

C. Simon Fan, **The Socioeconomics of Nationalism in China: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2022, 218 pp., \$35.27 (eBook).

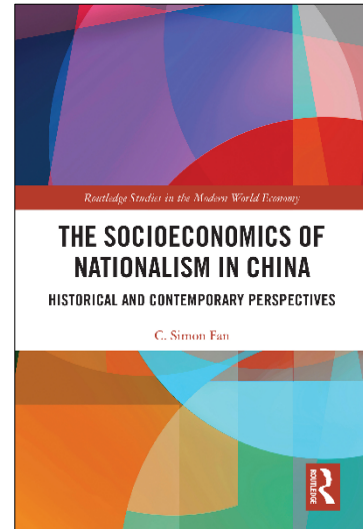
Reviewed by  
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As reported in previous literature, nationalism was aggressive and one of the main causes of war since the 1990s (Chafetz 1996; Comaroff & Stern 1995; Gagnon, 1994; Van Evera, 1994). There was no exception for the discussion of Chinese nationalism. Some scholars found that China had been aggressive simply because of Chinese nationalism (Bernstein & Munro, 1997; Huntington & Jervis, 1997). This idea was challenged by many Chinese scholars (Zhao, 2000; Zhao, 2013; Zheng, 1999; Zhou, 2021) who argued that the West misinterpreted the nature and intention of Chinese nationalism.

Against this backdrop, ***The Socioeconomics of Nationalism in China: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives***, a monograph by C. Simon Fan, is of epoch-making significance in analyzing Chinese nationalism from the perspective of social economics. The author contended that Chinese nationalism was “reactive nationalism” (p. 123). In other words, Chinese nationalism was a stressful response to external coercion. Chinese nationalism was born in the collision with the West, accompanied by the memory of the humiliation that one would be beaten if one lagged. According to Fan, numerous historical events and contemporary international conflicts in China could be analyzed from behavioral economics and game theory, which complemented the history literature in further understanding Chinese nationalism.

The main purpose of this book is to investigate “how people have engaged in trade-offs between national sentiment and material benefit in tackling international and inter-ethnic conflicts in historical and contemporary China” (p. 2). To this end, Fan defines nationalism as “a status good in people’s consumption bundle” (p. 1) from the perspective of economics. Fan develops a conceptual framework in which national status is treated as a “luxury,” which suggests that popular nationalism tends to increase with economic development. In other words, along with the development and growth of China’s economy, the expansion of national strength, and the improvement of its international status, popular nationalism is also surging.

This book is divided into 19 chapters, in addition to an introductory section and an epilogue. The introduction outlines the theories and conceptual framework on which this book is based, together with a very useful literature review of previous studies of Chinese nationalism.



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In chapter 2, Fan contended that popular nationalism did not exist for most of human history, based on Maslow's (1943) argument. He also distinguished elite nationalism from popular nationalism. The former was limited to "the elites of a nation" (p. 19), while the latter referred to "the nationalist sentiment of a country's common people" (p. 10). Believing that popular nationalism inclined to "increase with economic development" (p. 19), Fan developed the theory of utility in economics for nationalism, which meant that nationalism should be considered a luxury.

In chapter 3, Fan argued that hegemony in the Spring and Autumn period (771 BC to 476 BC) was the epitome of elite nationalism. Chapter 4 analyzed the role of nationalism in the Song dynasty (960–1279). Chapters 5 and 6 answered the question why an ethnic minority, the Manchus, ruled China in the Qing dynasty based on the theory of subgame perfect equilibrium.

In chapters 7 and 8, Fan analyzed the two Opium Wars. He argued that Britain started the first Opium War to open the Chinese market to dump goods and plunder raw materials. The Second Opium War was to further open the Chinese market and expand the rights and interests of aggression. Fan explained that Britain was eager to trade with China by making use of the theory of comparative advantage.

As mentioned in chapter 9, China lost Outer Manchuria to Russia in 1858, and China was faced with serious internal and external troubles in 1860. Fan provided a different explanation for the Qing dynasty's decision in engaging in the war with the allied forces of Britain and France. Fan argued that the war was "a sacrifice for the Qing dynasty's effort to take back the large territory of Outer Manchuria" (p. 99).

In chapter 10, Fan maintained that the conflicts of Western forces led by imperialist aggression replaced the struggle between Manchu and Han as the main historical contradiction with the development of modern China. Under such a circumstance, the Boxer Movement began to support the Qing dynasty to resist the West. Fan explained that the reason why the Boxers were allowed to exist was that the Boxer movement started from "the passions of nationalism rather than the desire to rebel against the Qing government" (p. 109).

In chapter 11, Fan provided a general analysis of three reforms (the formation of the New Army, the Wuxu Reform, and the Xinzheng Revolution) at the end of the Qing dynasty. In chapter 12, Fan analyzed the collapse of the Qing dynasty. These two chapters provided a consistent view of the rise of Chinese nationalism. The rise of nationalism in the late Qing dynasty was the reflection of multiple ethnic contradictions and conflicts at home and abroad at that time.

In chapter 13, Fan analyzed the direct causes of the Second Sino-Japanese War, in which Chinese nationalism culminated. In chapter 14, Fan provided an analysis of the establishment and growth of the Communist Party of China (CPC). He also argued that China's decision to participate in the Korean War in 1950 resulted from the nature of the Korean War. It was "the major confrontation between the Capitalist Camp and the Communist Camp" (p. 147).

Chapter 15 analyzed the causes of the Sino-Indian War based on the subgame perfect equilibrium and identity economics. In chapter 16, Fan examined the causes of the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979. Fan

attributed it to the clash of nationalism. Furthermore, he put forward a new explanation for the war based on the signaling theory. It argued that China wanted to use this war to "signal China's toughness to Britain in the bargaining over the upcoming 1997 handover of Hong Kong" (p. 172).

In chapter 17, Fan investigated the causes of the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999. According to Fan, the bombing might have resulted from the burgeoning rise of perceived Chinese nationalism. Moreover, he contended that the bombing was a subgame perfect equilibrium of three players (China hater, American captain, and Clinton administration). In chapter 18, Fan provided a general analysis of the two incidents related to the Diaoyu Islands in 2010 and 2012. He compared the emotions of nationalism to "a bubble" (p. 196) that could be easily burst. In other words, excessive nationalism should be avoided to reduce the bubble of nationalism in relation to the Diaoyu Islands.

Though well-organized, this book is quite challenging for scholars without a good command of economic theory. This is one of only a few books that discusses the socioeconomics of Chinese nationalism; however, it would have been more engaging had the author presented more case studies on international trades that benefited from the clashes of nationalism.

Nevertheless, this book casts a new light in understanding Chinese nationalism from a socioeconomic perspective. The book provides profound insights in regarding nationalism as "a status good," (p. 1) while the discussion is easy to follow thanks to the examples provided by the author to explain abstract economic theories. It will serve as a field guide for students and scholars in the field of nationalism, China studies, international relations, history, and political economy.

In my opinion, Chinese nationalism is an inclusive nationalism. What the Chinese are talking about now is a community with a shared future for humankind. It is also a great historical legacy of this civilized country, and in particular, a vision for the ideal of great harmony for humankind. These are the things that I find particularly brilliant about Chinese nationalism.

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