

China's National Identity during Hu Jintao's Age

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Abstract

States are the kinds of entities with identities. National identity is a precondition of the decision-making of national policy. Hu Jintao's age is an important milestone in which China is in the process of the transformation from a regional power to a global power. During Hu Jintao's age, international structures and domestic structures are re-constructing China's national identity. China's national identity is transforming on the four identities: corporate identity, type identity, role identity, and collective identity. During Hu Jintao's age, China's national identity deep impacts China and the world. China's national identity during Hu Jintao's age implies new characteristics of China's national policies.

Keywords: National identity, National security, Constructivism, Hu Jintao

1. Introduction

National identity is a precondition to any state taking part in intersubjective interactions in international system. Wendt treats national identity as "a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions" (Wendt, 1999: pp.224). The identification of national identity helps state to identify the border between the self and the other and then national identity mostly constructs the content of national interests. State is impelled by national interests to make national domestic and foreign policies. International structure and domestic structure construct national identity. Hu Jintao's age is an important milestone in the process of China's national development. With past thirty years of the reform and opening, China has made great achievement on national power. During Hu Jintao's age, as the reform is deepening, the deep-seated problems long compressed in the politics and the economy, such as the political reform lags behind the economic reform, the imbalance of income distribution, are becoming more acute. The transformation of Government's management style and the adjustment of the relationship among all of social class are becoming the major tasks to Beijing during Hu Jintao's age. In addition, internationally, the 9-11 terrorism and the global financial crisis has sprung the great global adjustment to international politics and international economy. As the transformation of international structures and domestic structures, China's national identity is also transforming. It is impacting China's domestic policies and foreign policies. This study explores the structural factors and the characteristics of China's national identity during Hu Jintao's age.

2. The two levels and four structures impacting China's national identity

None but under structures, national identity possessed its genuine character. Realist Waltz divided international politics into two levels: the level of states and the level of international system. (Waltz, 1979) The structural character of system constrains national behaviors. But Waltz "collapsed interaction and attribute theories into an 'undifferentiated mass'". (Wendt, 1999, pp.145) Wendt criticizes it and regards intersubjective interaction as international microstructure other than international macrostructure. Thus national identity is involved into two levels (the international level and the domestic level) and four structures (international macrostructure, international microstructure, domestic macrostructure and domestic microstructure). As a unit of international society, China's national identity is affected by the international level factors and the domestic level factors. The macrostructures and microstructures of two levels simultaneously construct China's national identity.

2.1 The international level

In the international level, international structures exteriorly construct China's national identity. Firstly, in international macrostructure, there are at least two factors impacting China's national identity. The first factor is the tendencies of the development of international macrostructure. In international politics, at least two

tendencies, to balance power and to become “like units”, cannot be explained solely by the theory of international microstructure or the theory of domestic structures. (Waltz, 1979:pp.74-77) As a rising great power, to some extent, the process of the construction or re-construction of China’s national identity essentially is the process of breaking existing balance and building new balance. Consequently, it clear implies that China will meet more and more forces which tend to oppose China when China re-constructs her national identity. To become “like units” is the byproduct of the globalization. The whole development history of human kinds tells us the fact that the whole human society has been experiencing the process in which from geographic obstruct to the globalization. With a series of interactions among states, their shared ideas are continually created step by step. At the same time, intersubjective interactions have internalized these shared ideas. This internalization of international shared ideas will impact national shared ideas. These shared ideas make states to adopt similar policy or similar actions. Gradually, all of countries become “like units”. Consequently, in the process of constructing China’s national identity, it is of consideration that how China keeps both synchronization with other countries and China’s own traits. Secondly, in international macrostructure, international culture is another factor impacting China’s national identity. Essentially, international culture is a big set of shared ideas among states. In international macrostructure, there are at least three kinds of international cultures, such as the Hobbesian culture, the Lockean culture and the Kantian culture. (Wendt, 1999: pp.246-307) When certain international culture is dominating international society, the relative manner, such as the host manner, the rival manner or the friend manner, is employed to deal with the relationship with other countries. In other words, under different international culture, state will adopt different thinking to reflect the relation between the self and the other. International culture constructs national identity, such as role identity and collective identity. The contemporary international society is mostly affected by the Lockean culture. The rival manner is popular thinking to deal with foreign relation.

Secondly, international microstructure is another international level factors impacting China’s national identity. In the process of the construction of China’s national identity, international macrostructure plays a global and general role, and international microstructure plays a direct role. “International microstructures refer to structures of interaction”. (Wendt, 1999: pp.143) In terms of the numbers of participants, international microstructure includes bilateral interaction structure, triangle interaction structure and multilateral interaction structure. For China’s national identity, it is the most important of the Sino-American relation. The U.S. is the most powerful great power which has global national interest concept. The U.S. is one of countable countries which are capable to threaten China’s national interests both in the strategic level and the tactical level. Among the triangle interaction structures, two of them are most important to China’s national identity. The one is the Sino-America-Russian triangle interaction structure. It is involved in China’s global strategy. Another is the China-America-Taiwanese triangle interaction structure. It is involved in China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Among of multilateral interaction structures, it is without doubt that the UN is the most important platform in which all of countries interact.

2.2 The domestic level

Not only do the international structures but also do the domestic structures impact China’s national identity. Be similar to the international level, the domestic level has two structures, such as domestic macrostructure and domestic microstructure. Firstly, in domestic macrostructure, at least two factors impact China’s national identity. The one is the general tendency in China’s domestic system. During Hu Jintao’s age, political democratization and market economy is the distinct trait of the development of China’s domestic system. This tendency consequently brings a series of adjustments on China’s political policies and economic policies. Another factor is China’s domestic culture. During Hu Jintao’s age, China is in the mixture of tradition and modern. Confucianism and other traditional thoughts have been influencing China more than 1,000 years. Chinese has been used to acting under some of these traditional concepts. In addition, since 1949, Socialism has been China’s national doctrine and Marxism with Chinese characteristics deeply impacts contemporary Chinese thinking and behaviors. As the past thirty years of Reform and opening, China’s interactions with the world help contemporary occident mainstream thoughts into China. All things considered, traditional thoughts, Socialism and contemporary occident mainstream thoughts are constructing contemporary Chinese thinking. In other words, these thoughts are internalizing into Chinese individual thinking and influencing their individual behaviors. Furthermore, when most of Chinese accept these thoughts, their shared ideas are shaping and will influence China’s national identity.

Secondly, domestic microstructure is a kind of interaction structures among domestic acts. State is the major actor in international structures. But in the interior of state, citizen is the most important actor. In addition, human collective which is organized by citizens is another important actor in domestic structure, such as party

and corporate. The clear distinctness between international structure and domestic structure is whether Government is existence and plays managing role. International anarchy shows the absence of government in international structure. But in domestic structure, Government is regarded as an entity claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence. In order to effective survival and development, all of citizens transfer their individual rights to Government. Consequently, government essentially is a kind of human collective. In fact, government is the highest level human collective. In domestic microstructure, interactions among citizens include the interaction among ethnic groups, such as the Han ethnic and the Tibetan. The interactions between government and citizens are involved in the management style of government.

3. The characteristics of China's national identity during Hu Jintao's age

National identity is constructed by international structures and domestic structures. For any country, there are at least four kinds of identity: (1) corporate identity, (2) type identity, (3) role identity, and (4) collective identity. (Wendt, 1999: pp.224) During Hu Jintao's age, the structural transformation in international structure and the significant change in China's domestic transformation impel the transformation of China's national identity. This kind of transformation on China's national identity is significantly influencing China's ideas during Hu Jintao's age.

3.1 Corporate identity

Corporate identity is mostly constructed by domestic factors, such as territory, population and history. Other national identities depend on corporate identity. During Hu Jintao's age, China's corporate identity is a great power with large population and long history. Proved by archaeology, China has at least more than three thousands-year history. During old times, close geography and autarkic agricultural society had shaped Chinese modes of conduct with self-restrained. Throughout China's history, Chinese regarded her domestic stabilization much than territorial expand. The tribute system is a good case to comment China's foreign manner with "convince others by morality". China during Hu Jintao's age is the continuous of historical China. The rising China would rather than adopt peaceful route to change the balance of international system. China put forward "construct harmonious world; achieve common prosperity". (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2007) Beijing argues that "mutual beneficial cooperation to achieve win-win" is more acceptable than "zero gaming". In addition, from of old, China has been a large population. Now she has even 1.3 billion populations. For China's development, the large population is a challenge and also is an opportunity. Low price labor forces and huge market helps China to achieve high GDP. During Hu Jintao's age, China's corporate identity is constructed by China's domestic structures.

3.2 Type identity

"Type identity refers to a social category." (Fearon, 1997) To be specific, type identity corresponds to "regime types" or "forms of states". (Cox, 1987) Usually, regime type of a state is considered under political type and economic type. During Hu Jintao's age, China is a socialist country in politics and Marxism with Chinese characters is esteemed as China's national doctrine. In economy, China is carrying market system. Consequently, during Hu Jintao's age, China's type identity is summarized to a socialist market country with Chinese characters. As the major socialist country, ideology was the most essential divarication between China and other countries. In different historical stages, this kind of divarication appeared as different contents. During Mao Zedong's age, it appeared as the class struggle with "life-and-death". During Deng Xiaoping's age, it appeared as the fighting between self and enemy with "peaceful transformation and anti peaceful transformation". During Jiang Zemin's age, it appeared as the moral dispute on democracy and human rights. Up to Hu Jintao's age, it is appearing as the contrast between "Washington Consensus" and "Beijing Consensus". From this historical trace, it clear outlines ideology play a very week role on the construction of China's national identity during Hu Jintao's age. At the same time, China is improving her market economic system. With the deepening of the reform on economic system, existing political system must be adjusted to suit it. This kind of dual-track system demands a strong central government. Beijing is looking for a pretty joint between Socialism and market economy. In addition, in China's domestic structures, the voice for democracy and justice posses greater sonority more and more. But in China, the shaping vested interests and serious corruption are forcing Beijing to adjust her domestic policies, even her domestic system.

3.3 Role identity

Role identity refers to a kind of national identity in which distinguishes the self and the other. In most extent, role identity depends on international structures. During Hu Jintao's age, vital and significant transformation is taking place in international politics and economy. With the end of Cold War, the Soviet and the Warsaw Convention went into history. It not only ended the bipolar world but also brought splendid ten years of the USA

empire. The 9.11 terrorism didn't destroy the US's national power, but it is a symbol to imply the coming of the wane of the Uncle Sam politically. Subsequently, the sublevel credit crisis almost destroyed American financial system and it rapidly spread to the world. After a serial of events, national power of the US no longer bears American unilateralism in international affairs. The supports from other great powers, such as China, Russia, EU, become necessary not dispensable for Washington. At the same time, China is exhibiting her unique charm. Depending on her advantage in political system and huge domestic market capacity, China became the first country away the global financial crisis. China also brings along her neighbor countries to redevelop as soon as possible. The phenomena of "China's rising and USA's downing" shows the coming of multipolar world with rapid speed. At the other hand, during Hu Jintao's age, China is still a developing country. Not only in population but also in territory, China is the biggest developing country in the world. Consequently, during Hu Jintao's age, China's role identity refers to a rising and the biggest developing country. This kind of role identity implies: (1) though China has more discourse power, China's national power doesn't bear the influence on the whole world; (2) China is still in the process of from regional great power to pan-regional great power.

3.4 Collective identity

"Collective identity" (Mercer, 1995) takes the relationship between Self and Other to its logic conclusion, identification. (Wendt, 1999: pp.229) Within the past thirty years, the reform and opening made China closing with the world. Before Hu Jintao's age, China carried out the foreign policy of "keeping a low profile". China spent much time on her domestic affairs. Up to Hu Jintao's age, with the rising of national power, China's national interest has spread to the whole world. For example, China has explored energy resources from Middle East to Africa and South America. China actively takes part in international interactions. More and more international interactions product more and more shared ideas. In addition, the globalization impels no international issue can be resolved by single country. All-win cooperation is new consensus in international society. Its precondition is belief among states. The construction of belief is close with national identity. Under such international structures, China put forward the idea of "image-building responsible great power" during Hu Jintao's age. Under the new idea, Beijing regards her as an active member of international society. Beijing cooperates with other great powers, especially with the US. For example, Beijing actively organized "six-party meeting". This platform can be used to negotiate about North Korea nuclear issue for the US and the North Korea. In addition, China actively participated in those international plans for the redevelopment. As a rising great power, image-building responsible great power is China's collective identity during Hu Jintao's age.

The transformation of the four kinds of national identities reflects the influences of international structures and domestic structures to China. The four kinds of national identities are concurrence. Under them, China makes her domestic and foreign policies. Throughout a series of interactions, China carries out those policies to re-construct her national identity.

4. Conclusion

Hu Jintao's age is an important turning point in China's development, and is the period of transition of China's influence from East Asia to the world, and also is the period of transition of China's foreign policy from "low profile" to "make some achievements". During Hu Jintao's age, the transformation of international structures and China's domestic structures is re-constructing China's national identity, and at the same time China's re-construction of national identity is also impacting international structures and China's domestic structures. During Hu Jintao's age, China's national identity is transforming in four aspects, such as corporate identity, type identity, role identity and collective identity. The transformation of China's national identity reflects four points concerning China's national policies during Hu Jintao's age. Firstly, in China's decision mechanism, national interests oriented replaces ideology oriented. Secondly, China has accepted new mode of international interactions. The "all-win cooperation" mode replaced "zero gaming" mode in international interactions. Thirdly, with the incensement of foreign communication, more and more voices from Beijing will be heard by others. Step by step, China's domestic culture will be externalized to international structure. At the same time, international culture will be internalized to China's domestic structure. Fourthly, as a rising great power, China intends to construct new consensus under her new idea of "image-building responsible great power". In summary, during Hu Jintao's age, China is making use of the transformation of national identity to impact the self and the world.

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