

# **The Discursive Construction of Online Chinese Nationalism**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

The year 2008 witnessed an explosion of online Chinese nationalism, triggered by a series of incidents relating to the Beijing Olympics. In this thesis, I mainly examine the significance and relevance of the internet to the studies of Chinese nationalism, and investigate the extent to which the internet can contribute to the shaping of Chinese nationalism in contemporary Chinese society. I treat online Chinese nationalism as discursive, because the production of online nationalist information, the construction of online nationalist identities and the discussion of online nationalist actions, are all discursive practices which are intrinsically related to the political use of language. Therefore, I argue that the study of online Chinese nationalism should entail critical linguistic analysis of the online texts that discuss Chinese nationalism. Rather than seeing nationalist texts as sheer expressions of nationalist concerns or claims, I am interested in how nationalist texts are made linguistically, and see linguistic features, structures and organisations of the texts as clues for unveiling the underlying nationalist ideologies and power relations.

I mainly focus on the online popular discourse of Chinese nationalism, however, since research on nationalism can hardly avoid the power relations between the state and popular nationalist players, I also shed significant light on the official nationalist discourse. To carry out the research, I examine the official newspaper *The People's Daily* and the non-official online media the *Tianya Forum*. By doing this, I intend to find out how the official and online popular nationalist players shaped and reshaped Chinese nationalism through media discourses during the time of the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics. Moreover, by taking both the official and online popular nationalist discourses into consideration, it also allows me to examine the possible tension and co-optation between both nationalist players, and investigate to what extent online Chinese nationalism as an alternative nationalist discourse, challenges the domination of the state over the politics of Chinese nationalism. To analyse the discourses of Chinese nationalism, I employ Norman Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis as the ultimate research method of the thesis.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>CCP</b>	Chinese Communist Party
<b>CNNIC</b>	China Internet Network Information Centre
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and Communications Technologies
<b>KMT</b>	Kuomintang
<b>PRC</b>	The People's Republic of China



## **Introduction**

### **Research Background**

The year 2008 witnessed a surge of Chinese nationalism triggered by a series of incidents relating to China's hosting of the Beijing Olympic Games. The mixed feelings of nationalist pride and anger among the Chinese public, namely, the soaring national pride of realising the so-called China's century-old Olympic dream on the one hand and the outcries of nationalist anger towards the alleged western hostility against the Beijing Olympics on the other hand, formed the defining feature of Chinese nationalism at the time. In the time leading up to the Beijing Olympics, the level of nationalist pride of the mainstream Chinese public was high, and it was not unusual to see people wear pro-China T-shirts in the streets and hang the national flags outside their apartments.

During the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics, many Chinese young people used the internet to organise and coordinate volunteers to escort the Olympic torch which they believed embodied China's national honour and pride, and whenever the torch arrived in a foreign city, crowds of Chinese lined the torch relay route, waving the national flags and cheering for China. However, their proud feelings were soon dampened when the international torch relay received massive protests in western cities like Paris, against Beijing's policies on Tibet and human rights. A significant proportion of the Chinese public saw the international torch relay as a great opportunity to showcase China's achievements to the global audience, but the Paris leg of the torch relay was seriously interrupted, and the chaos made Chinese nationalists believe that France was hostile to China. In response to the alleged hostility of France, some Chinese netizens called for a boycott of the French supermarket Carrefour. The boycott initiative caused considerable debates in China, and it even led to diplomatic tension between China and France. All of these show the determination and passion of Chinese nationalists, and the Beijing Olympics in fact provided such a chance for them to identify with the Chinese nation. The Beijing Olympics was not just a means for China to project its image to the world, but also a means to increase Chinese people's awareness of the nation.

Domestically, the Beijing Olympics had great value for enhancing national identity and unity, and it provided an array of opportunities for people to participate in the nation-building processes. They practiced their nationalist identity by sharing the pride of hosting the Olympics and by defending the pride when it was questioned and threatened.

The Beijing Olympics is an exceptional case study that offers various opportunities to investigate Chinese nationalism. The intensity of nationalist sentiments in society and the controversy brought by the nationalist initiative to boycott Carrefour may have drawn scholars' attention to the effects of Chinese nationalism on contemporary Chinese politics and China's relations with the world. This is certainly one of my concerns, but what really interests me is the significance and relevance of the internet to the politics of Chinese nationalism. As I argue, the role played by modern information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the formation, dissemination and discussion of nationalism should not be underestimated, and the reason why Chinese nationalism emerged during the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics, could spread quickly, and cause resonance among the public had much to do with the internet, because the internet not only facilitated the dissemination of nationalist information and helped mobilise people's nationalist passion, but more noticeably, it produced a means for ordinary Chinese to construct and reconstruct nationalist identity through interactive discussions of nationalist ideals, agendas and strategies. The connection between Chinese nationalism and the internet therefore opens a new dimension for studying Chinese nationalism, and the merging of both subjects leads to the main theme of this research – online Chinese nationalism, which has increasingly attracted researchers' attention (e.g. Hughes, 2000a; Shen and Breslin, 2010; Wu, 2007; Reilly, 2010; Li, 2009; Liu, 2006), but has not yet been adequately investigated.

The growing nationalist concerns of many Chinese about their country on the world stage as a result of China's continuous and rapid integration into international affairs, and China's becoming the country with the world's largest internet population have made the topic of online Chinese nationalism worth being studied. Moreover, the study of online Chinese nationalism becomes even relevant when scholars like

Smith (1995) claim that national identity is fading due to such modern technologies as the internet that transcend national borders. The outbreak of online Chinese nationalism nonetheless challenges such assumptions, and as Croucher (2003:18) indicates, globalisation does not make the concept of nationhood obsolete; rather it creates 'new mechanisms that enhance our capacity for constructing, imagining, and maintaining nations'.

However, online Chinese nationalism is far more complicated than a simple addition of Chinese nationalism to the internet; rather it is a fusion of modern information technology, national identity and ideologies. This research not only intends to prove the interrelations between Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet, but more importantly to explore the mechanisms the internet creates for ordinary Chinese citizens to engage in the processes of nation building in contemporary China. McLuhan (2003: 20) asserts that 'the medium is the message' in the sense that media or technology brings 'change of scale or pace or pattern' to human affairs. As a result, the fusion of the internet and Chinese nationalism drives me to think about how the internet as an interactive communications technology could bring changes to the overall understanding of Chinese nationalism, for instance, how the introduction of the internet changes the shape, structure and dynamics of Chinese nationalism, to what extent it transforms the ways Chinese nationalism is produced, mobilised, discussed and executed, and how it affects the relations between different nationalist players.

It should be noted that no matter how online Chinese nationalism is studied, for example, whether seeing its outgrowth as a signal of an emerging civil society (e.g. Yang 2009a & 2009b) or as a form of public opinion shaping Chinese foreign policies (e.g. Reilly 2012; Shirk 2011; Weiss 2014), the investigation of online Chinese nationalism can hardly avoid looking at the relations between the state and its citizens. In traditional thinking, state elites are often described as actors who set the nationalist agenda, whereas ordinary citizens are considered as passive receivers who respond to the appeal. Such thinking of nationalism as a top-down manoeuvre is under challenge particularly when nationalism is examined in conjunction with the internet, because the participatory and decentralised potential of the internet

creates opportunities for ordinary people to participate in the politics of nationalism and make it possible for a bottom-up nationalism to emerge (Liu, 2006). In the Chinese context, the prevalent use of the internet to a significant extent leads to a growing level of political participation, and the internet produces various ways for challenging the control of the authoritarian government over information flow and policy-making processes. In fact, during the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics, the internet not only provided spaces for Chinese people to discuss nationalist issues, but also enabled them to seize the initiative to launch the nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour and force the government to respond. However, while talking about the increasing political participation brought about by the internet, equal attention should also be paid to the growing concerns of the Chinese government to tighten the control of the internet, because it has become well aware that online political participation can pose a serious threat to its ruling legitimacy and authority. The power contests between both state and popular actors, namely, the attempts made by Chinese netizens to circumvent the government's censorship on the one hand, and the government's intent to control political activism in the Chinese cyberspace on the other hand, make me consider the extent to which Chinese netizens can take some independent role in leading Chinese nationalism, and how much online popular nationalism can challenge the government's domination of Chinese nationalist politics. These are some of the key questions I aim to answer throughout this research.

Furthermore, whether nationalism is top-down or bottom-up, people's awareness of and identification with the nation is formed and reinforced through social practices, for example, memorising the nation's origins, traditions and symbols, telling and retelling the stories about the nation's glory and suffering, producing and reproducing national heroes and enemies, and discussing shared interest and responsibilities of the community. However, it is of great importance to understand that all of these social practices are in essence discursive, that is to say, the making and narration of the stories about the nation's history, the creation of a hero for the people to identify with and an enemy to hate, and the discussions about national interest are all intrinsically related to the use of language. As said earlier, there is a growing interest among academics in examining online Chinese nationalist discourses, and scholars like Chan (2005) and Liu (2006) have started to pay

attention to the online texts that discuss Chinese nationalism. However, the major weakness of their researches is that they only present what Chinese internet users have said about a certain nationalist topic, and fail to draw any significant attention to the linguistic features provided in the texts, for instance, choice of words, voice of speech, syntax, grammar and so on. The use of language should not be taken for granted, because it is a socio-cultural practice and people use language differently to achieve different goals. In the context of nationalism, people use language to frame nationalist information, defend nationalist positions, construct nationalist identity and establish nationalist relations. Having said this, I argue that the study of online Chinese nationalist discourses should include systematic linguistic analysis, and see linguistic features of nationalist texts as clues for identifying the underlying political ideologies that govern the ways the texts are produced and delivered.

What I aim to establish through this research is that, a new method can be developed for studying online Chinese nationalism by regarding online discussions of Chinese nationalism as discursive practices, and as a result of this, bringing systematic linguistic examination to online texts that discuss Chinese nationalism. As I just mentioned, the linguistics-based approach to discourse analysis is rarely applied in the existing studies of online Chinese nationalism, and therefore, by doing this research, I intend to open up new methodological possibilities for researching the topic – online Chinese nationalism. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 4-6, the discursive analysis of online Chinese nationalism requires attention not only to what has been said on a certain nationalist issue, but more importantly, how it has been said and why it has been said in this way rather than the other. As Hughes (2007: 248) claims, the discursive analysis of texts relating to nationalism focuses on ‘the points of difference and tensions that exist between the texts’, and by doing this, ‘it becomes possible to explain how certain things can be said at a given point in time and space, why other things have to remain unsaid, the significance of who is doing the talking – and where they are located in the network of social power’. Therefore, according to Wodak et al (2009: 8), the fundamental task of a linguistics-based discourse analysis is ‘to unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use’.

## **Research Question**

I have argued that nationalism is formed and constructed through a range of discursive practices relating to the nation, and netizens' discussions about Chinese nationalism should be treated as discursive; therefore, this research mainly concentrates on the online discourse of Chinese nationalism, and examines the possibilities the internet provides for ordinary Chinese to participate in the discursive practices of building and maintaining the Chinese nation. In this sense, the overarching research question of this thesis aims to investigate:

*'The ways in which Chinese netizens use the internet to engage in the discursive practices of representing nationalist information, constructing nationalist identity and discussing nationalist actions, and the extent to which online popular nationalism challenges the domination of the state over the nationalist discourses.'*

The research question actually incorporates the arguments and concerns that I raised earlier, because it tries to establish connections between Chinese nationalism and the internet by asking the extent to which the internet could provide a space for ordinary Chinese citizens to participate in the politics of nationalism; because it emphasises the discursive nature of nationalism by seeing online activities of representing nationalist information, constructing nationalist identity and discussing nationalist actions as discursive practices; and because it assesses the power relations between the state and online popular nationalist players by raising the question how much online popular nationalism could challenge the dominance of the state over the nationalist discourses. To carry out the whole research, I adopt the case study of the international torch relay of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and pay special attention to the chaotic Paris leg of the torch relay which stirred up strong nationalist sentiments in the Chinese cyberspace and catalysed the nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour initiated by some Chinese netizens in retaliation for the alleged hostility of France against the Beijing Olympics. The case study is valuable because it gives various chances to investigate nationalist practices of Chinese netizens, for instance, how they use the internet to disseminate nationalist information, mobilise nationalist support and discuss nationalist actions. Since this thesis mainly probes online discourse of Chinese nationalism, I choose to look at the *Tianya Forum* – one of the

most popular online forums in China, and investigate how forum participants discussed the chosen case study at the time. This thesis equally pays significant attention to *The People's Daily* – the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and examines how the newspaper represented the international torch relay particularly the Paris leg and how it responded to the online nationalist initiative to boycott the French supermarket Carrefour. Since the thesis intends to answer to what extent online popular Chinese nationalism could challenge the dominance of the state over the nationalist discourses, without knowing how the CCP shaped and maintained the nationalist discourse in the official media, this part of research question would be difficult to answer. As I said, texts that discuss Chinese nationalism should be treated as discursive, therefore, all the texts collected from both the *Tianya Forum* and *The People's Daily* will be discussed and analysed using Norman Fairclough's framework of 'critical discourse analysis'. Fairclough's approach is linguistics-based, and is employed as the ultimate research method of the thesis.

### **Thesis Structure**

To answer the research question, this thesis is divided into the following chapters. Chapter 1 first of all gives some theoretical explanations about the origins of nationalism. It then examines the historical, socio-political and institutional contexts out of which the notion of Chinese nationalism emerges, forms and evolves as a key ideology in Chinese politics. To better understand Chinese nationalism, I have decided to embed the term into the official and popular nationalist discourses respectively, and investigate how state as well as popular actors have been defining the term and shaping its dynamics, trends and significance in Chinese politics since the late 1970s. Chapter 2 discusses various characteristics of the Chinese internet, and explains how the distinctive landscape of the Chinese internet and features of online activities could configure the production, dissemination and discussion of online Chinese nationalism. The chapter also explains the possible roles the internet can play in bringing changes to the ways people imagine and maintain the Chinese nation. Chapter 3 primarily discusses the methodology and the research design of this thesis. It gives a thorough explanation of the term 'discourse', explains Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis and justifies how his approach

can be employed as the research method of this thesis. The chapter also explains various issues relating to the research design, for instance, data collection, sampling and the analytical framework for examining nationalist texts. In the end of Chapter 3, I reflect on the possible limitations and other methodological concerns relating to the research design. Chapter 4 first of all focuses on the official media - *The People's Daily*, and discusses the language the CCP used to discursively represent the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics, in order to promote national pride in Chinese society. Then the chapter moves to the *Tianya Forum*, and analyses the online texts relating to the nationalist discussions about the Paris leg of the international torch relay. By doing that, it explores how the internet enabled Chinese netizens to challenge the domination of the CCP in the nationalist politics by exposing and representing 'realities' about the international torch relay that were suppressed and distorted in the official media discourse. Chapter 5 mainly looks at the online interactions of discussing the national enemy and national hero that emerged during the Paris leg of the international torch, and sees such online nationalist interactions as discursive practices in which language played an important role. The chapter shows how the online discursive practices of attacking France as a national enemy can help Chinese netizens declare their nationalist identity on the one hand; and on the other hand, how the discursive practices of embracing Jin Jing as a national hero could confirm their identity as members of the nationalist 'we'. Chapter 6 sheds light on the online debates between those who opposed and those who supported the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour, and investigates how each side defended and justified their own rationales and positions through manipulation of language. The chapter equally pays attention to *The People's Daily* to explore the responses, attitudes and policies of the CCP towards the popular nationalist call for boycotting Carrefour. By doing this, it helps understand where online popular and official nationalist policies could contradict and co-opt, and analyses the discursive techniques the CCP applied to instrumentally engage with online popular nationalism, in order to serve its own political agendas.



## Chapter 1

### Understanding Chinese Nationalism

#### 1.1 Introduction

Studies of online Chinese nationalism and its nationalist discourses can not proceed without some basic knowledge about nationalism, that is to say, what is nationalism? where does it come from? and what is Chinese nationalism about? The term ‘nationalism’ has a western origin, and according to Yuan (2008: 213), ‘nationalism both as a concept and an identity-building principle did not exist in China before the 19<sup>th</sup> century’. What makes Chinese nationalism a distinctive phenomenon is that China began to see itself as a nation only after its involuntary encounter with western capitalism and imperialism, because before that, China saw itself as the central kingdom of the universe. Since the Opium Wars, Chinese intelligentsia came to realise the importance of nationalism, and called urgently that only by awakening people’s awareness of the nation could they protect China from western invasions. As a result of this, ever since the advent of nationalism, the notion of Chinese nationalism always implies a connection with the feeling of ‘national salvation’. More importantly, coupled with the memories of China’s past suffering in the hands of western imperialists, this particular feeling also underlines a tension between China and foreign nations, and constantly shapes the conceptualisation, perception, mobilisation and discussion of Chinese nationalism (Callahan, 2004)

Nationalism has been a theme in Chinese politics since 1840. On the one hand, Chinese political elites use nationalism to obtain mass support and mobilise the people for collective national actions. While nationalism is commonly understood as a top-down political manoeuvre, it is crucial to also acknowledge the role of popular nationalists in shaping and reshaping Chinese nationalism. In the Chinese political sphere under the CCP’s authoritarian regime, nationalism is one of a very few political themes that give ordinary Chinese citizens some level of political participation and opportunities to voice their own views and concerns about China’s national security and international relations. Although the CCP still has a strong grip on Chinese nationalism, its monopoly of Chinese nationalist politics is increasingly

under challenge, because there is an evident tendency that popular nationalists have a growing interest in participating in the making and shaping of Chinese nationalist policies.

To obtain a better understanding of Chinese nationalism, it is necessary to put the concept 'nationalism' into the Chinese context, and examine how China's historical, socio-political and institutional context contributes to the formation, evolution and transformation of this specific concept. Before that, it is however worth providing some knowledge about the genesis of nationalism, and discussing various theoretical approaches of analysing nationalism as a social phenomenon. This chapter then continues with a brief historical review about the emergence of nationalism in China, and explains the reasons why nationalism was introduced and started to become an important political concept since the 1840s onwards. In the following section, it explains the concepts of 'nationalism' and attempts to provide a working definition of 'Chinese nationalism' for the research. However, providing a precise definition for the term Chinese nationalism is difficult, considering its relativity in terms of who defines it and the time period in which it is defined. Bearing this in mind, in the following two sections, I decide to embed the term into the official and popular nationalist discourses respectively, and investigate how the state as well as popular actors have been defining the term and shaping its dynamics, trends and significance in Chinese politics since the late 1970s. By taking both official and popular nationalist actors into consideration, it also provides a chance to understand the power relations between both actors over nationalist issues, and how such relations can possibly affect the overall shape and structure of Chinese nationalism.

## **1.2 Origin of Nationalism**

Nationalism is probably one of the most debated terms by political scientists and historians. Despite attempts of many scholars, defining the terminology of nationalism is a difficult task if not impossible, because as Smith (2004: 108) acknowledges, 'nationalism presents great difficulties of definition, classification and explanation; it involves a vast historical and geographical field, requires knowledge of several languages, familiarity with many events, customs and sentiments, and an empathy with various situations and problems of identity. And

there is no agreement even on basic definitions'. It is a difficult task also because, the definition of the concept is contingent upon one's theoretical stance, for instance, whether one sees nationalism as a natural part of human beings, a theoretical assumption shared by primordialists such as Shils (1957) and Geertz (1993), or sees it as a product of industrialisation, a common account held by modernists like Gellner (1983), Breuilly (1993), Brass (1991), Hobsbawm (1990) and Anderson (2006); and how one determines the origin of nations – is the formation of a nation a result of political transformations (e.g. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Brass 1979; 1991; Breuilly 1996) or socio-cultural developments (e.g. Gellner 1983; Anderson 2006).

Regardless of numerous debates about the origin of nationalism, majority of scholars, for instance, Giddens (1987) and Smith (1991a), tend to agree that nationalism first emerged in parts of Western Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and therefore, it is a concept of 'a relatively recent historical provenance' (Unger 1996: xii). In other words, as Kohn (1939: 1006) states, nationalism emerged 'only through the effects of an historical development which, by education, economic interdependence, and corresponding political and social institutions, bring about the integration of the masses and their identification with a body far too great for any concrete experience'. Ernest Gellner is one of the most preeminent scholars supporting this argument. He assumes that the emergence of nationalism is largely due to industrialisation and the subsequent prevalence of a high culture. In his words, 'the modern industrial world is one in which, for the first time in human history, high or literate culture is no longer a minority privilege and monopoly', and 'has become a pervasive possession of the overwhelming majority of the population' (Gellner 1994: 41). As Gellner (1983: 35) explains, unlike previous times, in modern societies, 'members are mobile, and ready to shift from one activity to another', and must possess generic skills that enable them to 'constantly communicate with a large number of other men, with whom they frequently have no previous association, and with whom communication must consequently be explicit, rather than relying on context.' Because of this, as Gellner (1994: 41) notes, there is an increasing need for 'a pervasive, all-embracing educational system' which operates 'in a standardized linguistic medium'.

Gellner (1983: 55) stresses the importance of a high degree of cultural standardisation by claiming that when standardised, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures pervade entire populations, 'a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify.' That is to say, a common high culture helps construct a collective identity and holds individuals together as a whole. As Gellner (Ibid: 33) furthers, 'modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, but to a culture'. From this point of view, nationalism can be regarded as a sense of membership determined by a shared high culture which 'pervades the whole of society, defines it, and needs to be sustained by the polity'.

Gellner's approach of analysing nationalism is influential, but is often accused of its inability to explain 'those nationalist movements flourished in societies which had not yet undergone industrialization' (Ozkirimli 2012: 130). Other modernists particularly those who favour 'instrumentalist' approach suggest that nationalism can be interpreted as a consequence of political manipulation. Breuilly (1993: 1) clearly declares that 'nationalism is above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power; while power, in the modern world, is principally about control of the state'. According to him, nationalism is in fact a 'sleight of hand ideology' which is used to strengthen the connection between state and society (Ibid: 62). Brass (1991: 50) generally shares ideas with Breuilly, and explains that 'a group becomes defined not only by its language and/or its religion and/or its claimed territory, but by political organization that pursues its interests'. From an instrumentalist perspective, as Smith (1986: 9) summarises, nationalism serves as a tool 'in the universal struggle of elites for wealth, power and prestige'. Brass (1979: 40-41) also pays attention to the significance of manipulating cultural symbols in leveraging nationalistic sentiments, and asserts that elites are able to 'select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups'. Similar to the above instrumentalist views, Hobsbawm also admits that nationalism is a result of political engineering. Unlike Brass whose attention is laid on cultural symbols, Hobsbawm concentrates on the importance of 'invented traditions', such as the invention of public ceremonies and public monuments. By 'invented traditions', he means 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which

seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (Hobsbawm 1983: 1). He identifies two processes of invention, namely, the adaptation of old traditions and institutions to new situations, and the deliberate invention of new traditions for quite novel purposes (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Chapter 7). Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 303) further explain that 'so much of what subjectively makes up the modern "nation" consists of such constructs and is associated with appropriate and, in general, fairly recent symbols or suitably tailored discourse (such as "national" history), the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the "invention of tradition". The foremost intention of 'inventing' traditions, as Hobsbawm (1983: 12) acknowledges, is that political elites use such invented traditions 'as a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion'.

However, theorists who advocate modernist approach especially those instrumentalists are often accused of overconcentration 'on elite manipulation of "the masses" rather on the dynamics of mass mobilisation per se' (Smith 1995: 40). A significant amount of existing literature on nationalism adopts a 'top-down' approach which regards people as manipulable objects of political mobilisation and action; however, the fundamental weakness of the 'top-down' approach is that it underestimates the dynamics from the 'bottom', and fail to take the views and needs of ordinary people into account. Even for Hobsbawm (1990: 10), he has to admit that although nationalism is 'constructed essentially from above', it 'can not be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people'. In this regard, nationalism is a social construction in which both political elites and ordinary people play a role. To put it another way, political elites can mobilise nationalism only if there is a strong craving for and identification with a nation among the people. Therefore, the study of nationalism should be considered as a dual process which takes both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' dynamics into account.

Furthermore, the top-down approach certainly overlooks the perceptions of the 'bottom', and nationalism is sometimes an 'overwhelming or ineffable' emotional bond (Smith 1995: 32), which as Connor (1997: 33) indicates 'does not draw its sustenance from facts but from perception, and perceptions are as important or more

than reality'. Miller (2000: 28) confirms that 'national communities are constituted by belief, and a nationality exists when its members believe that it does'. It can be argued that such 'inner perception of homogeneity' (Conversi 2002: 270) as nationalism can hardly be explained sometimes, because, as Finlayson (1998: 145) points out, it is related to 'some natural and atavistic urges'. Unlike modernists, another group of scholars assume that nationalism is primordial and is a natural part of human beings. For those scholars, such as Shil and Geertz who support these ideas, they argue that, as Eller and Coughlan (1993: 187) summarise, primordial identities or attachments are given, natural and powerful, and 'primordialism is essentially a question of emotion and affect'; hence, 'if an individual is a member of a group, he or she necessarily feels certain attachments to that group and its practices'. Shil (1957: 142) states that one's identification with a community 'could only be described as primordial', for 'it is a certain ineffable significance attributed to the tie of blood'. Similarly, Geertz (1993: 259) demonstrates that such emotional attachment 'stems from the "assumed givens" such as kin connection, being born into a particular religious community and speaking a particular language... which have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves'. In the sense, according to primordialist point of view, nationalism is defined by biological affinity, and it is naturally given and prior to modernisation. Although primordialists provide some distinctive perspectives to explain nationalism as an emotional attachment, what they fail to realise is the fact that the mobilisation and dissemination of nationalism as an organised and powerful force depend on modern conditions such as the prevalence of standardised education, the use of communication technologies and the establishment of bureaucratic institutions.

Smith (2005: 30) suggests that 'aspirations for nationhood can be found in pre-modern epochs, but they are particularly widespread and powerful in the modern era', and therefore, research of nationalism should embrace both pre-modern and modern elements into consideration. On the one hand, Smith (1986: 5) stresses that 'no study of nations and nationalism that completely ignores that past can bear fruit'. According to him (Smith 1999: 10), nationalism evolves over 'long periods of time (*la longue durée*)' rather than within 'a particular period of history or the processes of modernisation'. He pays particular attention on the importance pre-existing myths of common decent, shared symbols, values and memories in building a strong emotional bond between people and nation. On the other hand, he also emphasises that the past can be

‘rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias’ (Ibid: 10), and provides them with resources to mobilise ordinary people (Smith 1986: 200-201). In response to Hobsbawm’s notion of ‘invented traditions’, Smith (1991b: 358) contends that the past ‘acts as an constraint on “invention”’, because ‘it is not any past, but rather the past of that particular community, with its distinctive patterns of events, personages and milieux’. This explains why one version of the past is more successful than another in enhancing people’s identification with a community, because even if nationalist elites attempt to manipulate history in order to serve their political needs, they have to consider carefully which parts of group’s culture, memories, myths and traditions have the strongest nationalist appeal among the people.

### **1.3 The Emergence of Nationalism as an Important Political Concept in China**

Having provided some discussions about the origins of nationalism and multiple theoretical approaches to the studies of nationalism as a social phenomenon, this section attempts to link the concept with the Chinese context. Given the core mission of the research, this section does not aim to give a detailed account of the origins and historical developments of Chinese nationalism, but a brief historicised vision regarding where Chinese nationalism came from and how it evolved into an important concept in Chinese politics is still necessary. Although Gellner, Breuilly, Brass or Hobsbawm do not provide much discussion about Chinese nationalism in their works, they are at least right in the sense that Chinese nationalism is modern, and its emergence is largely a consequence of social, political and cultural transformations. As Unger (1996: xii) demonstrates, although China as a political and cultural entity that stretches back two millennia and comprised a civilisation and empire, it was not ‘truly a “nation” whose people were imbued with an abiding sense of “nationalism” in the full modern sense of those term’. The advent of Chinese nationalism, as Townsend (1988: 206) claims, was largely sparked by ‘the penetration of western power and ideas in the nineteenth century’. Before that, China adopted a Sino-centric worldview that saw itself as the only civilisation in the world and others as uncivilised barbarians (Feng, 2007). ‘Chineseness’ was defined by the acceptance of a shared pattern of cultural values; that is to say, it was the identification with a set of Chinese cultural tradition and philosophy (drawn mainly from the Confucian principles) that distinguished the Chinese from the non-Chinese.

From this perspective, China was not a country based on modern understandings of nation-state, but ‘a cultural community whose boundaries were determined by the knowledge and practice of principles expressed through China’s elite cultural tradition’ (Townsend 1996: 12). According to Harrison (1969: 2), ‘the traditional Chinese self-image has generally been defined as “culturalism”’, and as Levenson (1967: 108) echoes, ‘Chinese culture as the focus of loyalty’ permeated traditional Chinese view of the world. That is to say, all people, whether they were Mongols, Manchus, Arabs, or Turks, could be included in the Chinese community, as long as they accepted the teachings and principles of Chinese culture. As Townsend (1996: 12) explains, ‘it was intellectual commitment to the principles that counted, not the specific culture into which one was born, because the principles could be learned or renounced’.

The Opium War (1839-1842) marked China’s first encounter with the capitalist world, and Britain opened China’s doors with its military power. This violent contact brought a considerable crisis to China’s self-identification as the world’s only true civilisation and forced it to acknowledge the international system of modern nation-states. Before that, as Townsend (1996: 23) indicates, China did not see ‘other cultural or political systems as competitors that could challenge Chinese ways’. However, ever since its defeat in the Opium War, the Qing imperial government had signed a series of the so-called ‘unequal’ treaties with western imperialists, and was forced to pay an enormous amount of indemnity, open its ports and cede territories to countries like Britain, France, Germany and Japan. China’s defeat brought about a strong sense of identity crisis, and spurred its intellectuals to rethink the world order and China’s relations with other cultures, and they believed that China needed nationalism to hold all the people together to combat foreign invaders. Informed by nationalist ideologies, Chinese intellectuals urged the people to see China as one of the many nations in the world, and warned that those countries that China used to regard as peripheral and barbarian were actually more progressive and developed than China, and China was in fact already ‘inferior to western countries in many aspects’ (Zheng 2012: 218). Furthermore, realising its military inferiority in the wars with western powers, the Qing government was convinced by reformers to learn from the West, and even initiated the so called ‘self-strengthening movement’ aiming to adopt western military technologies as a



way of protecting China from more western invasions. The introduction of nationalism from the West and the use of nationalism to urge reforms and revolutions signalled a significant transition from 'a culturalism to a nationalism, to the awareness of the nation-state as the ultimate goal of the community' (Duara 1993: 2).

Chinese intellectuals, including Sun Yat-sen who later founded the Republic of China in 1912, shared the point that nationalism was key to the survival of China during the time of foreign invasions. Sun's stress on nationalism was manifest in his political philosophy - the 'Three Principles of the People' – nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood, which later became the ruling ideology of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, also known as KMT). Although under the banner of anti-imperialism and national unification, the KMT led by Chiang Kai-shek 'reduced the extraterritorial privileges enjoyed by foreign powers' (Chen 2005: 40), Chiang's preoccupation with the suppression of the communists and reluctance to fight against the Japanese occupiers undermined KMT's nationalist credentials and stimulated massive domestic protests against the KMT. While on the other hand, the CCP led by Mao Zedong actively waved the flag of nationalism and called to unite every possible force in China to fend off the Japanese invaders. The CCP succeeded in gaining popular support and consolidated its nationalist identity in the war against Japanese invasion, because it not only played a key role in rallying the nationalist awareness of the public, but also fought guerrilla wars against the Japanese army in Northern China for eight years.

As Tang and Darr (2012: 813) argue, the reason that the CCP could succeed in toppling the KMT and gaining its status in China's modern history is 'largely due to its abilities to appeal to the sentiment of public nationalism'. In face of Japanese invasions in the 1930s, the CCP openly criticised the KMT as a corrupt party that failed to stand up for the interests of Chinese people and was not able to unite the whole nation for the same goal of fighting against the Japanese imperialists. While the CCP attacked its opponent KMT for not being nationalist, it acted to be more nationalistic and more determined in the struggle for China's national independence. The CCP's leadership in the anti-Japanese guerrilla wars in Northern China and its

claims to be the saviours of the Chinese nation brought significant rewards to its later triumph over the civil war with the KMT and its founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The CCP's nationalist identity continued as Chairman Mao declared that the Chinese people had finally stood up on 1 October 1949, and its nationalist determination on national independence, autonomy and territorial integrity was clearly reflected in the major political moves after the founding of the PRC, for instance, Mao sought to establish a more equal relation with the Soviet Union; he attempted to recover Taiwan by military force and he sent troops to Korea to resist American aggression (Chen 2005: 42). Chen (Ibid: 53) explains that 'even socialist internationalism could not side-line Chinese nationalism', and Mao's assertion of protecting China's independence and rejection of Soviet leadership was also proved by the Sino-Soviet border war in 1969. Mao was believed to be a genuine nationalist, because on the one hand, he attached great importance to national autonomy and showed defiance to the supremacy of the Soviet Union; on the other hand, he upheld the flag of anti-imperialism by resisting western influence and confronting the USA over the Taiwan issues. Mao's militant and anti-imperialist nationalism subsided in the 1980s and the nature of Chinese nationalism changed, but this did not mean that Chinese leaders were less nationalistic than Mao (Oksenberg 1986: 503). Territorial integrity and national independence remained the ultimate nationalist concerns of the CCP, however, as Chen (2005:46) finds, the CCP 'abandoned most of the ideological elements in China's foreign policy' and developed relations with 'any country – regardless of its capitalist or Soviet-style ideology – as long as it did not pose a security threat to China, and could help China's modernization efforts'. The CCP promoted what Chen (Ibid: 46-48) calls 'positive nationalism', in other words, it paid great attention to China's modernisation, and at the same time emphasised the need to maintain social stability and peaceful international environment for economic development. The CCP under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping launched a series of economic and political reforms in the late 1970s, and this bold move marked a watershed in the CCP's nationalist policies. In the upcoming sections, I will explain in a more detailed manner with respect to how the reform changed the CCP's views and policies towards Chinese nationalism.

#### **1.4 Conceptualising Chinese Nationalism**

Since nationalism was introduced to China, it has always been a matter ‘of the political renovation for nation building’ (Lin 2006: 35). As Zhao (2004: 18) states, while contending groups of Chinese scholars were debating whether liberalism, fascism or Marxism could save China, ‘none of these isms endured’; and the only ideology that permeated and ‘triumphed as a new Chinese political identity in the modern era’ was nationalism. Many scholars of China have attempted to give a definition to Chinese nationalism. However, before defining what Chinese nationalism is, I observe that there seems to be a tendency that the two political concepts ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’ are often used interchangeably as if they bear no difference in essence, and as a result, it is necessary to address the conceptual problem and provide a clear understanding of the terms.

Viroli (1995: 1) points out that nationalism and patriotism ‘can and must be distinguished’. He defines patriotism as ‘a charitable and generous love’ which is ‘based on residence’, and nationalism as ‘an unconditional loyalty or an exclusive attachment’ which is based on ‘far more intimate and slow-changing personal characteristics’ (Ibid: 2-4). That is to say, patriotism is ‘indeed a rational kind of loyalty’ (Smith 2002: 56) and has a civic connotation indicating identification with and loyalty to a state, which quite often consists of several nations, while nationalism refers to emotional attachments to an ethnic community, defined by blood-ties and ancestry.

Zhao (1998: 290) defines ‘Chinese nationalism’ as a ‘state-centric conception of nationalism’ which advocates political and social solidarity based on the territorial state. It portrays the state ‘as the embodiment of the nation’s will, seeking for its goals the kind of loyalty and support granted the nation itself and trying to create a sense of nationhood among all its citizens’ (Townsend 1996: 18). Although China is a multi-ethnic state comprising 56 ethnic groups with Han as the largest ethnic group, the ethnic meaning of Chinese nationalism is in fact underplayed and obscured. In the Chinese context, the ‘Chinese nation’ (*zhonghua minzu*) conveys a predominantly civic meaning and embraces all the nationalities residing in the Chinese territory. As a result, the notion ‘Chinese nation’ is in reality synonymous with ‘Chinese state’, and the concept of nationalism is interpreted in Chinese as *aiguo zhuyi*, which literally means

‘loving the state’ (Zhao 1998: 290), implying the ‘loyalty to geographically unified and ethnically diversified China’ (Motyl 2001: 84).

However, scholars like Zhao (2004) and Hughes (2006) admit that giving a precise definition of ‘Chinese nationalism’ is next to impossible, because on the one hand, ‘the nation is itself a tool of definition’ (Conversi 1995: 77); and on the other hand, as Zhao notices (2004: 19) ‘the content of nationalism was not always attendant in similar situations of modernization because self-interested political entrepreneurs treat it as a political enterprise and manipulate it in response to changing supply and demand conditions in the political marketplace’, and hence, it is ‘situational’. In other words, the word nationalism could be defined by different nationalist players depending on their political considerations, and as a result, Chinese nationalism could have different focuses and meanings from time to time. This is true because, as it can be understood from the last section, the significance and characteristics of Chinese nationalism varied in different historical stages, for instance, during China’s involuntary encounters with western powers since the 1840s, the term nationalism was used as an important concept for raising people’s consciousness of China’s national survival and had a strong anti-imperialism connotation. However, from the 1980s onwards, China abandoned Mao’s militant type of nationalism, and adopted a more benign and pragmatic type of nationalism, which mainly stressed the importance of economic modernisation to the rejuvenation of the greatness of the Chinese nation.

Instead of trying to provide a precise definition, it might be fruitful to contextualise Chinese nationalism by examining a broader background against which it has evolved. The late 1970s were a watershed in Chinese politics, and I have chosen this particular time as the starting point for studying and understanding the shapes, dynamics, meanings and discourses of Chinese nationalism in the post-Mao era, because it was the time when China began to re-evaluate and normalise its relations with the world due to Deng Xiaoping’s reform policies, and as Chen (2005: 46) notices, ‘China’s relationship with other countries would no longer be decided by ideology, but rather by national interest’. The late 1970s were also the time when China’s interactions with the world started to grow exponentially, and such interactions were important for nation building and national identification, because national identity is always constituted by

interaction with others (Triandafyllidou 1998: 599; Eriksen 2005: 138) and ‘groups tend to define themselves, not by reference to their own characteristics, but by comparison to strangers’ (Armstrong 1982: 5). No matter how contentious the definition of nationalism is, discussion about nationalism can hardly avoid talking about the two major players, namely the state (the ‘top’) and ordinary citizens (the ‘bottom’). As I explained earlier, both players are the key constituents in the construction of nationalism, and the study of nationalism can not be fully understood without looking at the connections between the two. While it is of great relevance to evaluate how political elites use nationalism to legitimise their ruling through ‘invented traditions’, standardised mass schooling and manipulation of shared symbols, memories and history; it is also crucial to take the perceptions, views and emotions of the ordinary citizens into account. This is because, for instance, when the state initiates a nationalist action, it has to mobilise support from the bottom and needs its citizens to participate in the action; and people can only be mobilised when they have strong aspirations of and identification with the nation. On the other hand, when ordinary citizens raise their nationalist concerns, the state has to make decisions regarding how their nationalist concerns can be responded. In the Chinese context, as I will explain in a more detailed manner in the following sections, the party-state of the CCP uses nationalism mainly for addressing the ideological vacuum caused by the decline of Marxism and Maoism, and for garnering people’s support in order to legitimise its ruling status as the defender of the Chinese nation (Zheng 1999; Zhao 2000; Wu 2007). Whereas for ordinary Chinese people, nationalism not only provides a means for them to demonstrate and construct their national identity; but also gives them some limited space for social action and political discussion concerning China’s national interest and foreign relations (Reilly 2012; Shirk 2011; Shen & Breslin 2010; Weiss 2014). However, as Shen (2007: 32) argues, because of ‘its potential to show disapproval of the party-state through nationalist rhetoric’, nationalism also produces a channel for some Chinese people to criticise the party-state and challenge its nationalist policies. Due to the connections between the state and ordinary citizens and their relationship to Chinese nationalist politics, it is necessary to discuss Chinese nationalism from both official and popular perspectives, and examine how the term has been shaped and contested in each discourse since the late 1970s.

### **1.5 The Official Discourses of Chinese Nationalism**

With Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening up policies, China achieved a high rate of economic modernisation. However, the implementation of Deng's reform 'was not without its cost', as Zheng (1999: 17-18) acknowledges, for it weakened the central power and its ability to deliver Marxism or Maoism as an ideology for regulating or coordinating local societies. He argues that decentralisation gave autonomy to local governments, which was key to China's economic growth, but at the same time, the central government 'gradually lost its "touch" with local societies', and this gave rise to an ideological vacuum to be taken over by various foreign ideas, such as capitalism, individualism, and political liberalism, and therefore, resulted in a declining awareness of national identity (Ibid). Zheng's assertion certainly has its merits, and according to Zhao (2000: 17), this decline finally caused the so-called '*sanxin weiji* (three spiritual crises), namely, a crisis of faith in socialism, a crisis of confidence in the future of the country, and a crisis of trust in the party', which largely contributed to the outbreak of the student-led pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989.

The political crisis of 1989 made the CCP learn that the orthodox official doctrine of Marxism-Leninism was 'no longer effective in mobilising and legitimating the state, and the CCP should base itself firmly on Chinese nationalism' which 'they found remained a most reliable claim to the Chinese people's loyalty and the only important value that was shared by both the regime and its critics' (Zhao 2000: 17-18). Controversially, the real function of communist doctrines in rallying mass support can be overstated, as Wu (2007: 126) elucidates, the CCP has never been a genuinely communist party from the very beginning, and referring back to the history, the emergence and popularity of the CCP was not necessarily the result of its Marxist ideals such as 'class struggles or ideological alliance'. Rather, as noted by many scholars like Reilly (2004: 276-277), the CCP gained mass support mainly because of its resistance against Japan's invasion in the 1930s and its nationalist credentials in fighting for China's independence. From this point of view, Wu (2007: 126) asserts that the CCP is in fact a nationalist party under the flag of communism and the CCP 'only exists as a concept'. Regardless of its declining communist identity, nationalist identity is CCP's real identity with which it claims to rule. The

party often depicts itself as an ultimate defender of China's national dignity and territorial integrity, and the spokesman of all Chinese people. This nationalist appeal has helped the party stand in tandem with the people and according to Shirk (2007: 68), by 'binding the public to the Party through nationalism', it also helps the CCP 'preempt opposition'. This is because anyone who criticises the CCP would be labelled 'not loving the Chinese nation', and 'loving the Chinese nation' becomes so pivotal and undeniable a value that determines not only one's identity but also political correctness. However, on the other hand, the close engagement with nationalism may also become a constraint on the CCP and bring political risks particularly when the CCP fails to safeguard national honour and the interests of the people.

The CCP's suppression of the pro-democracy movement in June 1989 undermined its credibility and credentials as a national saviour, but in order to restore people's loyalty, the CCP launched the 'patriotic education programme' as a response to the political crisis. The programme was implemented and intended for all Chinese citizens alike, but the main target of the campaign as He and Guo (2000: 26) clarify, was 'the younger generation'. The campaign was extensively introduced to all levels of education in China, and a central document, *The Outline for Conducting Patriotic Education* was issued by the CCP in 1994, stipulating a curriculum to be taught in a patriotic classroom on a daily basis, including Chinese history and the rise of the CCP; the necessity of socialism and the incompatibility of western democracy with China's national conditions; the CCP's legendary and heroic stories and its great achievements for China's modernisation and so forth (Zhao 1998: 293). Hughes (2006: 57) points out that 'communism was still to be taught, but reduced to the stories of revolutionaries who illustrated the virtues of self-sacrifice for the interests of the collective and the need to always put the state before the individual'. Patriotism is not only repeatedly taught; according to Unger (1996: xv), its contents were 'very much manipulated' to serve the CCP's own political needs. New sacred symbols of nationhood were invented and inculcated through mass schooling, and as Unger (1982: 82-85) finds, they all served as symbols both for the nation and the party-state: the five-star red flag as China's national flag, the first of October as China's National Day, Tiananmen Square in Beijing as the sacred centre of China

where the founding of People's Republic was declared, and Chairman Mao as the sacrosanct father-figure of the nation and the CCP.

During 1993 to 1994, major patriotic projects like the 'hundreds books programme' and the 'hundred films programme' were jointly launched by the Party's propaganda department, the State Education Committee and the Ministry of Culture (He and Guo 2000: 27). Hundreds of books and films with patriotic themes were listed and recommended to school pupils. Group viewing is often organised at school, and during the summer vacations, reading patriotic books or/and watching patriotic films is compulsory homework for students. Students are also required to attend flag-raising ceremony everyday at school, and it is the daily morning routine before they start their classes. Such exposure to and practices of patriotic education as Chun (1996: 126) claims, in fact transformed the abstract ideology of patriotism 'from realm of high politics to the level of everyday routine', so that it became what Billig (1995: 15) terms 'banal nationalism', referring to an unconscious consumption of nationalist belief and practices, 'which makes existing social arrangements appear "natural" or inevitable'. As Billig (1995: 42) purports, if banal life is to be routinely practiced, the remembering of nationhood 'must occur without conscious awareness: it occurs when one is doing other things, including forgetting'. Scholars like Wu (2007: 124) doubt the effectiveness of the top-down patriotic education programme by criticising how it simply regards young people as passive receivers of propaganda; bearing the fact that students receive such education from kindergarten until college, its effects can not be underestimated, because such education not only confers identity on them (Gellner 1983: 36), but also helps individuals 'find their primary identification with the nation' (Ramirez and Boli 1987: 3).

The years after the crackdown of the pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union were critical for China, and it increasingly 'found itself at the centre of an international siege' (Tok 2010: 24). However, this plight provided the CCP a great opportunity to gain domestic support by appealing to nationalism. By portraying China as a 'crises-ridden nation', the party thrust itself 'to the fore of the Chinese patriotic front, making it the guardian angel of the nation's pride and honour, while spurring its target audience to follow its strides' (Ibid). The CCP constantly



indoctrinated through the state propaganda machine that the country was being enveloped by *neiyou* (internal chaos) and *waihuan* (foreign aggression), and therefore, only a strong centralised state led by the CCP could protect China from threats both home and abroad. Furthermore, Beijing's failure to win the bid for the 2000 Olympic Games and the enormous criticism it received on issues of human rights nevertheless assisted the CCP to instil 'an aura of victimization and international conspiracy within the expectant nation' (Ibid). In addition to that, Samuel Huntington's (1993) article '*The Clash of Civilizations*' in which he warns of an increasing possibility of conflict between western and Confucian civilisations coincidentally reinforced the perception among Chinese intellectuals that such anti-China theories did exist and had a good market in the West. Furthermore, the Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996 when America showed its willingness to defend Taiwan against China's military actions again lent credence to the suspicion that western countries would never give up trying to fragment and contain China. By circulating a hostile image of the West as well as Japan through state media along with the patriotic education programme, the CCP successfully joined the 'nationalism chorus' and enhanced its nationalist identity, quickly and smoothly shifting 'its color from "Communist Red" to "Chinese Red" (Wu 2007: 126). That is to say, in response to the decline of the communist ideology, the CCP can not but appear to be more Chinese. However, such theories as 'international conspiracy' and 'China Threat' did not become vivid to the ordinary people until the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was bombed by NATO in 1999, and a Chinese interceptor fighter jet collided with a US surveillance airplane in the Chinese air space in 2001, both of which provoked massive nationalistic sentiments in Chinese society.

Different from popular nationalism, which is usually regarded as emotion-driven, the CCP's version of nationalism is pragmatic in essence. It has put great emphasis on the three elements: 'economic development, political stability and national unification', and among the three, political stability is accentuated as the paramount prerequisite without which the other two remain difficult (Zheng 1999: 91-94). The CCP on the one hand tries hard to sustain a high rate of economic development so that the people can share the fruits of economic achievements, and by so doing, the party reduces the number of discontented people who might protest against the government. On the other hand, the CCP constantly emphasises the importance of social stability, and attempts to 'convince the Chinese public that Communist Party rule is essential for maintaining

order and prosperity', without which the whole country would be in chaos (Shirk 2007: 53). In fact, the CCP often reminds the people of the weakness and backwardness of the 'old' China before 1949, and of the social, economic and technological development China has achieved since the founding of the PRC under the leadership of the CCP. In this way, the party intends to publicise its fundamental role in the history of China, and tell the people that only the CCP can help China regain its past glory and rightful status in the world.

Although the CCP needs nationalism to help 'set the national agenda to suit the Party' (He and Guo 2000: 30), at the same time, they are cautious of the possibility that popular nationalism may spill over and cause its legitimacy to be questioned. This is because as Kristof (2001) suggests, nationalism is not just for conferring legitimacy on the government but also for taking it away, if the party fails to deliver their nationalist promises. Chinese history has in fact given the CCP a good reason to worry because as Shirk (2007: 7) suggests, the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and the Republic of China in 1949 were brought down by the mass movements of discontented groups that were united 'by the shared fervor of nationalism' and accused leaders of failing to defend the nation against foreign aggression. This requires the CCP to deal with nationalism with extra caution, because they know well that either suppressing popular nationalism or encouraging it may backfire. That is to say, if the party uses too strong a mechanism to tame nationalism, the CCP's nationalist rhetoric will be fiercely questioned and therefore 'causes the party to lose face and authority before the Chinese people' (Gries 2005a: 181). If on the other hand it is too soft, popular nationalism may grow out of control and have a strong impact on China's foreign relations and social stability. Hence, the most frequently used mechanism by the CCP as seen for instance after the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, is to first of all identify with the people and affirm their nationalistic deeds, but at the same time call for people to remain calm and warn them to guard against extreme behaviours and avoid causing social disturbance that may be taken advantage of by hostile parties. This explains the CCP's understandings of evaluating sentiments and perceptions of the citizens when dealing with Chinese nationalism, and it is true that the overall dynamics and structure of Chinese nationalism is increasingly shaped by the interactions between both the state and citizens. As Weiss (2014: 219) observes, in face of popular nationalist sentiment, the CCP needs to decide the extent to which it invokes this pressure, and it has to

weigh the potential benefits of tolerating popular nationalism against the cost of repressing it. Tolerating popular nationalism enables the Chinese leadership to enhance its legitimacy if the public sees the government's resolve to defend the nation's interests; however, Weiss (2014: 17) also points out that allowing popular nationalism to emerge can also pose a threat to the CCP as it provides 'a protective umbrella for domestic dissent', gives citizens 'experience with political mobilization' and generates 'populist fuel for intra-elite competition'. On the other hand, repressing popular nationalism may help the CCP reassure foreign governments that bilateral relations will not be hijacked by the domestic popular nationalism, nevertheless, according to Weiss (2014: 5), it can be equally costly, as it creates resentment and leaves 'the government vulnerable to charges of selling out the nation'.

Despite the CCP's cautious attitude towards popular nationalism, Hughes (2000a: 206) nevertheless observes a tendency that the CCP faces growing pressure to align with the claims of popular nationalists, and 'has found itself increasingly held hostage to an ideology' that it has been encouraging since the crackdown of the pro-democracy movement in 1989. The nationalist credentials of the CCP's leadership was questioned when it failed to react to the atrocities committed against ethnic Chinese Indonesians in Jakarta in May 1998. Popular nationalists, who were informed of the incidents mainly on the internet, pushed the government to take tough measures against the Indonesian government; nonetheless, the CCP's reluctance and insistence on a non-intervention policy only led its patriotic rhetoric to be attacked and ridiculed by angry Chinese. However, as Hughes (2000b) notices, nearly a year after the riots in Indonesia, the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade witnessed a dramatic change in the official attitude, and the CCP made a bold move to 'ride the nationalist cyber-tiger', because 'the same Beijing municipal authorities who had refused to permit students to march on the Indonesian embassy not only bus students but also set up a "Sacred Sovereignty" Web site where people could express their outrage'.

The CCP used domestic popular nationalist sentiments to gain leverage in the diplomatic negotiation with the US over the bombing of the embassy, and finally prompted the Clinton Administration to apologise. Although popular nationalism at home can give the government 'some legitimate basis for some tougher policy', Wu

(2007: 87) argues that it may narrow down 'its room for flexible diplomacy and secretive negotiation'. This is particularly evident in China's foreign policy towards Japan after its former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi started paying annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine where WWII Class A criminals are commemorated. In response to an outpouring of indignant sentiments against Koizumi in the media and the internet, the Chinese government had no better choice but to co-opt popular nationalism and suspend all high-level diplomatic contacts with Japan for five years (Shirk 2011: 28). This could help enhance the government's nationalist image at home, nevertheless, as Shirk (Ibid) warns, the danger of hyper-responsiveness to popular nationalism is that Chinese leaders sometimes may be hijacked by public opinion, which will cause them 'to box themselves into a corner from which it is difficult to escape'. Moreover, because China tries to reassure foreign audience that it has no intention to dominate as it is increasingly emerging as a world power, the Chinese leadership knows that over-engaging with popular nationalism in the decision making processes of foreign policies can cause damage to its image abroad and create a sense of distrust which can prevent China from playing a greater role in global issues.

Given that China is increasingly integrated into the world economy, the trick is, as Downs and Saunders (1998: 120-121) recognise, 'ideally, the CCP would like to maximize its legitimacy by making strong appeals to nationalism while simultaneously raising living standards, but power constraints and the contradictions between domestic appeal to nationalism and a development strategy that relies heavily on foreigners mean trade-offs exist between nationalism and economic performance.' This requires the leadership to 'find a foreign policy approach that can achieve both these vital objectives simultaneously' (Shirk 2007: 68). However, in reality, such a balanced foreign policy is hard to reach. Its commitment to the world as a peaceful player and the promise it has made to the home audience as a nationalist can sometimes put the government into an irreconcilable conflict in which it has to accept the consequences of either nationalist frustration or impact on its opening up policies. The Chinese government opts to block information which it thinks can ignite popular nationalism in order to reserve some room for secretive negotiation and avoid being hijacked by nationalist public opinion, but arguably, the expansion of internet usage and faster flow of information have made it increasingly difficult for the government to rein in the undesired content. While on the other hand, by reiterating the return of Hong Kong and

Macau, the successful launch of the manned Shenzhou spaceship and the hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the CCP promotes 'confident nationalism' (Oksenberg, 1986) and attempts to convince the domestic audience that under the leadership of the CCP, China will restore the past glory of the Chinese nation and overcome the 'century of humiliation' (Gries 2004, 2005b).

### **1.6 The Popular Discourses of Chinese Nationalism**

From all the above, Chinese nationalism has been explained from a statist point of view. However, as I have mentioned, Chinese nationalism can not be fully understood without taking the popular nationalists into account. The popular version of Chinese nationalism is more complicated, and it is a concept defined by various schools of thought. As Pye (1996: 90) observes, popular nationalism tends to 'vacillate between the extremes of xenophobic distrust and unqualified admiration of all things foreign'. Therefore, anti-traditionalism and anti-foreignism have been two strands of popular nationalism in China since the 1980s.

The anti-traditionalistic strand of popular nationalism was largely influenced by a television series called *He Shang (River Elegy)* broadcast in 1988. The anti-traditionalistic ideas originated among intellectuals who started to re-evaluate Chinese indigenous culture and were inclined to attribute China's socio-political problems at that time to its tradition. However, the broadcast of *He Shang* even amplified such ideas and brought them to the attention of the audience. The TV series 'demonised almost all aspects of China's tradition and turned key symbols of China's glorious past, such as the Great Wall, the Yellow River, and the "Four Great Inventions," into the root causes of China's contemporary backwardness' (Wu 2007: 129). Simultaneously, it 'used images of the West as examples of the new civilization summoning China' (Zhao 1997: 728). Such a self-demeaning tendency was denounced by the government as 'a dangerous example of "spiritual pollution" that blindly advocated total westernization and boosted national nihilism' (Ibid); notwithstanding, in Zhao's opinion (Ibid), those anti-traditionalists were 'assertively nationalistic' because their ideal was to summon Chinese people to 'rejuvenate the nation by assimilating nourishment from the West and by demanding a fundamental change in

the state of the Chinese mind'. Such yearnings for changes then led to the massive pro-democracy demonstration in 1989.

The waning of anti-traditionalism was not only attributed to the fact that they failed to find 'a replacement for Chinese tradition that could provide a satisfactory form of identification' (Zhao 2004: 137), but also to the official 'patriotic education programme' through which the government attempted to de-romanticise the western values by emphasising their incompatibility with the Chinese conditions. Despite cynical views among some Chinese towards the official warnings of the threats from the West during the early years after the suppression of the anti-traditionalist trend, the ever-growing popular nationalism in the 1990s tended to concur with the official propaganda that America and its allies, including Japan, intended to contain China. This tendency was exemplified by the popularity of a series of 'China Is Dissatisfied' books, notably *China Can Say No* (Song et al, 1996) and *China Is Unhappy* (Song et al, 2009). Both books were considerably popular, and quickly became a best seller in China in 1996 and 2009-2010 respectively. *China is Unhappy* is considered as a follow-up to *China Can Say No*, and one of its contributors, namely Song Qiang, was also a key author of *China Can Say No*. According to Shambaugh (2013: 27-31), both books are 'representative of nativist/hyper-nationalist discourse in China today', as they openly encourage enmity against the US and Europe, and assert that China must stand up to and even punish the West. As Shambaugh (Ibid) continues to argue, this cohort of popular nationalists is 'extremely conservative', expressing strong distrust of the West, regarding international multilateral involvement as 'traps laid by the West' to contain China and implying a xenophobic campaign to remove western ideas and influences from China, and these views are shared and reinforced by similar voices in the Chinese cyberspace.

The emergence of these popular claims can easily draw people to regard state propaganda as the manipulator behind such anti-foreign nationalism, while at the same time overlook the role of sensational commercial media in stirring up such sentiments. According to Reilly's (2010: 52) understanding, such anti-foreign nationalism seemed to have been largely driven by sensational and market-oriented media. Wu (2007: 129) also agrees that, with respect to the case of *China Can Say No*, it was the publishers

who ‘seized upon an undercurrent of the nationalistic sentiment, composed the title, set the timetable and took the market rewards’. The book came out right after the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996, which made the anti-American sentiments seem credible. Furthermore, NATO’s bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999 and the incident of mid-air surveillance plane collision in 2001 strengthened the conviction that America was hostile to China. In fact, the role of media commercialisation in boosting popular nationalism can not be underestimated. According to Qian and Bandurski (2011: 39), in China, regardless of rapid media commercialisation, the media still remain ‘formally a part of the party-state apparatus’, and therefore have to obey the imperatives of the CCP and operate within the boundary circumscribed by the CCP. However, the fierce competitions for readership have impelled commercial media to be increasingly customer-oriented (Zhao, 1998; Stockmann, 2013; Stockmann and Gallagher, 2011; and Shambaugh, 2007), since as Qian and Bandurski (2011: 43) find, the media have to consider the taste of the public other than the party’s. In order to take care of both the CCP and the public, the media look for stories that are attractive to the audience and at the same time politically safe. In this regard, news stories that have nationalist appeals are often considered as ideal topics, which not only can sell commercially, but also accepted by the authority. Therefore, as Shirk (2007: 85) comments, ‘a nationalist slant on news events works for both of them’ and ‘nationalism has become the politically correct point of view enforced by the marketplace as well as the censors’.

Under the nationalist overcoat, such stories normally would not invite radical suppression from the authority; and the reality is that the media have more freedom to report news on nationalism than any other politically sensitive news, such as democracy, human rights and Tibet. Looking back to the case of *China Can Say No* and *China Is Unhappy*, it might not be correct to blame media commercialisation as the sole factor for fanning the flame of nationalism while ignoring the role the government could have played in the tide of nationalism at that time. Technically speaking, it was not too difficult to ban the book if the government did not want it at all or thought it might undermine its diplomatic strategies, and in fact, *China Can Say No* was later banned for some time. One of the reasons for allowing such vent of nationalistic sentiments was supposedly that the government needed some public leverage to advantage itself in the diplomatic negotiations, and this instrumentalist co-optation of

public nationalist sentiments was also noticeable in the demonstrations against NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. University students were at first not only allowed but also assisted by the government to shout out their nationalist outrage in front of the US embassy in Beijing; but when the government thought it was enough lest it complicated the Sino-US relations, students were asked to go back to the classroom and 'hectorated and lectured by the official view on what constituted "correct patriotism"' (Lagerkvist 2010: 201). I will provide detailed analysis about the CCP's ad hoc use of popular nationalism in Chapter 6, and explain how the CCP carefully and strategically co-opted popular nationalism in the wave of nationalist protests against the French supermarket Carrefour, and how it attempted to suppress popular nationalism by imposing what it called 'rational patriotism' when the CCP thought popular nationalism was too hot. Although the government's instrumentalist flow with popular nationalism may bring short-term grassroots support, it can cause frustration among popular nationalists and hence harm the government's credibility. As Lagerkvist (2010: 201) explains, for popular nationalists, they expect 'sincerity and long-term nationalist commitment from the government', 'not occasionally giving the green light for patriotic outburst and later putting out the fire of public opinion when it no longer suits policy'.

As I discussed in the second section of this chapter, the analysis of nationalism should take perceptions of ordinary citizens into consideration; that is to say, how they perceive the nation's past and future, its symbols, traditions and myths, and their relation with the community. Scholars like Gries (2004) pay attention to the psychological dimension of Chinese nationalism, and explain that the outbursts of Chinese popular nationalist sentiments are significantly driven by a dualistic complex of victor and victim psychology. Liu (2001: 212-213) argues that 'insofar as a particular sense of a nation is concerned, it has to be narrated in connection with a version of the nation's past'. The formation of such a psychological complex in fact has much to do with China's 'tenacious self-identity', which according to Shambaugh (2013: 17), refers to a deeply held view about the nation's past that 'carries two distinct aspects'. On the one hand, it is the long history of China's glorious past when China was regarded as one of the world's greatest civilisations; and on the other hand, it is the humiliating side of its past, namely the 'century of humiliation' (Gries, 2004) starting from China's loss in the Opium War to the end of the war against Japanese invasion in



1945. Due to this particular version of China's past, when China is depicted as a victor, its past becomes a great memory of achievements and supremacy; whereas, when China is depicted as a victim, it becomes a traumatic reminder of being bullied, exploited and insulted. As Shambaugh (2013: 17) claims, this dualistic complex of victor and victim psychology, which interweaves the proud and humiliating feelings and is 'deeply rooted in the Chinese mind-set', is frequently articulated in official and popular discourses and fuels contemporary Chinese popular nationalism.

The fast growth of China's hard power as well as soft power in fact brings about a spontaneous escalation of national pride among the general public, and a prevailing confidence among many Chinese people that China will eventually become a strong country echoes with the 'confident nationalism' as promoted in the official discourse. However, the growth of proud feelings about the country does not mean a declining memory of the nation's past humiliation. The humiliation side of China's past continues to play a significant role in the popular psyche, and even when most Chinese people are celebrating a grand national achievement, such as the hosting of the Beijing Olympics, the memory of past humiliation is simultaneously recalled. For many Chinese people, the holding of the Beijing Olympics was not simply considered as the accomplishment of a national mission, but more importantly as a manifestation of China's re-emergence as a world power after a century of humiliation and weakness. Furthermore, the bitter memories of China's humiliating past shared and reinforced by a significant proportion of Chinese people also mean that they are uneasy with foreign challenges, and whenever China is questioned and criticised by other countries, especially western countries, it can easily trigger their memories of China's past suffering in the hands of western powers, and draw them to think that western countries are trying to prevent China from recovering its past status as a powerful world player. In this regard, as Shambaugh (2013: 17) points out, this deeply held and long-standing *weltanschauung* of historical victimization and humiliation reflects 'existing insecurities about China's potential as a global power', and it could be argued that there is still a long way for the notion of 'confident nationalism' to be established in the Chinese mind-set. In other words, when their proud feelings about the nation can be easily overtaken by the memories of past humiliation, their sense of national pride is in fact fragile. As I will discuss in the upcoming chapters, this is very much the case about the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics. Many Chinese saw the

international torch relay as a parade of China's national pride to the world audience, however, as the torch relay started to receive massive protests from human rights and pro-Tibet groups in cities like Paris, the feeling of national pride soon gave way to the outburst of nationalist anger towards the alleged intention of France to humiliate China.

The past humiliation 'has been an integral part of the construction of Chinese nationalism' (Callahan 2004: 200), and it is not only repeatedly mentioned throughout the official patriotic education and state media, but also constantly told and retold in popular nationalist discourses such as films, novels and TV series. It is such an important narrative that shapes and helps understand Chinese nationalism, and as Gries (2004: 135-136) indicates, in China, 'telling and retelling narratives about the "Century of Humiliation"' in fact creates an emotional bond between the people and the state. Furthermore, both official and popular nationalists share a realist view that a weak country is susceptible to foreign threats and becoming a strong country is the only way to rejuvenate China and wipe away its past humiliation. Although in this regard, popular nationalists share some of the CCP's visions about Chinese nationalism, this by no means indicates that state and popular nationalist players have the same nationalist agendas and policies. The CCP in fact becomes aware of the emergence of liberal popular nationalism, which increasingly poses a challenge to the official version of Chinese nationalism. Many young people protesting against the US after NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade may be easily mislabelled as manipulated by the Chinese government, mainly because their outcries for a strong state to defend China's interest and dignity appeared to be in accordance with the official nationalist rhetoric. However, from Lagerkvist's perspective (2010: 198), this coincidence does not mean that both official and popular nationalism share the same agenda and idea. As Zhao clarifies (2005: 137), those demonstrators were essentially liberal nationalists who did not even identify themselves with the CCP, nor did they 'stop criticizing the government's policies that limit personal freedoms and political participation'. For Zhao (Ibid), what liberal nationalists claim is that 'in the arena of international competition, Chinese people should defend their national rights', while 'in the domestic arena, they should fight for their personal rights of participation against the authoritarian Communist State'. This argument dismisses the common misinterpretation that sees the CCP's instrumental manipulation as the sole factor

contributing to the rising of popular Chinese nationalism, and explains why CCP is so nervous and cautious in coping with popular nationalist protestors.

Radically different from the official nationalism, which stresses a close connection between the Chinese nation and the CCP and equates loving the Chinese nation with loving the CCP, liberal nationalists is a group of people who draw a clear boundary between the party and the nation. As Liu (2010: 175) argues, although their understandings of loving the Chinese nation to some extent reflect ‘very much the patriotic socialization they have been exposed to (such as their antagonism to the “anti-China” forces and “separatists”, and their wish for a strong China)’, liberal nationalists emphasise that one must distinguish between the party and the nation when talking about Chinese nationalism. For liberal nationalists, they reject the CCP’s nationalist rhetoric and propaganda, and as Gries (2005a:191) indicates, they pursue their own nationalist cause and agenda, and ‘have begun issuing their own nationalist counterclaims, which are frequently based on racial, and not party, identity’.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

This chapter not only provided some generic explanation about the origins of nationalism as a social phenomenon; more importantly, it linked nationalism to the Chinese context by giving a brief review of Chinese nationalism, namely, in which circumstance nationalism was introduced to China, how it emerged as an important political concept during the time China was under invasion, and how it has continued to be a major theme in contemporary Chinese politics since the late 1970s. The study of Chinese nationalism requires attention to both official and popular nationalism, because Chinese nationalism as an ideology or as a socio-political movement is jointly produced and shaped by both state and popular actors. As a result, it is necessary to see how both actors confront, negotiate and co-opt over nationalist issues, and only by taking both into account can we constitute a fuller image for understanding Chinese nationalism. Official and popular nationalists tend to share a common goal of building a better and stronger China, but they have different nationalist ideals and agendas. Nationalism is used by the CCP to legitimise its leadership and unite its people, and political elites have been adjusting nationalist strategies and agendas according to their own political needs and people’s reactions. While much attention has been paid to the

significance of the state players in the politics of Chinese nationalism, in other words, how they mobilise and appropriate nationalism through propaganda, at the same time, ‘the roles that the Chinese people and their emotions play in Chinese nationalism’ should be equally considered (Gries 2004: 20). As explained in this chapter, popular nationalism is rising as a significant political force in China, and it is increasingly challenging the CCP’s dominance of nationalist discourses. Popular nationalists have displayed a strong interest in expressing their own nationalist claims, however, due to the CCP’s strict control of nationalist politics, they can be suppressed if the CCP thinks they exceed the bottom line. The extent to which popular nationalists can realise their goals largely relies on how the CCP responds to these nationalist appeals; nevertheless, the CCP’s instrumentalist attitudes towards nationalism can hardly guarantee a consistent answer to popular nationalists. Since the internet redefines the way ordinary people can engage in the politics of nationalism, the question is, how independently popular nationalists can seek their own nationalist objectives, and this question will be answered in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2

### The Chinese Internet and Online Chinese Nationalism

#### 2.1 Introduction

After providing a brief history of Chinese nationalism and examining the socio-political context as well as major players of Chinese nationalism, this chapter shifts to focus on the Chinese internet. As Yang comments (2011), any study focusing on the Chinese internet should first of all acknowledge the fact that the internet is 'contentful', and in order to understand the Chinese internet, its contents, such as practices, meanings, culture, politics and people, should be understood. If the last chapter mainly answers the question 'what is Chinese nationalism about', this chapter attempts to explain what the Chinese internet is and in what ways both terms, the internet and Chinese nationalism, can be linked to form a new political phenomenon of online Chinese nationalism which increasingly attracts scholarly attention these days.

The enormous expansion of the internet usage in China and its purported decentralising properties have depicted a different landscape from traditional media in terms of 'applications and impact' (Sassi 2001: 89), and the open and interactive quality of the internet has made scholars like Langman (2005: 44) believe that the internet has 'unique capacities to create democratic, participatory realms in cyberspace devoted to information and debates'. Warf and Grimes (1997: 260) even regard the internet as providing a 'counterhegemonic' discourse which challenges 'established systems of domination' and empowers social activists to legitimate and publicise political claims.

The internet poses a serious threat to the government's control of information, and in China, it fundamentally changes the ways both official and popular players participate in the politics of nationalism. From NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, boycotting the French supermarket Carrefour in the time leading up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, to the recent anti-Japanese

demonstrations in 2012 due to China's territorial dispute with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands (known as the Senkaku Islands in Japan), the internet played a significant role in all these nationalist incidents occurred in China. The internet not only helps disseminate nationalist information and mobilise people's nationalist awareness, but also provides a space for discussing nationalist policies and actions. However, before answering to what extent the internet can facilitate the dissemination, discussion and execution of Chinese nationalism and how the use of the internet reconstructs the relations between the official and popular nationalist players, it is necessary to understand the nature and contents of the Chinese internet.

Having this in mind, the chapter first of all sheds light on the Chinese internet per se - the immediate soil out of which online Chinese nationalism grows. It inspects the distinctive features of the internet that can configure the production, dissemination and discussion of online Chinese nationalism. By examining the demographics of the Chinese internet users and the generally apolitical and entertainment-oriented nature of the internet use in China, the chapter tries to sketch out an image regarding the population of the internet users in China and the distinctive characteristics of their online behaviours. In the following section, I regard the Chinese cyberspace as a realm of control as well as a realm of resistance. While the internet provides various ways for ordinary people to circumvent political control in China, it also gives the government new possibilities for manipulation and propaganda. As a result of this, instead of seeing the internet as a sheer emancipating technology that empowers ordinary people, I argue that the examination of the Chinese internet should pay attention to the tension between the two major users of the internet, namely, the ordinary Chinese netizens who want freer access to information and political participation, and the state censors who attempt to strengthen its capabilities of monitoring and regulating the internet. Furthermore, the temporary suspension of power hierarchy and prohibitions brought about by the internet also prompts me to see China's cyberspace as a carnival (Herold and Marolt 2011), and this provides a special angle for understanding interactions on the Chinese internet. In the final section, the chapter endeavours to make sense of online Chinese nationalism by interrelating Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet. It aims to examine the extent to which the internet can bring changes to the expression, discussion and

execution of Chinese nationalism, and as a result, challenge the relations between the official and popular players over the issue of nationalism.

## **2.2 The Demographics of Chinese Online Population**

According to the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC 2014: 6), the number of Chinese internet users climbed to 618 million by the end of 2013, with an increase of 53.58 million compared with the previous year, and the penetration rate was 45.8%. In spite of the fast expansion of the internet in China, there is a considerable disparity in the penetration rate of the internet between regions, for example, Beijing has the highest penetration rate of 75.2% and Jiangxi Province has the lowest rate with only 32.6%. Furthermore, as the report finds, the internet usage is primarily dominated by the young people. Although there is a continuing increase in the number of internet usage at the age of 30 and above, young people aged between 10 to 29 count up to nearly 60 per cent of the total internet population in China (Ibid: 27). As the data further suggest, the internet is predominantly used by those who have high school degrees and above, and this group of people counts up to 67.2 % of the overall Chinese internet population (Ibid: 27). With respect to the occupational structure, the report (Ibid: 28) finds that students are the primary users of the internet in China, taking up 25.5% of the overall Chinese online population followed by self-employed persons/freelancers (18.6%) and general staff of companies (11.4%). In addition to that, the use of the internet in China is largely an urban phenomenon, as 71.4% of the internet users live in urban areas. As all the data show, a typical Chinese internet user is normally young, urban and highly educated. In this regard, as Giese (2003: 42) states, the online community in China is a 'relatively privileged strata of the population', and hence, it should be noted that the online population can not fully represent the whole population of China. The above demographic information not only clarifies who uses the internet in China, but also gives some hints about the profile of online popular nationalists. In other words, an online popular nationalist is likely to be a young student or a white-collar worker who is well informed and educated, and living in an urban area.

## **2.3 Infotainment and Commercialisation of the Chinese Internet**

After establishing knowledge regarding demographics of Chinese internet users, it is also pertinent to understand what these people use the internet for. While scholars who specialise in the Chinese internet such as Guobin Yang (2009b) tend to regard the internet as a significant contributor to the growing political participation in contemporary China, the dominant internet utilisation in China is however noticeably personal, entertainment-oriented and apolitical. According to the CNNIC (2014), the majority of people surf the internet to acquire information, download music, communicate with friends, play online games and do shopping. Although as one of the most frequently used internet applications in China, search engine is commonly used by Chinese internet surfers for information acquisition, Liu (2010: 48-51) argues that the information that people look for has much to do with entertainment, such as music, sports and celebrities, and even though there are some users looking for 'serious' forms of information, their interest may have been already 'dampened by the China's sophisticated internet censorship'. Blogs/personal spaces and social networking websites are still popular among the internet users (CNNIC 2014: 40), however, Liu (2010: 49) again reveals that the online contents generated by Chinese netizens are mostly related to 'personal life, lifestyles and consumerism', and the predominantly apolitical nature of online activities suggests that the internet is largely a place for fun seeking and socialising. Moreover, instead of becoming involved in serious political discussions, Tok (2010: 33) observes that Chinese internet users are more likely to be attracted to 'individualistic and alternative viewpoints, sensationalized phrasings and contents'. In the case of blogs, for the majority of Chinese internet users, blogging is only a way to record personal life, pass time and read news about celebrities. As Liu (2010:49-50) claims, many Chinese users came to know about blogging largely due to a high-profile young journalist called Mu Zimei who boldly published her sex diaries online, and Sister Fu Rong who uploaded various photos to her blog to show off her body. In this regard, the tabloidisation of the internet has led Guo (2005: III) to think that 'rather than being an information highway, the internet in China is more like an entertainment highway'.

Furthermore, if the internet is a place where 'telecommunication, computing and the cultural industries merging into a seamless web of information, entertainment and communication glued together by the universal language of binary digital code'



(Goode 2005: 109), the expansion of the internet also helps spread commercialism and nurture hyperlinked consumer culture. According to the CNNIC report (2014: 41), by the end of 2013, the number of online shoppers skyrocketed to 302 million with a growth rate of 24.7% over the previous year. The rapid growth of e-commerce in China has much to do with the popularity of Taobao, a website similar to Amazon and eBay. Online shopping has become part of modern life in China, and is particularly popular among the young people. People shop online not only because goods are usually cheaper than those on the high streets, but also because it gives people a special shopping experience where the notion of shopping has been fundamentally revolutionised. By simply entering the name of a product and clicking the mouse, the computer shows tens of thousands of relevant goods in a second and can automatically range them in terms of price, popularity and credibility. Moreover, online shopping portals can continuously recommend certain goods or services to customers by profiling and tracing customers' cookies, which record their browsing preferences and previous transactions.

In addition, while it is thought that people are interconnected in the same online virtual community, it is realistic to say that they are actually living in ghettos differentiated by the lifestyles with which they are keen to identify. There are various online communities for Apple users, where Apple fans join together and share information about the products of this specific brand. They publish news about the latest models, show off the devices they have bought and share technical know-how. The concerns of the internet generation on private life and consumerism have resulted in a low level of interest in political issues; and led them to engage in online activities which they think individualistic and fun. From this perspective, it could be said that Chinese internet users are less politically motivated than most internet advocates have imagined.

#### **2.4 Political Control of the Chinese Internet**

Western media scholars such as Lax (2004: 217) tend to claim that 'new information communication technologies can link both government and governed' through such a platform as e-government, and therefore enhance the democratic process. Establishing government official websites seemed to be a global fashion, and China

followed the trend (Damm, 2006) although the intention of pushing the government online was not necessarily to encourage democratic participation (Rawnsley, 2005). In January 1999, the Chinese government launched a 'Government Online Project' that aimed to increase 'administrative efficiency, reduce costs and give citizens more access to government information' (Yang 2003a: 412). By the end of 2000, according to Lovelock and Ure (2003), 80% of governmental agencies, both central and local, had their names online. While knowing the importance of the internet to the development of Chinese economy, the Chinese leadership has to consider the balance between the benefits the internet brings to economic modernisation and the potential risks to political stability as a result of freer and faster flow of information engendered by the use of the internet (Rosen, 2010). However, as Kalathil and Boas (2001; 2003) explain, the CCP also realises that they can use the internet to enhance the implementation of its own political agenda if the internet can be managed properly. The Chinese government in fact took the 'proactive' initiative of establishing e-government, what Kalathil and Boas (2001: 8) term as the "informatization" of government', in hope that the increasing transparency and efficiency of the government through networked information management can consolidate Beijing's central authority. The e-government is equally a useful platform for distributing official propaganda, and in response to international use of the internet for advocating democracy, China posts and publicises counter-information on government and government-sponsored websites to guide public opinion at both domestic and international levels (Kalathil and Boas, 2003). The most recent example of the Chinese government engaging in the development of e-government involves the launch of an official website affiliated to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP. The website was opened to provide a new means for the public to report corrupt officials, and in addition to that, they can also leave their opinions and proposal regarding anti-corruption work (Global Times, 2013). The launch of the website not only demonstrates the CCP's resolve to tackle corruption, an immediate threat to the regime, but also shows its endeavour to win popular support and strengthen its legitimacy by inviting the public to the anti-corruption campaign.

Despite the pessimist views that authoritarian government can harness the internet in a way that can help maintain political control (Kalathil and Boas 2001; 2003;

Morozov 2011), internet optimists such as Yang (2009: 223) argue that the internet helps foster a new form of ‘citizens’ unofficial democracy’ that is ‘changing views of power and authority’, and it in fact provides a channel for people to discuss public affairs such as environmental protection, food security and civil rights (Yang 2006 & 2013; Sullivan & Xie 2009). The internet allows people to talk relatively freely without much fear of conflicting with other interests or ideological groups, and the anonymity reduces the likelihood of being traced and punished. Furthermore, the high-speed and interconnected nature of the internet means that information can be quickly transmitted to millions of people, which can effectively eliminate ‘the information monopoly of the state’ (Rosen 2010: 512) and make it ‘very difficult for an authoritarian state to intervene and control the free flow of information’ (Zheng 2008: 116). It is true, as many scholars like Hassid (2012a; 2012b) have observed, Chinese netizens are increasingly using the internet to supervise the government, exposing official corruption and misconducts and challenging government policies. In a country where the traditional media are strictly controlled by the state propaganda apparatus and fail to fulfil the role of overseeing the government power, in these years, netizens are witnessed to have led a series of investigations into official corruption, and prompted the government to respond and follow up. Zhou Jiugeng, for instance, the director of Nanjing’s property bureau was fired and later sentenced to 11 years in prison, largely due to an online investigation over his luxurious lifestyle. The official came to people’s attention in 2008 when a photo of him in a meeting started circulating on internet forums. In the photo, Zhou was wearing a Vacheron Constantin watch, which reportedly cost at least 100,000 yuan (equivalent to 10,000 GBP), and there was also a pack of expensive cigarettes worth 150 yuan (equivalent to 15 GBP) on his left hand side. Netizens questioned how Zhou as an ordinary public servant could afford such luxury goods, and angry public opinion on the internet eventually forced the local government to launch an official investigation to look over his assets.

The internet somehow empowers Chinese citizens, as the trend of Chinese netizens using the internet to mobilise online public opinion and compel the government to redress social inequalities and official corruption has become increasingly evident particularly with the popularity of Weibo (the Chinese equivalent of Twitter). Regardless of stringent censorship implemented by Weibo, as Sullivan (2012: 779)

notes, it ‘has developed into a kind of tabloid press, raising scandals, mobilizing capricious online public opinion and in some cases effecting “virtual mob justice”’, and due to its large users population, ‘the unusually social and active personality of Chinese netizens’ and ‘the mistrust of official information sources’, Weibo also becomes a ‘contested force in Chinese politics’. As online exposés become common in China, Chinese internet vigilantes have hunted down a number of corrupt government officials. In 2012, soon after a severe road collision between a bus and a tanker, which killed 36 people, a picture showing Yang Dacai, the former head of Work Safety Administration of Shaanxi Province, grinning at the accident site was circulated on Weibo. Many Chinese netizens were angered by his callousness, and some internet vigilantes retaliated by finding and posting photographs of him wearing various luxury watches in different occasions. His large collection of luxury watches soon put Yang under the scrutiny of internet users, and incensed netizens ridiculed Yang by giving him the nickname ‘Brother Watch’. Under public pressure, the local government ousted him from the post and accused him of serious wrongdoing. After an official probe into his financial dealings, Yang was found guilty of taking bribes and sentenced to 14 years in prison.

Realising that rampant corruption can undermine its legitimacy, the CCP responded quickly to the online public anger about corruption. Although the party vows to crack down corruption and encourages netizens to play a role in helping the authorities discover corrupt officials, it should be noted that most corruption cases exposed on the internet are mainly targeted at low-level and local officials and online discussions about corruption in the top leadership remain almost impossible. As Sullivan (2013: 10) agrees, ‘whenever a Weibo event holds potential to grow beyond the parameters of localized discontent, the state will implement its censorship and propaganda regime, reinforced by control of technological infrastructure, legal and political leverage over internet companies and by marshalling physical world public security apparatus’. Moreover, since malfeasant officials exposed by Weibo users were quickly identified and removed, and deeper systemic and institutional problems that allow corruption and social inequalities to grow across the country were not targeted, as Sullivan (2013: 7) adds, this in fact enables the party to strengthen its legitimacy by propagating ‘its image as

benevolent protector of the nation let down by the wrongdoings of its representatives’.

In spite of the role of the internet as a medium that increasingly challenges the government, as Wacker (2003) acknowledges, control is an inevitable theme of the Chinese internet. Rawnsley (2008: 129) also points out that ‘the greatest obstacle to the democratic potential of the internet remains non-technological, namely governments who consider this communications system a threat to their political power and thus seek to constrain its use’. Although experts on the Chinese internet like Xiao (2011: 209) claim that total control of the internet is next to impossible due to ‘the ephemeral, anonymous, and networked nature of internet communication’, this does not lead to a conclusion that the government has lost its grip on the internet. Rather, the government can ‘manage the internet’s risks and harness its potential’ (Hachigian 2001: 118) by ‘restricting internet access, filtering content, monitoring on-line behaviour or even prohibiting internet use entirely’ (Kalathil & Boas 2001: 3). Morozov (2011: 100) also questions the naive notion that ‘the internet is too big to censor’ and states that governments are able to build ‘censorship engines powered by recommendation technology similar to that of Amazon’, which ‘instead of being prompted to check out “recommended” pages, we’d be denied access to them’. In addition, as Harwit and Clark (2001: 395) observe, by using the tactic of ‘killing the chicken to scare the monkeys’, the government occasionally punishes some of the violators in order to publicise penalty to intimidate other internet users. In 2006, the government also introduced two online cartoon characters Jingjing and Chacha (the combination of ‘Jing’ and ‘Cha’ means police in Chinese language) and deployed them at various major Chinese internet portals. Both of them are linked to a special force of the internet police, and internet users can click them to report any illegal online information and activities they discover. However, the function of Jingjing and Chacha goes beyond that, as China Digital Times (2006) describes, it is ‘to let all internet users know that the internet is not a place beyond the law and the internet police will maintain order in all online behaviors’, and the ultimate use of Jingjing and Chacha is ‘to intimidate not to answer question’. From this perspective, it could be understood that the government tries to entrench its authority and influence in the immense cyberspace by practicing the idea of panopticon (Foucault, 1991). That is to say, instead of

using its coercive power to constantly punish violators, the government intends to cultivate an awareness of self-discipline among the online public by making them understand that a 'big brother' is watching them. Such tactic of online surveillance signals the changing nature of political control in China, that is to say, 'a shift is taking place from punitive power to disciplinary power' (Yang 2009a: 30).

The Chinese government's control policies not only target the end users, namely the netizens, but also according to Wacker (2003: 60), apply to the intermediary actors, such as internet service providers and internet content providers. As Xiao (2011: 207) explains, one of the primary strategies the government uses to strengthen its control of the internet is to 'hold internet service providers and access providers responsible for the behaviour of their customers'. Given that Chinese internet market is expanding dramatically and offering enormous chances to make profits, and most importantly, the Chinese government controls the 'broad regulatory environment as well as the minutiae of operating licenses and the like' (Kalathil and Boas 2001: 7), commercial companies have no choice but to practice self-censorship and make sure that their business does not violate the government's regulations. However, the official line between what is acceptable and what is not usually remains vague, and this grants the government to retain enough room to explain at its disposal. The vagueness of the official line requires much 'guesswork' and 'mind-reading work', and in order to avoid 'political incorrectness' that can affect the market share of their companies, the only thing they can do is to enforce active and strict censorship on their websites, and this explains why sometimes commercial websites implement even tougher censorship than those which have official background. The government uses the 'stick or carrot' trick to regulate internet firms. For those who disobey the government's regulations, they face the risk of being closed down. However, those who operate in conformity to the government, receive prizes such as 'Internet Self-Discipline Award' for their efforts of maintaining a healthy and harmonious internet environment (MacKinnon 2011: 37), and the award itself can in return facilitate the companies' future business in the industry. From this point, the sophisticated 'great firewall' developed by the Chinese government to block undesired contents plus the 'firewall' of self-discipline erected in the minds of individual internet users as well as commercial internet companies, gravely

challenges such assertions that the internet is where government can hardly exert power.

Despite various arguments about the Chinese government's regulations and control of the internet, there equally is a series of discussions about the broad landscape of popular contention in the Chinese cyberspace. Yang (2009b) identifies several ways of opposing the official control, which are created and frequently applied by online Chinese activists, for instance, using proxy servers, employing linguistic codes, and creating parodic and satirical genres. The creation of parodies and satires as a way of ridiculing the official control will be discussed with more details in the following section. As the internet provides mechanisms for both controlling and decontrolling at the same time, this to some extent explains the difficulty for the government to fully command popular opinion in the age of the internet, and also stresses the ever growing likelihood for a bottom-up protest to emerge with the help of new information technologies such as the internet.

Lagerkvist (2006: 58) believes that the decentralising nature of the internet will diminish if not eliminate the CCP's control of the public mind, however, Beniger (2003: 62) warns that 'no such infrastructure or medium has ever resisted application to persuasion and control'. Scholars have placed much emphasis on the government's waning capability of hard control while overlooking their growing power of 'soft control' (Yang 2009a: 30), or what Kalathil and Boas (2001) coin 'proactive strategies' that are used to guide 'the development of the medium to promote their own interest and priorities'. Deutsch (1966:82) purports that 'it might make sense to think of government somewhat less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering'. In China, as Brady (2008) notes, the government invests enormous efforts in the production and distribution of online propaganda in order to guide public opinion. Irrespective of the hard control methods, it is also necessary to pay attention to the more subtle control manoeuvres, for instance, the so-called 'fifty-cent party' (wumaodang), that are increasingly being used by the Chinese government. The 'fifty-cent party' is a group of online commentators hired by the propaganda departments of the CCP, and their main job is as Bandurski (2008) describes, 'to safeguard the interests of the Communist Party

by infiltrating and policing a rapidly growing Chinese Internet’, and ‘neutralize undesirable public opinion by pushing pro-Party views through chat rooms and Web forums, reporting dangerous content to authorities’. In return, they are paid RMB 50 cents (equivalent to 5 pence) for each message they post, and this is how they earned the name ‘fifty-cent party’. These messages intend to create a façade of pro-government opinions on the internet as if they are spontaneous and independent from the CCP, and according to Shirk (2011:14), ‘put social and psychological pressures to conform on people with critical views, and thereby presumably reduce the possibility of antigovernment collective action’.

There are many cases that could provide some insights into the efficacy of the ‘fifty-cent party’, and China Digital Times (2008) gives one successful story of such online manipulation. In 2007, a resident in Jiaozuo posted an online accusation against the local police due to a traffic dispute, and this post was soon followed by many other users who were also critical of the local police. As soon as they discovered the online discontent, the local police organised 120 online commentators to post in the forum explaining what had happened, in an attempt to restore its public image. Twenty minutes later, the voices of discontent in the internet forum turned to be supportive of the police, and many netizens started to denounce the person who posted the original comment (Ibid). In spite of many other stories talking about the mysterious taskforce, as Qian (2010) observes, it was not until January 2010 that the work of the ‘fifty-cent party’ ‘made a formal, official debut in the news’, when Lanzhou’s *Western Business Post* reported that the north-western province of Gansu had decided to build a team of 650 online commentators to ‘understand the information circulating online and make timely posts on hot-button issues receiving concern from Web users, in order to correctly channel public opinion in society’. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the mission of the ‘fifty-cent’ party to achieve a seemingly prevailing pro-government online atmosphere can hardly be fulfilled without the support of other hard control mechanism. As Zhong (2008) posits, while official commentators flood websites with pro-government messages, internet police are at the same time busy deleting any posts deemed anti-government. Moreover, the efficiency of the ‘fifty-cent party’ in guiding public opinion remains in doubt when its existence is no longer a mystery, and the name ‘fifty-cent party’ is increasingly used as a derogatory term to label



those who blindly share the position of the government. The problem as Lagerkvist (2010: 171) identifies is 'probably related to the language used: sounding too official in an online company of fellow teenagers will quite naturally generate suspicions about the underlying motive'. The reality is that when netizens are questioning the government's performance over a particular issue and all of a sudden, a bluntly pro-government message is posted, no matter whether the poster is in fact an online commentator or not, s/he is very likely to be attacked and ridiculed by other cynical users. Knowing that it has become hard for the 'fifty-cent party' to subtly steer online public opinion, as Wang (2012) observes, the Ministry of Culture 'even conducts training sessions in which participants are required to pass an exam before they receive job certification to become an official commentator'. Since the overtly official and propagandistic language used by the 'fifty-cent party' quite often annoys internet users, hired online commentators are taught to adopt teenage vernaculars, which young people - the major user group of the internet - are prone to accept.

The decentralising and interactive property of the internet poses a huge challenge to the CCP's propaganda effort, and despite secretive online manipulation, the internet has increasingly become a bridge between the government and the people. The CCP's central leadership realises the importance of the internet as a medium through which they can hear people's opinions about government policies. Chinese top leaders, including the former President Hu Jintao and the former Premier Wen Jiabao, often paid visits to the 'Strong Nation Forum' (known as Qiangguo Luntan), which is an online forum affiliated to the CCP's mouthpiece *The People's Daily*, to chat with the netizens, in order to show that the central government 'is listening to public opinion and taking it seriously' (MacKinnon 2012: 43). As Qian and Bandurski (2011: 39) acknowledge, 'the CCP seeks a power-maximizing balance between censorship and propaganda on the one hand and responsiveness on the other'. The fact that the internet is mainly used by the entertainment-oriented, fun-seeking and generally apolitical youngsters tells the government that previous propaganda models saturated with old-fashioned political jargons and paternalistic inculcation have lost their value. In other words, the CCP has to redesign its propaganda strategies in order to approach and address this special audience of the digital age. The internet as a multimedia platform where symbols, music and videos come together in fact allows the government to convey political ideologies in a more

attractive way. Lagerkvist (2008: 123) calls this strategy ‘ideotainment’, and defines it as an ‘intermeshing of high-tech images, designs, and sounds of popular web and mobile phone culture with subtle ideological constructs, symbols, and nationalistically inclined messages of persuasion’. He also explains that ‘the main thrust of the term illuminates the efforts to ideologically mould public opinion in ways more consistent with symbols and images liked, used, and judged to be “cool” by younger generations accustomed to the world of popular culture’ (Ibid). That is to say, it is a new propaganda technique which helps deliver political agendas and ideologies in a depoliticised and popular manner, and which specially targets the young internet users.

The CCP actually has been increasingly employing the strategy of ideotainment to project a positive image of itself to the young internet users. In 2008, the CCP enjoyed an outpouring of public support on the internet mainly due to the quick and efficient response of the central leadership to the deadly earthquake which occurred in Sichuan Province. Netizens embraced President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao as national super stars. To express their support to the top leaders but fear that internet censorship would delete any messages that include their names, Chinese netizens created nicknames for both leaders. For President Hu Jintao, they used ‘assorted rice pudding’ (shijin fan). In Chinese, the middle character ‘jin’ is the same one found in Hu’s name. Meanwhile, ‘eight treasures rice pudding’ (babao fan) referred to the Premier as it includes the same character ‘bao’ from Wen Jiabao. Both nicknames have the same ‘fan’ (Chinese word for rice) as a stand-in for the English word ‘fan’ in the sense of supporters and admirers (Canaves and Ye, 2008). Therefore, ‘Shijin Babao Fan’ (assorted eight treasures rice pudding) was a punning nickname created by fans of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, and the term soon became a popular phrase over the internet. Some even addressed the President as ‘Brother Hu’ or ‘Brother Tao’ and the Premier as ‘Baobao’. Taking advantage of the prevailing public opinion that was highly in favour of the government, *The People’s Daily*, the leading mouthpiece of the CCP set up a fan club page called ‘Assorted Eight Treasures Rice Pudding’ where netizens could sign up and obtain an electronic certificate, confirming them as official ‘Shijin Babao’ fans.

This is an example that illustrates Lagerkvist's notion of 'ideotainment', and also provides a brand new perspective to understand the CCP's propaganda effort in the age of the internet. It also shows the tendency that the Chinese government has learnt to co-opt online public opinion rather than simply contain it, although hard control mechanism, such as blocking access to undesired information, still remains relevant in the Chinese context. As Tai (2006: 206) points out, 'swimming with the tide of network public opinion, rather than against it, may win over popular support for the regime'. The CCP grew to understand that traditional ways of propaganda, such as inculcation of political jargons, may no longer work on the internet, and the very nature of the internet as well as the population using the technology requires the party to reconsider the ways propaganda can be conveyed. By grasping the trend of online popular culture and bringing popular elements into propaganda work, the CCP is more likely to gain support from the people especially the youngsters, and as a result, increases their identification with the party. The growing interest of the CCP in steering online public opinion through soft control methods made Morozov (2011: 117) proclaim that China has turned 'the internet into the Spinternet – a Web with little censorship but lots of spin and propaganda'.

### **2.5 Digital Resistance: the Chinese Internet as a Carnival**

As Chu and Cheng (2011: 23) point out, in discussion of the Chinese internet, two discourses are equally worth paying attention to, namely, the 'control discourse' and the 'liberation discourse'. Although the government has been constantly developing its ability to regulate the internet and using multiple techniques to curtail unwanted information as well as guide public opinion, Marolt (2011: 57) adds that Chinese netizens are also 'creating ever more imaginative ways in which individual Internet users bypass (rather than engage) the hegemonic narratives of censorship and control'. As observed by scholars, many Chinese activists and protestors often use the internet as a platform for expressing dissident views against the state and giving vent to grievances caused by corrupt official and other socio-economic inequalities (Yang 2009b; Chase and Mulvenon 2002; O'Brien 2008). It is not the case to think that the enforcement of internet censorship will eventually bring about a docile online population; conversely, state efforts to constrain the internet use in China have only led to more creative acts of subversion (Yang, 2009b), and prompted

internet users to invent new ways of circumventing the firewall, such as ‘by separating characters with hyphens and commas, using English acronyms or wholesale Romanization, or using Chinese characters with similar pronunciations to the forbidden words’ (Liu 2010: 40). These are the basic and widely used counter strategies to fool automatic keyword filtering systems, which will soon become obsolete once the internet censors update the lists of banned words. Despite this, the ‘battle’ between the internet users and censors never stops, with both sides trying hard to devise new strategies to conquer the other, therefore, making Xiao (2011: 203) describe such tension as ‘the cat and mouse game being played by netizens and censor’.

Much digital resistance against the official censorship, such as the creation of codes and abbreviations and the use of proxy servers, remains technical in form, and the government can therefore technically dismiss them by improving its technologies of blocking and filtering, just like those internet security companies which improve their antivirus software by constantly updating the viruses definitions. What worries the government most is the tendency that digital resistance increasingly takes a cultural form, that is to say, internet users can tamper with the official hegemonic discourse, twisting its original meaning in order to criticise, satirise and ridicule the authority of the government. The political philosophy of the former President Hu Jintao ‘to build a harmonious society’ is one of the most noticeable examples which give some sense of how an official hegemonic discourse can be turned into a popular laughingstock. Since the government often euphemised any undesired or sensitive information challenging the CCP as ‘inharmonious voices’ that needed to be turned down, Chinese netizens started to use the word ‘harmony’ (hexie in Chinese) as a synonym for ‘censorship’. Furthermore, since the word ‘harmony’ sounds very similar to the word ‘river crab’ in Chinese language with only a slight difference in intonation, internet users then transformed the river animal into a satirical icon representing internet censorship. Therefore, when netizens want to say that certain online content has been censored, they overtly say ‘it has been harmonised’ or ‘it has been river crabbed’.

The creativity of the Chinese internet users was endless, and they created another animal known as Cao Ni Ma (literally means Grass Mud Horse) which was supposed to be able to defeat the river crab that symbolises the CCP's internet control. The Cao Ni Ma is a mysterious creature, which has the appearance of an alpaca, and was originally introduced in a music video named 'the Song of the Grass Mud Horse' posted on YouTube. Although the music video appears harmless at first glance and basically shows a herd of alpacas on grassland, a close examination of the lyrics suggests that the author actually uses a range of offensive puns to ridicule the government censorship (China Digital Times, 2009). As described in the video, 'Cao Ni Ma', the animal that conquers the invading 'river crabs', is in fact phonetically equivalent to 'fuck your mother'.

Although the government attempted to limit the influence of the Grass Mud Horse, it has become nothing less than a popular culture. It is possible that the government can clean up those offensive words on the internet by updating the database of banned words and blocking the access to the video, but what they can not do is to remove a cultural meaning which has been widely shared by people both online and offline. Endowed with a new cultural meaning by the Chinese netizens, the innocent alpaca has been transformed into a popular symbol for ridiculing the CCP's online censorship. This explains the ever growing difficulty for the Chinese government to tackle popular resistance on the internet, because Cao Ni Ma is not merely a linguistic form of resistance which the government may feel easy to deal with through digital counter measures; rather, it is cultural and symbolic. Consequently, as Chu and Cheng (2011: 37) affirm, 'as social actors, Chinese ICT users are embedded in a particular socio-political environment and cultural tradition'. 'While the use of ICTs affects the manifested level of their lives, at a deeper level, the social actors have a role to play in the construction and changing of meaning', and this 'might be an aspect that even an authoritarian government cannot take full control of' (Ibid).

The online popular culture of Cao Ni Ma also suggests that the internet provides ordinary Chinese people with a place to 'express autonomy that is not available to them in the real world' and a virtual world where they 'can do as they choose

without concern about the impact of their behaviour on others' (Jackson et al 2008: 285). The striking disparity between the constrained real life and the relatively free online life has prompted researchers like Herold and Marolt (2011) to think about the possibility of adopting Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981; 1984a; 1984b) notion of carnival for the analysis of the Chinese cyberspace. As Herold (2011: 11) argues, carnival is a less rational, more emotionally charged, crazy and grotesque place for "free" public interactions', and Bakhtin's notion of carnival 'offers many points of comparison to descriptions of the (Chinese) Internet which could serve as apt metaphors and framing devices for a study of online China and its relationship to offline society'.

When analysing literature of medieval times, Bakhtin (1984a: 129-130) describes that 'a person of the Middle Ages lived, as it were, two lives: one was the official life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety; the other was the life of the carnival square, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything'. From Bakhtin's perspective, carnivalistic life is an antithesis of and a challenge to the normal official life, and it allows people to escape from hierarchy and orders that rule the normal official life. As can be seen in his description, the two lives of a person in the Middle Ages to a significant extent resemble Chinese offline and online societies respectively. For ordinary Chinese citizens, they have greater freedom in the online society than the offline society, and as shown in the case of Cao Ni Ma, they can challenge and ridicule the government authorities on the internet with laughter and obscene words, which is very unlikely to happen in the real offline society.

Carnival is a loud, crowded and even subversive event where social hierarchy is temporarily suspended, and according to Bakhtin (1984b: 10), 'carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical ranks, privileges, norms, and prohibitions'. Carnival also belongs to everyone, as Bakhtin (1984a: 122) justifies, within the carnival, 'everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act'.

Since ‘everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people (including age)’ is suspended during carnival, he argues that ‘a special carnival category goes into effect: free and familiar contact among people’ (Ibid: 123). The internet offers a virtual place that encourages people, regardless of class, gender, age and geographical location, to join in carnivalistic public interactions, and the anonymous nature of the internet in fact makes the suspension of the offline norms and orders possible. In the real world, a contact is established only when people know each other’s official identities. People know whom they are talking to when they are communicating with each other, and they have to adjust their manners of speech and behaviour when interacting with different people according to their social rank, age and gender. However, in the online carnival, the anonymity of the internet serves as people’s masks, and official identities are suspended and become irrelevant. Everyone appears the same with the masks and behaves in the same carnivalistic manner. The carnival law of anonymity enables a free contact to be set up among participants, and people feel free to interact with others because they do not have to worry about the hierarchical barriers and social distance between them. According to Bakhtin (Ibid: 123), carnival in fact helps establish a ‘new mode of interrelationship between individuals’, which counterposes ‘all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette’ connected with the noncarnival life. The behaviour, gesture, and discourse of a person are liberated from the ‘impenetrable hierarchical barriers’, and ‘all things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations’ (Ibid).

Bakhtin (Ibid) describes the category of familiar contact as ‘a very important aspect of a carnival sense of the world’ and illustrates that such category of familiar contact ‘is also responsible for the special way mass actions are organized, and for free carnival gesticulation, and for the outspoken carnivalistic word’. The dissemination and popularisation of online carnival such as the phenomenon of Cao Ni Ma, is largely because on the one hand, the masks provided by the internet reduces people’s fear of being identified, so that they dare shout out Cao Ni Ma without worrying too much about the consequences as it may cause in the official life. On the other hand, it is the sense of belonging that empowers and legitimises

carnivalistic behaviours, because when people realise that others are all celebrating, shouting and laughing in the same way, a sense of security arises: ‘why can’t I do the same’. To a significant extent, the anonymous nature of the internet empowers Chinese netizens particularly in the event of mass protests against government authorities, as Farrall and Herold (2011: 165-166) point out, online anonymity allows them to elude ‘the imagined, every-present gaze of the panopticon’, and gives them some confidence that their persistent and official identity will not be traced. Assured by this, many Chinese netizens therefore become more likely to speak and act in a way that they may not otherwise do in the real world (Ibid: 166). Besides that, anonymity provided by the internet also allows Chinese users to experiment and play out a range of identities, and from this point of view, the internet can be regarded as a carnival square for masquerade where participants engage in a role-play game. In a carnival, the boundary between ‘being’ and ‘appearing’ become blurred, that is to say, for various reasons, a person can present multiple identities which are different from or even contradictory to his/her real official ones, for instance, a man can appear to be a woman (or vice versa), which is common in online games (Wu and Wang, 2011), or a government-employed person can pretend to be an ordinary citizen who has no connection with the government (as in the case of ‘fifty-cent party’).

Turning things upside down or utilise them in reverse, such as ‘putting clothes on inside out (or wrong side out), trousers on the head, dishes in place of headgear, the use of household utensils as weapons, and so forth’, is another key characteristic of carnival, and as Bakhtin (1984a: 126) articulates, ‘this is a special instance of the carnival category of eccentricity, the violation of the usual and the generally accepted, life drawn out of its usual rut’. Eccentricity, as Bakhtin (Ibid: 123) clarifies, is another special category of the carnival sense of the world, ‘organically connected with the category of familiar contact; it permits – in concretely sensuous form – the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves’. In carnival, eccentric behaviours do not simply cause people to laugh; rather, carnivalistic laughter has power in itself, and is believed by Bakhtin (Ibid: 127) to be a challenging force that is ‘directed towards something higher – toward a shift of authorities and truths, a shift of world orders’. Consequently, carnivalistic laughter can be considered as a form of resistance to the serious and dogmatic official life,



and as a mean for the suppressed voices to be heard. In the online carnival of Cao Ni Ma, what is forbidden in the offline official life has become something not only accepted, but also celebrated. The use of obscene language to parody the symbols of authority and the allegedly sacred official culture of 'harmony' causes people to laugh, and Thornton (2002: 61-64) regards such laughter as 'adaptive strategies for the articulation of dissenting views in the face of repressive state power' and as 'subtle methods of framing dissent'. Due to the lack of democratic channels in the actual Chinese society, it is common to see people use satire, parody and caricature on the internet to express political dissatisfaction. In fact, as Li (2011: 83) observes, Chinese internet users who 'distrust Chinese media and the Chinese government distance themselves from Chinese propagandists and their colluders and laugh at their stupidities'. In a sense, online laughter could be understood as a weapon for the weak, and Chinese netizens use it as a counterhegemonic measure against the authoritarian regime. The 'fifty-cent party' which enforces the official ideologies on the internet has become the target to be laughed at and shamed by some Chinese netizens. In the cyberspace where hierarchy is temporarily suspended, the attempt to bring back the official order is against the law of carnival, and therefore is resisted; that is why the 'fifty-cent party' is condemned and increasingly known as a derogatory term. However, as Lagerkvist (2010: 156) argues, instead of thinking that laughter has a real subversive power that is directed towards the authority, it may be on the contrary 'merely a sad reflection of weakness, a way for the youth/subaltern norm in Chinese society to vent some of its frustration and endure status quo media censorship'.

Carnival is an ephemeral, temporary and virtual event, and everyone returns to the official life once carnival ends. Although carnival provides a place for discontented people to vent their anger and dissatisfaction, it only reconfirms the fact that they have nowhere else to get their messages out in the actual offline society. Although Chinese people have a much greater level of freedom on the internet to question, criticise and even ridicule the government, such limited freedom does not go beyond the virtual space. While for the Chinese government, although trying to rein in the internet remains as an important task, they start to see the internet as a 'safety valve' (Xiao 2011: 203) to relieve social tension before extreme actions may arise, and they give internet users some limited freedom to 'celebrate' carnivals, as long as

‘oppositional voices go no further than pointing to the perversity and absurdity of social hegemonic discourse, and their efforts do not lead to mobilization on the street’ (Lagerkvist 2010: 157).

As Herold (2011: 13) admits, although Bakhtin’s notion of carnival provides an interesting perspective to understand the Chinese internet, ‘any metaphor can be stretched too far ... and Chinese cyberspace can neither possibly nor adequately be explained by one particular theory’. Instead of regarding the Chinese internet as a sheer carnival, it is more realistic to view it as a carnival under surveillance. Although online anonymity makes it difficult and complex for government authorities to link one’s online identity with his/her official ones, as Farrall and Herold (2011: 167) observe, the Chinese government is ‘actively attempting to narrow or even close this anonymity gap’. Internet policies have been implemented to enforce real-name registration, and from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2015, all Chinese citizens are required to provide their real names and national identification numbers when registering online accounts, although they can still use nicknames on the sites (BBC, 2015). The new regulation not only bans internet accounts that spread rumours and undermine the ruling CCP, but also bans those which impersonate government institutions and foreign leaders. In the Chinese cyberspace, it is common that many users create parody accounts of prominent figures and institutions to make fun of them (Reuters, 2015). However, the implementation of the real-name regulation suggests that the space for Chinese netizens to express political dissent is shrinking, and the Chinese internet can only be described as an officially registered and sanctioned carnival which is far different from Bakhtin’s definition of carnival – a virtual space for anonymous and free contacts. Irrespective of some limited freedom granted for carnivalistic gesture, behaviour and speech, Chinese government authorities closely monitor the online society, and every participant is aware of the presence of internet police. While some police officers are visible and observant, some are wearing masks and embedded in the carnival crowd. Police are relatively tolerant of carnival participants who are shouting and laughing, but they start to warn and even penalise those participants whose behaviours they believe exceed the bottom line. The presence of police and the sense of self-discipline have made people pay extra attention to their behaviours in the carnival and prevent them from expressing as freely as they want.

## **2.6 The Chinese Internet and the Emergence of Online Chinese Nationalism**

As I said previously, in order to study online Chinese nationalism, it is essential to first of all understand the unusual ecosystem out of which online Chinese nationalism emerges. All the characteristics of the Chinese internet discussed above in fact provide relevant information for making sense of general online behaviours and interactions in China's cyberspace. Almost half of the Chinese population nowadays have access to the internet and the internet is mainly used by young, urban and well educated people. This circumscribes the possible online population to whom online Chinese nationalism appeals and who initiate, mobilise and discuss it. The generally apolitical, self-centred and individualistic nature of many Chinese netizens also helps explain some distinctive characteristics of online Chinese nationalism. During the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, young netizens were the main force protesting against the perceived western hostility to China. Some of them appeared extremely angry with ultra-nationalist emotions and actions, and they even claimed that China should use its power to penalise the West. As a result, they are often called as *fenqing*, which literally means 'indignant youths' (I will give a more detailed discussion about *fenqing* in Chapter 6). Ironically, those young people are nationalist on the one hand, and pragmatic and concerned about personal life on the other hand; therefore, popular nationalism initiated from the internet as Lagerkvist (2010:200) finds, often appears 'inconsistent and ad hoc itself'. Those young people appeared to be anti-West during the protests and they used strong nationalist language to condemn western bias and hostility against China on the internet. However, whenever they realised that the nationalist waves began to ebb, they continue to buy foreign goods and apply for foreign universities. In his research of analysing nationalist attitudes among students in three elite universities in Beijing after NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy, Zhao (2002: 885) identifies that students' anger expressed during the anti-US demonstrations was 'more a momentary outrage than a reflection of a long-term development of popular anti-US nationalism'. As Zhao (2002) finds, despite their genuine anger towards the bombing incident, students saw the US more as a superpower than as an enemy, and some of them believed that the deteriorating China-US relations as a result of the anti-US demonstrations could hurt their opportunities of working and studying in the US. The contradiction between the nationalist and pragmatist identities of young Chinese nationalists not only affects the

ways modern Chinese popular nationalism is expressed, but also reflects their complicated feelings about China's position as well as their own position in the globalised world. In Chapter 6, I will explain with more details with respect to how such complicated feelings, namely, the nationalist anger of Chinese internet users against the perceived hostility of the West on the one hand, and their yearnings for western lifestyle on the other hand, are represented, confronted and negotiated in the wake of online discussions about the nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour.

Furthermore, the abilities of the Chinese government to control the internet through both hard and soft mechanisms dismiss the assumption of seeing the internet as a medium that authoritarian governments find hard to control. Rather than thinking of the internet as a place independent of political manipulation and intervention, the example of the Chinese internet suggests that it is realistic to consider it as 'a political space that is already occupied' by the same social elites as in other realms of political life (Keohane and Nye 1998: 84). However, on the other hand, the internet does enable ordinary people to 'experiment with their public opinions' (Liu 2005: 149), and in order to gain popular support, the government has attached great importance to online public opinion and shown some responsiveness to the netizens' claims, for instance, they responded quickly to the online exposés of corruption of government officials. Although some limited freedom is given for Chinese netizens to discuss political issues and express different views, sensitive topics related to the CCP's central leadership, democracy and Tibet, and any online topics discussing issues such as civil rights, social injustice, environmental protection and nationalism that may lead to massive protests in the street, are strictly monitored by internet censors. By regarding the Chinese internet as a realm of control as well as a realm of resistance, it actually helps portray a dialectical picture about the power relations between the two major internet user groups, namely, the state and the netizens. The internet provides mechanisms that enable Chinese netizens to challenge the government's control of information and political participation; on the other hand, it also creates new possibilities for the government to manipulate online contents and activities. Given that the internet 'may affect power-holders' and challengers' opportunities in different ways' (Diani 2001: 126), both Yang (2009b) and Zheng (2008) tend to agree that it has become more difficult to make an easy judgment regarding who is more influential online over the other, because it increasingly depends on how both sides

interact with each other. Moreover, Yang (2009b: 13) argues that internet users are skilled actors who are able to respond creatively to state control; and on the other hand, 'while power constrains contention, it also responds and adapts to it'. Therefore, instead of seeing online Chinese nationalism as a purely spontaneous, bottom-up and counterhegemonic force against the authoritarian regime, it is more fruitful to treat it as a discourse, which is constantly shaped and defined by both the state and popular players. This is because, the Chinese internet out of which online Chinese nationalism emerges and develops, is in fact a domain that both the state and popular players compete for. China's cyberspace features not only control and resistance, but also co-optation, and online Chinese nationalism should be considered as a result of power contention between both players and hence, the investigation of online Chinese nationalism should take both the state and popular players into account. That is why I raise the question 'to what extent online popular nationalism challenges the domination of the state over the nationalist discourses', and in the upcoming chapters, I will give detailed explanation regarding where and how nationalist policies, agendas and positions of both players can collide and co-opt.

Moreover, Bakhtin's notion of carnival provides a new thought for studying collective online interactions such as online Chinese nationalism, because the internet does provide a virtual space for Chinese popular nationalists to come together, protest with outspoken nationalist language and even ridicule the official discourse of nationalist policies, which they are less likely to be allowed to do so in the real world. Regardless of serious discussions about China's national interests and security on the internet, online Chinese nationalism to some extent resembles a carnival in the sense that it is loud, wild and sensational, and the internet serves as a carnival square in which what is often discouraged in the real life, such as xenophobic expressions and nationalist hatred, are not only allowed, though temporarily, but also appreciated. In Chapter 5, for instance, I will give a deep analysis as to how Chinese nationalists circulate, publicise and practice nationalist hatred in the online discourse as a way of constructing their nationalist identity and establishing a 'familiar contact' with other online nationalists.

In spite of a general agreement among scholarship that nationalism is a product of socio-political engineering (as I discussed in Chapter 1), the top-down model that sees

people as passive receivers of propaganda omits the dynamics from below. As I have been constantly emphasising, a fuller picture of Chinese nationalism can be formed only when both key players, namely the state and popular actors, are taken into analysis. This is particularly true when nationalism is studied in the context of the internet, and the top-down model of analysis becomes evidently inadequate, because according to Liu (2006: 148-9), the decentralising and participatory nature of the internet not only challenges the monopoly of the state over 'production and circulation of Chinese nationalist discourse', but also enables netizens to 'play a more active and independent role in the expression of "unofficial" nationalism around cyberspace'. This makes it possible for ordinary Chinese people to disseminate and publicise their nationalist claims as counter discourses against the top-down manipulation. The internet as an open platform in fact has created 'a new infrastructure for the state and society in their engagement with each other', and produced a 'recursive relationship' between them, which will transform and shape both the state and society (Zheng 2008: 11). From this point of view, online Chinese nationalism should and must be investigated through a dual mechanism which includes both top-down and bottom-up frameworks of analysis.

In spite of contemporary discussions about the connections between the internet and the emergence of nationalism, the potency of communications technologies in nation building and identity formation has been extensively discussed, noticeably by Benedict Anderson (2006). He famously declares that the nation was imagined and sheds light on what he calls 'print capitalism' and its role in increasing people's sense of belonging to an imagined community. Anderson (2006: 37) states that the development of printing technologies 'made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways'. This is because, as Anderson (2006: 36) continues to explain, the mass consumption of newspapers reinforced people's awareness that what they were reading was 'being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the lightest notion'. This 'remarkable confidence of community in anonymity', according to Anderson (2006: 36), is 'the hallmark of modern nations'.

Likewise, Deutsch (1953: 72) also emphasises the weight of communications technologies in forming national unity, and he asserts that ‘people are held together “from within” by communicative efficiency, the complementarity of the communicative facilities acquired by their members’. The internet not only provides a profound opportunity for people to imagine at ‘long-distance’, as the electronic medium transcends time and space and ‘nationalism no longer depends as it once did on territorial location in a home country’ (Anderson, 2001: 42); but also serves as an effective medium that interconnects and holds together those who share the same nationalist ideals and visions. The internet creates a new mechanism for many Chinese to imagine and maintain the country, and they have been increasingly using it to publicise nationalist information, practice nationalist identity and rally nationalist supports. This was particularly evident in 2008 as the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics encountered massive protests in European cities like London and Paris. The internet played a key role in the outbreak of popular Chinese nationalism during the time, because Chinese people who were living abroad and personally witnessed the torch relay events, uploaded texts, pictures and videos to various internet forums and social networking sites to inform compatriots back in China of how ‘hostile’ westerners disrupted the Olympic torch relay which many Chinese saw as a journey of showing China’s national pride. The internet allowed them to imagine the nation as they believed there were millions of other Chinese people, no matter where they were, sharing the same nationalist concerns and passion. In fact, the internet was proven to be effective in mobilising nationalist support, because after the chaotic torch relay in London and Paris, online Chinese nationalists appealed to the compatriots in other countries where the Beijing Olympic torch was to be received, to protect the ‘holy flame’. Chinese nationalists shared on the internet their experience of escorting the torch, and discussed together further plans for better protection of the torch relay. Many Chinese living overseas, especially students studying abroad, were rallied to escort the torch in the subsequent legs of the torch relay in San Francisco and Canberra, and some compatriots in China even sent national flags abroad to support those students’ patriotic actions.

The internet also increases the chances for ordinary people to participate in the politics of nationalism by enabling them to narrate different versions of nationalist

memories. Memory is a key ingredient in the formation of national identity, and how memories are narrated is of great importance to the shaping of nationalism (Smith 1998; 1999). As mentioned in the last chapter, the CCP invests enormous resources to build itself as a true nationalist, and its heroic achievements and history especially its role in the war against Japanese invasion during the Second World War have been extensively propagandised and repeated through mass schooling and mass media. The official dominance of nationalist discourse is largely contingent upon the CCP's ability of maintaining a set of collective memories that favours its ruling. However, the prevalence of the internet and the popularisation of interactive sites such as forums, blogs and Weibo undermines the CCP's dominance in the narration and interpretation of collective memories, as these sites provide avenues for some users to tell, circulate and share different versions of memories. For decades, as the then ruling party in China which retreated to Taiwan after its defeat by the CCP in 1949, the role of the KMT in the war against Japanese invasion has long been obscured in the official discourses of the CCP. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to see internet users discuss and re-examine the history of China's war against Japan, and sympathetic voices to the KMT can be often heard. The CCP's version of the war, which amplifies its own role as a defender of China's national dignity and denounces the KMT as a corrupt and incapable party, is under challenge, and online appeals for rehabilitating the KMT in the war can encroach upon the CCP's nationalist histories. However, as Zhang (2009: 100-101) points out, even though the internet creates possibilities for netizens to narrate a different version of nationalist memories, such memories can only become 'at best a subcollective memory or fragmented memory for a certain group, not the national collective memory at all'. This is because, the government can ban any expressions of memories that are contradictory to its own version, and the censorship helps entrench the collective memories favoured by the leading political elites.

The CCP certainly knows the importance of controlling information, and as Conversi (1999: 566) comments, 'information is power', and 'selecting and sieving information' is crucial for the building and maintenance of a nation. Despite the rigorous censorship of the Chinese internet, its real effectiveness should not be overstated. It is worth noting that censorship can backfire, and it does not always succeed in blocking people from knowing something. Internet users can learn that



they have been censored, for instance, from the automated system message reminding them that the posts they are about to upload contain sensitive content, or from the notice sent by the web administrators warning them of the removal of their posts due to violation of some online regulations. Instead of obstructing information, censorship may result in the reverse - it tells users that there must be something that the government does not want its people to know, and hence stimulates inquisitive users to seek the truth. Every year, in the time leading up to 4 June (the anniversary commemorating the student-led pro-democracy demonstrations in the Tiananmen Square in 1989), the CCP launches massive online censorship to block any information relating to its suppression of the pro-democracy demonstrations, and due to the scale of online censorship, internet speed becomes noticeably slow. Any texts, symbols and pictures that hint or directly refer to the suppression are banned, and for those netizens who do not know the history and accidentally include, for instance, the number '64' (referring to 4 June) or the keyword 'Tiananmen' in their posts, they find their contents blocked. Due to the popularity of Weibo in China over the years, internet censors watch closely the contents published by users on the day of 4 June. Like many other social networking sites, Weibo provides various emotion icons and cartoons, and the users can choose to add them in their posts. Interesting to find, on the day of 4 June, Weibo temporarily removes the icon of a burning candle from the emotion list, in case that netizens use it for commemorating the pro-democracy demonstrations, because some netizens used to post the icon to express condolences to those who died in the demonstrations. While Zhang (2009) asserts that online censorship can reinforce the official versions of memories by deleting any conflicting ones, it is also reasonable to say that excessive censorship may on the contrary help unveil the history the government intends to veil, since netizens lacking the knowledge about the history can find the answers from friends and other peer users. Moreover, it can be said that censorship is in fact a reflection of the government's incapability to manage information, and in a long term, it also exhausts government's credibility, because people may perceive that what is censored regardless of how true or false, is the truth that the government intends to hide.

Scholars such as Gries (2004) argue that online popular nationalism in China can pose a threat to the CCP's regime, however, Zhou (2006: 212) foresees a 'seeming

convergence of many Chinese with the state on the issue of nationalism'. According to Zhou (Ibid), many young people become increasingly nationalist because modern information technologies such as the internet allow them to access information about the outside world, and make them understand the importance of enhancing China's 'comprehensive national power' and protecting its 'national interests' in the international political economy. Zhou's assumption may provide a plausible explanation for the emergence of contemporary popular Chinese nationalism, because those who initiate, mobilise and participate in popular nationalism normally have access to the internet and they are young, well educated and informed. Their nationalistic concerns about China's national integrity, security and pride in fact reflect their realist thinking about the state power and international legitimacy, and Guang (2008: 498-499) defines such 'fusion of political realism and nationalistic aspirations as "realpolitik nationalism"'. As Guang (Ibid) continues to explain, it is the thinking that 'elevates realist considerations of power, articulated expressly in the ideas of territorial integrity, sovereignty, and international legitimacy, to the level of a national imperative for the country and thereby makes these very ideas the constitutive elements of a modern Chinese national identity'.

This realpolitik nationalist thinking among some of the young Chinese netizens is to some extent congruent with the official 'baseline realpolitik view of international politics' (Christensen 1996: 37), and as Guang (2005: 497) argues, it may therefore provide some 'possible grounds of nationalistic mobilization by political leaders and intellectual elites'. However, it should be noted that, even though popular nationalists share some realpolitik views of the government about national interest and power, it does not necessarily mean that they accept the overall leadership of the CCP and its policies of Chinese nationalism. As I discussed in the previous chapter, liberal nationalists adopt realpolitik thinking about China and the world, which shows a seeming identification with the CCP's nationalist ideals; however, they criticise the authoritarian regime led by the CCP and reject its nationalist policies. Moreover, in Zhou's opinion, modern information technologies like the internet provide opportunities for many users to obtain various information about the world, and the more people become informed of the realist world, the more nationalist they become. Since Zhou (2006: 229) believes that realpolitik nationalism is based on realist thinking about 'comprehensive national power' and 'national interests', he

describes such nationalism as ‘less emotionally charged, less ideologically biased and more rationally driven’. However, in the Chinese context, the internet is strictly monitored and censored, and the possibilities for ordinary people to access multiple sources of information are limited. The great firewall has to some extent turned the Chinese internet into an intranet, and the likelihood is that much of the information that ordinary netizens can access only represents the government views. As a result, for most Chinese internet users, the rigorously censored web prevents them gaining multiple information to form fuller knowledge about China in the global system. Further to that, the internet is a marketplace where various information true or false competes, and this requires people to verify the credibility of the information. In fact, many popular nationalist movements nowadays in China have much to do with the unreliable information circulated on the internet. As Hughes (2000a: 204) observes, during the riots against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, some of the pictures of atrocities against ethnic Chinese women that were posted on websites and stirred up nationalist sentiments among the Chinese audiences turned out to be photos taken elsewhere and at other times. From this perspective, instead of thinking of the internet as a medium contributing to what Zhou’s claims as less emotionally charged and more rationally driven nationalism, it might be relevant to regard it as a place where information is manipulated for inciting nationalist emotions. It can also be argued that, sometimes, nationalism emerges not because people are well informed, but rather ill informed. The internet may provide information for realpolitik nationalism to form, it may also increase the possibility of nationalist agitation.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

To conclude, what makes the internet special for studying Chinese nationalism is that it challenges the traditional thinking of nationalism as a top-down manoeuvre, and provides a chance to analyse nationalism from a bottom-up perspective. The internet not only creates possibilities for popular actors to engage in the politics of nationalism, but also to compete with the official actors for nationalist discourses. This however does not mean that the CCP has completely lost its control of Chinese nationalist discourses. The CCP has been consistently developing control mechanisms and attempting to suppress claims that undermine its authority. The control-resistance landscape of the Chinese internet does not necessarily indicate

that it is the only interactional pattern between the state and ordinary internet users. Although censorship still remains the main control method, the CCP is learning to engage cautiously with the online public. The increasing level of the government's responsiveness to online public opinion also portrays a co-optation landscape of the state-public interaction. Therefore, as Xu (2001: 125) indicates, contemporary nationalism in China has shown 'great malleability as a junction and node of contradiction, interaction, and integration between state and society, between the ruling ideology and intellectual discourses, and indeed, among various intellectual discourses'. While the general relevance of the internet to the emergence of online nationalism has been explained, more attention needs to be paid to the specific uses of the internet by Chinese netizens throughout the whole process of online nationalism. In Chapter 4-6, I will provide thorough discussions regarding how ordinary Chinese people use the internet to disseminate nationalist information, practice nationalist identity, and debate nationalist actions.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology and Research Design**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the last two chapters, I provided a macro picture about the socio-political context of Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet out of which online Chinese nationalism emerges. I also stressed the state and popular players as the two major contenders in the politics of Chinese nationalism, and examined the theoretical possibilities for the two separate fields – Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet - to be studied as a whole. The last two chapters serve as a contextual and theoretical basis for the whole thesis, critically reviewing relevant theories and arguments as well as identifying gaps that need to be tackled throughout the research. The main goal of this chapter is to introduce the research method that bridges the theoretical and empirical parts of the research, and to explain how the research is designed and implemented in order to solve the overall research question. Since the thesis employs critical discourse analysis as the ultimate research method, the first section of this chapter discusses the key word ‘discourse’ which pervades the whole research - how it is defined and understood in the context of this research. The second section mainly justifies the employment of Norman Fairclough’s approach to ‘critical discourse analysis’; that is to say, how Fairclough’s approach works and how it can be transplanted to the research in question. The third section illustrates the research design, shedding light on, for instance, the rationales of selecting the case study, and explains the empirical stage of implementing critical discourse analysis, including data collection, sampling and the analytical framework. For the reason that research design can hardly be flawless, the last section also reflects the potential limitations that it may have.

#### **3.2 Explaining the Concept of Discourse**

Before moving onto the research design, it is first of all crucial to grasp some basic knowledge about the notion of discourse. Discourse is a complex and fiercely debated term despite the fact that it is widely used in social science and humanities, be it linguistics, cultural studies, media studies and politics. The term discourse is

used loosely to refer to ‘all forms of talk and texts, whether they be naturally occurring conversations, interview material or written texts’ (Gill 1996: 141). In some cases, as O’Farrell (2005: 78) notes, discourse has come to mean ‘something equivalent to “world view”’. Furthermore, as Danaher et al (2000: 31) explain, discourse is ‘language in action: they are the windows, if you like, which allow us to make sense of and “see” things’, and ‘these discursive windows or explanations shape our understanding of ourselves, and our capacity to distinguish the valuable from the valueless, the true from the false, and the right from the wrong’. As a key developer of the notion discourse, Foucault in his work, especially the *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2010), admits the associations between language and discourse. He uses the term discourse to refer to ‘a certain “way of speaking”’ (Ibid: 213) and ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Ibid: 54). Language serves an array of functions in human societies, and as Gee (2011a: 2-3) puts forward, people use language to ‘say things, do things, and be things’; in other words, language allows people to ‘inform’, to ‘engage in actions and activities’ and to ‘take on different socially significant identities’.

However, it is worth noting that, as Mills (2006: 55) contends, the term discourse ‘is not the equivalent of “language”’. This statement is accepted by Bruns (2005: 358), and he asserts that language is in fact part of discourse, and ‘the concept of language has been folded into that of discourse’. As a consequence, the understanding of discourse is not reducible to linguistic applications, and the study of discourse is not merely interested in language for its own sake. In addition to that, what remains unmentioned in the definitions given by either Gill (1996) or Danaher et al (2000) is the intimate relation between discourse and power. Foucault (1988; 1991) in his writings increasingly sees discourse as a social practice through which power is exerted, legitimated and maintained. Therefore, the key aspect of understanding discourse is also about disclosing power relations hidden in the use of language, and this will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

Discourse is a ‘symbolic interaction and communication between people’ (Bloor and Bloor 2007: 6), in which they rely on ‘symbolic resources of meaning-making’, including language, ‘to crystallize and to change social beliefs, relationships and

identities' (Chouliaraki 2008: 674). Although the reductionist view that equates discourse with language should be avoided, one can hardly deny that discourse of which language is a fundamental part constructs the world that people can think about and make sense of. Things that people experience are not 'somehow "direct" and unmediated' (Gill 1996: 142), but rather, they are 'mediated discursively' (Olssen et al 2004: 68). In a sense, the realities that people know of are not necessarily what things really are, rather, according to Gillies (2009), they are constructed realities. Further to that, as Gee (2011a: 9) indicates, since the use of language is 'political' and language gains its meanings from the discourse 'of which it is a part and which it is enacting', the study of discourse is hence concerned with the orientations of the language users, namely, the meanings they intend to create and to be received by the targeted audience in a particular time and socio-cultural setting.

Moreover, discourse is a meaning making system in which power is exercised, contested and realised. According to Chouliaraki (2008: 675), 'every move to meaning-making comes about from a position of power - power both structuring and structured by the social positions available within the practice'. Power and ideology are two important elements, which are closely connected with discourse. Mills (2006: 54-55) explains that the term ideology is conceptualised by Marxist theorists as 'certain statements and ideas', normally 'a set of false beliefs about something' that are 'authorised by institutions' and imposed on people to change individual ideas and behaviours. This understanding indicates that power is a means of oppression and a controlling force to manipulate the minds and actions of individuals and groups. Nevertheless, in Foucault's definition, as Rouse (2005: 108) observes, power is not seized by someone, rather it is dynamic and ever changing. As in his own words, Foucault (1978: 100-101) proclaims that 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it'. By saying this, Foucault actually stresses the fluidity of power and recognises discourse not only as the means of oppressing but also as the means of resistance (Mills 2006: 55).

From the above discussions, one may realise that the concept of discourse is in fact mainly defined by two different schools, namely, in terms of linguistic studies of texts and various others in sociology (Van Dijk 2001: 363). Van Dijk (Ibid) argues that the linguistic approach ignores ‘concepts and theories in sociology and political science on power abuse and inequality’, whereas for the latter, it often lacks a close look into the ways in which power is being exerted via texts. Taking this into account, the meaning of discourse in this thesis is therefore not drawn upon from one single school of definition; rather it comprises both linguistic and sociological approaches, in other words, it focuses on the linguistic and political sides of texts at the same time. Discourse analysis is on the one hand believed by scholars like Taylor (2001: 5) as ‘the close study of language in use’; and hence, it is inevitably concerned with how language is applied, not only about what is said, but more importantly about how it is said. Since language is used to do things, the ways people marshal the language can spontaneously lead researchers to ponder upon the goals and effects the users want to achieve. However, on the other hand, a language does not yield any meanings or effects without being embedded into a discursive structure. As Mills (2006: 56) asserts, ‘we can only think about and experience material objects and the world as a whole through discourse and the structures it imposes on our thinking’. Nonetheless, this assertion does not tend to say that there is nothing outside discourse, instead, as Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108) explain, what is denied is the assertion that ‘objects could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence’. They continue to argue that things like earthquakes do exist in reality independent of discourse, but ‘whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of “natural phenomena” or expressions of “the wrath of God” depends on the structuring of a discursive field’ (Ibid).

Laclau and Mouffe’s example insightfully demonstrates the connections among language, discourse and power, and it clearly highlights the point of view that it is not the language itself, but rather the discursive structure through which meaning is made. The ways in which knowledge and truth are produced reflect power, and as Chouliaraki (2008: 675) notes, ‘every move to meaning-making makes a claim to truth precisely from that power position that enunciates it’. As a result of this, knowledge and truth are, according to Danaher et al (2000: 64), ‘produced out of power struggles’, and ‘they are used to authorise and legitimate the workings of



power'. Language itself is neutral in terms of meaning-making, and it does not carry specific meanings until it is embedded into a discursive structure. Irrespective of this, language does play an important role in a discourse in the sense that as Lessa (2006: 285-286) states, 'language, the medium of interaction, creation and dissemination of discourse, is deeply implicated in the creation of regimes of truth, i.e. they explore ways in which, through discourse, realities are constructed, made factual and justified, bring about effects'. As one can understand in the quotation, language as a medium does not have any power per se, but to be precise, what language does is that it operates as an agent that mirrors and facilitates struggles of power. It helps represent, constitute and spread a version of reality and truth that those in power want others to know; thereby, although language is meaning-neutral, how language is used is indeed a matter of power.

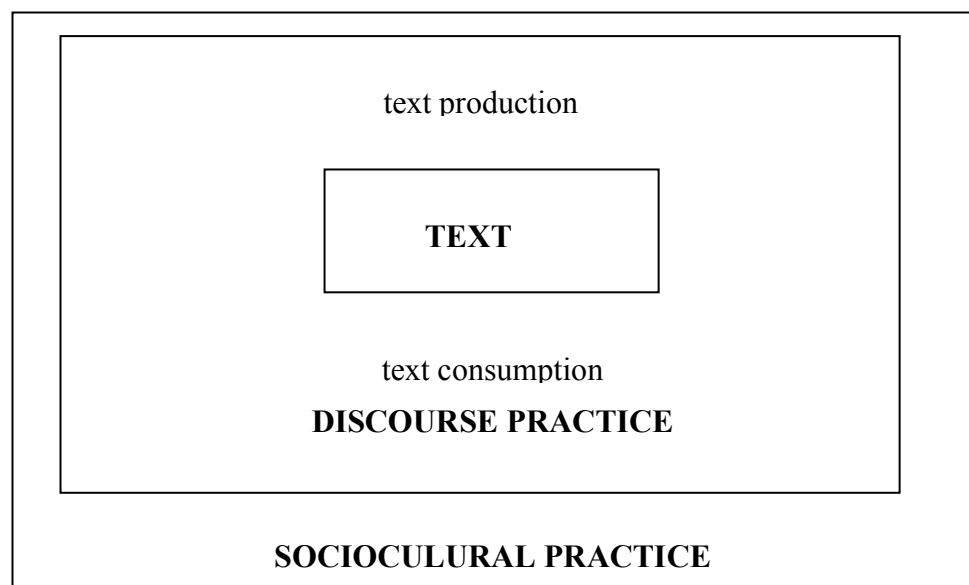
To synthesise all the above arguments, discourse is a meaning-making system in which symbolic resources like language are drawn upon not only to help represent the world, but also signify, constitute and construct the world in meaning (Fairclough 1992: 64). The realities and truths about the world are represented and constructed through the manipulation of language in an attempt to maintain or challenge power relations. Knowing this, the purpose of discourse analysis is therefore to examine the workings of power underneath the utilisation of language in a particular socio-political context, and as Van Dijk (2001:353) points out, 'the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of *power* and *dominance* in society'.

### **3.3 Norman Fairclough's Approach: Critical Discourse Analysis**

There are many different ways of analysing discourses (see for example Wetherell et al, 2001), but how a discourse is analysed is dependant upon the research topic as well as how the concept of discourse is defined. As elaborated in the previous section, in this thesis, the notion of discourse is not merely about language use, but also about power exerted through the use of language. Further to that, this thesis mainly investigates the ways language is used respectively by the CCP and Chinese internet users in the representation, dissemination, construction and discussion of Chinese nationalism, and the power of both players in shaping their positions,

relations and identities through these nationalist practices. As a result, in order to carry out the research, a transdisciplinary research approach which combines linguistic and socio-political studies is needed.

Since discourse analysis is keen to examine the exertion of power via the manipulation of language, Norman Fairclough's approach, namely 'critical discourse analysis', is introduced as the ultimate research method of the thesis. His approach comprises text analysis based on linguistic studies developed by linguists like Michael Halliday (1994), and the study of power primarily based on Foucault's theories. In Fairclough's opinion (1995a: 57), critical discourse analysis of a communicative event is concerned with the relationship between three facets which he refers to as '*text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice*'. He systemises this idea into a three-dimensional structure as shown in *figure 1*, in which he illustrates the dialectical interconnections between these three facets. As visualised in the structure, *text* is embedded in *discourse practice*; this is because as I explained earlier, a language no matter written or spoken does not transmit any meanings until it is located in a specific social interaction where texts are produced and interpreted. While at the same time, *discourse practice* is also embedded in *sociocultural practice*, the wider societal and institutional matrix in which discourse occurs. Therefore, Fairclough's approach suggests that the way in which a text is produced and interpreted is contingent upon the nature of the sociocultural practice which the discourse is a part of.



**Figure 1:** Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to critical discourse analysis.

Reproduced according to Fairclough's model (1995a: 59).

Language is a socially conditioned entity. All linguistic activities take place in a social context and people use it to disseminate specific social meanings. As Fairclough indicates (2001: 19), language 'is not merely a reflection or expression of social processes and practices, it is a *part* of those processes and practices'; and therefore, it has social effects, in the sense that how it is contributed to 'changes in people (belief, attitudes, etc.), actions, social relations, and the material world' (Fairclough 2003: 8). One of the most important effects of language as Fairclough (2001: 2-3) finds is to do with ideologies, because language is manoeuvred to help naturalise domination of some people over others and make ideological representations come to be seen as 'common-sense assumptions'. Fairclough (Ibid: 3) acknowledges that power is exercised either through physical violence or through 'manufacture of consent', and ideology has increasingly become the 'prime means of manufacturing consent' in the modern societies. Since power is largely realised through ideology and 'more particularly through the ideological workings of language' (Ibid: 2), texts should be analysed in terms of their connections with power.

The text facet of Fairclough's approach explores the role of language in facilitating ideologies. Any text, according to Fairclough (1995a: 58), simultaneously has three categories of function, namely, '*ideational, interpersonal, and textual*', and this view of text provides a chance to probe 'the simultaneous constitution of systems of knowledge and belief (ideational function) and social relations and social identities (interpersonal function) in text'. In other words, when analysing a text, the researcher needs to pay attention to the three aspects of information that a text carries, including 1) how is the event in question represented; 2) what identities are set up for those involved in the event; and 3) what social relations are established between those involved (Ibid: 5). This working framework of analysing texts corresponds well with the core research question of the thesis, which is 'how Chinese netizens use the internet to engage in the discursive practices of representing nationalist information, constructing nationalist identity and discussing

nationalist actions, and to what extent online popular nationalism challenges the domination of the state over the nationalist discourses'. This is because, if we re-examine the research question, the research is all about how nationalist information is represented in the official and online popular nationalist discourses (representations), what kind of identities that nationalist players intend to construct through nationalist interactions and practices (identities), and what are the relations between different players on the issue of nationalism (relations).

How these aspects (representations, identities and relations) are addressed through the use of language also provide knowledge to answer the question as to how media language might work ideologically, since the use of language is political, and every attempt to make reality and knowledge through text reflects the power positions of the language users within a particular social setting. Due to this, analysts are requested to look closely at various features of texts, including, for instance, grammar, the structure of sentence, lexicon and so on. More than that, analysts are also demanded to search for those relatively latent features within and among texts, such as contradictions, inconsistencies and vagueness. In a word, what analysts are interested in are the 'representational processes in a text' – 'what is included and what is excluded, what is made explicit or left implicit, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded, what is thematized and what is unthematized, what process types and categories are drawn upon to represent events, and so on' (Fairclough 1995a: 104). Therefore, as Fairclough concludes (1995b: 7), 'a working assumption is that any level of (textual) organization may be relevant to critical and ideological analysis'. Relating to the research in question, linguistic analysis has great value for understanding Chinese nationalist discourses, and texts provided by nationalist players should not be taken for granted. In fact, as I will discuss in the following chapters, the representation of nationalist information, the construction of nationalist identity and the discussion of nationalist actions all have an intrinsic relation to the use of language. That is to say, nationalist players manipulate language to frame nationalist information in a way that suits their own political agendas. They have to consider a range of linguistic options in order to highlight the information they intend to disseminate on the one hand, and obscure or even exclude the information they do not want people to know much about on the other hand. Moreover, the use of language is also of great importance in the construction of nationalist identity,

because nationalist players use language to declare their belonging to and identification with a nation. The use of language is equally crucial in the discussion of nationalist actions, for nationalist players need to deliberately employ language to approve or disapprove a nationalist action, and to defend and justify their own positions in a nationalist action.

The analysis of texts is not possible without considering the social interactions through which texts are produced, distributed and consumed. In Fairclough's opinion (2003: 123), the analysis of discourse is far beyond a detailed investigation of texts, it is rather 'a matter of discerning the rules which "govern" bodies of texts and utterance', and to put it in another way, researchers of critical discourse analysis are keen to find out why a text is structured in this way over the other, and what are the goals the user wants to accomplish by saying or writing in such a way. This goes to the second facet of Fairclough's approach – discourse practice. According to Fairclough (2001: 21), this stage of analysis is mainly concerned with the connection between text and social interactions – 'with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation'. What is required at this stage is to explore the underlying institutional, social and political factors that shape the ways texts are produced and received. When one analyses the text of a TV programme, for instance, the institutional factors could be understood as 'the routines and processes of programme production and the circumstances and practices of audience reception' (Fairclough 1995b: 7). Since text is embedded in and obtains its meaning from the discourse practice, it on the one hand, reveals '*traces*' of the productive process, in other words, it provides a window to look into the motivations and institutional procedures contributing to the making of texts; on the other hand, it also functions as '*cues*' in the interpretative process, that is to say, how a text is wanted to be received and how it is in fact received, and what are the possible factors that underpin or undermine the perception of the text (Fairclough 2001: 20).

Fairclough (2001: 20) claims that critical discourse analysts need to have 'members' resources' in order to analyse the processes of production and interpretation of text. By 'members' resources', Fairclough (Ibid) defines as a collection of cultural

knowledge which ‘people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts – including their knowledge of language, representation of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on’. This suggests a certain level of involvement of researchers into the discourse they are analysing, and it leads to the problem regarding the critical stance of researchers, and the concern of ‘objectivity’ will be discussed in the last section of the chapter. In relation to the thesis, it is important to note that although the analysis of text and discourse practice are visualised in Fairclough’s model as two different layers, they should not be considered as two separate processes, rather, they are to be analysed jointly. This is because, texts are produced through social interactions, and the meanings of social interactions are actualised through the forms of texts.

The last facet of Fairclough’s model of critical discourse analysis is the ‘sociocultural practice’ which the discourse is a part of. This admits that the analysis of discourse can not be isolated from the wider sociocultural environment. To understand the discourse as a social practice, it is necessary to understand the general context out of which such social practice comes into being and makes sense to the people of a specific community. In Potter’s opinion (1996: 127), the ‘sociocultural practice’ can be understood as ‘discursive resources’ that are drawn on to enable social practices and as ‘interpretative repertoires’ with which people of a specific group interpret things and events. To understand the text of a TV programme, researchers not only have to understand the discourse practice, for instance, the routines and procedures of programme production and various other circumstances and practices relating to audience reception; but also to understand the wider social, political and cultural context within which this specific TV programme is broadcast, such as, media law and regulation, the general understanding among the public about the role of TV in the political life, the general relationship between media and the government, and even the history of TV in that particular society. The facet of sociocultural practice therefore has less to do with language per se, but focuses more on the role of the wider sociocultural conditions in shaping the ways through which a particular social practice or interaction is to be understood.

In relation to the thesis, the facet of sociocultural practice requires an explanation of societal and political conditions which led to the emergence of Chinese nationalism and formed people's perceptions, values and orientations regarding Chinese nationalism. Since this research examines the connections between Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet, an explanation about the nature, users and characteristics of the Chinese internet is also of great relevance to the overall research. It should be noted that this information has in fact to a great extent been provided in the two previous chapters. In the previous chapters, I not only offered a critical review of the existing theories and arguments about Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet, but also explained the wider socio-political background shaping the development and transformation of Chinese nationalism. I also clarified the definition of nationalism in the Chinese context, and examined the historical evolution of Chinese nationalism since the late 1970s. Furthermore, I paid attention to the distinctive features of the Chinese internet, and discussed the general potential of the internet as a decentralising medium that facilitates the participation of ordinary Chinese people in the politics of Chinese nationalism. Although the internet in China is strictly censored, the internet provides netizens with a potential means to confront the government on the issue of nationalism, and enables them to debate nationalist agendas and actions through online interactions. These conditions mentioned above have been intensively shaping and reshaping the discourses of Chinese nationalism, and provide essential 'resources' for understanding the emergence, development and trends of Chinese nationalism. The previous chapters provided a range of relevant information about the sociocultural context of Chinese nationalism, and this sort of information is important for the analysis of the other two facets - text and discourse practice - in the empirical analysis in Chapter 4, 5 and 6.

### **3.4 Selection of Case Study**

In order to address the research question, the thesis pays attention to the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympic Games, with a particular focus on the Paris leg of the torch relay, which later triggered the popular nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour in China. The anti-Carrefour movement was mainly a reaction to the chaos of the Beijing Olympic torch relay in Paris. The

incident escalated when a pro-Tibet protestor lunged at a Chinese torchbearer (Jin Jing) in a wheelchair trying to wrestle the torch from her, and that fuelled a backlash among many Chinese, especially young people, that France disregarded and humiliated China's glory and dignity. In response to France's alleged hostility, some Chinese nationalists called on the internet for a boycott urging people to avoid French brands as punishment for what they considered France's shabby reception of the torch. Among all the targeted brands, Carrefour - a French international chain supermarket and one of the most visible French symbols in China - was blacklisted for its alleged support for the Dalai Lama who is the Tibetan spiritual leader in exile and is denounced in the Chinese media as a separatist of Tibet. The boycott initiative soon received considerable support, and the massive protests both online and offline even led to diplomatic tension between the two countries. Even though some young Chinese netizens admitted that they could not find any proof to verify the allegation that the French supermarket provided financial support to the Dalai Lama, however, they believed in the notion that France was hostile to China and France would use the opportunity of the Beijing Olympics to shame China. Therefore, they defended that Carrefour was a punchbag for their nationalist fury against France, and boycotting it would demonstrate their solidarity and determination to protect China's national honour.

Despite a significant number of Chinese netizens supporting the nationalist plan of boycotting Carrefour, the controversy remained highly debated and gained further attention as some public figures openly raised their objections to the initiative. Han Han, for instance, an influential writer and blogger among China's younger generation, wrote in his blog that the demonstrators outside Carrefour were making a fuss, and he thought that boycotting Carrefour was not patriotism but 'simply tacky' (Han 2012: 34). Han ridiculed some demonstrators by describing the actions of boycotting Carrefour as no difference from the behaviour as if someone called you an idiot, you held up a card in front of someone's girlfriend's little brother's dog, protesting that you were not stupid (Ibid: 35). He urged that young people should be open to different opinions, criticism and protests occurred during the international torch relay, and boycotting Carrefour only put the Chinese employees of Carrefour 'in a terrible position' (Ibid). Bai Yansong, a well-known anchor-man of China Central Television also openly opposed the boycott, and he claimed that since most



of employees in Carrefour were Chinese, boycotting it was like internal fighting (*neihong*), and hence, netizens needed to calm down and have rational emotions (Xinhua, 2008). Han and Bai's arguments nonetheless brought themselves under nationalist attacks, and they received considerable criticism accusing them of being traitors to China. The call for boycotting Carrefour, both online and offline, was so pervasive that people were forced to take a side, and as Han (2012: 35) lamented, if someone chose to boycott, s/he was considered to stand with the right side; if s/he opposed to boycott, s/he was called a traitor; and if s/he did not say anything, s/he was called a coward.

Regardless of the loud appeals for boycotting Carrefour, many Chinese netizens also attempted to make it heard their reasons for not boycotting it. Both sides, pro or against the boycott, fiercely debated the rationales, strategies and consequences relating to the boycott, and online discussions on whether or not Carrefour should be boycotted caught considerable attention in the society and caused various players, including official and online popular nationalists, to debate, contend and co-opt. This case study has been chosen because it not only provides a great chance to find out the rationales and concerns that shaped the positions of different players in such a nationalist campaign as boycotting Carrefour; more importantly, it also enables me to examine the power relations between different nationalist players and their competition for nationalist narratives; that is to say, by analysing nationalist texts collected from the chosen media, it allows me to analyse as to how nationalist players defend, justify, disseminate and impose their nationalist ideologies through manipulation of language. This case study also helps disclose the underlying working dynamics of online Chinese nationalism when China encounters an alleged foreign threat, namely, how the notion of enemy is constructed and reinforced through online interactions, and how the discursive construction of enemy attributes to the breakout and mobilisation of online popular nationalist sentiments. Since the case study also sheds light on Jin Jing, the disabled torchbearer who successfully protected the Olympic torch during the Paris leg of the torch relay and was idolised by many Chinese netizens as a national hero, this incident also gives an alternative perspective for studying online Chinese nationalism with respect to the role of a national hero in shaping the discourse of Chinese nationalism, and how netizens construct their nationalist identity by praising and identifying with a national hero

through online discursive practices. Furthermore, as most Chinese saw the Beijing Olympics as an embodiment of national pride and China's return to its rightful place in the world after a century of weakness, this case study equally offers an opportunity to comprehend how the notion of national pride is perceived and maintained in both official and popular nationalist discourses. In an overall sense, the chosen case study enables me to explore the shape, dynamics and power relations of online Chinese nationalism, and the findings could also be useful to explain other nationalist movements in China; more importantly, it also helps me to explain in detail the discursive nature of online Chinese nationalism. As I point out, online Chinese nationalism is a discursive process, and the chosen case study allows me to investigate the discursive practices that form and shape online Chinese nationalism; that is to say, in Chapter 4, I will explain the discursive representation of the nationalist information about the torch relay in Paris; in Chapter 5, I will analyse how Chinese netizens discursively construct their nationalist identity through online interactions of denouncing France as a national enemy and embracing Jin Jing as a national hero; and in Chapter 6, I will focus on the discursive making of nationalist actions of boycotting Carrefour.

Lastly, the case study has been chosen because it has some connections with my personal observations, experiences and memories about the boycott of Carrefour. I was closely following online discussions about the boycott on various internet forums including the *Tianya Forum* and other social networking sites in 2008, and as a then university student, I also engaged in the debates with friends and fellow classmates about the boycott of Carrefour both online and offline. Due to my personal experiences of discussing multiple issues relating to the boycott on the internet, I understand well the online environment for the discussions, that is to say, when online discussions about the boycott started to circulate, when it started to be censored, what was allowed to discuss and what was not, how online discussants circumvented censorship, what were the major issues about the boycott netizens debated and so on. This sort of information is useful for answering the overall research question and can be drawn on for the analysis in Chapter 4, 5 and 6.

### **3.5 Research Design and Implementation**

In this research, I take both official and online popular nationalist players into account and intend to investigate how they shape Chinese nationalism through media discourses; as a result, I chose to examine *The People's Daily* and the *Tianya Forum*, which represent official media and online popular/non-official media respectively. It should be noted that, as I explained in Chapter 2, a range of different factors have impeded Chinese cyberspace being considered as a medium that is independent from the CCP's control and propaganda, the internet however to a significant extent opens a new platform for some political debates and brings about certain 'dialogues' between the government and the public. Although the Chinese government strictly monitors the internet, it has increasingly accepted the role of the internet as an effective channel through which public opinion can be heard and gauged. Therefore, in the Chinese context where traditional media are strictly controlled and supervised by the authority, the internet that allows some political freedom can be deemed as the closest form of medium that represents public voices and interests.

The research first of all examines the news coverage relating to the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics by *The People's Daily*, paying attention to the language used in the official media discourse, namely, how the official newspaper represented the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics, particularly the Paris leg of the torch relay, and how the newspaper shaped the nationalist discourse by promoting a sense of national pride. *The People's Daily* is answerable to the Central Committee of the CCP, and is the leading official newspaper in China. It is the second largest newspaper in China in terms of circulation, and is widely subscribed to by governments at all levels, state-owned enterprises, public sectors and any other organisations which have party branches. Its news reports are often reprinted in local newspapers, and are considered as directives from the central government. Besides, the newspaper is also one of a few sources available to the public, from which scholars and policy-makers can spot information about the policies, ideologies and stance of the party, general political environment and certain political changes at the central level. On the other hand, a popular internet forum is chosen to study the online discourse of Chinese nationalism. The *Tianya Forum*, founded in 1994, is one of the most visited and influential internet forum in China. It is known for its open and liberal discussion environment. Moreover, the forum is

also a source of internet popular culture, and a place for citizen journalism, because many news stories and scandals which later attracted national attention were initially reported and exposed by the *Tianya* users. The *Tianya Forum* is also considered as a popular online forum for Chinese nationalists, and during the time of the anti-Carrefour movement in 2008, the forum played an important role in spreading nationalist information and facilitating nationalist discussions.

Data from *The People's Daily* were collected manually. Paris received the torch relay on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 as the fifth leg of the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympic Games. However, I decided to look at the whole period of the international torch relay starting from 1<sup>st</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008. Covering the whole length of the international torch relays enables me to have an overall understanding about the official representations of the international torchrelay and discover the general discursive patterns of the official newspaper in reporting the events. On the other hand, more importantly, although the torch relay in Paris finished on 7<sup>th</sup> April and the newspaper covered the event the next day, the influence that the chaotic Paris leg of the torch relay brought to Chinese politics lingered, as in the following days and weeks, the newspaper continued to publish editorials and articles relating to the incident. In consequence, covering the whole length of the international torch relay also allows me to track, over a longer period, the changing nationalist views, positions and strategies of the CCP in response to the incident. To make sure that the sample included as many relevant data as possible, the collection of data extended to 12<sup>th</sup> May when a massive earthquake broke out in the south-western province of Sichuan, and media attention shifted quickly to the earthquake relief and almost no further related articles were published. As a result, within the time frame (1<sup>st</sup> April – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2008), 112 articles have been collected. All the articles cover the following major themes: 1) the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympic Games held in 19 cities around the world; 2) international support for the Beijing Olympics and the international torch relay; 3) condemnation of the attempts made by pro-Tibet activists to interrupt the international torch relay; and 4) praising people's patriotic deeds of protecting the Olympic torch and discussing the meanings of patriotism in the context of the Beijing Olympics.

With regard to the online forum, data were collected through keywords using the search engine provided by the *Tianya Forum*. Unlike the data collection method used in *The People's Daily*, I only collected those online threads relating directly to the Paris leg of the torch relay and the consequent nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour, so that the collected data are more relevant to the analysis and the size of the data is manageable. 'Paris (*bali*) + torch (*huoju*)' and 'boycott (*dizhi*) + Carrefour (*jialefu*)' were chosen as the keywords. In lieu of using specific keywords, for example, 'Paris (*bali*) + Beijing Olympics (*Beijing Aoyun*) + Torch (*huoju*) + Relay (*jili*)', the choice of slightly loose keywords mentioned above was in fact deliberate, in order to include as many relevant threads as possible. Such ambiguity undoubtedly resulted in a slightly larger number of threads, but all the search results were organised in a more meaningful way by first of all sorting them in terms of the numbers of replies, which was enabled by the advanced searching options provided by the forum. Then, since the collection of online data focused on the time period from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 when the Beijing Olympic torch relay was held in Paris to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2008 when the earthquake struck China and public attention on the boycott of Carrefour was drawn away, the sorted search results were further checked according to their initial posting time, and any threads whose initial posting time was out of the time frame were not taken into account. Following this step, the sieved results were once again manually examined to ensure their validity for analysis, and any irrelevant threads were disqualified. Even though some of the threads contained the keywords, the contents had almost nothing to do with the topic in question. While some of the threads included the keywords and related to the topic in question, the contents of those threads were nothing but simple repetitions, for instance, there were some most replied threads about the torch relay in Paris, however, by close examination, it was found that they only contained several hundred of identical icons of Chinese national flag and red hearts. Threads of this kind showed the general nationalist passion of Chinese netizens for the Beijing Olympics, nonetheless, since the research is based on linguistic data and focuses on the emergence, mobilisation and discussion of Chinese nationalism through the use of language, they were not included in the final analysis. After the sieving procedures, 6 of the most replied threads were selected for the final analysis, and these 6 threads include 12275 posts. All the online threads collected cover the following main themes: 1) netizens' personal accounts of the turmoil of the Beijing

Olympic torch relay in Paris and the subsequent nationalist discussions about the alleged hostility of France; 2) netizens' discussions about Jin Jing's nationalist determination of protecting the torch and their identification with her as a national hero; and 3) debates on various issues relating to the purposes, ideals, effects and strategies of boycotting Carrefour.

The primary reason for selecting threads in terms of numbers of replies is that it helped identify the most concerned issues by netizens, and all the nationalist issues that were discussed in the *Tianya Forum* and *The People's Daily* also helped me decide the main themes to be discussed in the following discussion and analysis chapters. Since the data collected from both the official newspaper and the online forum cover the report of the Paris leg of the international torch relay, it actually enables me to compare the different discursive techniques used by the official and online popular nationalist players in representing the same nationalist event, and investigate the underlying nationalist concerns, positions and ideologies that affected the ways the torch relay was represented. Moreover, since the collected threads are some of the most replied and discussed threads, it means that they have a good reserve of empirical data and provide abundant opportunities to investigate the online interactions through which forum participants constructed their nationalist identity and expressed their nationalist claims. Furthermore, the reason that only some of the most replied online threads are collected is that critical discourse analysis does not claim comprehensiveness in the sense that it exhausts topics until it finds no more new topics. However, what critical discourse analysts claim is to account for the cases under analysis and make sure the 'analysis of the cases considered to date has been thorough' (Wood and Kroger 2000: 81). The six collected threads in fact supply a satisfactory amount of data, and the richness of the data warrants that thorough discussions and analysis of the selected case study can be made.

Despite the large quantity of the posts, they were in fact inevitably repetitive, and the length of each post varies as well, from a single word to thousands. Although efforts are made to exclude threads which contained nothing but repetitive texts and icons, such repetitions were inevitable in the collected thread. In a thread, for

instance, where many netizens passionately praised Jin Jing's nationalist determination of protecting the torch in Paris and embraced her as a national hero, slogans such as 'well done, Jin Jing' and 'you are the most beautiful girl' were repetitively used. Moreover, repetitions were also prevalent in the form of forwarding one's post without adding any comments. This usually happened when one forum discussant shared and agreed with someone else's argument and felt there was nothing more to add. Sometimes, people forwarded their respective posts with a single-word comment, such as 'yes', 'support' or 'agree', just to show their agreement with the point. On the other hand, when netizens disagreed with someone's idea, quite often, without elaborating why they disagreed, they just replied with 'nonsense', 'idiot' and other offensive words. It should be noted that the use of offensive words is not rare in Chinese online forums particularly when different ideas collide. Repetitions of various kinds along with verbal violence constitute part of the data collected, and it is in general a common and undeniable phenomenon in Chinese online forums. I by no means intend to ignore these repetitions and verbal violence, because these online contents enable me to understand the sensations and attitudes of online participants, and give some contextual information for better analysing the topic under discussion.

All the texts collected from the newspaper and the online forum form the data corpus, and they are to be examined by using Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis. Although this research sheds more light on the online popular discourse of Chinese nationalism, the official discourse of Chinese nationalism weights significantly as well, since as I have constantly emphasised, any studies relating to nationalism can hardly avoid looking at the state and popular nationalist players at the same time. Data from *The People's Daily* help unveil the discursive power of the CCP in shaping Chinese nationalist discourse and identify its nationalist positions, policies and ideologies during the time of the international torch relay, and as a result, make it possible to answer the latter part of the research question 'to what extent online Chinese nationalism challenges the official dominance of nationalist discourse'. In the light of power relations, Foucault (1997: 292) adds that 'there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violence resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all'. The

analysis of online Chinese nationalism based on the data collected from the internet forum in effect attempts to explore such possibilities of resistance, examining the extent to which online Chinese nationalism as an alternative discourse challenges the official dominance of Chinese nationalism.

Discourse is a meaning-making system through which power is practiced. The actualisation of power depends on one's ability for constructing realities, truths and knowledge and making the constructed realities, truths and knowledge come to be received as common sense (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). However, the production and dissemination of such realities, truths and knowledge largely rely on the use of language, and the ideological use of language should be carefully analysed. As a result of this, discourse analysis is keen to locate power and ideologies behind the use of texts. The analysis of texts, as Fairclough (1995a: 57) demonstrates, involves examination of meanings and forms of the texts, since 'meanings are necessarily realized in forms, and differences in meaning entail differences in forms'. In addition to this, as mentioned earlier, every linguistic feature may be relevant for critical discourse analysis; consequently, the research pays attention to a range of linguistic features, forms and structures, for example:

- Choice of words: why particular words are chosen over the others;
- Delivery of speech: including voices (passive/active and positive/negative), mood and modality (declarative, interrogative and imperative), tenses (past, present, future and perfect etc.), sentence structures, explicitness (what is foregrounded, what is backgrounded, what is absent or present and what is left ambiguous) and coherence (what is incoherent and contradictory);
- Rhetorical devices: rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, euphemism, irony and satire, which are commonly used by Chinese internet users as resistance strategies to elude and ridicule censorship when discussing perceived sensitive issues;
- Pronouns: the use of 'I', 'we', 'you', 's/he' and 'they'. They are frequently used in the discursive construction of identities and relations. That is to say, the use of pronouns indicates 'where a participant in the discourse positions himself/herself as a member of a social group and where others position him or her' (Bloor & Bloor 2007: 22).



### 3.6 Some Reflections

Although online Chinese nationalism has been increasingly studied, few scholars actually regard online Chinese nationalism as a discursive practice in which language plays a fundamental role. As all the above sections explain, this research adopts a new framework of investigating the online discourse of Chinese nationalism, and pays particular attention to how nationalist texts are structured and manipulated, and what are the ideologies and power relations behind nationalist texts. However, since research design can hardly be flawless, in this particular section, I mainly discuss the limitations that may come along with the research, and the efforts that have been made to minimise such problems. Methodologically speaking, political research in association with the Chinese internet is difficult not simply because of the immensity of the internet, but also because of the censorship. Government's various controlling mechanisms inevitably lead to the concern about the extent to which online censorship can affect the research. Although censorship is common in China's cyberspace, the ability of the government to censor the internet has to some extent been overstated, and this has been discussed mainly in Chapter 2. Moreover, the Chinese government is in general more tolerant of online discussions about Chinese nationalism than other topics like human rights, because the CCP knows that suppressing online nationalism can put its nationalist credentials into question. In spite of this, due to the nature and methodological design of the research, I do not see the problem of censorship as a serious hurdle to the quality of the online data collected. In fact, I found that discussions in the *Tianya Forum* were relatively unfettered, and different voices and even criticism of the government could be heard. Although online activities can hardly be exempted from regulations and controls of various kinds, the internet still possesses a greater level of freedom than any other forms of media in China. Instead of seeing the online censorship as an obstacle to the research, I argue that it is what makes the Chinese internet distinct, and no researchers of the Chinese internet can ignore this fact. Censorship is one of the defining features of the Chinese internet, and it helps explain the various characteristics of online activities in China.

Discourse analysis does not solely focus on the texts per se, more importantly, it pays enormous attention to the differences and tension that exist in and between the texts and the underlying power relations that account for the ways that texts are made, distributed and received. The problem of censorship does not hinder the research; rather, it helps explain the overall online discourse of Chinese nationalism. Referring back to Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis, censorship has been taken into consideration as a macro institutional factor that shapes the landscape of the Chinese internet; while on the micro level, the problem of censorship in reality provides a chance to examine the power relations between online popular actors and state actors, for instance, whether or not netizens utilise particular discursive techniques to evade censorship in order to voice alternative nationalist claims and agendas (this will be discussed in Chapter 6).

The other concern that has been frequently discussed by critical discourse analysts is the problem of objectivity. Discourse analysis in fact requires researchers to engage in the discourse they are analysing. Talking about Fairclough's three-dimensional approach, particularly the stage of 'discourse practice' that explains the processes of text production and consumption, it is important to acknowledge that one can hardly explain the rules and procedures that are dawn upon in the production and consumption of the texts unless as Fairclough (2001: 138-139) clarifies, s/he learns and shares the 'members' resources' (interpretative procedures) of the participants. Due to this, Fairclough (Ibid: 139) argues that 'the analysis of discourse processes is necessarily an "insider's" or a "member's" task – which is why I have called the resources drawn upon by both participant and analyst members "members' resources" (MR)'.

However, the sense of being an 'insider' prompts discourse analysts to consciously distinguish themselves from the participants under investigation, since the purpose of grasping 'members' resources' is not to identify with the participants, but to critically investigate what they are doing and why. For this reason, a discourse analyst has to maintain a critical stance by adopting what Gee (2011b: 12) calls 'the making strange tool', that is to say, acting as an stranger or an 'outsider' and asking 'what would someone find strange here (unclear, confusing, worth questioning) if

that person did not share the knowledge and assumptions and make the inferences that render the communication so natural and taken-for-granted by insiders'. In this regard, the 'making strange tool' also helps fulfil one of the main objectives of doing discourse analysis, which is to deconstruct the taken-for-grantedness and find out the underlying power relations that retain such commonsensical assumptions. Being an insider gives the researcher interpretative resources that are needed for understanding the participants under investigation, while being an outsider enables the researcher to question and problematize the perceived common knowledge that is rarely challenged by insiders. This insider-outsider method is actually what makes critical discourse analysis critical.

Furthermore, critical discourse analysis also brings such concepts as generalisability, representativeness and replicability into question (Rapley, 2008). The epistemological nature of critical discourse analysis determines that it is an interpretivist approach which sees its outcome as a reading of the text rather than a definitive answer as claimed by a positivist approach. Instead of asserting that social phenomena can be scientifically verified in order to establish universal patterns, interpretivists declare that people generate social phenomena and their meanings are socially and discursively defined and constructed by people, thus, different people may have different understandings. Potter (1996: 155) similarly suggests that 'discourse analysts are critical of the idea that such generalizations are possible, arguing that discourse is always constructed from particular interpretative resources and always designed for specific interpretative contexts'. However, this does not deny the possibilities of making some claims of representativeness about Chinese nationalism and its online nationalist discourses, because the data collected for the analysis might lead to a saturation point where evidence arises for identifying some general patterns, trends and characteristics. It nonetheless should be made clear that the dimension of the research is restricted by the types of data and case study that have been chosen and the 'members' resources' the researcher has obtained and used for the analysis of the data. That means, as Fairclough (2003: 14-15) points out, the analysis of text is inevitably partial in the sense that 'no analysis of a text can tell us all there is to be said about it', because our ability to know what is there is limited; on the other hand, it is selective because analysis is based on certain perspectives and interests, and is driven to answer a specified question that has been raised.

Therefore, the ultimate goal of the thesis is to answer the core research question by presenting thorough interpretation and analysis based on the data that have been collected from the chosen media.

Moreover, research ethics is another concern that needs to be mentioned here. All the data collected for this research were in fact available in the public domains. In other words, one can retrieve the data without needing further registrations or contacts. All the collected official articles were printed in *The People's Daily* and everyone can read them. Likewise, all the online data were available in the *Tianya Forum*, and one can view and access them without even having to register a forum ID. However, due to the nature of the internet, many Chinese netizens tend to be more bold and unconstrained in expressing political opinions and claims on the internet, and given the sensitiveness of political topics like Chinese nationalism, data collected from the forum have to be processed and analysed with extra caution. Furthermore, the search engine provided by the *Tianya Forum* in fact allows other users to look for information about a particular forum user. If one enters a forum user's ID into the search engine, it not only shows the registered information about the user, for instance, gender, age and region although this information could be fabricated, but also lists all other posts and threads s/he has published. This suggests that forum users face a potential risk of being identified, traced and embarrassed, and as a result, in order to protect their privacy, all the forum users quoted in this research are anonymised. That is to say, instead of directly quoting their online IDs, online forum users are referred to as Forum User A, B, C and etc. (the letter 'I' is avoided in case of confusion), and once the letters are used up, forum users are then termed as Forum User 1, 2, 3 and etc. Furthermore, since the online posts that I quote in the thesis have been translated into English from the original Chinese texts, there could be a potential risk that one may identify the forum user by translating the quote back into Chinese and putting some keywords into the search engine in the forum. This might be possible, and to reduce this potential risk, I have decided not to add the original Chinese texts into the thesis alongside the English translations. As a result of this, one may find difficult and complicated, if not impossible, to obtain the exact keywords to trace a specific forum post, given that the same texts can be translated differently.

Finally, there are also some reflections on the selection of the case study. The case study of boycotting Carrefour was approximately 7 years ago, and more recent cases could have been chosen. A more recent case about Chinese nationalism was related to the territorial dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands in September 2012, which led to great tension between the two countries and triggered considerable nationalist protests and debates in China both online and offline. This was an interesting case to look at; however, by the time this nationalist incident took place, I had already collected a large quantity of data relating to the case of boycotting Carrefour and some analysis had been done. Due to the limitations of time, funding and research scope, the case of the Diaoyu Islands was not taken into consideration. The validity of this thesis is however not undermined because of not using a more recent case, and all the data collected have been adequate to answer the research question. The case study of the Diaoyu Islands nonetheless provides some new thoughts for comparative studies about online Chinese nationalism, for instance, whether or not online Chinese nationalism presents new trends, characteristics and dynamics and to what extent the use of Weibo changes the formation, mobilisation and discussion of online Chinese nationalism, and these are some of the interesting questions that can be discussed in further research. It has to be clarified that Weibo was launched only in late 2009 and became popular in 2010, therefore, the examination of how Weibo contributed to online Chinese nationalism was not relevant to be discussed in the case of boycotting Carrefour, which broke out in April 2008. The study of online Chinese nationalism in the context of Weibo may require a new approach with respect to data collection and sampling due to the distinctive features and structures of the platform; however, the exclusion of Weibo in this research will not affect the quality of the thesis, because this research mainly examines how online Chinese nationalism is discursively constructed based on the analysis of online nationalist texts, and as I have observed, there is no substantial differences between Weibo and other internet forums in terms of the ways in which Chinese netizens discuss nationalist issues. In other words, the use of Weibo as an alternative platform for discussing Chinese nationalism does not lead to a fundamental change in the forms, features and styles of language applied by most Chinese netizens participating in nationalist debates, and this is mainly because the general contextual factors that shape online political discussions in China remain

largely unchanged, for instance, the young, educated and urban remain the major user group of the internet in China; censorship is still pervasively and strictly practiced in the Chinese cyberspace and Weibo is no exception (Sullivan 2012; 2013); and despite online censorship, the internet is a rare place where netizens feel less constrained to express politically. Additionally, although Weibo provides a new space for discussing Chinese nationalism, online forums such as *Tianya Forum* remain considerably popular among many Chinese netizens for nationalist debates; hence, to investigate online Chinese nationalism, online forums are still important to look at.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the word ‘discourse’ which pervades the entire thesis has been discussed. As clarified, the term ‘discourse’ does not simply equate to language, though language is a fundamental part of discourse. Discourse is rather understood as a meaning-making system in which power is legitimated and exerted through the use of language. Language is manipulated to achieve some certain goals, however, it should be noted that language itself does not generate meanings; rather, it is the discourse structure where the language is embedded gives it meanings. Given that discourse is mainly about the exertion of power via the use of language within a sociocultural context, discourse analysis therefore should take both linguistic studies of texts and political science of power into consideration. I introduced Fairclough’s three-dimensional approach to critical discourse analysis as the ultimate method of the research, and explained in detail about the structures and procedures of his model. Fairclough’s model of discourse analysis consists of three levels: text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. Basically, the text level examines various linguistic features, for instance, lexicon, grammar and syntax and so forth, and every level of textual organisation may be relevant for critical analysis; the discourse practice level explores the underlying rules, ideologies and conditions that shape the ways texts are produced and interpreted; and the sociocultural practice level looks at the wider sociocultural matrix within which discourse takes place. In a word, as Fairclough (2001: 21) summarises, the approach analyses ‘the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social

structures'. To implement the research, the chapter also elaborated the rationales of selecting the case study for investigation, and explained the research design as well as the criteria of data sampling and analysis. In the final section, the chapter reflected the potential limitations and concerns of the research, such as objectivity, representativeness and research ethics, and explained how efforts had been made to solve such problems.

## Chapter 4

### **The Construction of Chinese National Pride and Representations of the Beijing Olympic Torch Relay in Media Discourses**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Many Chinese people saw the Beijing Olympics as an important national achievement, which gave impetus to the growth of Chinese national pride. They considered the host of the Olympics as the realisation of the so called national dream for which China had been waiting for a century, and the growth of national pride among the mainstream public was important in shaping the dynamics of Chinese nationalism related to the Beijing Olympics. However, Chinese national pride did not come automatically as a consequence of hosting the Beijing Olympics; rather, their awareness of national pride was to a great extent mobilised, constructed and reconstructed by the media discourses to which they were exposed. Therefore, how the national pride of hosting the Beijing Olympics was constructed and represented in media discourses contributed significantly to the shaping of Chinese nationalism.

This chapter mainly explores the media representations of the Beijing Olympics, and attention is paid to *The People's Daily*, to see how the CCP as the dominant player of Chinese nationalism promoted national pride in the official media discourse during the early stages of the international torch relay. The chapter also sheds light on the online forum, because it is important to see how the internet as an alternative medium enabled ordinary people to challenge the domination of the CCP in the politics of nationalism by exposing and representing realities of the international torch relay that were suppressed and distorted in the official media discourse. The whole chapter is divided into the following sections: first of all, it talks about the hosting of the Beijing Olympics as China's 'century-old dream', and explains how such a dream narrative could be so integral to the formation of Chinese national pride relating to the Beijing Olympics. In the second part, it examines the official media discourse of *The People's Daily*, and attempts to explain how the CCP promoted national pride by discursively constructing the Beijing Olympics as a grand national cause that generated massive domestic support and cohesion, and as a



common goal for which Chinese people were striving. Since people's sense of national pride not only derived from the domestic unity that arose for the same national undertaking, but more importantly from the world's positive view of the Beijing Olympics, in the third section, it continues to analyse the discursive approaches applied by the official newspaper to construct a harmonious relation between the Beijing Olympics and the world. The CCP intended to bring confidence and pride to the domestic audience by discursively depicting the Beijing Olympics as a great event which received international support and contributed to the world's peace and harmony. Following that, the chapter continues to explain how the CCP attempted to maintain national pride in the official media discourse when the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics received considerable criticism from the West. The section pays special attention to the Paris leg of the torch relay, and investigates how the CCP's official media manipulated the nationalist information by representing the torch relay in Paris as a welcomed and harmonious event, which was not true in reality. In the last part of the chapter, it turns to the online *Tianya Forum*, and demonstrates how differently Chinese internet users described the Paris leg of the torch relay. The section analyses the different discursive approaches used by internet users to represent the torch relay in Paris, and how such approaches undermined the official ideologies of shaping Chinese nationalist discourses.

#### **4.2 Olympics as a Century-Old Dream**

As shown in the official motto of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games 'One World, One Dream', the word 'dream' is so relevant that it can hardly be avoided when discussing China and the Olympic Games. The dream narrative, which interconnected with China's national pride, played a fundamental role in shaping Chinese nationalism in both official and popular discourses. In 1993, China made its first bid to host the 2000 Olympics, but it lost to Sydney by a margin of two votes. The failure did not dampen China's aspiration for the Olympics. It made a second bid and won the right to hold the 2008 Olympic Games in 2001. Even from the very beginning of its bid process for the 2008 Olympics, holding the Olympic Games was constantly addressed and widely publicised as a national dream by the Chinese government to garner general domestic support. Such official publicity of the

Olympic dream was drawn predominantly from a popular anecdote - the so-called 'three questions regarding the Olympics' (*aoyun sanwen*) - which date back to 1908. After the Fourth Olympic Games concluded in London 1908, a Chinese magazine '*Tianjin Youth Daily*' asked three questions that were said to ignite China's pursuit of the Olympic dream. The three questions raised by the magazine were: 'when will China send athletes to participate in the Olympics, when will Chinese athletes win an Olympic gold medal, when will China host the Olympic Games?'

The first question was solved in 1932 when Liu Changchun was sent as the only athlete to attend the Tenth Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Although he did not succeed in entering the finals, he was idolised as a national hero who, for the first time, stood on the world stage on behalf of China. In 2008, a film entitled '*A One Man Olympics*' was produced based on Liu's Olympic adventure, in order to commemorate China's first presence in the Olympics and extol Liu's determination and patriotism, as he refused to represent the then puppet government in Manchuria supported by the Japanese occupiers. Fifty-two years later, the second question was solved by Xu Haifeng, a pistol shooter, who became the first person to win a gold medal for China in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. From Liu's 'one man Olympics' that announced China's arrival on the Olympic stage to Xu's winning the first Olympic gold medal for China, it is apparent that China's route to the Olympics was characterised by a strong sense of realising a dream, and was intrinsically related with national pride, esteem and prestige. Since two of the three questions had been settled by the time Beijing was heading for the bid, the only one remaining, which was the hosting of the games, could be easily drawn as the last step towards the full realisation of China's Olympic dream - the dream that is said to have been pursued by previous generations of Chinese people in the past century.

From the 'three questions regarding the Olympics' in 1908 to its successful bid to host the 2008 Olympics, China's efforts to fulfil the Olympic dream were repeatedly told in the official media, and according to Hughes (2009: 73), 'the Olympics was a very big patriotic event in China, with incessant TV coverage featuring all kinds of songs, dances, and poetry readings elaborating on the theme of the games'. Despite the official media, China's Olympic success was also visible in people's daily life,

and it was reproduced, celebrated and remembered through various forms, such as T-shirts, souvenirs and street banners. The massive national campaign helped publicise the Olympic achievement as part of the collective memory about the nation, and the notion of the 'century-old dream' provided the government with abundant emotional resources to draw upon when addressing the domestic audience, and invite them to engage in the grand project of realising a national dream. The dream narrative was also important in the way the Chinese government engaged with the international audience. On the one hand, the dream narrative corresponded to the core values of the Olympic spirit - the dream of the people all around the world for peace, unity, friendship and harmony. On the other hand, it also expressed China's willingness to share its achievements with the rest of the world, and its dream of being a key player contributing to world peace and development.

Internationally, the dream narrative was useful to reach the global audience and promote China's world image by showing Beijing's interests in maintaining world peace and harmony; however, domestically speaking, the motivations that drove China's bid for the Olympics were essentially nationalist. The Olympic Games meant far more than just sports to China, and underneath the Olympic dream was China's strong anxiety to win international applause - a symbol that confirms China's emergence as a respected world stakeholder. As Ong (2004: 36) claims, hosting the Olympics could enhance 'China's international prestige and project an image, both domestically and internationally, of national strength and unity'. It is worth noting that China's projection of strength to the world is to a significant extent a response to the domestic nationalist demand for building China as a strong nation. For a substantial proportion of Chinese people, they believe that hosting the Olympics is a competition among the world's top countries, and only those countries, which are economically and politically strong and culturally appealing, are granted the honour of hosting the Games. For the CCP, it regarded the 2008 Olympics as one of its greatest legacies, and the capability of leading its people to realise the so-called 'century-old dream' could win domestic support and consolidate its role as a defender of China's national honours.

International events like the Olympics provide a window to view China's own perceptions of itself in relation to the world. In both official and popular discourses, hosting the Olympics was widely believed to symbolise China's return to its rightful status in the world after a century of weakness, and was generally deemed as an opportunity to claim international prestige and respect. As a result of this, the world's responses and attitudes towards the Beijing Olympics became a significant concern to the mainstream Chinese public and the government alike. However, since being the host of the Olympics undoubtedly put China in the world's limelight, international debates, questions or even criticism of the Beijing Olympics were inevitable. Although China anticipated the world's approval and recognition for the Beijing Olympics, it was not easy to obtain exactly what it wanted. The discrepancy between how China expected the world to treat the Beijing Olympics and how the world in reality responded to it was a crucial factor in triggering Chinese nationalism.

People acquire the knowledge of the world through the given representations of social realities and truths which are discursively constructed by texts. In other words, Chinese people's understandings of the pride of realising China's century-old Olympic dream were largely shaped by the media representations to which they were exposed. As I said earlier, their proud feelings about the Beijing Olympics not only stemmed from the domestic unity for realising the national dream, but also depended on the world's positive view of the Beijing Olympics. Therefore, how the domestic as well as the world's responses to the Beijing Olympics were represented in media discourses could actually affect people's perceptions of the Olympic pride, and therefore, shape the dynamics of Chinese nationalism. The nature of the media determined how the realities of the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics could be represented. Due to the role of *The People's Daily* as a mouthpiece of the CCP, the newspaper's representations of the Beijing Olympics were hardly pure reflections of the realities, but propaganda that were invested with political ideologies and interests, in order to create domestic public opinion in favour of the official stance of the Beijing Olympics. On the other hand, the online forum that is less ideologically charged and more decentralising may open possibilities for ordinary people to represent 'realities' that differed from or even conflicted with the ones in the official media.

### **4.3 Constructing Domestic Mass Support and Pride in the Official Media Discourse**

As a journey to promote the Olympic spirit to the world as well as to showcase China's pride of hosting the Olympics, the international torch relay was for the first time China's 'century-old dream' facing the world's audience before the Beijing Olympics was officially opened. Promoting China's national pride and publicising the domestic mass support for the Beijing Olympics were the primary themes of the official media. *The People's Daily* published an article entitled 'Bless the Motherland, Bless the Sacred Flame' on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. It is the only article that featured the launching ceremony of the international Olympic torch relay, and provided typical views regarding how the CCP attempted to maintain an image of mass domestic support and pride through linguistic manipulation in the official media discourse. The excerpt reads:

1. *In the morning of 31<sup>st</sup> March, the solemn Tiananmen Square witnessed a new*
2. *historic picture, (as) the welcome ceremony of the Olympic sacred flame and*
3. *the launching ceremony of the 2008 torch relay were solemnly held here. In*
4. *the square, the bright five-star red flag was flying high. [...] Ding Ning from*
5. *the Association of Aerobic Dance Chongwen District, Beijing, was in high*
6. *spirits. While she was waving the coloured flag in her hand, she was speaking*
7. *excitedly 'the Olympic sacred flame has finally arrived here! Since Beijing's*
8. *success in its bid for the Olympics on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2001, we have been awaiting*
9. *this moment for almost 7 years. Chinese people have been expecting this*
10. *moment for a hundred years or so. This is the pride of the Chinese nation!'*
11. *[...] When the escort of the Olympic sacred flame entered the ceremony*
12. *scene with the flame lantern held in his hands, people stood up one after*
13. *another, waving the five-star red flags, the Olympic five-ring flags and the*

14. *Beijing Olympic flags in their hands, and welcoming the sacred flame with*  
15. *applause, cheers and drums. 'At this sacred moment, I feel very excited, the*  
16. *excitement which is hard to describe', (said) Zhang Aoyun, a year-three*  
17. *student from Beijing No.2 High School, who just finished performing a*  
18. *red-fan dance with her classmates in the square, and tiny beads of sweat*  
19. *were popping out on her forehead. She said 'in the Tiananmen Square, the*  
20. *sacred heart of the motherland, and in front of the holy Olympic flame, what*  
21. *I want to say most is: bless the motherland, bless the sacred flame.'* [...]   
22. *'The arrival of the Olympic flame in Beijing declares that the Olympic*  
23. *Games for the first time in history is to be held in China. 'For us comrades*  
24. *who are directly involved in the Olympic work, (we) recognise (we need to*  
25. *take on) more responsibilities.'* Wang Ning, the head of the Beijing Olympic  
26. *Games Operation Centre added, 'the light of the Olympic flame will inspire*  
27. *us to perfect every single segment relating to the preparation work of the*  
28. *opening ceremony with maximum passion and maximum efforts. (We) hope*  
29. *that after (watching) the Beijing Olympic Opening Ceremony in the evening*  
30. *of 8<sup>th</sup> August, people in China will feel proud of it, and people of the world*  
31. *will feel astonished by it'.*

At first glance, the above excerpt does not display a blatant expression of political preaching with communist jargons and clichés, if compared with other articles covering domestic politics in *The People's Daily*. It even shows a façade of reporting objectivity, because the paragraph is fairly descriptive and the level of the author's own viewpoints is kept low. The author tends to present himself/herself as an eyewitness who is describing to the readers what s/he has seen and heard without making too explicit his/her identity as a journalist working for the official mouthpiece, and this tendency is exemplified by the use of direct quotations from the interviewees, as quoting someone directly usually helps keep a certain boundary between the author's voices and the voices of the ones being quoted. However, a closer examination of the excerpt suggests the contrary, for the whole paragraph is

not in fact as politically neutral as it appears. Instead of using the CCP's own words to convince the readers of the mass domestic support it has received for hosting the Beijing Olympics, quoting ordinary people's supportive words not only obfuscates the underlying political agendas, but more importantly, creates an atmosphere of bottom-up support which makes such propaganda look more persuasive.

The excerpt first of all uses the perspectives of ordinary Chinese people to demonstrate the significance of hosting the Olympics to China. The title of the article 'Bless the Motherland, Bless the sacred flame' is in fact a direct quotation extracted from an interviewee (Line 21). The word 'bless' exhibits the love and wishes of an ordinary Chinese towards her motherland and the Olympics. By quoting the words of a local high school student - the words that she 'want(s) to say most' (Line 21) - as the title of the article, the newspaper emphasises how much hosting the Olympics means to Chinese citizens and how strongly they feel about it. Lines 1 to 4 are some of the places where the author contributes his/her own words. The depictions of the Tiananmen Square and the five-star red flag are symbolic. Tiananmen Square is in the centre of the Beijing City, and is considered as 'the sacred heart of the motherland' as seen in the student's own words (Line 19-20). It witnessed the founding of the People's Republic of China on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1949, and it was the place where Chairman Mao Zedong famously announced 'the Chinese people have stood up'. It is the central stage for holding national events, for instance, celebrating China's National Day. It should also be noted that Tiananmen square was the centre for the pro-democracy demonstrations in 1989 and the place where those demonstrations were cracked down on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1989. The descriptive words, such as 'solemn', 'new', 'historic', 'sacred', 'solemnly held', 'bright' and 'flying high', all stress the importance of the Olympics to China and the reception of the Olympic flame as an unprecedented national event. Moreover, the detailed and vivid descriptions of the ceremony scene provide an on-the-spot feeling which reinforces the author's eyewitness perspective as if s/he is standing in the crowd and giving a real time reporting from the scene, and therefore, authenticates the story s/he has been telling. The use of adjectives and adverbs like 'bright' and 'flying high' which emit auspicious connotations also discloses the author's pride and his/her sharing excitement and joy with the audience.

The excitement of the crowd seeing the arrival of the Olympic flame is highlighted in the descriptions of Miss Ding's actions and words (Line 4-10). Phrases like 'in high spirits' and 'speaking excitedly' (Line 5-7) illustrate Miss Ding's rejoicing and excitement. The word 'finally' (Line 7) shows her strong aspiration for the Olympics, and the use of 'we' in 'we have been awaiting this moment' (Line 8-9) instead of 'I', also implies Miss Ding's internalisation of seeing the Olympics as a dream not belonging to someone or some individuals, but rather, to all Chinese citizens. Miss Ding's reference to the 'century-old Olympic dream' as in the sentence 'Chinese people have been expecting this moment for a hundred years or so', and her resolution (shown in the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence) of linking the Olympics to the Chinese national pride as shown in her assertion 'this is the pride of the Chinese nation' (Line 10), in fact echo the official propaganda of the Olympic dream narrative. By using the words of an ordinary Chinese that show the conformity with the official agenda, the reality the author intends to push forward is that hosting the Beijing Olympics is not just the dream of the Chinese government, but of all the people in the country, and the people together with the government are united to strive for the same national dream.

The author is keen to construct a supportive and celebrative ambience in the official media discourse, and this can be sensed in the depiction of people's reactions as shown in Line 11-15. The waving of the national and Olympic flags and the noises of applause, cheers and drums surely portray a joyful image of the welcome and launching ceremony. The celebrative ambience is also reinforced by a sense of simultaneity of multiple reactions towards the arrival of the Olympic flame. In Line 11-15, instead of formulating several separate sentences like 'people stood up one after another', 'people waved flags', 'people welcomed', 'people clapped', 'people cheered' and 'people beat drums', the author incorporates the above separate sentence into one unit by using the 'stood up' + 'waving' + 'welcoming' + 'with' combination, and this particular sentence structure generates an impression of simultaneity. The projection of simultaneity - people's standing up, waving flags, welcoming, clapping, cheering and beating drums at the same time in the Tiananmen Square - creates a strong festive effect, which not only shows the intensive passion



and joy of the audience at the scene, but also provides a vivid picture and some realistic feelings for the readers who did not have the chance to be there, to imagine and share the moment that marked China's national success.

The official newspaper also publicises the devotion of the Chinese public to the preparation of the Olympics, in order to show their unity and selflessness for the same national goal. The depiction of 'the tiny beads of sweat popping out on her forehead' (Line 18-19) indicates the efforts Student Zhang made to perform the red-fan dance for the welcome ceremony. Her excitement of having the opportunity to perform in 'the sacred heart of the motherland' for welcoming 'the holy Olympic flame' (Line 19-20) seems to overpower the time and energy she devoted to the preparation of the performance. She does not tend to regard her hard work as a sacrifice, but as an honour, and her honour of being part of the welcome ceremony is manifest in her expression 'I am excited, the excitement which is hard to describe' (Line 15-16). Furthermore, it is interesting to find that the words she uses, such as 'sacred', 'holy' and 'bless', present an apparently religious connotation. It appears that she had strong faith in the Beijing Olympics and she was performing for the welcome ceremony as if it were for a religious occasion. Faith is the deepest thing that gives one power and directs one's deeds, and one's faith in a religion is considered divine and unquestionable. It seems that Zhang's religious-like faith in the Olympics makes her believe that she was performing for a sublime and glorious cause to which she felt honoured to devote.

The promotion of devotion is even explicit in the words of Mr Wang, the head of the Beijing Olympic Games Operation Centre. Although he and his colleagues '(need to take on) more responsibilities' (Line 24-25) for the Beijing Olympics, he does not tend to complain about it. Rather, as manifested in the two uses of the term 'maximum' (Line 28), he demonstrates unreserved enthusiasm for the preparatory work of the Beijing Olympics. 'To perfect every single segment relating to the preparation work' (Line 27) uncovers Mr Wang and his colleagues' ambition and extremely high standard of quality, giving the sense that they are working diligently to improve things that are already outstanding. Irrespective of their official roles in the Olympic work, Student Zhang and Mr Wang do not tend to regard their hard

work for the Olympic preparation as a burden, but rather as the responsibilities they are proud to take on. It is noticeable that neither Zhang nor Wang seems to work for personal gains, and what they care about as indicated in Wang's last sentence is China's national pride and its international recognition.

Mobilising the mass support, nurturing national pride and seeking a public consensus for the Olympic undertaking are the paramount objectives of the official domestic propaganda of the Beijing Olympics. The CCP's intention of achieving these political goals is identifiable in the above excerpt, but the author's overwhelming emphasis on the people's perspectives and the preoccupation with the discursive construction of people's pride and willingness to contribute to the Olympics help obscure the political ideologies of the CCP, making it appear as if the mass support for the Beijing Olympics is a spontaneous and genuine act of the people, rather than a consequence of political coercion. In reality, as Brady (2012) observes, the CCP authority invested enormous resources in the Olympics propaganda to manufacture consent and boost national pride. In the official media discourse, there is a constructed unity of the mainstream Chinese public for realising the 'century-old Olympic dream', and hosting the Beijing Olympics is depicted as a general agreement of the populace.

The newspaper is not only keen to demonstrate that there is massive domestic support for the Beijing Olympics, but also to show that the consent for hosting the Beijing Olympics is based on the people's own will rather than political persuasion. As I notice, neither in the excerpt nor in other collected official articles about the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics is there any explicit mention of the CCP. The role of the CCP in the Olympic mobilisation is largely obscured in the official media discourse, and therefore, it helps create a façade as if mass domestic support for the Beijing Olympics is largely spontaneous and independent of the official propaganda. In the excerpt, the sense of spontaneity is first of all enabled by the absence of the ceremony organiser, for example, in Line 3, the use of passive voice in the sentence 'the launching ceremony of the 2008 torch relay were solemnly held' clearly omits the agent of the whole process, and the one who organised the ceremony is unknown. On the other hand, with respect to the

welcoming scene as the Olympic flame arrived (Line 11-15), the whole sentence depicting a series of reactions of the crowd is structured as an active clause, and the use of active voice normally underlines the actor, stressing the crowd as the subject who does the action designated by the verb. The actions made by the crowd is represented as spontaneous, because in the text, it does not specify if anyone or any organisations invited people to come to the welcome and launching ceremony, as if people gathered together in the square by themselves. Furthermore, no one is indicated in the text to have asked them to stand up, cheer or wave the flags, and the crowd seemed to have performed all the actions naturally and automatically as they saw the Olympic flame. By showing people's spontaneous actions and backgrounding the CCP's role in the Olympic mobilisation work, the official newspaper intends to show that people's support for the Beijing Olympics is genuine.

As seen above, it seems that people's passion for the Olympics is sheerly driven by their genuine interest in the Olympics. While the official newspaper is keen to project the popular image of the Beijing Olympics among the people, it at the same time, conceals the fact that the popularity of the Olympics is largely a result of mass state propaganda and political manipulation. Although domestic support for the Beijing Olympics is constructed in the official media discourse as genuine and voluntary, ironically, in reality, support for the Olympics was blatantly encouraged and linked to Chinese nationalism by the CCP, and showing support for the Olympics therefore became a criterion for determining one's political correctness. Anyone who opposed or by any means questioned the hosting of the Beijing Olympics could be easily labelled as unpatriotic. As Brady (2012: 20) claims, 'the Chinese authorities were extremely strict on anyone, Chinese or non-Chinese, who linked dissent on any theme – including the demolition of housing to make way for Olympic buildings – to the Beijing Olympics.' The CCP's propaganda embraced every Chinese for the cause of the Olympics, and lectured that it was an honour for individuals to take part in the mission of realising China's 'century-old dream'. Contradicting what is the case in reality, the excerpt creates an image in which people are more than willing to become part of the Beijing Olympics. Take Mr Wang for example. In Mr Wang's words (Line 26-28), what drives him and his colleague to work with 'maximum passion and maximum efforts' is not the political

pressure he faces as the head of the Beijing Olympic Games Operation Centre, but the 'light of the Olympic flame'. Emphasising 'the light of the Olympic flame' that inspires them for the Olympic preparation work not only obscures the political nature of the task he is assigned to complete, but also shows Mr Wang's awareness of political correctness. He knows possibly better than others that as a government official, he has little room to express different views even if he has any, and showing conformity with the official Olympic policies also reflects his concerns about his political future, for his performance as the head of the Operation Centre would be inevitably linked to his further career. Taking the potential political consequences into account, Mr Wang's expression of unreserved enthusiasm looks more like a political pledge of claiming political correctness and loyalty than sheer passion for the Olympics.

The invisibility of the CCP in the media text does not necessarily result in a discourse independent of the CCP's ideologies. Although the CCP's ideologies are not explicitly visible, the newspaper's discursive construction of an overwhelming public acceptance and a shared craving of the Beijing Olympics through linguistic manoeuvres, in fact demonstrates the CCP's power to impose its own worldviews of the Olympics on its people, and enforce its ideological and moral hegemony by providing its own interpretation of the reality. The worldviews the CCP wants to purvey is that hosting the Olympics is a great achievement of the Chinese nation, and it is everyone's honour to welcome, celebrate and contribute to the Beijing Olympics. All the three interviewees quoted in the text are not simply represented to show their love for the Olympics, but more essentially are promoted as the role models. By establishing role models in the official media discourse, the CCP actually promotes a set of moral standards for its people to comply with, and encourages them to learn from the role models and be as supportive and proud of the Beijing Olympics as they are. Furthermore, by promoting the role models, the CCP in fact attempts to elevate the qualities of being supportive and proud of the Beijing Olympics to the level of patriotism, and therefore, what the CCP intends to impose is that supporting the Beijing Olympics is the defining feature of a patriotic Chinese citizen.

#### **4.4 Constructing International Support and Maintaining a Harmonious Relation with the World in the Official Media Discourse**

The CCP legitimises its leadership through its discursive power of manufacturing a domestic consensus for hosting the Beijing Olympics. Through representational techniques, *The People's Daily* reproduces the CCP's domination by limiting space for any voices that contradict the official interpretation of the Beijing Olympics and by constructing a reality of mass support among its people and their unconditional identification with the official Olympic policies. However, as I mentioned earlier, China's national pride is closely linked to how China is perceived by other countries, and in order to boost national pride and confidence as well as to further enhance the CCP's legitimacy, it is critical for the CCP to show the domestic audience that the world also dreams about the Beijing Olympics. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, the day before the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics started its first leg in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, *The People's Daily* published an article entitled 'Pray for Harmony and Peace'. The article constructs a harmonious relation between China and the world by claiming on the one hand, the Beijing Olympics can bring good to the world, and on the other hand, the world welcomes and supports the Beijing Olympics. The article reads:

1. *The President of the International Olympic Committee Rogge expressed (in*
2. *his speech) that the torch relay of the 2008 Olympics would be a harmonious*
3. *journey, and it would bring a breath of peace to the people of different*
4. *countries, civilisations and religions. It clarifies in Rogge's speech that*
5. *harmony and peace are the eternal hope and ideal of the Olympics. [...]*
6. *To some extent, sport is a magic means of transforming violent*
7. *confrontations among human beings into peaceful competitions. The function*
8. *of the Olympics is to deeply embed the value of peace, friendship and unity*
9. *into the spirit of the entire human race. Any acts that bring political plots or*
10. *violence into the Olympics violate the Olympic spirit and the good will of*

11. *the people all over the world. [...] The Olympics is a sport pageant for the*  
12. *entire human race. During the Olympic Games, people gather happily and*  
13. *harmoniously like a family, and compete peacefully under the shared rules*  
14. *of the game. This is a celebration as well as a rare spiritual pure land for*  
15. *the entire human race. People of different civilisations and faiths all expect*  
16. *the Olympics, and (people's) welcoming the Olympics reflects exactly (their)*  
17. *yearning for such pure harmony and peace. China earnestly and sincerely*  
18. *bid for the Olympic Games, and is carefully and diligently preparing for it.*  
19. *This has been acknowledged by the world. The Olympics have received*  
20. *extensive approval in the Chinese society, and the people are actively*  
21. *supporting and earnestly expecting the games. This is too an undeniable*  
22. *truth. If someone believes that the good will and ardent expectation of the*  
23. *Chinese people could be taken advantage of to play tricks and 'contaminate'*  
24. *the Beijing Olympics, unfortunately, (s/he) must have miscalculated. Some*  
25. *black clouds will not shield the sunshine, nor will several 'trouble-makers'*  
26. *obstruct the world's expectation of the Beijing Olympics. In the history, the*  
27. *Olympics had some problems, but the life continued and so did the*  
28. *Olympics. The Olympics were still a pageant for mankind with peace,*  
29. *friendship and unity. The world's blessings to the Beijing Olympics*  
30. *represent exactly (their) eternal prayer for harmony and peace for mankind.*

In order to promote national pride among the domestic audience, China is presented in the above media text not only as the host of the 2008 Olympics which the world supports, but more importantly as a contributor that can bring peace and harmony to the world. Being the host of the Olympics provides the Chinese government a good position to elaborate China's commitment and contribution to the world, and the newspaper constantly stresses that the Beijing Olympic Games is good for the world. The choice of words in Line 11-14, for example, 'pageant', 'family', 'celebration'

and 'spiritual pure land', reveals the author's deliberation of portraying the Olympics as something good that people would love and have no reasons to reject. Moreover, the way the author compares the Olympics to sunshine (Line 25) also suggests the importance of the Olympics to the world: the Olympics just like sunshine brings warmth and light which people rely on to live and thrive. Despite these special words that emphasise the 'good things' the Olympics can bring to people, the belief that the Olympics is good for the world is largely presupposed in the above text. The author positions the readers through presupposition as someone who has already acknowledged and agreed with what is being talked about. The merits of the Olympics have been to a large extent taken for granted, and such taken-for-grantedness can be sensed, for instance, in the word 'contaminate' (Line 23). For those who understand the word 'contaminate' know that only something that is originally clean and pure can be made dirty by exposure to or the addition of a polluting substance. The author's use of the word 'contaminate' is built on the assumption that all readers share the knowledge that the Olympics is a pure land that needs to be protected.

The above paragraph explains the multiple discursive techniques the author has employed to stress that the Olympics is good for the world, whether it is using special words or reinforcing the common-sense knowledge through presuppositions. Having compared the Olympics to a 'pageant', 'celebration', 'family' and 'pure land', the author seems to deliver such a logic that since the Olympics is good for humankind, people all over the world would like it. A picture of international support for the Beijing Olympics is also created through assuming a consensus that does not necessarily exist in reality. It is presupposed that there is extensive international support for the Olympics, and that people around the world are anticipating the coming of the Beijing Olympics. This tendency is evident in the sentences, for instance, 'people of different civilisations and faiths all expect the Olympics' (Line 15-16), '(people's) welcoming the Olympics reflects...' (Line 16), 'nor will several 'trouble-makers' obstruct the world's expectation of the Beijing Olympics' (Line 25-26) and 'the world's blessings to the Beijing Olympics...' (Line 29). In all these sentences, the world's expectation, welcome as well as blessings are all taken for granted as if these are the facts that undoubtedly exist in reality. Moreover, the use of 'all' and 'world's' suggests that everyone in the world is

expecting and blessing the Beijing Olympics. Such presupposition is important in the way it positions its readers, as explained by Fairclough (1995a: 107), ‘how a text positions you is very much a matter of the common-sense assumptions it attributes to you’. Attributing the ‘common-sense assumptions’ to the readers through presuppositions indicates the discursive power of the Chinese government to impose on people what they believe to be true, and such domination of imposing its own worldviews of the reality is also reflected in its intent to speak on behalf of human beings. Being the host of the Olympic Games in fact endows Beijing with a chance to speak to and for the world. The underlined phrases ‘the entire human race’, which appear three times in the text, uncover the ambition of the Chinese government to speak in the name of the entire human race and relate the Beijing Olympics to every individual in the world. Moreover, the author presents himself/herself as if s/he is a representative of the entire human race and knows very well their needs and expectations. As in the two sentences, ‘(people’s) welcoming the Olympics reflects exactly (their) yearning for such pure harmony and peace’ (Line 16-17) and ‘the world’s blessings to the Beijing Olympics represent exactly (their) eternal prayer for harmony and peace for mankind’ (Line 29-30), it appears that the author is able to read people’s mind regarding their perception of and motivations for the Beijing Olympics. The problem is however obvious, as one could ask what enables the author to represent people all over the world and make such an announcement, and how s/he comes to know that people’s welcoming the Beijing Olympics reflects their wishes for peace and harmony.

Even though it is true that people welcome and bless the Beijing Olympics, the author’s assertions are logically loose. People welcoming the Olympics is not necessarily a reflection of their yearning for pure harmony and peace, but possibly because of their sheer passion for sports. Likewise, people blessing the Beijing Olympics does not necessarily mean that people pray for world harmony and peace. In other words, the author’s assertions might be true to some extent, but there seems to be no absolute connection between people’s welcoming the Beijing Olympics and their wishes for harmony and peace; nor is there such a connection between people’s blessings to the Olympics and their eternal prayer for harmony and peace. What is really worth noting, as indicated in the use of the word ‘exactly’, is the deliberation of the author to squeeze the space for all other possible explanations and emphasise



that people's wishes for peace and harmony is the ultimate interpretation for explaining why people welcome and pray for the Beijing Olympics. By setting up this interpretation, the author seems to imply a sense of causality, that is, people around the world support the Beijing Olympics because they believe that it can bring peace and harmony. As I said earlier, different people might have different motivations for the Beijing Olympics, and the asserted fact in the official media discourse that people welcome the Beijing Olympics because of their wishes for peace and harmony is largely imagined. The author can not represent the whole world, however, the act of speaking in the name of the world's people and homogenising their motivations for the Beijing Olympics shows the government's discursive power of constructing an imagined world support for the Beijing Olympics.

What is behind the discursive manufacture of a prevailing international support for the Beijing Olympics is not only the purpose of showing the legitimation China has to host the Olympics, but more importantly, the purpose of elevating a sense of confidence and pride among the domestic audience. The underlying tone is that since people all over the world welcome the Beijing Olympics and believe that it can bring peace and harmony, China is on a mission for the sake of humanity, and that is something that Chinese people should feel confident about and be proud of. While depicting a prevalence of international support for the Beijing Olympics, the author has to admit that there may be some 'trouble-makers' that sabotage people's pursuit of the Beijing Olympics. However, the author tends to reassure people that China has confidence to conquer such problems, thanks to the extensive support from home and abroad. On the one hand, as one can find in Line 17-21, all the adverbs chosen, such as 'earnestly and sincerely bid', 'carefully and diligently prepare' and 'actively supporting and earnestly expecting', highlight the determination and commitment of the Chinese public to the Beijing Olympics. By doing this, it also implies that China, as a responsible and earnest organiser, deserves the world's respect and it is unethical to use the Olympics as a means to cause problem to China. The use of the perfect tense in 'this has been acknowledged by the world' (Line 19) and the adjective 'undeniable' in 'this is too an undeniable truth' (Line 21-22) stress that it is the reality that China has won the backing of the people from both home and abroad, and is confident to hold a successful Olympics. On the other hand, the

author stresses that there is little room for the ‘trouble-makers’ to ‘play tricks’, and by referring to the history of the Olympics (Line 26-28), s/he hints that the Olympics would be an inevitable success regardless of ‘trouble-makers’.

The author’s confidence that ‘trouble-makers’ can cause no harm to the Beijing Olympics is also identified in the strong-worded sentence ‘unfortunately, (s/he) must have miscalculated’ (Line 24). Regardless of this strong emotion, the author is in fact cautious with the representation of the ‘trouble-makers’ in the official discourse, in order not to contradict the image of prevailing international support the newspaper has created. First of all, ‘trouble-maker’ remains a vague and unspecified term. As in the sentence ‘if someone believes that...could be taken advantage of...(s/he) must have miscalculated’ (Line 22-24), the use of ‘someone’ obfuscates the subject who intends to ‘contaminate’ the Beijing Olympics. Furthermore, the metaphor that compares ‘trouble-makers’ to ‘black clouds’ (25-26) also helps obscure the real identities of the ‘trouble-makers’. Secondly, ‘trouble-makers’ are trivialised as those who are not worth mentioning, that is to say, the author makes them seem not that significant. In phrases like ‘some black clouds’ and ‘several trouble-makers’, the use of quantifiers ‘some’ and ‘several’ hints that they are just in small quantity, and they can not cause substantial problems. The trivialisation of the unjust ‘trouble-makers’ is even obvious when the unjust is weighted against the just, as in the sentence ‘some black clouds will not shield the sunshine, nor will several “trouble-makers” obstruct the world’s expectation of the Beijing Olympics’. The comparison enabled by the formulation ‘will not shield...nor will obstruct’ clearly suggests the weight of the ‘trouble-makers’ against the world’s support for the Olympics, and further stresses the inability of the ‘trouble-makers’ to threaten the Beijing Olympics.

Wood and Kroger (2000: 92) state that although it is difficult, considering what is not in the text is an important issue for discourse analysts. The official ideology of promoting confident nationalism and creating a harmonious relation with the rest of the world, particularly the West, is also evidenced by not mentioning the narrative of ‘Sick Man of East Asia’. This narrative, which is according to Wang (2012: 151) ‘closely related to sports and the Olympics in China’ and frequently mentioned and

widely shared in both official and popular discourse, was barely told in all the data collected from *The People's Daily*. The 'Sick Man of East Asia' is closely intertwined with the memory of 'the century of humiliation', and has long been understood as an insulting name imposed by imperialists to refer to the weakness of China and its people. According to Yang (2005), a British newspaper commentator originally used the term in 1896 to refer to the backward political system of the Qing Dynasty for its incapability of defending China from foreign invasions. Yang (Ibid) explains that in the West, the term 'sick man' was often used to describe those weakening countries, for instance, the Ottoman Empire in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century was called 'Sick Man of Europe', since it faced similar plights the Qing Dynasty had faced, like corruption and unwillingness to reform. However, in the context of foreign invasions since the 1840s and influenced by social Darwinism at the time, Chinese reformers frequently used the term 'Sick Man of East Asia' to urge Chinese people to improve their physiques and stressed that China was bullied mainly because Chinese people were weak. Therefore, in their opinion, only by strengthening the people's physiques as well as the country's 'body' could China keep itself from being humiliated. As Yang (Ibid) notes, the British newspaper commentator only used the term to criticise the corrupt political system of the Qing Dynasty and did not use the term to despise the physiques of Chinese people, however, in order to impose a sense of national crisis and stimulate people's nationalist awareness of saving the country, Chinese intellectuals intentionally distorted the meaning of the term, and as time went on, many Chinese people came to misunderstand that the term was a contemptuous label used by western imperialists to humiliate them.

Although the stigma of 'Sick Man of East Asia' is largely imagined and self-imposed, it always acts as a source of tension with the West in particular. Whenever confronting the West, the narrative of 'Sick Man of East Asia' along with the memories of 'the century of humiliation' can easily spark the victim mentality of the Chinese public. The sick-man narrative is frequently mentioned in the official Olympic propaganda in China, and as Wang (2012: 153) observes, stories like 'from "Sick Man of East Asia" to Sports Big Power' are often told to show the domestic audience the fundamental transformations China has made. As explained in the first section, from the one-man Olympics and the winning of the first gold medal to the

hosting of the Beijing Olympics, China's emergence as a sports powerhouse is considered as an indubitable indicator that China is becoming strong. Behind the narration of 'Sick Man of East Asia' is the strong aspiration shared by the Chinese government and most Chinese people of constructing a strong China, and by comparing China's achievements today with the weakness of old China, it also provides a chance for the CCP to stress its role in leading China to be a key player in the world.

The absence of the narrative of 'Sick Man of East Asia' in *The People's Daily* during the time of reporting the international torch relay reflects the concerns of the Chinese government to maintain a harmonious relation with the rest of the world. Being the host of the Olympics which is supposed to advocate peace and harmony, the Chinese government needs to play down the narrative of 'Sick Man of East Asia', for the narrative is so fundamental that it can instantly evoke people's memories of the past suffering and humiliation by western powers. The narrative is useful for the CCP to raise people's nationalist awareness and remind them of China's weakness in the past, however, to the world audience, overt reference to the narrative can easily make them link it to the 'China threat theory' and believe that China uses the opportunity of the Olympics to reclaim its long lost power and flex muscles in front of those who used to despise China. The Chinese government does not want to see that, because on the one hand, it contradicts its policy of peaceful development, which is used to reassure the world that China has no intention to dominate; on the other hand, it also contradicts the Olympic theme of peace and harmony. At the domestic level, the Chinese government promotes confident nationalism by encouraging its people to see its country not simply as a re-emerging power that is eager to reclaim its strength and 'wipe away' past humiliation, but more importantly, as a responsible and confident stakeholder willing to take part and contribute in world affairs. In the above paragraphs, the author has maintained a harmonious relation between the Beijing Olympics and the world in the official media discourse, and stressed that China can bring good to the world by hosting the Olympics, that China represents the will of the world's people for peace and harmony, and that the world is supporting and expecting the Beijing Olympics despite a small number of 'trouble-makers' who plot to interrupt the Beijing Olympics. All of these are intended to tell the domestic audience that the Beijing Olympics is not only popular

at home, but also around the world, and hosting the Olympic Games is a great opportunity for China to consolidate its status on the world stage.

#### **4.5 The Journey of Harmony: the Official Representations of the Torch Relay in Paris**

As I have explained in the last section, the official media promotes national pride by emphasising that the Beijing Olympics is good for the world and by assuming that the whole world supports it. The Chinese government also envisions an expectant international audience and their positive attitudes to the Beijing Olympics. If the previous section provides some insights into how the Chinese government had wished the world to treat the torch relay before it started, the following section explains how it represented in the official media the processes of the international torch relay and the world's responses to it when the torch relay was under way. During the time of the international torch relay, *The People's Daily* covered the news about the torch relay events on page 12 under the section called 'Sports News'. For each leg of the international torch relay, the newspaper normally published one or two articles specifically describing the torch relay - what happened during the torch relay event. As the central party newspaper, it is under the direct supervision of the CCP and reflects its ideologies, policies and positions. As a result of this, journalists working for *The People's Daily* have little autonomy to practice journalistic professionalism, but have to carry propaganda duties and follow a series of institutional rules for guiding public opinion.

Although reports covering each leg of the international torch relay were written by different journalists, it is not surprising to discover that all the reports in fact stuck to certain rules of writing. A typical template for reporting the torch relay event often includes the following aspects: firstly, descriptions of the launching ceremony of the torch relay and celebration of the local audience, in order to show the hospitality of the receiving city and the excitement of the locals when seeing the arrival of the Olympic torch; secondly, interviews with some of the local audience and their expressions of honour as being part of the torch relay and best wishes to the Beijing Olympics; thirdly, descriptions of the torchbearers, in particular the first and last ones, in order to show the audience that the torch relay was smooth and completed;

and lastly, accusing the ‘several’ ‘trouble-makers’ of violating the Olympic ideals of peace and harmony (this aspect was not mentioned in every report, but became common when the Beijing Olympics torch relay started to encounter significant protests in countries like UK, France, USA and Australia).

The Paris leg of the torch relay provides a typical example to investigate how the CCP endeavoured to retain China’s national pride of hosting the Olympics in the official media discourse when the international torch relay received serious challenges. The official media also had to deal with the discrepancy between an expected ‘journey of harmony’ and an actual journey that was not harmonious. These dilemmas are reflected and featured in the official representations of the torch relay in Paris, and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

On 9<sup>th</sup> April 2008, *The People’s Daily* published a report on the torch relay in Paris entitled ‘On 7<sup>th</sup> of April, the Olympic Sacred Flame Completed Its Fifth Leg of the International Relay in Paris – Delivering Dream in Coubertin’s Hometown’ (Article 1). The whole article reflects the official ideology of promoting pride and harmony, and starts with a description of Paris:

*The River Seine, the Eiffel Tower, the Triumphal Arch, the Avenue des Champs-Elysees, the Place de la Concorde, the Louvre Museum and the Notre Dame de Paris..... This long list of attractive ‘classics’ constitutes the romance of Paris. On 7<sup>th</sup> of April, when the Beijing Olympic torch arrived here, it was already spring in Paris with willows sprouting to flourish and flowers bursting into bloom.*

Quite often, a typical report covering the international torch relay event begins with a snapshot of the receiving city of the torch relay, and from the above excerpt, one can realise that the report on the Paris leg is not an exception. The author projects an attractive image of Paris, and the famous architectures mentioned in the beginning are known to and regarded by many Chinese as the symbols defining Parisian romance. Mentioning these landmarks not only shows the specialness of the torch

relay in Paris, but also seems to suggest the privilege of the Beijing Olympics to be received by such a classic and romantic city. The privilege can also be sensed, as stressed in the title 'in Coubertin's Hometown'. Pierre de Coubertin was a founder of the International Olympic Committee and considered as the father of the modern Olympic Games, therefore, being able to hold the Olympic torch relay in Paris is of great honour and pride.

The description of sprouting trees and blooming flowers in the latter part of the excerpt is a habitual technique in the CCP's propaganda, which is used to generate a festive atmosphere. Moreover, the word 'spring' means more than just a warm and lively season in Chinese literature, and it is often used as a synonym of 'hope' or 'vitality'. As a result of this, the undertone the excerpt attempts to convey is that it is an ideal place and time for the torch relay to be completed successfully. Interestingly, although good weather always makes it easier for the CCP's official media to produce an auspicious and harmonious atmosphere, bad weather sometimes also has a dramatic function. On 8<sup>th</sup> April, for example, when the newspaper reported the launching ceremony of the torch relay at the Wembley Stadium in London, it writes:

*April in London should have already been a warm spring time with blooming flowers, but goose-feather-like snow started to fall in the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> (April) [...] Regardless of cold wind and heavy snow, the passion of the audience on the scene is extremely high.*

The author gives prominence to the popularity of the Beijing Olympics by contrasting it with the bad weather conditions, suggesting that local people's passion for the torch relay was not by any means dampened. From this perspective, describing the local weather has a special function in the overall representation of the international torch relay, that is to say, beautiful weather is considered as a good omen for the success of the torch relay, and bad weather is normally used to contrast with the excitement of the local people. Although the descriptions of the romantic symbols of Paris as well as the mild weather could contribute to building a promising image of the torch relay, the representations of celebrations and cheers of local people at the scene, which are common in the official news reports of other legs of

the torch relay and are key to the discursive construction of a 'journey of harmony', are largely missing in the report of the Paris leg. Below are some of the examples explaining how the official media represented the reactions of local people upon the arrival of the Olympic torch:

*In Alma-Ata: 'Alma-Ata is full of festal feelings, local people wearing festive costumes are heading to various locations to see the torch relay'; 'audience wave to the journalists with the five-ring flags in their hands, and Chinese greetings such as "hello, Beijing" can be heard from time to time'. (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2008)*

*In Istanbul: 'banners of the Beijing Olympics and the torch relay are hung everywhere'; 'the starting point of the torch relay has accumulated thousands of viewers, and many of them even make a special trip to see the historic moment of the Beijing Olympic torch to be lit in Istanbul'. (5<sup>th</sup> April 2008)*

*In London: 'when the torch arrives at the Trafalgar Square, there are many people, too. The performance by a heavy metal band is extraordinary, and people are warmly welcoming the arrival of the Olympic torch'; 'people are waving both British and Chinese national flags in their hands, and blue blooms for celebrating the Olympic torch relay are flying into the sky'. (7<sup>th</sup> April 2008)*

As one of the most crucial discursive constituents forming a 'journey of harmony' in the official media discourse, the general omission of the welcoming crowd in Paris is unusual. Even for the London leg of the torch relay, which was later confirmed chaotic, especially in Trafalgar Square, the newspaper, as showed above, still tried to present a harmonious and supportive theme. Suspiciously, the omission of similar descriptions in the news report of the Paris leg to some extent insinuates that the torch relay was not as harmonious as expected.

Since the Beijing Olympics is widely considered as an epitome of national pride in China, how the world receives the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympics



is closely connected to the nationalist feelings of many Chinese. Due to this, the way the receiving city treated the Olympic torch relay was extremely important to Chinese nationalists, and they saw the quality of the reception as a criterion for gauging if the receiving country was friendly to China. In reporting the torch relay events prior to the Paris leg, the newspaper showed the high-class receptions, for example, in Alma-Ata, the President of Kazakhstan not only attended the launching ceremony of the torch relay, but also officially started the relay as the first torchbearer; and in London, Princess Anne attended the celebration ceremony after the torch relay and gave a speech. To show the readers the consistency of high standards of reception in Paris, the author first of all emphasises the location of the launching ceremony, which was on the second floor of the Eiffel Tower. Then, s/he mentions again all the landmarks shortlisted in the beginning of the report and confirms that all of them (which the author calls ‘the essence of Paris’) were included in the torch relay route in Paris. By clarifying all of these, the author tends to show the elaboration of the Paris authorities in designing the torch relay route and their hospitality for welcoming the Beijing Olympics.

While the author puts some significant emphasis on the elaborate design of the torch relay route, the representation of the torch relay itself, namely, how it was carried out has been reduced to a minimum level. The article only gives limited information about the starting and finishing moments:

For the first torchbearer (a French 400-metre-hurdles champion): *he ran downstairs from the Eiffel Tower with the ‘xiangyun’ torch, and started the torch relay;*

For the last torchbearer (not even specify who the torchbearer was): *after passing through all the ‘essence of Paris’, at about 17:35 local time, the torchbearer arrived at the finishing point of the Paris leg – the Charlety Stadium, and the whole journey was 28 kilometres.*

The above descriptions of the torch relay are fairly objective. However, in comparison with the official reports covering other legs of the torch relay and given the nature of the newspaper, the above descriptions are rather unusual in terms of propaganda and emotional investment. Comparatively, when the newspaper covered the London leg of the torch relay, it wrote:

*At 10:30, the torch relay officially started. When the former British athlete Sir Redgrave, who won five Olympic gold medals, held up the torch and started running as the first torchbearer, the Wembley Stadium was seething at once.*

*At around 6:00pm, when Miss Holmes ran into the O2 Arena with the 'xiangyun' torch, colourful streamers were swirling in the air and cheers were as loud as thunders.*

The figurative expressions as underlined in the above text indicate the passion of the crowds and create a massive welcoming scene. However, the lack of these similar descriptions of the crowds makes the report of the Paris leg rather distinctive from all other articles covering the international torch relay. Reactions of the local audience before and during the Paris leg of the torch relay as well as by the time the torch relay approached to its end are barely shown in the article. Exceptionally, one description of the local audience goes to the Chinese study-abroad students who were watching the torch relay in Paris:

*Among crowds of people, many (Chinese) study-abroad students were constantly holding high and waving the five-star red flag, and this was a deterrent to the unceasing noises at the scene.*

The above sentence, which demonstrates the patriotic behaviours of the Chinese study-abroad students, nonetheless, to some extent explains why the author has given little information about the celebrations and welcomes of the local audience. The adjective 'unceasing' indicates the scale of the noises, and the word 'deterrent' suggests a potential tension between Chinese study-abroad students and those who

made the ‘noises’, although the author does not clarify whether such potential tension led to substantial confrontations. The reporting of the Paris leg is different in the sense that it sheds little light on the positive interactions between the local audience and the torch relay, instead, it gives some emphasis to the noises that challenged the supposedly harmonious image of the torch journey. On 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008, *The People’s Daily* even published a detailed article regarding the ‘noises’, entitled ‘Tibetan Separatist Forces Disrupting the Olympic Torch Relay in Paris Were Fiercely Condemned’ (Article 2).

*The sacred flame of the Beijing Olympics was disrupted by a small number of Tibetan separatists during the torch relay in Paris, and local police made prompt measures to stop them. With the warm welcome of the French public, the Beijing Olympics securely finished its torch relay in Paris.*

The above paragraph makes it clear who the noisemakers were – the Tibetan separatists. Nevertheless, it emphasises that the Tibetan separatists were in small quantity (‘a small number of’) and they did not pose a significant threat to the overall torch relay since the torch relay was ‘securely finished’. The author continues to marginalise the unpopular Tibetan separatists by contrasting their disrupting behaviours with the warm welcome of the French public to the Olympic torch (‘with the warm welcome of the French public’), though s/he did not present any further information regarding how warmly the French public welcomed the Olympic torch. To reinforce the Tibetan separatists as the troublemakers, the author provides a detailed description of the disrupting scenes:

*When the second torchbearer received the torch and prepared to enter a tunnel, the torchbearer was blocked by a small number of Tibetan separatists, which caused delays in the progress of the torch relay. When the torch relay proceeded to the thirteenth torchbearer, Tibetan separatists tried to grab the torch from the torchbearer. All these behaviours were stopped immediately by the police. According to the police, at least five torch disturbers were arrested.*

The choice of words such as ‘disturber’ and ‘were arrested’ again labels the Tibetan separatists as ‘bad guys’. Although the torch relay was disrupted, the author still attempts to maintain a peaceful image of the torch relay by repeating that those disturbers were in small number and they were finally stopped and arrested. However, as underlined, the phrase ‘at least’ seems to contradict the author’s repetitive emphasis that pro-Tibet protestors were in ‘a small number’, and makes people suspect that the actual number of ‘disturbers’ might not be as small as the author claims.

Furthermore, instead of saying that ‘China or Chinese people condemn such disruptive behaviours’, the article uses the voices of the French public to criticise the protestors, in order to show that the French people are on China’s side, for instance:

*A French lady who was watching the torch relay with her four-year-old daughter spoke to the journalist ‘the torch relay should have been a celebratory event, but the appearance of those people destroyed the harmonious atmosphere, and their behaviours only shamed themselves’.*

By referring to the French lady, the author intends to establish the fact that the French public was actually eager to see the torch relay in Paris, but unfortunately, some Tibetan protestors interrupted it. However, quoting the words of the French lady in fact undermines the harmonious image the official newspaper endeavours to create, because her words ‘should have been a celebratory event’ indicates that the torch relay was in fact not celebratory; and ‘destroyed the harmonious atmosphere’ also makes it clear that the Tibetan protestors actually caused some substantial chaos to the torch relay.

Putting together the two articles covering the Paris leg of the torch relay in *The People’s Daily* reveals some interesting findings. Condemning the interruptive behaviours to the torch relay in one article while in the meantime, publicising a relatively peaceful and harmonious image of the torch relay in the other, clearly

discloses the struggle of the official media to represent the torch relay in Paris. Contradictions and inconsistencies existed within and between the articles undermine the credibility of the reports. Although the newspaper briefly mentions that the French public warmly welcomed the torch relay (in Article 2), the reactions of the local public to the torch relay are barely represented. It appears even stranger when compared with the official reports on other legs of the international torch relay where scenes of welcomes and celebrations are represented with detailed accounts, and the absence of such representations only leads people to think if the Paris leg of the torch relay was as harmonious as the official newspaper claimed. Moreover, the newspaper also has the problem of quantifying the scale of the protest. On the one hand, it repetitively emphasises that the Tibetan protestors were small in number and they made no harm to the torch relay; on the other hand, it leaks some clues which suggest the contrary.

Interesting to observe, the official newspaper admits that there were ‘unceasing noises’ during the Paris leg of the torch relay, but it tends to ascribe all the noises to the ‘small number of Tibetan separatists’ and it does not specify if there were people other than Tibetan separatists making the noises. Despite of the disruptions, Paris is in general maintained in the official media discourse as a hospitable and responsible city for hosting the torch relay event. The newspaper highlights the elaborate design of the torch relay route in Paris, the prompt measures the French police took to prevent protestors from disturbing the torch relay and the condemnation of a local French lady to the ‘disturbers’, and by doing this, it retains, through linguistic manipulation, a mainstream of favourable public opinion in France supporting the Beijing Olympics. On the other hand, Tibetan separatists are presented as isolated and marginalised protestors that were condemned by the French locals and arrested by the police.

However, the constructed reality of mainstream support in France for the Beijing Olympics is not true. What is worth taking into consideration but by no means referred to in both articles is that approximately two weeks prior to the torch relay in Paris, the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy threatened to boycott the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic in protest at the way China dealt with the unrest in

Tibet since 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008. Sarkozy's call for a boycott made him the first leader in the world to publicly challenge the Beijing Olympics due to human rights issues in Tibet. The Chinese government sees Tibet as an integral part of its territory and regards any criticism of its Tibet policies as intervention in China's domestic affairs, and undoubtedly, Sarkozy's announcement soon stirred up nationalist fervour in the Chinese society. The fact is that there had already been some tension between China and France before the torch relay took place in Paris, however, the efforts of the official newspaper to obfuscate the real tension and selectively present a supportive image of France reflect the concern of the Chinese government to cool down the already hot domestic nationalism, for it knows well that if a real chaotic image of the Paris leg was shown, Chinese national pride would be hurt and anger compounded with the previous tension could push popular nationalism against France to a new height. Moreover, as the host of the Beijing Olympics which advocated peace and harmony, Beijing had to keep popular nationalism in check, in order not to impair its image as a peaceful and responsible international stakeholder. As the Chinese government promised its people that a glorious Olympics could showcase China's pride and win international recognition, telling the domestic audience the facts about the chaos of the Paris leg would make them doubt if the CCP has the capability of bringing pride and honour to China, and as a result, may endanger its credibility and legitimacy.

#### **4.6 National Pride under Threat: the Online Representations of a Chaotic Torch Relay in Paris**

In the last section, I explained the attempts of the official newspaper to create a harmonious picture of the Olympic torch relay in Paris through manipulation of language, although various in-text contradictions and inconsistencies undermined the validity of the constructed realities. To a significant extent, the official representation of the torch relay in Paris is consistent with what the Chinese government wishes the international torch relay to be – it was a popular event and was welcomed and supported by the French public. The official media admits 'small-scale' interruptions by Tibetan separatists, and the protestors are depicted as 'bad guys' that disturbed the French public who wanted to enjoy the celebrative moments of the torch relay.

All the representational manoeuvres showed the CCP's endeavours to promote confident nationalism and carefully maintain national pride in the official media discourse, in order to show that the Beijing Olympics was not only dreamed by Chinese people but also by people all over the world. However, unlike the old days when the CCP used the state-controlled mass media to achieve ideological hegemony by providing individuals with the official worldviews and interpretation of reality (Giese 2004: 21), the advent of the internet, though it still remains rigorously controlled in China, challenges the official monopoly of information and creates some opportunities for ordinary people to know alternative views and realities. On 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008, several hours after the torch relay was completed in Paris, a forum user (whom I call Forum User A) published a long thread elucidating his/her personal experiences of the torch relay in Paris, and in the thread, s/he disclosed that s/he was a study-abroad student in France. Radically different from a harmonious event as depicted in *The People's Daily*, the torch relay in Paris from his/her perspective was an event of disappointment, anger and confrontations, where Chinese national pride was threatened. In fact, this particular thread was not the only article on the forum that challenged the official representation of the torch relay. During the time of data collection, I found other threads which provided different realities about the Paris leg of the torch relay, and more threads of this kind appeared several days after the torch relay was completed in Paris. However, what makes this particular thread worth investigating is first of all, the timing - it was one of the earliest articles that attempted to tell people what really happened in Paris; secondly, the popularity - it was the most popular and most replied thread that talked about the torch relay in Paris; thirdly, originality - the story was told based on Forum User A's own experiences as a witness of the torch relay; fourthly, the content - the forum user provided a detailed account of the Paris leg of the torch relay, which enabled me to systematically investigate and compare the different discursive approaches employed by the official and online popular nationalist players to represent the torch relay in Paris. The thread entitled 'Paris of 7<sup>th</sup> April, I Want to Narrate the Day as Calmly as I Can' attracted considerable forum users to express their support to the poster. In Chinese online forums as popular as *Tianya*, new threads appear very quickly, and old ones can be easily buried. To stand out among pages of threads and remain on the front page, a popular thread needs appealing content as well as a sensational title. The title the author adopted stimulates the curiosity of peer users, making people

want to know what really happened in Paris on 7<sup>th</sup> April and what caused the author to feel indignant but s/he still had to remain calm.

In the context of the French President Sarkozy's call for boycotting the Beijing Olympics due to human rights issues in Tibet, *The People's Daily* backgrounds the tension between both countries in the official news report relating to the torch relay in Paris, and tends to show the readers the support of the French public for the Beijing Olympics, as if Sarkozy's boycott did not cause negative effects to the Olympic torch relay. Before the political tension with the Chinese government over the Tibet issues, France in general maintained a good reputation in China. Many Chinese people admired France for its romance, modern technologies, literature and arts, and 'Frenchness' symbolises elegance and class in China. Politically, in the official media, France was constantly publicised as an old friend – while most western countries were sceptical and hostile to the newly founded the People's Republic of China, France was the first western country that recognised the PRC. For the author who studied in France, s/he admitted in the beginning of the article that s/he used to love France very much, and believed that France was a friendly country to China, nonetheless, because of the torch relay experiences, 'all has been changed'. What made Forum User A publish the article as s/he disclosed in the thread was that:

*After I came back home and watched the news report on CCTV4, I felt it was necessary to write something based on what I had seen and heard. Chinese people are too kind, and France continuously enjoys a very good and positive publicity in China. However, how did they treat our country?*

CCTV standing for China Central Television is the largest state-owned television broadcaster in China, and CCTV4 is one of its channels targeting Chinese living overseas and in Greater China regions, including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The forum user does not directly negate the CCTV4's report of the Paris leg of the torch relay, however, by saying that 'I felt it was necessary to write something' after watching the CCTV4 news, s/he suggests that it was the CCTV4's news of the torch relay in Paris that caused him/her to write something. Furthermore, by saying that, it also reflects the author's desire of adding some extra information and implies that the



official media did not provide a full picture of what really happened during the torch relay. To reassure the readers that the story s/he tells is real, s/he stresses ‘based on what I had seen and heard’, emphasising his/her position as someone who personally experienced the event. Using the word ‘continuously’, the author in fact covertly expresses his/her disappointment and criticism towards the official media for its being ‘too kind’ to present and maintain a positive image of France among the Chinese audience, regardless of the way France treated China. It can be understood from the above text that the key motivation that compelled the forum user to publish the article was his/her attempt to de-romanticise France by exposing, based on his/her personal experiences, a real image of France which was unknown to many Chinese people and untold in the official media, and urging them to stop being too kind to France, as it did not treat China in the same kind manner as China did to France.

What makes this particular online thread so relevant to the investigation is that it provides some perspectives, which enable me to make some interesting comparisons between the official and online popular representations of the torch relay, and therefore, give some insights with respect to how a same story could be represented differently and how such differences in representations can affect people’s awareness of national pride relating to the torch relay. The following is a paragraph excerpted from the original thread posted by Forum User A:

*Three Tibetan separatists (French) attempted to snatch the torch (from the torchbearer) [...] When the Tibetan separatists were trying to snatch the torch, I heard a conversation between a French mother and her daughter, which let me know how French people had been brainwashed from childhood. The young girl was five to six years old, and when she saw some people go to snatch the torch, she asked her mother: ‘mum, why do they do that?’ The mother answered ‘because Chinese people used violence to occupy their country for fifty years, and they want to use this opportunity to express that Tibetans need freedom’. I believe that the mother did not have any malice, because she received education from childhood like this, she just gave ‘what she knows’ to her daughter.*

What comes to my attention first of all is the title used to address the protestors. The term ‘Tibetan separatists’ (*zangdu fenzi*), which is the same as used in the official media discourse, gives the first impression that these people are Tibetans, who seek to separate Tibet from the Chinese territory. However, the word ‘French’ as emphasised in brackets shows the author’s elaboration of the definition that ‘Tibetan separatists’ do not necessarily need to be Tibetans, but generally refer to those who are in support of the separation of Tibet from China. The use of the term ‘Tibetan separatists’ instead of ‘Tibetan independence campaigners’ for instance, is ideological and clearly suggests the users’ political stance, since ‘separation’ and ‘independence’ evoke different meanings. For ‘separation’, it refers to the removal of one constituent from an integrity, which normally implies a negative connotation; while for the latter, it means the acquisition of freedom from outside control, which is quite often positive in meaning. Using the same term as the official media to address the protestors shows Forum User A’s basic identification with the official position and attitude towards the Tibet problem. However, by specifying that the Tibetan separatists who attempted to snatch the torch from the torchbearers were actually French, it undermines the efforts of the official media to maintain a friendly and supportive image of the French public. As I mentioned earlier, in the official media discourse, the protestors were all addressed as ‘Tibetan separatists’, and ‘Tibetan separatist’ was the only identity information revealed about the protestors. A ‘Tibetan separatist’ (*zangdu fenzi*) is understood by many Chinese readers as a member of the Tibetan ethnic group who seeks to separate Tibet from China, and using ‘Tibetan separatists’ in fact helped the official media to lead the audience to believe that the ‘small number’ of protestors were Tibetans, and at the same time maintain that those protestors had nothing to do with French people. However, the eyewitness account provided by the online forum user challenges the official claims about the identities of the protestors, and the forum user continues to confirm in the subsequent part of the thread that:

*‘All the Tibetan separatists (we) encountered today, 99% of them were French, and real Tibetans were indeed very few’*

The use of percentage in the above sentence has little to do with statistical accuracy, and its function is rather sensational. In lieu of saying ‘most of them were French’, ‘99% of them were French’ is not only more eye-catching, but more importantly, helps the author to emphasise, with strong emotion, the fact that the overwhelming majority in support of Tibetan separation during the Paris leg of the torch relay was French.

Referring back to the last section, *The People’s Daily* quoted the words of a French lady who was watching the torch relay with her little daughter, in order to show her support for the Beijing Olympics and condemnation of the Tibetan separatists who ‘destroyed the harmonious atmosphere’. Interestingly but ironically, the online thread also pays attention to a French lady with her little girl at the scene, and provides a totally different image of the reality. The conversation between the French mother and her little daughter also undermines the generally supportive attitudes of the French public to the Beijing Olympics as constructed in the official media. Far from being a respectable world player who is supposed to bring peace and harmony to the world as publicised in the official media discourse, in the answer the French mother gave to her daughter, China was described as a ‘bad guy’ who used violence to conquer the Tibetans, while the protestors were empathised with and their interruptions to the torch relay were considered legitimate. Different from the official media where a range of institutional rules restricts the publication of articles and political consequences have to be taken into account, in the online forum, it is relatively easier for people to express different ideas. The words of the French mother in the online thread are next to impossible to be shown in the official media, primarily because it touches sensitive topic the CCP tries to avoid and tarnishes the image of the CCP. However, as I said earlier, in order to attract audience attention, a ‘successful’ thread needs a curiosity-stimulating title as well as sensational content. Quoting the words of the French lady has great potential to provoke nationalist backlash among the audience, as she challenges the bottom line of most Chinese nationalists, that is, she criticised Chinese people for using violence to occupy Tibet, called Tibet a country and saw the torch relay as an opportunity for protestors to express support for Tibetan separation. In the eyes of Chinese nationalists, including Forum User A himself/herself, who regard Tibet as part of China and the Olympics as an epitome of China’s glory, the words of the French mother are unacceptable. It

is clear to feel the forum user's strong disagreement with the view of the French mother, and this is first of all manifested by the use of inverted commas as in 'what she knows'. In Chinese language, the inverted commas are used not only for quotations, but also for expressing sarcasm and rejection. Therefore, by using the inverted commas, the forum user suggests that what she knew and told to her daughter was wrong. The forum user does not tend to blame the French mother for the 'wrong' answer, as s/he believed that the mother was innocent and was actually 'brainwashed' by the French government. However, by giving the example of a conversation between the French mother and her little daughter, Forum User A wants to show how French people have been taught from childhood about China, implying that the country that China treats as an old friend is inherently unfriendly to China.

Forum User A continues to provide alternative information which is sharply in contrast with the official representation of the torch relay in Paris. S/he recalled what s/he had experienced along the torch relay route at various locations, and wrote that:

*1. All the way down to the next point, there were compatriots continuously joining us, and as long as Chinese people saw us, they joined us. We were sending over the national flags (to them) while we were marching forward. We walked along the River Seine, and when people on the bridge saw us, they treated us with hisses and slogans that supported Tibetan separation. From time to time, there were people walking towards us holding signs that opposed the Olympics and supported the Tibetan separation. We responded them by shouting 'Go, Beijing! Go, Beijing!'*

*2. When (we) arrived at the city council, (I) found many national flags flying in the wind. I felt very excited. We immediately ran into the big group of Chinese people there, singing the national anthem together and shouting out 'Go, Beijing', which reverberated in the whole city council square. I felt my blood was boiling. There were many French idiots around us shouting 'Free Tibet' and 'Beijing, The Killer', but they were soon overwhelmed by our national anthem and 'Go, Beijing' slogan. An old man near me constantly asked me why I came to France and why not fuck off*

*and go back to China, and I just regarded him as a psychotic and shouted at him 'China, China.'*

*3. Then we arrived at the finishing point - the Charlety Stadium. There, we had face-to-face confrontations with the Tibetan separatists. At the beginning, we had more people, and when they started to shout out slogans, they were suppressed by our outcries. Later, they had more and more people, and had two small confrontations with us. They beat us with a very long pole with a flag of Tibetan independence on top of it, but we seized the flag and stamped on it. At that moment, the Olympic vehicle came, and it halted in front of us for quite a while. We sang the national anthem incessantly, and the Chinese officials in the vehicle waved to us and put their thumbs up. The scene was really touching, and when we were surrounded by enemies, it was great to see people from our motherland.*

*4. At around six, it started to hail, and the Olympic torch was loaded back to the vehicle and left. We decided to leave altogether, but at that moment, Tibetan separatists rushed towards us and beat us. We restrained ourselves not to fight back but called the police. The police blocked them and let us leave. When we were leaving, we heard unceasing shouts of 'Free Tibet' and 'Beijing, The Killer' behind us. We gritted our teeth, as we were in their place, we had to quit.*

The finishing point of the torch relay – the Charlety Stadium - was covered in both media. *The People's Daily* only very briefly mentioned it, however, paragraph 3 probably gives some ideas regarding why the official newspaper did not give detailed coverage about what happened at the finishing point of the Paris leg, while it often did in its news reports of other legs of the torch relay. Overall, the above paragraphs have already released some clues that explain why the official newspaper provided little information about the reactions of the local public to the Olympic torch relay. The official newspaper asserted that the torch relay in Paris received a 'warm welcome', however, from Forum User A's observations and experiences as showed in the above paragraphs, the reality was just the opposite.

Unlike *The People's Daily* which attempted to show that those protestors were 'bad guys' who lacked support and were condemned, the above paragraphs indicate that the protestors in reality were not isolated; rather, they received continuous and considerable support, for instance, the phrase 'from time to time' as in paragraph 1 'from time to time, there were people walking towards us holding signs that opposed the Olympics and supported the Tibetan separation', and the phrase 'more and more' as in paragraph 3 'they had more and more people'.

What Forum User A intends to tell is that the French public showed little support for the Beijing Olympics, and they were even hostile and rude to the Chinese audience who were watching and welcoming the torch relay at the scene. With a strong emotional tone, Forum User A tells the readers how Chinese people suffered and were humiliated in Paris, for example, in paragraph 1, 'they treated us with hisses and slogans that supported Tibetan separation'; in paragraph 2, many French in the city council square shouted out slogans like 'Free Tibet' and 'Beijing, the Killer' in response to the Beijing Olympic torch relay; and in paragraph 3 and 4, the French protestors beat Chinese people who supported the Beijing Olympics. Far from being a peaceful event as propagandised in the official media discourse, according to Forum User A's personal account, the Paris leg of the torch relay was taken advantage of by the French protestors as an opportunity to oppose China over the Tibet policies. In *The People's Daily*, the patriotic behaviours of Chinese study-abroad students during the torch relay in Paris were mentioned and praised as the 'deterrent to the unceasing noises at the scene', though it did not clarify if the potential tension between Chinese people and those who made the noises led to substantial confrontations. The above four paragraphs not only make it clear who in fact made the 'unceasing noises' (French pro-Tibet independence protestors) and what were the noises about (hisses and shouts of slogans 'Free Tibet' and 'Beijing, the Killer'), but also reveal that Chinese people had confrontations both verbally and physically with the French protestors. It is interesting to find out that when talking about confrontations with the French protestors, Forum User A legitimises their actions by emphasising that the French protestors were the offenders who stirred up the confrontations in the first place, and Forum User A and his/her colleagues were the defenders who took actions in order to protect their own interests. This is evident in the way Forum User A organises the clauses, for

example, in paragraph 2, s/he recounts a verbal confrontation between himself/herself and a French old man: ‘an old man near me constantly asked me why I came to France and why not fuck off and go back to China, and I just regarded him as a psychotic and shouted at him ‘China, China’. The forum user highlights the cause-and-reaction sequence by putting what the old French man did in the first clause - it was the French old man who constantly asked insulting questions that caused the forum user to respond. The same sentence organisation is also evident in paragraph 3 when s/he describes the physical confrontation with the French protestors - it was again the French protestors who attempted to beat Chinese people with a pole in the first place. This form of sentence structure not only makes it explicit the sequence of actions regarding who offended and who suffered, but also highlights the aggressive and hostile image of the French protestors.

While Forum User A is telling the peer readers about how French protestors opposed and humiliated the Beijing Olympics, s/he is also showing the solidarity of Chinese people in Paris to defend China’s national pride. In paragraph 1, sentences such as ‘compatriots continuously joining us’ and ‘as long as Chinese people saw us, they joined us’ indicate that what Forum User A and his/her colleagues did received extensive and continuous support from other Chinese people. The phrase ‘as long as’ also emanates a sense of automatic identification, implying that supporting and protecting the Beijing Olympics was a shared mission of all Chinese living overseas. The solidarity of Chinese people is also manifest in the ‘we-ness’ and ‘togetherness’ constructed by Forum User A in the above paragraphs – ‘we’ marching forward together, ‘we’ waving national flag together, ‘we’ singing national anthems together, ‘we’ crying out supporting slogans together and ‘we’ facing the confrontations together. The mightiness of the ‘we-ness’ is stressed in some of the sentences, for instance, ‘reverberated in the whole city council square’ (paragraph 2), ‘they were soon overwhelmed by our national anthem’ (paragraph 2) and ‘they were suppressed by our outcries’ (paragraph 3). The words underlined on the one hand display the strong determination and passion of Chinese people in Paris to defend national honour; on the other hand, the chosen words such as ‘overwhelmed’ and ‘suppressed’ also suggest a sense of victory, that is to say, ‘we’ conquered the ‘noises’ against ‘us’.

As one may notice, the tone of the online thread is apparently nationalistic. Forum User A intends to increase people's nationalist awareness by telling other peer users that France is inherently hostile to China and wants to use the opportunity of the Beijing Olympics to shame China. Forum User A's nationalist identity can be seen in his/her attitudes towards the French protestors. Rather than seeing the protestors as those who had a different political view, s/her regards them as 'idiots', 'psychotic' (paragraph 2) and 'enemies' (paragraph 3). These sensational words not only mirror the forum user's inner anger, but more importantly, especially the word 'enemies', signal a clearly nationalist message that 'we are under threat and we have to fight a 'battle'. Although the unity and determination of Chinese people in Paris to protect China's national pride have been shown, the lack of support in Paris and demand for more domestic backing can also be sensed in Forum User A's words. In paragraph 2, as in the sentence 'we immediately ran into the big group of Chinese people there', the word 'immediately' on the one hand shows the author's excitement of finding an assembly of compatriots which s/he and his/her colleagues could join; on the other hand, it also unfolds the eagerness of the forum user and his/her colleagues to seek support and strength. In paragraph 3, s/he also describes the responses of the Chinese Olympic officials to the supporters ('waved to us' and 'put their thumbs up') and says 'when we were surrounded by enemies, it was great to see people from our motherland'. The mention of the responses of the Chinese officials is not just to show the official approval to what the forum user and his/her colleagues did, more significantly, to show a message of encouragement and support at the very critical moment ('surrounded by enemies') that irrespective of all frustrations and suffering - being treated with hisses, humiliation and violence - at least the motherland stands with 'us'. Unlike the official newspaper which intentionally backgrounded the massive protests against the Beijing Olympics in Paris in order to maintain a supportive and harmonious image of the torch relay, the online thread on the contrary highlights the tension and chaos, and Forum User A has to admit that support from the French public was actually rare:

*Friendly French was not non-existent, and I met one. When he saw me walk by his car, he stretched out his head from the window and said*



*'Beijing!'. I responded 'Long live, France!' He replied 'Thank you!'.  
However, people of this kind were too rare, really too rare.*

Forum User A does not lean to say that everyone in France was hostile to China, nevertheless, by emphasising that 'people of this kind were too rare, really too rare', s/he expresses disappointment and hints that the opposition that the Beijing Olympic torch relay received was enormous. The sense of disappointment, helplessness and suffering is particularly evident in paragraph 4. When Forum User A and his/her colleagues were to leave and heard unceasing shouts against the Beijing Olympics and for the Tibetan separation by the French protestors behind them, they could do nothing but 'gritted our teeth' and 'had to quit'. This clearly unveils their unwillingness to quit, but they had to as 'we were in their place'. Even though Forum User A shows some victory over the French protestors (e.g. 'they were soon overwhelmed by our national anthem'), the image presented in paragraph 4 gives readers some feelings of 'mission failed'. Moreover, the image could be in fact rather humiliating for Chinese nationalists. It shows that Chinese compatriots suffered humiliation and somehow 'lost the battle' due to a lack of support, and as a result of this, they had to withdraw unwillingly. While on the French side, they had more and more people and succeeded in forcing the Chinese 'rivals' to leave as if they were the victors of the 'battle'.

Hugely different from the official representation of the torch relay in Paris, the online disclosure of what really happened during the torch relay could be, to some extent, regarded as a form of carnivalistic resistance to the pretentious official culture of the CCP. As I explained in Chapter 2, Bakhtin's notion of carnival offers some theoretical and empirical references for analysing the Chinese internet, and the Chinese internet, in many ways, resembles a carnivalistic square in which participants celebrate temporary suspension of official dogmatism, norms and taboos. Carnival is an antithesis of official life, and undermines official ideology by turning it upside down. The anonymity provided by the internet empowers participants to circulate information against the prevailing truth, order and knowledge established in the official life. Forum User A challenged the official version of the truth, and provided almost opposite realities regarding the Paris leg of

the torch relay. Instead of a harmonious event welcomed and supported by the mainstream public in France as maintained in the official media, Forum User A overthrew the official authority by revealing that the torch relay in Paris was actually chaotic with considerable opposition and humiliation. S/he also showed his/her disappointment towards the official media, and ridiculed it by revealing the realities that were distorted or hidden in the official media. Carnival is not simply a destructive event that subverts the official norms; it is also constructive in the sense that it produces meanings and provides its own views about the world. Forum User A not only rejected the official truth about the torch relay, but also attempted to constitute his/her version of truth and project his/her interpretation about the realities. The internet creates a virtual space which allows people to talk and behave in a way that is not normally allowed in the real world, and what is suppressed and prohibited in the official discourse is brought to the surface in the online carnivalistic life. Unlike the official media which obscured the real identities of the protestors against the torch relay, Forum User A made it clear that almost all of them were French. S/he also exposed with strong nationalist tone that the French mainstream public showed little support for the Beijing Olympics, and French protestors even treated Chinese people who went to protect and welcome the Olympic torch with hisses, humiliation and violence. S/he provided a detailed account regarding the ways the French public responded to the Beijing Olympic torch relay, and this gave some clues to understand why such information was largely missing in the official media discourse. Despite the discursive power of the official media to frame and impose a supportive and harmonious image of the torch relay in Paris, the forum user nevertheless disclosed that China lacked support and those who stood by the side of China were 'really too rare'. The overall truth Forum User A intended to compose was that 'France was hostile to China' and 'China's national pride was under threat in Paris'.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at the media representations of Chinese national pride stemming from the Beijing Olympics with a special focus on the international torch relay in Paris, that is to say, how the official newspaper *The People's Daily* and the popular online forum the *Tianya Forum* represented the international torch relay in

the way that was supposed to shape the dynamics of Chinese nationalism. People now live in a media age, and how they know of the world largely depends on the given media representations of events, knowledge and realities, which are discursively constructed by texts. That is to say, people's knowledge about the national pride of hosting the Beijing Olympics and the realities of the torch relay in Paris is shaped by the media texts to which they have access. I argue that Chinese nationalism is a discursive practice, and this chapter has proved that the processes of producing Chinese nationalist information are discursive, because the representations of nationalist information are realised mainly through the political use of media texts. According to Fairclough (1995a: 102-103), media texts are not ideology-free, nor do they merely 'mirror realities'; rather they reflect 'the social positions and interests and objectives of those who produce them'. Based on this argument, the chapter made an attempt to deconstruct media texts by, on the one hand, analysing the linguistic features (e.g. choice of words, metaphor, presupposition and grammar) that contributed to the construction of national pride and representations of the torch relay event in Paris; and on the other hand, by revealing the underlying motivations and political ideologies that decided these linguistic applications, for example, why a certain aspect of a reality was highlighted in text while other aspects remained vague or even unmentioned.

The CCP saw the Beijing Olympics as one of its greatest political achievements that could boost its domestic popularity and consolidate its ruling legitimacy. In the official media discourse, hosting the Beijing Olympics was publicised as a 'century-old national dream' for which many Chinese people had been waiting for a long time. The official newspaper was keen to construct a homogenised demand and massive domestic support for hosting the Beijing Olympics, and showed that Chinese people's support and yearning for the Olympics were genuine and spontaneous, rather than a consequence of political coercion. By creating a homogenised support for the Olympics through the manipulation of language, the CCP on the one hand, limited the space for possible domestic criticism of the Olympics, suggesting that criticising the Beijing Olympics was against the 'century-old' dream of Chinese people; and on the other hand, it imposed its own interpretation of what was the identity of a patriotic citizen in face of the Beijing Olympics – being supportive, proud and devoted.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the CCP constantly addresses itself as the defender of Chinese national honour, and knows well that it is crucial to fulfil their nationalist promises, because failing to do so may cause people to question its nationalist credentials. Domestically, since the Beijing Olympics was so much publicised by the CCP as a symbol of China's increasing status in the world and as an opportunity of showcasing its achievements to the international community, reassuring the domestic audience that the Beijing Olympics was acknowledged and welcomed by the world was of great importance for maintaining and boosting China's national pride. Internationally, the CCP's intention of using the Beijing Olympics to present China as a responsible and peacefully rising player meant that they had to make sure that popular nationalism would not grow out of control. As Callahan (2010) claims, China's sense of pride and sense of humiliation are tightly intertwined. That means, when China is so keen to win international recognition, it in fact does not expect much criticism that challenges the Beijing Olympics particularly from the West, and western criticism of China can instantly spark Chinese people's memories of China's past humiliation and therefore, give rise to popular Chinese nationalism. In knowing this, the CCP encouraged confident nationalism through the official media discourse by constructing an image of international support for the Beijing Olympics and a harmonious relation with the world. These political considerations were clearly reflected in the official representation of the Paris leg of the torch relay, where China's national pride and the support of the French public for the Beijing Olympics were emphasised, while noises, protests and confrontations were under-represented.

However, as Liu (2006) claims, the popularity of the internet use in China has challenged the CCP's domination of nationalist discursive production. The internet provides some opportunities for ordinary users to voice opinions different from the official media, and gives some room for popular nationalists to 'play a more active and independent role in the expression of "unofficial" nationalism around cyberspace' (Ibid: 149). The last section of the chapter demonstrated the alternative channel the internet gave to ordinary Chinese people to represent and construct a different reality from the official media discourse regarding what happened during

the torch relay in Paris. Unlike the traditional model of nationalism where state elites are deemed as the dominant players in the making, shaping and mobilising of nationalism, from what was discussed in this chapter, it showed some evidence that popular nationalists could also take on some independent role in the politics of nationalism, largely due to the internet that challenges and changes the way information is produced, disseminated and consumed. Some of the abilities of popular nationalists in the discursive practice of Chinese nationalism are manifested in the framing of the nationalist incident (different from the official media discourse where the torch relay in Paris was represented as a welcomed and supported event, the forum user framed it as an event that received massive protest, criticism and humiliation), the expression of nationalist voices (the forum user employed nationalistically strong language to inform fellow users of a hostile France that attempted to defame Chinese national pride) and the appealing for nationalist support (the forum user emotionally narrated the tough situation they faced and although they fought hard to defend Chinese national pride, they still suffered and somehow 'lost the battle' due to a lack of support).

The possibility for netizens to participate in the politics of Chinese nationalism also to some extent dismisses a common misunderstanding that Chinese popular nationalism is a consequence of the CCP's manipulation. It should be noted that as I discussed in the literature review, technically speaking, the CCP has a range of different means to counterbalance challenging voices from the internet, the circulation and popularity of the thread was not possible if the CCP felt it was a threat. There might be two reasons for this. Firstly, the CCP tends to give some space to the online expressions of nationalist feelings as long as popular nationalists do not intend to mobilise people to take the street. Look back to the online thread, although Forum User A employed nationalistically agitating languages to raise people's nationalist awareness, s/he did not explicitly encourage people to take substantial actions. The CCP is well informed that censoring online nationalist materials can undermine its nationalist identity. Secondly, although the online thread challenged the official representation of the torch relay, it did not pose a threat to the CCP's nationalist bottom line. To some extent, the thread in fact showed some alignments with the official view, for instance, the forum user believed that Tibet was part of China and that the Beijing Olympics represented

China's pride and therefore needed to be defended. Given that the growth of online popular nationalism to some extent depends on the approval of the CCP and the CCP often instrumentally uses online nationalist sentiments to serve its political goals, the contradiction as well as co-optation between online popular and official nationalism will be discussed in a detailed manner in the following chapters.

## Chapter 5

### The Construction of Nationalist Identity in the Online Media Discourse

#### 5.1 Introduction

Since the last chapter explained the representations of a nationalist event (the torch relay in Paris) in both official and online popular media discourses, and how the online discursive construction of the nationalist event challenged the CCP's domination in the production of nationalist information, this chapter aims to concentrate on the part of the research question – how Chinese netizens use the internet to engage in the discursive construction of nationalist identity through online discussions of nationalist events. The online thread discussed in the previous chapter was successful in the sense that on the one hand, it disseminated the information regarding the 'real situation' in Paris to a large online audience, and attracted over 4000 replies regardless of repetitions of various kinds; on the other hand, it stirred up people's nationalist sentiments, because it informed the online audience that China's national pride suffered in Paris and imposed a strong sense of humiliation and victimisation. While the online discussion about France's intention to humiliate China continuously evoked nationalist anger of many netizens, another nationalist event equally contributed to the growth of popular nationalism on the internet. During the torch relay in Paris, Jin Jing, a Chinese disabled torchbearer, protected the torch and fended off a pro-Tibet protestor who almost wrenched the torch away. Jin Jing's protection of the Olympic torch soon became a nationalist topic on the internet, and netizens praised and even apotheosised her as a national hero, especially when she appeared in the *Tianya Forum* to hail her supporters. Both cases played an important role in the mobilisation of popular nationalist awareness, and will be discussed in a more detailed manner in this chapter. The two cases also provide an interesting dimension for me to assess how Chinese netizens construct and strengthen their nationalist identity through online discursive practices of hating enemies on the one hand, and worshiping heroes on the other.

It seems true that in the building of a nation, two elements are indispensable, namely an enemy that threatens a nation, and a hero that steps forward bravely to defend the integrity, dignity and pride of that nation. Producing and reproducing nationalist stories about enemies and heroes not only awakens people's nationalist consciousness, but also strengthens their nationalist identification with the nation. As demonstrated in the last chapter, language plays an important role in the construction and shaping of Chinese nationalism, and I gave explanations regarding how both official and popular players exerted power in the representation of nationalist information via the manipulation of language. This study of Chinese nationalism is discursive in nature, and in this chapter, I not only explore how people rely on the language to tell and retell the stories of enemies and heroes, but also examine how people use the language to construct their nationalist identity by demarcating them from the enemies and identifying with the heroes. Taking all this into consideration, this chapter falls into two major parts. In the first part, it looks at the escalation of online nationalist sentiments triggered by Forum User A's thread that alerted online audience of France's hostility and the humiliation China suffered in Paris. It examines how netizens respond to, perceive, discuss and reproduce the alleged hostility of France, and how the discursive practices of accusing, attacking and humiliating the hostile 'them' help Chinese netizens declare their nationalist identity. If the first part mainly talks about the expression of hatred towards a shared enemy as a way of claiming one's nationalist identity, the second part explains how the expression of identification with a shared national hero could also serve the same function. Jin Jing's presence in the online forum ignited netizens' passion for embracing the hero, and identification with her became a nationalist criterion for determining one's nationalist quality. The second part investigates the linguistic mechanisms that netizens apply to highlight their identification with Jin Jing, and how their discursive practices of praising, upholding and even deifying Jin Jing confirm their nationalist identity as members of the 'we'.

## **5.2 Discussions of France's Hostility and Expressions of Nationalist Hatred in the Online Media Discourse**

The last chapter provided some insights into how a Chinese internet user (Forum User A) could adopt a radically different discursive approach from the official media



to produce and represent the nationalist information, in order to unveil the unknown realities about the Paris leg of the torch relay and elevate the nationalist consciousness of the peer users. This section aims to examine the responses of the peer users to Forum User A's nationalist call; in other words, it examines how Chinese netizens frame and express their nationalist views in a way that establishes and reinforces their nationalist identity. A hostile enemy whether it is imagined or substantive is crucial in mobilising nationalism. However, the representation and imposition of a hostile enemy is only one of the first steps of shaping nationalism, and whether nationalism can be evoked or not is contingent upon how the hostility and threat of the enemy are to be received, interpreted and reinterpreted through constant interactions. For traditional media, it is often difficult to evaluate what audience think of a certain piece of story and how they might respond to it; whereas for the online forum like *Tianya*, it is relatively easier, as the forum provides such an interactive platform where audience can not only respond directly to the information producer, but also discuss with other peer users. This provides a good chance to analyse the nationalist responses of the online audience towards the alleged threat and hostility, and probe how the online discursive practices of producing and reproducing the image of the enemy can increase people's nationalist awareness and help construct their nationalist identity.

Forum User A's nationalist call received considerable support from the fellow users, and the most instant way of expressing one's support and at the same time protesting against France's hostility was shouting out slogans. According to Yang (2008: 139), 'sloganeering' is one of the most visible features of protests and contention in Chinese cyberspace, since 'slogans are easy to write, do not require a great deal of analytical skill, express strong opinions and emotions, and are often memorable'. 'China, Be Strong' (*zhongguo jiayou*), for instance, is probably one of the most commonly seen and frequently shouted slogans in the thread. It is simple, loud and emotionally charged, and shouting out slogans like this certainly reveals one's support for China, because 'be strong' is the phrase often used to cheer somebody up when s/he is facing frustrations and difficulties. Other slogans, such as 'Down with France', 'French, the Idiots' and 'Fuck France' which are furiously directed to France, are also common. Slogan is visible in the online collective expression of Chinese nationalism, and these sensational slogans provide a first glance regarding

the intensity of Chinese nationalist sentiments on the internet. The internet not only provides a channel for ordinary Chinese to vent their nationalist anger by shouting out emotional slogans, but also creates an avenue where they can elaborate and discuss nationalist concerns.

As seen in the official media discourse, the CCP attempted to promote confident nationalism by showing the domestic audience China's increasing status in the world and its commitment and contributions to world peace and harmony. *The People's Daily* invested enormous efforts to stress the 'we are respected and supported by the world' narrative; however, it was undermined by the 'we have been humiliated in Paris' narrative constructed by an internet forum user. The online revelation of a hostile France that humiliated China's national pride engendered the resurgence of the memories of China's past suffering among forum discussants, and the online Chinese nationalist sentiments, especially the feelings of hatred, were aroused by constantly telling and retelling western hostility towards China. Here is a typical response given by Forum User B:

*Our country has various problems to deal with when it is striving for development. However, for those westerners, the intention behind their clamours and exaggerations of our problems is not to make us stronger and better, but to divide us and make us even weaker, so that (we) continue to be the 'Sick Man of East Asia' under their feet. The more disorganised our country becomes, the happier they feel. [...] In such circumstance, is there anything more important than the unity of the Chinese people? Do French people really consider improving our living conditions? Did they ever think about China when they took things from our Yuan Ming Yuan? Have they solved all the problems in their own country? How do they have so much passion to deal with other country's problems? [...] Have all the problems in the world been solved? Why didn't they talk about equality and justice with the USA when the Americans assaulted Iraq with groundless charge? The more others hope we become weak, the more we should get united. Striving and competing to be the strongest is the rule for a man as well as a country to survive.*

Forum User C shares Forum User B's argument and further elaborates as follows:

*Hopefully from this torch relay, all the Chinese people understand that western countries oppose our Chinese nation in their bones. Since we have a long Chinese civilisation, and they fear that one day we will become as strong as we used to be. Their people have received education from childhood like this, because the system of our country is different from theirs, and they do not accept a country which has a different way of living and a country which probably will become stronger than them. Therefore, they take every opportunity to strike us. Hope all the Chinese people from now on strive hard and stop revering the westerners, and from now on, stop worshipping western countries as god. They can not tolerate us, because in their eyes, we are a heresy. However, we have to strive unremittingly, and we have to be strong.*

The arguments put forward by Forum User B and C show typical examples as to how online discussants join the nationalist call of the thread author (Forum User A) by interactively building the hostile image of France and collectively nurturing nationalist hatred towards France. Both of them share the points that western countries like France do not want to see an emerging China and they do whatever they can to prevent China from becoming a strong country. Both discussants attempt to legitimise their nationalist hatred towards France, and explain to other people that the West, including France, has reasons to be hated. For Forum User B and C, they believe that they are blameless and attribute their nationalist resentment to the hostility of France; in other words, the logic both discussants convey is that 'it is your hostility to us which makes you hated by us'. Forum User B rebuts France's claim of using the opportunity of the Beijing Olympic to improve human rights in China, and in his/her opinion, if France is ever concerned about the human rights issues in China, they should have thought about what it meant by human rights when they 'took things' from *Yuan Ming Yuan*. *Yuan Ming Yuan*, also known as the Old Summer Palace, was an imperial garden in Beijing, and it was looted and burned down by the French and British troops during the Second Opium War in

1860. The ruins of *Yuan Ming Yuan* serve as living memories of China's victimisation, and are considered as important evidence that shows the crime of the western imperialists to China. Forum User B believes that France has neither the qualification nor extra time to intervene in China's domestic problems, and France should mind its own business as it has much to deal with both home and abroad. France's obsession ('so much passion') with China's problem only reflects its malicious intention. In Forum User B's opinion, France is hypocritical, because France appears to be an advocate and defender of human rights, but it does not talk about the taints on its past human rights record, for instance, looting and burning down *Yuan Ming Yuan*. Furthermore, by imposing the question 'why didn't they talk about equality and justice with the USA when the Americans assaulted Iraq with groundless charge', the discussant suggests that France employs double standards to judge different countries, and it turns a blind eye to the violation of human rights by its ally (the USA). What Forum User B is insinuating is that notions, such as 'human rights' and 'equality and justice', are only the tools used by western countries to cause problems to, and 'divide' China.

Forum User B's nationalist identity is apparent in his/her call for national cohesion through the question 'is there anything more important than the unity of the Chinese people?' Using rhetorical questions is a striking feature in his/her speech. Unlike other question sentences, the rhetorical question does not expect an answer. Rather than seeing a rhetorical question as a question, it is more precise to regard it as a statement in a question form. The answer is not expected, because somehow the answer is already given in the question or, the questioner believes that the answer is apparent and the audience already knows it. The rhetorical question is quite often used as a persuasive device to subtly guide the audience to reach an answer the questioner wants. Forum User B's advocate of national unity is obvious in the rhetorical question, however, instead of saying, for instance, 'there is nothing more important than the unity of the Chinese people', which is declarative and emotionless, transforming it into a rhetorical question not only makes it more emotional, but more importantly, it gives extra emphasis on the importance of national unity and urges the audience to reach the same nationalist view as Forum User B has.

As I explained in the last chapter, the official media suppressed the narrative of ‘Sick Man of East Asia’, in order to promote a new understanding regarding China’s position in the world and its relations with the rest of the world, in particular the western countries. In the official media discourse, China has been depicted as a stakeholder which is competent and confident to play a key role in world affairs and has increasingly shared an equal footing with the powerful West. Ironically, while the official media is keen to promote national confidence and pride, in the eyes of online forum discussants, China is still a weak country that is under the siege of western hostility and mistreatment, and both discussants agree, as indicated in the last sentence of their arguments, that becoming a strong country is the ultimate solution to conquer western hostility. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the stigma of ‘Sick Man of East Asia’ is largely imagined and self-imposed, however, the resurgence and retelling of this narrative suggest its deep root in the popular nationalist discourses. There is also a widespread belief in the conspiracy theory among forum discussants, as one can find in Forum User B’s elaboration that the West is intending to fragment China and obstruct it from being strong.

In his/her thread, Forum User A provided copious evidence of France’s hostility during the Paris leg of the torch relay, and the evidence led peer discussants to entrench their belief in the conspiracy theory. The insecure feelings of online forum participants not only derive from their memories of China’s past victimisation, but more fundamentally, from their conviction that China is currently not strong enough and therefore, susceptible to western humiliation. Such conviction can be felt in the language used by the forum participants, for instance, in Forum User B’s argument, ‘the intention behind ... is not to ... but to divide us and make us even weaker so that (we) continue to be the “Sick Man of East Asia” under their feet’. The comparative adjective ‘weaker’ exposes his/her inner belief that China is currently weak, and if Chinese people do not unite, it can become weaker. Likewise, Forum User C shares a similar idea, as in the sentence, ‘they do not accept ... a country which probably will become stronger than them’. The choice of the word ‘probably’ and the use of future tense altogether reveal his/her speculation that

although there is a possibility that one day China can exceed the western countries, it is still not as strong as them at the current stage.

Realising that China is currently not as strong as the West and the country would possibly follow the track of the history of humiliation if people do not unite in face of foreign threat, forum participants are keen to create a sense of crisis in order to awaken people's awareness of national unity. Akin to the Chinese intellectuals in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who attempted to amplify the sense of national crisis by distorting and reinventing the notion of 'Sick Man of East Asia' as a humiliating epithet used by western imperialists to despise the physical weakness of Chinese people, modern online forum users continue to follow a similar fashion of 'self humiliation' by imagining how the strong and arrogant western powers would bully the weak and susceptible China. The self-imposed humiliation is visible in Forum User B's words, for instance, as in the sentence '... but to divide us and make us even weaker so that (we) continue to be the "Sick Man of East Asia" under their feet', '(we) continue to be' indicates his/her firm belief that China used to be the 'Sick Man of East Asia' and still has a possibility to regain this humiliating title if it fails to become strong and defend itself from western hostility. Although the West did not ever put the hat of 'Sick Man of East Asia' on China (Yang, 2005), there is a tendency that a significant number of Chinese people still firmly believe that western imperialists not only used, but will continue to use the humiliating epithet to laugh at China. Furthermore, in Chinese language, the phrase 'under one's feet', which means setting one's foot down on top of someone, is often used to refer to an extremely humiliating way of treating someone. The stress of 'under their feet' maximises the hostile and oppressing image of the West by pointing out that they are the ones who used to and still intend to trample on China, and imposes a strong sense of humiliation in order to increase nationalist awareness of the fellow discussants. Imagining how the western powers would humiliate China is a common means employed by forum users to elevate the sentiments of nationalist hatred and call for unity. Further to that, the sentence 'the more disorganised our country becomes, the happier they feel' in Forum User B's argument just shows another example of how some Chinese people imagine and impose humiliation onto themselves. S/he imagines that a weak China could become a subject to be laughed

at by the West, and they want to see a weak China because a weak China would make them feel superior.

In face of criticism from the West, it is very likely that Chinese people refer back to the history of the 'century-old humiliation' and present themselves as victims of western hostility and prejudice. Beneath the sentiments of hatred towards the alleged hostile western countries, including France, lies the sense of humiliation and shame which is so intimately tied with China's modernisation and can not be easily wiped away. Although just a year before the Beijing Olympics, by 2007, China had exceeded Germany to become the third largest economy in the world (and by 2010 it had exceeded Japan to become the second largest economy, second only to the United States) and no matter how strong China has become, the psychology of victimisation and humiliation is not fading as China grows strong. As the above texts demonstrate, the western countries are depicted as aggressive and hostile, whereas China is depicted as a country that is susceptible to western aggression. The feelings of hatred is categorically one of the most defining features in the Chinese nationalist discourses, and such feelings are discursively nurtured, maintained and reinforced by drawing a clear boundary between 'us' and 'them', for example, 'they' want 'us' to continue to be the 'Sick Man of East Asia'; 'they' hope that 'we' become weak; 'they' use the so-called 'human rights' to intervene with 'our' home issues; and 'they' employ double standards and treat 'us' with prejudice.

For Forum User C, s/he agrees with Forum User B's point of view that western countries are hostile to China; however, s/he manifests his/her nationalist identity by drawing an even clearer and sharper dividing line between 'us' and 'them'. According to him/her, the hostility of western countries towards China stems from the differences in systems, and there seems to be no chance for these differences to be compromised, as they oppose China 'in their bones'. His/her nationalist claim shows strong cold war mentality, because s/he is inclined to take those differences between China and the western world to the ideological realm. S/he continues to intensify the feelings of hatred by using the sentence 'they can not tolerate us, because in their eyes, we are a heresy'. 'Heresy' is a religious word which in fact

implies some sense of tension, because it originally means beliefs and ideas that are contrary to the orthodox doctrine. Here, it is used to refer to the communist system in China as a contradicting value system that the West can by no means accept. Ironically, while Forum User C is hyping the ideological and systematic incompatibilities between China and the West, s/he seems to blame the West for exaggerating such differences, for instance, ‘they’ do not accept a strong China with a different system, ‘they’ teach their children that China will threaten them if it becomes strong and ‘they’ take every single chance to stop China from rising. Forum User C’s anti-West nationalist identity is apparent in his/her call for de-romanticising the West. Having pointed out that the inherent hostility of the West towards China as they oppose China deep ‘in their bones’, s/he urges all Chinese people to ‘stop revering the westerners’ and ‘stop worshiping western countries as god’. The two ‘stop’ sentences with imperative tone have made Forum User C appear as if s/he is a nationalist leader giving orders and asking others to follow. By speaking to ‘all the Chinese people’ and imposing ‘orders’ for the sake of ‘all the Chinese people’, it on the one hand, reconfirms Forum User C’s identity as a nationalist who is concerned with the interest of the whole country; on the other hand, it also shows his/her confidence of thinking his/her ideas as a nationalist norm that every Chinese has to follow. The online forum not only provides a space for people like Forum User C to speak out their nationalist standpoints, but also for them to practice their nationalist identity by articulating, marketing and imposing their nationalist claims.

What differentiates the internet from other media in China is that the internet allows various schools of thought to compete for audiences. Although it is almost an unchallenged point of view among forum participants that western countries like France are hostile to China, people interpret such hostility rather differently. Unlike Forum User B and C who regard France’s protest against the Beijing Olympics as a serious offense to China, other discussants like Forum User D interpret the alleged western hostility with optimism:

*Elites in western countries are very concerned about China’s development and the threat it poses to their economies. As the economy*



*grows, our competitions with the developed countries in the areas of energy and minerals are becoming more and more fierce, even though this sort of tension has not yet evolved into a war. Their hostile sentiments such as envy, resentment, fear and upset are continuously accumulating and have escalated to a certain level that (they want to release) but they are not able to find an opportunity (to do so). Eventually, here come the Tibet issues, and (they) find the opportunity. [...] For the Olympics, we are not afraid of boycott. [...] If your athletes want to boycott the Olympics, please feel free. Beijing does not lack one or two athletes, and we have extensive support from Pakistan and other brother-like countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, if (you) miss the once-every-four-year Olympics, you risk your sports career, and no one is responsible for your decision. [...] Think about our elder generations in the critical times, such as during the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea. We survived with our own efforts even under severe western blockades, what else can we feel afraid of? Finally, let's review the great revolutionary leader Comrade MZD's wonderful elaboration on this problem: I believe, for us, if we are not opposed by (our) enemies, it is not good, that shows (we) must have been assimilated by (our) enemies. If (we) are opposed, that is good, that proves we have maintained a clear boundary from (our) enemies. If (our) enemies oppose us vigorously and criticise that we have done nothing right, that is even better, because not only does it prove that we have maintained a clear boundary from (our) enemies, but also indicates that we have done our job very well.*

Forum User D's post in fact caused considerable resonance among peer participants, and many expressed support by forwarding his/her post and adding brief comments like 'strongly agree', 'can't agree more', 'up' and 'strong push'. Forum User D shares the general view that there is tension between China and the West, and the West is nervous to see China's emergence and therefore, uses the Tibet issues to contain China. What makes his/her argument distinct is that while people like Forum User B take foreign criticism and opposition very seriously and believe that the West is intending to humiliate China, s/he does not seem to worry too much and

appears to be confident and comfortable to face opposition from the West. S/he emphasises the hostility of the West by highlighting their eagerness to cause problems to China, for instance, in the sentence, ‘their hostile sentiments such as envy, resentment, fear and upset are continuously accumulating and have escalated to a certain level that (they want to release) but they are not able to find an opportunity (to do so)’. The phrases ‘continuously accumulating’ and ‘have escalated’ stress that ‘their’ hostile sentiments to China never stop, and the conjunction ‘but’ nonetheless shows ‘their’ pain of not being able to find a chance to discharge these sentiments. However, as seen in the sentence, ‘eventually, here come the Tibet issues’, the word ‘eventually’ suggests that the Tibet issues is such an opportunity in the eyes of the western countries, which they have been waiting and seeking for a long time, and which they can take advantage of to vent their anger and discontent to China.

Like other forum participants whom have been discussed, Forum User D holds a strong belief in the theory of western hostility towards China, however, s/he adopts a totally different discursive framework of interpreting hostility from the West. Instead of regarding that the West threatens China, Forum User D tends to tell the audience that it is actually China that threatens the West, since China challenges their dominant status. As suggested in the sentence ‘their hostile sentiments such as envy, resentment, fear and upset...’, although s/he conceals the information with respect to whom ‘they’ envy, resent, fear and who makes them upset through nominalisation of the verbs, it is not difficult to find out the answer within the text. What s/he wants to tell the peer discussants is that the reason why the West is hostile to China is because ‘they’ envy, resent and fear China. Forum User E shares a similar assumption:

*Sigh, why could these happen to the Olympics, nonsense! However, let's think (in this way), (if) one is not envied, (he or she) must be mediocre. For a country, it is the same! It proves that we are stronger than before, haha!*

At first glance, as can be sensed in the words ‘sigh’ and ‘nonsense’, Forum User E is disappointed and angry to know that the torch relay of the Beijing Olympics suffered massive protests in Paris. However, a feeling of triumph arises as his/her emotion changes from ‘sigh’ and ‘nonsense’ to ‘haha’ (‘haha’ means to laugh loudly). In his/her opinion, being protested means being envied, and being envied is something worth being proud of. According to his/her understanding, if a country is not envied, the country must be ‘mediocre’ and being envied only indicates that China has become stronger. Although the way of equalising ‘being envied’ with ‘being strong’ looks odd, it shows Forum User E’s self-comforting mechanism of regarding other’s protests and criticism as a form of confirmation of China’s success.

Different from those who refer to the narrative of victimisation and regard China as a country threatened by the western powers, both Forum User D and E fundamentally transform China’s position from the one who fears western powers to the one whom western powers have to fear. Further to that, Forum User D’s discursive approach to describing China as a challenger that makes the western countries feel nervous rather than a victim that can be easily susceptible to western powers, is bolstered by the suppression of words, phrases and sentences that imply China’s vulnerability and weakness. As can be constantly seen in Forum User B’s argument, words and phrases which are applied to humiliate Chinese themselves such as ‘weak’, ‘weaker’, the ‘Sick Man of East Asia’ and ‘under their feet’, as well as sentences that imagine China to be a subject being laughed at by the West, like ‘the more disorganised our country becomes, the happier they feel’, are absent in Forum User D’s overall speech.

While creating and imposing a sense of national crisis is a common theme throughout the forum discussion, Forum User D faces the western criticism and intimidation of boycotting the Beijing Olympics with ease. S/he does not believe that the western strategy of boycott would cause any harm to China, and his/her confidence is particularly evident in the use of ‘feel free’. By saying that ‘Beijing does not lack one or two athletes’, s/he seems to express that there are more athletes wanting to go to the Beijing Olympics than China actually needs, and China is not

begging 'you' to come. S/he is keen to show how popular the Beijing Olympics is by on the one hand demonstrating the extensive support China has gained from its 'brother-like' countries, and on the other hand, minimising those oppositional voices through the use of the phrase 'one or two'. The phrase 'one or two' does not refer to an exact number, but rather in the Chinese language, it means a negligible minority. In marginalising the western athletes who propose to boycott the Beijing Olympics as the 'one or two', Forum User D disregards their boycott proposal and intends to tell them that their absence in the Beijing Olympics would not make any difference to China. While emphasising that the so-called boycott strategy would be useless, at the same time, Forum User D intimidates that 'if (you) miss the once-every-four-year Olympics, you risk your sports career, and no one is responsible for your decision'. By highlighting 'once-every-four-year', s/he tends to ask those athletes in favour of the boycott to think about how many 'four years' they have for their professional career, and if they miss the Beijing Olympics, they have to wait another four years for the next Olympics, which s/he thinks would be a huge loss for them. By employing the word 'risk', s/he warns those athletes of the serious consequence they would bring upon themselves. The use of the pronoun 'you' emanates the feeling as if Forum User D interrogates those boycott advocates face to face. By stressing 'no one is responsible for your decision', s/he hints that 'you' risk 'yourself' and 'you' are the only one who has to pay the price for the imprudent decision 'you' have made.

According to Forum User D, those criticism and opposition from the West during the torch relay are not fearsome at all, and s/he encourages his/her fellow discussants to be brave to face the challenges. The emphasis of the adjective 'severe' in the sentence of 'we survived with our own efforts even under severe western blockades' suggests the great challenges China used to face from the West, but by highlighting 'we survived with our own efforts' indicates Forum User D's deep faith that China can not be beaten easily and it can save itself even under severe conditions. By raising the rhetorical question 'what else can we feel afraid of', s/he actually urges people to believe that 'we' feel afraid of nothing and compared with the severe conditions China ever suffered, the western criticism of China during the Olympic torch relay is not worth mentioning.

In Forum User D's opinion, not only should Chinese people feel unafraid of the western criticism, but also they should feel happy about that. Such thinking is evident in his quotation of Chairman Mao Zedong's words. Before moving on, it should be noted that instead of using Mao Zedong, the use of the abbreviation 'MZD' reflects Forum User D's concern of online censorship, because for experienced forum users, they know that mentioning the names of the CCP's leaders could be a taboo, and codes are often applied to evade the automatic keyword filtering. However, due to the sophistication and complication of China's online censorship, netizens have no exact knowledge of what the sensitive words could be, they just habitually substitute words they think sensitive for codes, in case that their comments and posts are blocked.

Since Chairman Mao's words mainly talk about how he believes Chinese people are supposed to deal with opposition from their alleged enemies, and by quoting Mao's words to support his/her argument, Forum User D makes it even explicit that those western countries, including France, who use the Tibet issues to criticise and oppose China, are China's enemies. S/he concurs with Mao's logic which sees opposition from the enemies as a proof of clear demarcation between China and its enemies. According to Mao, the reason China receives opposition from its enemies is because China is different from its enemies, and if China receives no opposition from them, it is not a good symptom as China has been assimilated and become 'them', and therefore, the more 'they oppose us', the better 'we' actually are. Forum User D tries to reassure other forum participants that there is no need to worry about France's opposition, and instead of feeling sad, s/he even seems to celebrate such opposition. As said earlier, such an optimistic and confident attitude towards opposition is distinctive, however, it is apparent that Forum User D does not appear to show any willingness to listen to the criticism, no matter if the criticism makes sense or not. S/he holds the 'it-doesn't-matter' attitude towards the criticism, and what underpins such optimism is the seemingly illogical logic that being opposed by and different from the alleged enemies is being good. Nonetheless, what undermines such a seemingly confident attitude is actually the lack of confidence and bravery to listen to the criticism with an open mind. The

tendency as shown in his/her argument is that any country that criticises China is likely to be labelled as an ‘enemy’, and instead of showing a positive attitude to cope with the criticism, criticism is negatively dismissed and indiscriminately regarded as western hostility towards China.

As a founder of the People’s Republic of China, Mao’s nationalist heritage is not waning as the time goes by, and it is not rare to see that some netizens like Forum User D still worship him as a great nationalist leader. Nostalgia for Mao Zedong’s nationalist spirit is not uncommon, and he is missed particularly when China allegedly encounters hostility from other countries. From the anti-Japanese invasion war to the founding of the People’s Republic China on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1949, and from his sending troops to Korea to fight against the US in 1950 to the Sino-Soviet border war in 1969, Mao’s nationalist determination is remembered by his followers, and they extol him for his nationalist deeds and foreign policies that protected China’s independence, territorial integrity and national dignity. His unwillingness to make concessions to, and fearlessness to fight with even the most powerful countries, namely the US and the Soviet Union, gained him the reputation of being a true nationalist figure. Mao’s nationalist ideals and hardliner foreign policies are not only recalled online, but also offline. During the China-Japan tension over the Diaoyu Islands in 2012, many Chinese took the street and protested against Japanese claims to the disputed islands. In some cities, people held posters of Mao to urge the Chinese government to take tough measure towards Japan.

Condemning France for its alleged hostility to China and expressing hatred towards France is a netizen’s passport for confirming his/her nationalist identity. As can be seen from the above discussion, the attitude of Chinese online forum users towards France’s hostility bifurcates dramatically and seems to take two extreme forms, that is to say, forum users either feel extremely anxious about France’s hostility, retelling and reproducing the memories of China’s past weakness and humiliation in order to elevate a feeling of national crisis; or, they feel extremely confident and comfortable to be opposed, celebrating France’s opposition and regarding it as proof that China has become strong. No matter which forms of attitude forum users align with, one thing is in common: they tend to share the belief that western

countries like France are hostile to China, and they are China's enemies. Demarcating from the enemies and manifesting hatred is a predominant emotion in the forum, and besides that, online forum users also take another popular attitude in response to the alleged hostility. As indicated by some of the users:

*Rather than saying that how gentle and cultivated French people are, better to say that how cowardly they are. In the two World Wars, they were the first who held up their hands to the German Nazis. Rather than saying that how romantic French people are, better to say that how depraved they are; they are a race that only knows how to live to enjoy, but does not think of forging ahead. Rather than saying how wealthy French people are, better to say how many assets they looted from the Qing Dynasty. (by Forum User F)*

*The so-called capital of romance? The so-called freedom and democracy? During that time, the white used the bandit-like means to occupy the majority of the world. Now (they) become developed, wealthy and civilised, then they put up a mask and want to be the god of the earth. (by Forum User G).*

*For those abominable western barbarians, in their bones, there permeates a stream of cruelty, savage and hypocrisy, which can never be disguised. The alleged freedom and democracy is just only their means of showing off the superiority of their culture. (by Forum User H)*

Using negative words to defame France is a distinctive theme among the above three posts. When China is alleged to be shamed, some Chinese online forum users believe that shaming the one who shames China can be an effective means of revenge. A concerted effort of shaming France is prominent, and France's colonialist past provides abundant resources for its hateful image to be drawn. Various special words have been chosen to attack France's colonial taints, for instance, 'loot' (in the first post), 'bandit-like', 'occupy' (in the second post) and

‘abominable’, ‘barbarians’, ‘cruelty’ and ‘savage’ (in the third post). All the chosen vocabulary has been employed to depict France as a bandit. These forum participants not only shame France by emphasising the crimes it committed (‘loot’ and ‘occupy’) during the colonial age and how those crimes were committed (‘used bandit-like means’), but also tear down its respectability by using blatantly negative words such as ‘abominable’, ‘barbarian’, ‘cruel’ and ‘savage’, which directly point to the ‘personalities’ of France. Moreover, it seems that those forum users do not believe that these ‘personalities’ of France would change as the time goes by, because in Forum User H’s words, they are ‘in their bones’.

Forum User F continues to strip off France’s respectability by destroying those good qualities that make France known to others. The decent image of the French people, such as being ‘gentle’, ‘cultivated’, ‘romantic’ and ‘wealthy’ is denied and degraded by the three ‘rather than saying ... it is better to say’ sentences. Forum User F touches upon the histories of France’s defeat by Germany in the two World Wars, and defames France as a cowardly loser. Exposing one’s shortcomings or faults (here France’s bitter histories of being conquered) and making fun of them as laughingstocks is a typical remedy that some Chinese forum users often resort to, to alleviate their embarrassment, because they believe that satisfaction and comfort can derive from embarrassing those who bring embarrassment to China. Not only do they speak sarcastically about the bitter histories of the French people and laugh at them as losers who were incompetent and easily defeated (‘the first who held up their hands to the German Nazis’), they also tarnish the French people as idlers who ‘only knows how to live to enjoy, but does not think of forging ahead’ and as bandits who looted others in order to make themselves rich.

In expressing hatred towards the alleged enemies, objectivity becomes less of an issue in comparison with the need of manifesting one’s nationalist position. It looks as if defaming and laughing at someone becomes legitimate on the internet, and the more one enthusiastically expresses his/her hatred towards the enemy and the more one defames the enemy, the more they feel nationalistic. From the above texts, France has been defamed as a country worth no respect, like in the sentence ‘they are a race that only knows how to live to enjoy, but does not think of forging ahead’.



Forum User F even adopts a racist approach to smear the entire French people as a hedonist race which is too lazy to think about its future. As I mentioned in the last chapter, before the torch relay incident, France enjoyed a favourable reputation in China, and due to its leading role in various areas, such as technologies and education, France was to some extent also a role model to China. However, objectivity of admitting France as a respectable country has given way to the emotional expression of nationalist hatred, and has been rarely seen throughout the online media discourse. Further to that, for those nationalists, they believe that the more they disgrace France, the more their nationalist identity will manifest. Normally, they adopt a holistic approach to defamation, that is to say, not only do they defame the enemy's country, people, personalities, history, lifestyle, but also the overall value system to which people of the country adhere. In sentences like 'the so-called capital of romance? The so-called freedom and democracy?', by adding the question marks after 'romance' and 'freedom and democracy', it clearly shows Forum User G's rejection of the values that France is believed to defend. In his/her opinion, these values only serve as a mask that hides France's bandit nature and that France can put up and pretend to be 'the god of the earth'. Likewise, Forum User H also denies the value of 'freedom and democracy' by proclaiming that it is 'just only their means of showing off the superiority of their culture', and the use of 'just only' unveils his/her contempt to those values that France is said to be proud of. This overt online suspicion and rejection of the values of freedom and democracy may disappoint those who are optimistic that the internet can bring democracy and freedom to China. Admiration for democracy and freedom can be often seen on the Chinese internet forums, but in the currents of nationalist indignation, those who yearn for democracy and freedom normally choose to swim with the nationalist tide by either clarifying their nationalist positions and joining the collective defamation of the enemy, or simply keeping silent, as expressing a different view against the mainstream of hatred feeling requires bravery, and this can certainly cause one to be caught in a nationalist attack.

This section provided some detailed insights and explanations regarding how Chinese internet forum users discussed and responded to the alleged hostility of France after the story that the torch relay of the Beijing Olympics received massive protests in Paris was exposed, and how they collectively expressed and

disseminated nationalist hatred towards France's alleged hostility. As discussed above, the attitude of Chinese online forum users towards the alleged hostility of France varied radically, from the pessimistic views that France intends to humiliate China because China is weak, to the over confident view that France is hostile to China because it envies China. Whichever nationalist view Chinese forum users held, they all shared the point that France was hostile and intended to cause problems to China. Constructing and condemning the alleged hostility of France was a common means through which Chinese netizens manifested and reinforced their nationalist identity. The section demonstrated various ways through which Chinese netizens expressed nationalist indignation, from the most straightforward form of shouting out anti-France slogans to the collective defamation of France. It should be noted that the online interactive nationalist practices of producing and reproducing the hostile image of France, and humiliating France as retaliation for the humiliation France caused to China, are all in fact discursive. The hostile image of France was discursively produced, maintained and reinforced through certain manipulative uses of language, for example, France was depicted in the discourse of the online forum as a country which saw China as a 'heresy', which opposed China 'in their bones', and which was so eager to cause problems to China. Likewise, the online practices of condemning France's alleged hostility towards China also depended on the political use of language. As Chinese netizens believed that attacking France was a way of manifesting their nationalist identity, they stripped off France's respectability by describing it as a disgraceful country with blatantly negative words, such as 'barbarian', 'cowardly', 'depraved' and 'savage'. As Pye (1992: 68) points out, 'hate and hostility are not only more openly acknowledged but they are extolled as positive virtues of the political activist'. The internet not only provides an exceptional channel for Chinese nationalists to vent anger and collectively and interactively brew the feelings of hatred and hostility, but more importantly, creates a space for them to exert their discursive power in the construction and reconstruction of nationalist enemies.

### **5.3 Embracing Jin Jing as a National Hero in the Online Media Discourse**

In the previous section, I explained how internet forum users engaged in the discursive practice of constructing nationalist identity by singling out an enemy that

was believed to be hostile to China, imposing on the peer audience a sense of crisis that China's national pride was under threat, and directing their nationalist hatred towards the alleged enemy. The concept of enemy weighs considerably in the understanding of Chinese nationalism, because how this concept is produced, imposed and received determines the shapes and dynamics of nationalism. As can be seen from the previous section, the concept of enemy plays an important role in the evocation and escalation of online Chinese nationalism, and forum users sustain and reinforce their nationalist identity by marking a clear boundary between the hateful 'they' and the united 'we'. While much attention has been paid to an enemy as an external stimulus for awakening one's nationalist identity, it is also essential to shed light on the importance of a national hero as another key factor in defining nationalist identity and leveraging nationalist unity.

A national hero is upheld for his/her determination and self-sacrifice to defend a nation's independence, interest and pride, and his/her function of cementing a nation and shaping nationalist identity is prominent. Identifying and idolising a national hero is crucial in the building of a nation in every culture, and China is not an exception. Telling and retelling the stories of national heroes and martyrs has a long history in China, and has been a fundamental theme in the 'patriotic education campaign' initiated by the CCP in an attempt to enhance the nationalist awareness of the Chinese youngsters. National heroes are constructed and established as role models, and their exploits of devoting their blood, sweats and tears to the independence, modernisation and pride of China are constantly extolled and publicised throughout state media and mass education. The creation, publicity and emulation of national heroes in China have much to do with the state propaganda. Lei Feng, for example, is probably one of the most publicised national heroes in the contemporary Chinese society. As a soldier, he was characterised by the state propaganda apparatus as a moral paradigm that was selfless, devoted and always ready to serve the socialist country and the people. After his death in 1962, the CCP launched a nationwide campaign 'Learning from Comrade Lei Feng' to encourage the people to emulate his devotion, selflessness and service. The campaign was even ritualised, as 5<sup>th</sup> March became officially the national day for learning from Lei Feng. Even though half a century has gone by, every year in the time running up to 5<sup>th</sup> March, the official media still pay significant attention to the promotion of

Lei Feng's spirit, and on the day, many people go to the street to do some volunteer work as a way of commemorating Lei Feng.

From the above example, it is not difficult to realise that the creation, idolisation and ritualisation of a national hero in China is to a great extent a top-down political propaganda with the aim of enhancing people's identification with the nation, and on the other hand, promoting an officially desired model citizen for the rest of the people to follow. In this top-down propaganda approach, people are often regarded as those who passively follow the official initiative and emulate the national hero as required. However, the decentralised and interactive internet has to a significant extent revolutionised the way information is produced and consumed, and the way people participate in the politics of nationalism. So far, I have explained how the internet enables ordinary citizens to take an independent role in the representation of nationalist information, and practice nationalist identity by collectively and discursively constructing the hostile image of the enemy. In this section, I aim to examine the possible changes the internet can bring about to the way ordinary Chinese citizens engage with national heroes, and how the online discursive practice of creating and identifying with a national hero can reinforce their nationalist awareness.

While accusing the alleged enemies of intending to humiliate China was a prominent theme in the online forum, at the same time, online discussion also focused on compatriots who were identified as heroes, due to their patriotic deeds and determination during the international torch relay. Among many heroes who were praised by Chinese netizens, Jin Jing was probably the one who received the greatest attention and fame. As a Paralympic fencer and torchbearer, Jin Jing was attacked by a pro-Tibet protestor during the Paris leg of the international torch relay, and the protestor almost succeeded in wrenching the torch away from her. Pictures of her in her wheelchair tenaciously shielding the torch with her body were rapidly circulating on the internet, and earned her overnight fame as a national hero who protected the so-called symbol of China's national pride.

Jin Jing's story reached a mass audience, and praises for her patriotic determination were prevalent in Chinese online forums and social networking sites. She was embraced and called by Chinese netizens an 'angel in a wheelchair' and 'the most beautiful torchbearer'. Such online passion for praising and identifying with Jin Jing reached a climax when she appeared in the *Tianya Forum* and posted a thread to express gratitude to those who supported her in the Paris leg of the torch relay and to all the Chinese who supported the Beijing Olympics. The thread she posted entitled 'I'm Jin Jing! I love you, my study-abroad students in France, I love all the Chinese who support the Olympics'. Initially, thread followers did suspect if Jin Jing posted the thread herself, but after the forum administrator received confirmation from Jin Jing about authenticity of the thread and remarked at the top of the thread that 'it has been confirmed that the thread master is Jin Jing', the thread received over 6000 replies. The sheer number is considerable for a single thread, nevertheless, the thread was chosen not only because of the quantity of replies it attracted, but more importantly, because of its uniqueness. It is unique because, although netizens were enthusiastically praising and embracing Jin Jing as a national hero, much of the praising and embracing took place on the internet without Jin Jing being present. The virtual presence of Jin Jing in the thread certainly makes it distinct and it is interesting to find out how Jin Jing's virtual presence maximises people's nationalist passion and identification. As indicated by the number of replies, the virtual presence of Jin Jing in fact attracted a large audience, and this provides a chance that not only enables me to understand the general online enthusiasm for upholding a national hero, but also to examine more closely how this particular virtual experience of interacting with the hero and other audience through the online discourse can enhance the nationalist identity of Chinese netizens.

Before Jin Jing's participation in the *Tianya Forum*, she had already become a national celebrity and attended various interviews and talk shows in which she repeatedly narrated her experiences as a torchbearer in Paris. On 10<sup>th</sup> April 2008, three days after the torch relay incident in Paris, she wrote in the forum:

*1. I was the one who held the torch, but you were the ones who protected*

2. me, and without your protection, our torch might not be secured.  
3. Seeing Chinese study abroad students yelling 'be strong' while crying,  
4. my eye sockets turned red. However, I told myself that I must not cry,  
5. and I must let (those) Tibetan separatists know that we were not afraid  
6. of them and there was no way for them to snatch the torch out of my  
7. hand, the torch we were protecting together! [...] A journalist friend  
8. told me earlier that the torch relay in Los Angeles would take place in  
9. two hours, and there had already been full of Chinese national flags  
10. and cheerful people in the street. I cried all of a sudden and I really  
11. feel that we Chinese are great. In a foreign country, it is the  
12. compatriots who share the same race and blood tie that make all of  
13. us Chinese torchbearers so determined and fearless to raise and  
14. protect the torch. Therefore, I am not a hero, and I just did what all  
15. of us would do. **They** are greater, (as) **they** support the motherland  
16. and the Olympics, and whatever the difficulties would be, **(they)**  
17. unconditionally stand behind the motherland and us torchbearers,  
18. and protect us with deeds. I love you, the study abroad students that  
19. protected me in Paris; I love you, the girls that yelled 'be strong'  
20. while crying; I love you, all the Chinese that support the motherland  
21. when it is in difficult time without any complaints.

Although Chinese netizens warmly embraced Jin Jing as a national hero who did something great, as shown in the above text, Jin Jing modestly denies the 'national hero' title by declaring that 'I am not a hero, and I just did what all of us would do' (Line 14-15). In Line 3-7, she is describing to the readers how she felt when she was under attack, for example, in Line 4-6, 'I told myself that I must not cry' and 'I must let (those) Tibetan separatists know that ... there was no way ...'. The imperative feelings emanated from the modal verbs 'must not' and 'must' reveal Jin

Jing's strong belief that being fearless in face of threat and responding determinedly and toughly to the enemies were as if the obligations that she had to comply with at the time. By stressing that 'all of us would do' (to protect the Olympic torch), Jin Jing wants to say that she did what she was supposed to do, and it was nothing special since anyone else of the 'us' would act in the same way as she did in that particular situation. It is interesting to realise that, instead of saying 'I did what all of you would do', claiming 'I did what all of us would do' certainly indicates an inclusive relationship between the 'I' and the 'us'; that is to say, the 'I' is believed to be a member of the 'us'. Further to that, the declaration 'I did what all of us would do' not only indicates the belonging of the 'I' to the 'us', but also assumes a sense of shared obligations among the 'us'. In other words, if it was not the 'I', but anyone else of the 'us' in that position, it is assumed that s/he would still do the same thing to protect the torch, because protecting the torch that is considered as China's national pride was a shared obligation of the 'us', and everyone of the 'us' would be ready to do it. In the sense, the 'us' is defined by 'what all of us would do' when the national pride of China is allegedly under threat. For her, Jin Jing does not regard what she did as a great deed, however, since she presupposes that anyone that belongs to the 'us' would do the same as she did, she seems to impose what she did as a benchmark for defining the 'us'; in other words, whether or not she thinks one can be counted as a member of the 'us' depends on if s/he has the determination and sense of obligations to protect China's national pride.

While Jin Jing is hailing and thanking her supporters, her contributions to the shaping of popular nationalist discourse on the online forum are noticeable. She defines and reinforces the 'us' identity by reiterating the 'we' narrative. As can be seen from the various 'we' underlined in the text, Jin Jing uses the 'we' as a collective term in opposition to the 'they' ('those Tibetan separatists') who intended to snatch 'our torch', and in her opinion, the term 'we' is defined based on the consent that the Olympic torch represents the pride of China and hence needs to be protected. The sense of a shared responsibility of protecting the torch is distinct in Line 1-7, although Jin Jing thinks that the Chinese supporters at the scene played a more important role than her in securing the torch, as she says 'you were the ones who protected me, and without your protection, our torch might not be secured' (Line 1-2). A cooperative relationship between 'I' and 'you' for the same goal can

be felt, for example, 'I' was the one who held the torch and protected it when the Tibetan separatists attempted to wrench it away; and 'you' were the ones who gave 'me' the strength, and made 'me' feel strong and determined. From this perspective, 'I' and 'you' constitute the 'we' because 'I' and 'you' worked together and hard for a shared objective, that was, to ensure the torch was safe. The presupposition of the torch as a shared property of the 'us' also entrenches the 'we-ness', for instance, in the sentences 'our torch might not be secured' in Line 2 and 'there was no way for them to snatch the torch out of my hand, the torch we were protecting together!' in Line 6-7. The use of the determiner 'our' in the former sentence clearly suggests the belonging of the torch to the 'we' community. With respect to the latter, the formulation of 'we + together' as in the sentence 'the torch we were protecting together' not only stresses the unity of the 'we' for the same objective, but also clarifies that although it was 'I' who held the torch, the torch not just belonged to 'me', but to all of 'us'.

As frequently discussed in the previous section of this chapter and can equally be seen in Line 6 of the above text, the term 'they' ('them') is normally applied to refer to those alleged hostile forces that attempt to sabotage China's national pride. It is worth noting that a 'they' of a different nature has been singled out as highlighted in Line 15-16. Clearly, the 'they' highlighted is not a group of people opposing the 'we', but rather, it is part of the 'we'. According to Jin Jing's elaboration, the 'they' is in fact a remote 'we', who do not reside in the Chinese territory and may not have Chinese citizenship, but are connected with the 'we' through the 'race and blood tie' (Line 12). In her mind, the 'they' could be counted as the 'we' not only because of the shared race and blood tie, but more importantly, because of the shared sense of commitment to defending the pride of China. Jin Jing's reason for regarding the 'they' as part of the 'we' is explained in the sentence, 'whatever the difficulties would be, (they) unconditionally stand behind the motherland and us torchbearers, and protect us with deeds' (Line 16-18). A feeling of brotherhood reinforces the association of the 'they' with the 'we', for instance, 'they' unconditionally stand behind 'us' and 'they' protect 'us'. For Jin Jing, 'unconditionally' supporting the motherland and the Beijing Olympics regardless of 'whatever the difficulties would be' is such a fundamental quality that decides if one could be put into the group of the 'we'. Based on what she says in the thread,



Jin Jing not only enables the forum peer users to imagine the remote community of the 'we' that live beyond the territorial border yet share the same race, blood and pride with 'us', but also tends to act like an opinion leader and impose her own nationalist definition of the 'we Chinese' in the context of the international torch relay, and this tendency is demonstrated in the last sentence 'I love you, all the Chinese that support the motherland when it is in difficult time without any complaints'. In her opinion, it seems that supporting the Olympics and the motherland is a crucial characteristic that defines the 'us', and the 'we' she loves and identifies with does not refer to any Chinese, but restricted to the Chinese who unconditionally support the motherland whenever needed, regardless of whether s/he lives within or beyond the Chinese territorial borderline.

Although Jin Jing insisted that she was not a hero, her thread caused considerable resonance on the forum and brought her a great number of praises. The intensity of netizens' passion for embracing and identifying with Jin Jing is first of all manifested by a prevalence of brief expressions that compliment Jin Jing, for instance, 'Jin Jing, you are great!', 'Well done, Jin Jing', 'You are the most beautiful girl', 'Jin Jing, I love you', 'We are proud of you', 'you are the pride of China' and 'Jin Jing, you are the hero'. Irrespective of the large quantity of replies the thread has, comments are noticeably repetitive and complimentary expressions like the above are ubiquitous throughout the thread. Words, such as 'brave', 'beautiful', 'proud', 'goddess' and 'hero', are the most frequently used words to address Jin Jing. The prevalence of supportive and complimentary commentary is so noteworthy that one of the discussants comments: 'it seems that thread like this with 100% supportive comments has never appeared in *Tianya* before'. '100% supportive' is exaggerated as I do find a few other different and challenging voices as the thread proceeds (this will be elaborated later in this section), however, for such a long thread with an overwhelming dominance of pro-Jin Jing voices, it already shows the scale of people's admiration for a purported national hero on the internet.

In the thread, Jin Jing explains her nationalist understanding of the 'we' based on her personal experiences as a torchbearer in the Paris leg. Although she constantly

stresses that as a member of the ‘we’, she only did what anyone else of the ‘we’ would do to protect the torch, Jin Jing’s role in shaping the online popular nationalist discourse became significant when a large number of netizens started embracing her as a hero of the ‘we’, and believed that idolising Jin Jing was such a means through which their nationalist identity could be asserted and reinforced. The following comments by the forum participants give some ideas with respect to how netizens claimed their status as members of the ‘we’ by identifying with Jin Jing through online discursive practice:

*The moment you used your body to protect the torch, my tears burst out. That moment I was completely touched. Not just me, but all the Chinese people around the world who love their own motherland were touched. You are the pride of the Chinese nation, you are the pride of the People’s Republic of China. Your deed has told the whole world that: every individual of us Chinese who love the motherland would protect her, regardless of personal safety, when the pride of our country is under threat. (by Forum User J)*

*Jin Jing, every time I see the report about your protection of the torch, (I) am touched by your beauty, your determined expression, and your brave performance. It is never too exaggerated to use all the beautiful and sacred words to describe you. [...] In the picture, you look like a pure and holy angel, sacred and inviolable. Your splendid glory made the ugly look of the thugs even despicable. The final success of any just undertaking is achieved after suffering untold hardship and battling against various devils. Many thanks for your protection of the dignity of our motherland and the Chinese nation. Their contemptible actions can only enhance the cohesion of our nation. I also want to thank those anti-China forces and separatists; it is them that make our motherland and people so united at the moment. Jin Jing, we all feel proud to have such a compatriot as you, and (we all feel proud) that our motherland has children like you. Jin Jing, we all love you, too!!! (by Forum User K)*

*You are our angel, and your determination and smile inspire every Chinese. We become strong because of you, and we need to learn from you, (because you) fought the evil forces for our nation. (by Forum User L)*

*We love you, because of the moment in Paris. We Love you, not just because of that moment. We love you, because of your bravery and beauty. We love you, not just because of your bravery and beauty. We love you, because you bear Chinese soul. We love you, because you are the embodiment of the nation. (by Forum User M)*

One becomes a national hero when s/he has done something for the sake of a nation and its people, and the people of the nation firmly believe that what s/he has done is great. In contrary to Jin Jing's emphasis that she is not a hero and nor did she do anything great, from all the above online comments, there seems to be an agreement among many forum discussants that Jin Jing did something great for the motherland, and identifying her as 'our' hero is a common theme. Netizens' enthusiasm for idolising Jin Jing is in the first place demonstrated by the blatant expressions of admiration for Jin Jing. In Forum User M's post, s/he uses 'we love you' five times to hail Jin Jing. Similarly, Forum User K also shows his/her admiration for Jin Jing by emotionally speaking out 'we all love you, too!!!'. As in Jin Jing's original post, she expressed gratitude to her supporters by saying 'I love you', the addition of the word 'too' in Forum User K's expression 'we all love you, too' certainly signals a response to Jin Jing's call, suggesting that Jin Jing loves 'us' and 'we' love Jin Jing as well. The 'we-ness' is strengthened by a sense of an intimate relation, as Jin Jing and us, we love each other.

A national hero is in fact a discursive product, as the creation, publicity and cult of a hero are intrinsically related with the use of language in a particular socio-cultural practice. Whether or not one becomes a national hero depends not only on how his/her nationalist deeds have been publicised and reproduced, but more importantly, depends on how his/her nationalist deeds have been elevated to a point where people believe what s/he has done is a great contribution to the shared community. Jin Jing's

story of protecting the torch with her body was frequently reiterated in the online forum, and as can be seen from all the above online comments extracted, the tendency of elevating Jin Jing's deed to a nationalist height through the manipulation of language is obvious. In Forum User J's opinion, Jin Jing is addressed as 'the pride of the Chinese nation' and 'the pride of the People's Republic of China'. Forum User M thinks in a similar fashion, and s/he believes that Jin Jing bears the 'Chinese soul' and is the 'embodiment of the nation'. These particular words significantly contribute to the making of Jin Jing as a national hero, and elevate her to a height that few people can reach. While Jin Jing has been extolled as the 'pride' and 'embodiment' of the Chinese nation, she is no longer an ordinary individual Chinese, but rather, has been turned into a symbol that represents a collection of values, wills and dreams of the Chinese community. It seems common in various cultures that if one is upheld as a hero, s/he is more or less deified. In other words, Jin Jing is endowed with some divine features, and becomes an incarnation of a deity in human flesh. Apotheosising Jin Jing is common throughout the discussion in the forum, and the above selected posts provide some clues of this trend, particularly in Forum User K and L's comments. In Forum User K's post, s/he comments 'you look like a pure and holy angel, sacred and inviolable'. Similarly, Forum User L directly calls Jin Jing 'you are our angel'. As one can find, both Forum User K and L choose the specific word 'angel' to address Jin Jing. Forum User K even uses the adjectives 'pure', 'holy', 'sacred' and 'inviolable' to reinforce her divine quality. The binary opposition between hero and devil further underpins the sacredness of Jin Jing. The protestors are demonised by Forum User K as 'thugs' and 'devils' which are 'ugly', 'despicable' and 'contemptible', and on the other hand, Jin Jing is depicted as if she is a guardian angel that has divine strength to conquer the evil forces, and hence protects the 'the dignity of our motherland and the Chinese nation'.

The zeal for apotheosising Jin Jing and amplifying her nationalist deed on the internet is prominent, but the interesting thing is, many netizens do not seem to realise that the compliments they give to Jin Jing may have exceeded what she is supposed to deserve. Rather, as Forum User K adds, 'it is never too exaggerated to use all the beautiful and sacred words to describe you'. The four posts above give some instances that illustrate the efforts of some netizens to establish Jin Jing's heroic status and their belief in the greatness of what Jin Jing did. In Forum User J's

post for example, s/he proclaims that Jin Jing's action 'completely' touched him/her. The word 'completely' accentuates the extent to which s/he was impressed by what Jin Jing did. To further emphasise the great resonance that Jin Jing's nationalist performance caused in the society, s/he also assumes that not just him/her, but 'all the Chinese people around the world' 'were touched'. Likewise, in Forum User L's post, s/he stresses the greatness of Jin Jing by saying that 'we become strong because of you'. The causality enabled by the phrase 'because of' underlines the importance of Jin Jing to the 'we', indicating that Jin Jing is the one who gives 'us' strength and makes us 'strong', and without her, 'we' would not be that strong.

In spite of Jin Jing's determination and bravery of protecting the torch, which won her massive applause and led her to be idolised as a national hero, what is great about Jin Jing, as can be sensed from the above online comments, is her value in the discursive construction of the nationalist 'we' identity. One of the distinct features of online discussion about Jin Jing is the frequent use of the pronoun 'you' to refer to Jin Jing, and this is also evident in all the above selected posts. The linguistic phenomenon is largely due to Jin Jing's virtual presence in the forum and her occasional replies to forum participants, which makes them feel as if they are having a conversation with Jin Jing face to face. What is even more intriguing is the frequent mention of the 'you' in relation to the 'we' in netizens' language. It can be found that, the coupling of 'you' with 'we' in a single sentence is common in the commentary of the netizens, and netizens attempt to clarify who 'we' are by constantly interpreting and reinterpreting the relationship between 'you' and 'we' in the online popular discourse. According to Jin Jing's own nationalist definition, she sees herself as an ordinary member of the 'we', but when netizens start to regard her as a national hero and even transform her into a deity, her relations to the 'we' are understood differently.

There are many instances regarding how the 'we' is defined through the discursive identification with the 'you' (Jin Jing). In Forum User K's claims, 'you look like a pure and holy angel [...] many thanks for your protection of the dignity of our motherland and the Chinese nation'; and similarly as in Forum User L's sentence, 'you are our angel, and your determination and smile inspire every Chinese'. The

linguistic presence of 'you' and 'we' is apparent in both sentences. To put it in a more straightforward way, the former sentence can be translated as 'thank YOU for protecting the dignity of OUR motherland'; and for the latter, 'YOUR determination and smile inspire every Chinese (of US)'. The relation between 'you' and 'we' is clear: it is 'you' who protected the dignity of our motherland', and it is 'your' determination and smile that inspire every Chinese (of us). In both sentences, the 'you' is portrayed as an angel, and it gives the feeling that the 'you' does not seem to be a member of the 'we', but rather as a deity above the 'we', who is believed to look after 'our' motherland and whose spirit enlightens the 'we'. The sense of 'we-ness' is therefore underlined by a shared angel, that is to say, believing in and identifying with Jin Jing as an angel becomes a shared identity which determines whether or not one belongs to the 'we'.

As has been illustrated in the above example, netizens attempt to circumscribe and construct the 'we' through identifying with Jin Jing. A similar example can also be found in Forum User J's language: 'not just me, but all the Chinese people around the world who love their own motherland were touched'. The relationship between the 'you' and 'we' is not as explicit as the one in the previous examples, however, it becomes clearer once the sentence is put back in the context. The 'you' is hidden because of the passive voice as in 'not just me, but also all the Chinese ... were touched'. To reorganise the whole sentence, it should be like this: 'not just me, but all the Chinese people around the world who love their own motherland were touched by you (or by your action of protecting the torch with your body)'. By a careful examination, the sentence actually deals with the relations among the three: 'me' (Forum User J), all the Chinese people and 'you'. What Forum User J tends to express is that all the Chinese people around the world, including 'me' (the forum user himself/herself), were touched by Jin Jing. The inclusion of 'me' in the 'we' is indicated by the conjunction 'not just ... but', emphasising that 'me' and 'all the Chinese around the world who love their own motherland' form the collective of the 'we'. The attributive clause 'who love their own motherland' tries to restrict that it is not any Chinese around the world, but only those Chinese who love their own motherland constitute the 'we'. By stressing that 'all the Chinese people around the world who love their own motherland were touched', Forum User J seems to suggest that no matter where they are, those Chinese who love their motherland must have

been touched by Jin Jing's action, and for those Chinese who were not touched, they are not considered as loving their motherland, and hence, do not belong to the 'we'. Jin Jing's nationalist action to some significant extent contributes to the identification of the 'we', as the 'we' is defined by whether or not one was touched by her nationalist deed. From Forum User J's perspective, who 'we' are is what 'we' feel, in other words, it is the same emotional feeling about Jin Jing's action that defines and binds the 'we'.

When Jin Jing's action of protecting the torch is elevated by netizens to such a nationalist height, she is nothing but great. On the one hand, as discussed, Jin Jing has been described as a guardian angel who conquered the devils that intended to sabotage China's pride. The deification of Jin Jing has to some extent led her to be regarded as a mystical figure and become a nationalist symbol. On the other hand, interestingly, she is secularised as a model citizen of the 'we' for the 'we' to follow, for instance, as Forum User K asserts, 'we all feel proud to have such a compatriot as you, and (we all feel proud) that our motherland has children like you'. This is another typical sentence that addresses the relationship between the 'you' and the 'we', however, different from the approach to deification where Jin Jing is depicted as an angel for worshipping, in this specific sentence, Jin Jing is described in a secular manner and has a more equal status with other fellow Chinese. The word 'compatriot' underscores a secular connotation, suggesting that Forum User K deems Jin Jing as a fellow citizen of China instead of a deity. Furthermore, the sentence '(we all feel proud) that our motherland has children like you' also indicates a secular and equal relationship between Jin Jing and the 'we'. When Jin Jing is apotheosised, she does not act as a member of the 'we', because she is an angel and 'we' are ordinary human beings. Nonetheless, the above sentence insinuates the membership of Jin Jing to the 'we' community, since it emanates a sense of kinship: 'we' have the same motherland, and 'we' are its children.

It is noticeable that portraying Jin Jing as a divine character and as a secular role citizen could take place at the same time, and this is particularly the case in Forum User K's comment, as on the one hand, s/he calls Jin Jing an angel that protected the 'we'; and on the other hand, describes her as a compatriot that brought pride to the

'we'. It seems that netizens like Forum User K tend to randomly associate Jin Jing with whatever respectable characters they can think of. Nevertheless, what has to be taken into account is that whether she is described as divine or secular, one thing remains the same, that is, she is regarded as a great and heroic figure that many forum users are keen to identify with. When Jin Jing is so recognised as a national hero, she becomes a figure of nationalist identification. Regardless of various linguistic techniques netizens adopt to praise Jin Jing, identifying with Jin Jing is in fact a way for many Chinese netizens to establish as well as declare their own nationalist identity. Examples have been provided with respect to how the discursive construction of the relationship between Jin Jing and the 'we' helps netizens to circumscribe and reinforce who 'we' are. Netizens not only embrace Jin Jing as a national hero, but also use her as a key constituent in the building of the 'we', for instance, 'we' are the people who share the view that Jin Jing is a guardian angel or a model compatriot that protected 'our' dignity; and 'we' are the people who were touched by Jin Jing's action of protecting the torch. The attempts of netizens to establish relations between the 'we' and Jin Jing can be seen in the linguistic manoeuvre of constantly putting together 'you' and 'we' in a single sentence.

The identification of a common national hero helps define who 'we' are, but what can be easily ignored while talking about the 'we' is the underlying affiliation of the 'I' with the 'we'. It could be taken for granted that the pronoun 'we' is the first person plural that in fact includes the 'I', and when one is talking about 'we', in many occasions, it automatically indicates one's inclusion in the 'we'. There are a few instances that explain the inclusive status of the 'I' in the 'we', for instance, 'we all feel proud to have such a compatriot as you' in Forum User K's post, 'we become strong because of you, and we need to learn from you' in Forum User L's post and 'we love you' in Forum User M's post. In the first glance, all the three above sentences address the relationship between the 'you' (Jin Jing) and the 'we', however, as a closer examination suggests, the sentences actually contain hidden clauses which also reveal the relationship between the 'I' and the 'you': 'I feel proud to have such a compatriot as you', 'I become strong because of you, and I need to learn from you' and 'I love you'. Although the use of the pronoun 'I' could make it even more explicit the nationalist relationship between the speaker and Jin Jing, that is to say, how 'I' feel nationalistically motivated and inspired because of 'you', using the



pronoun 'we' has some more crucial functions than using the pronoun 'I'. If one says 'I feel proud to have such a compatriot as you', the sentence indicates the identification of the 'I' with the 'you', yet it does not show any relationship between the 'I' and the 'we', nor the relation between the 'we' and 'you'. Whereas a sentence like 'we all feel proud to have such a compatriot as you', it actually indicates a three-dimensional relationship: 1). the identification of the 'we' with the 'you', emphasising that 'we' as a community share the proud feelings about 'you'; 2). the identification of the 'I' with the 'you'; the 'I' is included in the 'we', and when the 'we' is connected with the 'you', a same connection between the 'I' and 'you' has been automatically established; 3). the relationship between the 'I' and the 'we'; using 'we' instead of 'I' also shows the speaker's belief and confidence in his/her status as a member of the 'we', and suggests that s/he is not the only one that feels those emotions, but that there are a number of others that feel the same way, and it is the sameness – the same nationalist feelings, responsibilities and reactions etc. - that bring the people together as the 'we'.

As Jin Jing's nationalist story continued to spread through the forum, netizens' passion for embracing Jin Jing showed no signs of decrease. Jin Jing is not just only identified as the one whom 'we' respect and whose nationalist deed 'we' need to learn from, but also the one whom 'I' want to associate with in 'my' personal life. This inclination can be understood in the following two forum posts:

*I have a daughter, and really hope that she will become a girl like you who are determined and have great love for the nation. (by Forum User N)*

*Jin Jing, are you married? Do you have a boyfriend? If you don't... [...] I'm serious! To be honest, from the moment you instinctively acted to protect the torch, I knew you were my dream! You were my white swan! (by Forum User O)*

From the two posts above, netizens' enthusiasm of self-identification with Jin Jing is obvious. Forum User N hopes that his/her daughter will grow up to become a girl like Jin Jing. Forum User O overtly expresses his admiration for Jin Jing and wishes that she could be his girlfriend. Forum User O is surely not the only one, and there were many other peer users expressing similar wishes in the forum. Regardless of their longings for a daughter or a girlfriend like Jin Jing, it tells that Jin Jing is no longer merely a national hero, but really has become netizens' model of the ideal girl. In other words, netizens' love for Jin Jing has grown from seeing her as a solemn angel or a model compatriot in the public domain for people to pay tribute to, to regarding her as a beloved girl that they could actually associate with in their private life. It is worth noting that although there are no linguistic signs such as 'because' and 'since' that explicitly explain the reasons why netizens are so keen to have a daughter or a girlfriend like Jin Jing, it still can be sensed that their strong desire to associate with Jin Jing has much to do with her nationalist deeds, and it seems that both forum users pay extra attention to stress Jin Jing's nationalist qualities. Forum User N, for instance, hopes that his/her daughter will one day grow up a girl like Jin Jing, and s/he uses the attributive clause 'who are determined and have great love for the nation' to explain what qualities s/he wishes his/her daughter to learn from Jin Jing. For Forum User O, he emphasises that it was the moment Jin Jing 'instinctively acted to protect the torch' that made him realise that she was his 'dream' and 'white swan'. According to both forum users, it appears that loving the motherland and being determined to protect its pride are the essential qualities that an ideal daughter or girlfriend has to have. Like any popular celebrity or stars, Jin Jing also has a crowd of people that imagine her as an ideal girl. Having a connection with the girl that many dream about is something that one can show off, however, for the case of Jin Jing, publicising one's strong wish to have a daughter or a girlfriend like Jin Jing means something more important. It may genuinely reflect what they think inside, nevertheless, such blatant expressions look more likely to be a way of declaring one's nationalist identity. Netizens seem to believe the notion 'who I am is who I am with', and claiming association with Jin Jing or even imagining a connection with her could help them manifest and strengthen their nationalist position.

All the above paragraphs have illustrated how forum users made a clear statement of their nationalist identity and stance by passionately embracing Jin Jing as a national

hero. It can be comprehended that the applications of language play an important role in the discursive construction of one's nationalist identity. In the online context of discussing Jin Jing's nationalist deed of protecting the torch, the attempts of netizens to highlight their nationalist identity are indicated not only by the specific words they choose to address Jin Jing, for instance, 'great', 'pride', and 'angel', as a way of showing their appreciation to and support for her nationalist determination; but also by the employment of some certain sentence structures that help establish the relationship between 'we' or 'I' and Jin Jing, as a means of stressing their identification with Jin Jing. When Jin Jing becomes a primary symbol of the 'we' and identification with her asserts one's nationalist identity, the problem arises, that is to say, any voices that intend to question Jin Jing or netizens' efforts of elevating Jin Jing as a national hero can easily trigger fierce resistance.

Although pro-Jin Jing comments were dominant in the online discussion and space for challenging voices was limited, there was still a tiny amount of people succeeded in expressing different views. They questioned netizens' excessive praises to Jin Jing, and argued that the online hype of Jin Jing's nationalist deed should be cooled down, because they believed that Jin Jing just did something that anyone else would be able to do. However, for most netizens, they did not seem to be open to hear different opinions, and their tolerance of opposition was considerably low. The following series of posts provides examples that explain the intensity of 'attacks' a post that challenges Jin Jing's heroic status can evoke:

*(I) did not pay much attention to this incident, just feel that the hype of this small thing has made (me) a bit sick. Not until I had a look at the picture did I realise that she was just embracing an extinct torch. Was that torch very expensive? What would happen if the torch were snatched away? Was she just driven by her instinct? Look at the omnipresent publicity (about the incident), as if (she) suddenly becomes a national hero, is that too exaggerated? (by Forum User P)*

*How do you deserve to be a Chinese? You are bringing shame to the motherland!! (by Forum User Q)*

*Her instinctive reaction was to protect national pride, what about you? Your fucking instinct is to squirt shit out of your mouth. What the fuck is flowing in your vessels? Is that urine? If I know you, I must open your shitty head to see what kind of fucking rubbish is used to make you as such? (by Forum User R)*

The three posts above feature the challenging voice of Forum User P and the fierce replies s/he received from Forum User Q and R. As I observe, voices that challenge Jin Jing's heroic status are limited in number, but the small number does not mean that they are meaningless. Forum User P's post is useful for the analysis because on the one hand, his/her argument in fact contains points that were also raised by other users who opposed the extravagant publicity of Jin Jing, and hence, it provides an opportunity to understand how a netizen articulated opposition in a place where a certain voice already dominated; on the other hand, his/her post was one of the few challenging posts that attracted significant resistance, and the replies stimulated by the challenging voice also enable me to assess how netizens defended their nationalist stance by defending Jin Jing's heroic status. By looking at Forum User P's comment, it is not surprising to understand the resistance s/he received. First of all, while many other netizens claimed that they were 'touched' by what Jin Jing did, Forum User P does not appear to be interested in the story, as s/he admits that s/he 'did not pay much attention to this incident' and thinks it was 'a small thing'. Secondly, s/he does not acknowledge the importance of the torch, which many forum users regarded as an epitome of China's pride, and his/her indifference to the torch is evidenced by the questions s/he poses: 'was that torch very expensive?' and 'what would happen if the torch were snatched away'. Thirdly, s/he denies the greatness of Jin Jing's action, for instance, in the sentence 'was she just driven by her instinct', the use of 'just' shows Forum User P's insinuation that Jin Jing's action of protecting the torch was only an instinctive reaction and should not be excessively publicised. This is the point actually raised by some other netizens, as they argue, it is natural that one instinctively turns to protect the thing s/he holds if someone suddenly appears to grab it. Forum User P's rejection of Jin Jing as a national hero can also be sensed in the sentence 'as if (she) suddenly becomes a national hero'. The phrase 'as

if' emanates a feeling of disbelief, underlining Forum User P's thought that netizens have endowed Jin Jing with a national hero title which she does not deserve. Forum User P's comment is 'provocative' in the sense that s/he not only denies Jin Jing's heroic deed, but also criticises people's enthusiasm for identifying her as a national hero. S/he regards netizens' passion for praising Jin Jing as 'hype' that made him/her feel 'a bit sick', and shows his/her disagreement with the cult of Jin Jing by asking 'is that too exaggerated'.

As said previously, Jin Jing has been transformed through massive online publicity into a national hero, and identification with her has become an effective way of asserting one's nationalist identity. Jin Jing's status as a nationalist hero needs to be defended, primarily because, netizens' identification with her as a means of declaring their nationalist identity can make sense only when Jin Jing's role as a national hero remains unchallenged. She is embraced by netizens as a nationalist symbol, and by identifying with her, netizens practice their nationalist identity and express their nationalist stance. Since Jin Jing did not regard herself as a hero, and her title of being a national hero was largely given by netizens, questioning Jin Jing's heroic status is actually questioning netizens' collective actions of making and worshiping her as a hero. From this perspective, when netizens' nationalist credentials are so determined and realised by the discursive efforts they make to associate with Jin Jing, intents that challenge her purportedly heroic status are considered threatening, because they know that the collapse of Jin Jing as a national hero, if it happens, means the collapse of a form of nationalist identification they create. That is to say, the collapse can not only make their passion for identifying with Jin Jing irrelevant and meaningless; as a nationalist symbol to which netizens attach so many nationalist emotions and hopes, the collapse can also result in a crisis of nationalist identification. As a result, it is not difficult to understand why the challenging voice of Forum User P can provoke aggressive replies as such.

Since a large number of netizens suppose that embracing Jin Jing as a national hero is a shared nationalist belief determining who 'we' are as Chinese, Forum User P's indifference to Jin Jing's nationalist deed and criticism of netizens' hype of her protection of the Olympic torch certainly deviate from and undermine the nationalist

norms established by the majority of other online discussants. One's membership of a community is obtained not only through the attempts of identifying with a figure that people of the community accept as a hero, but also through the efforts of defending the hero when s/he is questioned. As soon as Forum User P makes the comment, s/he receives replies with strong emotions, and becomes exposed to nationalist attacks. While netizens like Forum User Q and R are attacking Forum User P, they are also trying to draw a sharp line between themselves and Forum User P, in order to stress that s/he is not a member of the 'we'. Such sense of demarcation can be felt in Forum User Q's post, and his/her rejection of Forum User P as a member of the 'we' the Chinese is clear in the rhetoric question: 'how do you deserve to be a Chinese?' Contrary to the 'we' who are concerned with the national pride and praising Jin Jing's nationalist action, in Forum User Q's view, what Forum User P said makes him/her disqualified to be considered as a Chinese.

For Forum User R, s/he rebuts Forum User P's account that Jin Jing's action of protecting the torch was only an instinctive reaction that anyone else would make, and emphasises that Jin Jing's instinctive reaction was not a simple one, but rather an instinctive reaction to protect national pride. Instead of saying 'her instinctive reaction was to protect the torch', substituting 'national pride' for 'the torch' can glorify Jin Jing's instinctive reaction, making it as if her instinctive reaction was a sublime one. Furthermore, the stress of 'national pride' to some extent also helps Forum User R to declare his/her membership of the 'we', indicating his/her agreement with the shared view of the 'we' that the torch is an embodiment of China's national pride. Forum User R's strong determination of defending Jin Jing's heroic status can be sensed by his/her frequent use of offensive words towards Forum User P. Interestingly, the way s/he attacks Forum User P pretty much resembles the way many Chinese netizens attack their nationalist enemies. As I explained in the previous section, when they were discussing France's hostility and its alleged intention to humiliate China, they resorted to all linguistic means to tarnish France, and the more one enthusiastically defamed France, the more s/he felt nationalistic. From what s/he says in the post, Forum User R's hostility to Forum User P is overt, and it is clear that s/he treats Forum User P more as a hateful enemy than as a fellow citizen who has a different point of view. Forum User R's response does not show any of his/her patience to elaborate to what extent and on what point(s) s/he

disagrees with Forum User P; instead, s/he directly targets his/her anger and linguistic violence to Forum User P's personality and insults him/her by associating him/her with 'shit', 'urine' and 'rubbish'.

When praising, idolising and defending Jin Jing as a nationalist symbol has been established by an overwhelming number of forum users as a nationalist norm, they consider any acts that intend to challenge the norm as threatening, because questioning Jin Jing's role as a nationalist hero is actually questioning their nationalist quality. As linguistic violence is considered as a means to fight back the enemy that threatens the established nationalist idol and norm, using violence becomes not only legitimised but also a way of claiming one's nationalist determination. Bearing this in mind, one could find it difficult to express different nationalist views. Even though some attempt to do so, languages are carefully tailored in order not to cause unnecessary personal attacks. Here are the examples:

*I know, Jin Jing was delighted to protect the torch, (because) it is related to the pride of the country, and the pride of the Olympics. (I am delighted to protect it, too). Whoever in that position would do the same (no matter Chinese torchbearer or foreign torchbearer). Therefore, we should not infinitely beautify and glorify Jin Jing. [...] If (we) must say that Jin Jing is great, she is just mediocre great. (by Forum User S)*

*I think I can at least represent myself, my family and my friends to pay respect to Jin Jing. Certainly, I think many people would be able to do what she did if they had the chance. After all, I did not have the chance to do that, but she did, and so did those passionate overseas Chinese. Therefore, I must pay respect to them. (by Forum User T)*

Attempts to cool down the online cult of Jin Jing can be felt especially in Forum User S's post. S/he directly points to the problem of excessive online admiration for Jin Jing by blatantly claiming 'we should not infinitely beautify and glorify Jin Jing'. Both Forum User S and T raise the point that Jin Jing did something that in fact

many others would do, for instance, Forum User S states ‘whoever in that position would do the same (no matter Chinese torchbearer or foreign torchbearer)’, and a similar argument is made by Forum User T ‘certainly, I think many people would be able to do what she did if they had the chance’. Words, such as ‘whoever’ and ‘many people’ are chosen to stress that it was normal to protect the torch and many would do if they were ‘in that position’ or they ‘had the chance’. Forum User S even seems to think that protecting the torch has less to do with nationalism but more to do with the duty of a torchbearer, as s/he stresses in the brackets that ‘no matter Chinese torchbearer or foreign torchbearer’ would do the same in that position.

Even though both of them have shown some disagreement to the online enthusiasm for magnifying Jin Jing’s deed, they do not tend to deny that Jin Jing did something respectable. As Forum User P’s post shows, one’s rejection of Jin Jing’s heroic status and netizens’ passion for identifying with her could result in him/her becoming a nationalist target. Knowing this, netizens have to make sure that their nationalist stance and membership of the ‘we’ community are clearly presented while they are articulating a different point of view. Different viewpoints need to be articulated on the basis that one has no intention to challenge the established nationalist norms, and exhibiting one’s conformity with such norms is crucial. This is the case in both Forum User S and T’s posts. Forum User S unequivocally admits that the torch ‘is related to the pride of the country’, and likewise, Forum User T announces that Jin Jing did something s/he ‘must pay respect to’. To make their nationalist identity and stance even more explicit, Forum User S stresses in the brackets that ‘I am delighted to protect it, too’. Similarly, Forum User T implies his/her willingness to protect the torch even though s/he has to admit that s/he did not have the chance to do that. Whether or not s/he would really do the same as s/he claims if s/he were in Jin Jing’s position is not the matter, the importance is to show their willingness and readiness to protect the torch, as they know it is the way of vowing their nationalist correctness.

On the one hand, both Forum User S and T have to make it prominent that they care about China’s national pride and they belong to the nationalist ‘we’; on the other hand, however, since both of them believe that netizens’ admiration for Jin Jing is



excessive, efforts to differentiate themselves from those netizens who fervently see Jin Jing as a great national hero are also identifiable in both posts. Throughout Forum User T's post, s/he does not use such emotional expressions as 'we (I) love you' or 'you are our angel', which are quite often used by other netizens. Instead, s/he uses the phrase 'pay respect to', which seems less emotional and more neutral. Forum User T's intention to show his/her 'rationality' is also evident in the first sentence of his/her post 'I think I can at least represent myself, my family and my friends to pay respect to Jin Jing'. Unlike those passionate netizens who directly shout out slogans like 'Jin Jing, you are the pride of China', as if they have the power to represent all the people in China, Forum User T stresses his/her rationality by clarifying that s/he is different from those who blindly represent other people whom they can not represent, and s/he pays respect to Jin Jing only on behalf of those who s/he knows s/he can represent.

Although Forum User S shows some respect to Jin Jing, his/her major criticism is that netizens are excessively glorifying Jin Jing. To distinguish himself/herself from those netizens and show that s/he is critical and less emotional, s/he proclaims 'if (we) must say that Jin Jing is great, she is just mediocre great (*pingfan de weida*)'. Forum User S is in fact reluctant to use the word 'great' to describe Jin Jing. S/he employs the word 'mediocre' to rate Jin Jing's greatness, and adds the word 'just' to further emphasise his/her personal opinion that though Jin Jing is respectable, she is not as great as many other online supporters describe. The point is, although Forum User S tries to make Jin Jing a less mystical figure by claiming that she is 'just mediocre great', s/he still has to use the word 'great' to show that Jin Jing is more or less 'great'. This is on the one hand, a move to show other online nationalists that s/he still thinks Jin Jing is to some extent 'great'; on the other hand, it is a mechanism that allows one to express a different view towards the purported national hero, but at the same time, still protects him/her from being caught in nationalist attacks. Both Forum User S and T signal their worries and disagreement with respect to the prevailing online phenomenon of idolising and worshiping Jin Jing. The dilemma is, no matter how much people like Forum User S and T try to differentiate themselves from those peer users who they believe exaggerate Jin Jing's nationalist achievement, they are reluctant to challenge those peer users, and have to nonetheless show some

acknowledgement to them by reassuring them that they respect the established nationalist idol and norms, and have no intention to undermine them.

Interestingly, the online collective practices of attacking the alleged enemy and worshipping the national hero reflects what Bakhtin calls a carnival sense of the world. The hierarchical barriers that divide people in the real world are suspended during an online carnival, and the temporary liberation from the official norms, orders and prohibitions enables an equal mode of interrelationship that encourages a free and familiar contact between individuals. Protected by online anonymity, carnival participants are freed from the notions of manners, taboos and regulations that restrict them in the real world, therefore, they become unfettered to speak and act in a way they normally fear to do in the official life, for instance, in the context of online Chinese nationalism, Chinese netizens, as many of them do, publicly call for nationalist hatred against France and attack with obscene language against anyone that holds a different nationalist view. Carnival is an emotionally charged space for outspoken words and eccentric behaviours. The expression of excessive hatred toward France and extravagant admiration for Jin Jing is not only accepted in the virtual space, but also acknowledged as one of the prevailing norms that regulate online nationalist interactions. Moreover, the exaggerated and to some extent even eccentric expression of nationalist hatred and love can not be simply regarded as crazy and meaningless vent of emotions, rather, such expression becomes the ticket for joining the online carnival of Chinese nationalism. In other words, only by clearly announcing one's hatred against France and praise for Jin Jing can s/he be considered as a member of the nationalist 'we'. Furthermore, online Chinese nationalism can be treated as a resemblance to carnival also because of its ambivalent images. As Bakhtin (1984a: 126) suggests, when analysing a carnival, one must pay attention to the 'ambivalent nature of carnival images', because 'all the images of carnival are dualistic', and they unite 'birth with death, blessing and curse, praise and abuse, youth and old age, top and bottom, face and backside, stupidity and wisdom'. As can be seen in this chapter, the online construction of nationalist hatred against France on the one hand and love for Jin Jing on the other hand forms the most identifiable paired image of online Chinese nationalism in relation to the Beijing Olympic torch relay in Paris. In addition to that, online Chinese nationalism also presents other ambivalent images including, sacred and profane, praise and curse (forum users

praise Jin Jing as a sacred angel that protected China's national pride and curse those who question Jin Jing's heroic status with obscene words), divine and secular (Jin Jing is apotheosised as a divine nationalist symbol while at the same regarded as a secular role model citizen), optimism and pessimism (while some forum users feel pessimistic that a weak China can easily become susceptible to western humiliation, others feel confident that the reason why the West opposes and criticises China is because they fear China's emergence).

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter provided a special dimension for studying Chinese nationalism, because it put the concept of Chinese nationalism into the online context of collective expression of hatred towards the enemy, and collective identification with the national hero. The two ingredients, namely, 'enemy' and 'hero', which are critical to the building of a nation, were jointly brought into the research and formed the overarching framework of the chapter. Both concepts are important not only in the building of a nation, but also in giving meaning to a nation. How both concepts are produced, received and consumed determines the shapes and dynamics of Chinese nationalism. In an overall sense, this chapter explained the weight of both concepts in the politics of Chinese nationalism; however, to be more specific, it in fact focused on the importance of both concepts in the realm of the online construction of nationalist identity. From what was explained in the chapter, it could be argued that online Chinese nationalism is largely about politics of defining who 'we' are. Both concepts play a considerable role in the discussions of Chinese nationalism, and the online discussions about enemies and heroes also mirror the processes of defining the 'we'. One's nationalist identity is claimed by on the one hand, targeting his/her nationalist anger and hatred to the hostile enemy that allegedly humiliates the pride of the 'we'; on the other hand, by identifying with a national hero who is believed to have protected the pride of the 'we'. As a consequence, the 'we' is defined as a community that shares the same 'enemy' for hating, and the same 'hero' for loving.

This chapter also stressed the discursive nature of online Chinese nationalism. Online Chinese nationalism is a linguistically related phenomenon, not only because

the telling and retelling, production and reproduction, and interpretation and reinterpretation of the notion of ‘enemy’ and ‘hero’ depend on the use of language, but also netizens’ practices of constructing nationalist identity through expression of hatred towards the ‘enemy’ and identification with the ‘hero’, are largely enabled by the use of language. The concepts ‘enemy’ and ‘hero’ per se are inherently discursive, as they are discursively produced and maintained. France became an enemy because of netizens’ discursive practices of constantly constructing and reconstructing its hostility, for instance, France was constructed as a hostile enemy that saw us as ‘heresy’ and that wanted ‘us’ to continue to be the ‘Sick Man of East Asia’. Likewise, Jin Jing’s becoming a national hero was also a result of netizens’ passion for elevating and glorifying her deed of protecting the torch through language, and special words were chosen such as ‘angel’ and ‘pride of China’ to justify her heroic status. The chapter provided many instances regarding the discursive techniques netizens applied in order to produce, maintain and reinforce the notions of ‘enemy’ and ‘hero’. Further to that, the actions made by netizens to declare their nationalist identity were discursive as well, since languages was carefully selected and structured in order to make sure that a boundary between ‘me’ and the ‘enemy’ was clearly marked on the one hand, and on the other hand, to highlight a close connection between ‘me’ and the ‘hero’.

Lastly, this chapter also showed some new perspectives and understandings that the internet adds to studies of Chinese nationalism. Traditional thinking of nationalism as an elite led and top-down manipulation is challenged, and the internet has brought in a new dimension for analysis and urged scholars to consider nationalism the other way round, that is to say, to think about how the increasing participation of ordinary people in the politics of nationalism could change the way nationalism is understood in the age of the internet. In the Chinese context, the internet has enabled ordinary Chinese citizens to engage in the discursive processes of shaping the dynamics and structures of Chinese nationalism, and provided a space for them to deliberate and discuss issues that relate to the nation. The capability of the internet for increasing the opportunities for ordinary people to participate in and practice the politics of nationalism has been proved by the enthusiasm of ordinary Chinese netizens for the singling out of the enemy and the making of the hero. As illustrated in the chapter, by discursively framing, distributing and interpreting the notions of ‘enemy’ and

'hero', netizens have taken on some independent roles in mobilising, sustaining and transforming Chinese nationalism. The internet gives ordinary citizens some freedom which they could hardly find in the real offline society, to articulate, publicise and debate their nationalist views and claims.

In spite of the large quantity of online posts, the forum did not show a variety of different views, and deliberative debating among people of different views was not often seen. In both cases, certain voices permeated the overall online discussion, namely, the dominant voice of hating the enemy on the one hand, and the prevailing voice of loving the hero on the other hand. Furthermore, many Chinese netizens usually show little tolerance of a different nationalist view, and as shown in the case of Jin Jing, one has to express different nationalist views carefully in order not to become a target of nationalist attacks. The fear of personal attacks dismisses people's willingness to utter different viewpoints, and this results in what is called the 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). On the Chinese internet, using linguistic violence on those who challenge the dominant nationalist norms is not only accepted, but also legitimised as a way of showing one's nationalist determination. The legitimisation of hatred and violence, the shouting of emotional slogans and the exaggeration of love and hatred, all have made the Chinese internet look like a carnival square where orders, hierarchy and taboos are temporarily suspended.

## Chapter 6

### Debating the Boycott of Carrefour in Media Discourses

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 showed the emergence of online popular nationalism due to the online representation of the massive protests and ‘humiliation’ China received during the Olympic torch relay in Paris, and Chapter 5 explained the escalation of online nationalist sentiments provoked by the online discursive practices of condemning the enemy on the one hand, and identifying with the national hero on the other hand. This chapter investigates the culmination of popular nationalist sentiments largely as a result of an online initiative to boycott the French chain supermarket Carrefour as a counter strike to France’s alleged hostility to China. Although it is difficult to locate where the original call for the boycott came from, it is certain that Chinese netizens’ active response to the call and their passion and determination for boycotting the French supermarket were in fact caused by a series of incidents involving France and China. Firstly, the then President of France Nicolas Sarkozy threatened to boycott the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games in protest at the policies and actions of the Chinese government towards the riots in Tibet in March 2008. Secondly, on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008, when the Beijing Olympic torch relay was held in Paris, China received considerable criticism over human rights and Tibetan issues, and massive protests turned what China officially called the ‘Journey of Harmony’ into chaos. Many Chinese netizens complained that the turmoil of the torch relay and pro-Tibet protestors’ attack on Jin Jing was a consequence of the poor reception of Paris. Thirdly, when the Sino-France relations were already strained over the problem of Tibet, Paris city council voted to bestow the title of ‘Honorary Citizen of Paris’ to the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader in exile, whom the Chinese government denounces as a separatist intending to cause instability in Tibet and jeopardise national unity. However, what in fact catalysed the explosion of Chinese nationalist sentiments and eventually gave rise to the boycott of Carrefour was an online rumour that Carrefour supported and donated money to the Dalai Lama. Although the allegation was found largely groundless and the Chairman of Carrefour publicly denied that his company had ever backed the Dalai Lama, his announcement did not by any means appease the anger of Chinese

nationalists. Rather, the call to boycott Carrefour was disseminating fast through the internet and mobile phones, and discussions about the boycott on the internet soon resulted in substantial protests in front of Carrefour stores in various cities in China. As the nationalist protests continued to spread, it finally led to intervention by the government. In fear that popular nationalism would cause social instability and further complicate the Sino-France relations, the government made efforts to cool down the nationalist heat, and the word 'Carrefour' even became a sensitive word for a time on the Chinese cyberspace to prevent people from further discussing about boycotting Carrefour.

The previous two chapters respectively explained the representation of nationalist events and construction of nationalist identity in the online media discourse, and discussed the extent to which the emergence of online popular nationalism could pose challenges to the domination of the CCP in nationalist politics. This chapter focuses on the part of the research question which still remains unaddressed, that is, how ordinary Chinese people use the internet to participate in the discursive practices of discussing nationalist actions, and in what ways such online discussions collide, co-opt and integrate with the CCP's nationalist policies. I argue that the making and shaping of Chinese nationalism is a discursive process and as a result of this, the investigation of Chinese nationalism is closely related to the linguistic analysis of nationalist texts. As the last two chapters demonstrated, the representation of nationalist information and the construction of nationalist identity could hardly be realised without the use of the language, and language also plays a crucial role in the activation, mobilisation and elevation of nationalist sentiments. Taking this into consideration, this chapter continues to stress the discursive nature of Chinese nationalism by looking at how nationalist players discuss, promote and defend their nationalist actions through the manipulation of language in media discourses.

This chapter is divided into the following sections. First of all, since I realise that censorship was prevalent throughout the online discussions about the boycott, the first section pays attention to this specific online phenomenon and examines how online censorship could play a role in shaping the general setting out of which the

online discussions about the boycott took place. In the second and third sections, I mainly focus on the online debate between those who oppose and those who support the boycott of Carrefour, and investigate how each side defends their own rationales and positions via the use of language. In the following section, I look at the question about the relationship between personal and national interest and whether or not one should give up his/her personal interest for the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour. The section therefore analyses the ways in which the tension between personal and nationalist interest can affect netizens' discursive construction of nationalist positions towards the boycott. Finally, I turn to investigate the official media discourse of *The People's Daily*, in order to explore the responses, attitudes and policies of the Chinese government towards the popular nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour. This provides some opportunities for me to evaluate where online popular and official nationalist policies contradict and co-opt, and explore the discursive techniques the CCP applies to instrumentally flow with the tide of online popular nationalism when needed, and as it no longer suits and starts to threaten the official nationalist lines, how the CCP suppresses the challenging voices of popular nationalists.

## **6.2 Censorship: A Contextual Factor Shaping the General Discussions of Boycotting Carrefour in the Online Media Discourse**

As I said earlier, netizens' fierce debate about the initiative to boycott Carrefour and the protests in the streets eventually prompted governmental intervention, including massive clearing up and censoring of online content in connection with the boycott of Carrefour. Before moving to the analysis as to how netizens debate various views and concerns about the boycott through online discourse, this section has to briefly talk about online censorship in the forum, since it was a relevant factor that shaped the context out of which general discussions about the boycott took place, and can be immediately and constantly felt in the language people used to convey their nationalist views relating to the boycott issues.

For a certain period of time (notably the last week of April 2008), the word 'Carrefour' was filtered and as Jacobs (2008) finds, entering the word into Chinese-language search engine 'returned blank pages explaining such results "do



not conform to relevant law and policy”’. This was later confirmed by the Chinese authority, and blocking the word ‘Carrefour’ as explained by the Beijing Public Security Bureau was because ‘search results about Carrefour were heavily related to the Sino-France relations and Tibetan independence, and they were likely to contain contents which violates relevant laws and regulations’ (Netease, 2008). The authority also admitted that the keyword ‘Carrefour’ was kept blocked until 4<sup>th</sup> May 2008. Like always, the Chinese authority defended its online censorship with vague explanations, and did not specify which laws and regulations online discussions about Carrefour violated. Censorship was common in the online forum that is under investigation, and netizens’ prominent use of codes to substitute the keyword ‘Carrefour’ not only suggests their consciousness of the existence of online censorship, but also becomes the most identifiable feature of the online discussions about the boycott. Various codes were created to refer to the French supermarket without actually typing out the Chinese characters for Carrefour, and using abbreviations was noticeably one of the most common techniques Chinese netizens adopted to circumvent keyword filtering. ‘JLF’, abbreviation for Carrefour in Chinese pinyin (*Jia Le Fu*), was one of the most frequently used codes as seen in the forum, however, since Chinese internet users were well aware of the online censorship and knew that the official firewall constantly updated with new keyword definitions and simple codes like ‘JFL’ would soon become obsolete, they developed many other codes which look more complicated. They intentionally insert punctuation marks, such as asterisk (\*), comma (,), slash (/) and hyphen (-) between letters, for instance, ‘J\*L-F’, to fool the automatic filtering system. Using homophonic Chinese characters to refer to the name of Carrefour was another strategy used by Chinese netizens. The official name of Carrefour in China is written as ‘家乐福’, and netizens usually employed another three different Chinese characters, which had similar or the same sounds, to replace its official name. Codes formulated by netizens normally had no literal meanings, however, when they were pronounced, people immediately understood that the codes actually referred to Carrefour.

Combining abbreviations, homophonic characters and punctuation marks provides copious possibilities for creating codes, however, the problem is that the censorship in China was far more sophisticated than keyword filtering. As I explained in

Chapter 2, there is tension between the official and popular users of the internet, and while Chinese netizens are developing new tactics to avoid the government control of the internet, the government is also trying to re-establish control over the internet through both hard and soft censorship mechanisms. On the official level, there is a department in the Public Security Bureau specifically designated to monitor the internet; on the company level, internet content providers employ staff to manage the online content on their websites and make sure that no politically sensitive content is circulated. For those online forums like *Tianya*, there are administrators in each subforum responsible for the daily maintenance as well as deleting unwanted content. They are the persons who monitor the internet on a real time basis, and enforce the official regulations of information control. Given that there are censors manually checking the online content, though it could be extremely costly and labour intensive, it means that using codes could not always work. As I observe, in order to stop internet users from discussing the boycott of Carrefour, the forum administrators tended to close the entire threads that discussed the topic. The closed threads do not allow any comments to be added, but interestingly, they are still viewable and searchable. If the threads were closed because of people discussing the boycott of Carrefour, however, as I find, some threads in which people fiercely debate the boycott issues and whose titles even explicitly contain the exact keywords 'Carrefour' and 'boycott', without using codes, are still kept open.

If the purpose of censorship is to ensure that online public opinion conforms to the official ideology and amplify voices that favour the government, this does not appear to be the case in the data collection. Even though it can be assumed that there were posts censored and deleted, the data collected still features intensive debate between different views about the boycott, and voices that questioned and ridiculed the nationalist policies of the government can also be spotted. Irrespective of the online censorship, the pluralism of the online debate about the boycott may stress the fact that it is difficult to fully control the information, although the Chinese government tries hard to rein in the internet. On the other hand, it may also have something to do with the forum itself. Commercial websites are different in the implementation of censorship, and *Tianya* seems to have a relatively less censored environment for encouraging a diversity of voices. After all, it is difficult to understand the exact criteria of internet censorship, and learning the operation of

censorship in China usually requires guesswork. Some of the censorship policies of the forum even look contradictory, for instance, if forum administrators had really wanted to stop online participants from discussing about the boycott, they could have deleted the entire threads; the strange thing is that, they closed the threads and no further comments were allowed, however, the threads were still there and forum users could still read and search the threads. The purpose of this particular section is not to explain online censorship policies in China, but rather, to emphasise that censorship is actually an embedded part of studies in connection with the Chinese internet and political communications, particularly if one investigates sensitive topics like online Chinese nationalism. Bearing the reality that censors are closely monitoring the web and when sensitive incidents break out, relevant information can disappear quickly even before one starts to notice, it is more realistic for me to answer the research question based on the data to which I can access, rather than to retrieve the data which are already gone, because technically speaking, it could be extremely difficult if not impossible. Censorship shapes the way Chinese netizens express views and ideas in the cyberspace, and it is a fact that researchers can not avoid, but have to take into consideration.

### **6.3 Debating the Rationales of Not Boycotting Carrefour in the Online Media Discourse**

Ever since the initiative to boycott Carrefour was proposed on the internet, it became a fiercely debated topic among the Chinese public. It was fierce in the sense that the initiative soon caused a sharp bifurcation between those who were in favour of a boycott and those who were not, and the two camps often showed very little patience to listen to each other. They persisted with their own rationales of boycotting or not boycotting Carrefour, and their unwillingness to compromise constantly led to a war of words in the virtual cyberspace or even physical confrontations in the real society. According to Sina (2008), one of the main online news portals in China, Mr Ma and his friends went to a local Carrefour store in Kunming, Yunnan Province, to distribute flyers in order to persuade passers-by not to boycott Carrefour, as they thought it may hurt the local economy. However, their behaviours caused angry shouts from those who were protesting against Carrefour, and a police officer warned Mr Ma and his friends to be careful as the day before,

someone who expressed different views had been beaten. The report also features a confrontation between Mr Wu and the protestors in front of a Carrefour store in Kunming. Mr Wu argued that most products sold in Carrefour were Chinese products and it was irrational to boycott it, however, those protestors in favour of a boycott pushed him back and accused him of being a ‘traitor’, and they even threw bottles at him.

The sharp division between those who supported and those who opposed the boycott of Carrefour was no less reflected in the online forum, and the tension was exemplified by their actions of *koumaozi* with each other. *Koumaozi*, which literally means forcibly putting a hat on somebody, is a Chinese figurative expression, which refers to the act of branding somebody with an unwanted label. It was a prevalent phenomenon throughout the online nationalist debate of boycotting Carrefour, and forum users commonly used it as a means to criticise as well as differentiate themselves from those discussants who held a conflicting nationalist view. In discussing the controversy of boycotting Carrefour, forum participants, who disagreed with the plan of boycotting and thought it was an imprudent nationalist decision, usually used the title *fenqing* (*indignant youths*) to address those who fervently advocated the boycott plan as a tactic to teach France a lesson. According to Zhang (2005), *fenqing* was a term originally describing young people in Hong Kong who sought reforms during the 1970s; however, it has increasingly become a popular internet term normally referring to those young Chinese with ultra-nationalist emotion, claims and actions. Baculinao (2012: 80) defines *fenqing* as Chinese youths who embrace a ‘militant type of popular nationalism’ ‘in reaction to larger events that affect the country’s interests’ and use the internet to ‘propagate their ideas’. The term gained people’s attention largely due to the anti-Japan nationalist protests in 2005 and 2012. During the protests, those indignant young nationalists not just shouted out anti-Japan slogans loudly both online and offline, but also indiscriminately smashed and struck things in the street, which they thought were Japanese. They overturned Japanese cars even though most of them were made by Chinese manufacturers, and also attacked those who drove them. They smashed Japanese restaurants even though they were owned by Chinese citizens. Their ignorance and destructive ways of expressing nationalist anger have made the term *fenqing* increasingly negative, and as in Chinese language, the words ‘*faeces*’ and

'*indignant*' have the identical sound '*fen*', people who oppose ultra nationalist policies call those angry youths '*faeces youths*'. The *fenqing* reject the derogatory title of '*faeces youths*', however, they do not seem to care about being called '*indignant youths*'. They defend their 'righteous anger' (Gries 2005c: 112-113) by arguing that their indignation is directed to those who dare challenge China's national interest, and shouting out anger shows the strength and unity of the Chinese nation. As a response, *fenqing* called their opponents who were against the boycott '*hanjian*' (traitors) or '*yangnu*' (slaves of foreigners). They saw reluctance or objections to the initiative to boycott as a manifestation of being feeble and unpatriotic, and because of this, anyone who questioned the initiative or urged people to reconsider it could easily put himself/herself under *fenqing's* nationalist accusation. In the last chapter, I explained how Jin Jing was elevated and defended as a national hero, nevertheless, when she publicly announced that she did not support the boycott action since most of its employees were Chinese, she soon received considerable personal attacks from the *fenqing*, and was denounced as a traitor.

The sharp division between advocates and opponents of boycotting Carrefour was also evident in the online threads that I chose to take into close analysis. As I mentioned in the last section, online censorship was common throughout the discussions about the boycott and forum administrators tended to prevent users from discussing it by closing some of the threads. In fact three out of four threads collected for analysis were actually closed ones, however, in spite of this mechanism of discouraging online discussions, the four threads were still the most popular and replied threads collected through the keyword search, and in these forum threads, as I find, netizens debated a range of issues relating to the boycott of Carrefour. The three threads still reserved a good amount of posts (approximately 1400 posts), and all the four threads, consisting of nearly 2000 different posts, in reality provide a significant opportunity to understand the major issues that caused those who supported the boycott to clash with those who did not, and how they justified and defended their own nationalist claims throughout the online media discourse.

The question that stimulated fierce online confrontations between the advocates and opponents of the boycott was whether it was a necessary and rational decision to boycott Carrefour as a fight-back to France's alleged hostility. Many online discussants gave their own reasons for boycotting or not boycotting Carrefour, nonetheless, as the discussions continued, the reasons given for either supporting or opposing the boycott tended to saturate, since no more new arguments were added and people just repeated the viewpoints that had already been mentioned by other peer users. The nationalist debate started as soon as the call to boycott was made on the internet, and as I find out, those who veto the initiative to boycott Carrefour normally held common arguments as illustrated in the following paragraphs.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008, a forum user posted a thread entitled 'Can't Chinese Achieve the Goal? Why Are There Still People Opposing the Boycott of Carrefour'. In the thread, the author urged all forum users to unite for the same goal of boycotting Carrefour, as s/he believed that if all Chinese people could stop shopping in Carrefour even just for a day on 1<sup>st</sup> May (a national holiday in China), it would show France Chinese people's anger and solidarity. Forum User U responded to the thread and denied the proposition of the boycott:

*Boycotting Carrefour is very silly and muddled! Carrefour is just an ordinary French enterprise, and its shareholders are from the whole world, including China. In Carrefour China, the majority of employees and products are Chinese. Boycotting Carrefour will cause very little loss to France, but those who suffer the most are our Chinese compatriots. Then, what is the meaning of such boycott? Causing harm to others while bringing more harm to ourselves, is it rational? What objectives can be achieved? Importantly, boycotting Carrefour is against the prevailing norms of international business, and this will definitely result in international misunderstandings that China is not a mature modern society, (that China) is a country that has not formed healthy economic and legal systems. This will not only stimulate the international community to counter the boycott, but also give them ammunition for not recognising China's market economy status. We will lose more, and will stand on the*

*opposite side of most countries in the world. We don't have any chance of victory. [...] (Boycotting Carrefour) can bring no interest, not to mention dignity and honour. [...] According to international conventions, (when one) has complaints about a country or a government, the targets to which one expresses objections and protests should be the government and politicians (of that country). Boycotting an ordinary enterprise, and even rebuking the ordinary Chinese customers (shopping in Carrefour) as traitors are extremely incompetent, coward, contemptible and ugly performances.*

In another thread in which netizens continued the debate about the rationales of boycotting or not boycotting Carrefour, Forum User V raised another argument for dismissing the boycott proposal:

*Although I am not an emotional person, as a person who was born in this country, I choose to love it. I am very angry with France, too, but the one who can represent France in China is the French embassy, not Carrefour. Directing the spearhead to Carrefour, as I think, is very reckless. Boycotting Carrefour can hurt China itself, and China suffers more than France. Carrefour sells products made by our brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts, and it employs Chinese staff. Carrefour pays tax to China, and boosts Chinese economy. (Our) country spent enormous efforts to bring in foreign capital, but you want to punish it till it closes. Tens of thousands of (its) employees become jobless, are you going to take care of them? How much pressure does it cause to the society? For another decade, China on its own will probably not be able to develop a supermarket of Carrefour's scale. Are you going to pay for the loss it causes to the local finance during the decade? I don't really mean to crush your patriotic enthusiasm, if people like you boycott this and that like crazy, the Chinese economy will be plunged into a lost decade.*

Before starting the analysis, it should be noted that in Forum User U's post, all Chinese words referring to 'Carrefour' and 'boycott' are intentionally miswritten

and replaced with other homophonic characters in an attempt to avoid automatic keyword censorship. This echoes the previous section about the online censorship, and reconfirms the rigorousness of information control on the Chinese internet during that time, and netizens' efforts to circumvent the control and make their nationalist claims heard. Regardless of this, in both Forum User U and V's posts, their objections to the boycott initiative are clearly announced, and the chosen adjectives, such as 'silly', 'muddled' and 'very reckless', reflect both discussants' negative views towards the proposed nationalist plan. A point of view is shared between both discussants for not boycotting Carrefour, that is, as they point out, the French company should not be held responsible for the 'wrongdoings' of the French government, and Chinese people's complaints and anger should be directed to the ones that can officially represent the French government. This was the point actually mentioned by many other forum users, and they agreed that now that the boycott of Carrefour was called primarily because of the allegation that the company donated a large amount of money to the Dalai Lama, and by the time no evidence had been found to verify the validity of the allegation, actions towards Carrefour were groundless and should be halted. Although Forum User U and V reject the boycott of Carrefour, they do not seem to reject the 'fact' that France has done something that makes Chinese people angry, nor do they tend to stop people from expressing their anger towards France, as both of them point out that public anger should target at either the 'government and politicians (of that country)' or the 'French embassy'. As I elaborated in the last chapter, expressing hatred towards the enemy is an effective way of manifesting one's nationalist identity, and in order to show other forum users that s/he is equally patriotic, Forum User V explicitly claims that 'I am very angry with France, too'. Even though s/he opposes the boycott of Carrefour, by clearly announcing his/her anger towards France, it helps him/her reduce the political risk of raising a conflicting nationalist view, and leaves as little pretext as possible for his/her opponents to start a nationalist attack.

As it can be seen in the posts, both discussants try to persuade peer users that directing nationalist anger to the French government is more appropriate than to Carrefour. Stating that 'the one who can represent France in China is the French embassy, not Carrefour', Forum User V stresses the basic knowledge about international relations that the French embassy is the only body that officially



represents France in China and can report back to the French government about the appeals of Chinese people. Likewise, when saying ‘according to international conventions, (when one) has complaints about a country or a government, the targets to which one expresses objections and protests should be the government and politicians (of that country)’, Forum User U’s appeal to authority by emphasising the phrase ‘according to international conventions’, gives himself/herself an authoritative footing to underpin his/her reason for directing Chinese public anger to the French government or its representatives instead of to the French chain supermarket. Both Forum User U and V seem to argue that they are rational and their decision to not target nationalist anger at Carrefour is reasonably made, because they are aware of how international politics works and their nationalist decision is made in accordance with ‘international conventions’.

Further to the argument that Carrefour is not the right target to which Chinese nationalist anger towards France should be directed, as Forum User U stresses twice in his/her post, it is an ‘ordinary enterprise’, other reasons given in the above posts for not boycotting Carrefour are to a great extent built on economic considerations. Both discussants warn that boycotting Carrefour is not a wise decision, for it will bring negative consequences to China and its people. They do not deny that boycotting Carrefour would cause some loss to France; however, their objections to the initiative are rooted in the belief that China would suffer more than France from the boycott. By using clauses of comparison, both discussants aim to show the considerable disparity between China and France in terms of the possible loss they may have from the boycott, and the considerable disparity can be sensed in the sentences, for instance, ‘boycotting Carrefour will cause very little loss to France, but those who suffer the most are our Chinese compatriots’, ‘causing harm to others while bringing more harm to ourselves’ and ‘boycotting Carrefour can hurt China itself, and China suffers more than France’. The sharp contrast constructed in the sentences between France who will have ‘very little loss’ and China who will ‘suffer the most’ and have ‘more harm’ from the boycott, alerts those who support a boycott of the huge flaws of their nationalist plan.

Both discussants continue their explanations why they think boycotting Carrefour can bring more harm to China than France. They agree that even though Carrefour is a French supermarket, since it has been localised and integrated into the Chinese economy, boycotting Carrefour can in fact undermine China's own interest. The discussants are making efforts to convince others that the interest of Carrefour and China is in fact intertwined. In the sentence, 'Carrefour is just an ordinary French enterprise, and its shareholders are from the whole world, including China', the phrase 'including China' emphasises the interconnection between China and Carrefour on the one hand; and on the other hand, it implies that Chinese investors will be inevitably affected if the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour is executed. In addition to that, the word 'majority' as in the sentence 'the majority of employees and products are Chinese' further suggests the level of Chinese involvement in the business of Carrefour, and the negative consequences the boycott may cause to the Chinese employees and suppliers. Forum User V also emphasises the close association between China and Carrefour by mentioning the contributions of Carrefour to the Chinese local economy, for instance, 'Carrefour pays tax to China, and boosts Chinese economy'. Besides the efforts to underscore the fact that the price of boycotting Carrefour will be enormous and it will unavoidably hurt China itself, Forum User V also attempts to warn the supporters of the boycott that their actions of boycotting Carrefour will not only cause problems to China's macro economy, but also can have negative impacts on individual Chinese. In the sentence, 'Carrefour sells products made by our brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts', the use of 'our' not only shows Forum User V's intention to engage with those who are keen to boycott Carrefour, emphasising a sense of connection and belonging to the same community; but also shows his/her attempt to take them back to the moral common ground which few Chinese actually dare deny, that is, 'we' Chinese are living as a big family, 'we' share the kinship, and Chinese compatriots are like 'our' brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts. By suggesting that 'our brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts' will be subject to the negative effects of the boycott, Forum User V's attempt to urge the advocates of the boycott to reconsider their nationalist actions is manifest. The message s/he wants to deliver to the opponents is that boycotting Carrefour can cause negative impacts on 'our' compatriots, because Carrefour sells the products made by them, and if the boycott of Carrefour is executed, it will affect the sales of the products; and as a result, 'our'

compatriots will become the victims of the boycott actions. Since in the Chinese tradition, people prioritise the harmony of family, any acts that cause problems to the family are considered morally unacceptable. In trying to persuade the boycott advocates to give up their boycott actions, Forum User V also seems to intimidate them that since boycotting Carrefour will cause immediate hurt to our 'family members' and to some extent boycotting Carrefour is equivalent to boycotting 'our brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts', it is morally wrong to boycott Carrefour.

The threatening tone can also be sensed elsewhere in Forum User V's post. S/he tends to intimidate those boycott advocates that boycotting Carrefour is against the will of the country, and this can be felt in the sentence '(our) country spent enormous efforts to bring in foreign capital'. The word 'enormous' underlines the amount of efforts which have been made to attract foreign investments, including Carrefour, in order to enhance the Chinese economy. In common knowledge, it is not the country itself which makes efforts to bring in foreign capital, but rather the representative of the country, namely, the Chinese government. By saying '(our) government spent enormous efforts to bring in foreign capitals', it only indicates the behaviours and will of the government, and one can certainly oppose and disagree with what the government has done. However, by accentuating that it is the 'country' that needs foreign capital to develop its economy, it leaves very little space for people to say no, as opposing the will of the country, one has to face a serious accusation of not loving the country.

Both discussants stress the grave consequences the boycott of Carrefour can bring to China. As Forum User U argues, internationally speaking, the boycott can tarnish China's image to the world, because it causes international misunderstandings that 'China is not a mature modern society, (that China) is a country that has not formed healthy economic and legal systems'. Domestically speaking, as Forum User V argues, boycotting Carrefour can lead to the unemployment of 'tens of thousands of Chinese people, and result in the loss of local financial revenue and so on. While explaining the adverse effects of the boycott, both discussants are also frightening those boycott advocates that if they insist on boycotting, they will have to be held responsible for all the possible harm that their boycott actions will cause. This is

particularly evident in the use of ‘you’ in Forum User V’s post, for instance, ‘tens of thousands of (its) employees become jobless, are you going to take care of them?’ and ‘are you going to pay for the loss it causes to the local finance?’. The two sentences end with question marks, giving an impression as if Forum User V is interrogating someone who has done something wrong. S/he is intimidating in the sense that s/he exaggerates the negative consequences of the boycott, trying to scare the boycott supporters that they will not be able to afford the price of the boycott. A similar intimidating tone can also be found in Forum User V’s claim, ‘if people like you boycott this and that like crazy, the Chinese economy will be plunged into a lost decade’. S/he believes that boycotting Carrefour will engender deep problems to the Chinese economy, however, s/he overstates the consequences, because how s/he is supposed to know that ‘the Chinese economy will be plunged into a lost decade’, and s/he does not present any scientific data to support his/her assertion. Although Forum User V raises questions to those boycott advocates, s/he does not expect answers from them, because s/he knows for sure that it is impossible for any ordinary Chinese to say ‘yes’ that they will take care of the ‘tens of thousands of unemployed workers, and that they will pay for the loss the boycott may cause to the local economy. As a result of this, what Forum User V is really prone to say is that ‘if you can not be responsible for the serious consequences of the boycott, stop boycotting Carrefour’.

In spite of their reiteration of the harm boycotting Carrefour will cause, there is identifiable pessimism about the boycott in both Forum Users’ posts. For Forum User U, s/he seems to believe that China will be an absolute loser in the campaign of boycotting Carrefour, and this is evident in his/her assertion ‘we don’t have any chance of victory’ and ‘(boycotting Carrefour) can bring no interest, not to mention dignity and honour’. Such pessimism derives from a conviction that China has a weak position in the world, and since its economic development largely relies on foreign countries, especially on some developed countries, China is vulnerable to the decisions of those powerful countries. Forum User U fears that the boycott will provide ammunition to some countries for not recognising China’s market economy status. This reflects his/her firmly held opinion that China is subordinate to the western powers, and China’s development relies on their recognition. In fact, China has been negotiating for a decade or so with some of its major trading partners

about recognising its market economy status, nevertheless, its market economy status has not yet been recognised by the key players of international trade, such as the United States and the EU. Being without a market economy status means that China is exposed to various restrictions in international trading. The pessimism that China can not develop properly on its own without the support of the developed countries is also identifiable in Forum User V's argument. S/he proclaims that 'for another decade, China on its own will probably not be able to develop a supermarket of Carrefour's scale'. On the one hand, s/he admits that Carrefour is important to the Chinese economy, as it provides working opportunities to 'tens of thousands of' Chinese people and generates financial revenues to the receiving cities; on the other hand, s/he expresses a pessimistic view that China is not ready to face the closedown of Carrefour if the boycott succeeds in forcing Carrefour out of China, because China on its own may not establish a chain supermarket within a decade, which can contribute to the Chinese economy as much as Carrefour does.

The pessimistic thinking about boycotting Carrefour is also shared by Forum User W, and on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008, s/he published a thread entitled 'Too Silly Too Naïve' in which s/he articulates:

*Although I don't have much favourable impression of France, and (I) feel very angry about the suffering of the Olympic holy flame in Paris, I have to say that boycotting Carrefour is too silly and too naïve. First of all, boycotting products or companies of a country is a very silly behaviour. This is a behaviour of punishing oneself for the mistake others have made. It will cause some loss to the country being boycotted, but the one who suffers the most is actually oneself. It is an open world, and mutual exchange of goods and services is a prerequisite for the development of a country, and the final consequence of boycotting others is to fetter one's own development. [...] Secondly, I think we totally have no qualification to boycott others, because we are not yet strong enough. Boycott can only bring us more harm. (This is) because we are in a backward position of development, and our position in the international exchange is very weak. What we export to Europe are lighters, shirts, colour TV sets, and they can*

*boycott (us) right away, and you have nothing to complain. However, what can we boycott from France? Boycott French Airbus? Boycott French nuclear power and high-speed railway (technologies)? Why is it us who are waiting anxiously for the EU to recognise our market economy status, but not the EU who is waiting anxiously for us to recognise their market economy status? This indicates that we do not have the strength.*

Like many forum users who oppose the boycott, Forum User W starts with his/her argument by disclaiming any sympathy to France. The statements ‘I don’t have much favourable impression of France’ and ‘very angry about the suffering of the Olympic holy flame in Paris’ reflect the author’s attempt to demonstrate his/her nationalist anger towards France, in order to avoid possible nationalist accusations. Forum User W believes that boycotting Carrefour is silly because ‘this is a behaviour of punishing oneself for the mistake others have made’. From the sentence, one can feel Forum User W’s belief that France has done something wrong to China, however, s/he does not believe that the boycott is a clever option for revenge, because it causes ‘more harm’ to China than to France. This is the point shared by the previous two discussants, however, what is different from them is that Forum User W has made his/her pessimistic view about boycotting Carrefour even more overt by claiming ‘we totally have no qualification to boycott others, because we are not yet strong enough’. The word ‘totally’ apparently reflects Forum User W’s categorical pessimism about the boycott. S/he uses the words ‘backward’ and ‘very weak’ to describe China’s inferior status in the global economic system, and argues that it is the economic inferiority to and reliance on France that determines China’s inability to boycott France. On the one hand, by giving examples of the products China exports to France, such as ‘lighters, shirts, colour TV sets’, s/he suggests that these are the products which do not require much technological expertise and many countries can produce them easily, and France can buy them from other countries. On the other hand, s/he emphasises China’s dependence on France by arguing that China imports French products and technologies that it thirsts for but can not make them on its own.

Further to that, Forum User W's pessimistic views that China has no qualification to boycott France are also visible in his/her discursive construction of France as the one who has the power to affect the international political economy; while China as the powerless one who is only to be affected. The 'France acts and China suffers' narrative is apparent in the sentence, 'they can boycott (us) right away, and you have nothing to complain'. The phrase 'right away' is utilised to highlight the advantageous position of France, if China's boycott eventually leads to a trade war between the two countries. The emphasis of 'right away' also suggests that it would be easy and painless for France to boycott Chinese products, as France can import those consumer goods from other developing countries. While on the other side, Forum User W states 'you have nothing to complain' to underline China's disadvantageous position in the trade war, that is to say, China can do nothing but face the consequences of France's decision. Moreover, China's purported passivity in the international political economy is also reinforced in the sentence 'why is it us who are waiting anxiously for the EU to recognise our market economy status, but not the EU who is waiting anxiously for us to recognise their market economy status?'. In the sentence, China has been depicted as a country which is so eager to be recognised by the EU, as if it can not develop well on its own without the EU's recognition. On the other hand, the EU, in which France plays a major role, is depicted as a powerful decision maker whose policies can affect China's position in the world's trading system. Overall, Forum User W's main reason for not boycotting Carrefour is largely based on the pessimistic view that China can not compete with France in the realm of international political economy.

From the above discussions, netizens give three major reasons for not boycotting Carrefour. Firstly, Carrefour is an ordinary enterprise, and the allegation that it supports the Dalai Lama is largely groundless. Although a significant number of Chinese people are angry with France over its policies towards Tibet, nationalist anger towards it should be directed to the ones that can officially represent France, such as the French embassy. Secondly, Carrefour is so integrated into the Chinese local economy that boycotting it can bring harm to Chinese people and China itself, while the impacts of the boycott on France are limited. Thirdly, since China is not as strong as those developed countries in the international political economy and its development heavily relies on their investments, technologies and policies, China is

in a disadvantageous position to initiate a boycott. For them, opposing the initiative to boycott Carrefour is patriotic, because it shows their care about the economic wellbeing of the country and its people. The online debate on a nationalist action is a discursive process, because participants have to use the language to articulate, impose and defend their nationalist policies. To push people to agree with their nationalist decision of not boycotting Carrefour, they repeat and even exaggerate, through linguistic manipulation, the negative consequences that the boycott can occur to China. They also use an intimidating tone of language to warn the boycott advocates that they will be held responsible for the harm the boycott can engender to China. Those who oppose the boycott of Carrefour constantly emphasise the inabilities of China to boycott France and its passivity in the global order; however, such pessimistic views have made them subject to the accusations of those who insist on the boycott. This is going to be explained in the following paragraphs.

#### **6.4 Debating the Rationales of Boycotting Carrefour in the Online Media Discourse**

While netizens like Forum U, V and W were explaining their rationales of not boycotting Carrefour, on the other side, their contenders were equally pushing hard their logic for taking the action to boycott Carrefour. For those boycott supporters, they all shared the point that boycotting Carrefour was a good means to demonstrate the anger of Chinese people towards France and their unity and determination of defending China's national dignity. As Forum User X wrote:

*If you tolerate him, he will probably become even more unbridled, and do more things (we) can not tolerate. At this moment we just need an attitude and send them a message: DZ you is to let you know that supporting ZD is what China can not tolerate, and has made the Chinese people unhappy. There is a price (you) have to pay for (supporting the Tibetan independence), and hope you understand this point and make the correction. (Not boycotting) will send them a wrong message which makes them believe that Chinese people have no reactions, and they are just talking a lot without making substantial actions. As a result, they will*



*disregard Chinese people and cause more harm to us; or they will do more outrageous things on XZ and other issues.*

Using codes to evade keyword filtering is also visible in Forum User X's post. 'DZ', 'ZD' and 'XZ' are all abbreviations respectively for the Chinese words 'Dizhi (boycotting)', 'Zangdu (Tibetan separatists)' and 'Xizang (Tibet)'. These words were commonly regarded as sensitive on the internet during the time, and if any posts contained words like these, they were very likely to be blocked. In Forum User X's opinion, boycotting Carrefour is an effective way of sending a clear message to the French government that Chinese people can not tolerate their policies and attitudes towards the Tibet issues. S/he urges people to transform nationalist anger into 'substantial actions' by keeping reminding them of the serious consequences of not boycotting Carrefour. It is interesting to find that using the linguistic formulation 'will + comparative adjectives' is a conspicuous feature in Forum User X's speech, for example, 'if you tolerate him, he will probably become even more unbridled, and do more things (we) can not tolerate', and 'they will disregard Chinese people and cause more harm to us; or they will do more outrageous things on XZ and other issues'. A comparative adjective normally signals a comparison between two things, and often the word 'than' clarifies between which two things the comparison is made, for instance, 'A is better than B', then one knows that the comparison is between A and B. Sometimes, for various reasons, the sentence takes the short form and becomes 'A is better'. Although 'B' is visually absent in the sentence, as the element against which A is compared, it should be found somewhere in the overall context. In the above two sentences, the comparisons are to some extent obscured due to the missing word 'than', nevertheless, if one reorganises the sentences by adding the missing elements, they should look like: 'if you tolerate him, he will probably become even more unbridled (than he is now), and do more things (we) can not tolerate (than he has already done to us)' and 'they will disregard Chinese people and cause more harm to us (than they have already caused to us); or they will do more outrageous things on XZ and other issues (than they have already done)'. After reorganising the sentences, one can realise that Forum User X is actually comparing what France will do to China in future against what France has already done to China at present. Therefore, in both sentences, Forum User X not only shows his/her worries about what France

will do to China in future, but also discloses his/her judgement about what France has already done to China. On the one hand, the sentences reveal Forum User X's firm belief that France is already so unbridled that it dare fearlessly challenge China over the Tibet issues; that France has already done things that 'we' can not tolerate; that France has already caused harm to 'us'; and that France has already done outrageous things on Tibet. For Forum User X, s/he believes that France has already posed real and substantial threats to China, and thus, it is the time for Chinese people to do something in order to overcome the challenge. On the other hand, in coupling future tense with comparative adjectives, s/he further imposes a sense of crisis on forum discussants that if no action is taken now, worse scenarios will happen in future, namely, France will probably become 'even more unbridled' to intervene in Tibet issues; France will do 'more things' Chinese people can not tolerate; France will 'cause more harm' to China and 'do more outrageous things' on Tibet and other issues. By stressing the harm France has already caused to China and predicting more harm China is about to face from France, Forum User X seems to suggest that instead of waiting to see even worse situations to come, it is better to take action immediately to prevent France from causing further troubles to China.

In spite of the linguistic techniques that Forum User X applies to warn other fellow participants of the seriousness of the problems France has already occurred to China and the chances that France will pose even more substantial threats to China in future, there are further instances that explain how netizens attempt to persuade people to join in the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour. The following is a post extracted from the thread 'Too Silly Too Naïve' established by Forum User W. The post was written by Forum User Y in response to Forum User W's objections towards the boycott. It is a typical example worthy of close analysis, because it is a post that includes a multiplicity of discursive techniques that were commonly used by boycott advocates to defend as well as promote their nationalist claims. The post reads:

*Think about the shareholders of Carrefour donating a big sum of money to the Dalai Lama; think about the complacent smile on the face of the Dalai Lama the moment he is awarded 'Honorary Citizen'; think about the*

*embarrassment of being forced to put off the holy flame for several times in Paris; think about the apathy of the Paris police when the holy flame was being snatched away. [...] However, today, in order not to lose your job, you willingly accept such humiliation from other country, and this is not what a Chinese should do. Under such huge humiliation, if people like you do not show any reactions, we will be forever regarded by others as slaves who only dare be angry but dare not speak out. Furthermore, boycotting Carrefour will cause certain loss to its suppliers and employees, but that will be temporary. Even though Carrefour can not stand up to the people's boycott and is forced to quit China, as long as there are demands, the collapse of Carrefour will definitely result in the popularity of domestic chain supermarkets like CR Vanguard, Wangfujing, Xinshiji and so on. Can't those suppliers sell their products in these stores? Can't those employees work in these stores?*

*When the people of a country are uniting to fight against the injustice of a foreign country, it should be approved by everyone. [...] One country can oppose the government of another country, but they dare not easily show disrespect to the people of that country. However, the reason for the French government daring to be so provocative and rampant is just because some servile Chinese have spoiled their master. [...]*

One of the notable features of Forum User Y's post is the first four 'think about' clauses describing the alleged humiliation that France caused to China. Reiterating and reinterpreting the humiliation China received from France was prevalent in the online popular discourse during the time, and as can be understood in Forum User Y's first four clauses, s/he does not just simply retell what happened to China in those incidents, rather, s/he reconstructs and reinterprets the purportedly humiliating incidents in a way that s/he thinks humiliating enough to stimulate other peer users to join in his/her proposed nationalist action. Unlike many forum users who question the authenticity of the alleged association between the French supermarket and the Dalai Lama, Forum User Y, as indicated in the sentence 'think about the shareholders of Carrefour donating a big sum of money to the Dalai

Lama', seems to firmly believe in the unverified allegation, and use it as evidence to legitimise his/her call to boycott Carrefour. By emphasising the adjective 'big' as in the phrase 'a big sum of money', s/he not only informs the audience of the level of financial support Carrefour has rendered to the Dalai Lama, but also indicates the scale of Carrefour's engagement in the business which many Chinese regard as an offence to their country. In the second clause, 'think about the complacent smile on the face of the Dalai Lama the moment he is awarded "Honorary Citizen"', Forum User Y expresses his/her antipathy towards the Dalai Lama by describing his smile as 'complacent'. In his/her opinion, the victory of the Dalai Lama means the humiliation of China, and further to that, by stressing the word 'complacent', Forum User Y also tries to present a humiliating and provocative picture to the fellow readers, as if the Dalai Lama is laughing at the Chinese government for its failure and incapability to stop him from gaining international publicity and recognition. Although it does not specify in the sentence who actually awards the Dalai Lama the 'Honorary Citizen' title, Forum User Y assumes that people should have already known that it is the Paris City Council which gives the Dalai Lama the chance to show off his 'complacent' face as a means of declaring victory over China. In the third clause, 'think about the embarrassment of being forced to put off the holy flame for several times in Paris', Forum User Y continues to discursively reconstruct the humiliating torch relay event in Paris. His/her belief that the Paris leg of the torch relay was a shame is underpinned by the word 'embarrassment'. S/he uses the passive voice 'being forced to put off the holy flame' to reinforce the victim role of China, and employs the quantifier 'several time' to underline the amount of humiliation China suffered. For many Chinese people, the Olympic torch bears the flame of China's national pride, and the extinguishment of the Olympic flame is regarded as an enormous humiliation to its self-esteem. Moreover, Forum User Y does not tend to think over what China had done wrong so that it received massive protests in Paris, rather, s/he turns to attribute the torch relay chaos to the loose security provided by the city of Paris. Such blame is overt in the fourth clause 'think about the apathy of the Paris police when the holy flame was being snatched away'. Clearly, Forum User Y regards the ignorant and irresponsible attitudes of the Paris police towards the protection work of the torch relay as a key factor contributing to the turmoil in Paris. In all the four clauses, Forum User Y emotionally retells and reinterprets the allegedly humiliating experiences China had,

and points directly to France as the responsible for China's humiliation. By using the four consecutive 'think about' imperative sentences, on the one hand, Forum User Y intends to raise the awareness of the readers about the humiliation France caused to China; and on the other hand, to reinforce his/her own view that nationalist anger towards France is righteous and boycotting France is therefore justifiable and necessary.

As discussed previously, for those who voted against the plan of boycotting Carrefour, one of their major arguments was that boycotting Carrefour would significantly hurt the Chinese economy and those Chinese people who worked with Carrefour. Forum User Y admits that boycotting Carrefour will 'cause certain loss to its suppliers and employees', nevertheless, s/he denies that the boycott will cause profound harm to China, because as s/he believes, the loss 'will be temporary'. Unlike those discussants like Forum User V who stress the economic contributions Carrefour makes to China and fear that if the boycott eventually expels Carrefour from China, many Chinese would become unemployed and local tax revenues would shrink, Forum User Y dismisses such worries and reassures that even though Carrefour quits, it will not cause considerable harm and in a long term, it could be even good. His/her logic is that the buying power in China will not disappear as a result of Carrefour's withdrawal, and as long as the demands are there, people will go shopping in other domestic supermarkets. Therefore, s/he states 'the collapse of Carrefour will definitely result in the popularity of domestic chain supermarkets', and his/her confidence is highlighted by the word 'definitely'. In fact, as I notice, many forum users agree with Forum User Y's logic. They seem to believe in a causal link between the collapse of Carrefour and the popularity of domestic Chinese supermarkets, and argue that as the business of those Chinese supermarkets grows, they will need more staff, and those who previously work for Carrefour and lose their jobs because of the closedown of Carrefour will be reemployed by those domestic companies. For Carrefour's previous suppliers, their business will continue as they can supply goods to those domestic Chinese supermarkets. Furthermore, they also suggest that the local economy will not suffer either, because the growth of domestic supermarkets will contribute to the local tax revenues.

Boycott advocates like Forum User Y may be right, however, there are underlying problems in their arguments. One of the problems is that they simplify the business operation of a supermarket. The success of any supermarket is contingent upon a chain of factors, such as supplies, logistics, price, sales and services. As a result of this, the decline of market share or even closedown of Carrefour in China does not necessarily lead to the prosperity of domestic Chinese supermarkets. Forum User Y's reassurance that boycotting Carrefour will produce little economic harm even if it quits China, is based on the assumption that Carrefour declines and other Chinese supermarkets emerge, and the emergence of domestic supermarkets can compensate for the economic loss caused by the decline of Carrefour. In addition to that, by raising the question 'can't those suppliers sell their products in these stores? can't those employees work in these stores?', Forum User Y gives the backup options to those who will be supposedly affected by the boycott, namely, those Chinese suppliers and employees working with Carrefour, suggesting that if they finally lose their jobs as Carrefour quits China, at least there are alternative domestic supermarkets they can work with. Having this logic in his/her mind, Forum User Y believes that it is not difficult to boycott Carrefour, and the only problem Chinese suppliers and workers have to deal with is probably to switch to another Chinese supermarket, and then, their jobs continue as usual. However, Forum User Y seems to idealise the situation that even though Carrefour's former suppliers and workers are willing to reapply to work with another Chinese supermarket, it does not necessarily mean that those domestic supermarkets will feel happy to accept them. On the other hand, even if those Chinese supermarkets are willing to accept them, it does not mean that those suppliers and workers will be happy to accept, either. Further to that, although Forum User Y acknowledges that the boycott will cause 'temporary' loss to the Chinese suppliers and workers, s/he seems to hint that those suppliers and workers have to bear the 'temporary' loss themselves for the sake of the nationalist action. In his/her opinion, the actions to protect the national honour will unavoidably hurt the interest of a certain group of people, and for the sake of China's national interest, personal interest needs to be rendered. Even if Forum User Y is right that Chinese suppliers and staff who work with Carrefour will find a job in Chinese supermarkets and those supermarkets will be equally happy to accept them, s/he does not pay adequate attention to the potential inconvenience

and loss it may occur to them, for instance, the psychological pressure of losing a job, the process of finding and reapplying for a job, the possible economic hardship and so on. For Forum User Y, these might be the ‘temporary’ loss a nationalist action may occur to a certain group of people, however, what s/he regards as small and ‘temporary’ loss might be a significant difficulty for an individual. In his/her tone of language, self-sacrifice is not considered as a virtue, but rather expected as a matter of course. Moreover, Forum User Y also overlooks people’s freedom to choose. Whether one works for Carrefour or a domestic Chinese supermarket is after all a personal preference. S/he is paternalistic in the sense that s/he imposes his/her own nationalist norms to others, telling them to follow what s/he thinks is nationalistically right. Due to his/her firm belief in the unverified allegation that Carrefour financially supports the Dalai Lama, Forum User Y claims that any Chinese who continue to work with Carrefour is regarded unpatriotic, and this point is clearly made in his/her statement ‘in order not to lose your job, you willingly accept such humiliation from other country, and this is not what a Chinese should do’. For him/her, it is humiliating to work for Carrefour, and s/he even urges Chinese suppliers and workers to stop working with Carrefour and join other Chinese supermarkets. In his/her opinion, this is the way for those Chinese who involve in Carrefour’s business, to declare their disconnections from Carrefour and support for the nationalist action. Forum User Y probably pushes his/her nationalist norms too far, because forcing someone to abandon the job s/he lives on shows his/her indifferent and unsympathetic attitude towards the wellbeing of the fellow Chinese. His/her nationalist claims received criticism from some forum users, and their argument was that it was personal freedom to work with Carrefour, and as long as people worked in accordance with Chinese laws, their statutory rights to work and get paid should be protected. They also questioned that if people like Forum User Y showed little care about their compatriots, how they were supposed to care about the country. However, for these online popular nationalists like Forum User Y, they insist on the principle that national interest overrides all; and those people working for a company that undermines Chinese national interest are by no means accepted. What is ironic is that the allegation that Carrefour supported the Dalai Lama was never proven to be true.

To further defend the boycott of Carrefour, Forum User Y is also keen to stress that their nationalist initiative is not only just, but also represents the will of many Chinese people. In the second paragraph, s/he states that ‘when the people of a country are uniting to fight against the injustice of a foreign country, it should be approved by everyone’. S/he underlines the justice of the boycott by stressing that it is a collective action by the people of the country to fight against the ‘injustice of a foreign country’. In other words, what s/he says is that ‘they’ are unjust and ‘we’ are fighting against ‘them’, therefore, ‘we’ are just. Additionally, the present participle ‘are uniting’ is applied to emanate a continuous tense, indicating the continuous support the nationalist proposal of boycotting Carrefour gains, and the tendency of convergence of a large group of Chinese people for the same nationalist cause. The discursive construction of boycotting Carrefour as a nationalist action supported by many Chinese is also relevant in the following post published by Forum User Z:

*[...] (If) there is no provocation or humiliation from others, will we the so-called indignant youths go to boycott? [...] Tens of thousands of passionate Chinese youths have joined in the boycott campaign. For what? For personal interest? Are tens of thousands of passionate youths not as rational as you? Let the history prove whether we are a group of indignant youths, or a group of aspirational and wise youths. Let the history also prove whether your rationality saves or harms the country.*

In the sentence ‘tens of thousands of passionate Chinese youths have joined in the boycott campaign’, Forum User Z utilises the phrase ‘tens of thousands of’ to highlight the popularity of the boycott plan among Chinese young people. As I discussed before, those who opposed the boycott claimed that boycotting Carrefour would cause negative effects to China, and they regarded the boycott advocates as indignant youths whose nationalist actions were emotionally driven and lacked rational considerations. However, from the sentence ‘(if) there is no provocation or humiliation from others, will we the so-called indignant youths go to boycott?’, it can be understood that Forum User Z denies the label of ‘indignant youth’, and the phrase ‘so-called’ is employed to express his/her view that such a name is



inappropriate. His/her attempt to justify the boycott of Carrefour as a reasonable and rational action is evident in his/her post. By claiming '(if) there is no provocation or humiliation from others, will we the so-called indignant youths go to boycott?', Forum User Z clarifies the reason for the boycott, stressing that the decision is made because of France's provocation and humiliation. Furthermore, s/he also refutes the accusation that boycotting Carrefour is irrational by questioning 'are tens of thousands of passionate youths not as rational as you'. In his/her mind, a decision made by a few people may be irrational, however, as a nationalist plan supported by 'tens of thousands of' people, the boycott represents the appeal of a significant number of people, and the rationality behind it should not be underestimated.

While justifying that the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour is righteous and rational, as can be understood in both Forum User Y and Z's posts, they are also intending to tell those who oppose the boycott that they are wrong not to boycott. Take the underlined sentence in Forum User Z's post for example. Forum User Z is confident that history will prove that their decision to boycott Carrefour is 'aspirational and wise', whereas the decision to not boycott is harmful to the country. By announcing 'let the history prove', Forum User Z seems to elevate the problem of boycotting or not boycotting Carrefour to a historical height, and attempts to persuade those who oppose the boycott to reconsider their decision, as if saying that the decision to not boycott will be proved by history to be harmful to the country, and as a consequence, those who oppose the boycott will be found sinful by history. The message s/he sends to those who oppose the boycott is clear: if you do not want to be a historical sinner, you should make the right nationalist decision and support the boycott.

For Forum User Y, s/he not only criticises his/her opponents for not supporting the boycott, but also blames them for the alleged humiliation China has received. This can be noticed from his/her assertion 'the reason for the French government daring to be so provocative and rampant is just because some servile Chinese have spoiled their master'. Although s/he does not specify who are the 'some servile Chinese', as a post responding to Forum User W whose argument has been discussed earlier, the

target to which Forum User Y's sharp criticism aims is in fact clear. To recall, Forum User W described the boycott as 'too silly and too naïve' and believed that China had 'no qualification' to boycott France, due to its reliance on capital and technologies from the developed countries, including France, and its weak position in the international political economy. Forum User W's overemphasis on China's passivity and inferiority in relation to France made him/her easily exposed to the accusation of being unpatriotic. As I mentioned earlier, in nationalist discussions, anyone who shows sympathetic, reluctant and feeble attitudes towards the alleged enemies is very likely to be labelled as a 'traitor' or a 'slave of foreigners'. Forum User W's opposition to the boycott provided ammunition for Forum User Y to launch an attack, and this is evident, for instance, in the sentence 'under such huge humiliation, if people like you do not show any reactions, we will be forever regarded by others as slaves who only dare be angry but dare not speak out'. Forum User Y uses the adjective 'huge' to describe the humiliation s/he thinks China has suffered, in order to stress that in face of such severe situation, there are no reasons for any Chinese not to take action to fight against France. Forum User Y expresses his/her disappointment and ire towards Forum User W, and regards Forum User W's opposition to the boycott initiative as an action of yielding to France. On the one hand, Forum User Y accuses Forum User W of lacking courage and submitting meekly to the humiliation, denouncing him/her as a cowardly 'slave' who, in face of humiliation from France, 'does not show any reactions', and 'only dare be angry but dare not speak out'. On the other hand, as shown in the sentence, 'the reason ... is just because some servile Chinese have spoiled their master', Forum User Y continues to attack Forum User W by depicting him/her as the one who not only fears the power of France, but also tries hard to please France. S/he chooses the words 'servile' and 'spoiled' to underline the excessive kindness and willingness that people like Forum User W have shown to France, and describes France as 'their master' to further ridicule their submission to France.

Additionally, Forum User Y also attempts to show the audience the adverse consequences the decision to not boycott can cause to Chinese people as a whole. In the two sentences, namely, 'if people like you do not show any reactions, we will be forever regarded by others as slaves who only dare be angry but dare not speak out' and 'the reason for the French government daring be so provocative and

rampant is just because some servile Chinese have spoiled their master’, words such as ‘forever’ and ‘so provocative and rampant’ are chosen to emphasise the serious consequences of not boycotting Carrefour. If one examines the sentences closely, s/he may find that Forum User Y constantly addresses an underlying relation between ‘what you do’ and ‘what we suffer’, for example, ‘you do not show any reactions’ and ‘we will be forever regarded as slaves’, and ‘you spoiled your master’ and ‘France dare be so provocative and rampant (to us)’. Forum User Y suggests that there is a cause-effect relation between ‘what you do’ (cause) and ‘what we suffer’ (effect), and the phrase ‘just because’ in the second sentence is used to further reinforce such causal link. By establishing such causality, Forum User Y denounces people like Forum User W as traitors to the ‘we’ community, and intends to hold them fully responsible for the humiliation China has suffered.

This section provided some insights into how netizens promoted, legitimised and defended their nationalist proposal of boycotting Carrefour through various discursive practices. The point shared by many boycott advocates was that France had already posed serious threats to China, and it would continue to humiliate China if Chinese people did not unite to take a collective action to fight back. Humiliation was such an important theme throughout the online discussions about the boycott, and it was constantly retold, reconstructed and reinterpreted to emphasise the righteousness and urgency of the boycott. In response to their opponents who believed boycotting Carrefour would result in serious economic loss to the country and its people alike, boycott advocates argued that it would not be the case although ‘temporary’ loss was expected. In their eyes, people should give up personal interest and freedom to support their proposed boycott, and opposition or reluctance to the boycott was regarded as an indication of one’s weakness and submission to the ‘enemy’, and thus, opponents were labelled as traitors or slaves.

### **6.5 Responses of Netizens towards the Initiative to Boycott Carrefour**

The previous two sections respectively examined the rationales behind netizens’ claims of opposing or supporting the initiative to boycott Carrefour, and provided insights as to how both groups with radically different nationalist viewpoints confronted over this particular agenda, and how they elaborated, marketed and

defended their own nationalist proposals through various linguistic techniques. In the previous sections, it was common to see that discussants used the ‘we’ language in the debate of the nationalist action, for instance, why ‘we’ Chinese people should boycott or not boycott Carrefour, and what negative consequences it would bring to China and its people if not boycott or boycott Carrefour. This section shifts attention to the use of the ‘I’ language in the discussions about the boycott; in other words, it investigates how individual Chinese netizens discursively construct their own positions in the proposed nationalist action and how they respond to the boycott initiative by using the ‘I’ language. Furthermore, this section also pays close attention to various linguistic features, in order to probe the ways netizens express their personal devotion to the boycott plan on the one hand, and objections on the other hand. The relation between personal interest and national interest is one of the key topics quite often relating to the discussions of Chinese nationalism, and whether or not one should give up personal interest for the proposed nationalist action is such a question that centres the online debate about the boycott, therefore, the section sheds significant light on this point, and examines the extent to which such tension shapes netizens’ attitudes towards the boycott.

As soon as the boycott plan was announced on the internet, netizens gathered in the forum to discuss the possible strategies for punishing Carrefour for its alleged support for the Dalai Lama. When many of them were still debating the length for which they should halt shopping in Carrefour, in order to show Carrefour the anger and unity of the Chinese public, some forum users claimed that stopping shopping in Carrefour would be too gentle a penalty to Carrefour, and they came up with some tougher ideas. Different from those boycott advocates who urged people not to go to Carrefour in order to create awkward silence in store, some netizens encouraged people to go to Carrefour instead, and boycott it with some substantial actions. They suggested that people should take a trolley, go to the frozen food areas, load the trolley with ice cream and dumplings, stroll around the store as long as possible to let the frozen food thaw, then find a relatively quiet corner to get rid of the trolley and then leave the store without buying anything. They also suggested that people should go to the store just to buy a bottle of water, which cost approximately one yuan (Chinese currency), and without buying anything else, check it out with the largest denomination note – a hundred yuan. By doing so, they

thought, after some purchases, the stores would soon run out of changes, and therefore, they would not be able to operate normally. For those who proposed such ideas, they believed that the actions of either intentionally melting frozen food without checking them out or exhausting the store's changes could bring further problems to Carrefour and maximise its economic loss. It is hard to speculate about the real intentions of those people, whether they really meant it or just shouted these ideas out as a way of showing nationalist indignation. The anonymous and carnivalistic nature of the internet has made it difficult, if not impossible, to hold people accountable for what they say. Although no significant evidence shows that people were really doing these in reality, as soon as some netizens raised such ideas, they received intensive criticism from other forum participants. For those who chose not to boycott Carrefour, they condemned the ideas as stupid, and argued that since the world was watching China, such destructive and shameful actions could only provide pretexts for other countries to laugh at China. Even for the boycott advocates, they voted against such suggestions, and urged that people should boycott responsibly and peacefully.

As one might notice from the previous discussions, netizens talked about the boycott largely from a macro and national point of view, for example, the reasons why 'we' Chinese should boycott Carrefour or not and the possible consequences the decisions might cause to China. What dramatically changed the focus of netizens' discussions from a macro and national level to a micro and personal level had much to do with another allegation associating with Carrefour. It was rumoured that in order to respond to the boycott, Carrefour planned a big sale for the upcoming Chinese national holiday in the beginning of May 2008. Although it was later denied by Carrefour, the rumour soon attracted netizens' attention, and the question of boycott was suddenly brought down to the level of daily life, becoming a more relevant matter to ordinary Chinese citizens. On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008, a forum user set up a thread entitled 'Netizen's Boycott and Carrefour's Sales Promotion, Which One Looks More Appealing to Ordinary People!'. The thread was closed by the forum administrator after it reached approximately 500 replies, nevertheless, it is of great relevance to the research, because it put together the nationalist interest of fighting against an alleged enemy and the personal interest of buying cheaper groceries offered by the enemy, and asked online participants to give their own

choices and positions to this dilemma. By examining people's responses to the question, it provides plenty of chances to see how forum users discursively positioned themselves in the proposed nationalist action, and the ways they tackled the seemingly contradictory relation between the personal and national interest. On the one side, some netizens showed great commitment to the boycott call, and determination to give up personal interest:

*By Forum User 1:*

*To be honest, (I) don't know how others think, but for me, whether the 'boycott' initiative is explicitly raised or not, the consequence is the same. After I watched the news reports from France and those performances by the French shitheads, when I see those French things, I feel from the bottom of my heart that I will never buy (them)!!! The action of 'boycott' is meaningful only if it comes from the heart. I will go for it as long as I think it meaningful. Others' (decision to) not go (to boycott) will not become the reason for me not to do it. Therefore, I am not comparing with others, even though all the people around me carrying LV and using Chanel. I will not use what I should not use, though (I) can't persuade others, but at least I will persist in (boycotting).*

*By Forum User 2:*

*I have decided that I will no longer use my Montagut bag, and it has been thrown into the bin. In order to support me, my wife also bore pain to give up the LV handbag that she cared for so much. I urged her to dispose of her French perfume and cosmetics, she was reluctant (to do so), but she has promised to me that she will never buy any French products! For me, from now on, I will not use French rubbish any more!*

*By Forum User 3:*

*(I) was originally planning to buy a Peugeot 206 which (I) have been loving for more than a year. (I) have a special love for it, and prepare the*

*money for the car. Now, (I) am not going to buy it. For sure! Not going to Carrefour! Will ask people around not to (go to Carrefour).*

From all the above posts, the prevalent use of the ‘I’ language indicates the amount of personal views and positions that netizens have input into the discussions. Although the original nationalist call only asked people to boycott Carrefour, it was common as showed above that some netizens pledged to boycott any French products that they familiarised with, in order to demonstrate their nationalist allegiance. In Forum User 1’s opinion, boycotting French companies, including Carrefour, is his/her genuine thought. As manifested in the post, s/he maintains that even if nobody made the boycott call, s/he would still decide not to buy French goods. In his/her mind, the protests in Paris against the Beijing Olympics during the torch relay in Paris – what s/he describes as ‘performances by the French shitheads’ - have already served as a sufficient reason for his/her decision to ‘never’ buy French goods. Forum User 1 feels that his/her national pride has been challenged, and the use of the vulgar slang ‘shithead’ uncovers his/her strong nationalist fury. In the sentence ‘I feel from the bottom of my heart that I will never buy (them)!!!’, Forum User 1 employs the word ‘never’ to underscore his/her boycott determination, and the phrase ‘from the bottom of my heart’ to further stress how serious and genuine his/her determination is. It is interesting to understand that, different from other online popular nationalists as discussed previously, who quite often imposed their own nationalist norms and spoke on behalf of other Chinese people by inculcating that ‘we’ should do this and that, Forum User 1 declares, with explicit ‘I’ language, that his/her determination to boycott French goods is truly personal and independent of the decisions and behaviours of others. This is because, facing the thread which basically asks the question ‘national interest or personal interest, which one you stand for?’, Forum User 1 has the opportunity to demonstrate his/her nationalist passion and great concern about the nation, and the ‘I’ language is needed to make it even explicit his/her own nationalist position and how determined s/he feels about the boycott. Moreover, there is a distinctive linguistic feature in Forum User 1’s post, that is to say, the ‘I’ language is constantly used in conjunction with ‘others’, and this is particularly evident in the last three sentences as underlined. S/he keeps mentioning that others may choose not to boycott, that others may still use French goods, for instance, the ‘LV’ (abbreviation for ‘Louis Vuitton’)

handbags and Chanel, and that others may not be persuaded to join in the boycott action, however, what behind Forum User 1's deliberation of linking 'others' and 'I' in the sentences is that 'others' is actually used as a reference point to show forum audience how unshakable his/her belief in the boycott, that is to say, whatever 'others' do, the decision that 'I' will never buy French products will be kept unchanged.

Forum User 2 and 3 also demonstrate in the posts their active response to the boycott initiative. As a symbolic move to declare support for the boycott, Forum User 2 claims that he has thrown away his Montugat bag ('Montugat', a French designer brand well known in China), and also urged his wife to dispose of French products that she possesses. Similarly, Forum User 3 announces the cancellation of his/her personal plan of buying a French Peugeot 206 as a manifesto for supporting the boycott. Noticeably, in order to parade their nationalist determination, both Forum User 2 and 3 are keen to tell the forum audience that they are ready and willing to give up their personal interest for the sake of nationalist goals, and they have actually made some significant self-sacrifice for supporting the boycott. From what Forum User 2 describes, it seems as if throwing away his Montagut bag did not cause much pain to himself, and he does not appear to regret what he did. Nonetheless, he has to admit that for his wife, giving up the French products she adores in order to show support for the boycott is to some extent a difficult decision for her to make. He uses the phrase 'bore pain' to underline the uneasiness of his wife to give up the Louis Vuitton handbag, and employs the attributive clause 'she cared for so much' to give a further explanation why it took pains to make that decision. Moreover, when Forum User 2 urged his wife to dispose of her French perfume and cosmetics, she 'was reluctant' to do so, and from Forum User 2's post, one can understand that his wife did not actually dispose of what her husband asked for, but rather, she made concession by agreeing that she 'will never buy any French products'. The pains of giving up a French product in order to support the nationalist action are also visible in Forum User 3's post. S/he describes the Peugeot 206 as a car s/he 'has been loving for more than a year' and has 'a special love for it', and the phrases 'more than a year' and 'special love' indicate how eagerly s/he wants to buy the car. S/he also implies that if the boycott had not been called, s/he would probably have bought the car already, because s/he has prepared the money for the



car. What both Forum 2 and 3 want to tell is that although there is self-sacrifice for joining in the nationalist action of boycotting France, whatever inconvenience it may cause to individuals, personal interest should be submitted to the nationalist objectives.

Emphasising the self-sacrifice behind the decisions to not buy French products can help highlight people's nationalist dedication, nonetheless, the more they mention the pains it takes to support the boycott, the more it suggests that they actually have a special preference for and reliance on French goods, and therefore, it is doubted that if people can in reality achieve the boycott goals as they claim. Boycotting foreign goods is not new in China, and it is always one of the solutions raised by Chinese nationalists when they think China is under foreign threat, injustice and humiliation (Gao, 2012). When NATO bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Chinese nationalists talked about boycotting American goods. When China and Japan had disputes over the historic and territorial issues, Chinese nationalists again raised the option of boycotting Japanese goods. However, what may disappoint Chinese popular nationalists is the fact that as the population of affluent Chinese middle class grows, there is a climbing interest in western lifestyle and foreign goods, especially those from the developed countries. Despite the fact that the increasingly interdependent world has made it difficult for people to boycott, the preference of many Chinese customers for foreign goods, as can be sensed in Forum User 2 and 3's posts, provides another explanation as to why such boycott is hard to sustain. Most French products known to the Chinese customers are related to fashion and lifestyle, such as handbags, cosmetics, cars and wine, and they are considerably popular among the affluent Chinese. For many Chinese young women, possessing a Louis Vuitton handbag is their dream, and using French perfume and skin care products is a symbol of status, taste and superiority. That explains why Forum User 2's wife felt the pains and was reluctant to give up her French products.

People like Forum User 2 and 3 manifested their unconditional loyalties to the country, claiming to give up buying French goods no matter how much they desired, and not to shop in Carrefour even though there was a holiday sales promotion. Some young people even vowed to give up their plans to study in France. Fong (2004: 632)

defines such devotion to national dignity as ‘filial nationalism’, and argues that the strong loyalties of the Chinese youngsters to the country ‘based not on the idea of an imagined community, but on the idea of an imagined family’, in which China is identified as a loving mother who deserves filial devotion of her children. However, netizens like Forum User 2 and 3 may be serious and genuine about their nationalist vows, yet few people will know if they keep their promises in the real life, perhaps nobody even cares about it. Arguably, what they care about is how they perform in the carnival-like online nationalist protest against France, because in a carnival, the louder one speaks, the more attention s/he receives; the more one blatantly shows nationalist ambition, the more s/he feels nationalistic. Netizens may appear to be devoted to the nationalist action in the virtual space, however, once the online carnival is over, people return to the real life. Forum participants who had reservation about the boycott actually referred to the previous online nationalist calls to boycott Japanese products, and criticised how fruitless and inconsistent the boycott actions were. They argued that it was almost like a routine procedure that whenever China confronted Japan over the historical and territorial issues, popular nationalists started urging people not to buy Japanese products, however, despite the calls, Chinese customers continued to buy Japanese cars and electronic products. The point is that those Chinese people are nationalistic on the one hand, and pragmatic on the other. They may stop buying certain products from the targeted country for a period of time in order to demonstrate their nationalist commitment; nevertheless, as the nationalist wave fades, they start buying the products again. During the time when boycotting Carrefour was fiercely discussed, some Chinese customers suspended their plans of purchasing French cars until the nationalist fever receded, or, they gave up buying French cars and turned to other foreign equivalents instead, for instance, American and Japanese cars. They are reluctant to buy Chinese cars which are normally cheaper but considered unsafe. Critics raised the point that if boycott supporters were really patriotic, they should buy nothing foreign but domestically made products. However, the reality is, irrespective of the products China can not make, a significant proportion of Chinese customers prefer foreign goods. Although more expensive than the domestic ones, they think products from the developed countries are of better quality, and buying and possessing them is an indication of wealth.

Radically different from the above three netizens who demonstrated strong nationalist dedication to the boycott and claimed to put nationalist objectives before their personal interest, some others expressed their indifference towards the boycott, and prioritised their personal concerns over the so-called nationalist objectives.

*By Forum User 4:*

*(I am) not interested in politics. (I) shop in whichever (supermarkets) offer cheaper prices. Now that there is a sales promotion, (I) will go for sure. (I am) just an ordinary person, and in a year of skyrocketing prices, it is not bad to save a little money. Life is not easy, (you) cut it out and stop making a din.*

*By Forum User 5:*

*Is there really a big sales promotion? Prices are soaring fast and stock market is tumbling. Life is tough, and how come (I) will miss the opportunity of a sales promotion? Those friends who participate in the boycott please go and protest in front of the French embassy, and the more influence (you) generate, the more pressure Carrefour faces, and probably, the bigger the sales promotion will be.*

The posts above provide an alternative view regarding how Chinese netizens positioned themselves in a situation where the alleged national interest and personal interest clashed. Unlike the previous discussants who emphasised how they suppressed their personal interest in order to serve the nationalist goals, both Forum User 4 and 5 frankly admit their lack of interest in the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour. Instead, they show great interest in Carrefour's holiday sales promotion, and sentences like '(I) will go for sure' and 'how come (I) will miss the opportunity of a sales promotion?' indicate how much they look forward to it. By claiming '(I am) not interested in politics' and '(I am) just an ordinary person', Forum User 4 defends his/her choice of not taking part in the boycott, suggesting that the nationalist action is about politics and politics is only for those elites who are politically motivated; and as an ordinary person, it is therefore none of his/her

business. For them, as they accept, making a living is more important than participating in a nationalist action, and their preoccupation with striving for a living is apparent in the posts. They both emphasise that life is hard ('life is not easy' by Forum User 4 and 'life is tough' by Forum User 5), and they have increasingly felt the economic pressure of living as a consequence of the rising prices of consumer goods. The word 'whichever' in Forum User 4's statement '(I) shop in whichever (supermarkets) offer cheaper prices' actually gives a hint that s/he actually has no particular preference to Carrefour, and the only factor that can affect his/her decision where to buy groceries is the price. In other words, s/he chooses to shop in Carrefour during the holiday only because there will be a sales promotion and groceries will be cheaper, and s/he does not really care if Carrefour is involved in any political operations that are deemed to undermine Chinese national interest. By shouting out '(you) cut it out and stop making a din', Forum User 4 seems to be really annoyed by nationalists' call to boycott Carrefour, accusing them of politicising people's daily life, and not understanding the difficulty of making a living in such an economic situation. Contrary to Forum User 4's negative view towards the boycott, Forum User 5 actually welcomes it, however, s/he is opportunistic in the sense that s/he expects a louder expression of boycotting Carrefour from the nationalist compatriots, so that it can make Carrefour feel even more nervous, and the supermarket may decide to further reduce the prices of groceries in order to attract customers. In spite of this difference, both Forum User 4 and 5 share the same concern, that is to say, they are trying to make the living cheaper. Regarding the question the thread author asks 'netizen's boycott and Carrefour's sales promotion, which one looks more appealing to ordinary people?', both forum users choose unequivocally the latter, and argue that their choice is made largely based on their own economic conditions.

Forum User 4 and 5 use the adjectives 'skyrocketing' and 'soaring' respectively to stress the high cost of living during that time. They do not exaggerate as according to the report provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, in the first quarter of 2008, the CPI (known as 'consumer price index', a key index for measuring inflation) saw a year-on-year rise of 8.0% (Gov.cn, 2008). Among the daily groceries, the prices of pork, eggs, and edible oil climbed the most drastically. In the context of high inflation rate, many netizens have to accept that if Carrefour

really launches a sales promotion during the holiday, people's nationalist passion for boycotting it will be certainly undermined. Forum User 6 also agrees that for ordinary Chinese citizens, Carrefour's sales promotion will be more attractive than the boycott, because they simply have to live a life:

*Rice is expensive; (edible) oil is expensive; pork is expensive; whichever (of the three) Carrefour chooses to discount by 20%, its threshold will be crumbled. Commodity prices are flying high, and ordinary people almost can't afford to feed themselves. Boycott is farting useless.*

Forum User 6 shows a dismissive attitude towards the boycott by describing it as 'farting useless'. S/he complains about the mounting cost of living, and constantly uses words and phrases, such as 'expensive', 'flying high' and 'almost can't afford to feed themselves', to highlight the serious economic pressure faces ordinary Chinese. In such a situation, s/he thinks that if Carrefour launches a 20% off offer on any of the three, namely, rice, edible oil or pork, which people live on and whose prices rose the most steeply at the time, it will attract people without doubt. S/he even reckons that the offer will be so popular that on the day of the sales promotion, the threshold of Carrefour will be crumbled by a stream of customers. S/he actually has a reason to claim this. Just several months before the boycott call, according to China Daily (2007), Carrefour supermarket in Chongqing, a city in south-western China, launched a sales promotion on bottled cooking oil, and lowered the price from 51.4 yuan to 39.9 yuan (approximately 20% off from 5 GBP to 4 GBP). A large crowd of customers waited outside of the store from '4am until the supermarket opened at 8:40 am', and they rushed into the store, causing 3 people dead and 31 injured (Ibid). The accident to a great extent confirms Forum User 6's point that in the time of high inflation, people are too preoccupied with their livelihoods to have an extra interest in politics.

Furthermore, Forum User 7 also provides some interesting points about the boycott, and s/he describes:

*(I) could imagine that on the first of May, most people aged below 30 will raise the boycott banner in front of Carrefour stores, and in some places, the scenario that (protestors) aggressively urge others not to go inside (Carrefour) may happen; police will maintain the order; whereas, most people aged above 30 will enter the supermarket because of the sales promotion. [...] For the working class or housewives, if a bottle of (edible) oil is several yuan or even over ten yuan cheaper in Carrefour than other supermarkets, will s/he not go to buy it? (As for) French perfume, wine and cars, they will definitely not buy them. Let the compatriots who can afford these products boycott them. I very much respect the nationalist passion of the boycott advocates, but ordinary people need to live. This has nothing to do with the quality of the citizens; nor does it prove that the (Chinese) race is inferior.*

Forum User 7 attempts to make a balanced position with respect to the problem of boycotting Carrefour. On the one hand, s/he shows respect to boycott advocates by saying ‘(I) very much respect the nationalist passion of the boycott advocates’; on the other hand, s/he also shows empathy to those who choose not to boycott Carrefour due to the economic pressure they face. In his/her mind, whether people choose to or not to boycott Carrefour, it is a personal choice. As mentioned previously, people who opposed to boycott Carrefour were likely to face the nationalist accusation of being slaves of foreigners, by claiming ‘this has nothing to do with the quality of the citizens nor does it prove that the (Chinese) race is inferior’, s/he urges that boycott advocates should stop judging people in this way. Forum User 7 defends that shopping in a supermarket which offers groceries at cheaper prices does not mean those Chinese customers are not patriotic; nor does it mean they are inferior because of not being able to endure the sales promotion of Carrefour, rather, it is just their way of living based on their economic conditions, and after all, they ‘need to live’.

Forum User 7 believes that the working-class and housewives are sensitive to the price rise, and Carrefour’s sales promotion will be appealing to them. In addition, forum discussants also think that senior people will be attracted as they are generally

considered thrifty, and in the Chongqing Carrefour accident as mentioned earlier, most people died and injured were actually seniors. What is noteworthy about Forum User 7's post is that s/he tries to figure out who are actually the fervent advocates of the boycott. According to his/her speculation, age 30 is an important watershed - those below age 30 are more likely to be passionate about boycotting Carrefour and those who above 30 have a low interest in the boycott and tend to care more about living. Furthermore, s/he also suggests that economic conditions play a significant role in people's decision whether they boycott Carrefour or not, and pays attention to the discrepancy of concerns between two different groups of people. On the one hand, s/he talks about the working class and housewives who look forward to buying cheaper groceries like cooking oil in Carrefour regardless of the nationalist call of boycott; on the other hand, s/he also notices that some nationalists not only vow to boycott Carrefour, but also pledge to boycott French luxuries like perfume, wine and cars that ordinary people 'will definitely not buy', not to mention to boycott them. By taking all the netizens' posts that have been discussed earlier in this section into account, one can draw the point that economic conditions in fact have a significant effect on people's nationalist position in the boycott of Carrefour. There are affluent nationalists, such as Forum User 2 who threw away his French Montagut bag and asked his wife to give up her luxurious Louis Vuitton handbag and French perfume, and Forum User 3 who cancelled his/her plan of buying a French car. There are also people who have a tight budget and face increasingly economic pressure from the inflation, and therefore, feel difficult to resist Carrefour's sales promotion, for example, Forum User 4 hopes that Carrefour's sales promotion will help him/her 'save a little money', and Forum User 5 expects 'bigger sales promotion' to reduce his/her cost of living.

Since ordinary citizens show little interest in the boycott, it could be assumed that, as Forum User 7 reckons, it is very likely that the ones who actually call fervently to boycott Carrefour are people under 30 year-old and with a middle class background. This is largely congruent with the specific composition of the internet users in China. As I explained in Chapter 2, Chinese netizens are usually young (most of them are under 30), urban, educated, and affluent. Compared with other less affluent Chinese, their middle-class background gives them a comfortable position to raise the initiative to boycott Carrefour, because they are less sensitive to the price, and less

likely to be attracted by Carrefour's sales promotion. Furthermore, they are metropolitan and consumeristic. They have good knowledge of foreign brands, and are eager to possess them; contradictorily, they are also nationalistically conscious, and if it is needed, they are ready to turn down their appreciation of those foreign goods, in order to show their conformity with the nationalist tide. The metropolitan and middle class background of some boycott advocates are also reflected in their nationalist pledge of boycotting French luxury products like cosmetics, bags and cars which the working class citizens do not have the money to buy or simply do not know at all. From this perspective, it could be argued that the online nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour is to a significant extent led by a particular sector of the Chinese population, and they are generally young, metropolitan and middle class.

The online debate about whether or not one should sacrifice his/her personal interest to the nationalist objective of boycotting Carrefour can lead to a discussion that embarrassed the government. The debate about the nationalist action eventually brought people's attention to the domestic problem of inflation, and from the above posts, people's complaints about the soaring prices of consumer goods are visible. These complaints point to the CCP for its failure of maintaining a sound domestic economy, and pose a challenge to its status as the ruling party. As I explained in Chapter 1, the CCP claims its ruling legitimacy largely by promising to its people that it will continuously boost the economy and improve people's living standard, however, when netizens like Forum User 6 who start complaining that 'ordinary people almost can't afford to feed themselves', it signals a serious alarm to the party. Although many forum participants show support for the boycott initiative, they also admit that the economic pressure of living in the time of inflation is a fact that explains the indifference of many ordinary Chinese citizens to the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour. They seem to believe that if ordinary citizens become rich, they do not have to rely on the French supermarket which provides relatively cheaper groceries; and when people are rich, they have economic autonomy to shop wherever they want, and then boycotting Carrefour will not be a difficult nationalist mission to be accomplished. Therefore, having this in mind, they draw the point that the government should make people rich so that they feel economically confident to say no to Carrefour. The problem is, what netizens are complaining is that instead of



making them rich, the CCP actually makes them even poorer due to its failure of sustaining the domestic economy. From the sentence of Forum User 6's post, 'rice is expensive; (edible) oil is expensive; pork is expensive', the three consecutive 'expensive' unveil his/her complaints about the economic situation. Forum User 6 was not alone in this regard, and many others also complained that while all consumer goods were rising rapidly in price at the time, their salaries kept not rising. Furthermore, they also vented disappointment to the government's inability of saving the tumbling stock market, which caused huge loss to their financial investment. According to the BBC (2008), the Shanghai stock exchange dropped 65% by the end of 2008, becoming one of the worst-hit major markets in the world. People felt that they were not well taken care of by the government, and were left alone to face the economic failure and struggle for life on their own. This provides another interesting dimension of Chinese nationalism, because it demonstrates how a nationalist debate about fighting against the foreign hostility can divert people's attention to the domestic issues that the government fails to address properly.

#### **6.6 The CCP's Instrumentalist Use and Suppression of Online Popular Nationalism in the Official Media Discourse**

As can be understood in all the analysis chapters so far, the internet does provide a soil for a bottom-up popular nationalist force to emerge and thrive. By using the internet, popular nationalist players were able to take an independent role in framing the nationalist information about the torch relay in Paris, mobilising nationalist sentiments by discursively and collectively constructing the enemy to hate and the hero to love, and raising the nationalist agenda of boycotting Carrefour for open debate. All these perspectives confirm that online popular nationalist players have brought meaningful changes to the overall dynamics and shape of Chinese nationalism. However, this does not necessarily mean a declining role of the state in shaping Chinese nationalism in the digital era. Rather, by realising the ever-growing weight of the online popular nationalist actors, the CCP has increasingly gained knowledge to strategically engage with them, and co-opt their nationalist ideas and claims into its own nationalist decision-making processes. In particular, during the online debate of boycotting Carrefour, the CCP in fact showed a significant level of co-opting the online popular nationalist players. In a country like China where

information is rigorously controlled, the online initiative to boycott Carrefour would not have been able to spread widely if the CCP had not wanted it at all. The CCP could have mobilised all its propaganda apparatuses to silence the boycott debate on the internet at the early stage, however, the fact that netizens had been allowed to continuously discuss the topic for a certain period of time before the CCP officially intervened, gives some insights into the CCP's instrumentalist use of the popular nationalist sentiments to support its own political goals. In this section, by examining the official media discourse of *The People's Daily*, I mainly attempt to explore how the CCP discursively and strategically engaged with online popular nationalism. Furthermore, the section equally sheds light on the ways the CCP opted to cool down the online campaign of boycotting Carrefour when it was no longer regarded as suitable for the CCP's political needs. The final suppression of online popular nationalism against Carrefour also offers some glimpses with respect to the CCP's power in shaping nationalism in contemporary China.

Ever since the international torch relay of the Beijing Olympic Games was launched, China received considerable protests and criticism in major western cities like London, Paris, San Francisco and Canberra, where the torch relays were held. The torch relay, which the Chinese government described as a 'journey of harmony', was severely interrupted and turned into chaos especially in Paris. Moreover, leaders of western countries continuously urged the Chinese government to change policies on human rights and Tibet, and some of them, such as the former President of France Nicolas Sarkozy, even threatened to boycott the Beijing Olympics. The pressure the Chinese government received was immense, and criticism from the major western powers made it feel 'losing face' in front of the audience both home and abroad. In such a context, the Chinese government was keen to seek support to prove that China was not isolated. China's thirst for international support was reflected in *The People's Daily*. Almost from the beginning to the end of the international torch relay, the newspaper kept publishing supportive words for the Beijing Olympics from politicians, athletes, entrepreneurs and Olympic committee officials of various countries. The newspaper not only exhibited words of support from China's allies, for example, on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008, it briefed the speech given by the former President of Pakistan Musharraf in Tsinghua University, in which he expressed strong support for the Beijing Olympics and praised the friendship between China and Pakistan; but

also showed support from some western politicians, for instance, on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008, the official newspaper quoted Peter Mandelson, a British politician and European Commissioner for Trade, and reported his objections to boycotting the Beijing Olympics and his emphasis on the necessity of maintaining a cooperative relation between China and the EU, including the UK.

The keenness of the official newspaper to show the international support China obtained, uncovers the CCP's efforts of maintaining a welcoming image of the Beijing Olympics. However, in order to counteract western criticism of the Beijing Olympics, the CCP also had to mobilise domestic support. Nationalism became a handy tool, as popular nationalist sentiments against the West were already high owing to a series of nationalist incidents. With the intention of showing how much the general public was angered by what the West, including France, had done to China, the CCP did not take tough measures to cool down the flaring nationalist fury in the first place, and let anti-West sentiments spread on the Chinese cyberspace. As I notice, the Chinese government made few public comments on the growing domestic popular nationalism against France, until a week after the torch relay was held in Paris. In the regular press conference held in the Foreign Ministry of China on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2008, journalists asked the spokeswoman Jiang Yu two questions relating to the campaign of boycotting Carrefour: 1) Because of the torch relay disruption in Paris, some Chinese launched an internet campaign for the boycott of French products, especially Carrefour. Do you support the boycott? 2) China calls France a friend of China, how does China view its citizens' call for a boycott against French products in recent days? Do you think the protests over the torch relay in Paris will damage China-France relations? On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008, *The People's Daily* reported the regular press conference, and published Jiang Yu's replies to the journalists:

*Recently, some Chinese people expressed their own views and emotions. This is not a coincidence and the French side should ponder and reflect upon them. I believe people will abide by laws and regulations in expressing their reasonable appeals. (Answer to the first question)*

*Jiang Yu adds, it needs the efforts from both sides to make friends. On the one hand, France has been saying that they value the China-France relations, while on the other hand, we have often seen something happen in France which the Chinese people can not understand and accept. We hope that the French side could listen to the Chinese people, adopt an objective and impartial attitude, respect facts, draw a clear line between the right and wrong, and, as the vast majority countries of the international community have done, understand and support the just position and legitimate measures taken by the Chinese government. We attach great importance to the China-France Strategic Partnership of Cooperation. It is our hope that people from all walks of life in France could cherish the relations, create sound conditions and make positive efforts and contributions for the further development of the ties between our two countries. (Answer to the second question)*

It was the first time the Chinese government officially and publicly commented on the issue of boycotting Carrefour, and Jiang Yu's words reveal some evidence regarding how the Chinese government strategically and cautiously engaged with the online popular nationalism in order to tackle its diplomatic tension with France. By mentioning the 'views and emotions' of 'some Chinese people' in such a formal occasion, the government shows a certain level of responsiveness to popular nationalism, and wants to inform those people that their claims have been heard and taken into consideration. Both the government and popular nationalists share the point that France did something wrong to China, and Jiang Yu's attempt to defend netizens' call to boycott Carrefour is overt in her answer to the first question. By announcing that 'this is not a coincidence', she expresses her firm belief that such a call for a boycott was not made for no reasons. However, different from online nationalists who directly put the blame on France, Jiang applies a more diplomatic language to warn the French side that 'they should ponder and reflect upon them'. The modal verb 'should', which is used to indicate responsibility typically when criticising someone's actions, nonetheless implies Jiang's message that it was the faults made by the French side that caused some Chinese people to react in such a way. Having blamed France as the source of the problem, Jiang continues to justify

the righteousness of the internet campaign of boycotting Carrefour by describing it as the people's 'reasonable appeals'.

Moreover, in Jiang's reply to the second question, particularly in the sentences, for example, 'we have often seen something happen in France which the Chinese people can not understand and accept', and 'we hope that the French side could listen to the Chinese people', the government displays a strong populist position, and increasingly co-opts the appeals of 'the Chinese people' to address the problem facing the bilateral relations between China and France. It is clear that the Chinese government uses the popular nationalist anger towards France as a bargaining chip in the negotiation with France. With the nationalist backing of 'the Chinese people', the Chinese government appears to be confident in dealing with the French side, and its role in the China-France tension has been dramatically converted from the one being criticised by France for its policies on Tibet and human rights issues, to the one criticising France for dampening the national pride of the Chinese public. Western countries, including France, used the opportunity of the Beijing Olympics to push the Chinese government to change policies on Tibet and human rights issues, but arguably, they did not intend to point their criticism to Chinese people. The problem is, after being exposed to the massive state propaganda about the Beijing Olympics and by telling and retelling the 'century-old dream' narrative, many Chinese people regarded the Beijing Olympics not merely as pride of the Chinese nation, but also as pride of individual Chinese. They treated any voices that questioned the Beijing Olympics as a threat, and western criticism of the Chinese government was to some extent misperceived by some Chinese people as criticism of themselves and the Chinese nation as a whole.

The French government might think that it was a just and responsible world player as it was concerned about the human right issues in China, however, the emergence of Chinese popular nationalism against France in fact gave the Chinese government some evidence to show the French counterpart the anger of a significant proportion of Chinese people towards what France had done to China, and as a consequence, helped the Chinese government to urge the French side to alter its policies towards China and stop raising the undesired agendas about human rights and Tibet. As can

be seen in Jiang's public announcement, she discredits the French side as a problem-maker who caused the problems 'that the Chinese people can not understand and accept' and does not value the China-France relations as it claims to. Such a blaming tone is particularly evident in the two 'hope' sentences underlined. In both sentences, Jiang representing the Chinese government gives a range of suggestions to the French side, in order for them to improve the damaged China-France relations. By saying, for instance, 'we hope that the French side could listen to the Chinese people, adopt an objective and impartial attitude, respect fact...', Jiang seems to imply that the problems facing China-France relations have occurred because the French side did not or did not adequately 'listen to the Chinese people', 'adopt an objective and impartial attitude' and 'respect fact'. In addition to that, it is interesting to notice that although Jiang claims at the beginning of her reply to the second question that 'it needs the efforts from both sides to make friends', in all her subsequent announcement, she puts little emphasis on the Chinese side, but mainly talks about what the French side has to do in order to maintain the friendship. By structuring the announcement in such a way, it implies the position of the Chinese government that it did nothing wrong, and the French side should be held wholly responsible for causing the problems. An intimidating tone of urging the French side to change attitudes towards China is also detectable in Jiang's diplomatic response. In the sentence, for instance, 'as the vast majority countries of the international community have done, understand and support the just position and legitimate measures taken by the Chinese government', Jiang warns that since the 'just position' and 'legitimate measures' of the Chinese government are widely supported, and if the French side continues to question China, it will go against the will of 'the vast majority countries of the international community', and will be isolated.

From the above explanation, it gives an insight as to how the Chinese government attempts to dismiss the unwanted political agenda and force France to change policies to China by co-opting the nationalist sentiments of 'the Chinese people'. 'The Chinese people' have been constantly referred to by the CCP and put on the table as a bargaining chip in the negotiation with the French side. The CCP strategically engages with 'the Chinese people' to rebut foreign criticism and defend the legitimacy and justice of its own domestic policies. However, the intriguing

question is who are ‘the Chinese people’ (*zhongguo renmin*) mentioned by Jiang, particularly in her reply to the second question. It could be argued that the Chinese government purposefully amplifies the claims and emotions of some Chinese popular nationalists, as if they represent public opinion of all Chinese people. The campaign of boycotting French products, including Carrefour, was largely initiated and advocated by Chinese netizens, and in a strict sense, their claims can by no means be equated to public opinion of the whole Chinese society, since only fewer than half of the Chinese population have access to the internet. I do not intend to make the point that the claims of these people are irrelevant, nonetheless, as I stressed in Chapter 2, it should be noted that Chinese netizens is a specific group in China, and most of them are young, educated, and metropolitan. Furthermore, it is questionable to elevate nationalist claims of some Chinese netizens to the level of public opinion of ‘the Chinese people’, because as one can understand from the earlier sections of the chapter, although the boycott plan was fiercely debated on the internet, it was still a highly controversial topic. Netizens not only had different views regarding the rationales and strategies of the boycott, but more fundamentally, they had considerable disputes regarding whether or not the boycott should be executed. There were online nationalists who demonstrated great determination and devotion to the boycott, but there were equally netizens who showed little interest in such a political movement and cared more about their personal living.

From Jiang’s announcement, one can understand that while the government is giving some credit to the online popular nationalism against France, at the same time, it is also trying to keep some distance from the popular nationalists. Such tendency is evident in the first sentence ‘some Chinese people expressed their own views and emotions’. The phrase of ‘their own’ suggests the intention of the government to draw a line between the Chinese government and ‘some Chinese people’, indicating that ‘some Chinese people’ are responsible for those ‘views and emotions’, and they do not represent the official stance. Moreover, by claiming ‘I believe people will abide by laws and regulations in expressing their reasonable appeals’, Jiang actually warns popular nationalists that nationalism can not exceed the laws and regulations, and they have to behave lawfully and responsibly. It is noteworthy that, in the first question, the journalists clearly asked the spokeswoman ‘do you support the boycott’, however, Jiang skilfully avoided the question. In all the words given by the

spokeswoman, there are no explicit expressions that clarify her position, and she does not openly approve the boycott nor disapproves it. Such an equivocal position only proves the CCP's instrumentalist use of online popular nationalism. As I explained in Chapter 1, the CCP has to deal with popular Chinese nationalism cautiously, because either encouraging it or suppressing it can backfire. That is to say, if the CCP disapproves the boycott, it can certainly dampen netizens' nationalist ambition, and given that the CCP needs domestic popular nationalism to gain some leverage in the negotiation with the French government, it can not actually negate it as long as popular nationalism is still under control. If the CCP openly supports it, it leaves evidence for other countries to accuse the CCP of encouraging anti-foreign public sentiments, and this could tarnish the peaceful and harmonious image of China the CCP is keen to project for the Beijing Olympics. Finally, the demarcation between the Chinese government and popular nationalists is also noticeable in the CCP's overall attitudes towards the China-France relations. Unlike online popular nationalists who regarded France as a hostile enemy that humiliated China and pledged to penalise France regardless of the negative impact it might cause to the bilateral relations, the Chinese government on contrary, shows its care about the relations by declaring 'we attach great importance to the China-France strategic partnership of cooperation', and the word 'great' illustrates the importance of France to China. Although Jiang hints that the French side should be held responsible for causing problems to the bilateral relations, she does not threaten to halt the so-called 'friendship'. In fact, the Chinese government did not want to see a weakening tie between China and France, and what it needed by co-opting domestic popular nationalism was to urge France to make concessions and stop imposing political agendas that the CCP did not like.

The CCP understands that letting popular nationalism grow can cause serious problems to the social stability, and given that popular nationalism is not necessarily supportive of the CCP and discussions about nationalism can also direct people's attention to some domestic problems that the CCP fails to solve, for instance, the high inflation rate, it has to watch closely the development of the nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour. Further to that, the CCP's ad hoc use of domestic popular nationalism for serving its political ends means that once it achieves its goals, it has to make a timely decision to put an end to the nationalist fever in the



society. On 20<sup>th</sup> April 2008, it was the first time the CCP showed its intention to cool down the boycott of Carrefour, as the newspaper published a brief announcement reporting that the CEO of LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton) and major shareholder of Carrefour, Bernard Arnault expressed support for the Beijing Olympics when interviewed by the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. The following day, *The People's Daily* reported the denial of Carrefour's CEO that his supermarket had ever given financial support to the Dalai Lama. On 22<sup>nd</sup> April, the newspaper covered the official trip of Poncelet, the French Senate President, to China. It reported that Mr Poncelet visited Jin Jing in Shanghai and conveyed Sarkozy's letter to her, in which President Sarkozy praised Jin Jing's courage and stressed his opposition to the protestors who attacked her in Paris. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April, the newspaper also reported President Sarkozy's claims when meeting the newly appointed Chinese ambassador to France, that France would forever be China's friend and he expected the progression of the France-China relations.

The political message behind the series of reports was obvious. The CCP intended to show its victory over the French counterpart in the negotiation, and tell the domestic audience that the French side realised the 'mistake' and began to make correction. Since the CCP's political goal was achieved and the China-France relations began to restore, it had to take measures to create a favourable ambience for the bilateral relations to repair. Therefore, the CCP had to cool down the domestic nationalist anger towards France. To do so, *The People's Daily* issued articles to call for 'rational patriotism', and requested people to calm down. On 20<sup>th</sup> April, the newspaper published an editorial entitled 'How to Make Patriotism More Vigorous?' (Extract A):

*Patriotism, we should cherish it, but at the same time, express it rationally. Only in this way can we maintain the social stability, seize the opportunity for development, and make the motherland even better. This is the genuine way of loving the nation. Loving the nation requires no reasons, but expressing patriotic feelings rationally reflects not only a responsible attitude towards the nation, but more importantly a kind of formidable spiritual strength. After 30 years of opening-up, ancient China is*

*rejuvenating, and entering the key stage of reform and development. We are walking on the path leading to a strong nation, and also nurturing the mind-set of being a great nation. A strong nation is not only strong economically, but also spiritually. This (spiritual) strength includes facing pressure calmly and responding to difficulties rationally. At present, we are in a rare time that provides strategic opportunities. This special period is an opportunity as well as a challenge (for China). In order to protect the core national interest and become a real patriot, the Chinese people should keep calm, wise and united no matter how complex the international environment becomes. Let the world see that China is developing methodically and nothing can stop (it).*

On 21<sup>st</sup> April, the newspaper published another article ‘Patriotic Passion and National Interest’ (Extract B), in which it gave a further official explanation about patriotism and rationality:

*Passion and rationality are not contradictory. Expressing (patriotic passion) within legal and moral framework and keeping the core national interest in mind as a prime concern, that is rationality. [...] Patriotism is not abstract; rather it is concrete and pragmatic. It is tightly related to the fundamental interest of the Chinese nation. In the current situation, China’s core and fundamental interest is to (maintain) prosperity and unity, develop China and make it even stronger. In this regard, maintaining the stability of the general situation with actual deeds, boost economic development, and successfully hold the Olympics are the best responses to the bad acts intending to contain and tarnish China, and are the most concrete and genuine manifestations of patriotism. [...] As a globally acknowledged great country, our attitudes should be more open, tolerant, rational and confident. Putting the national interest first and expressing (patriotism) passionately as well as rationally is our right attitude towards patriotism.*

The frequent use of the words ‘rationality’ and ‘rationally’ in the official media discourse as shown in the newspaper extracts above, suggests the CCP’s increasing concerns about the challenges of domestic popular nationalism. Although the nationalist initiative to boycott Carrefour originally emerged on the internet, as popular nationalist anger grew, it was soon transformed into substantial actions in the street, and according to Branigan (2008), over the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2008, protests against Carrefour spread across China, especially in some big cities like Dalian, Xi’an and Wuhan. The CCP worried that the nationalist demonstrations could eventually engender social, political and economic instability, however, to calm down the nationalist fever, it required a legitimate reason. The fact that the CCP’s ruling legitimacy largely stems from its nationalist credentials means that it could not deny people’s nationalist passion, and this assumption is actually confirmed in the beginning of Extract A - ‘Patriotism, we should cherish it’. The use of ‘cherish’ indicates the official acknowledgement to the nationalist passion of its citizens, and in both extracts, although the CCP urges people to express patriotic passion rationally, it does not employ any negative words, for example ‘irrational’, to explicitly negate or criticise popular nationalism.

Although the CCP does not overtly criticise those popular nationalists, it consistently explains why rational expression of patriotic passion is important for China. The problem is, to define such a word as ‘rational’ is difficult, as people of different positions can have different definitions and understandings of it. To recall the earlier sections about the online debate regarding whether or not Chinese citizens should boycott French products especially Carrefour, for those who strongly supported the boycott, they argued that the boycott was a necessary and rational response to France’s alleged hostility. They defended their rationales of boycotting, and attacked those who opposed the boycott as ‘traitors’. On the other hand, for those advocated not to boycott, they thought the boycott was irrational as it could only bring troubles to Chinese people and the Chinese economy, and therefore, they called the boycott supporters as ‘indignant youths’. The CCP’s definition of ‘rational patriotism’ is built on realpolitik thinking, and sheds much light on the notion of national interest. According to the official interpretation, ‘rational patriotism’ requires that Chinese people should always keep in mind and protect with actual deeds China’s fundamental national interest of stability, unity, prosperity and

development. The CCP claims its nationalist credentials by promising its people that it will continuously boost the economy, protect China's territorial integrity, strengthen its comprehensive national power and restore China's ancient glory. However, as the CCP often stresses, stability overrides all, and without it, prosperity, unity and development become meaningless. In Extract A, these sentences like '(China is) entering the key stage of reform and development' and 'we are in a rare time that provides strategic opportunities', the author uses the adjectives 'key' and 'rare' to tell the audience that it is a decisive moment for China and China has a great chance to succeed, and in order for it to make full use of the chance available, social stability is essential. Furthermore, as in the sentence 'China is rejuvenating', the author employs present continuous tense to inform the audience that China is on the way to restore its past glory, and seems to request them to create a stable social environment so that the nation can maintain such a progressive tendency.

Both extracts provide visible clues that the CCP attempts to exert its discursive power of defining nationalism in a way that suits its own policies. The CCP knows that once popular nationalists take the street, things become extremely complicated, as popular nationalism, though it appears to share the official realpolitik thinking of protecting China's national interest and making China a strong country in the world, is not necessarily supportive of the CCP. Various political claims and criticism can gather under the flag of nationalism, and as Zhao (2008:174-175) observes, the outburst of popular nationalism has been increasingly witnessed to come closely with other discontented groups. In order not to give space for potential public criticism to emerge, the CCP has to dismiss nationalist protests in the street by urging people to stay calm and express patriotism rationally. As indicated in the extracts, the CCP does not say that such directive was made because it worries the possibility that popular nationalism could grow out of control and undermine its legitimacy, rather, it explains that China's core national interest requires the Chinese public to keep calm and rational. To encourage people to follow its directive, the CCP praises the rational expression of patriotism as 'a responsible attitude towards the nation'. By saying that, the CCP in fact imposes a moral standard, and people are coerced into conforming to it, because if they continue to express the patriotic feelings in a way the government thinks not rational, they face the moral risk of being irresponsible to the nation. Moreover, the CCP's exertion of its discursive

power of defining nationalism is also apparent in the following sentences, ‘only in this way can we ...’, ‘this is the genuine way of loving the nation’, ‘in order to protect the core national interest and become a real patriot, the Chinese people should...’ and ‘... are the most concrete and genuine manifestations of patriotism’. The phrases, such as ‘only in this way’, ‘the genuine way’, ‘become a real patriot’ and ‘the most concrete and genuine manifestations’, suggest the CCP’s endeavour of projecting its own views regarding how people should act to love the nation. Besides that, by accentuating ‘only’, ‘the genuine’ and ‘the most concrete and genuine’, the CCP deliberately excludes other potential explanations, and declares that its views are the ultimate and authoritative interpretations of patriotism.

It can be realised in the extracts that the government in fact discourages its people to take substantial action to boycott France; instead, it advocates the so-call ‘mind-set of being a great country’ (*daguo xintai*). As the official newspaper explains, a great country ‘is not only strong economically, but also spiritually’. What the government is inclined to say is that as citizens of a great country, people should learn to keep calm and wise in face of pressure and difficulties, and become ‘open, tolerant, rational and confident’ to face different voices. The CCP’s open request for confidence and tolerance is politically risky. On the one hand, the Chinese government constantly reminded people that China’s primary task was to develop, and whatever challenges China may encounter, Chinese people should stay calm and focus on their own work and studies in order to make China a strong country. On the other hand, there were angry popular nationalists who wanted to teach France a lesson through boycott, and criticised the public requests of the government for tolerance as a way of showing feeble stance to the alleged enemy. Furthermore, while the government was asking its citizens to be open, tolerant, rational and confident, one could actually raise the question that how open, tolerant, rational and confident the government was when dealing with criticism from the West. Facing the waves of criticism on human rights and Tibet issues, the CCP felt isolated and turned to the domestic popular nationalism for help. The CCP allowed the anti-France popular nationalism to loom large in the first place, in order to gain an advantageous position in the diplomatic negotiation with France, and when its political goals were achieved, it started suppressing popular nationalist sentiments by asking its people to keep calm and rational. The instrumentalist use of popular

nationalism in fact indicates that the CCP lacks confidence and open-mindedness to tackle criticism, and its inconsistent attitudes towards popular nationalism can only erode its credibility at home. The articles that openly requested for rational patriotism in *The People's Daily* can be understood as final calls to popular nationalism, because several days later, the government executed rigorous censorship on the internet and the word 'Carrefour' became a sensitive word. Most online discussions about boycotting Carrefour were deleted and disabled.

### **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter paid significant attention to the nationalist discussions relating to the boycott of Carrefour in both online popular and official media discourses. It demonstrated the potentials of the internet to facilitate open debate about the rationales and strategies of a proposed nationalist action. Although the internet was strictly censored, it did not seem to have dampened the passion of forum users for expressing, elaborating and promoting their own nationalist views about the boycott of Carrefour. The example of the online discussion about the boycott of Carrefour showed the growing participation of popular nationalist players in the politics of Chinese nationalism. The CCP's dominance in Chinese nationalism was challenged, because netizens initiated the nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour and forced the CCP to respond.

From what has been discussed in this chapter, it can be claimed that the internet opens a rare space for Chinese citizens to express, experiment and contend for various nationalist ideals, and creates a new mode of interactions between the CCP and ordinary citizens over Chinese nationalism. Netizens' interest in the online politics of Chinese nationalism certainly challenges the views that regard state elites as the only main actor of nationalism while dismiss the bottom-up nationalist forces as irrelevant. Online Chinese nationalism is a carnival in the sense that it belongs to every participant, and the impenetrable social inequalities and barriers in the official life that prevent them from expressing their own nationalist views are suspended. That is to say, in the virtual cyberspace, participants are liberated to express without much fear that their claims and behaviours may conflict the official authorities or other interest groups. This to a certain extent explains the wildness of online Chinese

nationalism, particularly relevant for explaining the ruthless and unconstrained nationalist attacks netizens launch when they find conflicting views and claims against theirs. According to Bakhtin (1984a: 123), carnival brings all things that are separated by the 'non-carnivalistic hierarchical worldview' into 'carnivalistic contacts and combinations'. Online Chinese nationalism is a carnival also in the sense that it is a 'cacophony' (Herold 2011: 11) mixed with conflicting voices between the so called rational and irrational, reasonable and unreasonable, right and wrong. The resemblance of online Chinese nationalism to carnival is also reflected in the outspoken languages and grotesque behaviours of online participants. Bakhtin (1984a: 123) argues that carnival is 'sensuous', 'half-real and half-play-acted' space. In the context of online Chinese nationalism, instead of thinking the internet as a place for nationalist deliberation, it is to some extent a carnivalistic square for nationalist performances. Rationality has given way to the needs of nationalist manifestation, and the louder one shouts out his/her nationalist claims, the more attention s/he receives and hence, the more nationalistic s/he feels. However, in the real world, one does not necessarily appear to be as nationalist as s/he does on the internet. As Shen (2006: 197) points out, while many Chinese people tend to express fervent nationalist rhetoric on the internet where their real-life identities are hidden, the same people realise 'the importance of being rational in real life'.

This chapter also reinforced the discursive nature of Chinese nationalism, and explained the importance of language in the debating and making of a nationalist action. The necessity, rationality and effectiveness of boycotting Carrefour were fiercely discussed on the *Tianya Forum*, and netizens applied various linguistic techniques to stress their rationales for boycotting or not boycotting Carrefour. For those who rejected the initiative to boycott Carrefour, they tended to amplify, through the manipulation of language, the considerable negative consequences the action of boycotting Carrefour could bring to China. On the other hand, for those who favoured a boycott, they constantly retold and reinterpreted the alleged humiliation France had imposed on China, in order to stress the righteousness and urgency of the boycott. Furthermore, the online discussions about boycotting Carrefour also provided such an opportunity for netizens to demonstrate their nationalist determination. Netizens stressed their commitment to the nationalist

action by showing other peer users, through the use of language, how willing they were to give up personal interest for the nationalist objectives.

The CCP were cautious about the online discussions of boycotting Carrefour because on the one hand, they feared that online nationalist discussions could eventually become real nationalist protests in the street, and therefore, caused problems to the social stability; on the other hand, online nationalist discussions were likely to become criticism of the government, for instance, in debating whether people should support the nationalist action of boycotting Carrefour by giving up personal interest of buying cheaper groceries in Carrefour, some forum users criticised the failure of the CCP to tackle the high inflation rate. Although the emergence of online popular nationalism challenges the CCP's dominant role in Chinese nationalism, it does not suggest that the CCP has become less important in the politics of Chinese nationalism. The CCP has increasingly realised the emerging power of online popular nationalist players in shaping the discourse of Chinese nationalism, and showed willingness to strategically engage with them. The CCP needs popular nationalist support particularly when it encounters major frustration on the international stage, and this chapter explained how the Chinese government carefully and selectively co-opted online popular nationalism to serve its political ends. The CCP may share some ideas and views of the online popular nationalists, however, from what has been explained in the chapter, the CCP maintains a clear distance from online popular nationalism. The CCP still has the power to define Chinese nationalism, and whenever online popular nationalism threatens the CCP's policies, it has the ability to cool it down.



## **Conclusion**

### **Summary and Contributions of the Research**

Nationalism is central to online political discussion in China, and online Chinese nationalism is an important discourse, which gives researchers an opportunity to understand the dynamics of social movements in China's cyberspace (Qiu, 2003; Qiu, 2006). As all the above chapters demonstrated, this thesis managed to establish meaningful connections between the two seemingly separate topics, namely, Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet, and provided some new perspectives for studying and understanding online Chinese nationalism. By focusing specifically on the Paris leg of the international torch relay of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the subsequent anti-France nationalist movement of boycotting Carrefour, this research not only proved the linkage between the use of the internet by ordinary Chinese and the emergence of Chinese nationalism, but more significantly, explained in what ways and to what extent the internet could contribute to the building and shaping of Chinese nationalism in contemporary Chinese society.

In reality, as I explained in the thesis, the internet can play a significant role in the production, dissemination, mobilisation, construction and discussion of Chinese nationalism. Chapter 3, for instance, showed how the internet revolutionised the ways nationalist information could be produced and disseminated. Without the internet, those Chinese who personally witnessed the Olympic torch relay in Paris would not have been able to publish their accounts about the incidents and inform a large audience back in China in such a quick and efficient manner. On the other hand, without the internet, people in China would possibly have had no alternative sources other than the official media to know what really happened during the torch relay in Paris. Moreover, the internet not only serves as an alternative channel that helps distribute nationalist information, but also offers possibilities for ordinary Chinese to engage in the production and mobilisation of Chinese nationalism. Netizens called people's attention and ignited their nationalist passion by emotionally warning them of massive protests and interruptions the torch relay

encountered in Paris and of hostile France that intended to humiliate the Beijing Olympics, which many Chinese believed, epitomised China's national pride.

The distinctive features of the internet enable ordinary people to maintain and imagine the nation, for example, the speed of communications and global reach provided by the internet certainly make rapid mobilisation of nationalist support possible when the nation is purportedly under threat. Furthermore, the interconnectedness of the internet could also contribute to nation-building, because it encourages nationalist interactions and discussions through which a sense of national belonging and unity can be formed and constructed. Chapter 5 provided some detailed insights with respect to how ordinary Chinese netizens constructed and reinforced their nationalist identity through online collective interactions of attacking France as a national enemy on the one hand, and embracing Jin Jing as a national hero on the other hand. One can manifest his or her nationalist identity, for example, by shouting out his/her anger towards a national enemy and by paying tribute to a national hero. However, what is unique about the internet is that it provides an avenue not only for a large number of people, regardless of geographic locations and social classes, to come together and express their nationalist claims and concerns, but more fundamentally, by interacting with each other, they collectively define, establish and impose a set of nationalist norms and standards for other fellow citizens to practice and conform to. As understood in Chapter 5, the making of France as a national enemy and Jin Jing as a national hero was largely a consequence of online nationalist interactions, and hating France and loving Jin Jing was the ultimate criterion set up by netizens for determining one's nationalist qualification at that time. Further to that, the internet, as showed in Chapter 6, provides a virtual space for ordinary Chinese citizens to debate nationalist agendas, rationales and actions. This is of great significance particularly in China where political participation and movements are strictly controlled, and one could find nowhere else other than the internet that can provide possibilities for such massive popular nationalist discussions to take place.

The thesis not only examined the ways in which the use of the internet in China could give rise to online Chinese nationalism, but also analysed the extent to which

the emergence of online Chinese nationalism could reshape the structure of Chinese nationalist politics. I argued that studies of online Chinese nationalism should take both state and popular players into account, because on the one hand, for the Chinese internet, it is a space used, shaped and contested by both state actors and ordinary netizens; on the other hand, because the processes relating to Chinese nationalism, for example, the making of nationalist policies, the mobilisation of nationalist support and the execution of nationalist strategies, can hardly be understood without considering the power relations between the state and ordinary citizens. One of the questions I aim to answer throughout this research is to what extent online Chinese nationalism could challenge the state's domination over nationalist politics, and as the evidence showed, the rise of online Chinese nationalism to a great extent has redefined and transformed the relationship between the state and popular actors over the issue of nationalism, and has prompted us to reconsider how both players could confront and engage with each other to jointly shape the overall dynamics of online Chinese nationalism.

The internet creates various opportunities for ordinary Chinese citizens to take part in the politics of nationalism, and throughout the whole research, I found that the emergence of online popular Chinese nationalism could challenge the official dominance over Chinese nationalism in three main areas. Firstly, online Chinese nationalism weakens the CCP's control of nationalist information. With the help of the internet, ordinary netizens are likely to publish, disseminate and acquire nationalist information that is different from the official versions. As I discussed in Chapter 4, in order to maintain people's national confidence and pride of hosting the Beijing Olympics, the official newspaper distorted the information by showing the domestic audience the support the Beijing Olympics received during the Paris leg of the international torch while underplaying the massive protests it actually faced. However, online popular nationalists challenged the CCP's manipulation of the nationalist information by unveiling realities that were contradictory to the official version, and exposed that the Paris leg of the torch relay which the government called 'the journey of harmony', was actually chaos. Secondly, the rise of popular nationalism on the internet also challenges the leading role of the CCP in the construction of Chinese nationalism. As I argue, the notion of enemy and hero is key to the construction of nationalism. Traditionally, the CCP endeavours to nurture and

reinforce people's nationalist awareness by constantly reminding its citizens, through mass propaganda and the patriotic education programme, of the enemies that caused and still intend to cause humiliation to China and national heroes that devoted their blood, toil and tears to the Chinese nation. However, as I explained in Chapter 5, online popular nationalists took the lead in the building of national enemies and heroes, and the online processes and practices of making national enemies and heroes were largely independent from the CCP. Thirdly, online popular nationalism also undermines the CCP's control over the discussion and execution of nationalist actions. As the case study of the online nationalist initiative to boycott Carrefour illustrated, debating and implementing such a nationalist action was no longer the privilege of the top state elites, rather, ordinary Chinese netizens could not only express their personal views towards the nationalist initiative, but also take part in the discussion of various issues relating to it.

The outgrowth of online Chinese nationalism poses a significant threat to the dominance of the CCP in the politics of Chinese nationalism, and as Callahan (2010: 25) points out, 'while it is popular to see the state as the actor and the masses as the audience, here the actor is the audience, and the audience is the actor'. Although the rise of online Chinese nationalism brings notable changes to the power relations between the state and ordinary citizens, it does not mean that popular nationalists have totally replaced the state as the leading actor in shaping the overall dynamics of Chinese nationalism. We have to regard such changing power relations dialectically. On the one hand, as Callahan (Ibid) claims, Chinese nationalism has in fact increasingly become a political realm shaped and contested by the state and popular actors, and it 'grows out of a dynamism of reciprocal influence that integrates official policy and popular culture'. Therefore, the study of online Chinese nationalism by no means leads to an easy conclusion that state actors become less relevant in shaping and constructing Chinese nationalism. On the other hand, when we tend to see online Chinese nationalism as 'resistance' or 'challenge' toward the CCP's control, we should not ignore the fact that the Chinese cyberspace, out of which online Chinese nationalism comes into shape, is actually a realm of resistance and a realm of control at the same time. The internet provides mechanisms for ordinary people to resist, circumvent and even ridicule the government's control of information and political participation, but it also gives the government new means

for political manipulation and propaganda. The CCP develops an array of methods to maintain the rigorous control of the internet via which online Chinese nationalism is mobilised, distributed, practiced and discussed, and closely monitors the developments, tendencies and changes of online public opinion and behaviours.

While talking about how Chinese netizens used the internet to challenge the CCP's nationalist agendas and policies, we should also consider why Chinese netizens could succeed – is it because the internet is too big to control or is it because the CCP loses overall control of online mass political participation? Technically speaking, even though reining in the internet has become increasingly difficult, the CCP still has the abilities to block undesired and sensitive online materials, and I assume that the online nationalist discussions about the alleged hostility of France and boycotting Carrefour would not have been able to loom large and prosper if the CCP had not wanted them at all. Usually, researchers of the Chinese internet pay attention to what is censored in the Chinese cyberspace and speculate about the political motivations behind the censorship. I argue that equal attention should be given to the online contents which could have been censored but were not, and the political intentions behind the action of not censoring them. As the case study of boycotting Carrefour demonstrated, the CCP could have halted the online discussions about the nationalist initiative in the very beginning, however, such discussions were allowed to flourish for a while, primarily because the CCP wanted to boost domestic nationalist support so that it could secure a bargaining chip in the diplomatic negotiation with the French counterpart. When the CCP achieved its political goals and realised that the escalating nationalist sentiments against France could threaten its foreign policies and the domestic social stability, it launched massive online censorship and netizens' passion for discussing the boycott was quickly cooled down. In this regard, it could be said that the CCP still plays a fundamental role in online Chinese nationalism, because it maintains the power to co-opt online popular nationalism for its policy making, and decide whether or not online nationalism can thrive, and to what extent and for how long it can thrive. Therefore, online Chinese nationalism should not be solely regarded as a form of challenge or resistance to the CCP's political dominance, but also has to be seen as a result and reflection of the CCP's strategic manipulation and co-optation.

Based on the chosen case study, this research provided an alternative perspective for understanding the ways in which the internet could help increase the participation of ordinary Chinese in the processes of nation-building, and stressed the dialectical power relations between the CCP and ordinary Chinese netizens over the issue of online Chinese nationalism. A research topic such as online Chinese nationalism apparently requires an analytical approach that incorporates media and political studies. However, what is really important about my research is that I examined online Chinese nationalism not only from the perspectives of new media and Chinese politics, but also from linguistic dimensions. In other words, I did not merely regard the emergence and transformation of online Chinese nationalism as a result of the political use of the internet, but fundamentally, as a result of online discursive practices. As I have constantly emphasised, online Chinese nationalist texts should be treated as discursive, and online Chinese nationalism is in essence a discursive practice which intrinsically relates to the political use of language. The online practices of representing nationalist information, constructing nationalist identity and discussing nationalist actions are discursive, because they are all to a great extent a matter of how language is manipulated to achieve certain nationalist objectives, for instance, to mobilise popular nationalist passion, to demonstrate one's nationalist position or to legitimise a nationalist action.

I adopted Norman Fairclough's analytical framework for investigating Chinese nationalist discourses, and the whole analytical process was intensively text-oriented. Existing research on online Chinese nationalism sees online nationalist texts as expressions and voices, and they do not pay adequate attention to how such expressions and voices are made linguistically and the potential ideologies and power relations behind linguistic applications. Fairclough (1995a) states that media texts have to be analysed discursively, and his framework of critical discourse analysis, which includes the analysis of text, discourse practice and socio-political practice, worked well for studying discourses of Chinese nationalism. By employing Fairclough's approach, I not only analysed the linguistic structures, forms and organisations of the collected nationalist texts, for instance, choice of words, grammar, syntax and so on, but also investigated the institutional factors as well as

general socio-political conditions that shaped the ways nationalist texts were produced and consumed. What this research has proved is that nationalist texts should not be taken for granted as the sheer expression of a nationalist concern, instead, they have to be regarded as discursive products that reflect the power positions and ideologies of the text producers. According to Wodak (2009: 8), ‘through discourse, social actors constitute objects of knowledge, situations and social roles as well as identities and interpersonal relations between different social groups and those who interact with them’. The constitution of knowledge, identities and relations can hardly be achieved without the use of language, because people use language to represent the world they know of, to identify who they are and to position themselves in relation to others. Having this in mind, I treated online nationalist discussions as discursive practices, and paid close attention to the construction of nationalist knowledge, identities and relations in text.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, 5 and 6, the discursive practices of representing nationalist information, constructing nationalist identity and discussing nationalist actions are intrinsically related to the use of language. This research entailed considerable linguistic analysis, and saw linguistic applications and features as possible clues for unmasking political goals of the language users. In Chapter 4, I explained that there was no single version or representation of a reality, because the reality itself was discursively constructed, and different social actors could create different versions of realities through manipulation of language in order to serve their own political ends. As I also explained, every step in the process of representing a reality is ideological, and whether one chooses to represent or not represent something, it is a matter of power. The CCP intended to use the opportunity of the Beijing Olympics to boost national pride and confidence among the Chinese public as well as to enhance its political legitimacy, therefore, through linguistic manoeuvres, the official media discursively constructed the Paris leg of the torch relay as a welcoming and harmonious event, and underplayed the massive protests it encountered. The discursive strategies of foregrounding and backgrounding were often used in the official newspaper in the process of representing the torch relay, that is to say, the newspaper foregrounded the welcoming scenes and the supportive words of local people, and backgrounded, if not totally veiled, the scenes of protests against the Beijing Olympics. However,

online popular nationalists exerted their discursive power of resistance by challenging the official representation of the torch relay, and they unveiled the realities that were covered up in the official media discourse. What was vague and backgrounded in the official media discourse became foregrounded, and online nationalists not only gave a detailed description about the interruptions during the torch relay in Paris, but also specified the identities of those who caused the chaos to the torch relay. Moreover, in order to rally nationalist attention and support, they employed nationalistically strong language to inform fellow compatriots how hostile the French public was to the 'we' Chinese and how seriously the pride of the Beijing Olympics was undermined in Paris.

In Chapter 5, I stressed that the online making of a national enemy and a national hero was actually a discursive practice in which language played an important role. The status of France as a national enemy was established due to netizens' discursive practices of interpreting and reinterpreting the threat France posed to China. Likewise, the deification of Jin Jing as a national hero was not possible without the help of linguistic manipulation. Jin Jing's elevation as a national hero was largely a result of netizens' reiteration of the story about her heroic action of protecting the torch and their constant use of special words, such as 'angel', 'pure' and 'sacred', that emphasised Jin Jing's divine quality. Furthermore, I also explained that netizens constructed and reinforced their nationalist identity through online collective interactions of hating France on the one hand and embracing Jin Jing on the other hand, and such online nationalist practices were essentially discursive. As we can understand from Chapter 5, the online construction of nationalist identity was largely a discursive practice of dealing with the relationship between 'us' and 'them'. On the one hand, netizens drew a clean boundary between 'I' and the 'enemy', and demonstrated the nationalist quality of the 'I' by utilising negative words to attack France and defaming the country as nothing but hostile to the 'we'; on the other hand, netizens announced a close connection between 'I' and the 'hero', in order to suggest that 'I' belonged to the group of 'we', as 'we' worshiped the same national hero.



In Chapter 6, I demonstrated that the online discussion about the nationalist initiative to boycott Carrefour was also a discursive practice. Whether netizens opposed or supported the nationalist initiative, they skilfully used the language to legitimise and defend their own nationalist claims. For those netizens disagreed with the initiative, a typical discursive strategy they applied was to appeal to authority. They argued that boycotting Carrefour was against the prevailing conventions of international relations and international business, and the phrase ‘international conventions’ was often mentioned to underpin the authoritativeness of their decision of not boycotting Carrefour. Moreover, they tended to believe that although boycotting Carrefour could teach France a lesson, it would cause more harm to China than France, because China was inferior to France in the global economic system and China’s development relied on technologies and investments from France. As a result, by discursively depicting China as a passive and inferior player, netizens tried to persuade fellow forum users that China could not afford the cost of boycotting Carrefour. For those who favoured the boycott, it was common that they tended to push others to boycott Carrefour by means of linguistic intimidation, and they labelled those who chose not to boycott Carrefour as ‘traitors’ and ‘slaves of foreigners’. Furthermore, the linguistic formulation of ‘will + comparative adjective’ was constantly used by boycott advocates to impose a strong sense of imminent national crisis and urge people to take immediate actions to boycott Carrefour, because they argued that France had already posed serious threats to China, and it would cause more problems to China if Chinese people did not fight back. In Chapter 6, I also investigated the official media discourse and examined how the CCP discursively and strategically positioned itself in the nationalist plan proposed by online popular nationalists. The CCP’s attitudes towards the online nationalist initiative to boycott Carrefour were ambiguous, and it did not negate netizens’ nationalist passion, nor did it explicitly support the nationalist action. On the one hand, the CCP showed some acknowledgement to popular nationalism on the internet, and such acknowledgement can be sensed in the official language, for instance, the CCP described people’s nationalist claims as ‘reasonable appeals’ and as something that ‘we should cherish’. On the other hand, the CCP maintained a distance from the online nationalist initiative, and emphasised that the online nationalist campaign of boycotting Carrefour was the views of ‘some Chinese people’, insinuating that it did not represent the CCP’s official stance. The CCP

avoided using any words and phrases suggesting that it supported the boycott. The CCP also exerted its discursive power by explaining what it called ‘rational patriotism’ and why it was important for the Chinese nation. By defining rational patriotism as the ‘only’ and ‘the most concrete and genuine’ way of loving China, the CCP in fact imposed its own nationalist views as the ultimate nationalist standard for its people to follow.

### **Further Remarks**

Before closing this thesis, I would like to share two general observations with other researchers and policy-makers. Firstly, online Chinese nationalism could be easily misinterpreted as a sheer result of the CCP’s manipulation, because the passion of online popular nationalists for defending China’s national interest and their indignation against the perceived foreign threat are often consistent with the CCP’s nationalist policies. However, as I have constantly emphasised, online Chinese nationalism is in fact a result of contradiction and co-optation between the state and popular nationalist players, and both of them jointly shape the overall structure and dynamics of online Chinese nationalism. Although it seems that both players share a general nationalist ideal, they have different agendas and strategies. As I explained in Chapter 6, the CCP gave some acknowledgement to online popular nationalism, however, at the same time, separated itself from popular nationalists by clarifying its own views and positions towards the nationalist plan. Furthermore, while online popular nationalists spared no effort to describe France as China’s national enemy and directed their nationalist anger towards it, as we understand from the official newspaper, the CCP showed no real intention to join the online popular nationalist call. Although the CCP needed online popular nationalism to pressure the French government, it did not want to see a weakening tie between China and France. Moreover, many online popular nationalists insisted that the nationalist initiative to boycott Carrefour should be implemented regardless of economic and political consequences it might cause, in order to punish France for its alleged hostility to China, nonetheless, the Chinese government reemphasised the importance of the ‘friendship’ between both countries, although it blamed the French side for causing problems to the bilateral relations. In response to the prevailing nationalist anger against France among the Chinese public, the CCP had to appear nationalistic in

front of the French counterpart, because it knew well that once popular nationalism was on, popular nationalist claims needed to be replied in some ways, and if not, the CCP's nationalist credentials would be questioned. Clearly, the CCP did not intend to 'punish' France as some online nationalists proposed, since in the increasingly globalised world, both countries were interdependent economically and politically. What the CCP really wanted by appearing nationalistic was to urge the French government to make concessions and stop raising political agendas that made the CCP feel uncomfortable. The Chinese government needed the concessive attitudes of the French government towards human rights and Tibet, because on the one hand, the CCP could show the domestic audience some sense of nationalist victory that France 'realised' the problems it had caused to China and the Chinese government managed to urge France to 'make corrections'; on the other hand, only when the French counterpart made concessions could the Chinese government have a legitimate excuse to cool down the anti-France nationalism among the Chinese public, and both governments could therefore sit down and discuss solutions to repair the bilateral relations without being hijacked by the nationalist public opinion.

Secondly, the internet enables ordinary Chinese to produce and disseminate nationalist information, at the same time, it also creates chances for them to fabricate information. As we notice in the case of boycotting Carrefour, although the online allegation of Carrefour supporting the Dalai Lama provoked massive nationalist anger among Chinese netizens and eventually made many of them decide to boycott Carrefour, the allegation was never proven to be true. According to my observation, most netizens tended to believe the unreliable allegation, because, after a series of incidents, such as Sarkozy's threat of boycotting the Beijing Olympics and the chaotic torch relay in Paris, there was already a widely shared view among many Chinese that France was hostile to China. The one(s) who fabricated the information actually took advantage of the fermenting nationalist sentiments against France among the Chinese public, and successfully mobilised netizens to take some nationalist actions. Furthermore, the online prevailing belief in the allegation outweighed other voices questioning about it, and the potential risk of receiving personal attacks and being labelled as unpatriotic made people less willing to challenge the validity of the allegation. The fact that a baseless allegation could circulate widely and rapidly also suggests that the digital divide is not only a matter

of the accessibility of the internet, but also of the ability of users to process information. Although many Chinese have access to the internet nowadays, users' lack of abilities to verify information has made the Chinese internet a space for nationalist manipulation and agitation. Besides, some other Chinese netizens might not even care about the validity of the nationalist information, and what they really cared about was probably the online nationalist carnival brought about by the massive response to and discussion about the allegation. As Qiu (2003: 14) claims, Chinese netizens 'care less about the grand narratives of modernity – be it rationality, liberalism, or “socialist democracy” – than subjects that can be discussed and celebrated, generating instant gratification for mass consumption'. Online Chinese nationalism could be regarded as a form of carnival, and it provides a great opportunity for Chinese netizens to escape from the real-life society where political participation is restricted. In the online nationalist carnival, hierarchy and taboos are temporarily suspended, and under the flag of Chinese nationalism, personal attacks and verbal violence not only become legitimate, but also come to be the ways of showing one's nationalist passion. Therefore, the more one boasts his/her nationalist ambition, the louder one shouts out his/her nationalist slogans and the more controversial and sensuous one's nationalist claim is, the more attentions s/he attracts. However, carnival is ephemeral, and once it is over, participants go back to their normal life. Nobody knows what one has said during the online nationalist carnival, and hence, one does not have to carry out what s/he has said on the internet. By seeing online Chinese nationalism as a carnival, I do not deny that some popular nationalists are serious and genuine about their nationalist ideas; nonetheless, the notion of carnival certainly provides an alternative perspective to examine online Chinese nationalism.

In a nutshell, the thesis has established meaningful connections between Chinese nationalism and the Chinese internet, and examined the significance and importance of the internet to nation building and identity-formation in contemporary Chinese society. More significantly, the thesis treated online Chinese nationalism as a discursive practice, and analysed online nationalist texts discursively. This is the point generally missing in the existing literature on Chinese nationalism. By regarding online Chinese nationalism as discursive, it not only provided an alternative perspective for understanding the social phenomenon, but also developed

a new methodological approach to investigate it, and this approach can benefit further studies on Chinese nationalism. Finally, although the thesis explained the extent to which online popular nationalism challenged the dominance of the CCP over nationalist discourses, it should be noted that both the state and online popular nationalist players contribute to the formation and shape of Chinese nationalism, and in a long term, both nationalist actors will continue to confront and co-opt over nationalist policies and actions.

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