**State-Centric or State-in-Society:**

**Collective Memory, National Identity and Nationalist Mobilization in the Linkage Politics of Chinese Foreign Relations**

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***Abstract***

This dissertation, situated in the analytic paradigm of historical institutionalism, attempts to disentangle China’s foreign policy behavior “inside-out.” To decipher how domestic politics and Beijing’s diplomatic formulation is synthesized within the ideational enterprise of nationalism, two interrelated dynamics of the indigenous political culture—collective memory and national identity—are selected to examine the Chinese state-society relationship in the linkage politics of its foreign relations. In the symbolic reserve for the internal and external legitimation of the regime, public recollection of the foreign aggression and intrusion in China’s modern history is the raw material of the strategic narratives projected by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to shore up its political authority and justify the nation-state’s persistent quest to regain a rightful place in the international arena. As a social carrier of traumatic memory, master commemorative accounts sanctioned in the official historiography have infused a dualistic national identity and a derived state emotion, which shape the perception of the Chinese populace in the antagonistic intergroup interactions. The memory-encoded norms, serving as the scripts on the stage of China’s diplomacy, have guided the popular assessment of the state’s performance and prescribe the ethical behavior for the in-group members during emotionally charged flashpoint events, and constitute the supply and demand sides of nationalist mobilization. Such historical institutions, while opening the window of opportunity for the CCP leadership to send a credible signal of domestic audience cost to its foreign counterparts, have bounded its rationality in conducting a pragmatic diplomacy and have empowered popular agency in the Chinese foreign policy marketplace. Given that the emotive and cultural symbols of Chinese nationalism can be both manipulated and appropriated in the framing and counter-framing endeavors at the domestic-foreign policy intersection, the construction of nationalist discourse is a process of constitutive interaction wherein the authoritarian state and societal actors are mutually transformed.