

## From “Resist Manchus” to “Anti-Japanese”

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### Abstract:

Nationalist thought existed in ancient China, and the traditional nationalist thought in China, including the late Qing Dynasty, carried strong “racism” color, which was used by the ruling class to distinguish between “foreign and domestic” and justify orthodoxy. During the Anti-Japanese War, due to the unprecedentedly serious national crisis, the nationalist thought of nationalism continued to awaken. Both the Kuomintang and the Communist Party advocated national unity and encouraged the army and the people in their own different ways. So far, the historical context of clarifying nationalist thought has obviously shifted from the contradiction between “Han people and barbarians” to the contradiction between the Chinese nation and foreign invaders. Therefore, it is not difficult for us to glimpse a modern context from the evolution of modern nationalist thought during the two Sino-Japanese War.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, The Sino Japanese War, Transmutation, Modernization of China

### 1. Introduction

The study of the evolution of Chinese nationalist ideology is a hot topic in academia. By reviewing the research on this topic by domestic and foreign scholars in recent years, it is not difficult to find that relevant works focus on academic history, intellectual history, and socio-economic history. In terms of academic history research, Wu X's *The policy of meaning: Modern Chinese nationalists' efforts to redefine the English word nation*[1] explores the role of intellectuals in the process of shifting the meaning of the word “nation” from “ethnicity” to “nation state”, Zhihong Chen's *The Frontier Crisis and the Construction of Modern Chinese Geography in Republican China (1911-1949)* [2] and Rogaski Ruth's *Unearthing the Nation: Modern Geography and Nationalism in Republican China* [3] explore the attempts of geographers during the Republic of China's regime to construct ethnic narratives through geographical research from the perspective of geographical science research; In terms of research on cultural history, Edward Wang's *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance, and Collaboration in Modern China* [4] explores the revealed nationalism, resistance emotions, and proposals for cooperation with Japan through the legend of Japanese occupation of Manchuria; In terms of social and economic history, Jia Junying's *Multiple Faces of Modern Overseas Chinese Nationalism: An Analysis of the Anti Japanese Movement of the Dutch East India Chinese Chamber of Commerce*[5] introduces the over-

view of the modern Dutch Indian Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and takes the Chinese Chamber of Commerce as the research object to sort out and analyze the changes, development process, and influencing factors of the “Anti Japanese Movement” of the Dutch Indian Chinese Chamber of Commerce before and after the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan, Showcasing the multifaceted nature of nationalism among overseas Chinese; Chen Yali's *The Dual Construction of National Consciousness in Modern Chinese Fashion Concepts: Taking the Production of National Goods “in Newspapers of the Republic of China as an Example*[6] takes newspaper advertisements during the Republic of China period as the research object, exploring the modern nationalist ideas reflected behind her behavior of grafting “national goods” and “modern”. These studies have provided constructive assistance for the discussion in this work.

Through examining the text at that time, the author found that since the Opium War, the trend of semi colonial and semi feudal has become increasingly apparent in China, with an urgent need for salvation and survival. The constantly emerging advanced ideological and cultural values, as well as the intense conflicts and struggles with conservative political systems and ideological cultures, have all provided a broad historical background for the evolution of traditional Chinese nationalism, and for modern times. The nationalist ideology of nationalism laid the practical foundation for its rise, improvement, and development.

## 2. Destruction and Reconstruction

### 2.1. Traditional nationalist ideas were outdated and fragmented

After experiencing two disastrous defeats in the Opium Wars, the Qing government carried out many reforms in domestic and international affairs in response to the rapidly changing international and domestic situation, and also made minor adjustments to its governing philosophy. However, at that time, the Chinese government and opposition were still shrouded in a traditional and conservative atmosphere. Therefore, the mainstream nationalist ideology did not show significant and universal changes, and still remained in the stage of racism in the “Manchu-Han distinction” and “Chinese-barbarian distinction”. The nationalism ideas of the nationalism concept at that time lacked necessary understanding and sufficient recognition. As mentioned earlier, the nationalist ideology with strong racist connotations is filled with a strong sense of “Chinese noble and barbarian inferior”. When analyzing domestic conflicts, it advocates the “distinction between Chinese and barbarian”, and when dealing with international relations, it blindly arrogates. This kind of thinking was mainly reflected in two aspects among the Chinese people before the First Sino Japanese War: first, resistance to the Manchu rulers, and second, rejection of advanced Western science and technology.

In the early years of the Qing Dynasty, the ruling class, in order to consolidate and expand their ruling foundation, formulated policies that Frederic Evans Wakeman considered to be more flexible before and after entering the country, attempting to ease the ethnic conflicts between Manchurian and Chinese, and bridge the social divide brought about by the change of dynasties. Although these policies played a positive role in helping the Qing court establish a foothold in the Central Plains, restore production, suppress resistance, and consolidate rule, they were far from complete success. Civil society parties such as Tiandihui and Bailianjiao still had a huge influence with the slogan of “anti Manchu”. During the Emperor Xianfeng and Emperor Tongzhi’s regime, Hong Xiuquan and others also launched the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom peasant war under the banner of “Conquer Manchurian as god’s order” and “anti Manchu and restore Ming’s Regime”[7]. These phenomena show that before the First Sino Japanese War, there were problems with the identity recognition of the lower class of Chinese people towards the Manchu rulers, and they did not escape the influence of the racist nationalist ideology of “barbarians should not be allowed to participate Chinese affair”[8].

### 2.2 Different National Consciousnesses De-

### veloped from Different Salvation Thoughts

#### 2.2.1 Reformists: Military and civilian joint governance, no distinction between Manchu and Han Chinese

After the failure of the First Sino Japanese War, due to the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, in 1895, Kang Youwei and others took the imperial examination in Beijing launched the public transportation petition movement, marks the awakening of modern nationalism among Chinese intellectuals. Three years later, Kang organized the “National Protection Association” in Beijing and explicitly proposed the principles of protecting nation, ethnic, and Confucious religion in his constitution. The progressive significance of this proposition lies in breaking free from the narrow confines of the “Manchu-Chinese Han distinction” and elevating the contradiction cognition from the perspective of nationalism, from the contradiction between Chinese Han and ethnic minorities to the contradiction between China as a unified multi-ethnic country and imperialist aggressors. During the Wuxu Reform, Kang formally proposed the idea of “aligning the hearts of the people of the whole country, thinking that foreign policies should not show similarities and differences within a single citizen.” He hoped that Emperor Guangxu would “govern the country through military civilian cooperation, without dividing the Manchu and Han dynasties, in order to establish the country and unify the people’s hearts.”.

As a student of Kang, Liang Qichao first drew on Gu Yanwu’s viewpoint that there was a difference between “the downfall of the country” and “the downfall of the world”. He believed that the Qing Dynasty was once enfeoffed in the Ming court and should be considered a vassal of Ming. Therefore, “the Zhu’s family, who replaced by the Aisin Gioro’s family, changed their surname rather than the downfall of their country” [10], and demonstrated Kang national ideology of “there are no distinction between Manchu and Chinese Han in a so-called China” [11] from the perspective of historical logic. In 1902, Liang firstly proposed the concept of the “Chinese nation”, further promoting the progress of nationalist and nationalist thought. At this time, the nationalist ideological tendencies of the reformists initially gave rise to a transition from racism to nationalism.

#### 2.2.2 Revolutionist: To seek self-preservation, one must first eliminate the Manchu people

After the failure of the Wuxu Reform, especially after the signing of the Xinchou Treaty, Tao Chengzhang, a Chinese theorist of revolutionism, proposed that “the interests of the Manchu and Chinese Han ethnic groups were completely opposite, and if the latter one wanted to

be survived, they had to first eliminate the Manchus” [12]. Zhang Taiyan, who held the near conception with Tao, also claimed that the Manchu people were “heterologous and lowly tribes, not the divine class of our Chinese Han” [13]. The “anti Manchurian” ideology of the bourgeois revolutionaries was summarized and summarized by Sun Yat sen in 1894 as “expelling the Tartars and restoring China”. In the publication of the *Min*, a newspaper which was used for propaganda for Sun and his comrade, “nationalist” ideology, along with “civil rights” and “livelihood” ideology, was included as part of the Three Principles of Democracy, and we look forward to promoting China’s equal international, political, and economic status, so that China can permanently exist in the world.

However, whether it is the reformist concept of “Manchu-Chinese Han co-governance” or the revolutionary demand for “expelling the Tartars”, they all emerged with the aim of saving the nation and seeking survival in the historical context of being surrounded by foreign powers and the deepening political crisis in China. The emergence of this ideology indicates that at this time, there was a trend of mutual integration between nationalist and patriotic ideas, It also laid the foundation for the emergence of nationalist ideas with a nationalist tendency in the future.

### **3. Seeking common ground while respecting differences**

#### **3.1 The R.O.C Government: To revive the Chinese nation, we must first revive the confidence of Chinese national culture.**

In the face of Japan’s cultural invasion and enslavement education, the R.O.C government, while investing a large number of troops to resist the enemy, also attached great importance to the promoting role of “cultural confidence” in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Dai Jitao, one of the most significant advisor of the nation’s leader Chiang Kaishek, believed that “to revive the Chinese nation, we must first revive the confidence of Chinese national culture” [15], and Chiang also regarded “the spirit of founding a country, which is the so-called national soul “[16] as the key to national rejuvenation. Therefore, the R.O.C government paid special attention to using cultural and educational means to awaken the national consciousness of the people and promote the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation once again.

##### **3.1.1 Promote relevant historical figures**

After the Sept. 18<sup>th</sup> Incident, the R.O.C government held a large number of commemorative activities to commemorate “national heroes” such as Yue Fei, Wen Tianxiang, and Shi Kefa. all of them tried to save their dynasty till

they were executed by new ruler. Although there is a certain continuity between the nationalist ideas reflected in these commemorative activities and the narrow nationalism ideas that emerged after the establishment of the Xingzhong Association, holding relevant commemorative activities in the historical context of the Anti Japanese War still has a positive effect on awakening the national consciousness of unity in the outside world and “inspiring the loyalty, bravery, and patriotism of the Chinese people” [17].

In addition to commemorating national heroes on specific commemorative days, during the Anti Japanese War, the Nationalist government also shaped the public’s admiration for heroes by promoting the deeds of ancient heroes. In 1931, Chiang Kai shek called on Nationalist Party members to “create a Republic of China’s Yue Wumu with countless unnamed Yue Wumu... Zhuge Liang took the oath of dedicating himself to his death, and Yue Wumu took the oath of loyalty to the country, all of which are the common motto of our Party members.”. The important figures from the party, government, and military sectors of the Nationalist government have repeatedly mentioned relevant historical figures, which has also played a positive role in cultivating the nationalist ideology of unity and resistance within the Nationalist government.

##### **3.1.2 Compose anti-Japanese patriotic songs**

Compared to commemorating relevant historical figures, the method of composing anti-Japanese patriotic songs is more practical. The easy to understand lyrics lowered the intellectual requirements for the target audience, making the scope of anti-Japanese patriotic propaganda wider and more profound. In 1937, a lyricist named Xiangba Lao’s “Popular Song for Encouraging the Purchase of National Bonds” exposed the aggression of Japanese who “forgot their roots, their kindness and righteousness, it was worse than beasts”, highlighting the appeasement policy of “the League of Nations, which is cunningly pretending to stop Japanese”, It is pointed out that “the most difficult thing to break through the enemy is finance, while our country is to have enough power “, and then called on “fellow countrymen to seek revenge should buy bonds quickly, fellow countrymen to save the country should buy bonds quickly, fellow countrymen to enjoy happiness should buy bonds quickly, and fellow countrymen to buy bonds quickly then they would be wealthy enough” [19]. In the form of vernacular poetry, it aroused the enthusiasm of the people for the war of resistance and promoted the smooth progress of the work of resisting the war and issuing bonds.

Many songs praising the heroic resistance of the Chinese army based on real battles have also emerged. Famous musicians such as Zhao Jingshen and Mu Mutian created

works during this period using battles such as the Lugou Bridge Campaign, the Battle of Songhu, and the Battle of Pingxingguan as themes, making the image of the Chinese military team “willing to die, not give in; willing to die, not surrender” deeply ingrained in people’s hearts, boosting the confidence of the Chinese nation in resisting Japan and defending the country.

### **3.2 The CPC: “The political economy of the class requires that cooperation not be broken in a certain historical period”**

Under such a historical background, the CPC has also actively taken action to cultivate the nationalist ideology that is conducive to maintaining the anti Japanese national united front in culture.

Firstly, pragmatically mobilize the national spirit. In 1939, the CPC launched the general mobilization movement of the national spirit in Yan’an, with “the country is supreme, the nation is supreme; military first, victory first; will concentration, force concentration” as the three major goals. However, out of consideration for the basic national conditions of China’s semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and the maintenance of the anti-Japanese national united front, the Communist Party still called on the people to “fight to the end for the realization of the Three Principles of the People” when advocating for the “National Spirit Mobilization” at this time. This not only reflects the CPC’s propaganda style based on the actual situation and focusing on practical effects, but also reflects the situation of the times in China, which was still in the stage of the new democratic revolution at that time.

Secondly, the creative consciousness of left-wing literati in “national defense literature” has been recognized. At the beginning of its establishment, left-wing literature advocated using Marxist critical methods to criticize current literary phenomena, and its early works mainly focused on exposing the dark side of society under the rule of the Nationalist government and the class contradictions that existed in that society. However, after the outbreak of the Anti-Japanese War, national contradictions gradually replaced class contradictions as the main contradiction in Chinese society, the creative thinking of the Left Wing Literary and Art Federation also changed profoundly. The CPC proposed the August 1 Declaration, and in the name of the party, “according to the spirit of the August 1 Declaration, put forward the slogan of ‘national defense literature’” [23]. Since then, the discourse of the Left-Wing literature has gradually changed, Transitioning from class discourse to national discourse.

Thirdly, strive to seek international assistance and build an international united front. On June 1, 1939, Mao Zedong specially held the “China Week” event for the British Aid

to China Committee. The *People Weekly* translated and published his English speeches during the event. In his speech, Mao Zedong expressed his gratitude to the British people for their material assistance in their resistance against Japan, and also made three requests to the British government to expand aid, sanction Japan, and resist Germany and Italy. Mao Zedong made proactive and friendly contact with the British Aid to China Association, hoping to convey his position to the British authorities through the association. In fact, this also indicates his attitude of placing national contradictions before class contradictions.

#### 4. Conclusion

In summary, it is not difficult for author to draw the conclusion that if the two important forces active in politics after the First Sino Japanese War were still wavering between the two nationalist ideologies of “racism” and “nationalism”, during the Anti-Japanese War, there was no such contradiction between the two forces that truly held political power in Chinese territory - the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, But instead, they adopt measures to strengthen the construction of nationalist ideology on the same construction site.

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