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# REVISTA INCLUSIONES

REVISTA DE HUMANIDADES  
Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES  
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*Francisco Giraldo Gutiérrez*

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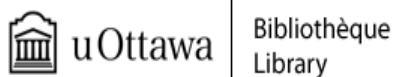


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**SOCIAL NETWORK'S FUNCTIONAL USAGE  
BY THE CHINESE CYBERNATIONALISTIC MOVEMENT**

**USO FUNCIONAL DE LA RED SOCIAL POR EL MOVIMIENTO CIBERNACIONALISTA CHINO**

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**Abstract**

As the process of China's industrialization and the penetration of Internet continue, the Chinese Cybernationalistic Movement (CCM) has become a notable and significant phenomenon. In this study the function of the social networks during the cybernationalism movement will be examined through Big Data and Natural Language Processing (NLP) technologies. Two case studies of more than 3000 examples will be conducted, both of them are highly connected with the recent incident. Not only the contribution of the social network to the self-identification, the choice of the adversary, and the movement core values of the CCM will be presented through their analysis, but also the action frames of the CCM can be confirmed.

**Keywords**

China – Nationalism – Social Network – Social Movement – Ideology

**Resumen**

A medida que continúa el proceso de industrialización y la penetración de Internet en China, el Movimiento Cibernacionalista Chino (MCP) se ha convertido en un fenómeno notable y significativo. En este estudio, se examinará la función de las redes sociales durante el movimiento del cibernacionalismo a través de las tecnologías de Big Data y Natural Language Processing (NLP). Se alcanzan dos estudios de caso con más de 3000 muestras, ambos están altamente conectados con los incidentes recientes. A través de ese trabajo, no solo se presentará la contribución de la red social a la auto-identificación, la elección del adversario y los valores centrales del movimiento del MCP, sino que también se pueden confirmar los marcos de acción del MCP.

**Palabras Claves**

China – Nacionalismo – Red Social – Movimiento Social – Ideología



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## Introduction

According to the China Internet Network Information Center, (CNNIC) the Chinese internauts' amount exceeded 800 million since the end of 2018<sup>1</sup>, which is almost three times that of the United States, the data from the Internet World Stats shows that until June 30, 2019, the number of Chinese internauts reached 829 million<sup>2</sup>. These data confirm that China is already a big country of Internet. Although the critics about cyber censorship never stop, the steady growth of internauts indicates a prosperous virtual community. And the increasing importance of the Internet during the daily communication results new social phenomena in almost every aspect. However, among all these social phenomena, why the nationalistic movement on the Internet is the most attractive and most important one?

First, If Ernest Gellner<sup>3</sup> and Eric Hobsbawm<sup>4</sup> were correct on that the expansion of nationalism is a result of the expansion of the industrialized lifestyle, according to the data of World Bank, Chinese employment in agriculture dropped from 59.7% (1991) to 26.77% (2017) in three decades<sup>5</sup>, which indicates a dramatic industrialization process and a strong potential trend toward the nationalism; Second, in the same period of the industrialization, the number of Chinese internauts also increased impressively. In 1990, with the help of their German counterparts, Chinese scientists registered the Top-level Domain of China, .cn<sup>6</sup>, which was the beginning of Chinese Internet history. In 2018, as we mentioned before, two-thirds of Chinese citizen established connection with the virtual world. As only 7.8% of Chinese internauts are of agricultural employment<sup>7</sup>, we can say that the Chinese internauts and the Chinese non-agricultural population are highly consistent. Therefore, in China the process of industrialization and informationalization are synchronized, and logically the Chinese nationalism acquired a strong Internet feature during its expansion. Many works have been done on the issue of Chinese nationalism, but most of these investigations were focused on the role of the Chinese government while ignored the mass participation, especially the participation on the Internet. Also, as the official control of the news media is weakling by the more open Internet, it is interesting to find out the result of the combination between the nationalist movement and the new communication technology.

This study, with the objective to research how the CCM is formed upon the social networks, guided with the key factors of a movement, will focus on the data analysis of the cybernationalist's information node, and provide an integral and profound view, which certainly will contribute to future investigation on similar topics.

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<sup>1</sup> The 43rd China Statistical Report on Internet Development, China Internet Network Information Center (Beijing: 2019), 16.  
<http://cnnic.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201902/P020190318523029756345.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Internet World Stats, "Top 20 Countries with the Highest Number of Internet Users," Retrieved from <https://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Ernest Gellner and John Breuilly, *Nations and Nationalism*. Vol: 1 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> The World Bank, "World Development Indicators: Employment in Agriculture (modeled ILO estimate)". Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS>

<sup>6</sup> Australian Centre on China in the World, "The China Story-The Internet". 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.thechinastory.org/keyword/the-internet/>

<sup>7</sup> The Internet Statistical Report ... 25

## Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

As professor Manuel Castells states, the social movement is collective action conscious about its impact, both in the case of victory and defeat, and transforms the values and institutions of society. From his point of view, the social movement can be classified as reactive or proactive. "As for the first one, it builds trenches of resistance on behalf of God, nation, ethnicity, family, locality (...) which now are threatened under the combined and contradictory assault of techno-economic forces; as for the proactive one, it aiming at transforming human relationships at their most fundamental level."<sup>8</sup> Obviously a nationalistic movement belongs to the reactive movement, and like other types of movement, they are also structured according to three principles: identity, adversary and social objective. Castells's opinion:

the **Identity** refers to the self-definition of the movement of what it is, on behalf of whom it speaks; the **Adversary** refers to the movement's principal enemy, as explicitly identified by the movement; and the **Societal goal** refers to the movement's vision of the kind of social order, or social organization, it would wish to attain in the historical horizon of its collective action.<sup>9</sup>

However, as the Internet significantly expanded, Castells's theory might be a little outdated, so the work of Professor Bennett and Professor Segerberg about the effect of social networks on the mobilization and organization of mass movement could be a beneficial supplement. They divide the collective action into three paradigms<sup>10</sup>:

1. The "traditional" collective action type: Depends on brokering organizations to carry the burden of facilitating cooperation and bridging differences when possible, may use digital media and social technologies more as means of mobilizing and managing participation and coordinating goals, rather than inviting personalized interpretations of problems and self-organization of action.
2. The connective action type: Self-organizes largely without central or 'lead' organizational actors, using technologies as important organizational agents, formal organizations tend to remain at the periphery, and personal action frames become the transmission units across trusted social networks.
3. The middle type: Formal organizational actors stay in using resources to deploy social technologies enabling loose public networks to form around personalized action themes. Encompasses more informal organizational actors that develop some capacities of conventional organizations in terms of resource mobilization and coalition building without imposing strong brands and collective identities.

Of course, these three types are all of the ideal models, in reality, it is not strange to find them working together inside one movement space. Their crucial inspiration for this study is, by analyzing the driving force, the usage of the social network and the role of

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<sup>8</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997) quoted in Sonia Valle de Frutos, *Cultura y Civilización: Un acercamiento desde las Ciencias Sociales* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2008), 142.

<sup>9</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 74.

<sup>10</sup> W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action", *Information, Communication & Society* Vol: 15 num 5 (2012): 756-757.

formal organization, a better understanding of the action frame of the cybernationalistic movement will be attainable. However, Professor Bennett believes that in the personalized action formation:

“The nominal issues may resemble older movement or party concerns in terms of topics but the ideas and mechanisms for organizing action become more personalized than in cases where action is organized on the basis of social group identity, membership, or ideology... People may still join actions in large numbers, but the identity reference is more derived through inclusive and diverse large-scale personal expression rather than through common group or ideological identification.”<sup>11</sup>

This may affect the classification of the CCM as it is a typical ideological movement.

On the effect of the mass movement organized by social networks, many researchers question its efficiency on reality politic impact. Internauts tend to click, to comment, to repost rather than take concrete action, as Evgeny Morozov argued in his book *The Net Delusion*: “Policymakers, therefore, should not pay much attention to Facebook-based activism. While Facebook-based mobilization will occasionally lead to genuine social and political change, this is mostly accidental, a statistical certainty rather than a genuine achievement.”<sup>12</sup> However, professor Tufekci fight back this opinion, from her point of view, there are four core values of social movements: “**Worthiness** is about convincing people of the rightness of a cause; **Unity** is a signal of determination; **Numbers** illustrate public support; **Commitment** is indicative of the ability to persist and potentially disrupt.”<sup>13</sup> As all of these four values can be demonstrated by online movement, “the widespread notion that protests and actions in the streets work better than online social media movements does not necessarily hold.”<sup>14</sup>

Maybe Morozov's theory is correct on many issues, but in the case of CCM, Tufekci is more reasonable here. The first cause is because the Chinese government allows criticism toward itself but silences call for offline collective action<sup>15</sup>, which significantly reduced the desire of taking concrete action among the Chinese internauts in real life, especially the nationalist one as nationalists naturally tend to be positive about the government. The second cause is the rise of politics of recognition, in his work *The Politics of Recognition*, Professor Charles Taylor stated that the nationalism movement demands recognition:

“A number of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need, sometimes the demand, for recognition. The need, it can be argued, is one of the driving forces behind nationalist movements in politics.”<sup>16</sup>... “What has come about with the modern age is not the need for recognition but the

<sup>11</sup> W. Lance Bennett, *Logic of Connective Action*... 744.

<sup>12</sup> Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World* (London: Penguin, 2012),180.

<sup>13</sup> Zeynep Tufekci, “Social Movements and Governments in the Digital Age: Evaluating a Complex Landscape”, *Journal of International Affairs* Vol: 68 num 1 (2014): 8-9.

<sup>14</sup> Zeynep Tufekci, *Social Movements*... 9.

<sup>15</sup> Gary King; Jennifer Pan and Margaret E. Roberts, “How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol: 107 num 2 (2013).

<sup>16</sup> Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition”, *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism* Vol: 98 (1997): 25.

conditions in which the attempt to be recognized can fail. That is why the need is now acknowledged for the first time.”<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, in a Chinese movement looking for the recognition, these four values of Tufekci, especially the last three, are far more important than other types of a social movement.

After combing all these theoretical backgrounds with the Chinese context, four hypotheses are proposed for this work:

1. Through the Social Network, the CCM has developed its own identity and clarified its adversaries.
2. CCM is of the connective action type.
3. Social Network contributes to the Worthiness, the Unity, the Number and the Commitment of the CCM.

## Methodology

The main applied methodology in this work is the quantitative one. First, with a specific web crawler tool, we will collect public data from different social networks, including content's information, the user's ID, the text of the comment, the number of upvotes, the number of replies to the comment, and the number of repost. Based on this primary data, we can carry out further analysis:

1. Classify the data by the user's ID, combined with a sample standard deviation calculation on the upvote of comment; it's possible to reveal the public opinion's degree of dispersion.
2. Sentiments analysis. Sentiment analysis refers to the use of NLP, text analysis, computational linguistics, and biometrics to systematically identify, extract, quantify, and study affective states and subjective information, as this study focuses on the Chinese text, the library SnowNLP which available on the Github platform will be applied.
3. Extraction of keywords, TextRank and Tf-idf: The TextRank is an extractive and unsupervised text summarization technique, by building up a vector for each and every word, the similarities between word vectors are then calculated, and finally a certain number of top-ranked words will be listed<sup>18</sup>. TF-idf stands for term frequency-inverse document frequency, typically<sup>19</sup>, its weight is composed by two terms: the first computes the normalized Term Frequency, the number of times a word appears in a document, divided by the total number of words in that document; the second term is the Inverse Document Frequency, computed as the logarithm of the number of the documents in the corpus divided by the number of documents where the specific term appears.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition... 35

<sup>18</sup> Rada Mihalcea and Paul Tarau, "TextRank: Bringing order into text", Proceedings of the 2004 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing. 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Karen Spärck Jones, "A Statistical Interpretation of Term Specificity and Its Application in Retrieval", Journal of Documentation Vol: 60 num 5 (2004).

## Case Study of Social Network's Usage during the CCM

### Cybernationalist's Self-Identification through Social Network

Castells states that “because contemporary nationalism is more reactive than proactive, it tends to be more cultural than political, and thus more oriented toward the defense of an already institutionalized culture than toward the construction or defense of a state. When new political institutions are created or recreated, they are defensive trenches of identity, rather than launching platforms of political sovereignty.<sup>20</sup>” In the case of China, the situation is somehow special compared with Europe, as it was a total agricultural country but now promotes its industrialization/informationalization process at a crazy speed. Thusly, most internauts still have the mark of the agricultural era but are living in modern society, and the cybernationalism in China is both classic and contemporary, the identity and the political sovereignty is bound tightly together here. While the official narrative about nationalism is developing slow and cautious, social networks offer an open space that allows cybernationalists boldly process their self-identification, informally, unprofessionally and autonomously. Among the numerous attempts, the most famous and successful case is the **Year Hare Affair (YHA)**.

### The Evolution of YHA through Social Network

YHA's original name in Chinese is *那年那兔那些事* (literally: The story of that hare happened at those years), a series of cultural products which use animals as an allegory for nations and sovereign states to represent political and military events in history. Its main characters include the hare as People's Republic of China (PRC), the baldhead as Republic Of China (ROC), the communist bear as Soviet Union (the same bear without the communist icon as Russia), the eagle as United States, the crane-like chicken as Japan, the bull as United Kingdom, and the Gallic rooster as France<sup>21</sup>.

The true beginning of this series can be traced back to a user original generated post on the Super Basecamp (*超级大本营*, <https://lt.cjdbby.net/>), an Internet Forum focus on military affairs. The user Yefengzhilang (*野风之狼*) started a thread with the title “the Glorious Past of the Little White Rabbit” (*小白兔的光荣往事*)<sup>22</sup>. With a crazy usage of argots, the author tried to tell the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (or the story of PRC) in a funny but also proud tone. Under his metaphorical description, China is a white rabbit pure and harmless in appearance but ambitious and scheming inside, which tries to restore its ancestors' glory while also survives in a world led by the eagle (U.S) and the bear (the Soviet Union/Russia). The little rabbit encountered many challenges in the story just like China in history but always finds a way out by its wisdom and valor. The little white rabbit's story quickly attracted popularity among military internet forums, especially for the new generation internauts who are tired of the official dreary tone. The use of argot contributes to the correction and perfection of historical facts involved, as only severe history enthusiast can understand the argot and participate in its discussion; however, the argot also stops the further expansion of this cultural product, because severe history enthusiasts are a minority of internauts while the common internauts have no idea about it.

<sup>20</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*... 33.

<sup>21</sup> See an example at <https://ask.qcloudimg.com/draft/5372432/lmaqz2fyay.jpg>.

<sup>22</sup> The original thread (<https://lt.cjdbby.net/thread-1066806-10-1.html>) on Super Basecamp is not available any more, but the author offers a refined version on other military internet forum. (<https://bbs.meyet.net/thread-418966-1-1.html>)



Then comes the cartoonist Niguangfeixing (逆光飞行, literally: Backlight Flight, BF), who also is a history-military enthusiast and try to evolve the monotonous text into more interesting form. Since 2011, he started to release a comics version of the little white rabbit story on Super Basecamp and changed the name to Year Hare Affair. Until today, the cartoonist has drawn 69 chapters in total.

Compared with its counterparts from China or Japan, the style and quality of the YHA comic are only better than the most simplified drawing. However, the theory “visual images retain more impact and are far more engaging than text alone<sup>23</sup>” is proved here, even this low-quality comics is much more attractive than the text, the popularity of YHA grew fast, and soon BF was contracted by a formal comic platform – Tencent Comics. According to the official data, only on Tencent Comics the YHA is read more than 20 million times<sup>24</sup>, not to mention other channels.

The initial success brought the cartoonist's career to a new level. In 2014, he established his own company, and formed a professional team, received more than 20 million Yuan (3 million US dollars) investment in the next two years<sup>25</sup>. With this adequate fund BF evolved the YHA furthermore to make it animated, since March 5, 2015, the 1<sup>st</sup> season of YHA animation was broadcasted in those major video-sharing websites, especially the teenage-oriented websites like Acfun and Bilibili.

The YHA animation is fully colored and has significantly improved its quality, but the quantity is still not too much, the 1<sup>st</sup> season of YHA has only 12 episodes and 96 minutes in total.<sup>26</sup> The themes of each episode are: The foundation of PRC; Korean War and aftermath (3 episodes); The return of Chinese aboard scientists and the successful nuclear test (7 episodes); The 1962 military clash between China and India; and the shot down of US-backed Taiwanese spy plane. Obviously, all these themes are about China's victory over the foreign (-backed) force, which is the classic nationalist expression. On the narrative style, while keeps the entertaining style, YHA emphasizes the effort and the sacrifice Chinese people had devoted to achieving the victory, and at the end of each episode some documental photos and videos are inserted as history proves.

The animation of YHA turns out another enormous success, today on the platform Bilibili, the 1<sup>st</sup> season is still the 14<sup>th</sup> most popular Chinese animation, with 57.42 million views for the first 12 episodes<sup>27</sup>. Many internauts, especially the young internauts, start to refer China and themselves as a hare, for instance, 我兔威武 (Bravo my hare), 兔党 (Hare party – the CCP), 兔军 (Hare army – the Chinese army), 种花家的小兔子 (Little hare from China). The YHA internet forum supported by Baidu Company also is built up<sup>28</sup>, until 2019, 1 million internauts are following it and 24 million threads are posted, while on Chinese

<sup>23</sup> Wendy Abbott; Jessie Donaghey; Joanna Hare and Peta Hopkins, “An Instagram Is worth a Thousand Words: An Industry Panel and Audience Q&A”, Library Hi Tech News Vol: 30 num 7 (2013): 3.

<sup>24</sup> Backlight Flight, Year Hare Affair. Tencent Comic. <https://ac.qq.com/Comic/comicInfo/id/545088>

<sup>25</sup> Tianyancha, “Public Information of Xiamen Yixiazhifeng Comic & Technology Ltd”. <https://www.tianyancha.com/brand/b661a134478>

<sup>26</sup> Bilibili, “Year Hare Affair, Episode 1”. 2015. <https://www.bilibili.com/bangumi/media/md1689>

<sup>27</sup> Bilibili, “Year Hare Affair, Episode 1...”

<sup>28</sup> Baidu Forums, “Forum of Year Hare Affair”. <https://tieba.baidu.com/f?kw=%E9%82%A3%E5%B9%B4%E9%82%A3%E5%85%94%E9%82%A3%E4%BA%9B%E4%BA%8B%E5%84%BF&ie=utf-8&tp=0&traceid=>

Twitter, the Weibo platform (微博, literally: Microblog), 300 thousand blogs have been posted with the tag #Year Hare Affair (#那年那兔那些事儿#).

Clearly, started from one single internaut's inspiration, today the YHA is already a popular iconic symbol for cybernationalists, and this success only takes less than 5 years. Its impact is so significant that even the official departments have to approbate it and try to absorb its influence, especially the Communist Youth League of China (CYL). For example, in 2016, BF was contracted by the CYL as a tutor for its vlog platform<sup>29</sup>, and CYL's official account begins use "little hare" to refer its followers on the Weibo platform.

So why a grassroots cultural product like YHA can reach such an achievement? How does the audience react to the message it conveys? Or in other words, what worthiness has been shown here? In order to acquire a neutral and integral perspective, comments of the YHA comics on the Bilibili platform will be analyzed through big data and NLP.

### Comments analysis of YHA on Bilibili

Comments on Bilibili are sorted by "hot level", although the platform doesn't offer any information about the algorithm applied, reliable speculation is that the hot level is jointly determined by the number of upvotes and the number of comment on the original comment.

Until July 31, 2019, YHA's 12 episodes of the first season have received 110995 comments on Bilibili<sup>30</sup>, for each episode, the top 80 hottest comments are designed to be captured as samples, so in an ideal situation, there should be 960 effective samples for the investigation. In the process of capture, with the help of web crawler program Bazhuayu (八爪鱼) developed by Skieer Company, information includes the commenter's account, the body of comment and the number of upvotes could be detected and collected. However, due to the compatibility issue, in the end only 851 effective samples with complete information were available.

First, basic data analysis will be conducted. The 851 comments were made by 693 internauts, 74 internauts have commented at least twice, this shows a high-passion of participation from YHA's audience. On the other side, these 693 users have received 298,303 upvotes in total, the highest data comes from the account Xingkongdeshouwang (星空的守望) with 17719 personal upvotes. However, as the average of upvote per user is 430 while the median is only 64, the sample standard deviation of upvote is unbelievable big, reaches 1830985, which shows that internauts' attention obviously tends to be highly concentrated.

The next process is the sentiment analyze, through the usage of the SnowNLP tool it's possible for researchers to verify the sentiment expressed by text, and the analysis result of a sentence should fluctuate between 0 and 1, while 0 shows a most negative sentiment and 1 means a most positive sentiment.

<sup>29</sup> Youth.cn, "Mashe enters the 'Youth Voice' V story and is hired as the 'Youth Voice' Youth Growth Instructor". (Beijing: 2016), [http://qnzs.youth.cn/tsxq/201608/t20160830\\_8607897.htm](http://qnzs.youth.cn/tsxq/201608/t20160830_8607897.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Bilibili, "Year Hare Affair, Episode 1..."

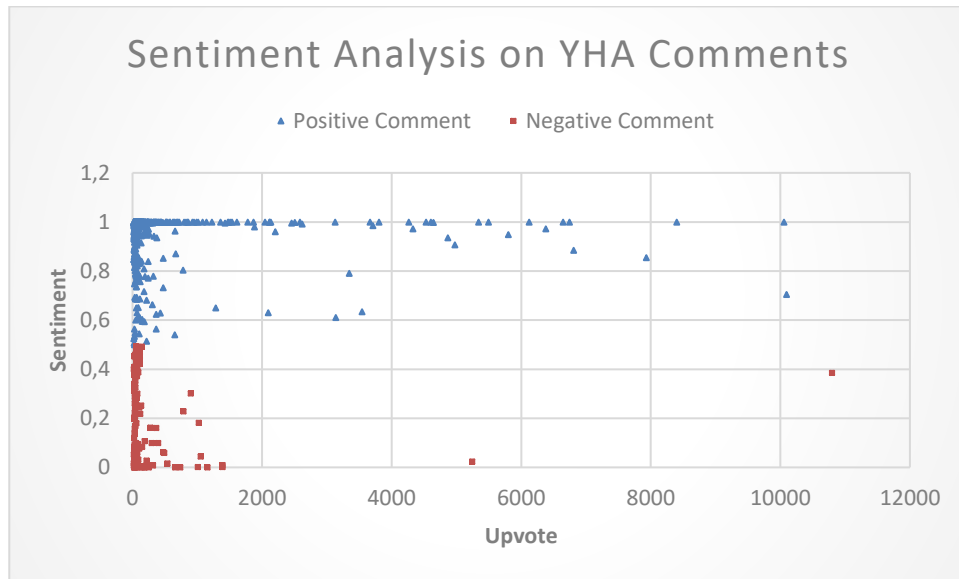


Table 1  
Result of Sentiment Analysis on YHA Comments  
Own elaboration

Of the total 851 examples, their average sentiment factor is 0.8348, and the median is 0.9997. These two numbers show an extremely positive attitude from audiences towards the YHA in general. Then, a coordinate with the upvote number as the X-axis and the sentiment factor as the Y-axis is established as the Table 1 presents, and the results are classified into two groups: the positive comments ( $\geq 0.5$ , 717 results) and the negative comments ( $< 0.5$ , 134 results). As we can see, large amounts of data are gathered around the range from (0, 0.8) to (0, 1.0), this means a lot of comments without massive upvotes (lower hot level and visibility) appreciate the YHA, so the positive attitude towards YHA is not a result of the Bandwagon effect - which the probability of individual adoption increasing with respect to the proportion who have already done so<sup>31</sup>, but a true voluntary opinion among the audiences. Although the majority of comments with more than 2000 upvotes shows a positive attitude here, however, there are two outstanding negative comments:

“我认识麻蛇是两年前，他非常惧内，两年后的今天，他仍然惧内，然后还催我西木头 (TDT)”

“I met Mashe (the cartoonist's nickname) two years ago, he was very henpecked, two years later, he is still henpecked...”

Shenqilufuren(神奇陆夫人), (10796, 0.3855)

“中印建交是4月1日，中巴建交5月21日，我好想明白了些什么”

“The establishment of the diplomatic relationship between China-India was on April 1. China-Pakistan was on May 21. I might understand something here.”

Chali·Tu(查理·兔), (5240, 0.0243)

<sup>31</sup> Andrew M. Colman, A Dictionary of Psychology (Oxford: Quick Reference, 2015), 77.

The first negative comment is about the author, and it is more like a friendly joke than criticism. Also, the second comment is mocking on India as April 1 is the Fools' Day while praising to Pakistan as 521 is the homonym of "I love you" in Chinese. In fact, in all "negative comments" with more than 1000 upvotes, none of them is a negative reaction towards the YHA and the worthiness it shows, for instance, the most negative comment (coordinate: 1155,0) is a list of Indian casualties during the 1962 military clash. On the other hand, in all "positive comments" with more than 5000 upvotes, they are all positive reactions directly linked with the YHA and its worthiness. Therefore, even though the number 0.9997 is already an impressive result, but the real response of the audience should be more positive than the data shows. The last analysis of YHA is keyword extraction. A Chinese stop words list developed by Harbin Institute of Technology on Github platform is specially modified and applied on these 851 comments, which results in a text file of comments excluding the noise words. However, due to the language difference, a text in Chinese cannot be further analyzed without a proper segmentation, so the Text Segmentation Tool Jieba based on python platform is adopted. As the text file is thoroughly prepared, the methodologies TF-id and TextRank can be used and here is the result:

TF-id Key Words and Weighting Factor	TextRank Key Words and Weighting Factor
We (我们) 0.0739399788575	China (中国) 1.0
China (中国) 0.0664215914858	Country (国家) 0.484395947867
Country (国家) 0.0437207146684	U.S. (美国) 0.30773159566
Hare (兔子) 0.041548745581	Hare (兔子) 0.209249943014
Animation (动画) 0.0353024398203	Homeland (祖国) 0.156513967988
They (他们) 0.0322605685944	History (历史) 0.156342503824
You (plural) (你们) 0.0301602256497	Animation (动画) 0.137271495356
Self (自己) 0.0271272240039	Patriotic (爱国) 0.13021479599
U.S. (美国) 0.0259256705954	World (世界) 0.119036662843
Homeland (祖国) 0.0259073276745	Grandpa (爷爷/外公) 0.116794385107
Zhònghuā (an affectionate and homophonic transformation of Zhōnghuá-China from YHA) (种花-中华) 0.0242593797861	Like (喜欢) 0.114246255777
Patriotic (爱国) 0.0225441535478	Japan (日本) 0.109577135616
Grandpa (爷爷/外公) 0.0192175993684	War (战争) 0.0948321740318

Table 2  
Own elaboration

Although these methodologies have two different algorithms for keyword extraction, still many similarities can be found in both results — for example, China, Country, Hare, Homeland, U.S., Patriotic, and Grandpa. As hare is the representative of China in YHA,

Zhōnghuá (中华) refers to the China Nation and mainly concerns the culture<sup>32</sup>, Country and Homeland also refer China, obviously the most outstanding keyword is China.

Another interesting keyword is Grandpa, an example of its usage is:

“我的外公当年是参与“两弹一星”当中导弹的研究人员，老人家一辈子都为此而骄傲。”

“My grandpa was one of those researchers who participated in the missile test, and the old man is proud of it for the rest of his life.”

Sumo\_hongAzhenmeiwei (素陌\_红A真美味) : (1515, 0.9998) Episode 8

Here the concept “Grandpa” has the same hint as to the “History”, by recalling the glorious memory a national myth is built up, which contributes to waking up the self-awareness of national belonging. The United States and Japan are two other common keywords of both algorithms, this shows a strong sense of confrontation against these two countries, which is reasonable as Japan invaded China and left behind countless disasters, while the U.S. is the most powerful threat of China in reality. An interesting phenomenon we should notice is the massive usage of pronouns, they are ignored by the TextRank methodology but crucial for this study, especially the words “We” and “They”. This phenomenon means the audience of YHA is gradually understanding and using the concept of national boundary, although without a clear academic cognition. Take this phenomenon into consideration and reorganize the keyword weighting factor, a WordCloud can be created which give us a direct impression on what worthiness is shown by the YHA: **We-China-Country-Self-Patriotic-They-U.S** (我们-中国-国家-自己-爱国-他们-美国). As figure 1 shows, the majority of the worthiness is more about the national self-awareness rather than confrontation against the outside entity.

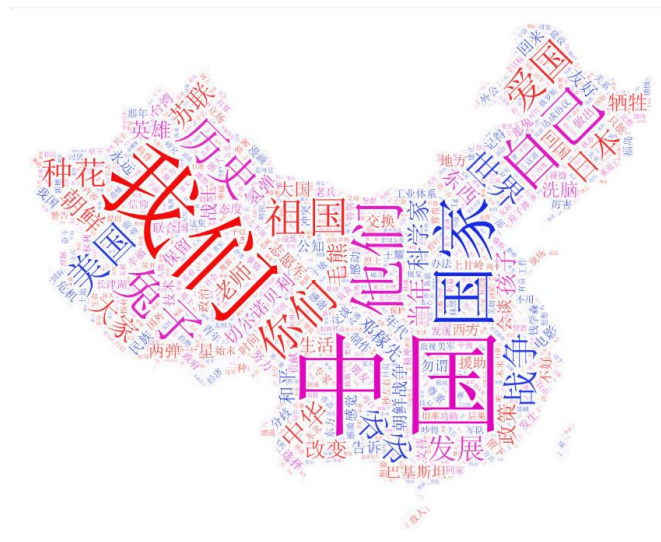


Figure 1  
Word Cloud of YHA  
Own elaboration

<sup>32</sup> Hui-Ching Chang and Richard Holt, Language, Politics and Identity in Taiwan: Naming China (London: Routledge, 2014), 162-164.

The process of YHA's development is also a process of decoding. Its origin manuscript is a thread full of argots which only suitable for a small group of readers, but the Chinese cybernationalist successfully decode it and simplify it for the common internaut. Maybe some information was lost during the decoding and simplification, but it is an affordable loss compared to the significant impact of YHA. Internauts show an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards YHA and a consensus framework is widely accepted; the most important part is, all this happened under the anthropomorphic symbol of China – the hare. An internaut accepts the hare as China, or refers himself/herself as a hare is also declaring himself/herself as a cybernationalist, this is a de facto political flag, and it is so influential that the government must accept its existence and try to alliance with it. YHA is not just an Internet cultural product, to some context, it is already the Chinese cybernationalism itself.

### **Cybernationalist's Adversary on Social Network**

As Castells mentioned, the adversary is one of the three fundamental principles for a social movement. Although in previous study the Chinese cybernationalist already shows a strong confrontation against the foreign force – more specifically, the U.S. and Japan, the concept of both the U.S. and Japan are too wide to become an adversary, in fact, American and Japanese cultures are not totally rejected by Chinese internauts. For example, on Bilibili platform there is a specific section for Japanese manga with numerous followers.

In order to find out which issue/group could be considered as an adversary for the Chinese cybernationalist, compared with an extensive scale survey filled with subjective opinions from undetermined internaut group, a more feasible and efficient way is tracking the daily trajectory of a specific cybernationalist opinion leader on social network. By analyzing his activity and interactions with his followers, not only we can check the adversary the cybernationalist confront with, but also the level of commitment and unity can be confirmed.

### **Common Internaut's carrer as Cybernationalist Opinion Leader**

The protagonist of our case is Shangdizhiying (上帝之鹰, literally: God's Eagle, GE), a senior user of many military Internet forums who also own account on other types of social network with the same/similar ID, for example his Weibo account is Shangdizhiying\_5zn (@上帝之鹰\_5zn). According to his self-description, he is a professional English – Chinese translator with some historical translation works, about 30 years old. Before the critical point, GE is just an ordinary Chinese internaut like many others.

However, things changed after the Sihang Warehouse Japanese Military Cosplay Incident (四行仓库日军照事件). Sihang warehouse is located in the city of Shanghai, as the Chinese army successfully defended the warehouse against the Japanese during the WWII, it provided a morale-lifting consolation to the Chinese army and people in the demoralizing aftermath of the Japanese invasion of Shanghai, and today it's one of the iconic symbols of Chinese national spirit.

Before the case study continues, the concept Spiritual-Japanese (SJ) must be introduced here. As a grassroots cybernationalistic word, there is no official nor academic definition on what the SJ is, a common but also ambiguous definition is: a non-Japanese



citizen group with extreme worship of Japanese Fascism-Militarism and hatred of their own nation, and spiritually regard themselves as militaristic Japanese. A famous but unconfirmed slogan of SJ is “Parents give me the shitty Chinese body, but the Imperial Japanese Army awards me the Yamato spirit” (父母生我支那身, 皇军赐我大和魂)<sup>33</sup>. According to this definition, a Chinese SJ will provoke a Chinese cybernationalist in three aspects: the Japanese Fascism-Militarism worship; the hatred of China Nation; and the nationality treason. Considering the heavy history between China and Japan, it is no wonder that the Chinese cybernationalist will classify the SJ as their prior adversary.

In the night of August 3, 2017, 10 days before the August 13, the date when Japan started the invasion of Shanghai in 1937, four Chinese youths wearing the Imperial Japanese Military's uniform took some photos in front of the Sihang warehouse to commemorate the 80 anniversary of Japanese invasion. Obviously, for Chinese cybernationalists, this is an unquestionable act of SJ. These four men shared their photos through the instant messaging program QQ, and further disseminated by other internauts. GE also encountered these photos 4 days later, and he was immediately irritated.

According to GE's Internet activity record, on the morning of August 7<sup>th</sup>, when he saw these photos, he continuously posted two threads with the title “Fuck all these bloody traitors!” (草拟吗的王八蛋狗汉奸!) , and “Call for Repost” (发金币, 求扩散) on the Northdy Forum (北朝论坛<https://bbs.northdy.com/>) . In the second thread he left a Weibo URL and stated that “Northdy is too small to cause public awareness... require help to spread this evil act”<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, during the interview with our researchers on August 22<sup>th</sup>, 2017, GE stated that he and some Northdy members formed a small “workgroup” to counterattack this provocation, but he refused to offer more detail for privacy concerns<sup>35</sup>. However, he did receive help from some influential Weibo accounts, including the founder of Northdy and the Cartoonist BF<sup>36</sup>.

At first, GE's effort worked, with more than 5 thousand reposts, 3 thousand comments and 3 thousand upvotes on this microblog<sup>37</sup>, he successfully drew attention from some internauts. But this blog was censored and totally removed from the Weibo platform within 24 hours. GE expressed his anger towards the Weibo's owner Sina Company and claimed that he'd received personal threat from some internauts, and he fought back with a long blog titled “The Vice and the Virtue in the Internet Age, A Review of the Military Uniform Gate” (网络时代的魔与道-军服门始末回顾), in this article, GE stated that:

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<sup>33</sup> Eastern Region Youth, “‘Parents give me the Chinese body, but Imperial Japanese Army awards me the Yamato spirit’ – Young, have you recognized the true face of ‘Spiritual-Japanese’?”. 2017, [http://www.sohu.com/a/169239927\\_757324](http://www.sohu.com/a/169239927_757324)

<sup>34</sup> God's Eagle, “Call for Repost”. 2017. Retrieved from <https://bbs.northdy.com/forum.php?mod=viewthread&tid=713007>. Note the Northdy is a semi-public forum, this link may not available for the no-registered visitors.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with God's Eagle. Reaction and Aftermath of the Sihang Incident, August 22, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with God's Eagle...

<sup>37</sup> The original microblog is censored, but a screenshot is available at Sina News. “4 men wore Japanese uniforms of World War II to take photos at the famous anti-Japanese ruins in Shanghai”. (August 8, 2017). Retrieved from <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/nd/2017-08-08/doc-ifyitapp2730673.shtml>

“Also, because I want to show my own attitude, I will not stop fighting because one or two microblogs are censored. And I dare to guarantee that there are many people like me, we will use our own experience to tell everyone, that in this busy, materialistic, and filled with shameless events age, there will still be many real patriots. The martyrs will not be forgotten, their spirit will not be forgotten and can't be insulted by those skunks! We don't want our descendants to worship the Japanese and Korean celebrities, while they don't know anything about the martyrs who really need be remembered! This is what we continue to fight for!”<sup>38</sup>

With the words he used, GE expressed an extremely strong nationalistic emotion in the article, and he does keep his promise. Since then, GE dedicates himself into the fight against the SJ and other adversaries of the CCM, and those internauts who supported him during the Sihang incident formed his first follower group. At first it was a small group, but till August 2019, GE has posted more than 3 thousand microblogs with 220 thousand followers on Weibo, one of his latest blogs about the Hong Kong Protest of 2019 receives 56635 upvotes, 3236 comments, and 5656 reposts. After three years of persistence, he is already one opinion leader with non-negligible influence.

### Weibo Data Analysis of God's Eagle

Using the web-crawler project, Weibospider developed by the user dataabc on GitHub<sup>39</sup>, we have collected all GE's microblogs posted from 2010/07/10 to 2019/08/03. The database includes the microblog body, the date of the post, the numbers of upvote, comment and repost. After data without complete information are excluded, finally 2850 out of 3400 microblogs are available for the case study.

The first step of data analysis is a regular keyword extraction with the TextRank algorithm, 20 keywords and their weighting factor are summarized as Table 3:

China	中国, 1.00	Internaut	网友, 0.21	Child	孩子, 0.17	Hong Kong	香港, 0.16
Japan	日本, 0.43	Rioters	暴徒, 0.18	Woman	女人, 0.17	Country	国家, 0.16
Everyone	大家, 0.27	Police	警察, 0.18	Yellow Ribbon	黄尸, 0.16	Japanese Army	日军, 0.15
Female	女性, 0.22	Police Department	警方, 0.18	Student	学生, 0.16	Insult	侮辱, 0.15
Man	男人, 0.22	the U.S.	美国, 0.17	Spiritual-Japanese	精日, 0.16	Video	视频, 0.15

Table 3  
20 Key Words from GE's Microblogs  
Own elaboration

<sup>38</sup> God's Eagle, The Vice and the Virtue in the Internet Age, a Review of the Military Uniform Gate. (Blog). (August 8, 2017) Retrieved from <https://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404138593290443025>. Translated by the author.

<sup>39</sup> <https://github.com/dataabc/weibospider>

The majority of the 20 keywords can be categorized into three groups. **The Japanese Group:** Japan, Spiritual-Japanese and Japanese Army, its total weighting factor is 0.74; **the Sexual-Family Relationship Group:** Female, Man, Child and Woman, its total weighting factor is 0.78; **the 2019 Hong Kong Protest Group:** Rioters, Police, Police Department, Yellow Ribbon and Hong Kong, its total weighting factor is 0.86.

It looks like GE have equally mentioned all three themes during his Weibo career, but does the key words extraction result indicates the cybernationalist's actual focus point? In order to verify it, a specific data analysis will be conducted next.

Generally, the three numbers of repost, comment, and upvote of a microblog represent its popularity, or how much attraction it has drawn. However, compared with the action of repost and comment, click the "like" button is much more convenient, so for the measurement of the influence of a microblog, compared with the direct addition between three numbers, here a more scientific and realistic formula is proposed: **Influence Factor = Upvotex0.33+Comment+Repost**. Then we can calculate the influence factor of all 2850 microblogs of GE. After microblogs with less than 500 influence factor are excluded, 868 microblogs with a significant influence are left for further investigation.

As table 4 shows, we've built up a coordinate with the date as the X-axis and the influence factor as the Y-axis. Then we try to locate some special microblogs, of which the influence factor is more than any other microblogs of a certain previous period, while during a certain period after it, new microblogs' influence factors are also significantly elevated. These special microblogs are classified as the Burst Point, and in total 16 burst points are verified.

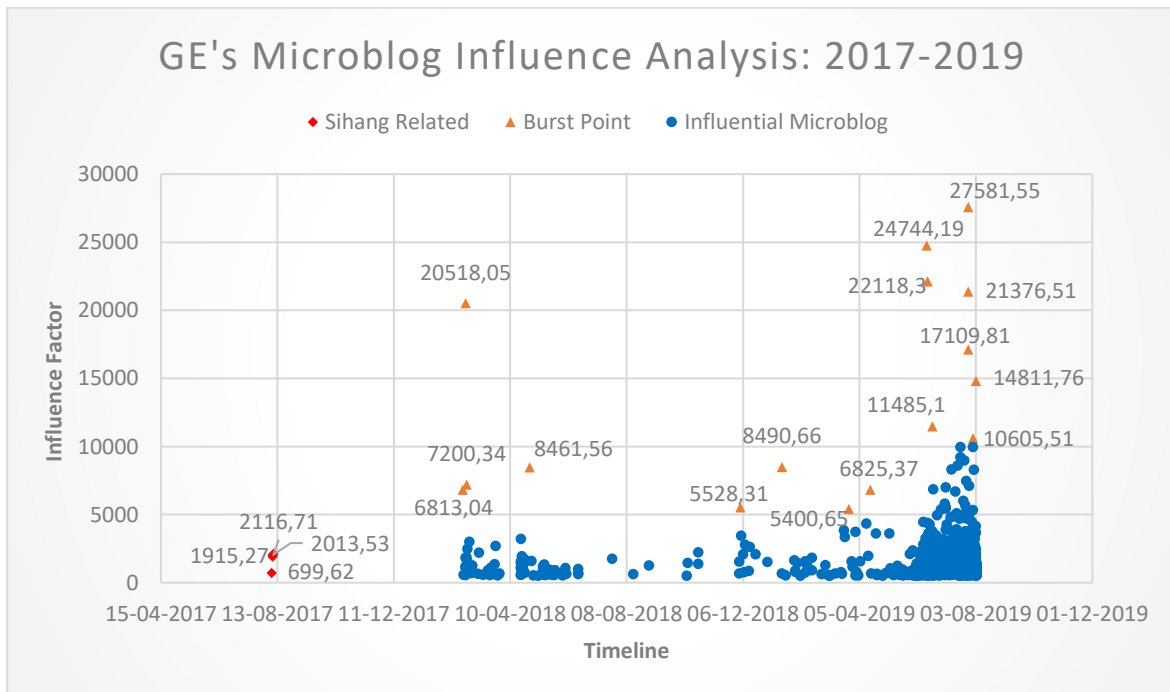


Table 4  
GE's Microblog Influence Factor Analysis

The burst point stands for the moment when a blogger boosts his/her influence to a higher level, at least in a period. The burst point not only means an intensive mobilization among the existed followers but also indicates a possible growth of the follower group and maximizes the influence factor for future burst points. In the case of GE, his burst points can be sorted into four periods:

**Approximately 2017/08/13:** Sihang Incident, the beginning of his career as an opinion leader, only four microblogs with more than 500 influence factor are recorded in a brief period, while in next half year no influential microblog was recorded.

**Approximately 2018/04/10:** Four burst points and multiple influential microblogs are noted. It started from the 6813.04 microblog of February 20, 2018, GE reported a new SJ's military uniform cosplay action in the city Nanjing, where the Japanese army had massacred 300 thousand Chinese citizens during the WWII<sup>40</sup>. Three days later GE's new microblog about the personal threat he'd received directly ignited the mood of many internauts, in this microblog GE stated that: "Now try to dox me and made my personal information public...I was not born in that era and cannot beat Japanese with the heroes, but can't I learn from their spirit?... (SJ) Come to me if you dare and I'm here waiting." (开始人肉我了, 把我的资料给公开了...没生在当年, 没能和人家一起扛枪打鬼子, 现在学点他们的样儿都不会? ...要来尽管来, 候着你们就是). This microblog's influence factor reaches 20518, an impressive number which shows that the Chinese cybernationalist does consider the SJ group as their prior adversary. The third burst point (2018/2/24, 7200) is an update about the personal threat, while the fourth burst point (2018/04/30, 8461) is a video in which a Chinese insulted the Nanjing victims and defended Japanese army in front of the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre. Generally, during this period, GE proved his persistence in the anti-SJ fight, and successfully won more public attention and followers.

**Approximately 2018/12/06 – 2019/04/05:** four burst points and more influential microblogs are founded during this time. However, 3 of 4 burst points were about everyday social news, only the microblog of (2019/01/15, 8490) was about nationalism, that the Taiwanese government tried to handover some Chinese relics to Japan. There are two points we should notice: first, after two years of dedication, GE's influence has already exceeded the Japanese-related issue; second, Japanese-related issue is still the most concerned topic for GE's follower, and his influence only maximize on this topic.

**The 2019 Hong Kong Protest Period:** Since the beginning of the Hong Kong protest (June 9, 2019), eight burst points and numerous influential microblogs can be observed in table 4. The first in time and the second most influential burst point is the microblog of (2019/06/13, 24744), in which GE mocked the protest "Unarmed?" (手无寸铁?) with nine photos of wounded Hong Kong police officers and weapons used by the protestors. The most influential burst point came at July 26 with 27581 influence factor, GE posted an image of list of Hong Kong local artist, and claimed that "Hong Kong independentism-scumbags have created a list of 'Inferior Artists'...Thanks, now we know who our friends are" (港毒制作了一份“劣质艺人”清单...多谢, 现在我们知道谁是我们的朋友了) All other six burst points are also about the Hong Kong protest/protestors and strongly condemn it/them. The data shows that 655 out of 868 influential microblogs are of this

<sup>40</sup> Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (Basic Books, 2014), 102.

period, while GE only has posted 863 microblogs in total from June 13, 2019, to August 3, 2019. Obviously as the protest in Hong Kong intensifies, GE wins more influence over the Weibo platform due to his extreme anti-HongKong-Protest attitude.

There is a **Special Burst Point** not marked on the coordinate because its influence factor is too high to be showed. On June 19, 2019, GE blogged that “# Yibin Earthquake# ...Some Taiwanese: ‘More please’, ‘Why not bigger?’, ‘Only 11 less for 1.3 billion, not a problem!’... (#宜宾地震#...某些台湾人：“多震几次”、“怎么不更大一点”、“不就13亿人口少11人，没事没事！”...) as he attached some screenshots from Facebook as proves, the influence factor reaches 79871, almost three times greater than the microblog about the “Inferior Artists”. GE also has blogged some hatred comments from Hong Kong internauts, which results a burst point marked on the coordinate as (2019/06/19, 11485)

After the review of all burst points, some key points can be summarized now:

1. Both cybernationalistic opinion leaders and the followers show a steady persistence to their nationalistic cause. The more commitment they dedicate to the cybernationalistic movement, the greater unity and number can be found.
2. The adversary of the CCM is not a deliberate choice by the opinion leader. Although GE has dedicated quite a lot of attention to the sexual-family topic, it results that his followers are not interested in it.
3. However, the right choice of the adversary and the right attitude towards it can turn a common internaut into an opinion leader. GE's influence is not just because of his own efforts, but mainly because the common cybernationalists need a channel to express themselves.

The ideology showed by GE's microblogs is similar to the official stand; however, unlike the Cartoonist BF, the Weibo opinion leader GE keeps a distance with the formal organization, company or government. During GE's Weibo career, the informational technologies are highly depended, while many of his microblogs are not his original creation but are his interpretation of raw information received from his followers. In this pattern of communication, the formal organization is almost totally excluded, and the grassroots opinion leader and his grassroots followers assume the responsibility of identifying the adversary, justifying the worthiness, expanding the group of supporters, and persisting under pressure. In many cases, the action of GE is not responding to the official call, but on the contrary. For example, after the Burst Point of February 20, 2018, Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister responded the question about the Spiritual-Japanese during a top press conference and defined the SJ as “Scum inside the Chinese people”<sup>41</sup>(*中国人的败类*). Another official response to the anti-SJ movement is, since May 1, 2018, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Heroes and Martyrs (*中华人民共和国英雄烈士保护法*) came into force<sup>42</sup>. Although none SJ issue is directly named out in this

<sup>41</sup> Wei Lu, Ying An, “After the meeting, Foreign Minister Wang Yi angered the ‘Spiritual-Japanese’ acts: The Scum inside Chinese People!” Xiandaikuaibao, Nanjing, 8, March, 2018. [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_2022046](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_2022046)

<sup>42</sup> LawInfoChina, “Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Heroes and Martyrs [Effective]”. <http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=28027>

law, its core principle is just like GE stated: “The martyrs will not be forgotten, their spirit will not be forgotten and can't be insulted by those skunks!”<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusions

The motivation of this study is to examine the CCM's development on Social Networks. It consists of two main parts: the case study about the self-identification of the cybernationalist through the social network; and the case study of the adversary choice by cybernationalist.

First, the self-identification of the CCM is achieved through various forms, and one outstanding form is the nationalistic culture product. In our study, is the Year Hare Affair series. The social network not just offered the first space for the born of the YHA, but also gradually promoting it to a higher level of impact. The social networks successfully convert a cultural concept into the nationalist symbol, as the audience shows an extremely positive attitude towards this cultural concept, they are also endorsing the nationalist ideology it attached.

On the other hand, a nationalistic opinion leader may have his own “list of adversaries”, but only when this list is consistent with the opinion of his followers can he mobilize his followers and maximize his influence on the social network. The fact is, by the interaction between the nationalistic opinion leader and his followers, the adversary of the CCM is clarified. So our first hypothesis is confirmed.

Second, although during the investigation of the evolution of the YHA, the cartoonist did start a company and cooperated with the official department and some companies, but these official agencies still are working as an auxiliary platform. The reaction from its audience is mainly voluntary and individual. In the case of God's Eagle's Weibo career, the cybernationalist's action is just like the description of the “Connective Action”: Self-organized, using technologies as important organizational agents, and personal action frames become the transmission units. Therefore, although the CCM is a movement based on the ideology, its main action frame is very personal. Thus the second hypothesis is confirmed.

Third, as two case studies show, social networks not only can convert a small cybernationalist idea into a prominent cultural product series but also can convert a common internaut into an influential opinion leader. During these processes, the Worthiness, the Unity, the Number, and the Commitment are core factors for the accomplishments. On the other hand, these four factors of the CCM are also boosted by these accomplishments. In interpreting the results of this study, one must pay attention to a number of limitations. First, one important data source of this work is the virtual communities and individual internauts, although many algorithms are applied to overpass the objectiveness problem, but still it may exist and influence the result of the study. Second, as a study of a phenomenon over more than 800 million internauts, more case studies should be conducted but is impossible due to the lack of many necessary resources. Third, more algorithms should be applied to clarify the CCM. A possible option for future research is the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model, which allows sets of observations to be explained by unobserved groups that explain why some parts of the data are similar.

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<sup>43</sup> God's Eagle. Vice and Virtue ...



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