

## วิวัฒนาการชาตินิยมของขุนยัดเซ็นและแนวคิดเรื่องรัฐชาติ

เจี้ยนผิง จาง

รศ.ดร.

คณะน่านาชาติศึกษา

มหาวิทยาลัยวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยีแห่งมณฑลเจียงซี

zping1992@163.com

เจิน เย่

นักศึกษาปริญญาโท

คณะน่านาชาติศึกษา

มหาวิทยาลัยวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยีแห่งมณฑลเจียงซี

1007368861@qq.com

อิง หวาง

นักศึกษาปริญญาโท

คณะน่านาชาติศึกษา

มหาวิทยาลัยวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยีแห่งมณฑลเจียงซี

1713474707@qq.com

บทคัดย่อ

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ด้านคู่ของแนวคิดชาตินิยม บทความนี้เน้นพิจารณาแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับรัฐชาติของซุนยัตเซ็น โดยเฉพาะแนวคิดการสร้างรัฐชาติใน 3 ชั้น กล่าวคือ จากเผด็จการทหาร การปกครองโดยพรรคการเมือง ไปสู่การปกครองโดยรัฐธรรมนูญ

**คำสำคัญ:** ชาตินิยม; ซุนยัตเซ็น; รัฐชาติสมัยใหม่; ลัทธิไตรราษฎร์; สหภาพห้าเชื้อชาติ

## The Evolution of Sun Yat-sen's Nationalism and Nation-state Concept

**Jianping Zhang**

Assoc. Prof.

Faculty of Foreign Studies

Jiangxi University of Science and Technology

zping1992@163.com

**Chen Ye**

Master's Degree Student

Faculty of Foreign Studies

Jiangxi University of Science and Technology

1007368861@qq.com

**Ying Wang**

Master's Degree Student

Faculty of Foreign Studies

Jiangxi University of Science and Technology

1713474707@qq.com

### Abstract

The nationalism of Sun Yat-sen, who inspired and organized the 1911 Revolution that overthrew the Manchu dynasty, witnessed an evolutionary process, from the initiative of “expelling the Manchu people and rejuvenating the Han nationality” around the radical revolution, to the proposition of the “Union of the Five Races” after the founding of

the Republic of China. In his later years, he advocated forming a great Chinese Nation by assimilating the ethnic minorities of China. On the basis of assessing the dual sides of his nationalist thoughts, this paper examines the nation-state concept of Sun Yat-sen, in particular, his three-staged nation-state construction, including “military governance”, “political tutelage” and “constitutional politics”.

**Keywords:** nationalism; Sun Yat-sen; modern nation-state; Three Principles of the People; the Union of the Five Races

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the evolution of Sun Yat-sen's nationalist ideology and nation-state concept in different historical periods. Nationalism in the modern sense did not appear until the late 19th century and early 20th century in which China was confronted with partition by imperialist powers after its humiliating defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and the expedition of the Eight Power Allied Forces in 1900. In the nation-wide debate on the social conflicts of China during that historical period, Chinese intellectuals had reached consensus on the status and nature of Chinese society since the Opium War, namely, an emaciated and weak China was being reduced as the prey of imperialist powers and the Chinese nation was confronted with a national crisis of subjugation. Reputed as the pioneer of the Chinese democratic revolution, Sun Yat-sen identified the late Qing Empire at that time as a "sub-colony", whose status was even lower than that of a colony (Wasserstrom, 2015, p.98). He interpreted his "Three Principles of the People" as a "doctrine of national salvation" for the ideology is targeted to "rescue China and to achieve the prosperity of the Chinese nation by upgrading the political, economic and international position of China" (Sun, 1994, p.12).

Widely accepted as the most influential advocate and leader of the Chinese nationalist movement, Sun Yat-sen fought all his life for the realization of the "Three Principles of the People", including nationalism, democracy and people's livelihoods (Doberneck, 1997, p18). The Principle of nationalism clearly described a nation rather than a group of people united by a purpose. By this, Sun meant independence from imperialist domination. He believed that China must develop a "China-nationalism," as opposed to an "ethnic-

nationalism," so as to unite all of the different ethnic groups of China (Sun, 1994, pp.16-19). This sense of nationalism is different from the idea of "ethnocentrism," which is equivalent to nationalism in Chinese language. To achieve this, he believed that China must develop a "national consciousness" for the purpose of uniting the Han people in the face of imperialist aggression. He argued that "minzu", which can be literally translated as "people", "nationality" or "race", was defined by sharing common blood, livelihood, religion, language and customs (Sun, 1994, p. 30).

Closely related to the peril of the Chinese nation, the nationalism of China was at first an innate national consciousness and instinctive reaction, which was then exalted to be a systematic ideology by the Chinese elites. Rather than an exclusive patent for the revolutionaries represented by Sun Yat-sen, nationalism was also sought after by the political conservative forces of China at that time, such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who were important participants in the Hundred Days' Reform. They asserted that China was in need of more than "self-strengthening", and called for many institutional and ideological changes such as getting rid of corruption and remodeling the imperial examination system. The reforms introduced radical changes into the stale Chinese government.

Kang Youwei pointed out that "China was on the verge of national subjugation" after China's discreditable defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (Kang, 1990, p. 29). Charles Darwin's Jungle Principle, including "natural selection" and "the survival of the fittest", after being translated into Chinese by Yan Fu, a Chinese scholar and translator who was credited with introducing western ideas, greatly intensified the Chinese nation's sense of survival crisis. Following the unsuccessful efforts of the Westernization Movement, which attempted to rescue

China by technological upgrade, “to subdue the western powers by learning from their advanced technologies,” the Chinese elites began to seek salvation remedies from the arsenal of Western thoughts (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p.67). Nationalism, which had been popular in Western countries in the last century, naturally became one of the ideological weapons for Chinese people.

## 2. The evolution of Sun Yat-sen’s nationalism

### 2.1 Before the Xinhai Revolution: to expel the Manchu people and rejuvenate the Han nationality

Interpretations on nationalism in the general sense, for example, “Sino-barbarian dichotomy” and the distinction of “major nationalism” and “minor nationalism”, abounded in the various historical documents of China (Doberneck, 1997, p. 103; Liang, 2000, p. 38). It is directly related to the fact that China has long been a multi-national state since ancient times. Therefore, ethnicity distinction and the resulting conflicts were frequently reflected in social ideologies and political activities. The modern history of China spans from the Opium War (1840) to the founding of the People’s Republic of China (1949), during which time the Chinese nation as a whole was directly faced with foreign powers’ aggressions and the concept of nationalism was imported into China. The Chinese people’s resistance against the British aggression during the Opium War had become an integral part of the nationalist struggle. In the Taiping Rebellion, a millenarian uprising in southern China, the peasantry fired their bullets at the foreign invaders while attempting to overthrow the feudal oppression (Mao, 1986, p.39).

Although Liang Qichao was the first to use the term “Minzu zhuyi” (“nationalism”) in China, the nationalism concept of Sun

Yat-sen had greater social impact, for the “Three Principles of the People” were accepted both as a convincing theory and a revolutionary political practice, thus playing a significant role in guiding modern Chinese revolution and social reform. The nationalism notions of Sun Yat-sen in his early revolutionary career were closely associated with his advocacy of overthrowing the corrupted Qing Empire.

Western powers, relying on the economic and military strength they had built up after the Industrial Revolution, launched a series of wars of aggression against China. Bearing down on China as if they were its masters, they brazenly treated the Chinese people as an “inferior race” that could be trampled on at will. Meanwhile, the corrupt and inept Qing Dynasty continued to rule over China as its people struggled for their very survival. In a bid to put an end to this humiliation, the Chinese people rose to fight back. Progressive thinkers also began to emerge in China at this time. It was at this historic moment when the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was being fought, that Sun Yat-sen, then residing in Hawaii, used the slogan “Revive China” in the Articles of the Revive China Society. Those admitted to the society swore the following oath: to expel the Tatar barbarians, to revive China, and to establish a unified government (Sun, 1994, pp.108-109). Here, “the Tatar barbarians” referred to the Manchu people, which was the ruling ethnic group of the Qing Empire.

Sun felt extremely miserable that the Han ethnic group had been long ruled by the Manchu rulers. He lamented: “the Han people, in spite of its large population and innumerable talents, were reduced to the current deplorable state” (Sun, 1963, p.29). Later, Sun made a more systematic commentary on nationalism in a speech in honor of the founding anniversary of Minbao, an influential newspaper at that time. “The consciousness of nationalism is a natural ability of

every human. The Manchus have dominated China Proper for more than 260 years. The Han people, even the kids in kindergarten, are capable of distinguishing between their compatriots and the barbarian Manchus; it is, as a matter of fact, the basis of nationalism. However, nationalism does not mean to reject people of different races in the general sense; rather, it disallows the other race to seize the Chinese central power. Currently, the Manchus are dominating the government; the Han ethnic group has been degenerated to be people without their own territory” (Sun, 1963, p.132). Sun added: “instead of eliminating all the Manchus, our national revolution aims to overthrow the Qing Empire and restore the Chinese government for the Han people” (Sun, 1963, p.136). Here, Sun made a disastrous error by excluding the Manchus out of the Chinese nation.

To crown it all, such nationalist concept was widely accepted by the Han intellectuals at that time. For example, Zhang Taiyan, a Chinese philosopher and revolutionary who enjoyed a high status in the Chinese academic history, also expressed similar radical statements. In 1907, Zhang established in Japan the Asian Peace Association, an international revolutionary group represented by Chinese, Japanese and Indians. Its charter authored by Zhang declared: “we intend to fight against imperialism and to safeguard the Chinese nation”. It was regarded as the herald of the anti-imperialist concept in China's modern history (Yu, 1999, p. 67). At the same time, Zhang, as one of the most uncompromising revolutionists on the issue of expelling the Manchus, equated the Chinese revolution with “expulsing the Manchus and rejuvenating the Han nationality”. In his *On the Revolutionary Morality*, Zhang said: “the national revolution of China means to restore the territory and government for the Han people” (Zhang, 1963, p.86). Strongly criticizing Kang Youwei’s

advocacy of “unity of the peoples of Manchu and Han”, Zhang argued that: “the Manchus and the Hans can’t be accommodated under the same roof in today’s era of nationalism” (Zhang, 1963, p.28).

From the current point of view, we can conclude that the nationalism propositions of the revolutionaries represented by Sun Yat-sen have their distinct defects. However, we shall keep it in mind that the revolt against the Chinese feudal rule was consistent with overthrowing the Manchu-dominated Qing Dynasty, for the Qing Throne represented the outdated feudal autocracy of China. In their governance over China for more than two centuries, the Manchu rulers had long implemented a discrimination policy against the Han people. As a consequence, there had been an earnest expectation among the Han ethnic group, in particular the intellectuals, to overthrow the Qing Empire and recover the Chinese central power to the Han people. Therefore, the mentality of “racial revolution” was utilized as an effective strategy to mobilize the masses to participate in the social movement.

The Taiping Rebellion, a massive insurgency in China from 1850 to 1864, had successfully resorted to the prevailing “racial revolution” sentiment. Therefore, it was a matter of course for the revolutionaries headed by Sun Yat-sen to apply “ethnic revolution” as an invincible means for mobilizing the public to fight against the Manchu rulers.

The reformists headed by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who were contemporaries with Sun Yat-sen, could be labeled as “political conservative forces” for they continued to advocate constitutional monarchy after the founding of the Republic of China in 1911 (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p.132). However, their advocacy of nationalism showed more positive elements in comparison with that of the radical revolu-

tionaries. In a memorial submitted to the Qing Emperor during the 1898 Hundred Days' Reform, Kang Youwei advocated "the Manchu-Han boundary be eliminated." Contrary to the proposition of "revenge on the Manchus", Kang strongly believed in "the shared Manchu-Han nationality"(Masumi, 2003, p.67). In one of his articles, Kang Youwei verified the fatal mistakes of "the Manchu-Han division" and "expelling the Manchus and rejuvenating the Han people" by citing examples from the Chinese history (Shan & Zhang,1998, p. 87).

Liang Qichao, the other representative of the moderate reformists, concluded that the large territory and population of China were favorable competitive elements in a world dominated by the Jungle Principle. Disagreeing with the promotion of "taking revenge on the Manchus", Liang proposed that all ethnic groups of China be integrated into a great Chinese nation, similar to the situation of the major modern nation states of the world. Liang put forward the concepts of "small nationalism" and "great nationalism"(Zhang & Wang,1960, p. 87). The former referred to the ethnic group in the strict sense, such as the Hans, the Manchus, etc., while the latter was a collective term for all the ethnic groups within a country, such as the Chinese Nation. He argued that the Han nationality itself was the mixture of many races. In addition, the Manchu people had already been assimilated by the Han people. Therefore, it was entirely possible to establish a great Chinese nation by "integrating the Han, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Huis, and the Tibetans into a great nation state" (Liang, 2000, p. 87).

The initiative of "Manchu-Han unity" could be attributed to the reformists' political conservativeness of maintaining the legitimacy of the Manchu-dominated Qing Empire. It in turn led to their advocacy of Manchu-Han coalition. However, their visionary nationalism view-

points had great significance at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century, when the foreign powers manufactured a series of separatism incidents in the Chinese frontiers by taking advantage of the chaotic situation after the Xinhai Revolution.

The "great nationalism" advocated by Liang Qichao has been widely accepted by the various major political affiliations of China. To some extent, the "great nationalism" was a concept which should be actively publicized to mobilize all the Chinese nationals to revolt against foreign aggression. However, it would be premature to conclude that Liang's nationalism ideology transcends the inherent limitations of his age, since we can find an apparent "Han Centrism" in his writings. By advocating the "greater nationalism" in the modern sense, Liang wished to establish a "great Chinese nation", which was expected to accommodate all nationalities of China. However, the "great Chinese nation" in his mind was by its nature "the Han centrism" based on the premise of assimilating the ethnic minorities of China (Liang, 2000, p.87). In comparison with Sun Yat-sen's self-denial of "Union of the Five Races" and advertising of ethnic assimilation in his later years, we could see no essential differences between these two schools of thought.

## **2.2 After the founding of the Republic of China (1912-1919): Union of the Five Races**

The foreign powers' military aggressions and economic plundering, which was complicated by the accumulated inter-ethnic grievances and hatred since the Manchu people dominated China Proper, reduced the Qing Empire, which had long proclaimed itself to be the only "Celestial Empire" of the planet, to be a semi-colony. The inept Qing government was unable to resist the foreign aggressions. To

make things worse, the Qing rulers had long implemented the policies of ethnic segregation and discrimination to guarantee the vested interests of the Manchu people. Sun Yat-sen came to realize that only by overthrowing the Qing Empire can China be elevated to be a free and independent state. The repeated courageous armed uprisings of the patriotic forces led to the success of the Xinhai Revolution, which overthrew the Qing Throne and the long-standing monarchy system. When he was sworn in as Provisional President of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen declared: “our revolution should not stop at toppling the Qing Empire; rather, we shall try every effort to transform China from an autocratic empire to a modern and democratic republic equally associated by all Chinese ethnic groups” (Wei, 1981, p. 91).

The “one out of many” or “melting-pot” structure of the US nationals has always been Sun Yat-sen’s ideal nation-building model. To prevent civil war and possible foreign intervention from undermining the fledgling Republic of China, he agreed to Yuan Shikai’s demand for China to be united under a Beijing government. After Yuan delivered a speech in favor of the republic system, Sun Yat-sen resigned his post of the ROC Provisional President, marking the end of the short-lived ROC Nanjing Government.

During this period, Sun released the “Three Principles of the People”, a political philosophy to make China a free, prosperous, and powerful nation, including nationalism, democracy, and the livelihood of the people. Sun’s nationalism can be traced to the anti-Manchu mentality advocated during the Xinhai Revolution. A watershed in the history of modern China, the revolution brought an end to the imperial rule of the Qing dynasty and triggered the birth of a brand new republic. In spite of accomplishing the mission of “ousting

the Manchu rulers”, it failed to realize Sun’s dream of “national, territorial and administration unity” (Sun, 1994, p. 86). When serving as the ROC Provisional President, he put forward the concept of “union of five races”. Apparently, it was a large step forward in comparison with the anti-Manchu mentality during the Xinhai Revolution. Sun declared: “Since the basis of a country lies in its people, the priority for this government is to integrate the Hans, Manchus, Mongols, Huis and Tibetans into a union” (Sun, 1981, p. 69). In his congratulatory speech to the founding of the Common Progress Society of the Five Races, Sun proclaimed: “we should dedicate to unite the five major Chinese ethnic groups, who are of the common lineage, into a great Chinese nation. If these five ethnic groups can truly be merged into a great Chinese nation, the long-established ethnic grievances of China would then disappear and the numerous talented minds of the five races will surely achieve the common prosperity of all the Chinese nationals” (Sun, 1998, p. 107).

In comparison with his former initiative of “expelling the Manchus and rejuvenating the Han Chinese”, the notion of “five races under one union” is a fundamental progress for the latter expands the nationalism subject from merely the Han people to the whole Chinese nation, a collective term for all the ethnic groups of China. Therefore, the idea of “a union of five races” has been widely established as a commendable nation-building ideology by the future generations (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p. 128).

The principle of ethnic equality embodied in “union of five races” transcends the inherent defects of the traditional Chinese concept of nationalism. It could be attributed partly to Sun Yat-sen’s progressive consciousness of democratic equality as an outstanding bourgeois revolutionary leader. More importantly, it should be

ascribed to his desire of establishing a unified sovereign state after the success of the Xinhai Revolution. His position was transformed from a radical revolutionist before the revolution to the current builder as head of state for the newly-founded Republic of China. However, Sun's political abandonment of "five races under one union" is not for the target of acknowledging the multi-ethnic structure of Chinese nationals; rather, it is reverted to the race-nationalism for the Han people.

### 2.3 In Sun Yat-sen's later years (1919-1925): ethnic assimilation

In his later years, Sun flatly denied his advocacy of "union for the five races". In the Three Principles of the People, Sun said: "soon after the Xinhai Revolution, some people coined the concept of 'union of the five races', which has been widely endorsed by the revolutionaries. Moreover, this slogan found its concrete expression in the colored stripes of the Five-Colored Flag of the Republic: the Han (red); the Manchus (yellow); the Mongols (blue); the "Hui" (Muslim Chinese) (white); and the Tibetans (black). However, we failed to realize the harmful effects of the concept at that time" (Sun, 1994, p. 137).

In a speech entitled Specific Measures for the Three Principles of the People, Sun added: "Although the Qing Throne was overthrown with the inauguration of the Republic of China, the Chinese nation still fails to stand independently among the countries of the world. Why is that? I believe the key lies in our confused concept of 'nationalism'. After the success of the Xinhai Revolution, some hereditary bureaucracy, stubborn reformists, monarchy restoration forces improvised the so-called 'union of five races'. Actually, it is a fundamental miscalculation. With a population of more than 400

million, the Han people are not able to establish an independent state of our own, which is truly a disgrace for all of us. As the ruling party of China, the Kuomintang (the Nationalist Party of China) shall dedicate itself to achieve the unfulfilled nationalism mission by assimilating the other ethnic groups in the Han people and founding a common state under the banner of nationalism” (Sun, 2000, p. 29).

For the purpose of achieve the core requirement for Western nationalism ideology: one nation, one state, Sun Yat-sen abandoned the advocacy of "union of five races". To this end, the promotion of a republic form of government was far from adequate in a multi-ethnic country like China; rather, all the ethnic groups of China must be integrated to form a great Chinese nation as a whole. Thus, Sun firmly believed the Han nationality shall be the only core for the ultimate national formation due to its absolute majority in the total Chinese population. Strongly endorsing the “one out of many” nation-state construction model of the United States, Sun declared: “We should abandon the biased notion of ‘five races under one union’ and transform the Han people into the Chinese nation by assimilating the various minority ethnic groups” (Sun, 1994, p. 361).

On the basis of Western nationalism’s core requirement of “one nation, one state”, Sun’s nationalism ideology complies with the US-style “melting pot” model. At that time, the political ideology of Sun includes both the racial and ancestry identity in the biological sense and the legitimacy of inheriting the territory of the toppled Qing Dynasty. From a historical perspective, there are inherent contradictions between the territorial integrity of China and the identity of the Chinese nation emphasized by Sun, including “commonalities of blood ties, languages, religion, folkways and customs” (Sun, 2000, p.276).

As a matter of fact, the two historical missions of Chinese people, namely, safeguarding territorial integrity and constructing the identity of Chinese nation, were directly linked to addressing the ethno-national issues of China. Of course, Sun Yat-sen was also cognizant of it. He asked his Han compatriots: “Are the Manchus, the Mongols, the Hui People and Tibetans willing to participate in the nationalism and self-determination of the Han people?” (Sun, 1994, p.112) In regard to this, Sun argued that all the Chinese nationals should be collectively identified as the Han people for the population of the Chinese ethnic minorities was “less than 10 million” among the total 400 million Chinese people. “Due to the absolute majority of the Han people in the total Chinese populaces, the Han ethnicity shall be the only core for the ultimate national formation” (Sun, 2000, p.219). Therefore, Sun Yat-sen and his successors embraced an ethnicity-based nation state, which led to their ethnic assimilation ideal in terms of building a nation state in China.

In addition to drawing on the insights of Western nationalism, Sun incorporated the Chinese intellectuals’ interpretations and arguments on race, ethnicity and nationalism while elaborating his “Three Principles of the People”. In spite of its ambiguity and vagueness, Sun’s nationalism doctrine was adopted as the guide for the ethno-national policies of the Nationalist Government, thus exerting an “enduring effect on the Chinese politics” (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p. 142).

The principle of “one nation, one state” has its justifiable modern significance from the perspective of the nation state formation in Western countries. However, the essence of “one nation, one state” refers to the identity of state-nation that embodies the independent will of state sovereignty in the international relation. In the modern

nation-state pattern, there are very few cases in which the identity of “one nation” formed in history coincides with the territory of a modern nation-state. After entering the era of modern nation-state, the ancient unified multi-ethnic countries either fragmented into many sovereign states, or established a sovereignty of “one nation”, which, however, consist of a diverse of ethnic groups. As far as China is concerned, the “one nation” refers to the “Chinese nation”, a collective term for all the Chinese ethnic groups. Nonetheless, to equate the Chinese nation with merely the Han people will definitely go against the historical process of China's unified multi-ethnic state, which will in turn intensify the existing ethnic grievances and conflicts.

### 3. Reassessment of Sun Yet's nationalism

After achieving the task of “ousting the Manchu people from the Chinese central power”, Sun Yat-sen's nationalism of rejuvenating the Han people and constructing in China a state nation, which, by its nature, is similar to “the American nation” of the US, were directed to imperialist powers (Sun, 2000, p.28). In the bourgeois-democratic revolution of colonies or semi-colonies, nationalism has played an irreplaceable role in mobilizing the public, resisting foreign aggression and fighting for national independence. For this reason, Sun Yat-sen regarded nationalism as a magic elixir for all social problems of China. However, Sun's declaration of solving China's ethno-national issues was aimed at forging a “coin” of the “Chinese nation”, with one side geared to “oust the Manchu barbarians from the central power”, the other to “rejuvenate the Han people” (Sun, 1998, p.87). The Xinhai Revolution and the subsequent founding of the Republic of China symbolize the accomplishment of the former task. However, Sun's

endorsements of “the self-determination of the Han people” and “assimilating the ethnic minorities into the Han People” obscure the deserved rights and interests of the ethnic minorities in the framework of “civil rights”(Shan & Zhang,1998, p. 120).

In short, Sun Yat-sen’s proposition of creating the “Chinese nation” by simulating the “one out of many” model of the US completely ignore the different national conditions of the two countries, in that China has long been a unified multi-ethnic state since the ancient times, while the US, with a history of merely a few hundred years, is a nation of immigrants. In spite of having theoretical or empirical backings from Western ideologies, the nationalism of Sun Yat-sen failed to solve the ethno-national issues of China for it is divorced from the basic national conditions of the country. John King Fairbank commented: “During the early days of the Republic of China, many foreign ideas have been imported to China. However, few of them survived on the Chinese land” (Fairbank, 2000, p. 39).

The nationalist ideology of Sun Yat-sen had their inherent dual sides. Its positive aspect lies in its revolting against the feudal autocracy and seeking to national equality; however, it denies the deserved status of the Chinese ethnic minorities by emphasizing “ethnic assimilation” under the influence of the deep-rooted Han chauvinism.

Sun Yat-sen is widely accepted as one of the most important representatives of Chinese nationalism at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century when the Chinese nation was at a historical peril. The nationalist ideologies of Sun had their commendable merits, including: the advertising of Chinese nation’s self-reliance, the advocacy of fighting against foreign aggression and the promotion of state unity and national rejuvenation. By actively arousing the nationalism consciousness of the Chinese people, he for the first time advocated

ethnic equality and sought to achieving the self-reliance, prosperity and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. However, his theories of nationalism had no real substances both in terms of their outward resistance against imperialism and inward ethnic quality.

Moreover, the nationalism of Sun Yat-sen provides theoretical foundation for the Nationalist Government's ethnic policy, which could be summed up as: knuckling under to foreign powers externally and implementing the policy of Han Chauvinism domestically. Claiming to be the orthodox disciple of Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, Chiang Kai-shek, who served as the leader of the Republic of China between 1928 and 1975, once regarded the "revolutionary nationalism" as the foundation of the ruling Nationalist Party. In addition, Chiang interpreted the domestic "national equality" to be the more explicit Han chauvinism (Wei, 1981, p. 92).

In *China's Destiny* published in 1943, Chiang pointed out that all the Chinese ethnic groups, being "clans of different sizes from the common lineage", were different branches originated from the common ancestor. He added that all the Chinese nationalities, in the long evolution process, were gradually assimilated into a "great Chinese nation" due to frequent exchanges and lifetimes of inter-marriages (Wei, 1981, p. 130). Chiang's notions on nationalism denied the ethnicity status of the minority nationalities. It contributed to the theoretic basis for Chiang's ethnic policy, which was characteristic of depriving the deserved rights of the ethnic minorities of China.

To sum up, nationalism is the lifetime pursuit of Sun Yat-sen, whose nationalism propositions, be it the membership oath of the Revive China Society in 1894, "to expel the Tatar barbarians and to revive the Chinese nation", or his political will in 1925, "to fight for the common prosperity of Chinese people by mobilizing the Chinese

masses and allying with any foreign nations who are willing to treat us as equals” , embrace strong patriotic sentiments (Sun,1998, p. 290).

#### **4. The establishment of modern nation-state based on Sun Yat-sen's nationalism**

The classical political principle for nationalism is "one nation, one state". An article covered in Zhejiang Tide in 1903 provided a concise definition for nationalism, “to establish a nation state by allying with people of the same ethnicity” (Zhang, 1960, p. 90). Based on Sun Yat-sen's expositions on nationalism, we know that the slogan of "one nation, one state" had been widely endorsed since the Western nationalism was introduced to China in the late 19th and early 20th century. Therefore, the struggle of nationalism is to seek for the nation's control over its own government by establishing a nation state.

##### **4. 1 Before the Xinhai Revolution: to restore the Chinese central power to the Han people**

Based on this reasoning, the primary nationalism task of the Xinhai Revolution was to restore the Chinese central power to the Han people by “expelling the Manchu people and rejuvenating the Hans”. During the entire stage of modern China from the First Opium War (1840) to the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949), China had been tragically reduced to be a “semi-colony” or “sub-colony” thanks to the foreign powers' aggression. Therefore, the first and foremost mission for the nationalism was to restore the full sovereignty of China to the Chinese nation by fighting against imperialists. After the success of the Xinhai Revolution, which toppled the Qing Throne and expelled the imperialist forces out of China, the nationalists of China had to find a solution to inaugurate their own "nation-state".

Before the establishment of a “nation-state”, we must at first clarify what can be construed as a “nation”. The concepts of “nation” imported to China from Western nationalism can be classified into two types. The first is “ethnicity-based”, which is derived from racial or cultural ties; the other is “nationality-footed”, which is established on common political and interest identities (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p. 27). Therefore, “nationalism” (literally translated as “Minzu Zhuyi” in the Chinese Pinyin) can be understood as a belief or political ideology that involves the identifying with, or becoming attached to, one's nation. Nationalism involves national identity, by contrast with the related construct of patriotism, which involves social conditioning and personal behaviors that support a state's decisions and actions.

Accordingly, the term “nation” in “nation-state” can also be interpreted from these two aspects, including “ethnicity-based” and “nationality-footed”. The concept of nation accepted by the Chinese academia around the Xinhai Revolution is directed to the former, namely, the “ethnicity-based” nation.

In the early 1920s, Sun Yat-sen pointed out that “nation” was composed of five “natural forces”, including blood lineage, lifestyle, language, religion and customs (Sun, 1994, p.76). Therefore, Sun's ethnicity-based nationalism leads to his ethnic assimilation ideal in terms of the construction of a nation state. During the Xinhai Revolution, the revolutionary mobilization for nationalism was to “expulse the Manchu people” and to “restore the Chinese central power to the Han people.” Its implication was: the task of nationalism would have been fulfilled if the Han people's government had replaced the Qing Empire. This was exactly the reasoning logic of Sun Yat-sen. Soon after the success of the Xinhai Revolution, Sun asserted: “the

abdication of the Qing Throne and founding of the Republic of China signify that we have accomplished the first two targets of the ‘Three Principles of the People’, including nationalism and democracy. In the future, we shall dedicate more efforts to realize the third principle, that is, to improve the livelihoods of the people” (Sun, 1982, p. 167).

#### **4.2 After the founding of the Republic of China: to build a nation-state by integrating all the Chinese ethnic groups into a greater Chinese nation**

Zhang Dongxun, a Modern Chinese philosopher, once argued: “the realization of democracy shall have some prerequisites; only by creating a nation at first can democracy be achieved thereafter. Each democracy must go through a particular stage in which nation is generated. Therefore, China must at first be transformed to be a ‘nation state’ for only in such ‘nation state’ do civil rights, or human rights, exist” (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p.91). Such insightful perception was not uncommon among some modern Chinese intellectuals, who were dominated by nationalism ideology. As a result, Sun Yat-sen went to great lengths to create a country of great nationalism for he believed that the Xinhai Revolution failed to realize the goal of nationalism.

Upon the founding of the Republic of China government in the wake of Wuchang Uprising, Sun Yat-sen was immediately confronted with the irreconcilable contradiction between his nationalism ideal and China's multi-ethnic reality. If China was understood merely as a country for the Han people, then the ruling of the whole territories inherited from the Qing Empire by the Han-controlled republic would be illegitimate; on the other hand, it would be impossible to accomplish the nationalism goal of “one nation, one state” for the multi-ethnic

reality of China if the territories of the newly-founded republic were defined as all the land of the toppled Qing Dynasty.

In this regard, Sun Yat-sen was faced with a dilemma. When serving as Provisional President of the ROC, Sun Yat-sen initiated the concept of "Five Races (the Hans, Manchus, Mongols, Uyghurs and Tibetans) under one Union", which has been accepted as a commendable theory by the future generations (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p. 129). However, Sun later abandoned the widely-acclaimed slogan for its contradiction with his idea of preserving the unified territory of China and its apparent non-compliance with the nationalism principle of "one nation, one state". At the same time, Sun put forward his notion of "nation-state", an ideology based on shared nationality, race and state identities for the purposes of maintaining the unity of China and developing China into a global power. He argued that "nationality is equated to state nation" and "nationalism is the synonym of the doctrine of state nation" in China since "the Chinese territories have been united as a unitary state by a single nation since the Qin Dynasty, the first dynasty of Imperial China" (Sun, 1994, p. 86). Sun added: "among the total 400 million Chinese people, the ethnic minorities are numbered no more than 10 million. Therefore, all the Chinese nationals can be collectively classified as the Han nationality with common blood lineage, language, and customs" (Sun, 1994, p. 103).

However, shutting the eyes to China's multi-ethnic situation couldn't cover up the multi-ethnic reality. Therefore, Sun suggested that "the Manchus, Mongols, Huis and Tibetans be assimilated into the Han people" while declaring all the Chinese nationals were of the same ethnic group. He applauded the ethnic assimilation model of the United States. He stated: "the US, the most powerful nation

state, is ethnically composed of several dozens of races. After the birth of the United States of America in 1776, a large number of immigrants relocated to this promising land for a better future. The 100 million populaces of the American nation is the result of assimilating the Blacks, British, Dutch, Germans, French and others, which fully testifies the great effect of nationalism. China should follow the successful example of the US in addressing its ethno-national issues. As a result, we should abandon the former proposition of ‘five races under one union’ and transform the Han people into the Chinese nation by assimilating the ethnic minorities of China” (Sun, 2000, p. 280).

As to the specific route to build a state nation, Sun proposed a kindred-clan-nation roadmap. He pointed out: “Chinese people, due to lack of strong concept of state, are frequently cited as loosely connected nationals in the international community. However, Chinese people have deep-rooted kindred and clan consciousness. Thus, by uniting the esteemed belongings of patriarchal clan, the inherent idea of clan can be expanded into nationalism. In addition, the Chinese people highly value their shared place of origin. In my opinion, the relationship between Chinese nationals and state structure can be construed as a hierarchical kindred-clan-nation structure” (Sun, 2000, p.86). Appearing to be of high operability, the kindred-clan-nation roadmap of nationalism architecture by Sun Yat-sen was actually impractical for it fails to consider the linkage between kindred, clan and nation.

#### **4.3 The Three-staged roadmap for the nation-state construction in China: from “military governance”, “political tutelage” to “constitutional politics”**

In terms of the government form of China, Sun proposed to

establish a “free and united republic of China”. It was consistent with his notion of integrating the various ethnic groups into a Greater Chinese nation (Sun, 1998, p. 97). The National Construction Plan authored by Sun Yat-sen provided that, before the realization of full democracy in China, the Republic of China should go through three stages, including “military governance”, “political tutelage” and “constitutional politics” (Sun, 1998, p. 128). “Military governance” is a period to achieve national unification with military force, in which all state systems shall be placed under military governance. “Political tutelage” is a stage in which the democratic abilities of Chinese nationals are fostered and developed by exercising “autonomy” at the level of county jurisdiction. During this stage, the central government shall assist the institutional and ideological preparations for the county-level “autonomy” by practicing electoral politics. “Constitutional politics” means to convene state congress, formulate national constitution and organize democratic government on the basis of the accomplishment of provincial-level autonomy.

In the three-staged democratic institution process, Sun emphasized that “governments at all levels shall assist the development of minority nationalities, so that they can exercise the right of self-determination and autonomy” (Sun, 2000, p.85). Here, the “self-determination” should be understood in the sense of the Chinese nationals’ resistance against the aggression of foreign powers, while “autonomy” was asserted from the aspect of the advancement pace of “political tutelage” and “constitutional politics” in the ethnic minority regions.

At the same time, Sun also illustrated the corresponding prospects for the various ethnic minorities in the three-phased democratic institution process: in the first stage, huge development gap is

observed in the various Chinese ethnic groups due to foreign powers' aggression; in the second stage, the inter-ethnic growth gap will gradually be reduced with the ever-increasing ethnic equality advancement; in the third stage, the equal components of the Chinese nation will lose traces of their original ethnicity with the formation the Chinese nation" (Masumi, 2003, p. 181). To that date, the nation state will have been formed in China with the accomplished targets of democracy politics and nation building.

The nation-state concept of Sun Yat-sen was almost completely inherited by Chiang Kai-shek. With the complete control of the Chinese central power in 1928, Chiang declared the end of "military governance" and the beginning of "political tutelage" in China. During the Second Sino-Japanese War, Chiang further developed Sun Yat-sen's theory of ethnic assimilation. In a speech delivered in Xining in Western China's Qinghai province in 1942, Chiang stated: " the Republic of China was established by the whole Chinese nation, which is a collective term composed of the five clans, including the Hans, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Hui people and the Tibetans. I want to emphasize that the Chinese people are made up of five clans, rather than five nationalities. In other words, the Chinese nationals, just like brothers and sisters in an extended family, are inseparable components of the Chinese nation. A lot of extended families make up clans, which then constitute the Chinese nation. Our founding father Mr. Sun Yat-sen once noted: 'we shall unify four hundred million people as a strong nation'. Thus, we have only one Chinese nation, clan being the most appropriate term for its components" (Chiang, 1961, p. 127).

Obviously, the so-called "clan" coined by Chiang Kai-shek was essentially different from that of Sun Yat-sen, the former being

“nationality” without any doubt, the latter referring to social groups with regional and blood kinship ties within a “nationality”. To bridge the sense gap between the two kinds of “clan”, Chiang repeatedly stated that the five “clans” had a common lineage in his relevant public speeches (Chiang, 1961, p. 287). However, such far-fetched explanation, due to its turning a blind eye to the multi-ethnic reality of China, naturally failed to produce the desired ethnic assimilation effects and left a hidden risk on the Chinese ethnic relations. These had been testified by the historical facts.

## 5. Conclusion

Originated in the late 19th century, nationalism was the result of modern China’s national crisis. It functioned as both the organic composition and a basic ideological resource of the Chinese revolution. The mobilization of nationalism was the basic impetus to generate the revolution of China. The Xinhai Revolution was a democratic revolution for its target was to overthrow the feudal autocratic system in China; at the same time, it could be defined as the first triumph of Chinese nationalism since the ruling of the Manchu people over the Chinese central power for more than two centuries was terminated. In a historical perspective, the real revolutionary value of the Xinhai Revolution lies in its overthrowing the long-existing feudal monarchy and the establishment of the republic system in China. However, the banner for mobilizing the revolution or even during the revolution process was “to expulse the Manchus and rejuvenate the Han people”. Though Sun Yet-sen tried to avoid associating his revolution with the rejection of the Manchus, he still argued for the notion of “expelling the Manchus” in various situations (Sun, 1963, p. 67 ; Sun, 1981, p. 120; Sun, 1998, p.93).

Not surprisingly, the Xinhai Revolution was justifiably labeled as a "racial revolution" (Shan & Zhang, 1998, p. 86). Based on the national conditions of China around the Xinhai Revolution, the revolutionaries represented by Sun Yet-sen equated the overthrowing of the authoritarian rule of the Qing Empire with the restoration of the Chinese central to the Han people by imposing a racial tinge on nationalism. Admittedly, it was indeed an effective strategy. Moreover, the political practice of "expelling the Manchu nationality and rejuvenating the Han people" coincided with toppling the autocratic rule of the Qing Throne. After China's crushing defeat in the Opium War, the Late Qing reform initiated by the Manchu elites failed to arrest the decline of the corrupted Qing Empire. Dominated by the conservative Manchu forces, the national strength of China had witnessed a dramatic decline, which was complicated by domestic conflicts and foreign powers' aggressions. The Chinese nation was reduced to be on the verge of subjugation after the terrible defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894 and the 450 million taels of fine silver paid as indemnity to the Eight-Power Alliance prescribed in the 1901 Boxer Protocol (Zhang, 1963, p. 67).

The harsh realities testified that the decline of Chinese national strength, destitute of the general public and peril of the Chinese nation were attributed to the corruption and incompetence of the Qing Court. Thus, to overthrow the authoritarian Manchu regime became the only option for the survival of the Chinese nation after the failure of the Hundred Days Reform initiated by some moderate reformists headed by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao.

The Xinhai Revolution was far from a revolt widely participated by the general public. Researchers showed that most of the participants were intellectuals, military officers and the so-called "Huidang", a

collective term for the secret civil societies existed in China after the Opium War with the purpose of revolt against the feudal autocratic rule of the Qing Dynasty and fighting against imperialism (Zhang & Wang, 1960, p. 98; Zhang, 1963, p.122; Yu, 1999, p. 301). These Han elites had the sense of urgency and aspiration to accept the ethnic consciousness for the Han people had long been dissatisfied with the Manchu rulers' condescension. As a result, the revolution banner of "restoring the Chinese central power to the Han people" had a deep-seated social basis. Sun Yet-sen later concluded: "The initiative of expelling the Manchu people was universally greeted by the Han Chinese due to the fact that nationalism ideology was rooted in our nature" (Sun, 1982, p.272). In spite of its inherent defect of "racial revolution", the mobilization strategy of the Xinhai Revolution did yield in desirable results.

Based on the evidence presented in this paper, we can draw the following conclusions: (1) to mobilize the Han people to participate in the Xinhai Revolution, Sun initiated the concept of "expelling the Manchu people and rejuvenate the Han nationality" before the Xinhai Revolution; (2) "Union of the five races" put forward by Sun Yat-sen after the founding of the Republic of China expanded the nationalism subject from merely the Han people to the Chinese nation, a collective term for all the ethnic groups of China; (3) for the purpose of achieving Western nationalism's core requirement, Sun argued that all the Chinese ethnic groups be assimilated into a Greater Chinese Nation, in which the Han people should be the only core due to its absolute superiority in population size; (4) The nation-state concept of Sun Yat-sen experienced a process from "restoring the Chinese central power to the Han people" to "building a nation-state for the Chinese Nation".

The building of a state-nation in a multi-ethnic country like China demands “unity in diversity” and “harmony without uniformity”, which has always been and will be a protracted and formidable task (Yu, 1999, p. 138). It to some extent contributed to the widely-quoted dictum of Benedict Anderson, namely, “nation is an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”, in which Anderson depicts a nation as a socially constructed community imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. The prevalence of Andersons’ definition of “nation” can be accounted for from the following aspects: first of all, it extricates itself from the controversy over the constituent elements of “nation”; secondly, it demonstrates the widespread perplexing problems in the nation-state construction (Benedict, 2010, p.93). Admittedly, the concept of “Chinese nation” was non-existent in the ancient history of China. However, it does not mean that this notion is an “imagined product”; rather, the unique course of the Chinese history and the special experiences of the Chinese people of various ethnic groups consummated the Chinese nation.

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