europe was even made to be a part of this re-creation of the universe within the walls of the Yuanming Yuan in the form of the “European Palaces,” which were two palaces built in baroque style, devised by exiled Jesuit priests, Castiglione and Benoist, for the Xianlong emperor. By having these European constructions inside the confines of the Yuanming Yuan, the Occident could be neatly placed within the Chinese sphere. A small tourist-oriented book published by the Foreign Languages Press in 2000 says it best: “Yuanming Yuan, where the wisdom of innumerable engineers and artisans was embodied, was a symbol and epitome of the ancient civilization of the Chinese nation.”³²⁸

The plunder and eventual destruction of this symbol of Chinese civilization was a catastrophe for the national psyche. The looting and pillaging itself was a great tragedy. The Allied troops had been raiding Chinese cities and villages all along their advance since their entrance into Canton in January 1860, through Pehtang in August, to Chang-chia-wan in September, with witnesses blaming anybody but themselves.³²⁹ What made the pillage of the Yuanming Yuan significant and memorable was the extent of the riches to be found and its thorough and extensive looting by the Anglo-French forces. “Today’s Yuanming Yuan, with its unique tragic beauty and sense of history, reminds people of the past and urges them to study the rise and fall, order and disorder of a nation. The soul-stirring power embodied in Yuanming Yuan and its special historic place are far more than what are to be found in the ruins of an imperial scenic garden.”³³⁰ What Zhu Jie terms “soul-stirring power,” another author, Régine Thiriez, calls “evocative power.”³³¹ Yuanming Yuan, as the representation of all that is illustrious and notable about ancient Chinese culture now turned into ruins, acts as an evocative symbol of China’s greatness, but also of national suffering at the hands of foreigners.

The use of descriptive language in the 2007 passage generates compelling imagery:

³²⁷ Ibid., 2-4.

³²⁸ Zhu Jie (2000), 5. The Yuanming Yuan was the “treasure-house of China – such a concentration of visual beauty, artifice and wealth as neither existed nor could once again have been brought into being anywhere else in the world. The Summer Palace as it stood represented not the Manchu dynasty, but China.” Beeching (1975), 316.

³²⁹ The British and French sides would accuse the other of beginning, persisting, or exceeding in the raids. If acknowledging their own involvement, the British blamed the Sikhs for starting, continuing, or going too far with the raids, and generally having a bad influence on the rest of the troops. Beeching (1975), 286-287 & 305-306; Mann (1989), 50-51, 115, 136-138.

³³⁰ Zhu Jie (2000), 5.

³³¹ Régine Thiriez, *Barbarian Lens: Western Photographers of the Qianlong Emperor’s European Palaces*, (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998), xxi.

“Yuanming Yuan’s large fire burned three days and three nights. While in the past it had been a splendid palace, with heavenly and ancient greenery, all were reduced to ashes.”

Nevertheless, China’s endurance and perseverance are insinuated in the description of the ruins of the Yuanming Yuan: “Nowadays, in Yuanming Yuan there are only a few pieces of relics that stand firmly in place. These relics are like a commemoration to record the Anglo-French united army’s monstrous crime, its devastating destruction of Chinese civilization.”³³²

The depiction of the burning of the Yuanming Yuan in this passage appears transparent and real, suppressing awareness of the contingency of its narrative. The allied army is drawn as one large invader, who burns down the Yuanming Yuan out of shame for its earlier destructive robbing and looting. Certain aspects are simplified and others purposefully fabricated to create a narrative that fits a model of national rhetoric: the nation – as symbolized by the Emperor’s residence – is innocent, while the foreign enemy is greedy, aggressive, and malicious. Wang, Lo, and Xin contest this black and white narrative by suggesting that a servant of the Qing Court observed that after the Emperor Xianfeng’s departure, those left behind were no longer able to control the comings and goings of the residence, and that local inhabitants had already started to set fire to the gardens in order to pillage even before the arrival of the allied armies.³³³ Other Western authors also suggest that Chinese peasants from nearby villages participated in the looting and were later punished for their sacrilegious actions, although how and by whom they were reprimanded goes unmentioned.³³⁴ It is well-known that coolie troops hired by the Anglo-French forces had been recruited from Hong Kong’s underworld – the Allied troops having had difficulty finding reliable assistance – and that their behavior alongside the advance of the allied forces was deemed at best suspicious.³³⁵ These accounts implicate the Chinese themselves in the looting and destruction of the Yuanming Yuan, but such a possibility is unthinkable in a narrative that emphasizes national Chinese unity against foreign attack, such as can be found in the 2007 textbook.

³³² 中国历史, 7.

³³³ Wang *et al* (2003), 43.

³³⁴ See Beeching (1975), 322. Mann (1989) writes of a Chinese peasant caught by French soldiers for stealing a pair of shoes and who was beaten with a cane by the French General de Montauban, 137. Thiriez (1998), also alludes to the Chinese participating in the loot, 56.

³³⁵ See Beeching (1975), 306; Mann (1989), 18-20 & 37.

According to Hevia, 4 400 officers and men participated in the burning of the Yuanming Yuan,³³⁶ and it took days for them to accomplish their task (two according to Hevia and Wong; three according to the 2007 textbook). Such a large and destructive undertaking demands an explanation. One of the most interesting deviations of the recent textbook's version of the event from the usual narration given by Western sources is the reasoning behind the burning of the Yuanming Yuan. Twice, the passage in the 2007 textbook refers to the combined Anglo-French forces as intending to "cover people's ears and eyes" (掩人耳目) by burning down the palace. Implied is that the allied army, after "plundering, pillaging and looting the magnificent buildings," used fire to cover their traces or "hoodwink the public" of their terrible offense.³³⁷

Western sources, on the other hand, attribute the decision to burn the Yuanming Yuan to the British High Commissioner to China, Lord Elgin – one person, not an army – as punishment for the Emperor (it was his main residence, after all) for having allowed a group of European and Indian soldiers allegedly sent out to the Chinese side to prepare peace talks, to be tortured, with a few even killed.³³⁸ In the 2007 passage, because the plundering and burning of the Yuanming Yuan is interpreted as a collective decision taken to satisfy the Westerners' greed and to cover their tracks, all trace of Chinese liability in the affair is overlooked, and the actions that allegedly influenced Elgin to order the destruction of the Yuanming Yuan are ignored. Interestingly, the 1912 passage blames the imperial throne's failure to ratify the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin for the Allies' decision to burn down the Yuanming Yuan. Just as in the 2007 version, the passage does not mention the Chinese torture and killing of a group of Allied soldiers, but in contrast, it holds the Imperial Court responsible for the disaster rather than the foreigners.

Western historians tend to focus on Elgin's decision to burn the Yuanming Yuan as a measure taken specifically to teach a lesson to the Emperor and not to the *people* of China, against whom he purportedly wanted to do the least damage. Lengthy descriptions of the suffering and sometimes death of the Allied prisoners, and how their bodies were recovered,

³³⁶ Hevia (2004), 74.

³³⁷ 中国历史, 7.

³³⁸ Hevia (2004), 45-46; Wang *et al* (2003), 46-47. Out of the 26 British and 13 French prisoners, 13 British and 6 French returned alive. In Wang *et al* (2003), 46; Beeching (1975), 299-309 & 322-323; Hurd (1967), 229-230 & 234-237; Mann (1989), 143-146. See also Wolseley (1972), 176-177, for an account of how the group was taken; 182 for a list of the missing men, British only; 259-260 for their return.

almost seems to justify Elgin's actions in these narratives. In the 1912 textbook, the actions of the Emperor and his Court are at fault because they do not ratify the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin; in the 2007 textbook, the Anglo-French troops start the fire in an effort to conceal their earlier shameful actions of looting and pillaging; while in Western sources, how the British High Commissioner to China comes to his decision is laboriously detailed in order to allow the reader to understand the circumstances he faced and assess his reasons.

Western sources also contest the accusation that French armies, as well as British, participated in the burning of the Yuanming Yuan. When asked by General Elgin to provide soldiers to partake in the burning of the Imperial residence, the French General Montauban was said to be against the idea, for various reasons, including that it might attract damaging publicity and it could negatively affect the negotiations between the allies and the Chinese, and might even lead to the overthrow of Beijing and the fall of the Qing dynasty, which was against their orders.³³⁹ So while the French forces participated in the looting, they did not necessarily contribute to the burning of the Yuanming Yuan, and therefore to its total destruction, as both Chinese textbooks would have their readers believe. This is possibly because the authors of both passages wished to portray the invaders in broad strokes. For the 1912 authors, the incompetence of the imperial throne in the face of foreign aggression was seen as more significant than the actual threat of invasion itself. For the 2007 authors, the distinction between the roles of the British and French sides remains irrelevant in their attempts to paint the "West" in general, negative terms.

Historical narratives found in middle-school history textbooks do not necessarily "create" nationalism, but they can reinforce certain aspects of it, especially when depicting a significant historical event, such as a war with a foreign country. The 2007 passage's focus on the destruction of the Yuanming Yuan by the "evil" Anglo-French forces buttresses a sense of shared memory of the humiliating event as well as a collective Chinese identity that is in contrast to the West's aggressive behaviour. This "cultural memory," which entails forgetting as much as remembering, evokes a "national people," working together to safeguard the strength and productivity of the "nation" against foreign encroachment and intimidation, partly reflecting the current anti-foreign sentiment that was seen to be endorsed by the state in Part I.

³³⁹ Hevia (2004), 47; Wolseley (1972), 279; Beeching (1975), 325; Hurd (1967), 235-236; Mann (1989), 151.

The 1912 passage also reinforces a certain aspect of nationalism based on its depiction of the events. Neither the outbreak of the war, Ye's death, nor even the burning down of the Yuanming Yuan are seriously considered to be the fault of the foreigners. By focusing on the misconduct of the Imperial Court, even the Emperor himself, rather than on that of the foreigners, the narrative delegitimizes the imperial system's worth as defender of the Chinese nation. In the 2007 version, however, the blame is squarely placed on the shoulders of the Anglo-French armies, in a way delegitimizing *their* worth in the eyes of the reader. To what extent can these nations be seen as superior if this is how they acted? Is their way of doing things, especially their ethics, really as innocent and exceptional as they claim?

Indeed, tourists today can visit the Yuanming Yuan and read the various signs that exist around the park to remind visitors of the shameful acts perpetrated by foreigners against the palaces and garden. The fact that this historical event is taught in such a way in the present-day school system, however, calls to mind the importance of symbolism of images learned in school to the establishment of a national consciousness.³⁴⁰ Through the 2007 passage, the Yuanming Yuan ruins become a "common point of reference" for all the students learning Chinese history from this textbook, a point that overcomes regional boundaries and reinforces the Chinese people's national purpose. Students are reminded of past national humiliation by focusing on the most shocking event of the Second Opium War: the looting and pillaging of an icon of ancient Chinese civilization, and its intolerable destruction by foreigners. This agonizing event is part of a national narrative that becomes a part of the "century of humiliation" until the arrival of the Communists in 1949, at which point resistance and the wiping out of past dishonor are stressed. The relics referred to in the passage act as a "commemoration," a specific place that embodies China's past vulnerability and the nation's present need to demonstrate its current strength to the world. The relics are a commemoration waiting for some sort of redress, or at least a restoration of China's past magnificence.

The twenty-first century textbook continues to develop this anti-foreign line of thinking by looking at passages from two primary sources: a British newspaper excerpt detailing the looting and burning of the Yuanming Yuan, that vaunts the plunder and value of the goods accumulated by British soldiers, and an excerpt from Victor Hugo's famous letter to a British

³⁴⁰ Weber (1976), 337.

captain depicting his horrified response to the allied troops' destruction of the Yuanming Yuan. Hugo wrote it while in exile in November 1861 – a full year after the event actually took place. One sentence is added in the textbook's excerpt that does not appear in the original. This sentence reads: "This [the plundering of the Yuanming Yuan and the transporting of loot back to Europe] is only one part of the two bandits' career." This "supplement" to the letter is a definite remark upon the numerous "crimes" that these two "bandits" committed, whether in China or elsewhere. Victor Hugo, being a well-known and popular writer in China, must have had his letter translated into Chinese numerous times,³⁴¹ so it is quite astonishing that the authors of this textbook would choose to so blatantly add such a powerful message for its readers of Europe's profuse evil-doing. It implies that such a "career" is not over yet and gives support to the contemporary view that the West continues to oppress the world, including China, discussed in Part I.

This focus on one of the most painful and humiliating elements of the Second Opium War, the destruction of the Yuanming Yuan, ingrains the injustice China suffered at the hands of domineering and exploitative colonial powers in the minds of Chinese students. Hevia argues that the acquisition of military technology and the search to eliminate a feeling of national humiliation are two elements that "run like a thread through the entire history of twentieth-century China,"³⁴² but the way in which this national humiliation is portrayed and interpreted changes with the shifting objectives of those in power. In a chapter on remembering and forgetting national humiliation, Paul Cohen suggests that the 1990s witnessed a resurgence of *guochi* – national humiliation – writing that had been a predominant preoccupation among writers of the republican era as well. Both eras saw an "overriding emphasis on the shameful interlude of China's victimization at the hands of imperialism in the century following the Opium War."³⁴³ The difference between the two time periods was that the "emphasis [in the 1990s] was much less on the defects of the Chinese body politic that facilitated imperialist incursion and much more on the Chinese

³⁴¹ A Chinese translation can be found on a French site ("Lettre de Victor Hugo sur le Palais d'Ete en bilingue," http://www.chine-informations.com/guide/chine-lettre-de-victor-hugo-sur-le-palais-dete-yuanmingyuan-en-bilingue_1618.html; retrieved 27-11-2008), and Hugo's popularity in China is described in an on-line article by Meiyang Li, "The Voice of Justice, Victor Hugo in China," UNESCO Courier, Nov. 1985, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1310/is_/ai_4003610?tag=artBody;col1; retrieved 27-11-2008). The French copy of the letter that I used comes from Wang *et al*, 9-10.

³⁴² Hevia (2004), 333.

³⁴³ Cohen (2003), 166.

people's defiant struggle against it."³⁴⁴ By implication, the writers in the republican era, who were closer temporally to the time period in question and did not yet view it as "one hundred years of humiliation," remembered these events as being the fault of the "Chinese body politic," in other words, the dynastic system. At that point in time, it was more important for those who were in control of writing history to admonish the previous form of rule in order to support their own position as advocates of the modern, "democratic" republic, than to demonize the foreigners.

Cohen's point is that nowadays, the CCP needs to remind people of the suffering and humiliation of the imperialist interval in order to highlight its own triumphal narrative of how it overcame imperialism and created an independent, sovereign Chinese nation. In the twenty-first century, increasing numbers of people have never directly experienced the effects of imperialism, and the CCP's victory in 1949 now appears less momentous in an increasingly distant past. Young people, therefore, need to be reintroduced to the "century of national humiliation" to buttress the CCP's claim to holding the position of national liberator and harbinger of national salvation. For the Communist Party's national narrative, recounting China's suffering under Western imperialism is "not just a history of humiliation, it is also a history of resistance, of the wiping out of humiliation."³⁴⁵ Even if the 2007 passage does not emphasize the Chinese people's resistance to foreign imperialism specifically,³⁴⁶ it does give a convincing portrayal of the wickedness of the West and hints at the present need to re-establish the international recognition of China.

The fact that the Qing Court was unable to defend the palace and the Empire is of no consequence in the 2007 passage's effort to focus on the devastation to China's glorious civilization wreaked by the Anglo-French allied forces. The emphasis on Western guilt for the allied forces' actions reinforces the idea that what the West did was wrong and that such a despicable act warrants restitution. In one part of *China Can Say No*, the 1990s best-seller depicted in Part I, the "shame" of the colonial era is recalled in order to encourage the reader "to see a *parallel* between China's colonial past and the Chinese government's international dilemma in the present."³⁴⁷ In effect, *Shuobu* "attempts to translate the international

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 166-167.

³⁴⁵ Liang Yichun, quoted in Ibid., 167.

³⁴⁶ Western historians of China suggest that during the Mao era, Chinese historians directed their attention at recounting moments when the Chinese people heroically resisted foreign imperialism to underscore Mao's anti-imperialist message.

³⁴⁷ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 222.

dilemma faced by China's current state apparatus [of isolation in the international arena] into a problem for all Chinese people." All Chinese people should feel indignity that Western forces – especially the United States – are holding China back from achieving her rightful place on the world stage, which at the same time subverts the Chinese culture and economy. Of most importance in the reading of this widely distributed book is the proposition that "the past invoked is meant to teach a perception of the 'foreign' *in the present*," and the reader "is encouraged to feel as strong a hatred towards the 'foreign' [in the present] as the humiliation of the past deserves."³⁴⁸ This is especially true for the reading of the passage on the looting and burning of the Yuanming Yuan in the 2007 history textbook. By invoking this one compelling and impressive event, the authors imprint in the minds of the students China's suffering as if it were still experiencing that dishonor today.

In its efforts to advance a narrative of victimhood, where past humiliations at the hands of foreigners appear as consequential for Chinese people today as they did more than a century ago, the central government not only glosses over its own responsibility for China's current problems, but also gives the Chinese people a sense of urgency to accomplish its national goals. The "inculcation of a sense of victimhood is designed to enhance an awareness that past humiliations can be repeated if China remains technologically backward and becomes politically divided."³⁴⁹ Such a narrative serves the domestic purposes of generating popular cooperation and collaboration for the national modernization drive, and relegates complaints about the current situation to the status of treachery for hindering the achievement of those national goals.

In his *History in Three Keys*, Paul Cohen explains the Boxer Rebellion as "Event," "Experience," and "Myth." In his preface, Cohen suggests the "political or overtly propagandistic nature" of re-writing the history of the Boxer rebellion "in the post-Boxer present,"³⁵⁰ in a way that simplifies – or "mythifies" – the past. He differentiates historians from mythologizers by their intentions or goals. While "good" historians have the "primary objective...to construct, on the basis of evidence available, as accurate and truthful an understanding of the past as possible," mythologizers "draw on it [the past] to serve political,

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 223.

³⁴⁹ Guo (2004), 34.

³⁵⁰ Paul Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxer Rebellion as Event, Experience, and Myth*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), xiii.

ideological, rhetorical, and/or emotional needs of the present.”³⁵¹ To be of some value, these terms would need some explanation (what are “emotional needs”? *whose* emotional needs is Cohen referring to?). As well, it would be very difficult to know, or to get at, an author’s intentions – as Cohen admits himself, some authors believe in their myths to the extent that they do not consider what they write or say to be myth at all – so who is to judge an author’s intentions? Moreover, does there exist a historical narrative that is not susceptible to any of these caveats?

Cohen, however, does go on to explain that while historians “deal in complexity, nuance and ambiguity, mythologizers generally operate with a one-dimensional view of the past, wrenching from the past single characteristics or traits or patterns that are then portrayed as the essence of past reality.”³⁵² With this latter definition of mythology in mind, it is possible to say that the passages found in the 1912 and 2007 history textbooks about the Second Opium War can be considered myth. “Nationalist mythmaking” is “a means of setting one body of images and values against another, which will very often threaten to overwhelm the first,”³⁵³ and this opposition can be seen in the 1912 passage’s focus on the failures of the imperial system, and in the 2007 passage’s emphasis on foreign maliciousness and aggression. Here is where the relevance of Duara’s definition of nationalism, as the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other, becomes evident.

The 1912 passage reinforces the new Republic’s claim to legitimacy by insinuating that the events of the Second Opium War were a succession of mistakes made by those in power at the time – the Emperor and his officials – while completely overlooking the role of Western interests and aggression in China. Although not explicitly stated, it is implied throughout the text that the values of the imperial regime were unable to successfully protect China from foreign intrusion, even though that foreign encroachment is itself nowhere clearly depicted as necessarily a bad thing. The underlying message is that the old-fashioned imperial government’s bungling response to a threat proved to be totally inept. The Chinese nation can now look forward to effective direction and national modernization under a

³⁵¹ Ibid., 213.

³⁵² Ibid., 214.

³⁵³ Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” *Film and Nationalism*, Alan Williams, ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 54.

republican system that is on par with the types of government found among other modern nations of the world.

The 2007 passage focuses on the wrong-doings of the “Western colonial forces,” who commit such atrocities that would seemingly be unthinkable for the Chinese troops. The textbook “forgets” the fate of the group of Allied prisoners seized by the Chinese side, which Western sources consider the catalyst for Elgin’s resolve to burn down the Yuanming Yuan. The passage also neglects any possibility of Chinese participation in the looting in order to focus on the injustice of what occurred at the hands of the Western forces, depicted in sweeping terms. It is a function of the very real political strategy to essentialize past events in order to create a shared memory of humiliation that reminds students of the CCP’s historic victory over imperialism and that may impel the youth to redress the problem of China’s inequality on the world stage.

Both textbooks use pictures to highlight in different ways the threat of foreign encroachment. The 1912 textbook supplies an image of the allied soldiers disembarking from boats in the ocean (see Illustration 2). The numerous boats with their flags waving appear in the background, with a row boat in the forefront allowing soldiers with their rifles in hand to ascend onto the mainland, the ocean water going up to their knees or waist. The Chinese are not depicted, as if there was no pretense to defense at all. There is only tall grass or boards sticking out of the water. Although simply a sketch, the drawing depicts a powerful scene of invasion from the ocean, as the soldiers appear to literally rise out of the water. This was a new and profound threat for the Chinese, who had historically known only land invasions. The caption reads, “The Anglo-French united army lands [上陸] near Tianjin.”³⁵⁴ The image reinforces the idea of invading foreign troops arriving onto defenseless Chinese territory, supporting the Beiyang regime’s national narrative that the imperial Court ineffectively guarded China, while the new republic and its proponents intend to restore China’s glory and successfully garner the West’s support.

³⁵⁴ Mann (1989) describes the difficulty the Allied forces had in disembarking – soldiers wading waist deep towards the shore and then encountering “a flat of soft, sticky, slippery mud,” 49.



Illustration 2 – 1912 Textbook, Anglo-French Allied Army Land Near Tianjin

In the chapter dealing with the Second Opium War, the 2007 textbook juxtaposes a drawing of the Yuanming Yuan depicting the Haiyantang – the European-style hall in front of which appears a fountain surrounded by the twelve bronze statues of Chinese zodiac animal heads, five of which caused such an uproar when sold at world auction houses – with a black and white photograph of the enduring ruins of the European palaces (see Illustrations 3 and 4). The drawing of the Haiyantang reminds students of the splendor of the Yuanming Yuan, and shows how the bronze statue heads discussed in the optional reading at the end of the chapter were used in the past, how they were an integral part of the magnificence of the emperor's residence, even if they were placed in front of a palace of European design. The photograph of the ruins is small but the caption underneath recounts the majesty and beauty of the Yuanming Yuan, whose presence lasted 150 years. How poignant that the choice of pictures portrays the European palaces, created by French and Italian Jesuits in the service of the Qing emperors,³⁵⁵ and that these images are then used in the textbook to illustrate Western aggression on a symbol of China's eminence.

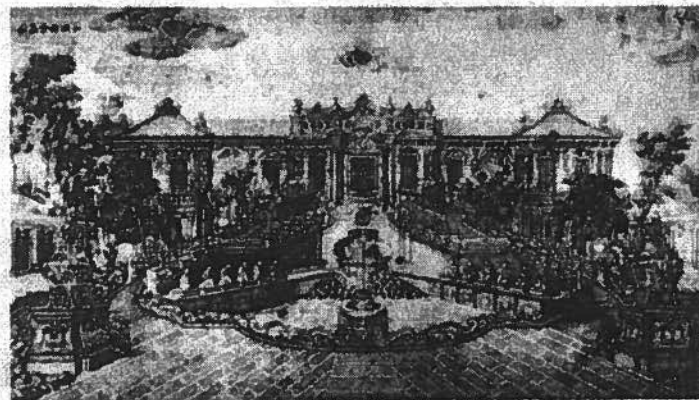


Illustration 3 – The Haiyantang

³⁵⁵ Hevia (2003), 100; Thiriez (1998), 133.

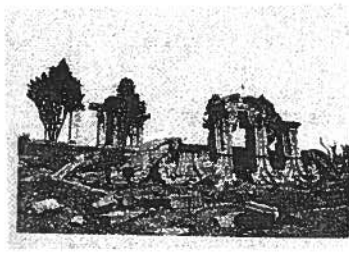


Illustration 4 – Ruins of the European Palaces

The choice of this photograph of the remaining columns from the European Palaces places visual emphasis on the lasting relics of the Yuanming Yuan. Régine Thiriez, in her book *Barbarian Lens: Western Photographers of the Qianlong Emperor's European Palaces*, makes the point that the European Palaces were for a long time the focus of early Western photographers in Beijing simply because the material in which they had been made, brick and stone, “withstood the great fire much better than their wooden Chinese counterparts.”³⁵⁶ Her book powerfully illustrates the duration of the long process of “destruction” of the European Palaces – one-fiftieth of the total area of the Yuanming Yuan – using photographs from the 1870s as well as the beginning of the twentieth century as evidence of the progression of decay. “The nineteenth century views all prove that the [European] palaces withstood the 1860s fire relatively well. [...] The actual disappearance of the buildings was due to neglect, pilfering or simple vandalism.”³⁵⁷ Recovery of the materials by locals, such as brick for local construction and marble for the making of lime, are known reasons for the gradual damage done to the structures.

Although difficult to ascertain how Hurd knows this, he indicates while writing in the 1960s, that “the Communist Government has not so far tried to exploit the propaganda value of the place [Yuanming Yuan]. For the most part the site looks prehistoric, showing only mounds, ditches and lakes as if they were traces of some long-vanished civilization. But the outer walls for the stone buildings designed by the Jesuits survived the fire, and have only slowly crumbled in the intervening century.”³⁵⁸ Thiriez accords the European Palaces’ popularity – its replication in the textbook attests to its becoming the “representative image” of the Yuanming Yuan³⁵⁹ – to the simple fact that it is naturally better preserved, since

³⁵⁶ Thiriez (1998), 60.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 131.

³⁵⁸ Hurd (1967), 236.

³⁵⁹ Thiriez (1998), 133; most of the images on the Beijing government site on the Yuanming Yuan display shots of the European Palace relics. Visit: <http://www.ebeijing.gov.cn/>

conservation measures have been undertaken only recently.³⁶⁰ She concludes that the earlier photographs portray structures that are closer to the originals from before the fire, while photographs from later periods display the natural deterioration that comes with time. The photographs presented in this book are “proof that eighty years of pilfering had been far more destructive than the blaze and were ultimately responsible for bringing the European Palaces to oblivion.”³⁶¹ In the 2007 textbook authors’ rush to point an accusing finger at Western forces for the complete destruction of the gardens, the passage of time and the role of Chinese indifference to the upkeep of the Yuanming Yuan are overlooked.³⁶²

The CCP’s choice to recover and restore the palatial grounds during the 1980s was a part of the state’s task to produce, preserve, and restore national history. Hevia has argued that the CCP’s requests for international recognition and protection of such sites as the Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven, “is clearly part of a development strategy designed to promote external and internal tourism,” as well as to “have the effect of contributing to a wider discourse on patriotism (*aiguo*, love of country) and national pride.”³⁶³ In this way, the state simultaneously develops the economy through tourism, expands its own authority over the way in which aspects of Chinese history are accessed and interpreted, increases China’s prestige by boasting UNESCO World Heritage sites, and encourages feelings of national pride among the Chinese people. The connections between the state’s authority, historical production and nationalism are made clear in these undertakings taken on by the CCP.

A small drawing on the following page shows the allied army looking aloof in front of a fire, the flames licking at what look like very intricately decorated buildings (see Illustration 5). Ruins already loom to the left of the drawing, with three representatives of the allied armies guarding a stash of precious loot in the foreground, one soldier still holding a trunk in his arms. The imagery of China’s great civilization crumbling under the eyes of the West highlights how these Western imperial forces subverted China’s sovereignty through their deliberate and cruel actions. The caption reads: Anglo-French Allied Army looting (抢劫) in

³⁶⁰ Thiriez notes that conservation measures were undertaken only, “first, with a careful rearrangement of architectural remains before the Cultural Revolution and, since 1984, with a massive effort at restoring the site which has paid little attention to historical or architectural accuracy and has altered the landscape and ruins beyond recognition,” Thiriez (1998), 60.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 63.

³⁶² Hevia also adds that for “much of the PRC period, the ruins of the gardens were officially neglected,” with farmers living and growing crops within the grounds of the park until the 1980s, in Hevia (2003), 340.

³⁶³ Hevia (2003), 340.

the Yuanming Yuan. By adding the “suggested reading” at the end of the chapter, about the sale of two of the Yuanming Yuan bronze statues at a Christie’s auction mentioned in this paper’s introduction, the authors of this 2007 textbook reinforce the idea of the West’s perpetuation of “bringing China low.”



Illustration 5 – Anglo-French Allied Army looting in the Yuanming Yuan

Dominick LaCapra has called on historians to avoid looking at texts simply as a quarry for facts and focus on examining the relation between how it functions as a text and its *use* for the reconstitution of life in the past for the present. In other words, the task of the historian is to focus on the “work-like” aspects of the text that give it its particular “variation, alteration, or transformation.”³⁶⁴ The historian arrives at such conclusions by looking at a combination of contexts in which the text was written. The “undecidability of where the text ends and the context begins and the nature of their relationship”³⁶⁵ should be viewed as accommodating the historian’s task, rather than as a problem. It is hoped that one could start reading this paper from Part III, and see how the passages from the textbooks themselves suggest and illuminate aspects of the Chinese past described more conventionally in Parts I and II.

Both the 1912 and 2007 textbooks see the Second Opium War as an affront to China’s sovereignty, recounting the event as if all Chinese people should feel humiliated and take offense at China’s suffering at the hands of foreigners. However, whereas in the 1912

³⁶⁴ LaCapra, “Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (1980), 250.

³⁶⁵ White (1987), 186.

textbook the source of shame arises out of the imperial court's incompetence at dealing with the West and ineffectiveness at defending China's territory, a narrative that strengthens the republican government's position as the nation's savior against foreign encroachment, the 2007 textbook focuses on one vivid event of the war, that meaningfully reminds students of the very real humiliation that the whole nation felt at the hands of the imperialist forces – at least as depicted in the narrative – in order to underline the necessity of the CCP and its claims to power. By focusing on the China-as-unified-nation afflicted by foreign intimidation, both passages conform to the contemporary national rhetoric coming from the central state that all people need to unite and support those in power to confront the foreign threats. In the 1912 textbook, the passage about the Second Opium War implicitly supports the new Republican government's national rhetoric that its handling of foreign affairs will be superior to that of the preceding imperial government's. On the other hand, the 2007 textbook uses the powerful imagery of Westerners perpetrating horrific crimes of lasting consequence, to give support to the CCP's national rhetoric that the West committed offenses in the past that weakened China, and presently continues to undermine China's authority and the realization of China's rightful place among the world's leaders.

Conclusion

“Rewriting the nation’s history is to reimagine the nation.”³⁶⁶ With every shift in power among the rulers of China, a new and different nation is reimagined, accompanied by a rewriting of the nation’s history to validate and sanction the change. The writing of history allows authorities to generate a national narrative – the story of the nation’s successes and misfortunes through linear time – that appeals to the people’s emotions of pride and their desire to avenge humiliation, and that justifies their veneration of the nation. By looking specifically at how one significant event in Chinese history is represented, an event whose symbolic power still resonates with the Chinese state today as seen in the BBC and Xinhua newspaper articles about Christie’s auction of two bronze animal heads looted from the Yuanming Yuan, this paper has attempted to look at ways in which the national narrative as depicted in middle-school history textbooks reflects the changing ways in which the nation is envisioned by the state.

Both passages reaffirmed the existence a certain social order propagated by the state, imposing a moral order on the narrative that not only reinforced the state’s importance, but made the contemporary state look morally upright. Whereas in the 1912 textbook, recounting the major episodes of the Second Opium War in a paragraph served the purpose of underscoring the imperial Court’s inability to defend their own territory against foreign invasion, the 2007 textbook reduces the whole war to one defining event: the pillaging and then burning of the Yuanming Yuan. This change reflects the creation of a powerful image of the Yunaming yuan ruins in China’s collective public memory as representative of the West’s abominable treatment of China in the past, with the hint that such treatment might persist in the present and future, if the Chinese people do not continue to “stand up” to foreign incursion under the leadership of the CCP.³⁶⁷ “In any case, memory as part of the experience of a group is bound up with the way that group relates to its past as it bears on its present and future.”³⁶⁸ The memory of the events of October 1860 remains significant because of the state’s present desire for recognition from the world as a great power. Leveraging this kind of

³⁶⁶ Yingjie Guo and Baogang He, “Reimagining the Chinese Nation: The ‘Zeng Guofan Phenomenon,’” *Modern China*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Apr. 1999), 142.

³⁶⁷ The notion of China “standing up” to colonial powers dates back to Mao’s iconic speech on 21 September 1949, when he declared that “the Chinese people have stood up,” even if the speech has now become associated with the formal proclamation of the People’s Republic of China, made by Mao in Tiananmen Square on 10 October 1949. See David Scott, *China Stands Up: The PRC and the International System*, (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2007), 1.

³⁶⁸ LaCapra (2004), 67

event, and accusing the West of perpetuating China's humiliation by auctioning on the world market cultural relics looted during the Second Opium War, brings the Chinese together behind a strong state that portrays itself as the guardian of a nation's sovereignty and cultural identity.

In 2007, the threat no longer comes from the sea, as depicted in the 1912 image of soldiers arriving ominously onto Chinese soil, but comes from the possibility that the West will continue to humiliate and undermine a unified China. The danger is no longer military but rather ideological: that despite China's advancement to world power status (or so it is hoped), the West continues to "teach" China lessons on how to behave among "proper" nations. Reminding Chinese students of the West's destruction of the Yuanming Yuan, turning its ruins into a symbol of China's past glorious civilization obliterated by the West's barbarity, allows the authors of this history textbook to destabilize and undercut the West's claims of bringing about freedom, justice and democracy in the world. Not only have the atrocious crimes of the past gone unacknowledged by their perpetrators, but the culprits attempt to maintain their authority over the Chinese by selling under their noses cultural relics looted from the Yuanming Yuan.

"In the period after 1895, China's main concern was national survival, and it was to achieve this end that modern education was recognized as necessary."³⁶⁹ The existing elite needed to learn how to deal with foreigners, and this could only be done through the implementation of an education system that imitated the successful models, such as that of Japan, Germany, and the United States. In 1912, the Beiyang regime desperately sought to distance itself from the image of China as the "sick man of Asia." The leaders of the newly-established republican government wanted to increase the state's powers in order to facilitate the modernization of China, aiming to achieve equal status with the Great Powers by emulating their development practices. "Because of the pivotal role that the school system played in cultivating a national identity, any Chinese government (be it the Qing, Beiyang, or Nationalist) had to spend a significant amount of resources to build schools, hire teachers, screen students, and monitor curriculum changes."³⁷⁰ The continuation of a public education system established under the Qing regime, regulated by the central government, was a part of

³⁶⁹ Wang (1966), 365.

³⁷⁰ Hon & Culp (2007), 3.

state-building and also helped promote the idea of a unified nation and the need for a strong and modern-oriented republican government to protect it from foreign encroachment. The “internationalist nationalism” promulgated by Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shikai at the beginning of the republic, which professed a willingness to accept and conform to international norms of education and development, is in stark contrast with the current CCP’s alleged outlook of the world.

The opening up process of the 1980s and 1990s, which only continues to increase in strength in the twenty-first century, witnessed a growing anxiety and resentment at the resurgence of a type of Chinese “cultural subservience” to the West, especially to the United States. In its efforts to allay internal opposition and promote its own authority, the CCP transforms its own concerns into those of the whole Chinese population, paralleling the foreign cultural and economic invasion of the colonial era to produce fears of the foreign in the present day.³⁷¹ The “accidental” bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during NATO’s airstrike against Milosevic in 1999, reaffirmed the supposition that the international order was “containing” China in the minds of many Chinese living in China and abroad. Hostility against “the West” in the perpetuation of a world order that consistently undermines China’s strength and capabilities allows the CCP to deflect blame for major internal problems³⁷² and legitimize its position as the only organization fit to rule and keep the peace over China. At the same time as handling domestic discontent, past humiliations can also be “used as an excuse to demand better treatment from the West.” By leveraging a “sentiment that the world (that is, the West) owes China something,”³⁷³ the Chinese state may be able to garner recognition and respect.

In the twenty-first century there remains the message promulgated at the beginning of the twentieth, with the founding of the Republic that a strong, unquestioned leadership is needed to preserve the enduring stability and progress of the Chinese nation. As socialism takes a back-seat in government ideology in order to accommodate new priorities such as establishing a market economy and ensuring stability, the CCP must negotiate a new position for itself that buttresses its claims as the unquestioned ruler of the nation. Under the present CCP leader, Hu Jintao, modernization and economic development continue to be the new

³⁷¹ Liu in Wei & Liu (2001), 225.

³⁷² Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 166, for examples of internal problems.

³⁷³ Geremie Barmé in *Chinese Nationalism*, Jonathan Unger, ed. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 187.

administration's primary focus, despite the dire consequences.³⁷⁴ The ability of the CCP in the twenty-first century to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances has proven the strength and resilience of its leadership to maintain control over a very large territory and immense population, despite the diminishing role of communism to support state ideology and the devolution of centralized power.

The idea also persists that education is the basis for national salvation and national progress. It can be found in Lanqing Li's book, about how he reformed the national education system in order to make China a competitive force in the "modern" world, as well as in the standard curriculum for Beijing history courses, which details the national challenge of raising the quality of the people to meet the needs of the twenty-first century, and in the grade 8 history textbook itself, where students are reminded of shameful historical events that demand some sort of rectification. In a post-colonial world, China – its state and its people – remains transfixed by the capacities of the Western economic model to procure wealth. The role of the CCP is to reconcile the full-out encouragement of capitalist endeavors with the maintenance of an authoritarian regime capable of imposing social order and stability. In the end, the state is important in the creation of a national curriculum which in turn helps legitimize and strengthen the actions of the Party-state and project the idea of a distinct nation, yet the extent to which the Party-state has power³⁷⁵ over the imaginings of its peoples – whether through public education or other means – remains ambiguous.

³⁷⁴ "Growing unemployment, the widening gap between rich and poor, troubled financial sectors, continuing labour disputes and peasant protests, official corruption, the persistence of separatist movements, and the issue of Taiwan, are serious challenges the new leaders will have to face," along with the ability to enforce regulations already in place. See Guo in Dittmer & Liu (2006), 166.

³⁷⁵ The extent to which the Party-state has the power in the present and will maintain that power in the future. See Cohen's differentiation between lived memory – first-hand remembering – and collective memory learned from textbooks – second-hand remembering – in Cohen (2003), 172.

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