

Construction and Consumption of Collective Memory: The Enabling versus Constraining Effects of Strategic Narratives and Beijing's Foreign Policymaking*

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In the formation of national community and the nation-state building project, political communication always involves the construction and consumption of collective memory. With the operation of strategic narratives, the mediated public remembrance has evinced its rhetorical potency in the evocation and reinforcement of national identity, looming large in the state's diplomatic behavior and its interaction with the society.

As a Weberian social fact, memories are not only possessed by individuals, but also consumed by collectivities. While the faculty of memory does reside with individuals, in the view of neo-Durkheimian school of memory studies represented by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (see Prager, 1998), an enduring memory is premised upon personal recollections that are “connected with thoughts that come to us from the social milieu,” to the extent that only “the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrance to each other” (Kennedy, 1998, p. 53). Considering the frequent lack of the immediacy of first-hand recollection, the construction of the socially embedded memory needs to rely on the cultural representation by means of symbolic techniques, which encode and preserve memories into narrative stories that are distributed among group members.

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By exploiting the symbolic resources in the repertoire of political culture, the past is narrated to reflect the present and even to formulate the future. This is why collective memory, as posited by Barbara Bisescker (2002, p. 406), “can tell us something significant about who we are as a people now, about the contemporary social and political issues that divide us, and about who we may become.” As argued by some scholars in the intellectual camp of narrative psychology, the inter-subjective understandings of selves and others are also significantly relevant to the actions social actors take (Sugiman, Gergen, Wagner, & Yamada, 2008, p. 7). Insofar as narratives serve to define the role of the state in its interaction with domestic societal forces and its position on the international stage, the strategic deployment of such a rhetoric tool is central to the social identification and policy legitimization in the domains of domestic politics and foreign relations. To bring into full play their political effects,” Timothy Ashplant and his colleagues (2004, p. 20) explain, memories need to be “woven together into a narrative which is both widely held and publicly expressed.” In what Brian Stock (1990) dubs the “textual community,” the mediation of memory entails “emplotment” (Polkinghorne, 1991, pp. 131-153; Ricoeur, 1984; White, 1975, pp. 5-12), a procedure comparable to storytelling, wherein those seemingly disconnected events are arranged and unified into a temporal whole under a proposed theme in the interest of the projector of strategic narratives.² Thus, political actors seeking to mobilize societal resources typically resort to strategic narratives to invoke public memory, which has the promise to enact the collective identity and legitimize their policies. It is in this vein that the formation, projection, and reception of strategic narratives can be construed as a political process, or, on the account of Antoniadou et al. (2010, p. 6), a “crucial form of strategic agency,” which “aims to transform itself and/or change the nature of the environment in which it exists and operates.”

Along this line of reasoning, the construction of collective memory and national identity is a contested arena where various political factions struggle to “give public articulation to, and hence gain

recognition for, certain memories and the narratives within which they are structured” (Ashplant et al., 2004, p. 16). This is especially true in an authoritarian state like China. The history education staged by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as a crux element of the moral-ideological pedagogy, has constituted an integral component in the indoctrination of the master historical narratives crafted by the Party-state. In the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy movement, the CCP was engaged in the political endeavor of strategically narrating the national history by virtue of the nationwide political mobilization of patriotic education. To glorify the Communist Party and consolidate the national identity conducive to the filial devotion of the general populace to the state government, the discursive theme of the national victimization by foreign aggression is highlighted in the official nationalism staged by the CCP. Such strategic narratives, to some extent, have directed China’s popular demand for internal democratic movements to the external targets attributed as the prime culprits of national humiliation in its modern history. It is worth noting, however, that the projection and reception of strategic narratives is not a simple linear or a top-down process, but a discursive terrain wherein both the party-state and popular masses, with their interchangeable roles of actor and audience on the performance platform of nationalism, are mutually constitutive (Gries, 2004a). While effectively enlisting the public political loyalty to the nation-state and boosting the regime legitimacy, the strategic narratives employed by the authoritarian regime to mythologize national history have transformed into what Goldstein and Keohane (1993, p. 9) call the “principled beliefs” held by the like-minded actors, who place the diplomatic events to “[distinguish] right from wrong and just from unjust.” Once the foreign provocations concerning controversial historical issues breach these “principled beliefs,” the inconsistency between Beijing’s diplomatic stance and the legitimated domestic convention constitutes “a case of social deviance” (Andrews, 1975, p. 532), one wherein the authority and legitimacy of the regime can be directly at stake. Given that popular agency has rendered the opinions of domestic audience an endogenous variable of the CCP’s foreign policymaking, the counter-narratives of societal

forces, appropriated from the state-imposed category of political communication and projected through the social space provide by commercialized media, threaten to undermine the regime's efforts to mediate the conflicts or disagreements in foreign affairs. In view of the negotiation between the Chinese state and society in the rhetorical transaction, it is plausible to argue that the warranted domestic expectations churned up by the very nationalism Beijing has fomented can force the authoritarian regime into a predicament on the foreign relations front.

This chapter attempts to contextualize the "linkage politics" (Rosenau, 1969, 1997) of Chinese foreign relations in the discursive texture of strategic narratives that are implicated in the memory construction and consumption. Such an interdisciplinary diagnosis is expected to generate some innovative insights for the intellectual interrogation of the communicative dynamics of Chinese political culture, which have been instrumentalized by both the authoritarian regime and societal forces in their political claim-making. Starting with the pragmatic aspect of political culture, the first part of the chapter offers an overview of the formation, projection, and reception of the strategic narratives employed in the CCP's patriotic education campaign. The second section deconstructs the transformation of master narratives in the modern Chinese historiography, illuminating the way in which the narrative construction of divergent national identities reflect varied semantic and syntactic relationships in the symbolic system of political communication. The third part elucidates how the historical narratives, from which nationalist discourse derived, are turned against the CCP leadership in its foreign policymaking, and how the commercialized media has contributed to the delegitimizing effects of strategic narratives under the legitimated banner of patriotism.

Patriotic Education: Historical Representation and the Social Pragmatics of Strategic Narratives

Identity, understood as a sense of sameness over time, is the depth dimension of individuals and collectivities established by the recollection of the past, which, in turn, leads to the selective remembering and forgetting of certain pasts to fit the ontological reflection of the self in the contemporary world (Gillis, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 144). Too often, the dissemination and consolidation of the meanings that are distilled into collective memory is a process of creating “true” discourse through the narrative arrangements of the symbolic elements existing in national history. In this sense, the construction of master historical narrative and the enactment of national identity can be canvassed within the symbolic canopy of political communication. According to the semiological approach adopted by Lowell Dittmer in his definition of political culture, such political symbolism consists of the linguistic components of signs, referents and significations, in addition to the communicative variables such as codes, transmitters, channels, and so forth. Such a communicative system functions as a dynamic link between two categories of actors—elites and masses—on the basis of the pragmatic, semantic and syntactic relationships among its variables (Dittmer, 1977, pp. 556, 570-571). In the enterprise of Chinese official nationalism, the symbolic system of political communication is embodied in the cognitive and normative connotations of national historical memory constructed in the patriotic education campaign.

In terms of the social pragmatics of political culture, unlike religious or literary symbolism, one of its defining features is political expediency, which inevitably involves the manipulation of the symbols by political elites with an attempt to concoct a series of strategic narratives that are expected to influence the opinions held by the masses. “Social groups,” Dittmer (1977, p. 571) points out, “are irrelevant to the political culture system unless they participate in the manipulation of symbols (in which case they become elites).” Political actors wielding the regime power have their vested interest in constructing the symbolic memory. Given that nationalism is often treated as a centripetal force turning the cohesive

force of national affiliation into political solidarity, collective memory, as a primary raw material to construct national identity, is an ideal and convenient resource to promulgate strategic narratives in the nationalist discourse. As Stephen Crites (1986, p. 172) claims, “A self without a story contracts into the thinness of its personal pronoun.” The storylines narrated in the collective memory provide significant epistemic resources to ratify national identity and reinforce social cohesion, which is mobilized by current political agenda. The pragmatic usage of strategic narratives, implied in the Halbwachsian “presentism” of collective memory (1992, pp. 30, 224), could be informative to examine the intricate interplay between power and knowledge elaborated by Michael Foucault, a prominent cultural scholar in post-structuralism. Human reality, in Foucault’s (1977) view, is socially constructed as it entails the exercise of power. In line with this proposition, memory narratives that are crystallized by the state as the official knowledge reflect the intricate interplay of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Such critical “truth” propagandized by the regime encompasses a spate of ideas and practices, which are promoted in the interest of the regime. Along this line of logic, the “true” knowledge—hammered out from the collective memory in the form of political symbols and validated by the political elites in their strategic narratives—is naturally imbued with power. The state-led history education in China, under the rubric of patriotic education, is a rich case of such power-laden discourse. In its desperate attempt to foster public loyalty to the socialist state as a “regime of truth” (Foucault, 2001, p. 131), the CCP has been laboring to mythologize the national history as the “true” official knowledge. Such an initiative of enhancing the regime legitimacy through the symbolic representation of national history compellingly illustrates the pragmatic aspect of Chinese nationalism as a manifestation of elite-driven political communication.

In the “strategic agency” of memory and identity construction, the central element is the “schemata” (Bartlett, 1995, p. 208) dictating the emplotment of the historical episodes. In this vein, the centerpiece

of China's patriotic education is the relationship between the Party-state and the Chinese nation, which can be construed as what James Wertsch (Wertsch, 2002; 2009, pp. 128-132) terms the "schematic narrative template" characterizing the configuration of state-crafted historical narratives. Following such a primary lot line, the patriotic bandwagon was patterned into the incessant articulation of the CCP's role identity as the sole savior and guardian of the nation and its credentials to be entitled to the monopolistic grip on political power. This "recurrent [constant] ... of dramatis personae," in Vladimir Propp words—or, the generalized function of the regime's character heightened in the fabric of patriotic education of national history—has constituted a stable and constant theme epitomizing all the "specific narratives" relating the role identity of the Communist Party to the historical vicissitudes of the Chinese nation (Propp, 1968, p. 21).¹ Considering the initial status of the cultural supremacy China enjoyed before the imperial empire was pried open by Western and Japanese powers, the disruption of the Sino-centrism narrated in a sequence of historical events has, given the relationship between the humiliation of national defeat and the need for vengeance, led to the nationalist aspiration of establishing China's rightful place on the international stage. This fundamental structuring logic has guided the current nationalist discourse concerning the involvement of the Communist party in Chinese revolution. As asserted by Hu Jintao, the General Party Secretary, at the congregation commemorating the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CCP,

In the 170 plus years since the Opium War of 1840, our great country has weathered untold hardships, our great nation has waged earthshaking struggles, and our great people have scored splendid achievement in the annals of history. Following the Opium War, China gradually became a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and foreign powers stepped up their aggression against China. The feudal rule became increasingly corrupt, the country was devastated by incessant wars and turbulence, and the Chinese people suffered from hunger, cold, and oppression. To salvage China from subjugation was an urgent mission for the Chinese nation. And the Chinese people faced the historic tasks of winning independence and liberation. ... The birth of the [CCP] was a natural product of the development of modern and contemporary Chinese history as well as the indomitable exploration of the Chinese people for survival of the nation. [It] put the Chinese revolution on the right course, gave the Chinese people a powerful

motivation, and created bright prospects for China's future development. (Hu, July 1, 2011).

After recounting the historical role the CCP has played in the new-democratic revolution, the socialist revolution and the establishment of the socialist system, and the reform and opening up over the past 90 years, which was described as “a grand epic in the history of human development on [the] ancient land of China,” Hu continued to state,

These three major events reshaped the future and destiny of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. They irreversibly ended the misery endured by China in modern times when it suffered from both domestic turmoil and foreign invasion and was poor and weak. They also irreversibly started the Chinese nation's historic march for development, growth, and great rejuvenation. They gave China, a civilization of over 5,000 years, a completely new look and created unimagined prospects for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. What has happened shows that in the great cause of China's social development and progress science modern times, history and the people have chosen the [CCP] ... History has also fully shown that the [CCP] truly deserves to be called a great, glorious and correct Marxist political party, and the core force leading the Chinese people in breaking new ground in development. (Hu, July 1, 2011)

The regime legitimacy of the CCP is symbolized in its role identity, which, as shown in Hu's official statement, is portrayed as the genuine representative of the Chinese nation. In the narration of historiography, Kenneth Gergen (2005, p. 101) notes, “subjective bias” is always involved in the formulation of storyline. Thus, narrative “requires an evaluative framework in which good or bad character helps to produce unfortunate or happy outcome” (MacIntyre, 1977, p. 456). Within such a mainstay structure reigning in China's patriotic education, causal linkage is established between the source of the traumatic humiliation inflicted on the Chinese nation—the corrupt feudal rule and foreign subjugation—and the foundation of the CCP, depicted as an inevitable outcome of China's modern history. The determined role that the Communist regime has played throughout the path taken by the Chinese nation along its independence, liberation, and modern development validates the capability of the Communist leadership. This “source-path-goal schematic pattern,” as termed by Polkinghorne (1991, p. 142), is a telling example of the “causal transformation” (Antoniades et al., 2010, p. 4; Todorov, 1977,

p. 45) in modern China—from the “sick man of East Asia” to an independent and strengthening nation-state, thanks to the leadership of the Communist regime—demonstrated in the narrative framing of the Chinese patriotic education.

In terms of the rhetorical transaction between the elites and masses in the political communication system, how well the state-driven strategic narratives are received by the general populace, according to Michael Schudson's (1989a) analysis on the power of cultural symbols, is less dependent on the audience's personal interests in the content or nature of the narratives themselves than on the position of the narrated memory “in the cultural tradition of the society the audience is a part of” (169). Only when historical representation is contextualized within such social milieu can it become intelligible. Given that reconstructing a modern state is an unending dynamic driving the tenacious struggle of generations of Chinese political elites, the representativeness of the CCP, upon which the mythmaking of national history hinges, fits the ongoing purposive action of the Chinese nation in recovering its powerful status in the international community, and is thus resonant with the targeted audience of the strategic narratives formulated for the political mobilization. In fact, the historical identification of the CCP can be viewed as a “stability narrative,” as defined by Gergen (2005, p. 104), through which the experiential elements of the Chinese collective memory are indexed “in a way that the trajectory remains essentially unchanged with respect to a goal or outcome.” To achieve the rhetorical efficacy of such a “stability narrative,” the ruling elites, in the “symbolic enhancement” of the incumbent regime, as Dittmer proposes (1977, pp. 542, 574), “may attempt to enhance the status of the collectivity [it] represents, and emphasize the indissoluble linkage between the office [it] holds and the high status and great power of that collectivity, alluding frequently to [its] own competence as an incumbent and deriding [its] opponent's inexperience. This technique of social representation is widely used in the formulation of

strategic narratives in CCP's patriotic education. For instance, Jiang Zemin, Hu's predecessor, once articulated the "indissoluble linkage" of the Party-state and the Chinese nation in an assertive manner,

Our party has inherited and carried forward the Chinese nation's outstanding tradition, and has made the biggest sacrifice and the biggest contribution in the struggle of national independence and safeguarding the national sovereignty. We have therefore won the heartfelt love and support from people of all nationalities in China. The Chinese Communist is the firmest, the most thoroughgoing patriot. Chinese Communist Party's patriotism is the highest model of conduct for the Chinese nation and the Chinese people. (Jiang, October 10, 1996)

Given the woeful memory of extraterritoriality and concession imposed by foreign aggression and subjugation, the absolutist notions of "national independence" and "national sovereignty" inferred from the traumatic experience of national humiliation have been ingrained in the Chinese political culture as the "ideational codes," or the "distinctive patterns of assumptions" (Elkins & Simeon, 1979, pp. 128-129; Keesing, 1974, p. 71), of the basic property with which the collectivity of the Chinese nation is equipped. The historic agency of the CCP in restoring the national unity has, as claimed in Jiang's speech and other authoritative political documents, effectively enacted the "indissoluble linkage" between the state—the alleged indefatigable defender of China's territoriality and sovereignty—and the nation, whose felt need of cleansing national humiliation can be fulfilled by the incumbent regime. Within such a mainstay scheme, the identity role of the regime is symbolized as the paramount patriotic force capable of protecting the nation from foreign intrusion and leading it to modernization. To the extent that the Party-state is legitimized through appeals to the sovereignty of the nation and its territorial integrity—the consensual assumptions inherent in Chinese political culture and the constitutive norms of Chinese national identity inscribed in the collective memory, Chinese general populace is exhorted to rally around the Communist party on the basis of the instructed motto that the love of the nation is indistinguishable from the support of the state.

How, then, does this “mnemonic legitimation,” as Jan-Werner Müller (2002, p. 26) names it, make its way into public awareness? To enhance their communicative efficacy, the reception of the elite-driven strategic narratives projected in the patriotic education is to be guaranteed by another vein of “strategic agency”—the social and institutional reinforcement of the patriotic education. Just as memory is a social undertaking manifested in cultural practices, so do commemorative narratives, the “meaning-making apparatus” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 17) of political culture, function in the institutionalized social relations, where the shared meanings lodged in the collective memory is enacted (Schudson, 1989a, p. 170; 1992, p. 347). To shore up the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime, patriotic education perpetuates in Chinese political institutions as an important venue of consensus building, which is, on the account of Renwick and Cao (1999, p. 121), “consistent with [Chinese] cultural tradition wherein a centralized, unified discourse has been habitually favored for legitimating action.” More than two decades after the prodemocracy protests, patriotic education, still crucial to mustering the allegiance to the unity of the nation-state, is underscored in the CCP’s renewed strategy of cultural revival. In an official document rectified in the sixth plenary session of the 17th CCP’s Committee, patriotism is affirmed as one of the “core socialist values” held by the CCP membership and the Chinese people more widely:

Patriotism is the deepest intellectual tradition of the Chinese nation, and it is the thing most able to arouse Chinese sons and daughters to unite in struggle. ... We need to carry out education in a national spirit on a broad scale, put great effort into fostering ideologies of patriotism, collectivities and socialism; strengthen people’s sense of national pride, self-confidence and self-esteem; encourage people to turn their patriotic fervor into practice action to revitalize the country; and view it as the greatest honor to love the motherland and contribute all their strength to developing the motherland and as the greatest disgrace to harm the motherland’s interests and dignity. (The CCP Central Committee, October 18, 2011)

To sustain the social recognition, public acceptance, and ethical practice of the “national spirit” with patriotism, the Party-state is aware that the ideological pedagogy aimed to mobilize and unite the whole

nation should be “physically present” and “cognitively memorable” in social relations. (Schudson, 1989a, p. 163). History education is a principal social channel to achieve such institutionalization, whereby state-sanctioned narratives can be readily retrieved by the general populace. Given that national historiography has been integrated into the national educational curriculum up to the postgraduate levels, all universities and colleges students are required study modern national history as an indispensable component in the compulsory politics course. In the state-centric history education, the testing of national historiography is an irreplaceable means for “memory entrepreneurs,” as termed by Elizabeth Jelin et al. (2003, pp. 33-36), to execute the retention of master commemorative narratives without contestation. Apart from the college entrance examination, the modern Chinese history is an essential part in the nationwide matriculation exam of graduate schools. Regardless of their major, students in the admission test of politics subject, which is required for all the examinees, have to retrieve the “true” historical knowledge and relate the information to the contemporary Chinese politics. Their answers, of course, must dovetails well with the official discourse printed in the state-sanctioned textbooks, which is another pedagogical element of history education manifesting the quintessence of the institutionalized patriotic education. To be erected as orthodox knowledge, collective memory is always distributed through the usage of textbooks. Viewed in this vein, textbook writing is a “memory regime,” whereby master commemorative narratives promulgated by the “privileged interpreters” of national history, along with the codified judgment of historical events, are transmitted into the minds of the national audience (Langenbacher, 2010, pp. 30-32). In order to maximize the discursive power of patriotic education, Chinese government draconically assumes dominant control over history textbooks, which are mandatory for all the school education. The compilation and revision of these textbooks are unconditionally subject to the rigid censorship of the government. In the process of the selection and organization of historical knowledge, the CCP has managed to insulate the master discourse of national history from any form of alteration. Through the discursive colonization, the molding of collective

memory in the symbolic system of patriotic education provides a pretext to purge various forms of “unofficial history” (Jin, 2004; 2006, p. 36), which is perceived by the regime to deflect the dogmatic conclusion of past events drawn by the state authorities. Any attempts to challenge the symbolic relationship between the Party-state and the nation are tantamount to treason (Zhao, 2004). In this way, heterodox social voices in discord with the consensual narrative of national history are relentlessly coerced, which facilitates the “symbolic enhancement” of regime legitimacy.

The Selectivity of Master Historical Narratives: Mythic Symbols and the Signified Identities

In collective memory, historical events are often simplified by being reduced to single-dimensional pictures (see, e.g., Nora, 1989; Novick, 1999). Given the malleability of memory, the complex and multifaceted historical process is prone to be reworked into a simplistic theme. In a stereotypical manner, the construction of collective memory is collapsed into the enactment of myth, on the account of Heuser and Buffet (Heuser & Buffet, 1998, p. ix), “a shorthand for a particular interpretation of a historical experience ... that is invoked in the present to justify certain policies.” It is this genre of narratives that is often chosen as the official history defining the “eternal truth, and, along with it, an eternal identity, for the members of [a] group” (Novick, 1999, p. 4). In the political communication system, mythmaking national history is basically a manifestation of strategic narratives formulated by the state in its political undertaking such as the symbolical enhancement of the regime legitimacy, which, in turn, is associated with the reconfiguration of national identity implicated in the state-crafted historical narratives.

The construction and reproduction of master historical narrative of modern Chinese history can be seen as a mythmaking process that is dissected into two types of political communications, corresponding to the semantic and syntactic relationships between the communicative constituents in the

system of political symbolism proposed by Dittmer. Since the selection of mythic symbols is context-specific, it is invariably subject to the imperative that these symbols remain relevant to shifting domestic and/or international circumstances. This process of selectivity, wherein national history is mythologized, reflects the semantic dimension of political culture, which demonstrates “the relationship between the symbol and the political reality... it refers to” (Dittmer, 1977, p. 571). To justify the state behavior in domestic politics and its foreign relations, historical narratives are often framed into “structures of attention” and “structures of inattention” in different semantic contexts (Bal, 1988). In achieving the instrumental purposes of the mythmakers, as Liu and László (2007, p. 87) argue, historical narratives always “communicate symbolic and practical meaning over and above the ‘bare facts’ of history.”

Within the enterprise Chinese nationalism, a banner under which historical narratives are wrapped, the mythic symbols bearing diverse socially binding connotations are signified into diverging identities. This communicative process can be interpreted in terms of the syntactic relationship between the dichotomized identities of in-group (self) and out-group (others) engraved on the Chinese collective memory, which can be also seen as the adversarial signs in the syntax of historical narratives. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), diverse narrative paradigms have been applied to Chinese modern historiography. Correspondingly, in the state-led history education, two paradoxical symbols for historical representation, among others, have been employed in the mythmaking undertaken by the Party-state: the triumph of the Chinese people in the Communist revolution led by the CCP and the trauma that the nation suffered in the “century of national humiliation.” The distinctive connotations of the symbolic polarities are communicated through diametrically opposed signs and signified into the antithetical identities: China as a victor and China as a victim (see, e.g., Gries, 2004a, pp. 69-85; Wang, 2008; 2012, pp. 95-117).

During much of the Cold War period, given that the imminent threats from the superpowers and the backwardness of its socioeconomic development predicated China's weak position on the global stage, the fledging regime was in bad need of a political symbol to substantiate its alleged capability of safeguarding national security in the adverse diplomatic conditions. Moreover, for a Party that was headed by a charismatic leader who was obsessed with the purported "grand enterprise of continuous revolution" (Chen, 2001), the symbolic representation that could erect the heroic image of the regime was essential to the mobilization of the broad-based popular support for a series of radical initiatives staged by the revolutionary state. Among a myriad of candidates for the master historical narrative, the triumphant account of the Communist Party and the Chinese people—depicted as a collective individual due to their "indissoluble linkage"—in warfare of national liberation, was privileged as the most appropriate theme fitting the structuring logic of the state-centered historiography in Mao's China. Mandated by the domestic and international political considerations, "structures of attention" are concomitant with "structures of inattention." Some narratives, which were perceived by the state not to align with its self-legitimation, were dealt with cursorily in the construction of collective memory. Most notably, the trauma of the Chinese nation endured in the second Sino-Japanese War, officially labeled as Anti-Japanese War (*kangri zhanzheng*, 1937-1945), was stylized as a peripheral issue in public remembrance (see, e.g., Reilly, 2006, p. 192). A case in point was the scant attention that the history education paid to the Nanjing Massacre, one of the most appalling atrocities of the Japanese invasion. Until the 1980s, not only did the official propagandized historiographical teleology of the PRC chose to soft-pedal this wartime suffering of the Chinese people, as noted by Dali Yang (1999, p. 858), scholarly investigation of this holocaust was also criticized for stoking nationalist resentment against Japan, and thus suppressed into silence. Such intended amnesia, it should be noted, did not consign Japanese invasion of Manchuria to historical oblivion. Due to the totalitarian regime's marked focus on class struggle, the stark contrast between the virtue of Communist Party and the evil of Nationalist

Kuomintang (KMT), the two protagonists representing diametrically opposed classes, overshadows the Sino-Japanese conflict to be the ideal signs for the in-group and out-group categorization in the strategic mythmaking (see, e.g., Mitter, 2000, pp. 282-283). Along this line of reasoning, it is hardly surprising that the positive contribution of the KMT led by Chiang Kai-shek in the Sino-Japanese War was dealt with cursorily, or even ignored, in official discourse. On the 20th anniversary of the Communist victory over Japan, Lin Biao (1965, pp. 1-2), then Vice-chair of the CCP's Central Committee, wrote, "The basic reason [for the victory] were that the War of Resistance against Japan was a genuine people's war led by the [CCP] and Comrade Mao Tse-tung." More significantly, the fissure between the two Parties is directly related to the syntactic connotation of the triumphal symbol. The demarcation of the opposite signs occurring in the same historical event provided a peculiar referent—Chiang Kai-Shek's troops "who were supposed to have been at the vanguard of the anti-Japanese resistance" (Mitter, 2003, p. 119)—to extol the competence of the in-group. In an authoritative document of the CCP, Chiang's resistance to Japan was pinned down as the "consequence of the serious blow Japanese invasion dealt to the interests of Anglo-U.S. imperialism in China as well as to those of the big landlords and big bourgeoisie whom Chiang Kai-Shek directly represented." With regard to the impact of KMT on the Communist victory, it specifically noted that "Chiang opposed the general mobilization of the people for total war, and adopted the reactionary policy of passivity and resisting Japan but actually opposing the Communist and the people" (Mao, 1954, pp. i-ii). What is connoted from such historical representation was the juxtaposition of a competent Communist Party, which was given full credit to the triumphal national independence and affirmed the "victor" identity of the nation-state, and its Nationalist opponent that was demonized as a corrupt, incompetent, and reactionary regime mainly responsible for the suffering of Chinese nation in its modern history. In the syntactic sense, the self-other categorization textually derived from the master historical discourse communicates the self-glorifying connotation of the incumbent regime paired with the other-maligning connotation that was used to delegitimize the

competing regime. As the communicative constituencies of the “symbolic enhancement” project of the regime legitimacy, these binary connotative meanings of strategic mythmaking accord with the class-struggle thesis as the preordained mission of the revolutionary state.

In the post-Mao reform era, with the significant transformation of Chinese society and the regime itself, the mantra of class struggle, the CCP leadership was aware, could not ameliorate the intra-party factions and the rampant complaints made by a large part of the populace that was adversely affected by the economic reform. Rather, given the glaring disparity of wealth distribution—a centrifugal force of social cohesion in the context of economic reform, narratives justifying class-struggle initiatives would go against the initiative of transforming the planned economy to market economy. The volatile domestic politics that was intricately linked to the waning appeals of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist vision, and external environments, including the collapse of European Communism and the sanctions imposed by the West in the aftermath of the Tiananmen crackdown, pushed the authoritarian regime to rummage in the reservoir of political culture for an effective ideology to mitigate the social and political fissure. The shift in the internal and external environments in the late 1980s and the early 1990s marked the onset of a renewed promotion of nationalism, which, taking the form of patriotic education, was expected to “bolster faith in a system in trouble and hold the country together during the period of rapid and turbulent transformation” (Zhao, 1998, p. 289). Similar to the historical representation in Maoist era, the patriotic education in the 1990s resorted to this “symbolic reserve” (J. H. Liu & Atsumi, 2008, p. 330) of mythmaking to inspire the unity of the nation-state. However, facing new sociopolitical challenges, the triumphant theme of Chinese historiography, which shaped the image of heroic revolutionary state that was at odd with social reality of market economy, was revamped in a narrative paradigm wherein different mythic symbol was conjured. To direct popular grievance emanating from the deteriorating internal tension to external entities, the ruling elites needed some symbolic targets as a source of

scapegoating that had little to do with the major issues besetting the its sustainment of the regime legitimacy. Within such a semantic context, the endemic memory of national victimization by foreign aggression stood out from the “symbolic reserve,” which served to rekindle popular rancor toward external targets, and thus, to energize the populace disillusioned by the discrediting Communist ideology.

Revolving around the newly-selected symbol, or the “chosen trauma,” as termed by Vamik Volkan (Volkan, 1997, pp. 36-69; 2004a), what the master historical narrative really “chose” was “to mythologize and psychologize the mental representation of [a tragic] event” (2004b). To augment the breadth of acceptance of the symbolic representation and the intensity of its rhetoric resonance, China’s traumatic experience as a result of the imperialist encroachment was widely propagated in history education. As the most recent and worst humiliation in modern Chinese history, Japanese invasion that was downplayed in Maoist historiography became one of the showpieces in the trend of the “new remembering of World War II,” to borrow a phrase from Arthur Waldron (1996, p. 869). Detailed information about the Chinese suffering in the Sino-Japanese War, which had been epitomized in the rape-of-China theme prevalent in the pre-Mao era, was again presented in ghastly detail in both official media and popular culture. Research delving into the Japanese invasion, once marginalized in Maoist years, was packaged into the agenda of patriotic education. Consistent with the official discourse and media coverage, which featured what Parks Coble (2007, pp. 404-405) describes the “number game” to sensationalize the horror of the Japanese imperialism in the cataclysmic war, collections of archival material and academic volumes documenting the magnitude of the atrocities committed by the Japanese troops sprang out in the patriotic education campaign. While evoking the resonance within the readership with the tragic tale of wartime sufferings, memoir literature constituted a vehicle to internalize the “victimization narrative” (Gries, 2004a, pp. 69-86) into the collective cognition. In addition to the numerous texts in the national humiliation mode, the revised master historical narrative

was also projected by memory agencies, for example, the “patriotic education bases” (*aiguozhuyi jiaoyu jidi*), which were designed to publicize the official discourse of historiography and distribute the state-sanctioned collective memory. Among the first batch of “demonstration bases” for the patriotic education announced by the Publicity Department of the CCP in 1997, 64% of the one hundred bases were the “memory sites” related to foreign invasions, and half of the sites in this category are museums and memorials commemorating the Sino-Japanese War (see Wang, 2012, pp. 104-108).² As an essential part of the “new remembering” permeating in the patriotic education campaign, these memory agents, which are devoted to the historical representation and academic research of Japanese imperialist aggression capitalize on the combined display techniques to “visualize,” Japanese act of brutality (Denton, 2005, 2007; Mitter, 2000). With their focused attention to national trauma, historical accounts projected through the multi-media presentations of these war museums serve as a “sensitizing tool” to generate the empathy of the audience and arouse what Andrew Hoskins (2011) calls the “connective memory,” a cognitive medium binding those non-involved members of the traumatic experience and those who did. It is in this sense that the state-sanctioned historical accounts are in effect the “lived narratives,” defined by Gergen (2005, p. 112) as a form of inter-subjective understanding with its emotional performance embedded within a broad pattern social relationship. By activating the “connotative property” (Dittmer, 1977, p. 568) of the mythic symbol, the “mental representation” of Chinese shared trauma at the hands of the Japanese invaders has infused the empathy of the audience, or to be more exact, the nationalist emotion in Chinese “connective memory.” In this process, the memory agents skillfully elicited the “affective response” to use Kirk Denton’s (2007, p. 250) words, from the recipients of the master historical narratives, who are thus inclined to accept the “credibility, authenticity, relevance, and coherence” of the master victimhood discourse (J. H. Liu & László, 2007, pp. 87, 98).

Through the empathetic representation of the memory agents, the “tragic narratives” (Gergen, 2005, p. 105) of the Chinese nation is naturally signified into the victimhood identity. The shifting focus on the “chosen trauma,” however, does not rule out the significance of heroic narratives in the mythmaking of modern Chinese history. In their representation of Japanese brutality, the war museums, as well as the writings highlighting the national humiliation, have to strike a balance between the depiction of Chinese trauma and the narration of the fortitude of the Chinese nation in resisting against the imperialist incursion (Denton, 2007, p. 251). Under the overriding theme of “not forgetting national humiliation” (*wuguang guochi*), the literature detailing the defiant struggle of the Chinese people coexists with the historical narration of the brutal Japanese imperialism (see, Coble, 2007, p. 404; Cohen, 2002, p. 18). Thus, the victimhood identity, signified from the mythic symbol of “chosen trauma” and the nuanced master narratives, is borne out by the syntactic connotation that “China’s goal for the great national rejuvenation relies on the solidarity of the people and the strong leadership of the [CCP].”³ As the renewed nationalist discourse has been inscribed in the highly-institutionalized education practices, the mediated consumption of the “chosen” traumatic symbol has created a sense of national community equating Chinese nation with its state. In this sense, the nationalist sentiment conveyed through the “connotative property” of the selected symbol becomes a legitimating glue to solidify the national cohesion and nurture the filial devotion of the citizenry to the Party-state, which was precisely what CCP expected from staging the patriotic education.

In terms of its scapegoating function, the mythmaking of national history, endowed with a changed endpoint dictating the “emplotment” of the storylines and the values to be held by the historical accounts, needs to be populated “with certain actors and certain facts as opposed to others” (Gergen, 2005, p. 110). In this regard, the categorization of in-group and out-group identities relevant to the mythmaking of the post-Tiananmen CCP leadership differs from the self-other demarcation that was connoted from the

national history mythologized in Mao's China. As the mythmaking in the post-Mao reform era has shifted away from the outdated class-struggle theme, the way in which the same historical event is related to the current situation is accordingly changed, thereby causing the reconfiguration of the "schematic narrative template." The adjustment of the fundamental plot structure entails the application of newly-selected mythic symbol to different signs. The juxtaposition of opposite signs in the varied context of the patriotic education is less premised upon the fissure between Communist regime and its Nationalist opponent than on the categorization between the Chinese nation and foreign invaders (He, 2004; Wang, 2008, p. 791). Consonant to the call for the great unity of all ethnic groups and the broadest possible patriotic united front, the out-group identity attributed to Chiang's KMT has been disassociated from the original context and linked to another sign: the Japanese imperialism, the most egregious invaders responsible for the humiliations in China's modern history. By highlighting the ulterior conspiracy of "peaceful evolution" schemed by the Western camp, which was believed to be cloaked behind the criticism of the lack of democracy in China, Beijing's patriotic education has instigated virulent anti-foreign sentiments from the general populace through the mythmaking of "chosen trauma." In the case when Chinese people feel threatened, or humiliated by foreign provocation, such anti-foreignism becomes a coalescing force to solidify the national cohesion, which holds true, for instance, for the unanimous outrage of the Chinese public for the Japanese intention to nationalize the disputed Senkaku (*Diaoyu*) Islands in 2012. Confronted with shared victimizing "others," the Chinese populace is bonded by a sense of nationhood based on the in-group/out-group identities. Viewed in this vein, the symbolic mythmaking of national history as a means of scapegoating has distracted the general populace from the domestic intensions and rallied the popular support for a regime inflicted with the volatile domestic politics.

In conjunction with the domestic considerations of regime legitimacy enhancement, the usage of strategic narratives in mythologizing national history is an important venue for Beijing to seek its external legitimacy. On the current international stage, to a certain degree, China has attained the recognition as a great power based on its impressive economic prowess and its critical role in global and regional affairs. However, considering the frequent criticism of its human rights problems, among other conspicuous traits of an authoritarian regime, China's social position in the hierarchical international society is perceived to be incommensurate with its grandiose national history, which makes it what Shogo Suzuki (2008) terms a "frustrated great power." Given the historical legacy of national humiliation ingrained in the collective memory, establishing a rightful place on the international stage—or to be more specific, attaining the social status of a "legitimate great power"—has constituted a purposive element of Chinese national identity. To reconstruct the "othering" status and achieve the social purpose ingrained in the national identity, China need to "invoke a convincing 'ethical argument'" to justify its aspiration for international status for which it is constantly seeking (Narlikar, 2007, p. 986; Suzuki, 2008, p. 50). On the part of China, the mythic symbol of the victimization by the colonialist predation and imperialist invasion creates the ethical foundation to develop what Volkan (2010, p. 53) calls the "entitlement ideology" to justify its quest for a power status. Further, just as the CCP's domestic "symbolic enhancement" of regime legitimacy needs an opposite sign, so is the enactment of China's external legitimacy contingent upon the "relational comparison" with an out-group entity (see Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006, p. 699). Thus, some salient "victimizing others" are required to serve as a foil, or a referent country, for China to accumulate its moral power on the world stage. As Gergen cogently puts it, "the incidents woven into one's narrative are seldom the actions of the protagonist alone, others are included as well. In most instances, others' actions are used to contribute vitally to the events linked in narrative sequence" (Gergen, 2005, p. 114). In this vein, the alarming signal that rightest Japanese politicians refuse to atone for its atrocities committed in the World

War II and attempt to whitewash Japanese history textbooks provides a symbolic marker to make intelligible China's moral image as a "responsible great power." Inasmuch as the traumatic symbol for the mythmaking of national history is kept alive through the fanfare of pervasive discursive patriotic education, Japan's audacious moves concerning Taiwan and the conflicted *Diaoyu* Islands, which can readily activate the popular memory of victimization, tend to prompt the Chinese government to produce the "discourse of danger" and portray it as a "threatening other" in its security diplomacy (Atanassova-Cornelis, 2012, p. 102). With the function of "time collapse," as Volkan (2001, p. 89) posits, the "contemporary threat" from the past invader is inevitably associated with the "chosen trauma," which fortifies the in-group's "sense of entitlement to regain what was lost, or seek to revenge." Viewed in this light, historical grievance of Japanese aggression is, in the pragmatic sense, appealing to the Chinese leadership, as it reifies China's undeserved treatment in the international society and undergirds the government's demand made in the international negotiation. The mythmaking of the past can be connected to enhance China's moral identity to persuade domestic and international audience of the legitimacy of the state behavior on the front of foreign relations.

Resistance and Negotiation: The Constraining and Delegitimizing Effects of Strategic Narratives

In the contested arena of memory politics, according to Wulf Kansteiner (2002, p. 180), the construction of collective memory is a complex process involving three types of historical agents: the political culture in which the collective remembrance is embedded, the "memory makers" who capitalize on the cultural repertoire to formulate the historical narratives, and the "memory consumers" who "use, ignore, or transform" these narratives in their own interests. In the process of symbolic enhancement, the authoritarian regime is legitimized through appeals to the political culture that is exploited to highlight its unique representativeness. Such memory-based legitimacy is premised on the memory maker's adherence to the "proper modes of conduct" widely shared in the political culture, the basic

“mind set” of which is carried by the collective memory (see Elkins & Simeon, 1979, p. 128). Given the dismemberment and subjugation of the Chinese nation-state in the “century of national humiliation,” such normative underpinnings are envisioned as the independent sovereignty and indivisible territoriality of the nation-state in the context of Chinese political culture. As these “quintessentially Chinese [ideas],” to borrow Samuel Kim’s (1994, p. 428) words, have been enshrined in the collective memory, the mythic symbol of national trauma communicated in the master historical narratives can accumulate what Schudson (1989b, p. 109) calls a “self-perpetuating rhetorical power” in the popular imagination. Thus, the victimhood identity instantiated in the historical accounts is all the more likely to predispose the popular perceptions toward the perceived culprits of the national trauma. While taking a close look at China’s projected soft power, the international society is often taken aback by Beijing’s “emotional face” that expresses itself in outbursts aimed at Japan, and United States, among others, when it is embroiled in the diplomatic skirmishes with them (Shirk, 2007b). In these instances, the CCP’s leadership, whose policy options are circumscribed by the frenzied nationalist public opinion, can be compelled to maintain a hardline diplomacy. In effect, China’s controversial images reflect the predicament of the CCP’s foreign policymaking, which is, to a considerable extent, induced by the outpouring of the traumatic collective memory and the resultant resurgence of popular nationalism that the state-centric mythmaking has sparked.

Such a contradiction between the manipulator and the consumers of collective memory makes clear that public recollection can be resistant to the present interests of the memory maker in a way that transcends the volition of the formulator of historical narratives. In contemporary Chinese history education, the traumatic memory has become a “sociobiological memory” highlighting the sense of agony as a shared destiny based on the common past of the community (E. Zerubavel, 1996, p. 290; also see Y. Zerubavel, 1995). In the case of highly emotionally charged events, which often serve as focal

points for the representation of past massive national trauma, this sort of memory significantly influences the cognition and behavior of the domestic populace. In the animosity-building situation when the “time-collapsing” function of the “sociobiological memory” is especially salient, memory consumption is typically manifested in the usage of the “chosen trauma” as what Jerome Bruner (1962, pp. 13-14) calls the “preemptive metaphor” to amplify the negative image of the out-group identity. In the ongoing tension between China and Japan over the *Diaoyu* Islands, since Japanese action is intimately analogized to its annexation of the territory in the Chinese maritime sphere as a symbol of the onset of Japanese imperialist invasion, the island-buying motion is perceived as a fundamental breach of the constitutive norms of the Chinese national identity. As a protesting commentary of the official Xinhua Agency sternly stated, “In history, Japan stole the so-called ‘administrative rights’ of the *Diaoyu* Islands throughout unjust means.” To evince China’s determination to protest against Japan’s action, it further announces, “Long gone are the days when the Chinese nation was subject to bullying and humiliation from others. The issue of the *Diaoyu* Islands concerns sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national dignity. [There] is no room for making a concession” (Wu, September 11, 2012). Such historical analogy enables the memory of collective suffering, as Jerez Jedlicki (1999, p. 226) puts it, to “burden the present conflict with strong resentments and make it appear to be either a historical repetition, or a historical redress.” Given that the regime has styled itself as the paramount patriotic force capable of leading Chinese nation to cleanse the national humiliation, the CCP is obliged to live up to the expectation of the Chinese citizenry to prevent the historical repetition. In this sense, collective memory, while serving as a foreground to valorize the regime as a moral being in domestic and international politics, has given ground to the “dominant ideas,” or the “national ideas,” as Jeffrey Legro (2007, pp. 516, 522) terms it, defining “the collective beliefs of societies and organizations about how to act.” When the historical grievances come to the center of Beijing’s diplomacy, such societal “ethos,”⁴ reified as safeguarding national sovereignty and dignity in Chinese political culture, resembles the

“scripts” for the state actor to follow (see, e.g., Alexander, 2006, pp. 58-64; ÓTuathail, 2002, pp. 619-620). If Chinese diplomacy is viewed as a performance stage, the formulation and execution of China’s foreign policy, as a form of communicative behavior, must uphold these socially-held beliefs, which provide the domestic audience the criteria to assess the state’s performance. In the case of territorial disputes with Japan, for instance, how the Chinese public interprets Beijing’s diplomatic performance is directly related to the issue of historical redress. The “ethos” of sovereignty, territoriality, and dignity significantly limits the public attention. In the policy options, the cost-efficient trade-offs rationalized by the lucrative bilateral economic cooperation can be ruled out, as they are inconsistent with the “scripts” guiding the state’s diplomatic behavior. Take the current Sino-Japanese *Diaoyu* crisis for example. After Japan’s announcement of its decision to purchase *Diaoyu* in September 2012, Hong Kong *baodiao* activists, the civilian group devoted to maintaining Chinese sovereignty over the islets, landed the island to display Chinese determination to defend its sovereignty. Many China’s bloggers raised doubt as why the patriotic feat was not initiated by mainlanders with the support of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). As shown in the thinly veiled critique by an unsigned editorial published in *Global Times (Huanxiao shibao)*, “The Chinese public is wondering why the *Diaoyu* Islands, a part of China’s territory, is occupied by Japan and why the PLA doesn’t send ships to escort activists. The Chinese government is thought of as being ‘weak’” (Minter, August 20, 2012). In such instances, although the top leadership explicitly pledged that China won’t back down on issues surrounding the islands, anything less than a forceful move on China’s part could be perceived as the regime’s lack of the commitment to fulfilling the social norms institutionalized in the Chinese political culture.

As such, while public agitation shaped by the victimhood identity, which is implicated in the master historical narratives, can be directed against foreign countries, nationalist demand invoked from the mythic symbol of the traumatic memory is likely to undermine the autonomy of the state’s policy-

making. The predicament in which the CCP is locked is highly related to its commercialized media, which plays a significant role in the social consumption of collective memory and the distribution of nationalist discourse.

When it was initially launched after Tiananmen, Chinese official nationalism centered on patriotic education did score great success in gaining public resonance. Yet, the situation has changed today when the China's media ecology has been qualitatively transformed in the opening up of the marketplace. While the agenda of patriotism remains chiefly in the custody of the regime and its ideologues, commercialized mass media also joins the state in whipping up the subject of patriotism. As Geremie Barme (1995, pp. 211-212) observes, "Patriotic sentiment is no longer the sole province of the Party and its propagandists. ... [Nationalism] is functioning as a form of consensus beyond the bounds of official culture." Chinese public, fed up with stale sloganeering fashioned in the totalitarian political thought work, will not take much credence in the propagandized information. To increase the persuasive power of state-crafted strategic narratives, the Party-state needs a more innovative, informative, and empathetic media. Thanks to commercialization, most of the Chinese non-official media, including some subsidiaries of the propaganda press, has evolved from being solely the mouthpiece Party-state to the "marketized semi-controlled media that propagates 'nationalist mythmaking'" (Shirk, 2007a). For the market-oriented media still operating along the state-defined orbit, nationalist discourse with the constellation of patriotism provides a content area to win more readers without sinking in the political quicksand. While contributing to the popularization of the "new remembering," commercialized media is capable of drumming up hyper-nationalism and compounds the CCP's diplomatic dilemma. In today's China diplomatic issues related to conflicts in the Sino-Japan and Sino-U.S. relations as well as Taiwan's independence—which are most likely, among other foreign provocations, to catalyze the "time collapsing" function of "chosen trauma," bridging present threats

with past shared agony—provide expedient materials to highlight the historical exigencies in the contemporary era. In light of the likability of these events in activating state emotion, publicity given to the focal-point issues can easily meet the popular demand for sensational stories (Shirk, 2007a, pp. 45, 47). In the process wherein the “mobilizing information” highly related to historical narratives stimulates the popular “resolution” in “concrete, visible, immediate, and measurable ways” (Lemert, 1982; Schudson, 1989a, p. 172), the state-crafted historical narratives are transformed, via the communicated messages covering the present diplomacy, to the collective or personal use of memory consumers. In the cut-throat competition, radicalizing these events has become a common market strategy for the media, in its aggressive exploitation of commercial goldmine, to make the cultural products distinguishable. The market-driven media, whose professional pendulum sways between the “commercial ‘bottom line’” and “Party line,” is often driven to take more risks breaking the regulation of the propaganda state to run the emotionally-charged stories that could appeal nationalist sentiments against Western powers and Japan (Shambaugh, 2007, p. 55). As commented by Liu Xiaobo (May 27, 2005), a Tiananmen activist and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 2010, “Publishing jingoistic, anti-foreign articles played to national sensitivities that always simmer, and thus could easily be brought to boil, with obvious benefits for the bottom line.” “The media managers,” Liu said in his interview by *Financial Times*, “show fake enthusiasm for orders from above, but their efforts to curry favor with the consumer are genuine” (Dickie, March 4, 2004, p. 17). When foreign provocation involving “hot” historical issues come to the stage, the abundant source materials for media coverage and the popular demand drive the market-oriented media to provide “realpolitik account” of foreign affairs (Cao, 2007, pp. 442-443). When it comes to Sino-Japanese conflicts, consonant with the onslaught of the populist and scholarly writings detailing Japanese wartime atrocities, tabloid journalists are tempted to deploy vitriolic rhetoric to present an overly negative out-group image. In reporting high profile events that can readily evoke Chinese traumatic memory of Japanese aggression, divergence between the propaganda-

oriented official media and commercialized media is evident. For instance, after Junichiro Koizumi's final worship at the Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines fourteen Class A Japanese war criminals, the coverage of *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*), CCP's chief propaganda organ, not only criticized Koizumi's visits, but also documented the domestic opposition he met in Japan for his Yasukuni visit to demonstrate the willingness of the Japanese people to "correctly acknowledge" history (Reilly, 2011, pp. 23-24). Deviating from the realm of interpretation desired by the Party-state, *Global Times* (*Huanqiu shibao*), a commercialized but authoritative media devoted to international news, described Koizumi's visit as a focal point arousing China's and South Korea's outrage and attracting the world's gaze. One of the featuring articles condemning Koizumi's action pointed that it was a nasty trick played by Japanese politicians. If Koizumi's successors do not follow his suit, it claimed, that would be a "bargaining chip" for Japan to demand the compromise from China's side (Reilly, 2011). During the 2010 *Diaoyu* crisis, an intense confrontation starting from the detainment of a Chinese captain whose boat collided with two Japanese patrol ships near the islands, the "tie-mending meeting" between Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan was cancelled at the ASEAN summit meeting in Vietnam. *Global Times* imputed the blame to then Japan's Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara, who referred to China's response to the *Diaoyu* dispute as "hysterical." In shrilling media attack, *Global Times* made such satirizing comment on the Japan's leaders and its foreign policy,

It may be better to call Maehara a defense minister rather than a foreign minister. ... Apparently, Kan has chosen the wrong guy to represent Japan in international relations. The young and promising new-generation politician proved to be more like a political extremist than a diplomat. ... Japan's foreign policy shows no sign of viewing China as Japan's largest partner in trade, but as a war machine, ready to attack Japan at any time. ("Maehara: A Foreign or Defense Minister," November 1, 2010; quoted in Tiberghien, 2010, pp. 75-76)

In the case of China's unpleasant encounters of Japanese out-group, which is reported by the state propaganda with caution, the "dramatic and melodramatic events" in the media coverage can awaken

“manifest nationalism” from “a cognitive slumber into a state of fist-raising agony of flag-waving ecstasy” (Guo, Cheong, & Chen, 2007, p. 469). In the 2010 Sino-Japanese confrontation, the crisis continued after the release of the Chinese Captain. With the outpouring of nationalist sentiments, large-scale anti-Japanese protests swept many Chinese cities. The pressure of public opinion played a significant role in pushing the Chinese government to demand Japan’s official apology and compensation, thereby pushing the conflicts to a more complex level (“Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands [2010 Crisis],” ; Tiberghien, 2010, p. 75). As evidenced in such circumstances, the commercialized media and its commodified coverage, while contributing to the dissemination of state-sanctioned strategic narratives, can constitute a cumbersome burden on the Party-state. Amid the rising ride of domestic anti-Japanese nationalism, the Chinese government is often compelled to display a muscular posture toward Japan to assuage public rage, especially when “the public raises their demands in the name of patriotism that is now the main ideological underpinning of Beijing’s legitimacy,” as noted by Yinan He (2007, p. 3). The hair-trigger flipside of nationalism vehemently fanned by the media can backfire on the CCP leadership, whose foreign policymaking is hijacked by public animosity. The commercialized media has become a significant societal force facilitating the influence of public opinion on Beijing’s foreign policymaking.

The agency of commercialized media and its negotiation with the propaganda state points to the dominance of and resistance to the strategic narratives projected by the authoritarian state. Through the mythmaking and “symbolic enhancement” in the patriotic education campaign, the state-crafted strategic narratives, embodied as the historical narratives connoted from the chosen symbol, have been essentialized as “truth.” In the political agenda of regime legitimacy enhancement, the strategic narratives can be viewed as the hegemonic construct of official nationalism. Rather than a fixed state of domination, a shorthand usage of the notion, hegemony is a dynamic process that “has continually to be

renewed, recreated, defended, and modified.” On the account of Raymond Williams (1977, p. 112), it is also “continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all of its own.” Inasmuch as the CCP’s regime legitimacy depends on the “indissoluble linkage” between the state and nation, the hegemonic discourse entails an “agency (state/regime)-principle (nation) relationship,” which has, as Jungmin Seo (2005a, p. 142) contends, generated the strong sense of entitlement on the part of “national subjects” to the principle of the nation. In the case when the official nationalist discourse fails to ring true, societal forces, in their effort to challenge the leviathan state in the name of patriotism, can formulate counter-narratives by appropriating the state-crafted nationalist discourse. Such “counter” projection of narratives is indicative of the internal dynamism of resistance in the hegemonization of elite-driven strategic narratives. Given the marketability of nationalist narratives, the commercialized media has provided a release valve for the articulation of the alternative societal discourses, which has undermined the state’s monolithic control of the ideological discourse (Seo, 2005b). This is particularly evident in the growing torrent of nationalist literature in the marketplace of popular culture. The crux of the nationalist sentiments evinced in this genre of “dissatisfaction literature” is the grievance of the current international system (Shambaugh, 2011, p. 11). However, while affirming the normative and purposive contents of the Chinese national identity and their loyalty to the nation, the authors of the books may not identify themselves with the Party-state. In the Chinese collective memory, nationalist sentiments derived from the shared agony of the Chinese people are associated with the “emancipative character” and “democratic dimension” of nationalism (Schubert, 2001, p. 140). As the origin of Chinese nationalistic movement, the May Fourth Movement in 1919, which resulted from the outrage against the Versailles Treaty transferring Germany’s China concession to Japan, was a symbol of social reform of overthrowing an authoritarian regime that failed to protect the nationalist interest by surrendering territories and sovereignty to foreign demands. This subversive vein of collective memory was a symbolic implication of the mass demonstration in 1989, making the CCP ultrasensitive to any

sign of student movement on the anniversary of the nationalist protest. While defending the government against China's putative enemies, some popular nationalists have asked for "people's democracy" (Gries, 2004b, p. 186; Song Qiang et al., 1996). In proposing their rival claims, they can shift the nationalist emotion stemming from the original events to the current concern of Chinese domestic politics. For instance, when Wang Xiaodong, a leading liberal nationalist, expressed his discontent of government's news blackout over the \$2.87 million compensation payment to the United States for the damage inflicted upon the U.S. diplomatic property in China after the anti-American demonstrators protesting the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy, he demanded the popular participation in China's foreign policymaking. Only in that way, he believed, would the government be held accountable to the Chinese public for safeguarding national interests (Lawrence, January 13, 2000; Zhao, 2005, p. 138). Most recently, in the *Diaoyu* crisis, while deploring the protesting landing of *Diaoyu* Islands was initiated by the *baodiao* activists in Hong Kong but not mainlanders, Zhao Chu, a military affairs expert, boldly tweeted an equivalent version of nationalist demand for democratic freedom in Sina Weibo, China's most popular micro-blog,

In a place where patriotism and protest require approval, it's all but inevitable that the pursuit of the national interest will be impaired ... this is a lesson the Hong Kong people have taught the mainland people. So how can we protest the national interest, and the best interest of the community? We need the freedom of association, speech and press. Only a free man can keep his country in his heart. (Minter, August 20, 2012)

Indeed, casting liberal ideas in the fabric of patriotic ideas has become an effective channel for popular nationalists to advance their political agenda and a coded way of expressing dissent at the state. More importantly, the projection of counter-narratives has shown that the foreign policymaking of the authoritarian state is not free from the domestic public opinion, which, given the marketization of nationalist discourse, cannot be easily checked by the propaganda state. Given the significant transformation of the domestic context of Beijing's diplomacy, Suishang Zhao's (2004, p. 265)

prediction is not implausible: “it is very possible that if the Chinese people should repudiate the communist government of China, it could be for nationalist reasons after a conspicuous failure of the government’s program of national construction or after the people of China conclude that the government’s foreign policies run counter to the national interest.”

Conclusion

The projection of strategic narratives is essential to the construction of collective memory, which is constitutive of national identity enacted in the consumption of memory and the interests of the memory markers. As the key component of the Chinese official nationalism under the guise of patriotic education, the projection of state-driven strategic narratives parallels the construction of collective memory. In the system of political communication, master historical accounts are reconfigured to instantiate the normative and cognitive templates inherent in the Chinese political culture, based on which the popular worldview is forged and the instrumental awareness of the state linking its goals and purposive actions is clarified. To the extent that the normative underpinnings—the determined meanings encoded in the Chinese collective memory—have shaped the popular cognition in the ethical judgment of the state’s performance, the state’s behavior can be both enabled and constrained by the strategic narratives projected in the nationalist discourse. In addition to its “constative utterance” in portraying the world, as noted by John Austin (1962), the “performative” aspect of narrative discourse is equally significant. The CCP’s projected strategic narratives have animated the formation of what Thomas Rochon (1998, pp. 22-53) deems the politically and morally engaged “critical community,” in which the meanings communicated through the historical accounts are institutionalized as codified “scripts” that the state’s diplomatic performance has to follow. While the appeal to patriotism can touch off the state emotion related to the traumatic national experience, the mythmaking of selective symbols, as a hegemonic construct, simultaneously engenders the internal dynamism of social resistance,

something that the official nationalism does not intend to provoke. With the connotative property of the mythic symbol of “chosen trauma,” collective memory has evoked virulent nationalist sentiments toward those countries that are deemed responsible for the Chinese national disgrace in its modern history. The surge of popular nationalism, while forging the national coherence in the crisis moments, is causing a backlash against Beijing’s rational and flexible foreign policymaking. In light of the discursive power of historical narratives that has been reinforced by the marketized media, collective memory has obtained a life of its own in Chinese public opinion and possesses the potential to challenge the state’s foreign policymaking. The essentialized “true” discourse of national history that is supposed to enhance its legitimacy has, in accordance with Stanley Hoffman’s (2000, p. 198) proposition on the discursive power of nationalism, “mobilized believers who will propagate it and do battle for it.” In this sense, the traumatic collective memory, constructed for the purpose of directing domestic social grievance to out-group entities and enhance regime legitimacy, has lurked to internalize the external historical conflicts. Formulated in the “symbolic enhancement” endeavor of patriotic education, historical narratives blowing up the public commemoration of Chinese wartime sufferings have bounded the rationality of Beijing’s foreign policymaking. As the constructor and consumer of the communicative nationalism, state and society cannot be simplistically dichotomized. Just as Joel Migdal (2001; 2002, p. 76) posits, the interaction of state and society is “mutually empowering.” While the state can engineer social consent to meet its interest by molding the collective memory, as exemplified in the projection and reception of strategic narratives projected by the Chinese Party-state, the state can be hemmed in—indeed transformed” by the internal forces of a transformative society.

NOTES

1. For the differentiation between “specific narratives” and “schematic narrative templates,” see Wertsch (2002).

2. Up till the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, the CCP approved 353 national “demonstration bases,” covering the 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions and 4 municipalities, for the patriotic education. See <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64176/64180/8287041.html> (accessed on September 12, 2012).

3. This nationalist call was made *People's Daily (Renmin Ribao)*, CCP's pivotal propaganda organ, in the editorial commemorating the 80th anniversary of the September 18 Incident, a milestone event indicating the commencement of the Japanese invasion of China.

4. According to Daniel Bar-Tal, the collective beliefs in the victimization, which focus on the atrocities penetrated by the out-group, and the patriotic beliefs generating the dedication to the country and society are both important sources of “ethos.” See Bar-Tal (2000, pp. 137-150).

5. The phrase “nationalist mythmaking is quoted in Snyder (2000, p. 59).

6. The genre of popular nationalist literature started from a book written by three young authors, entitled “*Zhongguo keyi shuo bu*” (*China Can Say No*), which was published in 1996. The publication of the volume was soon followed by more “say-no” literature attacking the West, particularly the U.S., and Japan. Examples include *Zhongguo haishi neng shuo bu* (*China Can Still Say No*, 1996), *Yaomohua Zhongguo de beihou* (*Behind the Demonization of China*, 1996), *Zhongguo zenme shuo bu?* (*How can China Say No*, 1996), *Zhongguo heyi shuobu?* (*How Can China Say No*, 1996), *China's Road under the Conspiracy of Globalization* (*Quanqiuhua yinmou xia de zhongguo zhi lu*, 1999), *Unhappy China* (*Zhongguo Bu Gaoxing*, 2009), and *Why Is China Unhappy?* (*Zhongguo weishenme bu gaoxing*, 2009), *Zhongguo meiyou bangyang* (*China Has No Example*, 2009), and *China Has Stood Up* (*Zhongguo zhanqilai*, 2010).

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