

Modern Chinese nationalism and the awakening of self-consciousness of the Chinese Nation



Dahua Zheng

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Abstract The concept of “Chinese nation” has a close relationship with the rise, development and upsurge of modern Chinese nationalism from its proposition to establishment, and to universal identification among people of all ethnic groups. The period of the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China was the formation stage of modern Chinese nationalism and also the stage of the proposition and initial usage of the concept of “Chinese nation”: Modern Chinese nationalism developed around the period of the May 4th Movement. Under the impetus of the establishment of national self-determination theory, especially the rise of a national self-determination movement, the concept of “Chinese nation” was accepted and adopted by more and more people and finally established and formed. After the September 18th Incident, especially after the North China Incident and the July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the worsening national crisis promoted the upsurge of modern Chinese nationalism, and this upsurge made the concept of “Chinese nation” more widely and deeply disseminated and accepted.

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D. Zheng (✉)

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Modern Chinese History, Wangfujing Dajie
Dongchang Hutong 1#, Beijing 100006, China
e-mail: xingl5566@163.com

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Introduction

Although the Chinese nation(中华民族) was formed very early, its national consciousness is weak. In Mr. Fei Xiaotong's words, in ancient times, the Chinese nation was a "self-being" national entity rather than a "self-conscious" one. This is an important reason some think that there was no nation or nationalism in ancient China. However, after the Opium War in 1840, and especially after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, as the crisis of Chinese nation increasingly deepened, modern Western nationalism was introduced to China and this promoted the rise, development and upsurge of modern Chinese nationalism.(Zheng 2007) The rise, development and upsurge of modern Chinese nationalism also further promoted the awakening of the self-consciousness of the Chinese nation. The main sign of the self-consciousness awakening of the Chinese nation, is the formation of the concept of "Chinese nation", which means that all ethnic groups within Chinese territory is a unified national community, and this formation includes the proposition, establishment and universal identity of the nation among people of all ethnic groups.

Results

There have been some research achievements on the formation of the concept of "Chinese nation". In particular, the paper by Huang Xingtao at Renmin University of China, (Huang, 2002) is a great contribution to research on the formation of the concept of "Chinese nation." Regrettably, however, these achievements rarely investigate the combining of the formation of the concept of "Chinese nation" with that of modern Chinese nationalism and its evolution process. In fact, the concept of "Chinese nation" that equates to all ethnic groups within Chinese territory being a unified national community has a very close relationship with the rise, development and upsurge of modern Chinese nationalism, from its proposition to establishment, to universal identity among people of all ethnic groups. In view of this, this paper intends to research "Modern Chinese Nationalism and the Awakening of Self-consciousness of the Chinese Nation" on the basis of the previous achievements.

Discussions

I

The period of the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China was not only the era of the early stage of modern Chinese nationalism,(Zheng, 2006a, b) but also the stage of proposition and initial use of the concept of "Chinese nation(中华民族)". First to put forward and use the concept of Nation of China(中国民族) was Liang

Qichao, who was also the first to introduce Western nationalism. In his 1901 paper, “*An Introduction to Chinese History*”, Liang presented, for the first time, the evolutionary history of the nation of China and he divided it into three periods, namely, “Ancient History of the Nation of China”, “History of the Middle Ages of the Nation of China” and “Modern History of the Nation of China”. (Liang, 1989a) In 1902, Liang put forward the concept of “Chinese nation(中华民族)” on the basis of the term “Nation of China(中国民族)”. In his article, “*On the General trend of the Change of Chinese Academic Thought*” published the previous year, he used poetic language to explain the connotations of the word “Chinese(中华)” for the first time. Then, he used the word “Chinese nation(中华民族)” for the first time in his discussion on the maritime state of Qi’s academic thought during the Warring States Period. “In ancient times, only Qi(齐) of the Chinese Nation had the idea of sea power. Therefore, two concepts were produced [in that era by Qi], one being state outlook and the other world outlook.” Liang, 1989b) Soon after, Liang mentioned “Chinese nation” several times in *Observation of Nations in China in History* (1904) and made investigations on problems such as whether the “Chinese nation” was originally a single nation or was formed by multiple ethnic groups through fusion. This led him to consider that if it was formed by multiple ethnic groups through fusion, whether there was a “most important ethnic group” and “why it was the “most important ethnic group.”(Liang, 1989d)

After Liang Qichao, Yang Du, another representative figure of the constitutionalists(立宪派), and Zhang Taiyan, a famous revolutionist, used the concept of “Chinese nation” in the late Qing Dynasty. Yang Du not only mentioned “Chinese nation” many times, but also clearly explained the origin and characteristics of “Chinese(中华)” as the name of a nation in his article, “*Theory of Gold and Iron Doctrine*,” published in 1907:

Although China never had a noun called “nation”, it did have the title to distinguish nations. People today must have regarded the Han as the oldest ethnic group in China. In fact, Han is the name of the dynasty founded by the Liu family rather than the name of their ethnic group. Since ancient times, there has been an ethnic group with a comparatively higher culture and a larger number of people in China. The people named their state China(中国, literally means “the central kingdom”) and named their nation/ethnic group Chinese(中华). In this regard, the distinctions between one state and another lie in their regions. China was the Central Kingdom, while the others lied outside the Central kingdom. The distinctions between Chinese nation and the other nations lie in their cultures. Chinese nation (中华民族) means that Chinese culture is superior to that of other ethnic groups.(Yang, 1986a, b, c)

In the same year, Zhang Taiyan published an article, “*Interpretation of the Republic of China*,” in the *Min Daily*, in which he also mentioned “Chinese nation” twice. The first mention was to quote Yang Du’s words; the other was his own discussion. He said,

Since the Wei and Jin Dynasties(魏晋) in China, there have been fusions with other ethnic groups. According to genealogies, most of the surnames are from the the northern ethnic groups in Jin and Yuan Dynasty(金元), less than 1 % are

from Han. Just think if you go to a downtown and ask people who gather from all directions to the large city, what their surnames are. Are there more old Han surnames? Or are there more abnormal and special surnames? Of course, some people changed their surnames privately and some were given surnames by the imperial court. In the surname books of Tang and Song Dynasties(唐宋), the number of Han surnames was the smallest. Is the Chinese nation only a hollow model which is filled with people of other ethnic groups?(Zhang, 1907)

As far as Liang Qichao, Yang Du and Zhang Taiyan's specific discussions are concerned, on the one hand, they all used the concept of "Chinese nation" in the meaning of "Han ethnic group". Liang Qichao clearly pointed out that, "the present Chinese nation is commonly known as the so-called Han ethnic group." It is "the main ethnic group in China, namely, the so-called 'descendants of Emperor Yan and Emperor Huang(炎黄遗胄)'"'. On the other hand, Liang Qichao, Yang Du and Zhang Taiyan differed in their understanding, with Liang Qichao and Yang Du emphasizing that it is a "cultural" title rather than a "bloodline" title. In history, those ethnic groups that did not belong to the Han bloodline but that had accepted Chinese culture had actually become part of the "Chinese nation", that is, part of the Han ethnic group. Liang Qichao held in his article, "*Observation of Nations in China in History*," that the "Chinese nation" was the product of multi-ethnic fusion. After detailed investigation of its fusion process, he "made a bold judgment: The present Chinese nation was not one ethnic group at the beginning. It is actually a mixture of multiple ethnic groups."(Liang, 1989b) Yang Du repeatedly emphasized in "*Theory of Gold and Iron Doctrine*" that,

The noun, China(中华), is neither the name of a state of a certain region, nor the name of a bloodline. It is the name of a cultural family. Therefore, according to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, whoever they were, Lu and Wei with the same surnames, Qi and Song with different surnames, Chu and Yue with people from other ethnic groups, people of China could become Yidi(夷狄, tribes in the east and north of China) and Yidi could become people of China. The only standard lied in the feudal ethical code, not in the differences between affinity and disaffinity. Since then, hundreds and thousands of ethnic groups have been mixed into the Han ethnic group over thousands of years. The ethnic group is still called Chinese(中华). In this way, the reason we name people of China "Hua"(华), lies in culture, not in bloodline. Therefore, if we want to know what kind of nation the Chinese nation is, we may just refer to the meaning found in the definition in use at the time of naming the nation. As explained in Western theories, it actually complies with the culture theory but is contrary to the bloodline theory. "Hua"(华) is the original character of "flower"(花) which is used to describe the beauty of its culture rather than the rareness of its bloodline. This can be understood by the meaning of the Interchangeable character.

He also urged people to believe that with the strengthening of ethnic fusion, that in the near future, there would be "neither names of Manchu and Han ethnic groups, nor that of Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan ethnic groups. There is only the

Chinese nation fused with thousands of ethnic groups over thousands of years. Then it will be greater and more developed.”(Yang, 1986a, b, c) From the perspective of discussions of Liang Qichao and especially Yang Du, on “Chinese nation,” they not only realized the national characteristics of “unity in diversity”, but also preliminarily possessed the idea that “Chinese nation” is the common appellation of all ethnic groups in China. Unlike Liang Qichao and Yang Du, Zhang Taiyan paid more attention to the role that bloodline played in the formation of the “Chinese nation,” particularly the Han ethnic group.

In “Interpretation of the Republic of China,” he criticized Yang Du’s understanding of the original meaning of the Character “Hua(华)”. The original meaning of “Hua(华)” was a regional name and a name of a kingdom, rather than a nation (or ethnic group) name, and he could not arbitrarily interpret “Hua(华)” as “culture,” “resplendence” and “civilization.” Although Zhang also acknowledged the fusion or assimilation of Han ethnic group with other ethnic groups throughout history, with some ethnic groups having become a part of the Han ethnic group, he also emphasized that the Han and Manchu ethnic groups hadn’t been completely assimilated. In other words, the Han were still Han and Manchus were still Manchus. There were still obvious differences between the bloodlines of the Han and Manchu ethnic groups. In his words, “If the people of one race are not evenly distributed among bloodlines, one of the largest groups of the same bloodline must be the subject. What kind of people? They are people of the same culture and from the same bloodline, and people from other ethnic groups are governed and accepted by it. If the two bloodlines are antagonistic to each other, the people cannot be assimilated.” In the Qing, Zhang asserted, Han and Manchu ethnic groups “stand on equal status,” and the Manchu is not subject to the “governance” of the Han ethnic group. On the contrary, Zhang continued, it ruled the Han ethnic group and conducted ethnic discrimination and oppression against the Han. Therefore, it would be impossible for the Han and Manchu to be completely assimilated and become one nation/ethnic group as Yang Du had suggested.(Zhang, 1907)

In fact, the differences in Liang Qichao, Yang Du and Zhang Taiyan’s positions are related to their different “nation-state building” proposition. Influenced by the modern Western nationalism introduced into China in the early twentieth century, “nation-state building” is the common requirement of the revolutionaries represented by Sun Yat-sen and Zhang Taiyan and the constitutionalists represented by Liang Qichao and Yang Du.(Zheng, 2007) However, there are serious divergences between the two schemes on the question of what kind of country to build. The revolutionaries advocated “excluding the Manchus” and founding a country with a single ethnic group, Han, while the constitutionalists advocated “fusing the Manchu ethnic group [with the Han]” and founding a unified multi-ethnic country. In a heated debate, the revolutionaries emphasized racial segregation between Han and Manchu ethnic groups, focusing on “excluding the Manchu ethnic group.” Contrary to the revolutionaries, the constitutionalists emphasized that the Manchu ethnic group had been assimilated with the Han ethnic group through “fusing the Manchu ethnic group” and claimed that, “they cannot be called purely alien ethnic groups.” (Liang, 1963)

As far as the divergence between the revolutionaries and the constitutionalists on the issue of “nation-state building” is concerned, it is recognized both historically and practically that the constitutionalists’ view was the only correct choice on which to found a modern China. This is because China has been a unified multi-ethnic country since ancient times. All ethnic groups living in China have been bound to each other by consanguinity in the long-term of production, living and communication. They have also influenced each other culturally, jointly creating Chinese culture with Confucianism as its core and they have formed a common historical and cultural memory together. As a member of the Chinese nation, each ethnic group has offered its own contributions to the formation and development of China. If we had founded a country made up of a single, Han ethnic group as advocated by the “revolution of excluding Manchu ethnic group,” the unified multi-ethnic country formed through history would have been divided and there would have been revengeful killings between Manchu and Han ethnic groups. As a result, the modern nation-state could not have been established. More seriously, it would have provided opportunities for the imperialists to invade and carve up China, thus further aggravating China’s national crisis. In Yang Du’s words, “In today’s world, no land of Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui or Tibetan ethnic groups in China can be lost. None of the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui or Tibetan ethnic groups can be lost.” Otherwise, “if there is any change, the country will perish.”(Yang, 1986a, b, c)

After the Wuchang Uprising broke out in October, 1911, the revolutionaries quickly abandoned their earlier proposal to “Drive out the Manchus” to found a single-ethnic nation-state, and accepted the constitutionalists’ proposal of “fusing” the Manchu ethnic group, thereby advocating “republicanism of five ethnic groups,” “equality among five ethnic groups” and the founding of an independent, democratic and unified multi-ethnic country. On January 1, 1912, Sun Yat-sen was sworn in as the Interim President of the Republic of China in Nanjing and he declared the founding of the Interim Government of the Republic of China. In the Declaration of the inauguration of the interim President, Sun Yat-sen clearly proclaimed to people at home and abroad that, “The founding of a country lies in its people. The regions of the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, and other places are integrated into one country, that is, Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan ethnic groups integrated into one nation. It is the unity of the nation.”(Sun, 1982) The *Provisional Constitution of the Republic of China* issued later determined the founding policy of the country such as “republicanism of the five ethnic groups” and “equality among the five ethnic groups” in the form of fundamental laws of the country.

The founding of the Republic of China, especially the founding policy of the country such as “Republicanism of the five ethnic groups” and “equality among the five ethnic groups” were proposed and became the basic state policy, greatly promoted the establishment and formation of the concept of “Chinese nation.” This is exactly what Chang Yansheng (Chang Naide) later pointed out in his book, *A Brief History of the Chinese Nation*,

The name of a nation is usually changable in accordance with the times. There was not a definite or particular name for a nation in most circumstances. Unlike the name of a country, which has to be used in diplomacy, must be a definite

one. China has been a great unified country since ancient times. However, it had only carried dynasty names but no country name until after the Qing Dynasty was overthrown when the name, the Republic of China, appeared. Without a definite country name there had not been a unified nation name. Somebody called it Xia(夏); somebody called it Huaxia(华夏); somebody called it Han people(汉人) or Tang people(唐人). However, Xia(夏), Han(汉) and Tang(唐) are all dynasty names rather than nation names. Only “Zhonghua(中华)” can be adopted as nation name for the Republic of China. Its connotation is extensive, and it is more appropriate than other names whose connotations are partial and incomplete. Therefore, this book adopts it. According to the common habits today, the name Han is in the same rank of Manchu, Mongolian and other ethnic group names. If we only adopt the Han ethnic group to represent other ethnic groups, it may be easy to cause misunderstandings. Moreover, since Han is a dynasty name, it is not appropriate to take it as the name of a nation. The name, Zhonghua Minzu(中华民族), or “Chinese nation”, has fewer shortcomings.(Chang, 1986)

Thus, in the early period of the Republic of China, the concept of “Chinese nation” was not only more widely applied, but it also had the meaning of the common appellation of all ethnic groups in China. On January 5, 1912, Sun Yat-sen solemnly declared in the “Declaration to the world” issued in the name of Interim President of the Republic of China, “Now we have staged an uprising and the general situation has been settled. The Chinese nation is so brave to overthrow the autocratic government of the Qing Dynasty and found the republic. We will proclaim the founding of the republic to the world... the Chinese nation is peaceful and abides by the law that is rooted in nature. If we were not forced to defend ourselves, we would not easily start wars.”(Sun, 1986a) According to records found thus far, this was Sun Yat-sen’s first use of the concept of “Chinese nation” and the first time that an official Chinese document used the concept of “Chinese nation.” On March 19, leaders of the revolutionary party, including Huang Xing and Liu Kuyi, initiated the founding of the “National Datong Association of the Republic of China(中华民国民族大同会)” that was later renamed as “Datong Association of the Chinese Nation(中华民族大同会)”. A *History Textbook of the Republic of China*, published by Commercial Press in the autumn of the same year, also used “Chinese Nation” in reference to the unification of the Republic of China. “In the central part of Chinese nation there are mostly Han people While Miao, Yao and other ethnic minorities live together with them. Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan ethnic groups live in the west and north. All ethnic groups live in the same country and are closely related. They share joys and sorrows, they have brotherly affection and righteousness.”(2002) This was the first time “Chinese nation” was used in a history textbook.

After the Revolution of 1911, under the plan of the Russian Empire, Mongolian feudal kings, princes and aristocrats such as Jebtsundamba, declared the independence of Outer Mongolia and founded the so-called “Great Mongolia” in Kulun. The behaviors of those such as Jebtsundamba were opposed by all Chinese, including the Mongolians, at that time. In January 1913, Mongolian feudal kings and

princes of the Ulanqab League and Yikezhao League got together in Hohhot to formulate the “Conditional Outline of the Ximeng Conference of Feudal Kings and Princes,” and unanimously decided to “sponsor republicanism and oppose the division of Outer Mongolia.” Governors of the Ulanqab League and Yikezhao League also sent proclamations to the ethnic separatists in Kulun and stated “The territory of Mongolia and the hinterland of China has always been as close to each other as the lips are to the teeth. They are mutually dependent. Han and Mongolian ethnic groups have been a family for hundreds of years.” “Now the republic is newly founded, and the five ethnic groups become a family... Since the Mongolian ethnic group is also part of the Chinese nation, we shall work together to maintain the Republic of China.” He also exhorted them to “be aware of and correct their errors, and give assistance to China”, to cancel the Russia-Kulun Treaty, and not to be “trapped by the Russians”. (1914) According to records, this was the first time that an ethnic minority in China adopted the form of political proclamation to publicly admit it was a part of “Chinese nation.” The historical significance is self-evident. Around this time, Yuan Shikai also sent a letter to Jebtsundamba as president of the Republic of China in which he stated, “Outer Mongolia also belongs to Chinese nation. We have been like a family for hundreds of years. Now the current political situation is dangerous and the border is in a state of emergency. There is no reason to split from China.”(Yuan, 1979) Yuan’s application of the concept of “Chinese nation” here is the same as the proclamation of the Ulanqab League and Yikezhao League to Jebtsundamba.

In addition to its use by politicians, the term “Chinese nation” was also adopted by scholars. In June 1914, Gu Hongming, a famous scholar, presented his paper, “The Spirit of the Chinese,” at the Beijing Oriental Society. In the paper, he referred to “Chinese nation” many times. For example, he said the “Chinese nation” is an “ancient nation”, and although it is “still a childish nation at present”, its “brilliant achievements” are incomparable with those of “ancient or modern European nations.” The Chinese “not only put the majority of the population on the Asian Continent under the rule of a great empire, but also maintained its peace.” He continued, “If the spirit of the Chinese nation is a kind of spirit of eternal youth and the immortal soul of a nation, the secret of national immortality is the perfect spiritual and intellectual harmony of the Chinese.”(Gu, 1996) In April of the same year, an author signed “Guangsheng(光升)” published a monograph, “On the Nationality of China,” in the first issue of *China Magazine*(中华杂志). According to his understanding of the modern Western concept of “nation,” he held that, rather than “call Manchus, Han, Mongolians, Hui and Tibetans five ethnic groups,” it was better to imitate the form of “Great Germanism” and “Great Slavism” and “call it the Great Chinese Nation.”(Guangsheng, 1914)

Although the founding of the Republic of China, especially the founding policy of the country that included the “republicanism of five ethnic groups” and “equality among five ethnic groups”, greatly promoted the establishment and formation of the concept of “Chinese nation”, we cannot say that the concept of “Chinese nation” was finally established or formed in the period of early Republic of China. This is because, firstly, people mostly used concepts such as the “nation of

China(中国民族)”, “nation of the country(国族)” and “Hua nation(华族)” rather than “Chinese nation(中华民族)”.¹ “Chinese nation” had not yet been accepted and used by most people.

For example, in early 1913, Wu Guanyin published “Theory of Assimilation of Five Ethnic Groups” in installments in *Yongyan*(庸言) numbers 7, 8 and 9, which analyzed each ethnic group’s history of fusing and assimilating other ethnic groups: Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan. He held that the five ethnic groups were able to fuse and assimilate other ethnic groups and become one big nation. “It is possible to integrate five ethnic groups into a bigger nation.” Therefore, he advocated that with further fusion and assimilation among ethnic groups, in the future, the people should not be referred to as “five ethnic groups,” but should be collectively called the “Chinese nation”.(Wu, 1913) The book, *Textual Research on Compatriots of Six Ethnic Groups in China*, written by Xia Dewo in 1914, made a comprehensive demonstration of the compatriot relationship among six ethnic groups, namely, Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan and Miao, on the basis of detailed textual research of relevant records found in various historical books of the past dynasties in China. He held that “The six ethnic groups, Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan, are of the same race in distant origin and of the same nation in near origin.”(Xia, 1917) However, he called the unified nation “Hua nation(华族)” rather than “Chinese nation(中华民族),” and the term “Chinese nation” was used only occasionally in his book. Secondly, for some people, “Chinese nation” still referred to the Han ethnic group rather than being the common appellation for all ethnic groups in China. For example, in *History Textbook of the Republic of China* mentioned above, “Chinese nation” refers to Han ethnic group which lives in the same country and has a “brotherhood relationship” with “ethnic groups such as Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan”. As mentioned above, in the late Qing Dynasty, Liang Qichao, Yang Du, Zhang Taiyan and other people, used “Chinese nation” to essentially refer to Han ethnic group; however in the early period of the Republic of China, this phenomenon changed. Many people began to use “Chinese nation” to refer to all ethnic groups in China.

¹Although “Chinese nation,” “nation of China” and “nation of the country” refer to all ethnic groups in China, they are different in connotation. “Chinese nation” emphasizes the historical and cultural tie or identity among all ethnic groups, while “nation of China” or “nation of the country” emphasizes the political and legal tie or identity among all ethnic groups. By comparing them, it is found that “Chinese nation” is more in line with the “national” theories and historical facts of all ethnic groups in China. It is also more acceptable to all ethnic groups because China’s territory has changed from time to time as have regimes (dynasties) throughout history, and political and legal ties between different ethnic groups have also changed therefrom. However, changes in territory and regime have not affected the historical or cultural ties or identity among all ethnic groups. In 1924, Li Dazhao pointed out in *Race Problems*, “differences between ethnic groups are due to differences in history and culture. Therefore, no matter whether politics and law are unified or not, all people or nationalities living under the same history and culture can be classified as one nation. For example, although the people of Taiwan are now subordinate to the Japanese government, as long as their history and culture are the same as ours, they can still be regarded as [part of] the Chinese nation. (*Collected Works of Li Dazhao*, People’s Publishing House, Edition of 1999, p427).

II

The concept of “Chinese nation” was finally established or formed around the time of the May 4th Movement that was the development stage of modern Chinese nationalism. Influenced by the national liberation movement after World War I, the October Revolution, and Lenin’s theory of national self-determination, the theoretical construction of nationalism in this period was national self-determination.(Zheng, 2010) This so-called national self-determination was intended to liberate the Chinese nation from the oppression and enslavement of imperialist powers and achieve national independence and freedom. In Chen Duxiu’s words, “Outward-looking developmentalism/expansionism is certainly something that the Chinese cannot do at present, neither do we agree with this irrational idea. However, we are absolutely in favor of ‘national self-determination’ (that is, the doctrine of inviolability in regard to other nations within our territory).(Zhiyan, 1919) Therefore, with the establishment of the theory of national self-determination, especially the rise and development of movements of national self-determination such as the May 30th Movement, the Movement for Concession Recovery and the Right to Education, the Movement for Abolition of Unequal Treaties and the Non-Christian Movement, people increasingly realized that imperialism was the common enemy of all ethnic groups in China and only by banding together and jointly resisting the oppression and enslavement of imperialism could all ethnic groups achieve true independence and freedom. For example, Sun Yat-sen’s new nationalism was developed from the prior old one in this period.

The new nationalism differed from the old nationalism in that it explicitly put forward the content of opposing imperialist aggression and realizing national independence and freedom. In 1924, in talking about nationalism in the *Fundamentals of Constitution Government of Republic of China*, Sun Yat-sen clearly pointed out, “the government shall resist foreign aggression powers; and amend the treaties with foreign countries to restore international equality and national independence of our country.” Before long, in his *Letter to All Comrades of the Party*, he emphasized, “All imperialist aggression shall be eliminated and liberated, so that the Chinese nation can enjoy a status equal to that of all the other nations in the world.”(Sun, 1986a, b) And in order to oppose imperialism and realize national independence and freedom, the Republic must firstly realize the equality and unity of all ethnic groups in China and integrate all ethnic groups into great Chinese nation on this basis. *The Manifesto of the Kuomintang of China* published in January 1923, clearly stated that when it came to nationalism, “As for the task of our Party’s nationalism, the primary one is to eliminate the inequality among the ethnic groups; the higher task is to unite all ethnic groups in China and complete a great Chinese nation.” The goal established in *The Party Program of the Kuomintang of China* published almost simultaneously was “to form the great Chinese nation with existing ethnic groups in China and realize a national country.”(Sun, 1985)

With the promotion of the construction of the theory of national self-determination, and especially the rise and development of the movements of national self-determination, the concept of “Chinese nation” referring to all

ethnic groups within Chinese territory as a unified national community was accepted and adopted by more and more people and was finally established and formed. On the political and ideological stage of China at that time, except for the Beiyang Army, there were three main political forces or political factions, namely, the Kuomintang represented by Sun Yat-sen, the early Communists represented by Li Dazhao and the research intellectuals represented by Liang Qichao. Each of these three factions had certain degree of self-consciousness in accepting and using “Chinese nation.”

First let's take a look at the Kuomintang loyalists, represented by Sun Yat-sen. In the late Qing dynasty, although Sun Yat-sen raised the slogan of “rejuvenating China” at the beginning, he never used the term “Chinese nation”. Even until the early years of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen had only occasionally used “Chinese nation.” Mostly he used “nation of China” and “five ethnic groups/nations under one union”. The word “Chinese nation” frequently appeared in his article and speeches up until around the May 4th Movement. For example, in the preface to *The Postwar Pacific Ocean Problem* published in September, 1919, *Eight Year's Today* in October of the same year, and *Three People's Principles, also in 1919*, he used “Chinese nation.” In the preface to *The Postwar Pacific Ocean Problem*, Sun emphasized the importance of the “Pacific Ocean problem” to the existence of the Chinese nation, saying that it was “what concerns the existence of our Chinese nation and the fate of the Chinese nation.” In *Eight Year's Today*, Sun required all members of the revolutionary party and all “wise people who support the Republic of China,” to “embrace the revolutionary principles and practice everything by themselves and to achieve the goal of revolution and build a country of the people, by the people and for the people, for the purpose of leaving the descendants of the Chinese nation great heritage for millions of years.” In *Three People's Principles*, Sun conducted a deep exploration of the anti-Qing revolution in the late Qing dynasty and considered that the anti-Qing revolution was just the primary purpose of nationalism, while the higher purpose was rather that the “Han nationality shall sacrifice the name of its origin, history and self-respect and arrogance, and be equal to the people of Manchurian, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan faithfully, so as to integrate a new Chinese nation and realize common governance, like the United States that forms American nationalism by uniting dozens of peoples, including black and white, in its country.”

Later, Sun wrote articles and gave speeches to advocate the combination of Han and minorities to form a new Chinese nation. In 1920, he pointed out in a speech at a Shanghai Kuomintang meeting that: nationalism was initially used to destroy the autocracy of the Qing government, now “we are going to expand it to unite all peoples of China and establish a Chinese nation.”(Sun, 1984) After the reorganization of the Kuomintang, the plan was to unite all peoples to form a Chinese nation so as to overthrow imperialism and realize independence and freedom of the Chinese nation. This became the action plan and basic national policy of the Kuomintang.

Turning now to the early Chinese Marxists, Li Dazhao was the first to accept and use the word “Chinese nation.” As early as 1916, he had used the concept of “nation of Chinese(中华之民族)” in a passage in *Morning Bell Mission*. In 1917,

he also aimed at the Great Asianism advocated by Japanese. He published two articles called “New Chinese Nationalism” and “Great Asianism” in the journal *Jia Yin* that reveal the important historical and cultural factors, the bond of blood and the practical political conditions that caused the various ethnic groups to tend toward integration. He proposed that the Chinese people should stimulate an awareness of a “new Chinese nation” based on the integration of various peoples, and considered that “the great Asianism should regard the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and revival of the Chinese nation as the key point.”(Li) In the passage “Whether We Should Be Patriotic or Not,” written shortly after the May 4th Movement, Chen Duxiu used “Chinese nation” for the first time in considering that “our Chinese nation have been closed to the outside world since ancient times and have dominated the Orient for so long with only the concept of the world but no that of the country until the treaty was signed with Europe, the United States and Japan.”(Chen, 1987)

The initial use of “Chinese nation” by Mao Zedong also occurred shortly after the May 4th Movement. On August 4, 1919, he wrote in “*The Great Union of the People*,” published in *Xiangjiang Review*, no. 4: “Our Chinese nation originally had great ability... the reform of the Chinese nation someday will be more thorough than that of any other nation. The society of the Chinese nation will be brighter than any other nation. The great unity of the Chinese nation will precede that of any other nation in any other region.”(Mao, 1995) As far as Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and Mao Zedong’s use of “Chinese nation” is concerned, what they talked about was the joint name of all the ethnic groups within Chinese territory. As a Marxist party founded after the May 4th movement, the Communist Party of China first accepted and used “Chinese nation” in the *Declaration of the Second National Congress of the Communist Party of China*. When referring to the China’s current revolutionary mission, the *Declaration* pointed out that one of China’s current revolutionary missions was “to overthrow the oppression of international imperialism and achieve the complete independence of the Chinese nation”.(1991) In September 1922, *Guide*, the official newspaper of the communist party of China, was founded. It’s “Introductory Remarks” emphasized that: “The foreign invasion of international imperialism politically and economically, is the devil that prohibits the Chinese nation from free development...Therefore, the Chinese nation must revolt against the aggression of international imperialism to defend China from being an oppressed nation and to strive to make China a completely independent country.”(1922) In *Declaration of the First Farmers’ Congress in Hunan Province* published in 1926, even resounded the slogan of “Long lives the liberation of Chinese nation”.(1989)

As for intellectuals represented by Liang Qichao, they accepted and used the “Chinese nation” in a more conscious way earlier than the Kuomintang represented by Sun Yat-sen, and early Marxists represented by Li Dazhao. By that time, Liang Qichao had left the stage of political struggle and mainly focused on academic research. Therefore, he did not speak of the Chinese nation from the perspective of current political need, but from the perspective of academic research. In 1921, he gave an extracurricular lecture at Nankai

University in Tianjin on the methodology of Chinese history research. By the end of the term in 1922, his lengthy, 100,000-word-long *Chinese Historical Research Methodology*, was published. In this book, he proposed that: “If today we want a national history that fits the need of modern Chinese people,” then we have to research whether “Chinese nation are the original inhabitants of China or migrants from elsewhere?” and “how many nationalities are mixed into the Chinese nation? What is the trail of its blending?” as well as other major issues concerning the formation and development of the “Chinese nation.” (Liang, 1989c) Because the book mainly discussed the method of studying Chinese history, instead of the history itself, Liang Qichao only made a preliminary discussion and elaboration on the above issues. In 1922, he then wrote *Ethnic Studies in Chinese History* on the basis of *The Observation of Nation of China in History* which had been published 18 years before. This was one of the most important works of his twilight years. There, Liang pointed out that although ties of blood, language and beliefs formed the “strong conditions” of a nation’s establishment, they were not the most important conditions. The most important condition or “the only factor” was the discovery and establishment of “national awareness,” that is to say, “Anyone who meets another group and immediately has the concept of “I am Chinese” floating in his mind, then this person is a member of the Chinese nation,” and the discovery and establishment of ‘national awareness’ was the natural result of long-term cross-ethnic interaction, integration and development. According to the above understanding of “discovery and establishment of “national awareness”, Liang conducted an investigation and summary of the formation process and characteristics of the historical pattern of the “multi-integration” of the Chinese nation. It was believed that “Huaxia(华夏)” or “Zhuxia(诸夏, “Zhu” means “all the”)” ethnic groups living in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River were not only “the backbone of the Chinese nation,” but also had a strong national “assimilative power”, by which they constantly “combined with” the surrounding ethnic groups and finally caused “the establishment of today’s great and united Chinese nation”. Therefore, Chinese nation were “a combination of multiple nations from the very beginning” and manifested from the name of “Zhuxia”, which means all the Xia nations. Liang continued, “Our people were dubbed ‘Zhuxia’ ever since in order to differentiate them from Yidi, the tribes in the east and north of China. The name ‘Zhuxia’ was established as the representation of national consciousness. ‘Xia’ is combined with ‘Zhu,’ and this carried the implication of the combination of multiple nations. Liang Qichao also elaborated that the reason why “the assimilation of the Chinese nation...developed specially” from all aspects, ranging from geography, language, culture, economy to war. ‘Huaxia’ or ‘Zhuxia’ ethnic groups were the “backbone of the Chinese nation,” which was due to its ability to constantly “combine” the surrounding ethnic groups but not be assimilated by them in its metamorphosis over 3000 years. Eventually it “become the world’s largest ethnic group”. (Liang, 1989d) Because of Liang Qichao’s academic status and social influence, his article had a significant impact after publication. In 1928, Qian Mu fully affirmed this article in *An Introduction to Traditional Sinology*, saying it was “especially

capable of focusing on the nation as a whole, which presented objective understanding of Chinese nation in accordance with historical facts.”(Qian, 1997)

Around the time of the May 4th movement, the construction of the theory of national self-determination, especially the rising and developing of a national self-determination movements, promoted the final confirmation and formation of the concept of the Chinese nation, which means that all the ethnic groups in China are a unified community. At the same time, we should also see that those who accepted and used the concept of “Chinese nation” are mainly Kuomintang loyalists represented by Sun Yat-sen, early Chinese Marxists represented by Li Dazhao and intellectuals represented by Liang Qichao. The concept of “Chinese nation” was not a popular concept throughout the society, that is to say, it had not been widely recognized and used by people of all ethnic groups. At that time, some people still agreed and used the concepts of “nation of China,” “my nation,” “whole nation.” For example, in *The Great Mission of Oriental Culture and Me*, when comparing Chinese culture with Western culture, especially when talking about the national spirit of China, Chen Jiayi used “nation of China” and “my nation” (see *Oriental Magazine*, volume 4, no.1 and no.2); An article by Chang Yansheng on the debate of the May 4th Movement, was entitled *The Creation of nation of China and Chinese New Culture* (refer to *Oriental Magazine* Vol. 24, no.24).

Backers of the Kuomintang, early Chinese Marxists and intellectuals used and accepted the concept of “Chinese nation” and used such concept as “nation of China,” and “whole nation” to express that all ethnic groups in China constituted a unified national community. For example, in 1925, in files titled *Resolution of the National Revolutionary Movement* and *To the Whole Country by the Communist Party of China Against Imperialism’s Brutal Mass Murder*, the CPC used “whole nation” instead of “Chinese nation.” In June of the same year, Qu Qiubai published the article “SunYat-sen and the Chinese Revolutionary Movement” in *New Youth*, the theoretical publication of the CPC central committee. In this article, he also used “nation of China”. It was after the September 18 incident, especially after the north China incident and the July 7 incident, that the concept of “Chinese nation” became popular in society and was generally accepted and used by people of all ethnic groups in China, including overseas Chinese.

III

Michael Freeden has pointed out, “Nationalism becomes extremely important only in a short period of time, that is, when the nation is constructed, conquered, threatened externally, disputed in territory, or dominated internally by hostile ethnic or cultural groups.”(Smith, 2006) Therefore, after the three incidents mentioned above, the worsening national crisis promoted the upsurge of modern Chinese nationalism.(Zheng, 2006a, b) The upsurge of nationalism also allowed the concept of “Chinese nation” to be further accepted and popularized, which means that all ethnic groups in China are a unified national community.

First, Japanese imperialism invaded China as a whole. When they massacred, burned, robbed, plundered and divided Chinese people, they made no distinction among Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, Hui and Miao ethnic groups. Just as the

song *Trilogy of Exile*, which became popular after the fall of the Northeast, put it, “what’s yours and what’s mine, when the enemy strikes with guns and cannons, only damages and wounds were left. It is the same in the end.” The song objectively educated Chinese people of all ethnic groups and strengthened their sense of identity as the “Chinese nation”. Again for instance, a widely recited letter at that time, *A Consolatory Letter to the Frontline Officers and Soldiers by Delegation of Kham Tibetan*, says with full emotion, “China is an entire territory consisting of twenty-eight inherent provinces and Mongolia and Tibet. The Chinese nation is a great nation formed by Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan and other ethnic groups. The purpose of the Japanese imperialists’ wanton military aggression is to destroy our entire country and enslave our entire nation. In such a situation, no part of our land and no part of our people can survive.” (1938)

When the *March of the Volunteers*(义勇军进行曲) with lyrics written by Tian Han and music composed by Nie Er came out in 1935, the sad, angry refrain, “The Chinese nation have arrived at their most perilous time, from each one the urgent call for action comes forth” was quickly spread throughout the country. The broad masses of all ethnic groups sang it. Cao Juren, a cultural celebrity, described, “Since the day on which the enemy attacked Shenyang, an irresistible feeling of resistance to aggression has been aroused in the hearts of Chinese people; and the feeling is also expressed through such a popular song. A British man was moved to tears when he first heard this song in Beidaihe; a Japanese intellectual felt his mind and heart shocked when he heard this song in the street of Shanghai; the song has spread along the Indus River and into a corner of San Francisco; this sad and indignant song becomes popular wherever there were traces of Chinese people.”(Cao and Shu, 1988) “The Chinese nation have arrived at their most perilous time, from each one the urgent call for action comes forth.” The song greatly stimulated the sense of identity and patriotic enthusiasm of the people of all ethnic groups towards the Chinese nation as a whole.

Second, the recognition and publicity of the Chinese nation put forward by the Kuomintang of China and the Communist Party of China, and especially the establishment of the National United Front in the War of Resistance Against Japan’s aggression, and the formation of the situation of resistance participated by the whole nation, jointly played a very important role in enhancing people of all ethnic groups’ sense of identity to the Chinese nation as a whole.

As early as April 18, 1927, the *Declaration of the National Government on Choosing Nanjing as the Capital* declared that it should adhere to Sun Yat-sen’s unfulfilled wish of the Three People’s Principles, to “realize nationalism, democracy and the guarantee of people’s livelihood, make the Republic of China an independent and free country, make the Chinese nation a nation of freedom and equality, and achieve the happiness of the people, by the people and for the people.” After the three incidents of Japanese aggression, in order to enhance national cohesion, oppose national separatist forces and consolidate its dominant position, the Kuomintang of China consciously strengthened the identity and publicity of the Chinese nation. For example, in *Chorography of of Mongol Banners in Suiyuan*, compiled by the national government May and June 1937,(Chen, 1937a, b) officials wrote In the opening statement of “Chinese nation”:

The Chinese nation is the descendant of Emperor Huang(黃帝). Because of the different locations of fiefs, they were scattered all over the country. Due to the long history, disparate climates and traffic barriers, there are different customs and differences in language and accent [throughout the country]. Although there are names such as Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan, the differences between them are just like those between surnames such as Zhang, Wang, Li and Zhao. In fact, the Chinese nation is a whole. All people are just like a family. This is because China is a country created by one nation. Prime Minister Sun said the Chinese nation is the nation of the country... Since the founding of the Republic of China, the principle of equality among the five ethnic groups has been included in the Constitution. Prime Minister Sun's nationalism is also aimed at uniting all ethnic groups in the country to achieve a great Chinese nation. Now the central government adheres to the unfulfilled wish of the Prime Minister, spares no effort to foster all ethnic groups in the country and always seeks happiness and relieves sufferings for our remote compatriots. It has especially set up Mongolian-Tibetan Committee to plan all improvements for our Mongolian and Tibetan compatriots. There are also Mongolian personnel in the Central Committee. So the five ethnic groups make the Chinese nation, the nation of the country.(Summary of Mongol Banners in Suiyuan).

When explaining the “nationalism” of the “Three People’s Principles,” the “Declaration” issued by the Provisional National Congress of the Kuomintang of China in March 1938 pointed out that, “all ethnic groups within Chinese territory were fused to form” a unified “Chinese nation” and a “whole country” “through historical evolution.” The declaration of the First National Congress of the Kuomintang of China had a solemn promise to all ethnic minorities, that is, “after the victory of the revolution against imperialism and warlords, the Republic of China, freely unified by all ethnic groups, will be organized.” To fulfill this commitment,

“We must achieve victory in the war of resistance against Japanese aggression,” otherwise, “all ethnic groups within our territory are oppressed by Japan and have no free will. The functions of national self-determination in the mouth of the Japanese are just seduction and incitement; as a result, it will lead to nothing but sporadic territorial fragmentation and sporadic abduction of the people. Therefore, the ‘Declaration’ calls on the people of all ethnic groups throughout the country to oppose secession and adhere to the war of resistance against Japanese aggression based on the position of ‘Chinese nation.’ Only after the victory of the war of resistance against Japanese aggression, can a free and unified Republic of China in which all ethnic groups are freely unified be organized. (1985)

Around the time of the July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incident, some scholars represented by Gu Jiegang and Fu Sinian had a discussion on whether China was a multi-national country or a single-nation country. During the discussion, Gu Jiegang successively published articles and speeches such as *The Unity of the Chinese Nation*, *The Chinese Nation Is One* and *Continued Discussion on ‘The Chinese Nation Is One.’* They historically proved all ethnic groups within Chinese territory had been integrated into an indivisible “Chinese nation” from the perspectives of bloodline and culture. To

this day, “there is no need to say what race you belong to and what race I belong to, or how your culture is or how my culture is. We have become a family.” We have become a part of “Chinese nation.” Except for “Chinese nationality,” there are no other nationalities existing in reality. The so-called “five ethnic groups,” namely Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan ethnic groups, are a “trap made by the Chinese themselves” indeed, thus giving Japanese imperialists and individual ethnic separatists an opportunity to plot to split China in the name of “national self-determination.” (Gu, 1939)

Gu Jiegang’s purpose in putting forward the notion that “Chinese nation is one” was to strengthen all ethnic groups’ sense of identity with the “Chinese nation” in order to frustrate the plot of Japanese imperialists and individual ethnic separatists of splitting China in the name of “national self-determination.” However, he denied that China was a multinational country. Five ethnic groups, namely, the Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan ethnic groups are just “races” rather than “ethnic groups.” This viewpoint is wrong and is not conducive to the equality and unity of all ethnic groups in the country, and so his articles and speeches were criticized by persons such as Jian Bozan and Wei Huilin. However, Gu’s articles were recognized and adopted by the Kuomintang of China and Chiang Kai-shek. On August 27, 1942, Chiang Kai-shek delivered a speech entitled *Common Responsibility of the Whole Chinese Nation* to “gentry, the Living Buddha, the nobility, imam, heads of hundred households and thousand households of Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan ethnic groups” in Xining. He talked about the relationship between the Chinese nation and the Republic of China, and said that the “overall” relationship was equal among the members of Chinese nation, and that the members share honor and disgrace. Then he pointed out the realistic necessity of these relationships. From the above points, he repeatedly explained that “the Chinese nation is one” and all ethnic groups can only be called “clans” rather than “nations” because “the evolution of history and the tradition of culture show that the five ethnic groups comprise a whole” and that they, together, can become a nation, namely, “Chinese nation”.

Later, in the first chapter of *The Destiny of China*, “The Growth and Development of Chinese Nation,” Chiang Kai-shek repeatedly stressed this point. With its 5000 year history, “In terms of the history of national growth, the Chinese nation was formed through fusion of multiple ethnic groups. Ethnic groups fused together with the Chinese nation increased over subsequent dynasties. However, the driving power of fusion was cultural rather than military force. The method of fusion was assimilation rather than conquest.” An important reason Chiang Kai-shek recognized and adopted Gu Jiegang’s theory that “the Chinese nation is one” is that this theory is objectively conducive to enhancing the sense of identity of all ethnic groups to a “Chinese nation” as a whole. By virtue of Chiang Kai-shek’s special status, *The Common Responsibility of the Whole Chinese Nation* and *The Destiny of China* were widely publicized, reprinted, cited and published, and had a great social impact. Therefore, the concept of “Chinese nation” was also widely disseminated.

After the September 18th, North China and the July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incidents, the Communist Party of China also attached importance to the identity and publicity of “the Chinese nation.” For example, the *Declaration of War against Japan* published by the Interim Central Government of the Soviet Republic of China on April 15, 1932 solemnly declared, “We will expel Japanese imperialists from China through

national revolutionary war, oppose imperialists' partition of China and completely strive for true independence and liberation of the Chinese nation." The *Resolution of the Central Committee on the Current Political Situation and Tasks of CPC* adopted at the Wayaobu Conference on 25 December 1935, pointed out, "the Japanese imperialists' action of annexing north China and their intention to annex the entirety of China brought about the great disaster of national subjugation and genocide of about 400 million people to the Chinese nation. This great disaster forced all those unwilling to become conquered people or serve as traitors to take the only road available: to wage a sacred national war against Japanese imperialists and their flunkies and traitors" to "expel Japanese imperialists from China, overthrow the rule of flunkies of Japanese imperialists in China and achieve thorough liberation of Chinese nation."

On May 1, 1937, Zhang Wentian, then General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, published his *Opinions on the Guiding Principle of National Unity* and pointed out that the "basic principle of the guiding principle of national unity" is to "resist invasion, save the country from extinction and revive China." "The actual content of resisting invasion, saving the country from extinction, and reviving China" includes both external and domestic aspects, namely, "striving for the independence of the Chinese nation internally" and "realizing the freedom of civil rights and the happiness of the people's livelihood at home." In the report *Tasks of Congress of Delegates from the CPC Soviet Area* delivered on the following day (May 2), Zhang Wentian proudly declared, "The CPC is entrusted with the great past and future of Chinese nation." According to Zhang, members of the Communist Party of China are "the most excellent children of the great Chinese nation," the victory of the Communist Party of China is "inseparable from the victory of Chinese nation," and only the "existence and development" of the Communist Party of China can provide reliable guarantee for the final victory of Chinese nation."(Zhang, 1992)

On the day after the July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China immediately issued the *Circular Telegram of the Communist Party of China on Japanese Troops' Attack to Lugouqiao* and appealed to people of all ethnic groups throughout the country, "The Pingjin Area is in imminent danger! North China is in imminent danger! The Chinese nation is in imminent danger! Only making the whole of the Chinese nation participate in the war of resistance against Japanese aggression is our way out!" After that, the Communist Party of China repeatedly mentioned or discussed "the Chinese nation" in its proclamations, announcements, conference resolutions and leaders' speeches or articles. Some anti-Japanese armed forces under the leadership of the Communist Party of China were called the "Anti-Japanese Vanguard of the Chinese nation" and "Anti-Japanese Advance Vanguard of Chinese nation." Among the proclamations, announcements, conference resolutions and leaders' speeches and articles of the Communist Party of China, Mao Zedong's article, *Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China*, published in December 1939, had the greatest social influence and represented the communists' basic understanding of "Chinese nation." In the first section of the first chapter of this article, "Chinese nation," Mao Zedong discussed the origin, development, composition and basic missions of the Chinese nation.(Mao, 1991)

What needs to be pointed out here is that after the September 18th, North China, and July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incidents, the Communist Party of China not only strengthened the identity and publicity of “Chinese nation,” but also recognized that “China is a multi-ethnic country and Chinese nation is a joint name of all ethnic groups within Chinese Territory”, unlike the Kuomintang and Chiang Kai-shek that hold that there is only one ethnic group in China. For example, the *Political Resolution* adopted at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC on November 6, 1938, put forward that the basic mission of the whole Chinese nation should be resolute fighting in the war of resistance against Japanese aggression, and the uniting of all the ethnic groups of China as a unified force to fight against Japan for survival. Mao Zedong’s Political Report, *On the New Stage*, made at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixth Central Committee of the CPC repeatedly stressed the necessity of “uniting all ethnic groups in China to resist Japanese aggression unanimously” and advocated granting autonomy to ethnic minorities in China. It also advocated establishing ethnic minority committees in regions where different ethnic minorities lived together; respecting culture, religion and customs of ethnic minorities; prohibiting Han chauvinism and giving status which was equal to that of the Han ethnic group to ethnic minorities; and jointly founding a unified country of Han and ethnic minorities. (UFDCPCCC(The United Front Department of the CPC Central Committee), 1991)

Later, when mentioning the basic population composition of the Chinese nation in *Chinese Revolution and the Communist Party of China*, Mao Zedong pointed out, “China is a country formed by integrating multiple ethnic groups and it has a large population.”(Mao, 1991) In the same year, the *Political Textbook for Anti-Japanese Soldiers* issued by the General Political Department of the Eighth Route Army also emphasized, “The Chinese nation includes dozens of ethnic groups such as Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Miao, Yao, Fan, Li and Yi ...the Chinese nation is the joint name of all ethnic groups within Chinese territory.”(UFDCPCCC(The United Front Department of the CPC Central Committee), 1991) Obviously, compared with the national theory held by the Kuomintang of China and Chiang Kai-shek’, the national theory held by Communist Party of China could be better accepted by the people of all ethnic groups in China, especially people of ethnic minorities, which was more conducive to them in establishing their sense of national identity and belongings as both members of their ethnic groups and members of the Chinese nation, because it not only recognized China as a multi-ethnic country and advocated equality among all ethnic groups, but also held that all ethnic groups in China have “formed” a unified “Chinese nation.” After the full outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Kuomintang of China and the Communist Party of China forgot past grievances, realized the second Kuomintang-Communist cooperation and established the most extensive anti-Japanese national united front on this basis. The establishment of the Anti-Japanese National United Front and the formation of the situation that the whole nation participated in greatly promoted the sense of identity with the Chinese nation as a whole for people of all ethnic groups. In

the “Foreword to the Periodical” of *National Public Opinion*, a periodical dedicated to saving the nation from extinction and founded in Wuhan in September 1938, we read, “War is a melting pot, only through this melting pot can a country of independence and freedom be founded on what is newly cast.”(1938) Facts have proved that the people of all ethnic groups in China unprecedentedly achieved great unity and great union through the “melting pot” of the war. Meanwhile, all ethnic groups form a national community “sharing joys and sorrows, living or dying together, sharing honor and shame and sharing a common fate”—the sense of national identity and of belongings to the Chinese nation was also strengthened unprecedentedly. For example, in April 1938, *A Consolatory Letter to the Frontline Officers and Soldiers by Delegation of Kham Tibetan from Mongolian-Hui-Tibetan Unified Delegation of Appreciation to Anti-Japanese Officers and Soldiers* issued by the Unified Delegation of Appreciation to Anti-Japanese Officers and Soldiers stated, “We are all frontier people from remote places. Although our religions, languages and habits are different, we are all members of the Republic of China. We are a family. We are of one mind... the Chinese nation is a whole nation originally. Admittedly, there are some collateral branches. They are just like brothers, leaves and branches which are parts of the whole. Reconciliation will benefit both; while separation will harm both. The Japanese invaders envy our rejuvenation and wish to destroy us at one in order to realize their dream of dominating East Asia... We have great confidence in the victory of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Meanwhile, it is a truth that ‘the Chinese nation is a whole and unified and can be divided by no enemy.’” (Huang, 1944) Mongolian County King TubuxinJirgel said on the radio, “Although I am a Mongolian, I am also a member of the Chinese nation. I also know that conquered people have no ranks. Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Hui and Tibetan people are full brothers originally. Therefore, we should unite and concentrate our will and power to overthrow the Japanese troops on the principle of the supremacy of the country and nation, regardless of region, sex or religion.”(Lou, 2011) Bai Chongxi, a Hui general, repeatedly stressed at the founding meeting of the Chinese Islamic Country Salvation Association that the mission of the association was to “save the country and rejuvenate Islam.” To rejuvenate Islam, it was necessary to unite and save the country first. He also criticized the incorrect idea of “fighting for religion rather than fighting for the country” evidenced in minority of Hui people. He said, “Every member of Islam must be aware that only when there is a country, can there be religion, as in the saying, ‘Without the skin, how can the hair stand?’ If the sovereignty of a country cannot be independent, religion will lose its protection... All ethnic groups in China shall follow the nationalism of Sun Yat-Sen and create a great Chinese nation from family to religion to nation.”(Lin)

Thirdly, the thought of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation after the September 18th Incident also played an important role in enhancing all ethnic groups’ sense of identification with the Chinese nation as a whole. If the theoretical construction of nationalism in the period of the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China was of a nation-state, the theoretical construction of nationalism during the period of the

May 4th Movement was of national self-determination, then the theoretical construction of nationalism after the September 18th Incident was of national rejuvenation. (Zheng, 2006a, b) Publications, such as *Rebirth*, issued in Beijing, *Review Weekly*, issued in Tianjin, and *Rejuvenation Monthly*, issued in Shanghai, clearly declared that “national rejuvenation” was the purpose of the publications. Many other newspapers and periodicals that did not indicate the purpose also published a large number of relevant articles. Some of them also “editorialized” and opened up special columns to discuss “issues of national renaissance.”

Some books with “rejuvenation as their main content such as Zhang Junmai’s *Academic Foundation of National Rejuvenation*, Wu Gengshu’s *Policies of National Rejuvenation in China and Their Implementation*, Zhou Fohai’s *Spiritual Construction and National Rejuvenation* and Wang Zhiping’s *Key to National Rejuvenation* were also published successively. Volume 2, issue 1 of *Rejuvenation Monthly* published on September 1, 1933, pointed out, “At present, internally in China there is political corruption, exhausted wealth and poor people; externally there is hollow national defense and territory loss; the national strength is precarious. Those who worry about the current situation are very worried that the Chinese nation will be beyond redemption. Therefore, they lift up a cry, ‘Rejuvenation!’ ‘Rejuvenation!’ They rack their brains and make painstaking efforts to express the great theory of rejuvenation of the country and the nation with what they have learned.”(Wu, 1939, b)

With the rise of national rejuvenation thoughts, an upsurge in researching the history and culture of the Chinese nation rose among intellectuals. Guy S. Alitto, an American scholar, has pointed out that among countries that suffered foreign aggression, the intellectuals often cannot find the basis for national rejuvenation, what they can do is to construct a national myth through culture and history in order to find out the superiority of spirit and culture of their own nation. In this way they prove the possibility of national rejuvenation.(Alitto, 1999) As a backward country which had been invaded by Western and Eastern powers, China’s notion of national rejuvenation that emerged after the Mukden Incident was first reflected in the research on the history and culture of the Chinese nation. In terms of national history, there are Yi Junzuo’s *Collected Stories of Heroes of the Chinese Nation* (1933), Guo Weiping’s *History of the Development of the Chinese Nation* (1936), Huang Kuiqing’s *Theory that the Tibetan Ethnic Group is a Descendant of Emperor Huang* (1936), Zhang Yuanji’s *Personality of the Chinese Nation* (1938), Zhang Dadong’s *Outline of the History of the Development of the Chinese Nation* (1941) and so on. In addition, there were, Zhang Qiyun’s *History of the Nation of China* (1933), Song Wenbing’s *History of the Nation of China* (1935) and Lin Huixiang’s *Ethnic History of China* (1937). Although the title of the above two books is “Nation of China,” the concept of “Chinese nation” is mostly used both in table of contents and within the books.

In terms of cultural research, according to incomplete statistics, there were about fifty works on culture and history of Chinese national culture published in the period of the Republic of China, most of which were published after the September 18th Incident. Some researchers have pointed out that, “using cultural history to inspire national spirit” and enhance national self-confidence

was the “purpose of studying cultural history (of the Chinese nation) for many scholars” after the September 18th Incident.(Zhou, 1997) Zhang Junmai wrote *Past and Future Development of the Culture of the Chinese Nation* shortly after the September 18th Incident and focused on the characteristics of culture within the Chinese nation and its contribution to world culture.(Zhang, 1936) In another article, Zhang Junmai further refined the performance of various outstanding factors in the culture of Chinese nation and held that they have universal significance and can survive forever. Therefore, he concluded, the Chinese nation should not be self-deprecating as Chinese history is unailing. The culture of the Chinese nation was recognized as being extensive and profound. Many of its components were to be valued in national rejuvenation, “I do believe that the Chinese nation can survive forever with the world.”(Zhang, 1936) Although the above-mentioned works and articles on research of the history and culture of Chinese nation are of different specific content and viewpoints, they are all devoted to disseminating the whole-nation status and integrated consciousness of “the Chinese nation” in order to stimulate the strength of unity and resistance against Japanese aggression and establish the belief that the Chinese nation will certainly rejuvenate.

Conclusion

In short, after the September 18th, North China, and July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incidents, the concept of “the Chinese nation” that recognizes all ethnic groups within Chinese territory as part of a pluralistic and integrated national community began to be accepted by people of all ethnic groups in China and was widely used. In a summary of the development of the concept of “Chinese nation,” someone said, “Since 1923, the notion of a Chinese nation has gradually matured. Especially after the September 18th Incident, Chinese nation were particularly clear about this concept and agreed with it very much!” (Chen, 1937) The comprehensive anti-Japanese war, a big “melting pot” after the July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incident, further “melted 450 million hearts of the Chinese nation into a solid and unbreakable whole.”(Ma, 1937) From then on, the concept of “Chinese nation” was deeply rooted in the hearts of people and became people’s daily written and oral expression. When looking over newspapers, periodicals and books published after the September 18th, North China, and July 7th Marco Polo Bridge Incidents, we may find people generally used “Chinese nation” and rarely used other concepts such as “nation of China,” “Hua nation,” “nation of the country” or “whole nation” when collectively referring to all ethnic groups in China in this period.² Except for individual ethnic separatists, people of all ethnic groups admit that they are members of the Chinese nation. It is

²Take the Communist Party of China as an example. Before the Mukden incident, and even before the North China incident, the Communist Party of China used “Chinese nation,” “nation of China” and the “whole nation” interchangeably in its documents, proclamations, conference resolutions and leaders’ speeches or articles. After the North China incident, and especially after the Marco polo bridge incident, they used “Chinese nation” more often, rarely used “nation of China” or the “whole nation”

often said that the victory of the Anti-Japanese War was the pivot point in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, while the universal recognition of the concept of “the Chinese nation” by people of all ethnic groups in China laid the foundation for this pivot.

Author’s contribution

Professor Zheng Dahua has the only authorship of this article. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

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