

THE 1990S CHINESE DEBATE ON SOVIET FEDERALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF THE CHINESE NATION

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The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 has had a profound impact on China's national-politics. In the 1990s, Chinese scholars reviewed extensively on the intrinsic problems of Soviet federal system, which was deemed as one of the fundamental agents in triggering the downfall. They argued strongly that federalism was not feasible for China and discussed on how to dilute its influence on the country in the future. Moreover, the concept of *zhonghua minzu* (the Chinese nation) coined by Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong in 1988 was also introduced to the 1990s Chinese debate. Chinese scholars argued, while the Soviet style of federalism contributing to lax national cohesion, the notion of the Chinese nation could provide fresh impetus in strengthening the Chinese common national identity and maintaining state unity, against the negative repercussions of the demise of the Soviet empire.

The 1990s Chinese discussions on Soviet federal system and its consequences could be summarized as the following points: federalism might awaken and strengthen ethnic national identities, which pose a danger to state unity; federalism is a product of Western democracy, and it requires certain power sharing with local regions, which might weaken the central control; federal design is not in compatible with Chinese tradition of state supremacy and grand unification; the lesson of the collapse of Soviet federal system for China is that only a strong central authority like the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could have the capacity to maintain state unity and sovereignty. Moreover, the Chinese debate on the concept of the Chinese nation was not only about how to strengthen national cohesiveness against the negative precedent of the Soviet collapse. The debate was followed by some CCP-sanctioned state manoeuvres in the 1990s, such as promoting and unifying the use of Mandarin language in China and intensifying the patriotic education, thus reinforcing the national identity of being Chinese among various ethnic groups. Moreover, the goal of those scholarly writings and official initiatives aimed to make Chinese people recognize that the socialist path and one-party rule are the common destinies of the country, and only those could build and ensure national cohesiveness.

Those scholarly writings aimed to convince Chinese people that socialism and one-party rule were the common destinies of the country, and only those could ensure national cohesiveness. They made the communist regime the representative of China's national interests and thus justified its dictatorship in China.

The article will not only analyse the Chinese post-mortem on Soviet nationality politics, but also study the interplay of scholarly writings and political decision making on China's nationality issues, and answer the question of what China learned from the Soviet experience and how it changed its national politics to adapt to the post-communist world.

Keywords: China, the Soviet Union, federalism, the Chinese nation, communism, nationalities, ethnic minorities, autonomy, independence.

КИТАЙСЬКІ ДЕБАТИ 1990-Х РОКІВ ПРО РАДЯНСЬКИЙ ФЕДЕРАЛІЗМ ТА КОНЦЕПЦІЮ КИТАЙСЬКОЇ НАЦІЇ

Лі Цзе

Розпад Радянського Союзу в 1991 році значно вплинув на національну політику Китаю. У 1990-х роках китайські вчені детально розглянули внутрішні проблеми радянської федеративної системи, які вважалися одними з основних чинників, що спровокували розпад. Вони рішуче доводили, що федералізм не підходить для Китаю, обговорювали, як послабити його вплив на країну в майбутньому. До того ж концепція *zhonghua minzu* (Китайської нації), придумана китайським антропологом Фей Сяотун в 1988 році, також була введена в китайські дебати 1990-х років. Китайські вчені стверджували, що тоді як радянський стиль федералізму сприяв ослабленню національної згуртованості, поняття китайської нації може дати новий імпульс для зміцнення китайської загальної національної ідентичності та підтримання державної єдності всупереч негативним наслідкам розпаду радянської імперії.

Китайські дискусії 1990-х років про радянську федеральну систему і її наслідки можна звести до таких пунктів: федералізм може пробудити і посилити етнічну національну ідентичність, що становить небезпеку для державної єдності; федералізм – продукт західної демократії, який вимагає певного поділу влади з місцевими регіонами, що може послабити центральний контроль; федеративна конструкція не сумісна з китайською традицією державного верховенства і великого об'єднання; урок краху радянської федеральної системи для Китаю полягає в тому, що тільки сильна центральна влада, така як Комуністична партія Китаю (КПК), може мати здатність підтримувати державну єдність і суверенітет. До того ж китайські дебати про концепцію китайської нації були не тільки про те, як зміцнити національну згуртованість на тлі негативного прецеденту радянського розпаду. За дебатами послідували деякі санкціоновані КПК державні маневри в 1990-х роках, такі як просування і уніфікація використання мандаринської мови в Китаї і посилення патріотичного виховання, зміцнюючи національну ідентичність китайців серед різних етнічних груп. До того ж мета цих наукових праць і офіційних ініціатив полягала в тому, щоб змусити китайський народ усвідомити, що соціалістичний шлях і однопартійне правління є спільною долею країни, тільки вони можуть створити і забезпечити національну згуртованість.

Вони зробили комуністичний режим представником національних інтересів, чим виправдали його диктатуру в Китаї.

У статті не тільки проаналізовано китайське посмертне дослідження радянської національної політики, а й вивчено взаємодію наукових праць і прийняття політичних рішень із питань національності в Китаї, а також дана відповідь на питання, чому Китай навчився на радянському досвіді і як він змінив свою національну політику, щоб адаптуватися до посткомуністичного світу.

Ключові слова: Китай, Радянський Союз, федералізм, Китайська нація, комунізм, національності, етнічні меншини, автономність, незалежність

Author's Biography

Jie Li completed his PhD in History at the University of Edinburgh in 2017. While his primary interest is modern and contemporary Chinese history, Jie Li's research covers many fields, which include China's international relations since 1949, the histories of the former Soviet Union and communism, and the Cold War. His recent publications include: *Gorbachev's Glasnost and the Debate on Chinese Socialism among Chinese Sovietologists, 1985-1999* (Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies December 2016); *Xinjiang's Islamic Resurgence: A View from 1990s Chinese Sovietology* [Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies 2016]; *The Use of Lenin in Chinese Sovietology in the 1990s* [Routledge India 2019]. In addition, he has published a number of commentaries on contemporary Chinese affairs as well as book reviews on a variety of historical scholarship. Some of these works appeared in the *Twenty-first Century Bimonthly* administered by the Institute of Chinese Studies at Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is currently a Lecturer in the Department of History at Hong Kong Baptist University. He can be contacted at <jielican2009@hotmail.com>.

Introduction

The breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991 has had a profound impact on the People's Republic of China (PRC), which, like the USSR, is also a communist giant state in the world. The Soviet dissolution has had a variety of significant repercussions on Chinese politics, foreign relations, and nationality policy. However, existing scholarship on Chinese post-mortem on the USSR after 1991 seems to overwhelmingly focus on the impact of the late Soviet political reform initiated by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and be univocal in assessing the implications of Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) and his liberal programs on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime after 1991 [Christopher Marsh, 2005; Jeanne Wilson, 2007; David Shambaugh, 2008; Gilbert Rozman, 2010; Guan Guihai, 2010].

In reality, Chinese scholars presented a much broader historical view and offered a more systemic analysis of the multiple reasons for the Soviet collapse. Gorbachev and his political liberalization were by no means the only, or even the most significant, factor in the USSR's dissolution, as represented in Chinese analysis in and after 1991. This article attempts to clarify those relevant issues and rectify inaccuracies in the existing scholarship. Drawing upon a larger body of updated Chinese sources, the article will study the repercussions of the disruption of Soviet national union on China. It will discuss how the 1990s Chinese scholars drew on lessons from the failure of the Soviet style of federalism, and how they reflected on the Chinese own model of multinational state-building. In their debate, the Chinese attempted to introduce the notion of *zhonghua minzu* (the Chinese nation) to provide fresh impetus in strengthening the common national identity of the Chinese people, and maintaining state unity against the negative influence of the collapse of the Soviet empire.

With respect to primary sources, it should be mentioned here that this research is based primarily on the *guojiaji hexin qikan* (national core journals) published in the PRC, and mainly on the following four categories of journals:

The first are those journals focusing on research in the humanities and social sciences in general. Second are those journals dealing with problems of socialism or communism in the world. The third group forms the core of this study; they concen-

trate on questions and issues relating to the former Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation and other Commonwealth Independent States after 1991). Lastly, the research scope also included relevant articles in various university journals.

All the journals selected for this research accept submissions from all over China. Most (but not all) of the contributors are academics, and the journals maintain acceptable quality standards and have a good reputation in the Chinese academic world. Some of them, such as *Sulian dongou wenti* (Matters of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) and *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu* (Socialism Studies), are the very best PRC journals in their fields.

Moreover, the article intends to examine the thinking of Chinese scholars against the backdrop of political and social changes in 1990s China. The study will be based not only on the analysis of primary sources already undertaken, but will also attempt to locate the developments of the Chinese scholarly debate amid the rapid changes in the social and political environment of China. Therefore, in order for this research to be successfully located in the rich fabric of the intellectual activities of contemporary China and in the changing environment, the investigator has also identified the following two kinds of documents that may be beneficial to the research:

Articles in PRC official newspapers and journals concerning aspects of the former Soviet Union: *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily, owned by the CCP Central Committee); *Guangming ribao* (Guangming Daily, published by the CCP Central Propaganda Department); *Hongqi* (Red Flag, renamed as *Qiushi* or Seeking Truth after 1988 and under direct control of the CCP Central Committee); *Beijing Review* (China's only national English weekly news magazine published in Beijing by the China International Publishing Group), etc.

Writings and speeches of PRC officials and leaders on the matters of the Soviet state: *Mao Zedong wenji* (Selected Works of Mao Zedong); *Deng Xiaoping xuanji* (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping); and other contemporary Chinese leaders' related speeches scattered among the current Chinese newspapers.

The Issue of Federal System

After 1991, the ethnic problems in causing the collapse of the Soviet Union hit the panic button of China, which, like the USSR, is a multinational country with diverse ethnic minorities. Many Chinese scholars engaged in a heated debate about the Soviet federalist approach of multinational state-building, criticizing that the Soviet style of federalism might be the root of the collapse and arguing that China should learn a lesson from the failed Soviet model.

In the early 1980s, the repressive nationality policy pursued by the deceased Chinese leader Mao Zedong during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) had left devastated effects on China's ethnic minorities both economically and culturally.¹ Afterward, the national unity of China was almost shattered. Since the death of Mao in 1976, minorities' resentment against *dahan shawen zhuyi* (Great Han Chinese chauvinism) and the Chinese government led to their strong anti-socialist sentiments and separationist tendencies [June Dreyer, 1976]. The Chinese government during the Cultural Revolution itself was politically powerful enough to suppress

¹ Chairman Mao Zedong's goal of launching the Cultural Revolution was to use the movement for purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society, and re-imposing his dominance within the state and the CCP. The movement paralysed China politically and negatively affected the country's economy and society to a significant degree.

any latent ethnic identities among the minorities, but once the clamps were lifted in the early 1980s, the sense of national consciousness blossomed like flowers in spring [Colin Mackerras 1995, 214]. The Chinese communist regime in the 1980s was confronting an enormous task of how to placate the ethnic minorities who had suffered tremendously under Mao, cement the ties of state unity, reintegrate different nationalities into Chinese society, as well as usher those peoples into the post-Mao direction of reform and modernization.

In the early 1980s, under Deng Xiaoping's new leadership, China took hard work to reverse the repressive Maoist policies and redress past wrong treatments on minorities, for consolidating national unity as well as re-legitimizing the Party authority. At first, the CCP attempted to sweep away the influence of the ultra-left line pursued under Mao and adopt a less rigid nationality agenda. At this moment, Chinese official and academic writings started to praise the first Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin as the symbol of post-Mao China's humanistic and diversity oriented ethnic politics. They hold Lenin's teachings as the guidance of China's new accommodational ethnic policy and for strengthening the weakening legitimacy of Chinese socialism, after the disastrous Cultural Revolution. According to them, Lenin's moderate approach toward national minorities stood contrast with that of Mao Zedong. They argued that the first Soviet leader had been committed to respecting ethnic cultures and customs, and developing the economy of ethnic minorities and improving their livelihoods, in order to strengthen national unity under the communist one-party rule. In their opinion, such Lenin's policies correspond to the direction of China after Mao [Yang Kun 1981; Xu Liming 1981; Liu Cheng 1981; Ma Yin 1983].

Most importantly, China decided to learn from the Soviet model of federalism to administer its own nationality affairs, by adopting the Chinese equivalent of *minzu quyu zizhi* (the National Regional Autonomy or NRA). The practice of regional autonomy is to set up organs of self-government under the unified leadership of the state in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities, thereby enabling the members of such groups to exercise the right to be masters of their own fate and independently handle their internal affairs. The policy of NRA was formally written into the post-Mao PRC constitution and adopted in 1984 [Liu Fang 1984].

It should be noted that the term *zizhi* (autonomy) by no means suggests devolution of political or economic power. It does not connote in Chinese the sense of insulation from central authority that it connotes in English [Warrant Smith, 2008]. And unlike the federal system, NRA does not mean that these ethnic regions have the right to secede from the sovereign territory of the PRC, though they can enjoy certain special rights granted by Beijing, such as using their own languages, promulgating their own laws, and administering local finances themselves (within the framework of financial planning for the state as a whole) [Thomas Heberer, 1989]. Finally, compared to the Soviet republics, Chinese ethnic regions have been only granted the autonomy status (which is province in nature) only. China is a more ethnically homogeneous and more politically stable and durable society than the USSR. Chinese almost monopolies the nations of China and other non-Chinese minorities are just appendages. In the PRC, autonomy is a rare exception but assimilation is the permanent rule.

The PRC had been quite positive about the Soviet federalist approach before the Soviet demise. Since the founding of the Chinese communist regime in 1949,

China had praised the Soviet model of federation founded by Lenin as adhering to socialist principle as well as the actual condition of the country. Evidenced by the former Premier Zhou Enlai's 1957 speech and the 1987 article written by Guo Zhengli, vice-president of the Ningxia Academy of Social Sciences, both persons commended that the Soviet federation had reached the objective of socialism in unifying different ethnic groups. In their opinion, under this system, the USSR enjoyed ethnic harmony and were relatively free of racial discriminations. The Soviet model was creation hitherto unknown in history and the hope of the oppressed nations in the world [Zhou Enlai 1957; Guo Zhengli 1987]. According to Odd Arne Westad, since the early 1950s, the PRC leaders indeed viewed the Soviet federalism as a model for China's multinational state building. However, because the Sino-Soviet disputes since the late 1950s, which ended China's determination to learn from the USSR. Instead, the CCP regime insisted that China was to be a unitary, not a federal country [Odd Arne Westad 2012, 316].

Since the 1980s, owing to the Sino-Soviet rapprochement and the disastrous outcome of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government picked the Soviet model again. Because the Cultural Revolution had gravely damaged the socialist relationship between nationalities based on equality, unity, self-autonomy, and mutual assistance, therefore, it was argued that such a move of institutionalizing NRA by the CCP in 1984 was for regaining trust and support from minorities after Mao, and developing socialist democracy and rule of law lost during the Cultural Revolution, thus making a new stage in the implementation of its reformed nationality policy [Mao Sheng 1984; Luo Meimei 1984]. The first paragraph of the 1984 NRA Law stipulated, "NRA is implemented according to the basic principle of applying Soviet federalism created by Lenin to resolve our country's nationality questions." [Liu Fang 1984] Mao Gongning, vice-president of the Centre for Ethnic Studies in the PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, spelled out in 1986 that although China practiced regional autonomy rather than established a federation composed of many national republics like the USSR, but NRA was based on China's reality and it followed Lenin's proposition of exercising socialist nationality policies in line with the local conditions [Mao Gongning 1986].

Since the early 1980s, many Chinese scholarly writings commented that Lenin had become so concerned about the implications of Great Russian chauvinism that he engaged in a major polemic with Joseph Stalin about the forms of a future multinational Soviet state in the evening of his life. Stalin's aim, which symbolized ultra-leftism of Mao in Chinese writings, was to adopt the oppressive methods toward different Soviet nationalities and to argue forcefully for assimilation of the non-Russian nations by establishing a highly centralized communist country. On the other hand, those articles argued that Lenin always recognized that Stalin's plan was reactionary as it meant one nation destroying another by force, and the first Soviet leader wanted to achieve common progress and prosperity through national co-operation and mutual assistance – a goal of post-Mao China as well [Zhang Daben 1983; Guo Zhengli 1984; Liu Shusheng 1984; Jiang Ping 1985].

Those Chinese writings contended that Lenin actually wanted to create a loosen centralized national union, a kind of equivalence to NRA in China. However, in their opinion, after the 1917 October Revolution, due to domestic difficulties and foreign hostilities to the newly-born Soviet state, Lenin held the conviction that

only a federal solution could prevent the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and maintain the political allegiance of different nationalities to socialism. The authors all remarked that Lenin's such federal plan was only a temporary transition to a unified and strong republic. His premature death resulted in Stalin's altering the vision to an oppressive and highly centralized system, which prevented the Soviet Union from adopting the similar Chinese model of NRA. Some articles published in the mid-1980s also commended that the successful implementation of NRA in China since Mao's death had validated the truthfulness of Lenin's conciliatory principle in ruling a multi-ethnic socialist country. They argued that NRA in fact not only inherited but also developed Lenin's theory on nationality affairs [Liu E 1984; Pan Yongsheng 1985].

By reinterpreting that NRA was the embodiment of Lenin's concept in ruling a multinational socialism, Chinese scholars seemed to have reassured that NRA pursued by the post-Mao government was the right direction in administering nationality affairs in China. By making a claim that Lenin's true preference toward the administration of ethnic minorities epitomized China's current agenda of NRA, therefore, those scholars also attempted to boast the credentials of the PRC that the regime was still the *bona fide* disciple of Lenin, as well as a legitimate Leninist state even after having extirpated the Maoist vestiges.

However, those optimistic views reflect that some Chinese were reluctant to admit that, like the Soviet Union, historically China was actually an ethnically diverse empire, with more times of disunification than unification, because of civil wars and foreign invasions [Martin Jacques 2009, 210]. China has vast geographic areas and a diverse range of ethnic peoples with different life styles and cultural characteristics. While purportedly homogeneous, the country is in reality a massive melting pot [Timothy Cheek 2006, 13-14]. The image of a strong political, social, and national unity of China enforced by the CCP since 1949 is more a historical myth than a historical reality. Moreover, the implementation of reform and open-door policies since 1978 have hastened the paces of regional diversification and political decentralization. And China is not able to escape from the international influence since the late 1980s, when sovereignty was being tested and amended around the globe. In short, China might face the ethnic challenges no less severe than did the USSR, and it is liable to the sort of disintegration that has doomed the Soviet Union. The danger is real.

Indeed, the confidence that viewed China as being a highly cohesive state and an exemplary model of multinational society in the world was almost shattered after the disintegrations of the USSR and Yugoslavia. How to maintain China's national unity and manage such ethnically diverse country became a core topic in PRC scholarly circle in the 1990s. Many Chinese scholars were deeply anxious about the intensification of national consciousness and the rise of local nationalism among Chinese minorities after the end of the Cold War, due to the influence of the collapses of some multinational socialist states in Europe [Sun Yi 1990; Hu Yan 1992; Sun Zhenyu 1994; Fang Huaping 1995].

As noted before, while in the 1980s China still had favourable view on the Soviet federal system, which was deemed as a positive model for China and being equally socialist in nature like NRA, however, from the 1990s, due to the spectre of the Soviet and Yugoslavian demises haunting in the minds of Chinese scholars presented

above, the issue of federation came under fire from the 1990s Chinese scholarly writings. By researching the topic of federation, those articles attempted to seek solutions for China to avoid the Soviet and Yugoslavian scenarios.

According to Zhou Zhongyu, a scholar at the Qinghai University for Nationalities, the CCP had proposed to follow Moscow in building a federal republic in China in the 1920s. The determination was abandoned in the 1930s, when Japan started a large scale of invasion of China, through an effort of collaborating with China's Muslim community. Since then, the CCP began to downplay the Soviet style federalism and question its suitability in China, lest what they saw as minority reactionaries be exploited by the Japanese to sabotage the unification of China [Zhou Zhongyu 1999].

While reconsidering borrowing the Soviet federal approach in the form of NRA in the 1980s, China reignited its assessment of the Soviet model of federation after 1991, when the CCP leadership was devastated by the Soviet disunion and Yugoslavian catastrophe. As such, seen from Zhou's remark, in both the 1930s and 1990s, China's serious concerns about the issue of Soviet style federalism tended to surface in the times of crisis, when China perceived its sovereignty and unity were being threatened by domestic and foreign hostile forces.

Started in 1989, Du Youde, a scholar at the Central University of Nationalities in Beijing, attacked the federal system that had cultivated what he saw as fanatical nationalism and racism, and attributed the sporadic ethnic disturbances happened in the USSR and Yugoslavia since the late 1980s to "the fundamental deficiencies of federation in those countries." [Du Youde 1989] In 1997, Wei Guangming, a scholar at the Northwestern University for Nationalities, put blame squarely on federation that had rung the death knell of the USSR. He said that federalism posed a threat of secession not only on the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, but also on some advanced capitalist countries like the United Kingdom and Canada [Wei Guangming 1997]. In the same year, after discussing the precedents of the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, many scholars participating at the sixth annual conference of the Chinese Society of World Ethno-National Studies concluded that federation was detrimental to the cohesion of state, thus not suitable to the multi-ethnic socialist country like China [Chen Lianbi 1997].

Moreover, the 1990s Chinese turning negative toward the Soviet model of federation was also reflected in many articles in re-assessing Lenin's theories of self-determination and federalism. Unlike in the 1980s, as discussed above, that Chinese scholars had vehemently embraced such Lenin's notions as the spirit on which NRA based, however, many articles in the 1990s started to harbour critical thoughts on Lenin's theories, which were perceived as having negative influence on some Chinese minorities in seeking independence.

In 1991, Chen Kuiyuan, who would succeed Hu Jintao [CCP general secretary from 2002 to 2012] as party secretary of Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1992, accused Tibetan separatists of abusing Lenin's concepts of self-determination and federalism to ask for more autonomy and even independence from China [Chen Kuiyuan 1991]. In another 1991 article written by Meng Xianfan, president of the Chinese Society of World Ethno-National Studies, the author singled out some Western scholars [though without providing their original names in English] for their "venomously distorting Lenin's thought of self-determination and federalism to preach Tibetan independence." [Meng Xianfan 1991, 176]

Several scholars pointed out that the biggest problem of the Soviet federal state inherited from Lenin was the dual sovereignties, in which every republic was granted a status of sovereign state. In their opinion, such system was contradictory to the one-party rule of socialism and was not conducive to the cohesion between the centre and the local. They remarked that such design was made out of idealism and not feasible [Xu Kui 1994; Chen Lianbi 1995; Chang Qing 1996]. In 1996, after analysing the relations between Lenin's thesis and Soviet national separatism, Liu Xide, a scholar at Nanjing Normal University, regretted to say that "Chinese scholars should not attempt to seek answers for the contemporary time from Lenin's works," which "are not able to give solutions." [Liu Xide, 1996: 62] In 1997, Pan Zhiping, a Central Asian specialist at the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, even admittedly wrote that "self-determination and federalism are the concepts contributing to the founding as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union." [Pan Zhiping 1997, 13]

First, against the shadow of the Soviet demise, Ismail Amat, an ethnic Uyghur and chairman of the PRC State Ethnic Affairs Commission, wrote in 1998 that China has a long-standing tradition of *dayitong* [state supremacy and grand unification], which is a key concept in China's civilization and mentality that articulates the unification of the country is the norm and division of it is an aberration, and centralized state power constitutes the historical basis of the country [John King Fairbank 1968]. In his opinion, many nationalities in China have lived together in compact communities, coexisted and depended on each other. As a result, "Only a strong unitary state could provide a favourable condition and it is inappropriate to establish separate national states." The author also thought that by following the principle of communist one-party dictatorship and a Chinese style NRA, all nationalities had become masters of their own regions in managing their affairs. As he said, "the practice of NRA helps combine the centralization and unification of the country with the autonomy and equality of nationalities," so there would be "no need to establish the Soviet style federalism." [Ismail Amat 1998, 10-11]

Second, as Zhou Tianzhong, a professor at Inner Mongolia University, wrote in 1980, that unlike the USSR, whose Russian majority was historically an aggressive nation that annexed other nations and integrated them into its empire, but both the Han Chinese and other minorities in the PRC belonged to the category of oppressed people, and they were traditionally victims of foreign invasion and imperialism. Therefore, it was necessary for China to become a strong unitary state to resist foreign oppression [Zhou Tianzhong, 1980]. Since the late 1980s, against the background of the socialist demise in Europe and the prevalent CCP thesis of peaceful evolution [the alleged Western attempt to effect a political transformation of the Chinese socialist system by peaceful means], a number of Chinese scholars expressed their concerns about some Soviet republics that had taken advantage of certain freedom given by Moscow to collaborate with the West for pursuing independence. In their articles, those scholars compared the foreign support of the Dalai Lama [leader of the Tibetan government-in-exile] and East Turkistan [Uyghur separatist organization striving for a future independent state in present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China] to the Baltic collaboration with the West, arguing that the federal system was potentially vulnerable to foreign exploitation and national secessionism [Luo Bingzheng 1988; Yang Jingchu 1994; Wei Guangming 1997].

Third, since the late 1980s when facing the prospect that international communism was in deep crisis everywhere in the world, the CCP regime tends to treat federation as a product of Western democracy, which is antagonistic to a socialist proletarian dictatorship. Jiang Ping, a professor at the Chinese University of Political Science and Law, in his 1999 article criticized Gorbachev's some grave mistakes in nationality policy that had been under the bad influence of Western federalism, including concessions to local nationalism and delegating too much autonomy to republics [Jiang Ping, 1999]. After the Soviet collapse in 1995, the CCP regime turned down the request of the Dalai Lama for allowing Tibetan people to have universal suffrage in deciding their own fate. According to the news reporter, such demand was inspired by the Soviet referendum on the new federal treaty proposed by Gorbachev [Liu Haifan 1995]. The CCP seemed to realize that any soft and moderate nationality policy, like those of Gorbachev and Western federal states, would ignite the domino effect on many ethnic independence claims, which were not only a major factor in jeopardizing the PRC's nationalistic ambition to regain Taiwan in the future, but also a danger to the survival of the communist regime.

In 1990, The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [CASS] held a large conference for many Chinese Soviet experts across the country, discussing about the Soviet nationality issue and Gorbachev's proposal of the New Union Treaty in particular. During the meeting, a number of participants strongly condemned Gorbachev's Treaty and his nationality reform as the betrayal of what they saw as true Leninism, and argued that the intention of the Treaty was going to divide the Soviet state. In their opinion, the new treaty would give a green signal to the republics to act of their own free will without complying with the Kremlin, and would probably not renew the Soviet socialism but rather destroy it. For those scholars, they never shared with Gorbachev's concept of democratization. They believed that the Soviet nationality in complete disarray had as much to do with "taking the lid off" through the policy of *glasnost*. They accused the federal system under Gorbachev had become more Westernized, and the republics had excessive freedom granted by *glasnost* to wield their powers vis-à-vis the centre of Moscow [Jiang Liu 1990].

After the Soviet demise, in a 1991 article criticizing Gorbachev's decentralization effort, CASS scholar Mu Lili wrote that because Gorbachev's soft approach toward the federal rule, many Soviet republics only fought for their own interests while ignoring those of the Union. From there, they started to demand economic as well as political powers, which in turn challenged the central government's authority and generated independent tendencies [Mu Lili 1991].

In late 1992, Lei Zhenyang, a professor at the South-Central University for Nationalities, presented an article praising Stalin's nationality policy. In his point of view, Stalin should be the positive model while Gorbachev was the negative example for nationality administration. The former had made endeavours to oppose different nationalism, maintain national equality, and promote economic development for minorities, while respecting the cultures and rights of ethnic peoples. In short, Stalin was adhering to Lenin's principle of federalism [Lei Zhenyang 1992]. Lei's analysis was very different with the Chinese writings in the 1980s, which tended to blame Stalin's oppressive policy while commending that Gorbachev's conciliatory methods were a return to Lenin [Yang Kun 1982; Xu Liming 1983; Bkra Shis Dbang Phyug 1984]. The author finally argued that the national disaster

of Soviet federalism was “the state had turned a blind eye to the achievement of Stalin’s nationality policy,” and the final downfall of the Soviet multinational state was “an outcome of humanistic and democratic socialism preached by Gorbachev.” [Lei Zhenyang 1992]

Seen from these, it was Gorbachev’s *glasnost*, which was the father of his relaxed nationality policy, that showed the Chinese the danger of political diversity and liberalization and its crucial role in creating the disruptive situation on Soviet federalism. After the Soviet collapse, the PRC leadership start to take note of the danger of Gorbachev’s liberalization that had facilitated ethnic separation movements. One month after the Soviet demise, in analysing the problems of Soviet ethnic situation, CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin in a speech on nationality work put blame on Gorbachev’s nationality policy. He lamented that, encouraged by Gorbachev’s liberalization, many Soviet republics demanded the right to be independent, which was unthinkable in the past [Jiang Zemin 2006].

Gorbachev’s political reform made the CCP regime realize that excessive political freedom might contribute to not only the awakening of national identities among minorities and the rise of local nationalism, but also the political decentralization and the loss of control from the top. It took pain to understand that Gorbachev’s liberalization program in the USSR had led to the disintegration of political centres strong enough to be able to hold their diverse peoples together. Initially, Chinese scholars did not have problem on Gorbachev’s accommodational nationality policy, since it was also the direction of post-Mao China. However, once such a move threatened the power monopoly of the communist party, it immediately compelled Chinese scholars to attack Gorbachev’s nationality policy and the root of it – political reform and *glasnost*.

After observing the lessons of Soviet national disunion, it seemed that Chinese scholars no longer favoured the concept of federalism [as they did in the early 1980s], which emphasized on lending more autonomy to ethnic peoples and prioritizing regional interests. In 1992, after analysing the Soviet tragedy in nationality affairs, Hou Shangzhi, a scholar at the Northwestern University for Nationalities in Lanzhou, suggested that autonomy of minority areas in China be curtailed in the future. Party leadership in autonomous regions should be occupied by those loyal to Marxism and should bring themselves into line with Beijing [Hou Shangzhi 1992]. As Aldan, an ethnic Mongolian scholar at Inner Mongolia University, remarked in 1993, that “the goal of socialism is not letting different nationalities have their own self-rule territories, but the fusion [*ronghe*] of them.” [Aldan 1993, 20] Here, the term *ronghe* is employed. The Chinese original *ronghe* means a melting together or amalgamation, but not integration. Such definition certainly differs from the principle of federalism that embraces national autonomy but not heteronomy.

The Use of the Concept of the Chinese Nation

According to Wang Xien, a scholar in the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at CASS, there was one more effort of China to strengthen the unity of different nationalities and resist the negative influence of the Soviet style federation since the late 1980s. Wang points out that the best-known Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong, who held a PhD from London School of Economics in the 1930s and was the director of the Institute of Sociology at CASS, had broached a concept of “a Chinese nation with diversity” (*zhonghua minzu, duoyuan yiti*) in 1988

[Wang Xien, 1997: 2]. According to Fei's original speech delivered at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Chinese includes the 56 nationalities as its basis, but it is not just a collection of the 56 nationalities; it is a national entity that has developed from common history and memory. In his opinion, the Han Chinese in reality consists of different ethnic minority origins. Different Chinese peoples have integrated through intermarriages, co-existence, and co-developments in Chinese history, and they cannot do without each other [Fei Xiaotong 2009]. To put it simply, all Chinese people belong to one nation and that is *zhonghua minzu* (the Chinese nation). Wang remarks that Fei's terminology of the Chinese nation had drawn the attention of the CCP since the early 1990s, when the PRC government was deeply concerned about the negative ramifications of the Soviet model of multinational state-building on China. Since then, the notion of the Chinese nation was exploited by the CCP regime as a philosophical as well as a practical tool to cement the unity of state and increase the minority's loyalty to the country [Wang Xien 1997, 3].

However, Wang Xien has neglected the fact that the concept of the Chinese nation was not the invention of Fei Xiaotong. In his inauguration speech as the President of the Republic of China in January 1912, Sun Yat-sen spoke of combining the lands of the Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui, and Tibetans as one country and as one people. He described those five peoples as "one family" and he urged them to work together as lips and teeth for building a strong China [Dru Gladney 2004, 15]. In 1982, an article in *Guangming ribao* (another CCP mouthpiece) stated that the word "China" is not only a name to describe the state, but also "an inclusive term to define a family of nations that encompasses all nationalities which have long existed in Chinese history." [Chen Wutong 1982, 4]

In the 1980s, several academic articles had emphasized that all nationalities were Chinese and their histories were part of Chinese history, arguing that each ethnic group had contributed to the creation of Chinese history and each shared the destiny of the nation as a whole [Chen Liankai 1981; Weng Dujian 1981; Ma Yin 1983; Wang Lei 1982]. In 1985, Yang Shengyi, a scholar at the Hunan Provincial Party School, formally used the term "the Chinese nation" in his article, arguing that all Chinese nationalities share the same history as well as the same mentality, psychology, and custom, even though he did not elaborate the definition of the term in detail as Fei Xiaotong did in 1988 [Yang Shengyi 1985]. One year after, Li Lin, director of the Institute of Law at CASS, wrote that unlike the multinational states of the USSR and Yugoslavia, China was a unique country and the Chinese was in fact a "*fuhe minzu* (compound nation),» which meant "a multinational community (*gongtongti*) on which the state of China was based." [Li Lin 1986, 6]

The 1980s use of the Chinese nation by Chinese scholars was mainly for strengthening national unity sabotaged by the Cultural Revolution and for justifying the CCP's demand to reunify with Taiwan. On the other hand, in the 1990s, Chinese official publications always cited Fei Xiaotong's term to counter the potential threat of national secessionism posed by domestic and international hostile forces in the wake of the Soviet demise [Zhou Dayi 1992; Dong Liang 1997]. Following the official line, a popular trend of researching on *zhonghua minzu ningjuli* (the cohesiveness of the Chinese nation) under the influence of Fei Xiaotong became prevalent in the 1990s Chinese academic writings [Lin Ruo 1992; Zheng Qun 1992; Ren Jiyu 1992; Ma Rong 1999].

In 1992, He Weiguang, a professor at the Northwestern University for Nationalities, argued that Fei's concept of *zhonghua minzu, duoyuan yiti* (a Chinese nation with diversity) should focus on *yiti* (a nation) not *duoyuan* (diversity). He demonstrated that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev had committed a mistake of over-emphasizing on *duoyuan*, which triggered the downfall [He Weiguang 1992]. In his 1997 article, Pan Zhiping fully examined the use of the term *minzu* in Chinese language. He found that none of the English words, such as "nation," "nationality," "ethnos," and "ethnic group," could accurately catch the meaning of *minzu* in the Chinese context [Pan Zhiping 1997, 2]. In his opinion, Fei Xiaotong's *zhonghua minzu* should be translated as "the Chinese people" but not "the Chinese nation." He explained that because China is not a multinational country like the USSR or Yugoslavia, but "a unitary state under a central government since the ancient time." All nationalities have become "inseparable parts of an entity and jointly created the shared history of the Chinese nation." [Pan Zhiping 1997, 4]

In 1999, Ma Rong, a professor of sociology at Beijing University, developed his own theory based on Fei Xiaotong's notion. He said that comparing to the Soviet Union, China would not crumble along ethnic lines. It was because Chinese minorities have greater "*xiangxinli*" (centripetal force) toward the central government [Ma Rong 1999, 9]. At the end of the article, against the background of the reversion of Hong Kong and Macau to the Chinese rule in the late 1990s, Ma Rong was proud to state that "one country, two systems" guaranteed by Deng Xiaoping is a far better model than the Soviet style federation to govern a diverse socialist country like China [Ma Rong 1999, 12].

It should be noted the term *zhonghua minzu* (the Chinese nation) is a political not an ethnic concept. It is more about demanding loyalty to the Chinese communist state than calling for harmony and unity among various ethnic groups in China. While Soviet ethnological vocabulary strictly distinguishes in Russian between *ethnos*, *nationalnost*, and *narodnost* (roughly equivalent to ethnicity, nationality, and peoplehood), but Chinese terms of nation and race conventionally conflate the categories of ethnic identity [Dru Gladney 1996, 343]. The word "Soviets" is referred to the citizenship not a nationality for most of the Soviet citizens. But the word "Chinese" could apply to all Chinese citizens as both citizenship and nationality. People in China often use the words of *ethnicity* and *nationality* interchangeably and call both in *minzu* nonetheless. This linguistic tradition and confusion in turn influence official definition of ethnicity and state nationality policy making. Sometimes such self-perception is quite hegemonic, *Chinese* refers to not only minorities in China, such as Tibetans and Uyghurs who certainly object to such identity, but also all the Chinese diasporas residing outside the PRC. As Thomas Heberer reveals:

In Chinese language and frame of reference, they have no distinction between people, nation, nationality, and ethnos. And a nuance to the term national minority implies something more in the Chinese context, namely, preclusion of the right of secession from the state. *Minzu* is used to refer to all of China's nationalities, the Han as well as the minorities. In common usage the term, on the one hand, indicates legal equality and, on the other, documents that all of China's nationalities are subordinate to a higher authority – the Chinese state [Thomas Heberer 1989, 11].

It was reported that the Chinese government had sponsored a *zhongguoren* (Chinese people) propaganda project in the mass media in the 1990s, to instil a sense

of pride and belonging of the common motherland of China into all national ethnic groups and facilitate the policy of integration (or, more accurately speaking, assimilation) [Guan Guihai 2010, 508].

In 1998, Yang Yanli, a researcher at the CASS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, described that Gorbachev's liberalization, which encouraged the republics to issue their own laws for promoting their national languages along with the status of Russian, as one of the causes in inciting separation movements and hastening the downfall [Yang Yanli 1998]. Almost at the same time, an article in *Renmin ribao* appeared to criticize the languages used in minority areas were "not standardized." The reporter asked the government should show its ruthless determination to push the popularization of *putonghua* (Mandarin) in China by the year of 2010 [Lin Tao 1998, 4]. The tune of the article was very different with the trend in the 1980s official publications, which emphasized on the accommodational approach and the respect of local cultures and languages.

Indeed, by observing the lesson of the Soviet failure in managing its multinational state, China had started a nation-wide movement to downplay the role of minority languages while promoting Mandarin as the super language to dominate China since the late 1990s [Joanne Smith Finley 2013, 32]. As Arienne Dwyer points out, that learning Chinese was no longer optional as in the 1980s, and the mastery of the language is a requirement in the schools of minority areas from the 1990s onward [Arienne Dwyer 1998, 71]. Thomas Heberer also worries that Chinese minorities in the future "will no longer know their own ethnic language," and concerns about "an increased assimilation and sinification of the minority populations, and a decreased level of identity for these people." [Thomas Heberer 1996, 41].

Moreover, in the 1990s the CCP regime called on strengthening patriotic education in minority regions [Ge Wu 1994]. The goal of such state-wide education movement, as Ismail Amat pointed out, was to admonish the ethnic groups that "*guojia biminzu gengzhongyao*" (state is more important than nation) [Ismail Amat 1998, 450]. Four months after the Soviet collapse, the CCP-sponsored journal *Minzu gongzuo* (Nationality Work) published an article, indicating that Fei Xiaotong's concept "*yiti*" (one nation) meant that all nationalities in China should accept not only the common motherland, but also the socialist path and the leadership of the CCP [Zhang Jian 1992, 47].

After the Soviet collapse, Chinese communists attempted to reinforce party authority and legitimacy, by arguing that China needed a strong central state to maintain national unity, order, independence, and stability, which contrasted with the Soviet Union under Gorbachev that was caught in the vortex of ethnic conflicts and internal strife. As a result of the bankruptcy of worldwide communist ideology and the ethnic fragmentation in China after the end of the Cold War, Chinese communists treated the demands of Chinese ethnic groups for any kind of greater autonomy (allegedly influenced by the Soviet and Yugoslavian precedents) as the beginning of a slippery slope toward independence, and thus a serious threat to the territorial integrity of what they consider, rightly or wrongly, the Chinese state. The CCP had to drape itself in the garb of nationalism and seize on propagating the idea of the Chinese nation, as the common spiritual pillar to unify the country as well as a new legitimizing ideology to keep its grip on power.

China's practice in nationality administration after 1991 strayed significantly from its direction in the early 1980s, when the CCP was committed to implementing accommodational policies and relinquishing some political power to deepen the autonomy of minority regions, for safeguarding the ruling mandate of the communist regime after the disastrous Mao era. The Chinese communist regime, like its Soviet counterpart, has long been eager to propagandize a utopian blueprint out of the Marxist theory: To build a world model of classless multination by voluntary assimilation and incorporation of all nations, opposed to the exploited nature of the capitalist and evil West, in order to justify the communist ideal of internationalism without nationalism or nationalist conflicts, and remain the foremost champion of oppressed colonies and nations.

China's well-known historian Fan Wenlan once pointed out in 1980, that throughout Chinese history, the dynastic governments always deliberately cultivated or sinified non-Han Chinese people with state-sanctioned assimilationist strategies, such as training local officials loyal to Chinese emperors and teaching Confucianism and Chinese language in minority areas. The result was that many non-Chinese people were unable to withstand the extremely powerful cultural influence of the Chinese culture and in the end had become sinified [Fan Wenlan 1980].

Ironically, from the 1990s onward the CCP regime had fallen back on resorting to imperialist methods to strengthen state unity and keep itself survived amid the worldwide crisis of communism. In the 1980s Chinese scholars tended to criticize the post-Lenin leaderships' rushing into the fusion of nations in the USSR [Wang Guodong 1983; Li Fangzhong 1985; Liu Gengcen 1987; Tian Mengqing 1989].

After 1991 China started its own process of forcing the fusion of nationalities for averting the Soviet precedent and strengthening the role of the state. Communist China is a typical party-state, therefore, such endeavour was obviously for justification of the rule of the Party and strengthening the communist state after the demise of world socialism. Such an effort of the CCP from the 1990s onward is a great irony of the Marxist view presented in *The Communist Manifesto*, which asserts that states would wither away as socialism progresses to communism [Karl Marx and Frederick Engels 1998, 332–33].

Conclusion

Ethnicity is first and foremost a resource in the hands of state leaders to mobilize and organize followers in the pursuit of other interests, such as physical security, economic gain, and political power.

The 1990s Chinese discussion on Soviet federal system and its consequences could be summarized as the following points: federalism might awaken and strengthen ethnic national identities, which posed a danger to state unity; federalism was a product of Western democracy and it required certain power sharing with local regions, which might weaken the central control mechanism; federal design was not in compatible with the Chinese tradition of state supremacy and grand unification; the lesson of the collapse of Soviet federal system for China was that only a strong central authority like the CCP could have the capacity to maintain state unity and sovereignty.

As Gregory Gleason points out, that Marxists have traditionally been hostile to the federal principle. According to Marxist theory, federalism could only be seen as a retrograde development. Marxists saw little wisdom in extending formal recogni-

tion to national groups in a federal structure of the socialist state. To do so could only prolong the demise of nationalist yearnings [Gregory Gleason 1990, 129].

In terms of demographic structure, the Han Chinese in China is an overwhelming majority – comprising around 95 percent of the total population. Conversely, Russian, comparing to Han, constitutes merely 50 percent of the whole population in the Union. The reasons above could readily explain that the Chinese communist state is more coherent and has greater security, and the Chinese leadership is easier to impose coercion on national minorities and is committed to a much more assimilative course. However, for many Chinese people, being Chinese is primarily an ethnic and cultural affiliation. “China” is to the Chinese what Christendom is to the West. “China” is more about an ideology and religion than a concept of state or nation. As a result, when a person of Chinese origins [no matter where he is from] referred to “China” he is not always clear what he has in mind, whether “China” is in a geographical or cultural sense. Martin Jacques once correctly described, “China is a civilization pretending to be a nation–state,” and “what binds the Chinese together is their sense of culture, race, and civilization, not an identification with the nation as a state.” [Martin Jacques 2009, 210] In his opinion:

The belonging of all ethnic groups to China is seen exclusively in terms of an enduring and overriding notion of Chineseness that goes back at least two millennia if not longer: all Chinese are part of Chinese civilization, and therefore China. Choice is not an issue [Martin Jacques 2009, 210].

Therefore, the concept of the Chinese nation is like the concept of the Soviet people promoted by the former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in the 1970s. The concept of the Soviet people was an official rhetoric that served to encourage all nationalities in the USSR to identify their national interests with state interests. As Terry Martin comments:

The Soviet people were primarily a figure of speech, used most frequently as shorthand for the passionate patriotism and willingness of all the national distinct Soviet peoples to defend the Soviet Union from foreign aggression. The role played by the dominant nationality of traditional nation–state would be played in the Soviet Union by the Friendship of the Peoples. The Friendship of the Peoples was the Soviet Union’s imagined community [Terry Martin 2001, 461].

Seen from the article, to oppose federal system and emphasize on national homogeneity in the 1990s Chinese writings were actually for justifying and safeguarding the one–party dictatorship in China, which also intertwined in the context of the rise of Chinese nationalism from the 1990s onward.

After the collapse of world communism, nationalism has become a logical response to the decline of socialism as a coherent and meaningful ideology in the PRC. Chinese people are now indoctrinated with nationalism as a new faith to supplant Marxism–Leninism [Leong Liew 2004]. Many writings of Chinese Soviet–watchers examined in the article play an equal role in constructing the conceptual basis of such nationalism and using it as a tool to legitimize the political agendas of the CCP regime in the post–communist world. Instead of learning how to integrate China into the world system after the negative precedent of the USSR, Chinese writings have often seemed to argue that the West is aiming for China’s disintegration after the Soviet demise, and preventing China from receiving well–deserved respect in the family of nations. They argued that only a centralized and powerful

state could resist Westernization, political chaos, and economic breakdown, as well as bring wealth and stability to the Chinese nation. In their opinion, Chinese style socialism would become a universal model for the future of the world, the ultimate fate of China, and the common identity of the Chinese people.

As seen from the article, the language of their writings has been exceedingly nationalistic and patriotic in tone. Moreover, they have asserted that the CCP saved the country after the shockwaves of 1991 and revived its greatness on the world stage, a statement that appeals to contemporary Chinese people's patriotism and nationalistic feelings, which are also a result of the CCP's domestic mobilization efforts from the 1990s onward. To a degree, Chinese scholars succeeded in linking the challenges facing communism to the fate of China. Against the negative Soviet precedent, in the name of stability and order as the necessary preconditions for China's continuous development, they made the regime the representative of China's vital national interests.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, such a tradition has been reinforced more strongly than ever before. The CCP regime, the only Marxist giant state in the world, attempts to produce an image that communism, dictatorship, and patriarchy are the avatar of Chinese civilization. The Party tries to reinforce the relations between Chinese nationalism and its authoritarian tradition. As such, communism in China after 1991 has been honoured as a sign of the Chinese identity, which creates a moral and ideological boundary that separates it from the democratic West. The CCP's authoritarian political model has successfully tied itself to the identity of the Chinese nation. As Lan Quanbin, a professor at the Central University of Nationalities, wrote in 1997:

Today, when socialism is experiencing a setback in the world, some people in the West have predicted that socialism will disappear in the 20th century. However, China's experience of building socialism with Chinese characteristics has demonstrated that socialism in China is still strong. China and socialism are undivided. To love China means to love socialism. Patriotism and socialism are inseparable [Lan Quanbin, 1997: 15].

The CCP revolution has a long history and tradition of being both communist and nationalist. After the Soviet collapse, the Party regime portrayed itself as the historic agency that has restored national unity and political independence, saved the country from foreign peaceful evolution, and rejuvenated its economy amid the collapse of international communism. Many Chinese people feel uncomfortable with the post-Cold War international order authorized by the West. They refuse to bend to the Western norm, and instead accept such claims from the Party [Zheng Wang 2012]. Gleaned from their writings presented in the article, what Chinese scholars wanted to defend was not a communist regime but the principle of a strong Chinese nation allegedly opposed to, and resisted by, the West after the demise of the USSR.

To conclude, since the international collapse of communist regimes in and after 1989 has resulted in the bankruptcy of the official communist ideology and the emergence of the belief crisis. The old doctrine is shattered and the CCP is not able to advance a new one. The tragic ending of the Soviet Union gave the CCP a needed opportunity to argue, that China might fall right into the same disorder and mayhem if the Party were toppled down, therefore, it would be necessary for authoritarianism and a strong central state represented by the communist party to maintain national

unity, economic prosperity, order, and stability. Such arguments not only reinforce the CCP authority and legitimacy, but also become a renewed national identity that holds the PRC together after the demise of world communism. The regime peddles its invented equation that the CCP equals China, and that if the CCP collapses, then China would go astray. This idea has penetrated the minds of many Chinese people who think that the CCP is the only organization capable of maintaining the unity of the Chinese state. The 1990s Chinese debate on Soviet federalism and the concept of the Chinese nation presented in the article seems to forge and justify such arguments as a new basis of the regime's legitimacy.

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