Riding the Tiger:
Chinese Cyber Nationalism and the Sino-Japanese Relationship

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Abstract

The rise of cyber nationalism has accompanied the rapid development of the cyberspace within the People’s Republic of China. Does online nationalism threaten the Party’s rule? In other words, does cyber nationalism targeting Japan act as a proxy for dissatisfaction with the regime’s domestic governance?

This thesis provides the first extensive empirical and qualitative analysis of the direction and characteristics of cyber nationalism towards Japan, its main target, from March 2008-December 2012. This research is the first study of Chinese online nationalism during this time period. Through the case study of the Strong Nation Forum, the most well-known political online bulletin board within China, I provide empirical evidence that nationalistic discourse responds to international stimuli. Netizens pay a higher degree of attention to incidents when they reflect Japanese aggression towards China. However, they tend not to react to Beijing’s provocative behavior or matters which are potentially humiliating to the government. Furthermore, I empirically support the hypothesis that historical memory and territorial disputes are the two main themes within online nationalism. Anti-American sentiment consistently accompanies anti-Japanese anger, as online nationalists view the United States as China’s historical enemy. They consider the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute as not merely a test of Sino-Japanese relations, but also a litmus test of China’s rise on the current U.S. dominated unipolar system.

Lastly, I argue that the Chinese Communist Party is vulnerable on its foreign policy towards Japan, particularly on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands controversy. Arguments that the government is redirecting netizen discontent with domestic matters to Chinese online nationalistic fervor do not gain traction within the forum. However, a small number of online nationalists call for civic mobilization as an alternative to relying on the government bureaucracy. The fact that such expressions of dissatisfaction and a desire for further political engagement remain online, despite state and self-censorship, is significant. I argue that online nationalism compels Beijing to act more aggressively on national sovereignty matters. The Chinese Communist Party must appease cyber nationalists when managing its relationships with Tokyo and Washington.
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Chapter One: Introduction

“He who rides the tiger is afraid to dismount.”

—Chinese Proverb

Protests rocked the streets of Beijing in September 2012. In response to the news that the Japanese government purchased the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, demonstrators surrounded the Japanese embassy in the city and hurled water bottles and eggs at the compound, despite the police barricades. The attack on the Japanese embassy was not an isolated incident; media reported that anti-Japanese protests spanned eighty-five cities during this time.¹ Often, the demonstrations escalated into violence. In Shenzhen, police wielded tear gas and water cannons against Chinese citizens targeting a Japanese department store. In other parts of the country, rioters set fire to two Japanese car dealerships and Japanese restaurants hung the People’s Republic of China (PRC) flag outside their doors for protection.² Even Chinese car drivers took to posting signs in their Japanese-made cars proclaiming the PRC’s sovereignty over the islands. In response to this wave of anti-Japanese anger, the strongest since the 2005 protests, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda called upon Beijing to ensure the security of Japanese citizens.³ During his visit to Tokyo, United States Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stated that he was “very concerned” about the escalation over the islands.⁴

The wave of anti-Japanese anger over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands not only highlights the heightened tensions between the second and third largest economies in the world, but also showcases how nationalistic fervor affects the PRC. As the public increasingly turns to the

² Lim.
⁴ Ibid.
Internet to vent their nationalistic fervor, online nationalism has emerged as a new phenomenon in China. The Internet has become an important civil space for citizens to express their opinions, engage in conversations and organize protests. Due to the limited avenues of political expression within the authoritarian state, the cyber sphere serves as a crucial outlet for public opinion. Even the commonly used description of Chinese Internet users as *wangmin*, or “neitzens” (which combines the words “citizen” and “Internet user”) reflects the unique political identity of Chinese citizens who participate in online activity. While there are multiple facets of online nationalism, this thesis explores the characteristics and direction of Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards Japan, and its potential threat to the regime.

**The Chinese Communist Party and the Development of the Chinese Cyber Sphere**

Since 1994, the Internet has quickly developed and weaved itself into the fabric of Chinese civil society. The PRC has surpassed the United States as the country with the largest number of web users in the world. According to the China Internet Network Information Center, a ten percent increase rate in the number of new Chinese internet users at the end of 2012 raised the number of Chinese online users to 564 million, and increased the Internet penetration rate by 3.8 percentage points to 42.1 percent.

As an authoritarian regime, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) faces a dilemma in how to control and direct the Internet. This thesis builds upon current literature which argues that the Internet poses a unique threat to China, as the government harnesses the Internet’s economic benefits while attempting to maintain control over citizen discourse. Scholar Yochai Benkler asserts that the Internet is particularly problematic for non-democratic states, as the government

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6 Ibid., 4.
can longer maintain its firm grasp on “a single or manageably small set of points of control,” thereby exerting pressure on the “capacity of the regimes to control their public sphere” in order to control the population. 8 Instead of only a small set of state or commercial actors participating in society, individuals can now participate in conversations and express opinions which now form part of the “broader public conversation.” 9

The Party currently utilizes various strategies to regulate and censor online discourse. The Propaganda Department and the State Council Information Office are state bodies which monitor and produce content in line with the official government narrative. 10 Municipal, provincial, or country-level offices oversee local media and carry out the central government’s directives. 11 Apart from the notorious Great Firewall, the CCP also employs keyword filtering and a large network of human monitors to patrol the Chinese cyberspace. 12 Harvard Professor Gary King estimates that currently the Party employs approximately 20,000-50,000 Internet police and monitors, as well as an estimated 250,000-300,000 “50 cent party members” who are paid fifty cents to distribute online propaganda. 13 Though this estimation’s reliability is uncertain as King relies on anonymous informants for his projection, the current consensus among China scholars is that the state apparatus actively monitors and tries to direct online discussion.

The state also perceives the Internet as a barometer on how the Chinese public views domestic and foreign affairs. The strongest advocate for this perspective is Susan Shirk, who argues that the Party is particularly sensitive to online opinion because of its political system.

9 Ibid., 180.
11 Ibid., 206.
12 Ibid., 206-207.
Instead of being able to rely on public opinion polls like democratically elected officials, authoritarian governments’ survival rests on being attuned to the segment of the population who are the most vociferous online.\(^\text{14}\) She postulates that instead of relying on government bureaucrats who filter information, Party leaders directly access the cyber space to discern public opinion, even though they know that they are receiving feedback from a nationalistic contingent of the population.\(^\text{15}\) She provides the March 2005 petition in response to the Japan’s bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council as evidence for this theory.\(^\text{16}\) She argues that there is a direct causal link between the thirty million signatures on the petition calling for Beijing’s immediate action to block Japan’s proposition, and the Party’s official announcement that it opposed Tokyo’s membership on the Council.\(^\text{17}\) She also points to an incident in 2003, when forty-three workers were injured and one killed by mustard gas canisters left behind by the Japanese military from World War Two in 2003.\(^\text{18}\) She argues that Beijing’s demand for the Japanese government’s compensation stems from the Party’s fear of online criticism.\(^\text{19}\)

Though Shirk does not provide further evidence of the direct cause and effect between the petition and the Party’s action, which is understandable due to the secretive nature of the regime, the government’s response to successive domestic and international events supports her assertion that the state utilizes the Internet to take the pulse of the Chinese public.

**Chinese Cyber Nationalism as a Modern Phenomenon**

Before I begin to discuss Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards Japan, I first define the phenomenon. Given that there is no commonly accepted definition within this new field of

\(^\text{15}\) Ibid., 240-241.
\(^\text{17}\) Ibid., 102.
\(^\text{18}\) Ibid., 101.
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 102.
Chinese online nationalism, I describe the subject as “the expression of nationalistic sentiment online.” This definition follows the current literature, which generally refers to online nationalism within the context of nationalism expressed online. This perspective suggests that Chinese cyber nationalism contains the characteristics of modern nationalism, and that the only differentiating factor between these two movements is that the latter is expressed within online media such as blogs, microblogs and online bulletin boards (BBS).

I infer from the assumption that online nationalism expresses contemporary Chinese nationalism online that the phenomenon incorporates both state-sponsored and grassroots nationalism. The leading scholar on Chinese nationalism, Suisheng Zhao, postulates that the CCP launched this movement to “rediscover nationalism” in order to fill the ideological vacuum within Chinese society after communism’s popularity declined due to Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square incident. Zhao argues that the pragmatic camp within the CCP led by Deng Xiaoping, recognized nationalism’s appeal and elevated it to the status of the Party’s main spiritual pillar through an intensive patriotic education campaign. However, authors such as Peter Hays Gries, Shih-Diing Liu, Zhou Yongming, Xu Wu and Yuezhi Zhao argue that popular nationalist discourse is the product of an increasingly engaged and informed public and that grassroots nationalism threatens the CCP’s narrative.

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21 Ibid., 213-214.
22 Peter Hays Gries, China's new nationalism: Pride, politics, and diplomacy (University of California Press, 2004), 87-88.
24 Yongming Zhou. Historicizing online politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and political participation in China (Stanford University Press, 2006), 211-212.
The ongoing debate on Chinese cyber nationalism is not whether or not the movement originated from state-sponsored nationalism, but rather the extent to which the Chinese public has control over the movement. Even the lone dissenter Xu Wu, who argues that cyber nationalism is distinctly separate from state-led nationalism as a grassroots movement, recognizes that it originated as the “natural extension” of nationalism during Deng Xiaoping’s economic modernizations.27 However, Wu’s view of the phenomenon is too narrow, as he does not consider the Party’s continuous involvement in guiding nationalistic sentiment online through its censorship and monitoring apparatus when defining the movement. Therefore, my definition of Chinese online nationalism follows the general consensus in the literature that the movement is “the expression of nationalistic sentiment online.”

**Chinese Cyber Nationalism’s Potential Threat to the Governing Regime**

Does Chinese online nationalism towards Japan actually pose a threat to the Chinese Communist Party? There are two main conflicting perspectives on this subject. Suisheng Zhao speculates that if neitizens perceive the government as not aggressively protecting national interests, this could lead to the failure of the government. He asserts that the CCP relies on the trade-off between domestic appeals to nationalism versus the economic benefits of a healthy relationship with Japan.28 For example, during the 1996 crisis over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, the government pursued a pragmatic nationalistic policy and chose an economic relationship with Japan over satisfying domestic protest. The Party cracked down on online mobilization and restricted access to information about the dispute. Furthermore, he argues that the current defensive nature of nationalism has caused Chinese leaders to become increasingly assertive regarding territorial issues, particularly on subjects such as national security and territorial

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27 Wu 2-6.
28 Zhao 273-274.
integrity. Zhao suggest that the PRC’s loss of legitimacy could possibly stem from its inability to balance domestic and international pressures regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. However, Zhao fails to explain why Chinese netizens will prioritize the external issue of territorial sovereignty over other domestic problems such as corruption, incompetence and economic inequality.

In contrast, Sow Keat Tok believes that Chinese policy-makers are able to accommodate online nationalism. He views incidents such as the new Japanese history textbook controversy in 2005 and the online mobilization against Japan’s bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council as examples of the Chinese government actually strengthening its role as a guardian of Chinese sovereignty. Tok argues that given the close connections of cyber nationalism with top-down nationalism, Chinese cyber nationalists continue to operate within the state-led framework of nationalistic discourse and do not truly pose a threat to the regime. He states that cyber nationalism actually plays a supportive role on sovereignty issues, as the government successfully commanders nationalistic sentiment when convenient and manages netizens’ outbursts of emotion. Tok believes that as online Chinese cyber nationalism is relatively pro-regime, the government is able to accommodate netizen discourse. However, Tok fails to address the problem of accommodation: the Party can be perceived as slow in addressing netizens’ anger if it fails to identify, respond and resolve the issue to online users’ satisfaction.

**Central Thesis Questions**

The emerging field of Chinese cyber nationalism explores the various facets of this new, fluid phenomenon. This thesis concentrates on the main question of whether or not Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards Japan threatens or strengthens the Chinese Communist Party.

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30 Ibid., 31.
The crux of my thesis rests on the proverb *qi hu nan xia*, as described by Chinese cyber nationalism scholar Wu Xu. The phrase, which translates to “he who rides the tiger is afraid to dismount,” suggests that the Chinese Communist Party (“the rider”) is precariously perched on the back of Chinese cyber nationalism (“the tiger”). Wu argues that the CCP is currently in the same predicament as the rider in the proverb, as the integration of state orchestrated nationalism with the Internet has created the wild beast of online, grassroots nationalism. The CCP is unable to release its grip on cyber nationalism, as it is afraid of being eaten by the very animal it raised.31 Yet, the rider cannot perennially maintain its balance on the creature’s back. Wu compares the current rise of cyber nationalism to Mao Zedong’s predicament in the 1970s, when the Chairman realized that he was losing his control over the “self orchestrated” Cultural Revolution due to the younger generation’s enthusiasm.32 Mao dispatched the young men and women to remote villages for reeducation. However, Wu argues that instead of being able to manage the tide of nationalism like Mao, the CCP now faces the unprecedented challenge of containing “the momentum flowing at a supersonic speed across the globe.”33 He argues that the CCP is currently in the same predicament as the rider, as the integration of state sponsored nationalism and the Internet has given birth to online nationalism which threatens the ruling party.

Through empirical and qualitative research on the Strong Nation Forum, one of the most famous online bulletin boards, I analyze the characteristics and major themes within the “tiger” of Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards its main target, Japan. I utilize qualitative research methods drawn from communications to show that online nationalism reacts to international stimuli, particularly in regards to the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute. Building upon the first two parts

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31 Ibid., 144.
32 Ibid, 144.
33 Ibid, 144-145.
of the analysis, I provide evidence that Chinese online sentiment targeted towards Japan reflects the ways netizens view territorial conflict and historical memory as the two most important subjects within Sino-Japanese relations. In addition, I demonstrate that netizen’s awareness of China’s rising power in the international system drives online nationalism. As the first systematic, empirical analysis of forum members’ perspective on relations between Beijing and Tokyo, this thesis contributes to the extant study on the phenomenon.

This thesis aims to answer the following questions: which are the predominant themes which drive the phenomenon? Which types of international stimuli affect nationalistic fervor? To what extent does online Chinese nationalistic sentiment directed towards Japan reflect netizens’ perceptions of the state’s rising star on the global stage? Through my analysis, I aim to answer Wu’s initial question: to which extent does the tiger of Chinese cyber nationalism pose a serious threat to the CCP’s legitimacy? In other words, are expressions of nationalism in cyber space narrowly focused on Japan, or do they serve as a proxy for dissatisfaction with the governing regime’s performance in general?
Chapter Two: Research Methods

On June 20, 2008, President Hu Jintao participated in a question and answer session with netizens on an online bulletin board.34 During the short online chat, Hu commented, “Although I am too busy to browse the Internet every day, I try to spend some time on the web. I would particularly like to say that the Strong China Forum of People's Daily Online is one of the web sites I often choose to visit.”35

In this thesis, I conduct a content analysis case study specifically on the Strong Nation Forum (SNF), the most famous political online bulletin board (BBS) in China. I analyze the content from archived online threads that discussed Sino-Japanese relations over a five-year time period from March 2008-December 2012, with a specific focus on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. My case study of the SNF highlights the themes and the implications of Chinese cyber nationalism for Sino-Japanese relations.

The Online Bulletin Board System

Due to the important role that online forums play in providing a space for netizens to discuss politics, I select an online bulletin board (BBS) for content analysis, as opposed to other types of Chinese online spaces such as blogs and microblogs. BBS forums are ideal for a longitudinal study, as they archive material for an extended period of time. Since the 1990s, BBS are avenues for Chinese citizens to discuss and debate political issues and continue to play a significant role in the social media landscape.36 According to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC)37, 26.5% of Chinese online users, or close to 150 million netizens,

35 Ibid.
37 CNNIC is the official English abbreviation of the organization, as cited from the website: http://www1.cnnic.cn/
surfed online bulletin boards or political forums in 2012.\textsuperscript{38} Though the foreign media increasingly turns to microblogs such as Sina Weibo as a barometer of Chinese public opinion, these types of online spaces can only provide a snapshot of netizens’ perspectives on current issues, as they do not store online content over a long period of time.\textsuperscript{39} Blogs are not suitable for extensive analysis due to the difficulty in compiling and collecting data from multiple blogs hosted independently on a wide variety of websites.

Most websites host BBS portals through their main online sites. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsors an external link to the Chinese Foreign Affairs Forum, \textit{Zhong Guo Wai Jiao Lun Tan}, a space where diplomats regularly engage netizens in question and answer sessions, on its official website.\textsuperscript{40} These forums require users to register with a user handle before posting content on the forum, though usually one does not have to sign in order to read the political discussion threads. BBS forums typically also have forum monitors, or separate forum monitors for sub-threads, who patrol and regulate the forum for sensitive content. While such forums usually require netizens to register before they can participate in discussion, these sites normally allow readers to peruse the online content without registering.

\textbf{History of the Strong Nation Forum}

I select \textit{Qiang Guo Lun Tan}, or the Strong Nation Forum (SNF) as a case study due to its status of the first Chinese online political discussion forums and the prominent role it continues to play in the PRC cyberspace. The site, which has also been translated into the Strong Country Forum or the Strong China Forum, is formative the development of cyber nationalism.

Sponsored by the online version of the \textit{People’s Daily}, the CCP Central Committee’s official
newspaper, the Party established the online forum into an outlet for Chinese to express their anger at the 1999 U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The online bulletin board has the unique distinction of being the first political forum created in reaction to public anger over an international incident.\textsuperscript{41} Established within 24 hours of the bombing, the site was initially called the \textit{Kang Yi Bei Yue Bao Xing Lun Tan}, or the “Protest against NATO’s Crime Forum” before its name was changed to the SNF.\textsuperscript{42}

The forum currently serves as an online space for the CCP to engage the public and for grassroots nationalism. The Party reaches out to netizens through online initiatives such as the newly launched “Tell the Premier Your China Dream” in the wake of the power transition during the 18\textsuperscript{th} Party Congress. In addition, the site attempts to engage netizens through asking for suggestions to improve local governments in specific sub-forums such as the E-government initiative. The SNF appears to be an important feedback channel to the government. Public leaders such as President Hu have identified the forum as a source for public opinion, and the Information Department of the Foreign Ministry, the State Council Information Office, and secretaries of high-ranking officials are known to prepare summaries of online news and discussion for internal reports.\textsuperscript{43}

Common consensus in the literature posits that the state is unable to direct Chinese cyber nationalism within the forum. In particular, Shih-Diing Liu, who has extensively studied the site’s Sino-Japanese sub-forum, argues that the SNF has continued to serve as “one of the most dramatic and controversial virtual political forums in China,” and the nature of the Internet as a decentralized, participatory medium allows netizens to either implicitly or explicitly challenge

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\textsuperscript{41} Wu 190. \\
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 190. \\
\textsuperscript{43} Shirk 240.
\end{flushright}
the official top-down propaganda narrative within the forum. Though initially the forum was created for the State to align itself with the Chinese nationalistic anger in the wake of the bombings, the online bulletin board currently serves as a space for the regime to engage with the public as well as a hotbed for grassroots nationalistic discussion.

**The Characteristics of the Strong Nation Forum**

Though previously located at www.qglt.com/bbs/start, the Strong Nation Forum is now a sub-forum under a new online portal called *Qiang Guo She Qu*, or Strong Nation Community, though it continues to be sponsored by the *People’s Daily*. The main page of the Strong Nation Forum at http://bbs1.people.com.cn/default.html provides links to sub-forums ranging from recommended discussion boards and microblogs, to the E-government initiative where people can provide feedback and suggestions for improvement projects to their local government. The newly designed Strong Nation Community portal went online in August 2012.45

The actual discussion board for the SNF can be accessed at http://bbs1.people.com.cn/board/1.html. As seen in Figure 1, the main page allows the reader to search by author, title, topic label, size of the message, the date the thread was created, the number of characters in the message, number of replies and the popularity ranking of the message thread.

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44 Liu 70-80.
Figure 2.1: Screenshot of the Strong Nation Forum Homepage

The online discussion threads sponsored by the SNF are at the top of the forum, and usually involve some type of question and answer session with bureaucrats, or an online form for users to provide feedback to the Chinese Communist Party. For example, the top discussion thread as of February 18, 2013 was a string of submitted questions to China’s premier called “Tell the Premier Your Chinese Dream,” which had 3494 responses and 28,173 readers after the first post on February 17, 2013. The remaining online discussion threads that are not officially sponsored by the forum are listed below in chronological order from most recent to oldest.

Thread Structure

Figure 2.2: Screenshot of an Individual Thread on the Forum

Each series of posts in one conversation, or a “thread,” is organized in a top-down fashion similar to a building. Any registered user can start a new thread, and the title of the thread is highlighted in bold on the first page of the screen. The user who starts a new thread is considered to be the thread owner, or as the forum refers to the user in Chinese, the lou zhu, or “building owner.” Though users occasionally post only the title of the thread, and the title is
replicated in the content body, any additional content is listed underneath the title as the post body. Each post is organized with the user’s written content on the right and his personal information on the left. Any person browsing the forum can access the user’s profile. The thread owner’s post shows the number of replies and the number of readers who visited the thread post on the top right, while the bottom left also shows the number of readers of the post, but also provides the number of people following the thread.

The subsequent replies to the original thread are listed in chronological order downwards on the page, accompanied with a timestamp which lists the time the post was uploaded by day, hour, minute and second. The top left side of each individual post is described as a different floor of the building, with the each level increasing over time. For example, on the top left side of the second post in the forum, the post is listed as the di er lou, or “the second building floor.” Similar to the thread owner, the respondents’ posts are packaged with the user profile on the left and the body content on the right, with the only difference being that the respondent does not have a title for the post. When there are too many replies, the replies are listed on separate pages that can be easily accessed by clicking on arrows at the bottom of the page. The thread structure on the SNF is typical of online bulletin boards.

**Current Research**

Scholars single out the Strong Nation Forum for playing a significant role in the emergence of Chinese cyber nationalism. Simon Shen and Shaun Breslin argue that the forum’s creation signifies the emergence of a second wave version of Chinese nationalism, which is distinct from the “first wave” of elite nationalistic discussion online.47 Shen calls the forum the “arguably the most famous meeting point of Chinese nationalists since the Kosovo War in

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47 Simon Shen and Shaun Breslin, introduction to *Online Chinese nationalism and China’s bilateral relations*, eds Simon Shen and Shaun Breslin (Lexington Books, 2010), 8.
According to Shen and Breslin, the establishment of the SNF signals the emergence of contemporary Chinese nationalism online. This new wave of nationalism is characterized by its grassroots, bottom-up nature, as while it is anti-Western it also challenges official state narratives of foreign events. They assert that the creation of the SNF played a crucial role in contributing to the momentum leading up to the 2005 outbreak of anti-Japanese sentiment and protest within China. While Xu Wu agrees with the assertion that the SNF is significant for the development of cyber nationalism, he believes that the creation of the forum was a marketing strategy by state-owned news sites to appeal to young web users. Wu points to the Chinese government’s aspirations to reap the benefits of communication technology through permitting online commercial companies to become public, while also wanting to compete with commercial media carriers and providers.

The majority of past research on the SNF and similar forums concentrates on textual analysis of specific online posts and videos through a qualitative approach. Shen examined the SNF and Tianya Shequ (Tianya Community) online discussion threads over a two-year period to determine Chinese netizen’s perceptions of Africans. Through content analysis of differing Chinese online perceptions of Sino-African relations, he argues that Chinese netizens project their “wished for Chinese identities,” attach different actions and values to the concept of a “responsible state” than the West, and pay little attention to Chinese realist action on the African continent. While he acknowledges that there does not seem to be pressure from the online community for the Party to take specific action, he points out that Chinese netizens play a

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49 Shen and Breslin 8.
50 Ibid., 8.
51 Wu 140.
52 Ibid.,140.
53 Shen 218-219.
54 Ibid., 233-235.
significant role in creating how China views Africa (as seen in Text Box 2.2). Shih-Diing Liu also performed qualitative analysis when conducting research on the organization of anti-Japanese boycotts and protests on the China-Japan Forum within the SNF. Liu asserts that the establishment of online spaces such as the SNF signals that the state no longer can monopolize nationalistic public discourse. Through analyzing the content of an individual YouTube clip on Taiwanese independence and online comments on the video as a case study, Benson Wai-kwok Wong characterized online Chinese nationalist sentiment towards Taiwan as “hostility, supremacy, and patriarchy.”

Even though qualitative content analysis can demonstrate netizen sentiment and discussion from particular threads, without quantitative analysis it is difficult to truly understand the overall picture of netizen discussion on the forum, particularly as the researcher is limited to selecting representative threads or posts for analysis. Kai-chi Leung attempts to address this problem through utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analysis. He asserts that forum members are more concerned about the revival of socialism within Latin America, and pay little attention to the Chinese government’s political and economic investments in the region. He argues that the forum members’ selective use of the Internet suggests that the Internet does not promote a more informed civil society.

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55 Ibid., 235.
56 Liu 74.
57 Ibid., 79.
60 Shen 225.
However, as Leung conducted a keyword search through the site’s own search engine in order to produce the frequency count of each term, I question the reliability of such a research method due to the search engine’s structural problems. Even though the forum can easily produce results through the search engine’s pre-selected categories, I was unable to replicate his method of inputting keywords into the search query.\textsuperscript{61} While there is the possibility that Leung’s research, published in 2010, used an older and more reliable search engine than the redesigned site which was launched in August 2012 that seems unlikely because website upgrades are supposed to improve the site’s performance. As Chinese cyber nationalism is a relatively new field, Leung’s methods seem plausible, but are unable to be quantitatively duplicated due to the website’s structural problems. In this thesis, I build upon Leung’s concept of conducting a keyword analysis of the trends in the forum.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Shen's Examples of Major Themes in Netizen Attention to Latin America}
\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
- Revival of socialism in Latin America indicates that the area is learning from Chinese socialism \\
- Whether or not foreign policies are anti or pro-U.S. \\
- The standing of the Chinese soccer team in relation to Latin American teams \\
- Reports of violent news crimes \\
- Natural scenery \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{61} When I test the search engine by conducting searches for key words, the site produces inaccurate results. For example, the search engine crashes when I input “Diaoyu,” into the query.
The Dataset

Figure 2.3: Screenshot of the Strong Nation Forum Search Engine

As mentioned in the previous section, the website poses significant problems for research. The search engine either produces limited results when trying to process a search of specific Chinese keywords, or transfers the user to a broken link page as the engine is unable to complete the search query. However, the advanced search engine is able to sort the archived results under a list of different categories on the forum’s search engine. These include domestic political initiatives which attempt to engage netizens with government such as “I ask representatives on behalf of netizens,” “Citizen monitoring,” “I have a question for the Premier,” and more cultural and leisure categories such as “Travel Discussion and “Sports Discussion.”

Out of the thirty-five categories listed in the search engine, only two relate to international affairs: “Sino-Japanese Discussion” and “International Affairs Discussion.”

Despite the fact that the website accurately lists all results filtered under the “Sino-Japanese Discussion” classification, the online bulletin board often loses connection when scrolling through the archives, which requires that the researcher return to the search engine and input the original keyword again to restart the search. In addition, online archives are difficult for researchers attempting to conduct analysis, as the material is only accessible as long as the website decides to store the archives. Typically, websites only archive the most recent posts, and older posts are deleted after a period of time.

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Text Box 2.1: Examples of the Search Engine’s Preselected Categories

- Discussion on military affairs
- Discussion on education issues
- Travel discussion
- Overseas Han Chinese discussion
- Urban discussion
- University student discussion
- Discussion on economic issues
- Discussion on assisting the underprivileged
- Discussion on law

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64 I conducted a test for accuracy by double checking the results from the preselected category of “Sino-Japanese discussion” with the threads listed on the homepage.
In order to solve the problems of reliability and access when conducting analysis on SNF’s online archives, I created my own database through the technique of web scraping. I first conducted a keyword search to find all search results tagged under “Sino-Japanese Discussion” and then downloaded selected content from the web forum into an Excel file. Overall, I downloaded 37,158 posts categorized under “Sino-Japanese discussion” over a five year time period, beginning with the earliest archived post from March 18, 2008 to the last tagged post in the year 2012 on December 21, 2012. I decided not to incorporate data past December 2012 into the database, as the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress...

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65 Web scraping is a commonly used computer science technique which downloads online content into selected programs, such as Excel.
66 As the downloaded posts are all tagged under “Sino-Japanese discussion,” the results from the search query produces both content from the China-Japan Forum, as well as any other post labeled under the topic outside of the specific forum. This allows me to more accurately reflect the volume and content of overall netizen discussion on relations between the two countries.
decided on December 28, 2012 that all social media users in China must register with their actual names.\textsuperscript{67}

Each individual data unit contains the post title, the post content if the body of the post differs from the post title, number of responses, number of page views, timestamp and post URL. In this thesis, the author conducted all translations of forum items and Chinese language content. As the thread title and thread body are sometimes the same due to the website’s construction, I only count the content of the thread title once, not twice. By creating my own database, I am able to conduct both quantitative and qualitative content analysis on the forum while circumventing the problems posed by the site’s unreliable infrastructure. In addition, I can circumvent the problem of normal standard coding software, which is restricted by their inability to process Chinese text or analyze large quantities of data.

\textbf{Table 2.5: Sample Posts from the Database}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>No of replies</th>
<th>Page Views</th>
<th>User Name</th>
<th>Timestamp</th>
<th>Post Content</th>
<th>Post URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Bots, Trolls and the Fifty Cent Army

Another methodological challenge for content analysis within an online space, but particularly by the Chinese cyberspace, is determining the authenticity of the sentiment expressed online. While automated Internet robots and programs (commonly known as “bots”) and “trolls” (users who post inflammatory content in order to provoke a response) are common throughout the World Wide Web, the Chinese cyberspace presents a unique challenge to researchers attempting to distinguish the authenticity of online sentiment. As mentioned in the literature review section, the Chinese cyberspace is particularly notorious for the prevalence of online propaganda orchestrated by the Chinese government, disseminated through the elusive “Fifty-Cent Army.” However, through an examination of the content posted online, I found that there was little evidence that trolls, bots or the Fifty Cent Army distort the dataset. While prior researchers acknowledge the difficulties of conducting research in Chinese cyberspace, so far there has not been an established, concrete method for testing netizen authenticity.

In order to address this problem, I applied three types of criteria to users’ profiles. By clicking on the profile name on the forum, I can access data which the user made available to public, such as the users’ date of registration, email, gender, date of birth, personal blog, post

![Figure 2.6: Screenshot of User Profile](image)
history, selected post history, posts which he or she started, followed posts, experience, received votes, etc. While users often set their profile to private for personal information, the date the users registered on the forum and their post history are publicly accessible. When the user self-deletes her profile or is removed by the website, their post content is still considered within the dataset as her comments remain on the forum. However, their user ID is replaced with a number and the personal profile data is deleted.

I applied the following schema in examinations of suspicious threads within the database:

1. Was there a reasonable amount of time between when the user joined the forum and when she started to post content? For example, new members who start posting rapidly in succession about a certain issue are more suspicious than a poster who has a history of consistent engagement with the forum.

2. How frequently are the posts uploaded onto the forum? If the timestamps of the online content are posted within seconds of each other over a significant period of time, it is unlikely that a human user is posting the content and that instead an automated program or “bot” is uploading the information.

3. Has the user uploaded unique content and engaged in conversation with other users, or does she post the same content repeatedly or only post short phrases and numbers? Users who construct entire threads of the same exact post content or which repeatedly post the same content in the reply box to another user’s post are considered to be spamming the forum.

Through both checking the first 101 profiles of the top posters on the forum, as well as a random sample of 43 posters within the dataset, I discovered that while inauthentic posters certainly exist, the numbers of suspicious posters are so small that they have little to no impact on the dataset. In the top 101 posters, I only discovered three potential “bots,” while in the
random sample I determined that three fit the criteria.

One such example of a suspicious poster is demonstrated in the thread with the highest number of replies within this five-year period. The owner of the thread, *txdnpx001*, joined and started this thread on September 20, 2012, the same date that Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura announced that the state intended to seek compensation for damages inflicted upon its diplomatic missions by anti-Japanese demonstrations. The same day, Japanese activists swam from fishing boats and landed on one of the islands. In addition, several Japanese manufacturers stated that they were intending to halt production in China due to the intensity of anti-Japanese activity. Angry protesters commemorating the 81st anniversary of Japan’s invasion of China in 1937 had demonstrated outside the Japanese embassy in Beijing and Japanese consulates in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenyang the previous day. Earlier protests during the weekend over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute had turned violent.\(^{68}\)

Anti-Japanese anger came on the heels of an announcement on September 11 that the Japanese government had purchased three of the eight islands within the disputed region for $26.2 million. The Chinese government reacted to the announcement by sending patrol ships to the area. In March 2012, Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara announced the Tokyo metropolitan government’s intention to purchase the islands from private owners, and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda stated that Japan was negotiating to nationalize the islands. The issue of Japanese nationalization of the disputed islands was one of many controversial incidents involving the islands dispute in 2012, as other issues such as increased activity from both sides’ vessels and attempts to physically reach the islands by activists and fishermen from Hong Kong, Japan and even Taiwan, caused tensions to spike. On August 27, anti-Japanese protests had

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ripped the Japanese flag from the Japanese ambassador to China’s car when he was traveling in Beijing.

In this tense atmosphere, at the height of anti-Japanese protest, thread user txdnpx001 excerpted without citation from an article written by wanmin6144. Wanmin6144 posted an opinion piece titled “Use justice and reason to safeguard the islands, demonstrate our China’s strength,” on September 19, 2012 on the SNF and another web forum called Club Kdnet.Net under the pen name “Wan Min.” A day later, on September 20, 2012, txdnpx001 directly quotes passages from wanmin6144’s original post:

As the country has increasingly used reason and justice to protect sovereignty, the people also have to use reason and justice to safeguard our China. In order to protect our sovereignty, the people can demonstrate, can conduct street protests, but if we lose control of our emotions and even escalate to using this as an excuse to make trouble, then those actions are not only unreasonable and unjust, but are also illegal and criminal. If this is the case, instead of actually safeguarding the Diaoyu islands’ sovereignty, wouldn’t it be a tragedy if we become criminals and become the enemy of those who love peace and law?

In order to safeguard our sovereignty, and protect the Diaoyu islands, the people have the choice to decide not to buy Japanese goods, but, if they don’t buy Japanese goods and also illegally destroy Japanese goods that legally entered the Chinese market, then haven’t we become brutes who have lost control of our reason and our sense of justice? While we safeguard sovereignty, protect Diaoyu, people need to maintain reason and justice. If a number of people lose control of their reason and create disorder, this will not only not prevent us from achieving the objective of protecting the Diaoyu islands, this instead can be negatively utilized by other people, and affect the normal lives and order of the people in our country; this can hurt the innocent and also provide an excuse for those who view the Chinese people as their enemy.

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69 In this thesis, I translate the meaning of the Strong Nation Forum usernames when possible. Though as often the names are simply strings of characters, numbers or English letters together, I do not translate every username referenced in this paper.
Out of the 422 responses to txdnpx001’s first post, 419 posts are by a user called txdnpx002 who also joined the forum on September 20, 2012. Three of the posts are by users who write messages of support for the original post, and whose user handles were later removed and replaced with numbers. Txdnpx002’s responses to the thread owner indicates that he is either a troll or a bot as his activity satisfies all three criteria to test authenticity: the Internet users joined the same day he started to have a high frequency of activity, the user often posts rapidly within seconds or minutes, and the poster does not provide unique content or engage in actual conversation with other forum members.

Beginning from September 21, 2012, txdnpx002 continuously posts successive bursts of replies to the thread, even when no other user responds to his text. He uploads responses on September 21, 24-30 to October 2-12, 15-16 with varying numbers of replies during this time period. For example, txdnpx002 wrote 22 responses on September 25, 2012. During this time period, groups of posts were uploaded in succession at 16:38:16, 16:39:10, 16:30:20, 16:39:23, 16:39:24, 16:39:31, 16:39:58, 16:40:11, 16:40:34 and 16:40:58. The limited amount of time in between the posts, often a few seconds, raises suspicion about the user’s authenticity.

Additionally, txdnpx002 did not post any original arguments or responses to txdnpx001. The posts contain either content which reinforce the first post’s call for reason through directly quoting from the original post or regurgitating the original posts’ words into slogans to encourage people to follow the thread owner’s call for rational action in the midst of the islands dispute. Examples include quotes such as “Chinese people use reason and justice to safeguard sovereignty,” and “we use reason to love our country!”

Txdnpx002’s other type of posts demonstrate that he is continuously observing how the event develops and evolves. Periodically,

he would respond to his own comments within the thread with slogans such as “support [the original thread post]!” and “[I am] paying attention” to the thread owner’s initial post.\(^3\)

In addition, at the end of each statement, txdnpx002 usually lists a four or three digit number, writes the “learning number” before listing a row of numbers, or sometimes he simply posts the list of numbers.\(^4\) While there are certain times when he breaks the pattern, txdnpx002’s numbers tend to have a common theme: they have four digits with a leading zero and increase from 01 up to 11, with the latter two digits either going up or down depending on the post. There is no clear or direct explanation as to why these numbers are part of the content body. The numbers are unlikely to be a form of identification, as in that case the forum member would simply list the same number for each post. Though certain posts also list the words xue hao at the end of the string of numbers, I rule out the possibility that the words indicate students’ identification numbers, as each time the series of numbers after xue hao varies rather than remaining consistent. This pattern is suspicious, as members do not typically list a series of numbers within the body of their content on the SNF. Similarly, this phenomenon has also appeared in other threads on the forum by posters with suspicious identities. For example, on a separate thread started by Lincoln on September 25, 2012 in response to a thread titled “Japanese former military official: If Taiwan tacitly accepts Japan’s sovereignty over the Diaoyu islands, Japan will provide military defense for Taiwan,” an user by the name of Pei Xun Gong Yong Zhang Hao exhibited similar characteristics to txdnpx002 by registering two days after the initial thread post was uploaded, posting successively within seconds of each item and including a

\(^3\) http://bbs1.people.com.cn/post/13/0/1/122852568_1.html.
\(^4\) Xue hao, which literally translates to “learning number,” is commonly used in the PRC to identify individual students in schools.
I theorize that the series of digits, the date of when txdnpx002 joined the forum, the post frequencies and the lack of unique content indicate that the user is a rudimentary automated program which spams the forum. Unfortunately, as there is no way to glean further evidence about the users’ motivations, or to concretely connect them to the Chinese Propaganda Ministry, I theorize that the phenomenon of bots or trolls can be explained by the structure of the forum. Inauthentic posters or spammers use the forum’s medium to influence public opinion through increasing the volume of posts that support the state’s narrative. As the forum displays content from most recent to the oldest archived message in 2008, users have good reason to post their messages rapidly in order to keep the discussion thread at the top of the forum, attract and maintain public attention, particularly during periods of high forum activity. Furthermore, as the replies to threads are displayed on the webpage, multiple posts about the same item will conflate the perception that multiple users share the same sentiment on one subject.

While I speculate that these posters have some connection to the Chinese government due to the subject of their patriotic content and their lack of criticism directed towards the CCP, there is also the possibility that spammers are simply Chinese citizens who feel very strongly about Sino-Japanese relations, or who want to spam and inflame public opinion due to boredom. After all, bots and trolls exist everywhere on the Internet, not just within the Chinese cyberspace. As there is very limited information about exactly how the CCP’s Propaganda Department operates, as well as a small number of inauthentic posters on the forum, I cannot determine conclusively whether or not the presence of these bots on the forum are orchestrated by the state. For example, there is no concrete method to determine if the user is sponsored by the CCP, if the user has a

long history of involvement on the forum and does not post any suspicious content. Although there are limitations on the extent to which researchers can determine if a user is genuine, the results from my analysis suggest that there are actually only a very limited number of suspicious posters. I believe that the absence of a significant number of suspicious posters implies that the database is an overall accurate representation of neitzen sentiment.

Methodological Limitations

Given the vast size of the Chinese cyberspace, the number of Chinese users online (as of January 2013, there are 564 million Chinese online users), and the multiple online mediums for discussion, it is very difficult to provide a comprehensive analysis of the content of all political discussion online. There are several methodological limitations that pertain to conducting research within the Chinese cyberspace. Due to the sensitivity of participating in political discussion within an authoritarian regime, Internet users self-censor the content they post online. The Party’s online monitoring apparatus and the board monitors also serve as another layer of censorship. Furthermore, there is also the problem of the “fifty-cent army” which is paid to post state propaganda online. Through the method described above, a close examination of members’ online profile and history for suspicious activity can shed some light on whether or not an online posting was written by an agent of the “fifty-cent army” or by an actual netizen, there is no previously established concrete method of ascertaining the user’s identity. While this technique is not foolproof, my analysis in the following section attempts to shed light on characteristics of such trolls and/or automated robots.

Moreover, there are dangers of assuming broad, overarching statements about the general Chinese public from content analysis derived from one specific forum, particularly a well-known

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76 China Internet Network Information Center 4.
forum such as SNF that is known for nationalistic discussion. The demographic statistics
collected by the China Internet Network Information Center illustrate that the netizen population
has consistently been skewed towards educated, young males living in coastal regions in China.\textsuperscript{78}
As the users who engage online on the SNF are not only a specific segment of the Chinese
population, they also represent a specific subset of Internet users as they are the most invested
members of the Chinese public. They not only take the time to read the online threads but also to
register and engage in political discussion with other users while at risk of running afoul of the
authorities. We can assume that netizens posting on Sino-Japanese subjects are more politically
active than the average Chinese citizen. However, this is also precisely the segment of society
that the Chinese Communist Party is most concerned about. According to Susan Shirk, the
“individuals taking the risk of fulminating online are the ones most likely to take the greater risk
of participating in or organizing mass protest.”\textsuperscript{79} She argues that there is the risk that the CCP
conflates the significance of online nationalistic sentiment when considering foreign policy
decisions and that such extreme public opinion may have a disproportionate amount of influence
amount policy-makers in China.\textsuperscript{80}

By restricting the data set within the bounds of the SNF, my content analysis provides
insights into a specific sample of the Chinese population that is the most politically active and
interested in Sino-Japanese relations.

\textsuperscript{78} China Internet Network Information Center 21, 22, 24.
\textsuperscript{79} Shirk, \textit{China: The Fragile Superpower}, 239.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 239.
Chapter Three: An Empirical Test of Chinese Cyber Nationalism

In a 1996 article in *International Security*, scholar David Shambaugh argues that “current Chinese posturing” is “defensive nationalism.” He characterizes the phenomenon as “assertive in form, but reactive in essence.” He clarifies this statement by asserting that nationalistic sentiment “affirms China’s glorious past but emphasizes transgressions against its weaknesses.” According to Shambaugh, this form of defense nationalism “reflects basic insecurities about China’s society and place in the world.” He suggests that nationalism is a top-down phenomenon, as the PRC strengthens its legitimacy through emphasizing its role as the Middle Kingdom’s savior from national humiliation, and utilizes propaganda to reinforce widespread public anger over these historical injustices. Suisheng Zhao expands upon this argument by asserting that Beijing is especially sensitive on national security and territorial sovereignty subjects, as the Party does not know exactly when the “resentment of foreign countries may metamorphose into resentment of the impotence and incompetence of the Chinese state.”

Though these two scholars operate under the assumption that state-led nationalism is reactive in nature, my analysis of the authenticity of the posters in the previous section found that there is a very small number of suspicious posters who could be operating under the government within the Strong Nation Forum.

Both Xu Wu and Sow Keat Tok consider cyber nationalism to align with modern nationalism’ reactive nature. They both refer to cyber nationalism’s reactive nature to foreign affairs as a crucial factor in its development as a political and social ideology. Wu asserts that a series of international issues, such as the question of Taiwan’s territorial sovereignty and the

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82 Ibid., 205.
83 Ibid., 205.
84 Suisheng Zhao 288-289.
Sino-Japanese dispute over historical memory and territory in the East China Sea, has served as major contributing factors in the formation of Chinese cyber nationalism’s emergence as a powerful social and cultural movement.\textsuperscript{85} Even though Tok agrees with this view, he specifically separates the phenomenon into three single or compound international incidents that have each time increased the intensity of online nationalism against a different agenda and/or enemy, thereby forcing the CCP to react in response.\textsuperscript{86} He asserts that the first phase targeted the United States, the second Japan and the third phase is a transition period from 2008 to present. Tok argues that the Party’s top-down patriotism campaign was successful due to a desire within the Chinese public for the CCP to guide China’s return to the international stage as a world power.\textsuperscript{87} He states that Beijing has successfully painted itself as the leader of the Chinese patriotism movement and the protector of the country’s national sovereignty by utilizing international incidents, such as the 1999 Belgrade bombing and China’s failed 2000 bid to host the Olympics for propaganda purposes.\textsuperscript{88} The utilization of international crises to strengthen nationalistic sentiment is a similar characteristic shared in grassroots and cyber nationalism.

As I define Chinese cyber nationalism as the expression of nationalistic sentiment online, I explore how the concept of Chinese nationalism as “assertive in form, but reactive in essence” translates to the expression of such sentiment within an online political discussion space such as the SNF. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the forum serves as both a space for state driven nationalism through the websites’ engagement with netizens, as well as a forum for grassroots political organizing and discussion due to the small number of inauthentic users. In subsequent chapters, I explore the first half of Shambaugh’s description of nationalism as “assertive in form”

\textsuperscript{85} Wu 3.
\textsuperscript{86} Tok 14, 27-29.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 23-25.
through quantitative and qualitative analysis. This chapter concentrates on empirically testing the application of the second half of the claim that nationalism is “reactive in essence” to netizen nationalistic sentiment. This is the first quantitative test of how Strong Nation Forum members react to international stimuli within the current research on Chinese cyber nationalism.

Given the higher number of posts which correlate to an increase in the volume of discussion, I analyze the nature of Chinese cyber nationalism through comparing and contrasting the frequency variations with the baseline of significant events. I theorize that if the number of posts drastically increases in response to the events listed on the baseline, this empirically supports the hypothesis that online nationalistic sentiment reacts to international stimuli. Conversely, a steady level of dialogue throughout the five year time period illustrates how netizens maintain a constant strain of attention on the Sino-Japanese relations, and that developments between the two sides do not lead to significant further dialogue on the subject.

**Methodology**

I first construct charts which illustrate the overall frequency of online discussion, and contrast the frequency with a baseline of significant events between China and Japan from 2008-2012. I draw the overall volume of online dialogue on Sino-Japanese relations through compiling the information from the dataset. In order to construct the baseline of events within the Sino-Japanese relationship, I use either official statements from the Chinese and Japanese governments, or events that were widely reported on by media to curate a timeline of crucial incidents between the two states within the five-year time period. The complete timeline is included in the Appendix.

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89 Unless I otherwise provide citations for the events, the sources for the incidents are from the Timeline included in the Appendix.
Graph 3.1 Frequency of Strong Nation Forum Posts illustrates the volume of posts labeled under “Sino-Japanese discussion” from March 2008 to December 2012. The red dots represent the significant dates, while the blue series represents the quantity of dialogue within the Strong Nation Forum during this time frame. The events are categorized alphabetically on the baseline. Each event is assigned a letter in alphabetical number. I group the events together if they occur successively.
Key Findings

The quantitative data supports the idea that the phenomenon of Chinese cyber nationalism is reactive within the Strong Nation Forum. Graph 3.1 demonstrates that while netizens maintain constant interest in Sino-Japanese affairs, there are spikes in reaction to incidents between the two sides, which taper off in the subsequent months. The graph illustrates the cyclical nature of Chinese cyber nationalism. I theorize that this result is the product of forum members responding to international stimuli by communicating about the latest developments. When there are no longer external stimuli, attention to Sino-Japanese relations decreases, until it once again resurges in reaction to another conflict erupts between Beijing and Tokyo. I theorize that the fluctuations in the timeline during 2009, as well as the other months when there is not baseline event, indicates that netizens pay a consistent level of attention to Sino-Japanese relations rather than responding to international incidents. It is plausible that forum members who are dedicated to observing developments between the two sides often bring up or mention even minor events related to Japan, thereby creating the spikes within these time frames. This can also explain why there is such as small frequency of activity.

However, the quantitative data also illustrates an important distinction in netizen reaction to international affairs. The analysis shows that the Chinese netizens tend to pay a higher level of attention in response to Japanese actions towards the PRC. For example, the post frequencies jump from 19 to 219 during mid-late 2012. This time frame corresponds with a period of escalating tensions, as the Chinese public reacted to the Japanese government’s nationalization of three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands with anti-Japanese protests and a boycott of Japanese goods (Events Q, R, S, T and U). Other events which seem to generate high levels of discussion are in the beginning of 2008. Prior to May 2008, tensions between the two countries escalated
when Chinese produced dumplings caused Japanese consumers to fall ill, leading to a boycott of PRC products. Starting in May 2008, the atmosphere between the two sides became friendlier, as the Chinese President Hu Jintao paid an official state visit to Japan, and for the first time the PRC recognized Japan’s status as a peaceful, post-World War Two country in a political document (Event A). This event is followed by an announcement that Tokyo and Beijing intended to jointly develop the Chunxiao/Shirakaba gas field in the East China Sea (Event B); a joint appearance by President Hu and the Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso to commemorate the Treaty of Peace and Friendship’s thirtieth anniversary (Event C).

However, netizens tend to pay less attention to Sino-Japanese relations when Beijing is the aggressor. Though there are instances when the level of dialogue increases in response to Chinese provocation, such as for events D and U, these tended to follow already heightened interest in Sino-Japanese relations. In contrast, events E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N which involved PRC’s belligerent action in the East China Sea received low post frequencies. Though there was a bump in response to the highly controversial collision between the Japanese Coast Guard vessel and a Chinese fishing trawler (event J), the physical confrontation surprisingly did not garner as much attention as other controversial incidents which involve the East China Sea, such as the nationalization of the islands in late 2012. During this time frame, the only other event which did not involve China’s assertion of its authority over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands was Premier Wen Jiabao’s official state visit to Japan. This item received a low number of posts.

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90 Event D is the report by the Japanese government that two Chinese Marine Surveillance vessels entered Japan-claimed waters near the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. China reasserted its right to enter the area in its response, though it added that it welcomes development of the Chunxiao/Shirakaba with Japan. This action comes two months after the announcement of a joint development plan between the two sides (Event B).

Event U, which attracted a small spike in attention, refers to the Japanese complaint that a PRC airplane and four ships entered into the contested waters on December 13, a little less than two months after the controversy over Japanese nationalization of the islands erupted within China in September.
There are three possible explanations for this result. The first is that netizens could simply consider Chinese provocative action towards Japan to be less significant within the greater scheme of Sino-Japanese relations. As they assume that the PRC owns the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, they could consider such action to be less noteworthy as it is viewed as an expression of the state’s rightful claim over the contested territory. The second scenario could be that the government suppresses information which portrays China as the aggressor in regards to Japan, rather than the traditionally held view that it is Tokyo who is the instigator of antagonism in the East China Sea. As Chinese netizens are less aware of these incidents, this is naturally reflected in the posts’ frequencies. Lastly, as Chinese citizens are cautious about posting anything which seems to criticize the government, SNF members could be aware of incidents but simply do not feel comfortable discussing them online. Forum participants could consider Sino-Japanese relations to be too sensitive a subject, when Tokyo refused to acquiesce to Beijing’s demands for an apology and compensation after the September 7 collision between the two countries’ vessels, and detained a Chinese national for two weeks. Though I am unable to conclusively explain these characteristics through quantitative analysis, these all serve as potential reasons for the disparity in netizen reaction to external stimuli.

Summary

This is the first study which quantifies the volume of the Chinese public’s attention to matters relating to Japan from a PRC Internet forum. The empirical analysis of the frequency of forum dialogue on Sino-Japanese relations supports my hypothesis that David Shambaugh’s assertion that the nationalism is “reactive in essence” holds true for the expression of online nationalism. Though his statement concentrates predominantly on Chinese nationalism as a state-led movement, I suggest that the variations in frequencies of discussion on the forum also
indicate that the argument holds true for both top-down and bottom-up nationalistic sentiment expressed online.

My research also highlights how forum members respond to Sino-Japanese incidents depending on whether the PRC is considered to be the instigator of escalating tensions between the two powers, or if the event is embarrassing to the government. The fact that Chinese forum users seem to attach less attention to PRC driven conflict suggests that there should be a qualification to the theory that Chinese cyber nationalism reacts to significant events between China and Japan. Instead, I suggest that the argument should be that Chinese cyber nationalism is reactive in essence, as long as the stimuli do not reflect negatively upon the Chinese Communist Party.
Chapter Four: A Keyword Search Analysis of Sino-Japanese Discussion

The current relationship between China and Japan can be described as “cold in politics and hot in economics.” Despite the interdependency of the world’s second and third largest economies, anti-Japanese sentiment continues to play a crucial role in fueling Chinese cyber nationalism. There have been multiple waves of anti-Japanese protest in recent years in response to various triggering events. The issues range from the 2004 visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the 2004 Asian Soccer Cup match between Japan and China which led to riots in Beijing.

Scholars have traditionally tried to understand the direction and characteristics of Chinese cyber nationalism through qualitative analysis. The two general themes within the current literature are the impact of historical memory and territorial sovereignty within the phenomenon. Peter Hays Gries, Jae-Jung Suh and Guobin Yang argue that deep-seated anger and resentment against the Japanese stemming from the First Sino-Japanese War and the Second World War continue to play a significant role in China’s perception of Japan and its own national identity. The other major theme in PRC cyber nationalism directed towards Tokyo is the subject of territorial sovereignty. Sow Keat Tok assert that sovereignty is an important factor in the formation of Chinese cyber nationalism. Tok suggests this element is considered a less significant factor than historical memory and is a “contingent function” of historical memory.

However, so far there has not been an extensive quantitative examination of the phenomenon. My thesis aims to build and expand upon the current literature on Chinese nationalistic sentiment directed towards the Japan through empirical tests. Do netizens consider

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91 Wu 80.
92 Gries 69-73
93 Suh 247-248.
94 Yang 139.
95 Gries 69-73.
96 Tok 32.
territorial sovereignty to be the more crucial in Sino-Japanese relations than historical memory, or vice versa? How much attention do they pay to regional or geopolitical politics in relation to Sino-Japanese issues? In this chapter, I will utilize the tools of content analysis to prove or disprove empirically generalizations of Chinese cyber nationalism.

By utilizing the communications research method of content analysis, I first conduct a keyword search from a custom Dictionary of significant terms. I subsequently provide individual scatter graphs to flesh out the results from the keyword search analysis. Based on the qualitative scholarship, I hypothesize that my empirical analysis shows that historical memory and territorial conflict are the two key themes within online nationalism.

Methodology

I chose the communications research technique of content analysis in order to produce quantitative results of major themes in Chinese netizens’ discussion of relations between Beijing and Tokyo. Defined as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics,” content analysis is the most appropriate method to examine the content downloaded from the website into the database. As my research investigates communications content, this approach will allow me to produce a “numerically based summary of a chosen message set.” Through this analytical technique, I can generate the frequencies, or counts, of variables while minimizing the biases which accompany qualitative analysis.

My methodology builds upon the empirical method utilized by Kai-Chi Leung to generate frequencies of phrases. Though Leung relied upon the website’s own search engine,

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97 A Dictionary is defined as a “set of words, phrases, parts of speech, or other word-based indicators that is used as the basis for a search of texts.” Dictionaries “constructed by the researcher are called custom dictionaries.” Source: Kimberly A. Neuendorf, The Content Analysis Guidebook (SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 2002), 126-127.

98 Neuendorf 1.

99 Neuendorf 14.
downloading the content into my own database allowed me to both circumvent the site’s poor infrastructure as well as the difficulty of conducting quantitative analysis on a large amount of Mandarin Chinese data. Typically, researchers utilize computer programs to generate quantitative results for content analysis. However, I am unable to utilize Yoshikoder, the only content analysis tool which processes Mandarin Chinese data, as the program cannot generate frequencies for a keyword search on such a large amount of data. In order to still produce a summary of the results within the database, I set up a system of search functions within Excel. The database runs a search and generates a count each time I input a keyword search. Within this database, I create functions that calculate the volume of posts each day and show how often a key phrase was mentioned over the five-year time period. I generate a sum of each phrase’s frequency and a trend graph that tracked the terms’ individual frequency, or “count,” over time.100

As a social and behavioral research technique, content analysis is “consistent with the goals and standards of survey research.”101 In the field of content analysis, the independent variable is considered to be the “presumed cause” and the “presumed effect” is referred to as the dependent variable.102 A variable is “a definable and measurable construct” which “holds different values for different individual cases or units.”103 This research technique tries to “measure all variables as they naturally or normally occur” without any “manipulation of independent variables.”104 In this chapter, the independent variable is the Strong Nation Forum members’ attention to Sino-Japanese relations, and the dependent variables are the outcomes

100 In the field of content analysis, the term “count” refers to “how many cases or units occur in each category.” In this chapter, I refer to the number of times a specific keyword is mentioned as a “count.” Source: Neuendorf 125.
101 Neuendorf 48.
102 Neuendorf 48.
103 Neuendorf 48.
104 Neuendorf 48.
from the Keyword Search Analysis. A higher count indicates a higher degree of attention from SNF members to the subject, and a lower frequency shows that netizens pay less attention to the Dictionary key term.

I argue that as the frequency of keywords indicates the degree of attention netizens pay to a particular subject within Sino-Japanese relations.\textsuperscript{105} I acknowledge that it is reasonable to assume that there is a higher quantity of discussion on a topic if it is referenced within the context of a conflict between the two states. A point of contention between the two states generates more attention on the Chinese cyberspace, as forum members are more likely to discuss articles, editorials, blog and forum posts in reaction to the event. However, the Chinese public could also be unaware of an event or not consider the matter to be significant enough to warrant discussion. For example, even though Chinese food quality became a subject of contention between China and Japan in early 2008 due to the controversy over contaminated Chinese dumplings causing sickness in Japan that led to a Japanese boycott of Chinese food,\textsuperscript{106} a keyword search for “Chinese food quality” produced zero results. Even though the conflict occurred prior to March 2008, before the database’ time period, it is notable that netizens do not continue to reference the subject in the subsequent months. In contrast, there has been a high degree of activity on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute from 2008-2012, which can account for the high frequency count of 2,835. I assert that the search count illustrates Chinese forum members’ attention to a keyword, as well as how much attention SNF users pay to the subject’s developments during this time period.

\textsuperscript{105} This argument is supported by the previous chapter’s analysis, which quantitatively demonstrates how netizen reaction to international incidents depends on whether or not the conflict reflects negatively upon the Chinese government.

In accordance with the content analysis rule that variables, measurements and coding rules must be established first hand, I establish the Dictionary of Keywords before starting the keyword search.\textsuperscript{107} The Dictionary contains terms which are pertinent to Sino-Japanese relations and which are commonly used when discussing the relationship. I created multiple combinations of formal or colloquial Chinese phrases for each specific item in the Dictionary in order to generate the most accurate frequency possible.

As seen in Table 4.1, the Dictionary is divided into four general categories which incorporate commonly referenced terms in Sino-Japanese relations. These four groups of variables include:

1. Geopolitical relations
2. Historical memory
3. Other contemporary issues
4. Territorial/sovereignty disputes

The geopolitical category includes keywords related to the PRC’s global standing and the perceived threats of other states. Apart from “the rise of China,” the other key terms in the Dictionary are all variations of references to the U.S. I select the U.S. as the only other country besides Japan to be in the Dictionary due to America’s presence as the dominant military power in East Asia, and its longstanding alliance with Japan.\textsuperscript{108} I theorize that apart from Japan, the other state which netizens closely observe is the United States.

The historical memory sub-category includes two types of keywords. The first are items which reference the past, such as specific dates or incidents of events significant in the history

\textsuperscript{107} Neuendorf 11.
\textsuperscript{108} Gries 17.
between China and Japan. These items are more likely to be referenced in context of commemorating the memory of specific dates, such as the date of Japan’s second invasion of China in 1937. The second type is contemporary issues which have their roots in the legacy of the historical past. For example, the term “comfort women” references the systematic sexual violation of women by the Japanese military during World War Two. The issue continues to surface in contemporary East Asian politics. In December 2012, Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga stated that the government is looking into revising the 1993 apology to comfort women.109 This is also true for the Yasukuni Shrine. While the place is controversial as it is the burial ground for Japanese military who were found guilty of war crimes, Japanese politicians periodically visit the Shrine provoking angry reactions from China.

The category of “other contemporary issues” includes only the Chinese boycott against Japanese goods. This is because longstanding controversial issues between the two sides such as textbook reform, Japanese politicians’ visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and the uproar over the comfort women issue are all rooted in the historical memory of World War Two. Though the Chinese people called for boycotts of Japanese goods and attacked Japanese owned businesses within the PRC in the wake of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands conflict, I believe that the anger behind such actions is not driven exclusively by passion over the sovereignty conflict. Instead, as Chinese protestors also often cite Japanese atrocities during World War Two as one of the reasons for anti-Japanese action, the term “Japanese goods boycott” is sorted in a separate category from either territorial sovereignty or historical memory.

Additionally, I only conduct keyword searches with the Mandarin Chinese keyword combinations if there are conflicting names for the contested area. For example, for the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, I use Chinese combinations for “Diaoyu” rather than the Japanese name “Senkaku,” as the Chinese terms are much more likely to be used by Chinese posters on the online bulletin board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Keyword</th>
<th>Chinese Keyword Combinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geopolitical Relations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise of China</td>
<td>中国伏起, 中伏起, 中国崛起, 中崛起</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.-Japan Alliance, U.S.-Japan</td>
<td>美日联盟, 美日</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>美国</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical Memory</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott against Japanese goods</td>
<td>反日货, 日货</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort Women</td>
<td>慰安妇</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Sino-Japanese War</td>
<td>甲午戰爭</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>历史</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident of July 7/Lugou Bridge Incident</td>
<td>七七事变, 卢沟桥事变, 七七卢沟桥事变, 七七</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukden /Manchurian/Liutiaohu /September 18 Incident</td>
<td>柳条湖事变, 九一八事变</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing massacre</td>
<td>南京大屠杀, 南京</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook reform</td>
<td>课本改革, 课本, 历史课本, 教材改革</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total references to World War Two by name in China</td>
<td>War of Resistance Against Japan, 抗日战争, 抗日战, 对日之战, Eight Years War, 八年抗战, 抗战, Second Sino-Japanese War, 第二次中日战争, 二战</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 731</td>
<td>731 部队</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasukuni Shrine</td>
<td>靖国神社, 靖国</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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110 The second Japanese invasion of China started in 1937.
111 The Mukden or Manchurian affair, which is also known as the Liutiaohu or September 18 incident in China, refers to Japan’s staging of an explosion as a pretext for invading Manchuria and subsequently establishing a puppet state of Manchukuo. I refer to this subject as the Mukden incident for conciseness.
112 Unit 731 is the name of the infamous facility where Japan conducted biological, chemical and bacteriological experiments on civilians and prisoners of war in China.
Other Contemporary Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese goods boycott</th>
<th>反日货, 日货</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Territorial/Sovereignty Disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diaoyu/Senkaku islands(^{113})</th>
<th>釣魚島, 釣島, 釣魚, 釣, 登岛</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dongsha/Pratas islands(^{114})</td>
<td>东沙群岛, 东沙</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xisha/Paracel/ Hoàng Sa islands(^{115})</td>
<td>西沙群岛, 西沙</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penghu/Pescadores islands(^{116})</td>
<td>澎湖縣, 澎湖</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryukyu/Nansei islands(^{117})</td>
<td>琉球諸島, 琉球弧, 琉球</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South China Sea</td>
<td>南中国海, 南海</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spratly islands</td>
<td>南沙群島, 南沙</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>台湾</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To eliminate the problem of “double counting” frequencies of keywords and phrases with the same characters, I only consider the word combinations which had the larger count number. I subsequently eliminate the second combination with a smaller number of words. For example, if I compute the combinations for the Ryukyu/Nansei islands, 琉球 and 琉球諸島, in the search matrix, I only count the results for 琉球.\(^{118}\) As the phrases contain the same two characters (“琉球”), the search produces two duplicate sets of results for 琉球 and 琉球諸島 as the phrases contain the same first two characters. However, while 南中国海 and 南海 contain the same characters, the search terms do not produce overlapping results with 南海 as 南 and 海 are not adjunct to each other in 南中国海.

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\(^{113}\) “Diaoyu” and “Senkaku” are the respective Chinese and Japanese names for the territory.
\(^{114}\) “Dongsha” is the contested area’s Chinese name. “Pratas” is the Japanese name.
\(^{115}\) The Chinese name for the islands is “Xisha.” The Vietnamese name is “Hoàng Sa.”
\(^{116}\) The Chinese and English names for the islets are “Penghu” and “Pescadores,” respectively.
\(^{117}\) The English name for these islands is Ryukyu, but Japan refers to them as “Nansei” and the PRC calls them “Liu Qiu.” In this thesis, I refer to the islands as “Ryukyu/Nansei” for conciseness, as the English and the Japanese names are more commonly known.
Furthermore, I decide to err on the side of caution when choosing whether or not to search for variations of the keyword phrase when there will be significant overlap with other Chinese terms. For example, countries’ names are sometimes shortened in colloquial discussion. Instead of typing out the full phrase for “America” as 美国, the Mandarin Chinese term for country is written simply as 美. However, 美 is also often used in other Chinese phrases such as “美丽” (“beautiful”) and “美好” (“fine”), In order to prevent conflation of the counts, I do not conduct searches for terms such as 美 when generating keyword frequencies. As I am unable to capture all references to specific keywords, I speculate that the search actually produces a lower number of counts.

In the second half of the chapter, I expand upon the overview of notable results from the Keyword Search Analysis presented in the following section. I build upon the findings from the first section, and supplement the most noteworthy results in each category through scatter graphs. These diagrams compare and contrast how the frequencies for each individual key term evolve over the five year time frame.

While I recognize that I am not able to capture every reference to each term due to these limitations, this methodology systematically produces objective, quantitative analysis on the phenomenon of Chinese cyber nationalism in the most accurate method possible in the current field. By tracking and analyzing how the numbers of posts that contain phrases relevant to the Sino-Japanese relationship fluctuate over time, I provide an in-depth examination of how netizens view relations between the two dominant powers in East Asia.
### Table 4.2: Dictionary Keyword Search Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Keyword</th>
<th>Total Sum of Frequencies for Keyword Combinations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diaoyu/Senkaku islands</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total references to United States</td>
<td>2,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total references to World War Two by name</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryukyu/Nansei islands</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.-Japan Alliance, U.S.-Japan</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasukuni Shrine</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing massacre</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese goods boycott</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South China Sea</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort Women</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Sino-Japanese War</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise of China</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukden /Manchurian/Liutiaohu /September 18 Incident</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spratly islands</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident of July 7/Lugou Bridge Incident/July 7 Bridge Incident</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penghu/Pescadores islands</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 731</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xisha/Paracel/ Hoàng Sa islands</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook Reform</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongsha/Pratas islands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 4.1: Keyword Search Frequency

- Diaoyu/Senkaku islands
- Total references to the U.S
- United States
- History
- 1937
- Total references to WWII by name
- Taiwan
- Ryukyu/Nansei islands
- U.S.-Japan Alliance, U.S.-Japan
- Yasukuni Shrine
- Nanjing massacre
- Japanese goods boycott
- South China Sea
- Comfort Women
- First Sino-Japanese War
- Rise of China
- Mukden Incident
- Spratly islands
- Incident of July 7
- Penghu/Pescadores islands
- Unit 731
- Xisha/Paracel/ Hoàng Sa islands
- Textbook reform
- Dongsha/Pratas islands

Frequency
The most striking result from the Keyword Search Analysis is that the United States is the second most often mentioned Dictionary term. As seen in Table 4.1 and Graph 4.1, the total number of times the U.S. is mentioned outstrips all the other keywords associated with Sino-Japanese relations within the Dictionary, except for “Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute”. The third and ninth categories are also terms that include America. The specific references to the United States by name have a frequency count of 1,590, and the number of times netizens refer to the “U.S.-Japan Alliance” or “U.S.-Japan” is 438. I did not expect that the U.S. would rank as the second highest on the list of key terms given that I only downloaded posts labeled as “Sino-Japanese discussion” and the wide range of issues incorporated within the Dictionary. The search results indicate that Strong Nation Forum users attach a great degree of significance to America, even more than historical or territorial controversies relating to China and Japan.

The second outcome is that the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is the most commonly mentioned subject when Strong Nation Forum members converse about affairs between China and Japan. I theorize that the key term’s frequency reflects the degree of significance netizens attach to a subject, as well as their reaction to any activity involving the term. While netizens probably already considered the subject to be significant within Sino-Japanese relations, the escalations of tensions over the islands between the two sides also bolster the frequency count and elevate the topic’s importance.

Furthermore, the data analysis suggests that netizens only pay attention to sovereignty disputes if the PRC is actively engaged in conflict over the territory. Graph 4.2 and Table 4.3 illustrate that there are two very disparate responses to each type of territorial conflict. I suggest that there are two reasons for why the frequency count is higher when the PRC is actively engaged in a territorial controversy. First, the count increases as netizens disseminate
information about developments in the case and discuss the latest news. The second is that in response to the news about activity, netizens attach more significance to the conflict, as they know that there is a challenge to the PRC’s claims of ownership. This can explain why certain keywords such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute and the South China Sea have such high frequencies as Beijing has been asserting its claims over these areas through statements by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and military action. In contrast, the counts for key terms such as the Xisha/Paracel/ Hoàng Sa territorial dispute and the Dongsha/Pratas islands are low because China has not been actively defending its claim to the region.

Graph 4.2: Territorial Dispute Keyword Frequency
Table 4.3: Territorial Disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diaoyu/Senkaku islands</td>
<td>2,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryukyu/Nansei islands</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South China Sea</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spratly islands</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penghu/Pescadores islands</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xisha/Paracel/ Hoàng Sa islands</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongsha/Pratas islands</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Keyword Search Analysis also empirically shows that Strong Nation Forum participants consider historical memory to be an important factor in interactions between China and Japan. Following the keywords for “Diaoyu/Senkaku islands,” “total references to the U.S.,” and mentions of the “U.S.” by name, the next few items which rank highly on the list of Keyword Search Frequencies are all terms closely connected to history. “1937” and “History” both have 1,420 postings, followed by 773 references to World War Two by name. Both of these terms support the argument that the historical past forms a core component of Chinese cyber nationalism. 1937 specifically refers to the year of the Japan’s second invasion of China and the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The War later metamorphosed into World War Two after the December 1941 Japanese assault upon Pearl Harbor. The high frequency count for the term “History” further strengthens this notion, as the keyword encompasses a wide range of issues related to history from Chinese historical claims over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands to the memory of Japanese atrocities in China during World War Two. The fact that the War is the sixth most mentioned category within the Dictionary supports the idea that the historical legacies of World War Two form a crucial component of Chinese cyber nationalism. Other terms within the historical memory category, such as the Yasukuni Shrine (349 counts) and the Nanjing
massacre (331 counts) are also more often mentioned than other contemporary topics within Sino-Japanese relations, such as the boycott against Japanese goods (280 counts).

**Comparative Analysis of Keyword Frequencies for Geopolitical Relations**

![Graph 4.3: "Geopolitical Relations" Frequencies](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total References to the U.S</td>
<td>2,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.-Japan Alliance, U.S.-Japan</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rise of China</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The United States is the second most mentioned key word within the Dictionary with 2,028 posts. I theorize that forum members scrutinize American actions because they consider the U.S. to be a key player in East Asia. As the dominant military force in the Asia-Pacific, American policies have consequential implications for China and its relationship to Japan. In addition, the U.S. is often mentioned within the context of the U.S.-Japan military alliance and
U.S.-Japan relations, as seen in the Table. These results indicate that Chinese forum members are aware that Washington could become involved if military conflict breaks out between the PRC and Japan. The U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security obligates the U.S. to act if either party to the Treaty is attacked, and the State Department confirmed in September 2012 that the sensitive Diaoyu/Senakku islands are considered within the Treaty’s bounds.\textsuperscript{119} The results from the Keyword Search suggest that Chinese netizens view the U.S. in a negative manner as they consider America to be operating in its capacity as a Japanese ally in geopolitical relations.

Graph 4.4 “Total References to the United States” shows how Strong Nation Forum users consistently mention the United States when engaging in dialogue on Sino-Japanese relations. While the number of references to the U.S. is low, the diagram shows that there is a persistent strain of Chinese cyber nationalist sentiment directed towards Washington. The number of references steadily climbs when tensions between China and Japan escalate. The first cluster of variables occurs from September 2010 to August 17, 2011. This increase in postings on the United States corresponds with a September 2010 event when a Chinese fishing trawler collided with the Japanese Coast Guard. Even though the atmosphere in the East China Sea became tenser in the subsequent months as Tokyo refused to apologize or to compensate Beijing for the fishing trawler, there is no subsequent actual confrontation between two sides by the time that the online bulletin board members stop mentioning the U.S.\textsuperscript{120} Other than Japan protesting the intrusion of two PRC surveillance ships into Japanese controlled waters around the Kuba Islands, there is no

\textsuperscript{120} During this time period the PRC detained four Japanese nationals on charges of trespassing in military restricted zones in September 2010. Japan scrambled fighter jets to intercept Chinese naval airplanes on March 2011. Japan also protested a Chinese helicopter flying close to a Japanese destroyer in a territory in the vicinity of a disputed gas field. However, none of these controversies led to physical confrontations between the two parties.
significant controversy during this lull. As shown in the previous chapter, netizens tend to not pay attention to Chinese provocations in the ongoing clash between the two countries in the East China Sea, which could explain the lack of conversation about the U.S. during this time frame. The second main cluster of activity occurs in mid to late 2012, when anti-Japanese fervor was at its peak in the PRC over the Japanese landing on the islands. Within this time frame, the Japanese government moved to nationalize the islands in response to the Tokyo governor’s announcement that he intended to purchase the Diaoyu/Senkaku territory with public funds. The amount of attention netizens pay towards America corresponds with the perceived provocative activity by Japan in the East China Sea. The results from the Dictionary keyword search and the graphs indicates that the constant strain of anti-American sentiment in nationalistic postings towards Japan flares up in response to perceived provocative behavior by China’s rival due to Washington’s role as a longstanding Japanese ally.
The key word “rise of China” garnered only 57 frequencies. I initially put this term within the Dictionary in order to test the idea that the PRC’s enhanced global standing drives online nationalistic sentiment. Though the search results seem to imply that netizens do not consider the topic to be of much importance, the results may be skewed by the difficulty of trying to capture a wide range of Mandarin Chinese phrases which convey forum participants’ belief that the PRC has become a stronger power. The fact that the specific Chinese phrase for the “rise of China” is used within the context of Sino-Japanese relations signifies a consciousness of Beijing’s enhanced economic and global political position in the international system. I speculate that the actual number of all expressions of sentiment by netizens who consider the Middle Kingdom to be a stronger power to be higher than indicated by the 57 frequency.

**Comparative Analysis of Keyword Frequencies for Territorial/Sovereignty Disputes**

The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands has the highest number of posts in its Dictionary category and is also the most often referenced keyword within overall Sino-Japanese relations. By comparison, there are almost 70 percent more references to this specific controversy than all the other sovereignty disputes combined. In addition, the comparison graph of references to the dispute and the overall frequency of discussion imply that the keyword’s frequency corresponds to the degree of attention netizens pay to Sino-Japanese discussion. In fact, I speculate that the controversy actually serves as the primary driver in the variation in the volume of conversation. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the quantity of dialogue increases in response to incidents between the two countries, and 22 out of the 30 significant incidents between the two sides from March 2008 to December 2012 either directly involve the islands or activity related to the dispute.
Table 4.5: Territorial/Sovereignty Disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diaoyu/Senkaku islands</td>
<td>2835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other territorial disputes</td>
<td>926</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high frequency for the Ryukyu/Nansei islands underscores the fact that SNF users often refer back to the historical origins of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands conflict. This key word is the third most often mentioned territorial conflict and the seventh most discussed item on the Dictionary, despite the fact that there has not been any significant activity specifically regarding the Ryukyu/Nansei controversy between the two sides during this time period. I speculate that this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that netizens reference the Ryukyu/Nansei islands when conversing about the Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict. Tokyo officially considered the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as part of the Nansei Shoto area on January 14, 1895. Incorporated as part of the Okinawa prefecture, the U.S. held the region under a trusteeship after World War Two before returning the territory to Tokyo in the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Agreement.
From this background information, I theorize that the key term’s frequency indicates that netizens refer to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands’ inclusion into the Ryukyu/Nansei islands when tracing the origins of the first territorial controversy. Graph 4.6 below illustrates how the Ryukyu/Nansei islands frequency fluctuates according to the variation of the Diaoyu/Senkaku frequency. There is an anomaly for “Ryukyu/Nansei” on October 12, 2008, and while there is not a constant overlap between the two categories in the first half of the time period, the diagram shows that the two islands disputes are often brought up within the same time frame. From August 2010 to September 2012, the count for “Ryukyu/Nansei” correlates with the overall fluctuations for “Diaoyu/Senkaku.” Though the count for the former key word dips down from October 2012 as the latter’s count increases, forum users continuously reference the “Ryukyu/Nansei” controversy when engaging in conversation on the “Diaoyu/Senkaku” conflict. The graph supports the theory that the Ryukyu/Nansei matter is raised within the context of the Diaoyu/Senkaku controversy, rather than a separate sovereignty conflict. This data also suggest that instead of challenging only Japan’s claim to the islands, SNF members could extend the conflict area by arguing that Tokyo’s control over the entire Ryukyu/Nansei area is illegitimate.
I theorize that the island’s high frequency count stems from the fact that Chinese online users view the island has having multiple roles within the Sino-Japanese relationship. The first is Taiwan’s status as a territorial conflict: The Chinese Communist Party has considered the Republic of China (R.O.C.) to be a breakaway province since the Nationalists established a government there at the end of the Chinese Civil War. The reunification of the island with the mainland continues to be one of the most sensitive issues in Chinese politics. The second is that the PRC not only considers the ROC as a reminder of Japan’s colonial legacy, but also as a stakeholder in the controversy. The Qing dynasty transferred control over the islands to Japan in the humiliating aftermath of the First Sino-Japanese War. However, China argues that Japan should have returned the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands to the control of Taiwanese Provincial authority when Japan surrendered control of Taiwan in the Treaty of San Francisco. Lastly, Taiwan is also an actor in the ongoing dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. From March
2008-December 2012, the ROC responded to the PRC and Japan’s actions involving the contested region. For example, Taiwanese fishing boats and the coast guard entered the waters near the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands chain in September 2012.

As seen from Graph 4.7 “Taiwan” Frequency, the “Taiwan” keyword follows a similar pattern to the U.S. key term. “Taiwan” has a low frequency, but is a recurring theme within the overall discussion. In addition, like the United States keyword, the subject’s frequencies concentrate around September 2010 to mid-2011 before once again slightly increasing in the latter months of 2012. The spike in references to the island is likely to be attributable to netizens engaging in dialogue about Taipei’s role, as well as responding to the news that the islands sent a flotilla into the contested region in September 2012.
### Comparative Analysis of Keyword Frequencies for the Historical Memory Category

#### Graph 4.8: "Historical Memory" Frequency

![Graph showing frequency of keywords in historical memory context]

#### Table 4.6: Historical Memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total references to World War Two by name</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasukuni Shrine</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing massacre</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort women</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Sino-Japanese War</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukden Incident/Liutiaohu Incident/September 18 Incident</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incident of July 7/Lugou Bridge Incident/July 7 Bridge Incident</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 731</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook reform</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, topics that have the highest search frequencies after the Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict and the United States are those relating to historical memory. “History,” “1937,” and “total references to World War Two” empirically illustrate how historical memory continues to affect Chinese netizen discussion of contemporary interactions between the two East Asian powers. Furthermore, the identical result for “1937,” the date of Japan’s second invasion in China, and the term “History” is not a coincidence. The comparison graph below shows how though the blue series represents “1937”, the red series for “History” covers every single blue data point within the graph. This result is supported by an examination of the frequencies within the two separate datasets for “1937” and “History.” The comparative analyses of the two subjects indicate that when netizens refer to the historical past, they concentrate specifically on the beginnings of Japan’s second invasion of China and by extension, the historical legacies of World War Two.\[121\]

\[121\] As I am measuring the volume of Sino-Japanese discourse within the forum, and not the number of unique users who participate in Sino-Japanese dialogue, this finding remains significant.
The Keyword Search Analysis illustrates which specific historical incidents generate the most discussion. The more well-known and controversial subjects which surface in contemporary relations between the two countries such as “Yasukuni Shrine,” “Nanjing massacre,” and “comfort women,” are mentioned most often behind general terms relating to historical memory (“History,” “1937” and “total references to World War Two”). They are followed by “First Sino-Japanese War,” two terms which refer to the beginnings of Japanese encroachment upon China (“Mukden” and the “July 7 Bridge Incident”), followed by “Unit 731.”

Surprisingly, Chinese netizens pay very little attention to the Japanese revision of history in textbooks by Japan during this time period, as the item is ranked last within the Dictionary’s historical memory section. I speculate that the small count reflects the fact that textbook reform did not resurface as a contentious issue between 2008 and 2012, as the most current row over the subject exploded in April 2007, almost a full year before the time period of the collected online
The fact that there is such a low number of allusions to textbook reform suggests that forum users do not continuously pay attention to the subject.

The “Japanese goods boycott” Frequency

This section explores the references to the Chinese boycott of Japanese goods, which is considered under the “Other Contemporary Issues” category. The item ranks in the lower-middle section of the results for the Dictionary keyword search. This result was surprising, as I expected the count to be higher because the call to boycott Japanese goods seemed to play such an important role in the 2012 protests against Japan. In April 2012, then-Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara announced that he intended to buy three of the islands in the contested chain with public funds. In September 2012, the Japanese government bought the islands to thwart Ishirara’s attempt. In response, Chinese citizens attacked Japanese businesses in the PRC and boycotted Japanese products. An estimate by JP Morgan Chase & Company in January 2013 suggests that the fall in demand for Japanese goods in the Chinese market could have slowed Japanese growth by one percentage point in the last quarter of 2012. If the boycott was so widespread, why isn’t the frequency for “Japanese goods boycott” higher?

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Table 4.9: Contemporary Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese goods boycott</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I attempted to capture all sentiment which reference products from Japan by including 日货, which literally translates to Japanese goods, into the Dictionary. After all, a search will produce results for different variations of terms referencing Japanese goods, as long as the phrase incorporates 日货 in the term.\textsuperscript{124} However, there are also numerous other ways which netizens could express anti-Japanese sentiment that the search query would not be able to pick up, such as specifically listing Japanese brand names as targets. Another possible explanation could be that forum users actually do discuss the protest, but do not directly refer to the subject specifically. For example, if a SNF member writes on the forum that Chinese people should be reasonable when addressing the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, the netizen does not have to explicitly write out the words “Japanese goods boycott” for his audience to know that he is responding to the such action. Graph 4.10 seems to support the theory that there are increased references to

\textsuperscript{124} As mentioned in the methodology section, the search function will produce results for any phrase containing the words 日货, as long as the characters are adjacent to each other.
boycott Japanese businesses when there are increased hostilities between the East Asian powers. Though the frequency count is small, there is are slight increases after the September 2010 crash between Japanese and Chinese vessels, as well in the latter half of 2012 in response to Tokyo’s purchase of the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

**Summary**

The Keyword Search Analysis provides empirical data which supports my hypothesis that the two main themes in Chinese online nationalism are historical memory and territorial sovereignty. The results indicate that netizens prioritize the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute as the most hot button issue in contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. In addition, as the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands conflict is closely interlinked with the Ryukyu/Nansei controversy in forum members’ minds, forum members seem to not just challenge Japan’s authority over the islets and rocks in the East China Sea, but also extend the contested territory to part of the Okinawa Prefecture. As the Okinawa area houses American military bases, there is the potential for further involvement of Washington in the territorial controversy if Beijing takes its cue from SNF participants.

Apart from the islands dispute, netizens refer to historical memory, particularly the legacy of World War Two, more than territorial sovereignty. The outcome demonstrates how Chinese Strong Nation Forum members view contemporary Sino-Japanese relations through the lenses of Japan as a historical aggressor and China as the victim of Tokyo’s aggression. The ties of the historical past drive Chinese netizen anger towards Tokyo. For netizens, the wounds inflicted upon China by Tokyo during World War Two are still fresh.
Furthermore, the data analysis illustrates that SNF members only mention territorial conflicts within the forum if the conflict is active during this time period. For example, they pay attention to the South China Sea dispute, rather than other squabbles such as the Dongsha/Pratas controversy as China has been defending its claim to the area during the 2008-2012 time period.

Lastly, the most unexpected outcome from the Keyword Search Analysis is that the United States has the highest second frequency among all Dictionary terms relating to Sino-Japanese relations. An analysis of the keyword scatter chart illustrates how there is a consistent strain of attention to America with Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards Japan. The fact that references to the United States increases in volume when tensions between Beijing and Tokyo escalate and decrease when conflict defuses suggests that netizens closely connect Washington to the developments in the Sino-Japanese relationship and that they have a consistent negative view of America as Japan’s ally.
Chapter Five: A Case Study of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Controversy

In April 2013, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) informed General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are part of the nation’s “core interests.” The subject joins a list of items which include Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang. This categorization of the islands as a core interest highlights how seriously Beijing views these five uninhabited islets and desolate three rocks in the East China Sea.

The announcement that China is prioritizing the sovereignty quarrel as a core interest comes on the heels of escalating tensions in early 2013. In March, Kyodo News referenced “unidentified senior Chinese officials” who admitted that a Chinese frigate aimed fire-control radar towards a Japanese destroyer in a region near the Tokyo-controlled Diaoyu/Senkaku area in January. The report claimed that the incident was unplanned by the Chinese. Previously, Beijing had called such a rumor a fabrication. While the tensions over this specific event have decreased in subsequent months, the heightened tensions over the PRC’s locking of military radar on a Japanese vessel illustrate the potential for military confrontation between the two states to spiral out of control. It is not hard to imagine that an incident between the two powers in East Asia could draw in other states such as the U.S., South Korea, which is engaged in its own territorial spat with Japan, and even Taiwan.

This chapter analyzes Strong Nation Forum (SNF) posts on the Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict from March 2008 to December 2012. I chose this specific sovereignty conflict for a case study

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127 Japan and South Korea are currently embroiled in a territorial conflict over the Japanese-called Takeshima island, a region which South Korea has named as “Dokdo.” The Republic of Korea currently has administrative control over the area. Source: Ida Torres, “South Korea protests Japan’s latest move to claim Takeshima-Dokdo,” *Japan Daily Press*, April 5, 2013, http://japandailypress.com/south-korea-protests-japans-latest-move-to-claim-takeshima-dokdo-0526463.
because this term produced the highest frequency. In addition, the altercation over the territory has been become arguably the most hot-button issue in Sino-Japanese relations. While the conflict has been studied as part of Chinese cyber nationalism, this is the first close examination which specifically studies netizens’ perception of the topic’s political and economic sensitivities. In addition, as I am examining the most recent five year time period, this will be the most current analysis of the characteristics of Chinese online nationalistic sentiment targeting Japan.

**Hypotheses**

I hypothesize that my research demonstrates that netizens view the specific Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict as involving more than just the economic and strategic benefits of controlling the contested islands and associated waters. Instead, I theorize that Strong Nation Forum users perceive the PRC’s policy toward the disagreement as inextricably connected to how the Middle Kingdom’s transformation into a global power affects the existing power balance between the PRC, Japan, and the United States. In addition, I speculate that conversations which connect foreign policy with the Chinese Communist Party’s domestic governance will illustrate a desire for greater political participation by netizens who seek to demonstrate their nationalistic fervor.

**Methodology**

To provide a detailed portrait of the variables that affect the nationalistic discussion online from March 2008 to December 2012 surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, I use the content analysis technique of emergent coding on a representative sample. In the first chapter, I utilize Keyword Search Analysis, a top-down method of analyzing the data content, as I apply a pre-set Dictionary of keyword terms to the dataset. In this chapter, I perform the technique of emergent coding. Emergent coding is one of the four techniques recommended in Kimberly A.
Neuendorf’s standard textbook for communications research, *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Emergent coding, which is described as a “grounded or ‘emergent’ process of variable identification” creates a “coding scheme after all responses are collected,” and then applies analysis to the data.¹²⁸ This form of coding is a bottom-up method of analysis.

The emergent coding process is the most appropriate analytical method for Chinese online expression on the islands’ sovereignty for two reasons. First, the existing theory and research literature are unable to provide a “complete picture of the message pool” and thus are unable to conduct a top-down approach in conducting analysis.¹²⁹ Although I generate a Dictionary of Keywords based on the commonly discussed themes in the Sino-Japanese relationship, there is no pre-existing coding scheme which addresses the Diaoyu/Senkaku altercation.¹³⁰ By using emergent coding, I am able to capture a wide range of variables or themes by immersing myself in the message pool and grounding myself in the “reality of the messages.”¹³¹ In addition, I establish a new schema for classifying online sentiment on the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute. Secondly, emergent coding can provide a comprehensive portrait of SNF conversation by building upon the results from the Keyword Analysis Search, which highlight the topic’s popularity. This bottom-up method allows the significant themes to emerge directly from the message pool. This strategy contrasts with the top-down method of conducting searches for the frequencies of keywords from a Dictionary of pre-determined themes. As recurring subjects are drawn directly from the dataset, this method gives a more accurate reflection of the topics which are significant for forum members.

In accordance with content analysis standards, I randomly sample ten percent, or 284

¹²⁸ Neuendorf 97, 105, 194.
¹²⁹ Neuendorf 105.
¹³⁰ In the emergent coding process, each major theme or category that emerges from the coding process is considered to be a “variable.” Source: Neuendorf 103.
¹³¹ Neuendorf 105.
posts, from a sub-dataset of 2,835 posts and create a sub-dataset by isolating every post which contained references to the “Diaoyu Islands.” I then code seventy percent of the sample in order to record variables and measures which rise from the sub-dataset. The preliminary coding procedure assists me to establish a coding scheme based on actual frequencies in the sub-dataset. As the length and content of the posts vary greatly from one short sentence to an original essay, the categories are not considered to be mutually exclusive. Subsequently, I create a Code Book and Coding Form which I use to recode the ten percent sample. By conducting content analysis twice, I ensure that each post is coded according to the variables which emerge directly from the message pool during the preliminary coding process. The Codebook, which explains the measurements used in the process of coding this particular group of data, corresponds with the Coding Form used by the coder. These two items are included in the appendices.

The small size of the sample precludes performing a reliability test, but it is possible to speculate about the implications of the data produced by the emergent coding process. Towards that end, I examine similar variables within specific groups. For example, I analyze the difference in counts for variables relating to forum user’s perceptions of China. Dividing the frequency of the individual count numbers by the total number of times a general theme is mentioned yielded a percentage for each variable. Thus, to calculate the percentage of times America is mentioned in a negative manner, I divide the number of times online members negatively reference the United States (78 counts) with the total number of the times the U.S. is mentioned (99 counts) to produce a 78.8% result.

In addition, I provide further context for the most important emergent coding results with specific qualitative examples in order to provide further context for the analysis or explain the variables’ frequencies. This approach obviously is more speculative, but the combination of
emergent coding and qualitative examples provides further insight into the major themes of Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands clash. This is the first systematic application of content analysis in research within the forum.

**Analysis of the Source Content**

Examination of the online bulletin board content yields two surprising results. First, more than a quarter of the forum’s volume on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands contains non-original content. I define non-original content as any material not originally written by the user uploading the item, such as the reposting, citing, or analyzing of content from news sources (articles, editorials, links to videos) or information (essays or statements) written by another forum user. The high frequency of non-original material indicates that a significant portion of online discussion on the forum is drawn from either traditional media sources or from posts by other netizens. It is also interesting to note that the Chinese sources cited or analyzed mostly from state propaganda publications, such as *Xinhua*, or *People’s Daily*, the state sponsor of the Strong Nation Forum. I speculate that the results indicate that while forum members predominantly upload original content, users often refer to non-original content such as news articles to circulate and provide information in response to specific incidents between the PRC and Japan. Reposting information or citing official state publications not only serves the purpose of disseminating a particular viewpoint of activity between the two sides and indicates the continued ability of the state publications to affect public opinion, but also seems to be a way to demonstrate support for the official party line.
The analysis shows that forum users primarily draw upon Chinese language sources when they decide to upload non-original content. There are five distinct types of categories which are depicted in Graph 5.1. These differing types of posts include content which reposts Chinese sources, reposts Japanese sources, reposts U.S. sources, and analyzes Chinese and Japanese sources. The percentage of user content that reposts from Chinese language material is 62.2%, far outstripping the other types of non-original content. The second category with a high count is analysis of Japanese language sources (23%). This item is followed by posts which analyze Chinese sources (9.5%), items which repost Japanese language sources (4.1%) and finally a very low percentage of posts which repost U.S. language sources (1.4%). Though I originally expect that Chinese forum users to refer to Chinese sources more than other language sources due to ease of access and familiarity with the media sources, I did not expect that they would almost exclusively draw upon Chinese sources given that non-Chinese news agencies typically have
Chinese editions of news articles and are usually accessible within the PRC. However, the high count for Chinese sources does not necessarily indicate that Chinese forum users overwhelmingly support the state narrative, as I consider material generated by netizens (such as blogs and other SNF members, not by news agencies) under the “Chinese sources” category.

The results do demonstrate, however, the skewed proportion of online members’ attention to Chinese sources and suggest that Strong Nation Forum users rarely draw from non-Chinese perspectives of news articles and discussion on the Sino-Japanese relationship. When SNF members do turn to content from non-Chinese sources, they seek Japanese sources for insights into Japanese viewpoints. The outcome of the comparison analysis also demonstrates that Chinese users rarely refer to American news agencies as a source for information.

**Comparative Analysis**

The emergent coding results produce eight types of variables for comparison analysis, which I group together by similarity (as seen in Text Box 5.1). Brief analyses of the emergent coding results provide perspectives on the relative significance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, historical memory and perception of Japanese interaction with Japan and other Japanese territorial disputes.

I subsequently concentrate on the analysis of the theme groups on China, the U.S. and Taiwan. These measurements produce results relevant to my hypotheses, or led to surprising results. I supplement these four groupings with specific qualitative examples of online sentiment. I select the qualitative examples of netizen sentiment for clarity of language as well as the extent to which the forum members explained their position on key issues. Similar to other forms of social media, the emergent coding process illustrates that there is a core group of users who are the most engaged members and who constantly upload long essays on Sino-Japanese relations.
As these participants are the most invested in developments in matters between China and Japan within the forum, I often chose their posts for comparative analysis.\footnote{I select multiple posts from same users on the forum, as the members who write the most extensive and comprehensive analyses are those who consistently engage in dialogue on the forum.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Box 5.1: Main Clusters of Content Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Netizen Perception of:*

- Total frequency count for China: 197
  - China’s role in geopolitics
  - China’s interaction with Japan
- Total frequency count for Japan: 215
  - Japan’s interaction with China
  - Other Japanese territorial disputes
- Total frequency count for the United States: 99
  - The U.S.’ role in geopolitics
  - The U.S.’ role in the Sino-Japanese relationship
- Total frequency count for Taiwan: 55
- Total frequency count for historical memory: 47
- Total frequency count for the significance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands: 32
Netizen Perception of the Significance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands

Although there are only 32 counts for variables that mention reasons other than historical memory or geopolitical issues, a comparative analysis of the variables within this category indicates that demand for natural resources is the most cited reason the contested islands are significant (56.3%). The second most commonly mentioned is the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea at 25% and the variable which reference the islands’ strategic position at 18.75%. The Law of the Sea contributes to both the natural resources and the strategic position categories, as it establishes a 12-mile territorial sea limit and an exclusive economic zone limit around the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. However, at 32 counts, the total number of references to this specific category is the lowest within the organized groupings of the collected variables from the emergent coding process. This indicates that while access to the economic and strategic benefits

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of the contested islets plays a role in why netizens believe that the islands are important, other factors such as historical memory and Taiwan are higher on the list of reasons.

Netizen Perception of the Significance of Historical Memory

As seen in Graph 5.3, within the historical memory category, the “neitzen perception of historical memory,” the cluster has the second lowest number of variables. There are a total of 46 counts for the combined frequencies of these variables, slightly higher than the 32 times the economic and strategic benefits of the islands are referenced within the representative sample. The most commonly mentioned measurement is the historical legacy of World War Two (69.6 %), followed by the First Sino-Japanese War (21.7 %). The frequency of these two variables in the message pool suggests that Strong Nation Forum members continue to consider the historical memories from the First Sino-Japanese War and World War Two to be important when discussing contemporary East Asian relations.
Netizen Perception of Japan

Graph 5.4: Netizen Perception of Japan's Interaction with China

Themes
- Perception of Japan as an inferior, state or ethnic group
- Japanese activity surrounding the islands
- Japan as a declining power
- Japanese nationalization of the islands
- Japan historically acts aggressively towards China
- Positive perception of Japan
- Japan is manipulating the U.S. to act aggressively towards China

Frequency
Unsurprisingly for a Chinese political forum, the variables indicate that Strong Nation Forum users have a high degree of hostility towards Japan. The percentage of counts for “positive perception of Japan” is so small (0.9%) that it is insignificant. Though the percentage for the variable “Japan is manipulating the U.S. to act aggressively towards China” is also close to zero, the emergence of the suggestion that Japan has agency over American foreign policy from the message pool is an interesting insight into how netizens perceive the power dynamic between the U.S. and Japan. This variable suggests that Japan has agency over American foreign policy, which is contrary to the mainstream SNF opinion that the U.S. is orchestrating Japan’s actions (as seen in the previous section on America where forum users’ consensus was that the U.S. seemed to have the upper hand vis-à-vis Japan). Conversations on the forum which explore Japanese actions towards the PRC a on the subject predominantly contain an unfavorable view of Japan (11.97%), with 9.51% of the conversations mentioning Japanese activity around the islands (9.51%), in particular the government’s decision to “nationalize” the islands in 2012. In addition, I conjecture that the sentiment which expresses the belief that Japan is aggressive towards China (5.12%) suggests that a small proportion of netizens consider Japanese action as a continuation of a pattern of Japan’s bellicose action against their nation.
As can be seen from Graph 5.5, the second group of items about Japanese action referenced Japan’s territorial conflicts with other countries. Though the variables are also quite small, the surfacing of these two items from the sub-dataset indicates that Chinese netizens are conscious of how Japan addresses its other sovereignty conflicts. The frequency for the Kuril/Chishima quarrel between Russia and Japan (5.1%) is minimally higher than the count for the conflict between Japan and South Korea over the Takeshima/Dokdo area (1.4%).

Netizen Perception of China

Three main groups of variables surface after applying emergent coding to the dataset: netizen perception of domestic Chinese politics, China’s role in geopolitics and China’s interaction with Japan. In this section, I will examine these three clusters of variables individually, specifically concentrating on the connection between the conflict over sovereignty and Chinese domestic issues.
Graph 5.6 Neitzen Perception of China’s Role in Geopolitics and Graph 5.7 Neitzen Perception of Chinese Interaction with Japan shows that the data supports my hypothesis that Chinese nationalists connect the Middle Kingdom’s transformation into a global power with its ability to take a stronger stance against Japan, its historical enemy. The belief that the PRC is now a more powerful country than the Middle Kingdom of the past is illustrated by the fact that the three specific themes of “China is a rising power in the international system” (9.1%), “China is currently a weak country” (4.1%), and “China was weak in the past” (3.6%) surfaced in specific comments depicting China’s global standing. As these themes are not mutually exclusive, I speculate that these results can be explained by the narrative that neitizens view the PRC as a country which has overcome its past as a poor and bullied country, but is not yet strong enough to enter into a military conflict with Japan or the U.S.
This perspective can explain the results from Graph 5.7 which shows the counts for “Netizen Perception of China’s Interaction with Japan.” Forum discussion does not center on the outcome of a military altercation between China and Japan (the counts for either China or Japan winning in such a conflict are essentially the same at 2%), or the overall significance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku sovereignty clash (though the percentage for those who think that the issue is the most important subject is at 6.09% rather than 4%), or even whether or not Japan views China as a threat (4.1%). Instead, the variables which are most frequently mentioned in descending order are a desire for the PRC to take a stronger stance against Japan (19.3%), the PRC is the rightful owner of the islands (15.2%) and that Beijing should take a rational stance towards Japan (9.6%). I am not surprised by the fact that only 15.2% of netizens seem to consider the PRC to be “the rightful owner of the islands,” as I only explicitly categorize a post under a variable if the author explicitly writes the sentiment. During the emergent coding process, I found that users did not explicitly state that China owns the islands as they already assume that Beijing possesses the Diaoyu/Senkaku territory. For example, forum members do not have to explicitly state that the PRC owns the islands when they call for “reason and justice,” even though that sentiment is embedded within the post.\(^{134}\)

Though netizens desire the PRC to react strongly against perceived Japanese encroachment over the island chain, Strong Nation Forum participants seem to stop short of actually advocating war with Japan. This perspective is further explored in qualitative analysis of SNF members’ perspective of America’s role in global leader and as an actor in the Sino-Japanese relationship.

\(^{134}\) http://bbs1.people.com.cn/post/13/0/1/122852568_1.html.
Graph 5.7: Netizen Perception of China's Interaction with Japan

Wants China to take a strong stance towards Japan
China is the rightful owner of the islands
Calls for rational action towards Japan
Significance of a boycott against Japan
Japan views China as a threat
The Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute is viewed as the most important factor in S-J relations
The Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute is insignificant when compared to overall S-J relations
China is able to win a war with Japan
China is unable to win in a war with Japan
Domestic Chinese Politics and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Territorial Conflict

As described in the literature review chapter, cyber nationalism scholars have long debated the extent to which the tiger poses a threat to the rider—that is, the extent to which online expressions of nationalistic public opinion (“the tiger”) actually threatens the Party’s legitimacy (“the rider”). China scholar David Shambaugh argues that domestic discontent over issues such as “inflation, corruption, severe class disparities, environmental deterioration, moral vacuum, and a deep sense of losing ground in China’s Hobbesian economy” drive hyper nationalistic sentiment on Chinese sovereignty. How much does criticism or support of the government’s policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku lead to further discussion of Chinese domestic politics? Conversely, how closely do internal problems drive nationalism directed towards Japan?

The coding results reveal that when netizens bring up the subject of the PRC in relation to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, 20.8% of the conversation mentions Chinese domestic politics. Within this subgroup, “the island dispute impacts domestic politics or political participation” variable is more often mentioned than the “netizens or the new generation as a political force” variable (as seen in Graph 5.8). The first category garners an 8.6% frequency and the second is mentioned at a 4.57% frequency.

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Qualitative examples of online sentiment of Strong Nation Forum members who discuss domestic PRC politics in conjunction with the territorial argument reveal that forum users challenge the governing regime to provide more support for expressions of political participation. One such post by lqszglz1216 expresses his frustration that the Chinese Coast Guard seemingly did not demonstrate sufficient support for Chinese and Hong Kong activists and fishermen earlier in the year 2012. He complains:

When the Diaoyu event happened, where was our coast guard? When fourteen Chinese citizens from Hong Kong went alone to safeguard the islands, where was our coast guard? When around forty Japanese kidnapped our fourteen citizens by force on our Diaoyu islands, where was our coast guard? When the Japanese submarines patrolled our Diaoyu islands, where was our coast guard? When Tokyo’s investigation team “investigated” the seas around the Diaoyu islands, where was our coast guard? …Do you all really only appear to protect our citizens after they are released by the Japanese and returning back to the country? Show more effort, show more effort.
You at least should conduct patrols when Japanese submarines enter the seas near our Diaoyu islands, so that our fishermen can see that you actually know
that is our territory, so that our fisherman can see that you actually know that they are not alone—that the country is behind them.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{136} \texttt{Lqszglz1216}' post expresses his belief that the government should demonstrate concrete support for fishermen and activists who are risking their own lives in order to safeguard China’s claim over the contested area. He calls for the state to back political action organized by citizen groups, rather than by the military.

The second type of narrative which stems from conversation on Chinese domestic politics goes a step further than merely criticizing the CCP for insufficiently guarding national interests. Instead, this account asserts that forum users should turn to grassroots organizing as an effective method of action against Japan. These posts combine the two variables of “netizen perception of how the issue impacts Chinese domestic politics” and the topic of how “netizens and the younger generation can participate in politics.”

Though only a few posts challenge the CCP’s handling of the issue, the authors are highly critical of the government’s ability to strike back against perceived Japanese provocation. For example, in a September 18 2010 post after the collision of the Japanese Coast Guard and the Chinese fishing trawler, \textit{Yi Min Shi Ye} writes that:

\begin{quote}
On the Chinese side, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, the members of the Party Congress consecutively came out and said a few words, but the strongest statement is no more than “If Japan takes provocative action, it will inevitably have to eat the bitter fruit of its own production.” The Japanese devils do not care, they regard this as a joke…\textsuperscript{137}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{137} Instead of relying on the Party, he suggests that netizens conduct a grassroots boycott of Japanese household goods, products, and services, and that the combined economic might of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{136}] http://bbs1.people.com.cn/post/13/0/2/122174406_1.html.
\item[\textsuperscript{137}] http://bbs1.people.com.cn/post/13/0/1/102964194.html.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
“1.4 billion comrades on either side of the Taiwan Strait” will crush Japan. As the government does not seem to be safeguarding national interest, he suggests, the Chinese people should instead wield the combined might of their economic power to counter the Japanese. Yi Min Shi Ye notably does not advocate military conflict.

Strong Nation Forum members also expressed similar attitudes in response to one of the controversial plans by Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara to purchase the islands with public funds. In response to this news, online bulletin board users argue that Chinese citizens should be able to organize and purchase the islands. In particular, Luo Hong Wei Su directly criticizes the ineffectiveness of CCP attempts to tackle the problem of the islands. He charges that China’s younger generation need to be more like Japanese youth, who they consider to be more politically active:

Besides the factor that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have not been unified, the key [to why Japan bullies China] is that our response mechanisms are too bureaucratic, we always respond through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issuing statements with no new content, they are not only bland but also useless. If we rely on lazy officials, this causes serious issues in international relations. In comparison, the domestic people are in the forefront of the movement, particularly the netizens. They are typically of the younger generation, and they demonstrate one hundred twenty thousand percent commitment to their own country.

This perspective is echoed by Jin Feng Wu Han, who questions: “If the Japanese can start an initiative to vote for the purchase of the Diaoyu islands, why can’t we start an initiative to vote for the purchase of Little Japan?”

The answer to the latter’s question of course is that the difference between the ability of citizens to openly organize civil protests or initiatives is due to the type of governing regime. While Japanese citizens are able to participate in a democracy and establish political groups, the

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construction of any civil society group and the demonstration of any form of activism, even one intentioned to protect Chinese sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku argument, is highly sensitive under an authoritarian regime. Although only a small number of posts call for political organizing by the PRC public (possibly due to censorship by state-monitors or self-censorship due to the sensitivity of directly challenging the regime), it is important to note that a desire for civil political organization and direct criticism of the regime exists within the forum. These posts support the idea that cyber nationalism is a bottom-up phenomenon rather than solely a state manufactured product. Forum members exhibit a consciousness that they would like to be able to participate more in the political process and express their patriotism, just like Japanese citizens.

However, I find that there is little evidence that Chinese netizens connect the Diaoyu/Senkaku row with internal instability. Forum users call for more aggressive action from the state in support of citizens’ expressions of nationalism, but only one member, called Da Feng Zhan You, tries to bring up the idea that Japan is purposely stirring internal dissent. On February 18, 2008, he starts a thread that argues “We should defend against forces which are using the Diaoyu islands problem to stir up internal dissent to disrupt China’s internal security,” though he does not specify which “forces” he has in mind.141 However, the first response to the thread is by a Forum member called Wo Ke Ai De Zhong Guo (whose user handle translates to “My cute China”). In his response, this user specifically calls Japan is the disruptive force. In the last response in the thread, a user named Lang Ya rebuts the idea that Japan is intentionally causing trouble, by stating that “domestically [China] is already ‘harmonious’ and protecting our state soil does not affect the ‘internal security and stability of the state’ which you mention.” Neither Da Feng Zhan You nor another netizen posts in reaction to Lang Ya’s statement.

The same user who began the February 2008 thread, Da Feng Zhan You, once again tries to steer the conversation to how the conflict between China and Japan affects domestic politics in October 2010, but receives no replies within the forum. After the Japanese Coast Guard and a Chinese fishing trawler collided in the contested waters near the islands in September 2010, he posts that “Everyone’s attention was finally drawn to the Diaoyu islands, but one sentence ‘my father is Li Gang’ turned everyone’s attention back to the frustrations of domestic issues.”142 The user is referencing the notorious case of Li Qiming, the son of the deputy police chief in a district of Baoding. Li Qiming, who was intoxicated at the time, struck and killed Chen Xiaofeng, a poor farm girl, and when security guards tried to stop him he shouted out of his car “My father is Li Gang!”143 The phrase “My father is Li Gang” subsequently became a social media phenomenon as shattered for the power and privileges afforded to the elite in Chinese society.144 However, Da Feng Zhan You’s implication that the Chinese Communist Party’s tries to redirect attention away from domestic disturbances, only to have events such as the Li Qiming case return the spotlight to such matters, does not receive any responses.

I speculate that there are two reasons as to why there are few discussions on how the clash between Beijing and Tokyo affects domestic politics. The first could be that netizens genuinely do not pay a high degree of attention to the implications of Sino-Japanese foreign policy for internal problems within China. It is possible that forum users view the spat solely as a foreign policy issue and push back against attempts to connect domestic and foreign policy, as demonstrated by the lack of response to Da Feng Zhan You’s posts. After all, Da Feng Zhan You

144 Wines.
does not respond to the challenge by Lang Ya that there is no connection between protecting state ownership over the contested islands and internal stability.

The second is that forum users either conduct self-censorship, or that the board monitors and the state censors erase any messages that try to connect the two subjects. As mentioned in the introduction, Susan Shirk argues in *Changing Media, Changing China* that the Party is most worried about unrest spilling from the Internet into the streets and threatening the CCP’s authority. Posts which criticize the Party’s approach to foreign policy and suggest that netizens should instead take matters into their own hands through political action is problematic for the government. Anger against the Party for foreign policy issues could also potentially be a proxy for anger against the regime’s handling of internal affairs. I suspect that the final answer lies somewhere between the two: forum participants are willing to push the government to be more aggressive in safeguarding the islands, as such conversation is can be cloaked in patriotic language. However, direct criticism of how the government handles the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands spat and the state’s internal affairs are considered too sensitive for Chinese internet users to post, and when such subjects are mentioned online, they are quickly censored by the forum and state monitors. The fact that content critical of the regime can be found on the forum indicates that there is dissatisfaction with how the Party governs. Moreover, there is a notable absence of praise for how the Party has handled domestic and geopolitical politics.

**Netizen Perception of the United States**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most surprising result from the keyword search is that “references to the United States” was the second most frequently used term among the items listed in the Dictionary. Only the Diaoyu/Senkaku category exceeds the number of times the United States is mentioned. Through emergent coding, I find 78 mentions of the U.S.

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145 Shirk 240.
relation to the blowup over the ownership of the islands. Two groups of variables regarding the U.S. emerge from my dataset: Netizen perception of the U.S.’ role in geopolitics and the U.S. role in the Sino-Japanese relationship. By analyzing both the emergent coding data and online conversations, I find that forum members have overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards America because of its historical involvement in the Diaoyu/Senkaku controversy and its continued presence in East Asia.

As seen in Graph 5.9, netizens rarely discuss the U.S.’ standing in global politics. However, forum users generally mention three themes when bringing up America’s position in global politics. These are descriptions of the U.S. as a strong nation, the U.S. as a weak state and the U.S. as a power which is increasing its presence in the Asia-Pacific. Within the overall online chatter on the U.S., forum users are slightly more preoccupied with President Barack Obama’s
recent announcement of a “pivot” or “rebalancing” towards Asia (8.08%), followed by mentions of the U.S. as a strong nation (6.06) and lastly discussion of the U.S. as a weak country (5.05%).

In comparison, when netizens refer to the U.S. in conjunction with the Diaoyu/Senkaku territorial controversy, the discussion focuses on how America affects the Sino-Japanese relationship. Graph 5.10 illustrates that Strong Nation Forum participants overwhelmingly hold the negative belief that America is actively involved with Japan to act against China (78.79%). In contrast, only a small percentage of online conversations assert that the U.S. is a neutral actor (2.56%). The category which describes American involvement with Japan against China encompasses the following clusters: the U.S. alliance with Japan, the idea that America is actively conspiring with Japan to suppress China’s rise, the belief that the U.S. controls Japan’s foreign policy, and the assertion that Washington is ultimately responsible for the current confusion over administrative control of the Diaoyu/Senkaku and Ryukyu/Nansei islands’
sovereignty because of the way it transferred control to Japan in the aftermath of World War Two. The consensus implies that netizens consider the Washington to be working with Tokyo against Beijing, and that Japan is subservient to American power. These results seem to suggest that for netizens at least, the White House has not been very successful in its attempts to distance itself from the crisis. During the 2008-2012 timespan, the U.S. maintained its policy of not taking a stance on the “ultimate sovereignty of the islands” though it recognizes that Japan has administrative control over the contested area.\textsuperscript{146}

A qualitative examination of the U.S. role in geopolitics and in the Sino-Japanese relationship reveals two predominant narratives that connect the emergent themes from the Strong Nation Forum members’ dialogue. Firstly, the concept that the U.S. is actively participating in the current sovereignty crisis is inextricably linked to online users’ belief that the U.S. is responsible for transferring power over supposedly Chinese owned territory and its role in shaping the Asia-Pacific region in the aftermath of World War Two. Online members blame Washington D.C. for transferring administrative control over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and the Ryukyu/Nansei islands. For example, in a blog post titled “The Secret Power Struggle among China, Japan, and the U.S. over the Diaoyu islands,” member Yuan Zhu Da Zhan You attributes the current squabble to Washington’s involvement in the Asia-Pacific:

\ldots The Diaoyu island conflict is a Sino-Japanese conflict. China and Japan are the two great powers in the Asia-Pacific, and have significant influence in the world. The dispute between the two sides inevitably influences the East Asian security position and by extension, the entire world. The Diaoyu island spat also involves the U.S. In fact, the Americans actually created this dispute. Frankly speaking, the current problem of Diaoyu is directly connected to the games and tricks that the U.S. played in the past.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{146} Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After Their Meeting," (Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After Their Meeting. Department of State, Washington D.C., U.S. Department of State, January 18 2013).
\textsuperscript{147} http://bbs1.people.com.cn/post/13/0/1/105609865.html.
In the rest of the post, Yuan Zhu Da Zhan You continues to explain how the U.S. has actively prevented the rightful return of the island chain to the PRC. Although Japan first gained the islands after the First Sino-Japanese War, he argues that Washington D.C. did not properly address the return of the islands to the Nationalist government when it returned administrative control of the Okinawa islands to Japan, and by the time the Chinese communists came into power “the situation had already changed” and that Beijing was too weak to protect its territory. By assigning responsibility for China’s current spat with Japan to the U.S., netizens such as Yuan Zhu Da Zhan You perpetuate the belief that Washington historically interfered with the islands’ sovereignty against Beijing. If the U.S. has meddled in the past, what will prevent Washington from continuing to provoke the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands conflict? In addition, tracing the historical origins allows Chinese netizens to explain why Beijing has been unable to reclaim the islands even though it is supposedly the rightful owner of the contested territory. By explaining how Japan gained present-day administrative control over the islands through U.S.’ meddling in East Asia, online users can also relieve the Chinese government of responsibility for losing the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

The second main narrative reflects the netizens’ perception that the Diaoyu/Senkaku conflict reflects the shifting geopolitical power balance between the U.S and China. Posts which discuss the American position in geopolitics connect the U.S.’ “pivot” or “rebalancing” to Asia to the belief that Washington, in alliance with Tokyo, is conspiring against Beijing. Forum users expect that Beijing could finally reclaim the islands because they are acutely aware of China’s ascension within the international system. Netizens such as Li Zhi directly contrast the weak China of the past with the PRC’s growing power. In a July 2012 post, Li Zhi quotes from a Xinhua article that argues the U.S. and the Japanese “illegally stomped on Chinese sovereignty
and territory” with the assertion that “the China of the 21st century is no longer the ‘sick man of East Asia’ that it was in the hundreds of years past.” The forum member argues that despite the government’s elevated status, Beijing has “maintained restraint over the island spat” despite Japanese provocations such as the nationalization of the Diaoyu/Senkaku region. The article reposted by Li Zhi also references the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership as further evidence that the U.S. is targeting China. Given that neitzens believe that Washington is already an active participant in the Sino-Japanese conflict over the contested territory, any action by the U.S. which seems to target the PRC (such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the rebalancing towards Asia) confirms forum members’ view of America as the enemy.

This narrative of Beijing as the victim and Washington and Tokyo as the aggressors is further expounded upon by a user called Bao Dao Yao Li Zhi (whose user handle translates to “Use Reason to Safeguard the Islands”) in September 2012. He writes:

Why has Japan made so many movements, attempting to ‘nationalize’ the Diaoyu islands? …The U.S. announced its “pivot to Asia” in response to China’s rise, and the U.S. and Japan alliance cannot allow their imaginary enemy China to easily obtain the first island chain [in the East China Sea]. Because of this reason, as the mainland and Japan are unable to maintain their present status quo, the U.S. and Japan have taken a further step by coveting the Diaoyu islands and scheming against China.

Similar to Li Zhi, Bao Dao Yao Li Zhi paints China as having the moral high ground as a “victim” of aggression by outside powers such as the U.S. and Japan. While his statement acknowledges China’s rise, he implies that the Middle Kingdom’s rise within the international arena be a peaceful one. The assertion that the U.S. and Japan consider China to be an “imaginary enemy” further adds to the forum users’ perception that Beijing is morally superior to the other two

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nations as it is not only the victim of aggression, but also does not maintain aggressive ambitions despite its increase in power. In other words, this type of sentiment allows netizens to argue that China is merely reclaiming its rightful territory and reacting to belligerent action by powerful countries such as the U.S. This perspective absolves the PRC of any blame for the escalating tensions in the East China Sea.

Forum users believe that China’s economic growth is the reason that the Middle Kingdom is able to play a stronger role in the global geopolitical system. However, analysis of the data illustrates that they still believe that the U.S. continues to be the dominant economic and military power in East Asia. Despite the fact that the online bulletin board members believe that the United States is now weaker, they still perceive Washington to be stronger than China. The White House’ support for Tokyo makes it very difficult for China to reclaim its territory. This explains the phenomenon in Graph 5.9 Netizen Perception of the U.S.’ Role in Geopolitics, which shows that the perception of the “U.S. as a strong nation” is slightly more common than the notion of the “U.S. as a weak nation.”

This perspective is illuminated in a post called “‘Not afraid to start a war’ over the Diaoyu island dispute?” by forum user Da Feng Zhan You.vip. He angrily calls the notion that China is not afraid of military conflict over the islands as an “extremist, simplified form of logic, which completely goes against diplomacy...” He states that:

Not afraid to start a war” is a too simplified perspective as can’t we see that we are existing in a complicated international environment that is not just limited to China and Japan, but also the U.S., Korea, the Southeast Asian countries, etc. which construct a large and complex international system? If the Sino-Japanese relationship worsens, what type of attitude do you think that the U.S. will have? … If China and Japan actually start a conflict, no one will win the Diaoyu islands, and both will be losers, because neither of them has the ability to shoulder the burdens of war.\(^{151}\)

He then explains that as the U.S. is a strong state, America has been able to absorb the long-term high costs of the Iraq War, but neither China nor Japan are as powerful as the U.S. yet, a war over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands territory would be disastrous for both sides. This perspective also fits the pattern illustrated by Graph 5.11, which is originally mentioned in the earlier section on netizen perception of China.

![Graph 5.11: Netizen Perception of China's Role in Geopolitics](image)

It is important to note that the online users’ perception that America is responsible for orchestrating Japan’s inflammatory actions towards China does not exclude the idea that the U.S. is too strong for China to challenge directly. Even Bao Dao Yao Li Zhi, who assigned responsibility for the heightened tensions over the islands to U.S. machinations, states that “even though Japan and the U.S. were affected by the financial crisis, in 2012 the combined U.S. and Japanese GDP was around three times that of China’s… In addition, there is still a significant gap between the Chinese and the U.S.’ navies, and blindly starting a war will be jumping into the
As netizens still consider the U.S. to be the dominant power in the international system, Chinese forum users are afraid that America would support the Japanese in a military conflict against Beijing in accordance with the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. “We need to think of a way to make sure that the Americans don’t participate in a military conflict over the Diaoyu islands,” warns Xia Gang Hou Wu Suo Shi Cong, “because as soon as the Little Japanese no longer have the U.S.’ support, they will not dare to be so arrogant.”

A post by a user whose information was subsequently deleted, also expresses a negative perception of the U.S. He laments, “when the U.S. army controlled the Ryukyu and Diaoyu islands, China should have spent money to buy back the islands. After all, the U.S. could easily take Japan, and the U.S. is greedy.” This post reflects both the negative perception of the U.S. as “greedy” and that the U.S. is the key player in the dispute. The statements imply that forum participants consider Washington a crucial factor in the Sino-Japanese relationship because U.S. policy indicates not only how Japan acts towards China, but also how Beijing should pursue its foreign policy agenda. The potential for American involvement in a military clash serves as a constraint upon Chinese netizens’ call for outright military conflict. Despite forum participants’ belief that the PRC has strengthened its economic and military might, the U.S. is still seen as the strongest player in the international system.

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154 As noted in the methodology chapter, even when forum members’ profiles are deleted the post content remains on the forum and are considered to be part of the database.
Netizen Perception of Taiwan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan's sovereignty</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan's collaboration with China</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan's activity around the islands</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
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When netizens discuss the Republic of China (ROC), three clusters emerge from the message pool: Taiwan’s activity around the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, Taiwan’s collaboration with China, and the issue of Taiwan’s sovereignty. There are a total of fifty-five frequencies for these three themes, and 54.6% of the posts mention Taiwan’s sovereignty referred to Taiwan’s sovereignty, as seen in Graph 5.12. Taipei’s collaboration with Beijing has the second highest frequency at 23.6%, and Taiwan’s activity around the region is 21.8%. Through qualitative analysis, we can see that these three variables are closely interlinked.

Forum users who mention Taiwan view the island’s activity on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands through the perspective that the People’s Republic of China is the rightful owner of territory controlled by the Republic of China. Since the end of World War Two, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have maintained a tense relationship. The ROC has also claimed ownership
over the island chain. During the 2008-2012 time period, Taiwanese activists and politicians participated in the escalating tensions in the East China by sending fishing and coast guard boats to the region. China still considers Taiwan to be a breakaway province.

Because online users consider Taiwan to be under Chinese jurisdiction, they do not see Taiwanese assertions of ownership over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as expressions of the so-called renegade province’s assertion of its independence, even though Taiwanese activists claim the island’s ownership over the area. Instead, Strong Nation Forum members consider such activity as further evidence of Taiwanese action in support of the mainland. For example, user Yuan Zu Da Feng Zhan You argues that trips by Taiwanese legislators’ and members from a Taiwanese organization to the islands are not considered as threats to China. Instead, he asserts that the islands have historically been Chinese territory, Taiwanese actions illustrate how the “comrades on the other side of the Strait desire assistance from the motherland.” He states that Taipei would no longer trust or feel emotional connection to Beijing if the latter did not take concrete steps to assert Chinese ownership over its turf in the East China Sea. He warns that giving up the islands would lead to Beijing’s inability to unify the nation; as such action would lead to the loss of security across the Strait and the failure of China’s foreign policy.

Forum member Bao Xiao echoes this sentiment three years later in July 2012. He believes that with the reunification of both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the “U.S. and Japanese would no longer be able to cause mischief…The Chinese and Nationalists should once again cooperate and return the Diaoyu islands to its proper jurisdiction of ‘China Taiwan Yilan County Diaoyu Island Town.’” While there is a transnational element to the narrative of Taiwanese

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activism, this narrative is still constructed based on the patriarchal relationship between China and Taiwan.

Analysis of Chinese online sentiment indicates that netizens do not consider Taiwan to be an actual contender for ownership of the islands, and even actually seem to welcome Taiwanese activism. Chinese forum users agree with the Taiwanese perspective that Taiwan has jurisdiction over the islands — only as they believe that the mainland has claims over Taiwan, they interpret any action taken by activists from the other side of the Strait as supporting Chinese claims of ownership.

Summary

The case study of the conflict over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islets illuminates several key aspects of cyber nationalism from March 2008 to December 2012. The first is that one cannot think of cyber nationalism as a monolithic entity. Instead, the emergent coding and qualitative examples illustrate how the phenomenon spans the historical past, economic and strategic considerations, geopolitics and internal issues.

Secondly, Chinese online users tend to gravitate towards Chinese language sources when seeking news or opinions about the Sino-Japanese relationship. Though the frequency of non-original content is only around a quarter of the total volume of discourse on the subject, this behavior suggests that state media such as Xinhua can still steer public opinion on foreign affairs to a certain degree. Though as the other three quarters of the overall volume within the representative sample is original, user generated content, this influence is clearly limited.

More importantly, the results from the emergent coding and qualitative examples confirm my hypothesis that forum members primarily view the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands controversy as a weather vane for how the PRC’s rise drives the evolving power balance in East Asia. Though
web users express sentiments that indicates the economic and strategic benefits of owning the islands, as well as the historical legacies of the past, cause the island controversy to be considered as a priority in foreign relations, the results indicate that the neitzens regard the subject as a barometer of the PRC’s future in the international system. In particular, though SNF members call for China to aggressively safeguard its perceived rightful territory, they do not perceive China to be able to challenge Japan and its ally, the United States, in a military conflict. For the online participants, the White House is the deciding factor in both how Japan acts towards the PRC, as well as the degree to which China should react against perceived outside aggression. Though China has increased in economic and military strength since the humiliations of World War Two, there is the sense that the state is not yet quite ready to conduct a war over the islands.

Lastly, I discover that Chinese members rarely discuss international politics as a proxy for internal politics. There is a small number of netizens who argue that as the CCP is not acting aggressively enough to protect the states’ interests, the public should turn to grassroots organizing and activism to assert Party sovereignty over the islands. However, sentiments expressed by individual users who attempt to discuss domestic problems within the context of the Diaoyu/Senkaku crisis do not gain traction. Though there is not a high volume of discussion supporting these arguments, possibly due to self-censorship and official censorship, the fact that such streaks of grassroots nationalism remain online is significant. The evidence indicates that forum members who see clear connections between domestic governance and foreign policy are dissatisfied with the official Party line. Though the state can attempt to control online nationalism, certain strands of grassroots nationalistic opinions threaten the regime’s domestic governance.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

On May 8, 2013, the government mouthpiece People’s Daily published a highly controversial piece titled “Regarding the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the Problem of the Diaoyu islands.” The article, which was authored by members of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Research Center for Chinese Borderland History and Geography, expands the territory claimed by China in the East China Sea to incorporate the Ryukyu/Nansei islands, which are currently under Japanese control as part of the Okinawa Prefecture. They argue that the People’s Republic is the rightful owner of the area, as the Ryukyu kingdom was an independent vassal state to China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The authors claimed that Japan obtained control over the islands in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, but the area should be returned to the PRC because the Cairo Declaration returned all occupied Japanese territories. By taking the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute a step further by claiming that part of the Okinawa Prefecture, which is home to multiple U.S. military bases, actually belongs to China, the PRC seems to be raising the stakes in the East China Sea. The episode highlights the continuous, escalating tensions in the Asia-Pacific between the world’s second and third largest economies.

Nationalism, particularly Chinese cyber nationalism, is a wild card in relations between Beijing and Tokyo. State-sponsored nationalism’s fusion with the Internet has produced the phenomenon of online nationalistic fervor. By analyzing the number of suspicious posters and examining qualitative examples, I find that the majority of forum discourse stems from netizens, rather than from SNF members who seem to be sponsored by the state’s propaganda apparatus. Chinese cyber nationalism cannot be categorized simply as a tool of the Chinese Communist Party. However, as Chinese forum members tend to rely on state newspapers for information and

analysis of Sino-Japanese relations rather than foreign news agencies, the government still retains a degree of influence within the Chinese cyberspace. I argue that the research disproves Xu Wu’s theory that the phenomenon is a grassroots movement separate from state-sponsored nationalism. Instead, my research supports the consensus among Chinese cyber nationalism scholars that the phenomenon contains both state-sponsored and grassroots elements. Online nationalism both captures and reflects Chinese public opinion.

The Future of Research on Chinese Cyber Nationalism

I concentrate on the Strong Nation Forum as a case study, but the winds of the Chinese cyber space are shifting. Though the SNF currently maintains its prominent status in the PRC Internet realm, Chinese cyber nationalism scholars should turn to microblogs for future research. China Internet Network Information Center statistics illustrate how netizens increasingly gravitate towards microblogs as opposed to online bulletin boards such as the SNF. According to the Center, the popularity of microblogging has grown, while that of online forums has decreased. The most recent statistics show that the number of people using microblogs has continued a trend of annual growth. The number of microblog users grew by 23.5 percent in 2012, while the frequency of online bulletin board users increased only by 3.2 percent.\(^{159}\) As the online population gravitates towards a medium other than forums, Chinese online nationalism scholars should explore utilizing computer science techniques in order to download and archive the online content from microblogs for longitudinal study.

Summary of Research Results

This case study of the Strong Nation Forum provides the first in-depth, empirical examination of Chinese cyber nationalism directed towards Japan. I conduct my analysis through a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. I empirically test the volume of online content

\(^{159}\) China Internet Network Information Center 38.
discourse on Sino-Japanese relations, conduct a Keyword Search Analysis, generate scatter graphs, utilize emergent coding, and analyze qualitative examples. As I research online nationalistic sentiment from March 2008 to December 2012, a previously unexplored time period, this study contributes to the understanding of the evolving phenomenon’s current direction.

There are four key results in my case study of the Strong Nation Forum. First, my empirical analysis expands upon current scholarship on the nature of netizen attention to international incidents. Though analysis confirms David Shambaugh’s claim that nationalism is “reactive in essence,” this statement needs to be qualified with the clause that the degree of netizen reaction relies on the international stimulus. Netizens are less likely to react to an external event if the international incident involves Chinese aggression towards Japan, or can be interpreted as humiliating for the regime.

Additionally, my analysis empirically supports the theory that historical memory and territorial sovereignty are both flashpoints for nationalistic fervor expressed online. While the data suggests that netizens consider the Diaoyu/Senkaku squabble to be the most significant item on the agenda between the two countries, the results also show that Strong Nation Forum members tend to pay attention to territorial conflicts only when there are recent actions on the issue. Otherwise, they prioritize Japan’s historical atrocities against China.

Thirdly, I argue that SNF members not only perceive the U.S. as the key player in Sino-Japanese relations, but also view the islands dispute as Washington’s reaction to Beijing’s ascent in the international system. Despite Washington’s professions of neutrality, netizens blame the U.S. for transferring control over the Okinawa Prefecture, and hold America responsible for the inability of the PRC to recover the islands. Online users keep a careful eye on Washington when discussing Sino-Japanese relations, as they still consider the U.S. to be the dominant military and
economic power. Forum members closely watch the White House for any action that confirms their suspicions that the U.S. is conspiring with Japan to suppress China’s development. Netizens recognize that even though the PRC is ascending in power, it is not yet ready to confront Tokyo and its U.S. ally militarily, though there is a sense that Beijing will inevitably match the U.S.’ in power. Due to the consistent amount of netizen attention on the U.S., there is a chance that anti-American sentiment could refocus on Washington as its main target in response to perceived U.S.-Japanese antagonism. Instead of simply interpreting the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands skirmish as a conflict between Tokyo and Beijing, Chinese nationalists consider the matter a litmus test of the relationship between the PRC and the United States.

Lastly, my research shows that only a small number of users within the general online population on the forum link the state’s external and external affairs. Among this group of forum participants, the focus is not primarily on the state’s handling of domestic problems such as corruption or income equality. In fact, only one netizen consistently expresses the idea that the government redirects public attention on domestic issues to cyber nationalism. His argument does not gain traction on the forum; either due to the risks of criticizing the government or because SNF members simply do not perceive online nationalism to be a proxy for discontent with the regime’s domestic governance. The fact that at least one netizen expresses this belief provides evidence that there seems to be some dissatisfaction with the Party’s domestic governance.

However, this thesis illustrates that when netizens consider domestic issues in conjunction with international relations, they call for civic mobilization when they believe that the government is not protecting national sovereignty. Netizens seem frustrated that the Chinese public is unable or unwilling to participate in politics in comparison with other citizens in
democratic countries such as Japan. Forum members express anger that the state is seemingly not acting strongly enough to protect its claim over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islets and suggest that citizens take matters into their own hands as an alternative. Even though mainstream online opinion tends not to link the PRC’s internal and external affairs, the fact that dissatisfaction with the Party and a desire for greater civic engagement exists online is significant. Given the dangers of challenging the Party, and the widespread practices of self-censorship and state censorship, the remnants of dissatisfaction towards the State suggests that this frustration towards the regime could be shared with a larger number of the Chinese public. However, though these small numbers of netizens call for citizens to participate in an alternative to the Party’s foreign policy apparatus, they notably do not call for the overthrow of the government. While SNF participants express desire for the ability to conduct civic initiatives, they do not advocate for democracy either.

**Research Implications**

Lastly, I return to the central question raised in the beginning of my research. How significant a threat does the tiger of Chinese cyber nationalism pose to the rider, the Chinese Communist Party? Does Chinese cyber nationalism towards Japan serve as a proxy for discontent with the regime’s domestic rule?

My case study of the Strong Nation Forum shows that Chinese cyber nationalism exerts pressure on Beijing to address historical memory and territorial sovereignty issues when interacting with Tokyo on contemporary matters. Based on my examinations of SNF members’ online discourse, I believe that Beijing has reason to feel particularly vulnerable in its handling of territorial sovereignty disputes, particularly the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands conflict. Within the segment of the population of the most concern to the Party, there are strands of discontent with
the PRC’s governance. These netizens consider the islands dispute as a proxy for discontent over the limited avenues for civic engagement and express frustration with the existing political system’s perceived mishandling of its relations with Tokyo. Though they do not advocate deposing of the government, the fact that forum members express a desire for civic activism as an alternative to relying on the government’s bureaucracy to safeguard China’s national interests suggests that the regime must tread carefully when approaching national sovereignty matters. While there seems to be a consensus among Chinese online users that Beijing is not yet powerful enough to confront the U.S. and Japan militarily, they also argue that the government should behave more aggressively as befitting its increased power. The awareness of the PRC’s enhanced standing on the global stage drives online nationalistic fervor.

Given this context, it is unsurprising that Beijing behaves in an increasingly nationalistic and aggressive manner towards Japan on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, or even towards other countries on matters such as the South China Sea dispute. The government has to simultaneously accommodate Chinese public anger over territorial and sovereignty affairs towards Japan, while also ensuring that the dispute will not flare into military conflict with Japan and its ally the United States, or irreparably affect the PRC’s economic trade with Japan. How long can the PRC maintain this delicate balancing act? Will the government be able to accommodate Chinese cyber nationalism’s demands in the long term? Through my analysis, I find evidence that at least a small segment of the population expresses desire for the tiger of Chinese cyber nationalism to buck the Chinese Communist Party’ rule. Not enough for the rider to fly out of his seat into the tiger’s jaws, but enough to unsettle his perch on the beast’s back.
Bibliography


Song Yi Pin, Zhou Zi Yi.“Duo ge mei ti bai wan yuan guang gao tong he qiang guo she qu xin ban shang xian.” *People’s Daily Online*. August 3, 2012.


Appendix 1: Timeline of Sino-Japanese Significant Events from 2008 to December 2012

2008

January 30: Over eighty Japanese people fell ill eating dumplings that were made in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). According to the Japanese health ministry, the dumplings contained traces of an organic phosphorous insecticide. The Chinese Communist Party ordered the production company to halt manufacturing and recall all its export products, and promised a full investigation. However, schools and restaurants in Japan pulled Chinese-made food products.\(^{160}\)

Database Time Period: March 2008-December 2012

Each event is assigned a letter in alphabetical number. I group the events together if they occur successively.

A. May 6-10: PRC President Hu Jintao visited Japan on a state visit described as the “Warm Spring Tour” by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.\(^{161}\) The PRC and Japanese governments released a joint statement on the promotion of a “Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests” as well as a joint press statement on the “Strengthening Exchange and Cooperation between the government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China.”\(^{162}\) For the first time, China recognized Japan’s status as a peaceful postwar country in a political document.\(^{163}\)

B. June 18: China and Japan reached an agreement to jointly develop an area of the East China Sea known as Chunxiao in China and Shirakaba in Japan, to make it a “sea of peace, cooperation and friendship.”\(^{164}\) “Under the principle of mutual benefit,” the two sides arranged to select areas for mutual agreement areas for joint development.\(^{165}\)

C. October 24: PRC President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao individually met with the Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). On the same


\(^{165}\) “China, Japan reach principled consensus on East China Sea issue.”
day, President Hu and Prime Minister Aso appeared together and gave speeches to commemorate the “Thirtieth Anniversary of the Conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the PRC”.  

D. December 8: The Japanese Coast Guard reported that two China Marine Surveillance vessels (the “Haijian 46” and “Haijian 51”) stayed in Japan-claimed territorial waters near the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands for around 9 hours before leaving.  

166 Taro Aso, “My Personal Conviction regarding Japan-China Relations” (Remarks by His Excellency Mr. Taro Aso, Prime Minister of Japan at the Reception to Commemorate the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between Japan and the People’s Republic of China, Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China, October 24, 2008), http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/address0810.html.


168 Sinodefence.com

169 “China, Japan reach principled consensus on East China Sea issue.”


172 “Report from China Regarding the Arrest of a Suspect in the Dumpling Incident (Second).”

173 Russell Hsiao, “PLAN East Sea Fleet Moves Beyond First Island Chain” (China Brief Volume 10, Issue 9, April 29, 2010), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36320&cHash=8b6992d044.

2009 There were no significant activity between China and Japan during this time period.

2010

E. March 26: The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement that the Chinese government sent to Japan’s embassy in Beijing on the so-called “Dumpling Incident.”  

170 The Chinese police reported that the suspect in custody was a thirty-six year old man from Hebei Province called Lu Yueting, who had injected poison into the dumplings.  

171 According to the statement, the PRC police investigated this issue for two years and the Chinese government stated that they were prepared to carry out a joint investigation with the Japanese government if the latter wished.

F. April 7-10: According to the Yomirui Shimbun, a People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) military flotilla, comprised of a total of 10 warships and submarines, conducted training exercises and traveled from the East China Sea through the Okinawa Islands and Miyako Strait, close towards the Okinotori Islands.
G. **April 21:** A military helicopter from the Chinese destroyer made proximate flights near “Asayuki” escort ship from approximately 3:37 PM to 3:40 PM. The Japanese government lodged a complaint about the close proximity of the flight to the escort ship on the same day of the incident.

H. **May 3:** On May 6, Tokyo lodged a protest regarding a May 3 incident involving a Chinese ship approaching a Japanese survey ship. Minister Katsuya Okada, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, stated that the Chinese military helicopters made two dangerous proximate flights to Japanese escort ships.

I. **May 30-June 1:** PRC Premier Wen Jiabao paid an official visit to Japan. He met with the Emperor of Japan and the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Yukio Hatoyama.

J. **September 7-24:** Japanese Coast Guard patrol vessels collided with a Chinese fishing trawler in Japanese-claimed territorial waters off the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Japan rejected the Chinese demand for an apology and compensation for the case of the Chinese fishing trawler. However, Tokyo’s statement emphasized that the “steady development of Japan-China relations is extremely important not only for both countries but also for the region as well as the international community.” The government stated that it is important for both Japan and China to continue making efforts to materialize the “Mutually Beneficial Relationship based on Common Strategic Interests” from a broader perspective. The Chinese fishing boat captain, Zhan Qixiong, was detained and released on September 24, 2010.

K. **September 24, 2010:** The Japanese government protested the detaining of four Japanese nationals in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. According to the Chinese authorities, the

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178 “Statement by the Press Secretary/Director-General.”

179 “Statement by the Press Secretary/Director-General.”


Japanese nationals were arrested over suspicions that they had violated Chinese law by entering a restricted zone to film military facilities.\(^{182}\)

2011

L. **March 2:** According to Japan’s Ministry of Defense’ Joint Staff Office, Tokyo scrambled F-15J fighters to intercept two Chinese Y-8 naval airplanes which were detected 31 miles north of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.\(^{183}\)

M. **March 7:** Tokyo condemned an incident in which a PRC helicopter flew close to a Japanese destroyer that was on patrol, close to a long-disputed gas field.\(^{184}\) According to the Japanese officials, the helicopter flew close to 70m (230 ft) of the Japanese destroyer at a less than 40m altitude.\(^{185}\)

N. **August 24:** Kenichiro Sasae, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, lodges a protest against Ambassador of the PRC.\(^{186}\) The Japanese Coast Guard identified the entry of two Chinese fishing surveillance vessels, Yuzheng 31001 and Yuzheng 201, into Japanese territorial waters around Kuba Islands, despite warnings from the Japanese side. The two vessels purportedly asserted China’s claims to the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and claimed that the enforcement activities are in accordance with China’s jurisdiction. The Japanese Coast Guard asserts that the two Chinese fisheries intruded upon the Japanese-claimed 2-mile nautical zone around the disputed islands.\(^{187}\)

O. **November 6-9:** After paying a $3,850 fine, the crew from a Chinese fishing boat was released by the Japanese authorities. According to Tokyo, the boat continued venturing into Japanese coastal waters, even after repeated warnings by the Japanese authorities.\(^{188}\) The crewmembers were arrested near the Goto islands, which are undisputed Japanese territory.\(^{189}\)

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\(^{185}\) Buerk.


\(^{187}\) “China defends boat patrol in disputed waters,” *Agence France-Presse*, August 24, 2011, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iVsR-lq8ZjLKKBWtMe9NpCXEEgCg?docId=CNG.af132ca0e3a0fd2cd947182992220075.3f1.


\(^{189}\) “Japan releases Chinese fishing boat.”
P. **February 19:** According to Beijing, the Chinese maritime law enforcement authorities expelled two Japanese boats in the East China Sea.\(^{190}\) The Japanese ship was conducting a survey in waters 170 kilometers/105 miles north of Okinawa.\(^{191}\) Both Japan and China claim exclusive excavation rights of the Shirakaba or Chunxiao gas field within the East China Sea.\(^{192}\)

Q. **March 3:** Tokyo sparked a diplomatic row with Beijing and Taipei after giving Japanese names to thirty-nine disputed islands within the East China Sea when defining its Exclusive Economic Zone.\(^{193}\) In retaliation, China’s State Oceanic Administration released seventy Chinese names and descriptions for the islands. Taiwan also lodged a protest against Japan for renaming four islets in the disputed territories.\(^{194}\)

R. **April 16-17:** Ishihara first announced the plan to purchase the islands when he visited Washington on April 16.\(^{195}\) The Tokyo metropolitan government confirmed Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara’s intentions to use public funds to buy uninhabited islands in the East China Sea from private owners on April 17.\(^{196}\)

S. **July 7:** Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda stated that Tokyo was negotiating to buy islands in the East China Sea from a private Japanese citizen to strengthen Japan’s defense.\(^{197}\) In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin stated “China’s holy territory simply cannot be allowed to be bought or sold by any person.”\(^{198}\)

**July 11:** The Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs lodged an official complaint to the Chinese Ambassador to Japan on the entry of the vessels Yuzheng 202, Yuzheng 204 and Yuzheng 35001 into territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands earlier that morning.\(^{199}\)

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\(^{192}\) “Japan says China ordered halt to marine survey.”


\(^{196}\) “Tokyo governor seeks to buy islands disputed with China.”


\(^{198}\) Yamaguchi.

July 12: Japan protested Chinese patrol ships entering Japanese territorial waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands after 6 PM on July 12. 200

T. August 15: Japan strongly protested the actions by Hong Kong activists who entered the territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands, and illegally entered Uotsurishima Island. 201

U. August 19, 2012: Ten Japanese nationals, including five local assembly members, conducted an authorized landing on one of the disputed islands. Japanese Chief Cabinet spokesman Osamu Fujimura called the unauthorized landing “regrettable.” 202 Beijing has protested the Japanese activists’ landing, and the trip fueled further demonstrations within China. 203

August 27: Anti-Japanese protestors attacked Uichiro Niwa, Japan’s Ambassador to China’s vehicle. 204 The Japanese flag was ripped from the car, though the ambassador was unhurt. The Japanese government rejected the Tokyo government’s application to land on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in interest of maintaining stability. 205

September 11: The Japanese government purchased three of the eight islands claimed by Japan, China and Taiwan for $26.2 million. 206 News of the purchase precipitated outrage and protests from Taiwan and China. The same day the news of the purchase was released, China sent two patrol ships to “assert its sovereignty” over the islands. 207

September 19: Chinese protestors demonstrated outside the Japanese Embassy in Beijing on the 81st anniversary of the incident that sparked the 1931 Japanese invasion of

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202 Wang.


206 “Zhong Guo Tong Ri Ben de Guan Xi.”


208 Robert Saiget, “China sends ships to islands purchased by Japan,” Agence France-Presse, September 11, 2012, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iWreBMI1gFHPa0HNsgWF8GylUwyA?docId=CNG.56449accdb55cbfa2f5220f4ebc0c387.6e1
China. AntJapanese protests also occurred outside Japanese consulates in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenyang. In response to the anti-Japanese protests, some of which turned violent, certain Japanese manufacturers announced that they were going to halt production in China.

September 20: Japan’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura announced that Tokyo would seek damages from Beijing for damages to its diplomatic missions from anti-Japanese protests.

September 25: According to the Japanese Coast Guard, dozens of fishing boats and twelve coast guard ships from Taiwan briefly entered waters near the disputed island chain in the East China Sea. At the same time, ten Chinese surveillance ships were also in the area but did not enter the area claimed by Japan. The Taiwanese trip organizers claimed that the trip will be the largest action ever taken by Taiwan regarding the islands’ sovereignty and that the flotilla was a demonstration of the local fishermen’s assertion of their rights of “traditional fishing grounds.”

V. December 13: Tokyo protested the PRC’s State Oceanic Administration’s airplane intruding into the Japanese territorial air space, as well as four vessels’ intrusion into the territorial waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands on December 13.

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209 Ogura and Mullen.
210 Ogura and Mullen.
212 Katie Hunt and Junko Ogura.
Appendix 2: Chinese Netizen Sentiment towards Japan Codebook

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Center for International Security and Cooperation Honors Program
April 4, 2012

Unit of Data Collection: Each post which contains Chinese words and phrases relating to the “Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute” within the database. The database is comprised of posts produced by the Strong Nation Forum’s search engine under the preset category of “Sino-Japanese discussion” from March 16, 2008 to December 31, 2012. Each data unit within the database includes the post title, the number of replies, the user name, timestamp, post content, and post URL.

Coding Instructions:
The 284 posts in the ten percent sample are randomly selected from a sub-dataset of 2,835 posts. Only code utilizing the information available to the user.

Coding Scheme:
Each post is coded for the following variables.
Neitzen Perception of:

Total frequency count for China
• China’s role in geopolitics
  o China is a rising power in the international system
  o China is currently a weak country
  o China was weak in the past
• China’s interaction with Japan
  o Calls for rational action towards Japan
  o China is able to win a war with Japan
  o China is the rightful owner of the islands
  o China is unable to win in a war with Japan
  o Japan views China as a threat
  o Significance of a boycott against Japan
  o The Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute is insignificant when compared to overall Sino-Japanese relations
  o The Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute is viewed as the most important factor in Sino-Japanese relations
  o Wants China to take a strong stance towards Japan

Total frequency count for Japan
• Japan’s interaction with China
  o Japan as a declining power
  o Japan historically acts aggressively towards China
  o Japan is manipulating the U.S. to act aggressively towards China
  o Japanese activity surrounding the islands
  o Japanese nationalization of the islands
  o Perception of Japan as an inferior, state or ethnic group
- Positive perception of Japan
  - Other Japanese territorial disputes
    - Chishima/Kuril dispute
    - Takeshima/Dokdo dispute

**Total frequency count for the United States**
- The U.S.’ role in geopolitics
  - The U.S. as a power reengaging with Asia
  - The U.S. as a strong nation
  - The U.S. as a weak country
- The U.S.’ role in the Sino-Japanese relationship
  - The U.S. is involved with Japan against China
  - The U.S. is a neutral actor
- Total frequency count for Taiwan
  - Taiwan’s sovereignty
  - Taiwan’s collaboration with China
  - Taiwan’s activity around the islands
- **Total frequency count for historical memory**
  - First Sino-Japanese War
  - Historical legacy of World War Two
- **Total frequency count for the significance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands**
  - Natural resources
  - The islands’ strategic position
  - The U.N. Law of the Sea
Appendix 3: Sample Emergent Coding Form

Coding Form:
Date: 
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Coder ID: 
Post URL: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of Sample Coding Form</th>
<th>Netizen Perception of China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China’s role in geopolitics</td>
<td>China’s interaction with Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China is a rising power in the international system</td>
<td>China is currently a weak country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China was weak in the past</td>
<td>Calls for rational action towards Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China is able to win in a war with Japan</td>
<td>China is the rightful owner of the islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China is unable to win in a war with Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post URL
Appendix 4: Scatter Graphs for Individual Keywords

Territorial Sovereignty

"Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute" Frequency

These scatter graphs are arranged alphabetically within the territorial sovereignty, historical memory, geopolitical and other contemporary issues categories listed in the Dictionary.
"Xisha/Paracel/Hoàng Sa Islands" Frequency

Date

03/16/08 10/02/08 04/20/09 11/06/09 05/25/10 12/11/10 06/29/11 01/15/12 08/02/12

Frequency

0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 1.2 1.4 1.6 1.8 2

03/16/08 10/02/08 04/20/09 11/06/09 05/25/10 12/11/10 06/29/11 01/15/12 08/02/12

"Xisha/Paracel/Hoàng Sa Islands" Frequency
Historical Memory

"1937" Frequency

Date

Frequency

03/16/08 10/02/08 04/20/09 11/06/09 05/25/10 12/11/10 06/29/11 01/15/12 08/02/12
Geopolitical Relations

"United States" Frequency

Date

Frequency

11/14/07 06/01/08 12/18/08 07/06/09 01/22/10 08/10/10 02/26/11 09/14/11 04/01/12 10/18/12 05/06/13

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18
Other Contemporary Issues

"Japanese Goods Boycott" Frequency

Date

03/16/08 10/02/08 04/20/09 11/06/09 05/25/10 12/11/10 06/29/11 01/15/12 08/02/12

Frequency

0 2 4 6 8 10 12