

lack of transparency. Evidence of the status of US public opinion is available almost everywhere – and yet, it seems, Chinese leaders consistently misperceive or misunderstand the parameters within which American leaders work, and the ways in which this opinion restrains and constricts them.

The other issue is the ways in which from the time of Mao onwards, ideology – while important – has always been balanced by pragmatism. The nature of this pragmatism, of course, changed from the early era onwards. But Mao cannot easily, except in the aberrant era of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1969, be accused of enslavement to predetermined ideas. He was flexible with the Soviet Union, and, in his later life, with the US. His aim was to acknowledge the awful geography in which China existed, with so many potential enemies ranged around it, and to find a balance of power through diversification of alliances. To this day, Xi Jinping maintains the same stance, visiting small countries because “they still have a role to play in shaping a balance of power favourable to China” (p. 232).

Two other factors are striking about this book. The first is that the discussion of grand strategy means that a great number of domestic issues disappear. The Great Leap Forward, the famines in the early 1960s and the Cultural Revolution, while mentioned, simply get subsumed in discussion on the network of alliances and emerging foreign policy issues around China. Did Chinese leaders really divide their thinking up in this way? One’s impression reading their works is that they thought from a very clear domestic context, and in many ways this book is light on the detail of that. The second is that despite Khan stating at the start of his work that study of China’s grand strategic thinking has been neglected, he fails to mention that there has been lots of discussion about at least one very clear Chinese strategic objective: the nationalistic one of creating a powerful, strong country. Lots has been written on this desire, predating even Mao. It is odd that this crucial formula of making a “great, strong country” doesn’t appear in the book, especially as it has been the overarching slogan for the whole nation-building project from the late-Qing era down to today.

Nevertheless, *Haunted by Chaos* is an accessible and well-informed account of a complex issue, and it merits wide readership. It is good for general readers, for those on international relations courses, and for students of contemporary Chinese and Cold War history.

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The Great Han: Race, Nationalism, and Tradition in China Today

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Kevin Carrico’s book *The Great Han* investigates participants of the Han clothing movement and critiques their ideology. Carrico’s ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in 2010 and 2011 in several cities with active movement organizations. The movement began in the early 2000s, and its active participants were “young and fairly educated professionals, with a roughly 1:1 proportion of men and women” (p. 40). They utilized internet forums and urban performances of Han dresses to promote their ethno-nationalists beliefs.

Carrico does not focus on the movement or its social context but on the psychology and values of its participants. The book's main theoretical concern is to explain – with a framework inspired by Jacques Lacan, Niklas Luhmann and Peter Sloterdijk – why participants embrace a blatantly racist form of neotraditionalist ethno-nationalism. Chapter one outlines a typical participant's beliefs in nationalism, race and tradition. Chapter two interprets the movement as an attempt to ethnicize the Han ethnic group through dress and to construct a rich culture for the group's collective identity. Chapter three analyses four participants' personal profiles. Carrico links together their anxiety, their marginal social positions and their embrace of ethno-nationalism. Chapter four interprets the participants' strategic use of dress, public rituals and photography as an attempt to enhance the materiality of their unreal fantasy of Han ethnicism. Chapter five elaborates how participants, in denial of logic or facts, construct the Manchus as the contemporary enemy of the Han ethnic group. Chapter six explores how a “ladies' academy” operates as a patriarchal and heteronormative institution. In chapter seven, Carrico adopts his framework to examine four other social or intellectual movements in China that promote similar neotraditional nationalisms to the Han clothing movement.

I find Carrico's critique of the ideologies of the Han clothing movement to be largely valid and relevant. Chapter six is especially pertinent for its intersectional scope. I also find the book's ethnography of participants to be rich, timely and useful. The Han clothing movement is one of the most high-profile social movements in contemporary China. Yet scholars neglect it for its seemingly frivolous focus on dress and its extreme political incorrectness. This ethnography fills an important research gap.

Unfortunately, the theoretical framework of this book does not enhance this ethnographic material. I wish that Carrico had adhered to the frameworks he implicitly adopts for each chapter. They include whiteness studies (chapter two), new social movement theory (chapter three), performance theory (chapter four), framing theory (chapter five), feminist and queer theories (chapter six), and critical race theory and critiques of ethno-nationalism (all chapters). Instead, he puts forward an unelaborated framework for the book and straitjackets all analyses with it.

There are four problems with the framework. Firstly, the three theories of the framework do not match, and Carrico does not justify their combination – the “theory section” of this book contains only a dozen pages (pp. 13–15, 19–29). The combining of Luhmannian autopoiesis and Sloterdijkian spherology may be acceptable – it will probably involve a spatialization of Luhmann's systems theory. But Lacan's psychoanalytic theory hardly matches with systems theory and spherology. Luhmann is a canonical figure in relational sociology and Sloterdijk develops a relational philosophy. Lacanian psychoanalysis, at least in the way that Carrico adopts it, is decidedly substantialist.

Secondly, engagement between Carrico's framework and theories of nationalism is too limited given his ambition of establishing a new explanation of nationalism. For example, Carrico's specifying of the “elementary structures of nationalism” as mainly affective would require a discussion of how his framework connects to current theories on ethno-nationalism (p. 19).

Thirdly, it is meta-theoretically and methodologically problematic to directly apply abstract grand theories to ethnographic data. Luhmann's autopoiesis is supposed to explain all structures with staying power; Lacanian psychoanalysis is supposed to explain all individuals; Sloterdijk's concept of “sphere” is devised to describe all human practices. The success of applying them to the Han clothing movement does not theoretically prove much aside from the fact that the movement is composed of individuals, human practices and structures.

Fourthly, Carrico's framework is supposed to replace Anderson's "imagined communities" thesis and to be globally generalizable. Yet by the concluding chapter, it looks like the framework is specially tailored for analysing neotraditional nationalism in contemporary China. Perhaps he does not mean that. I can imagine how the framework can be used to explain post-truth Americans and Europeans in the past few years, for example. But if Carrico's framework is meant to be globally generalizable, a serious problem emerges. The framework actually implies that most nationalists and patriots are ethno-nationalists. This is a big and unsubstantiated claim.

These four problems negatively affect the book's empirical analyses. For example, except that in chapter six, the analyses are organized around the proof that movement participants' actions and beliefs are self-deconstructing and self-reproducing. The aim is to show that they are autopoietic and that there is a gap between imagination and reality. But from a relational sociological viewpoint and a Lacanian one, being self-reproductive or desiring fantasies is not special. Both an ethno-nationalist and a liberal multiculturalist can be described in this way.

Carrico suggests that he wishes to offer "a considerably more complex picture" than portraying the movement as "a fairly extreme nationalist group" (pp. 16–17). However, there is very little discussion on the sociocultural context of Chinese national dress, or of the varieties of Chinese nationalism. Carrico tends to over-state the constructedness of Han clothing (e.g. p. 37). Numerous Chinese citizens, as audiences of popular culture, are already familiar with images of historical dresses in television drama, animation and video games. Meanwhile, readers unfamiliar with China may get the impression from this book that ethno-nationalism represents Chinese nationalism. But in reality, contemporary ethno-nationalists (whose imaginary enemies are Japanese and Americans instead of Manchus), state nationalists, liberal patriotic citizens and Little Pinks are far more numerous. They embrace very different nationalist beliefs. Many of them regard Han clothing activists as lunatics. Likewise, there is insufficient description of internal differentiation within the Han clothing movement. For example, there is a large cultural nationalist wing in addition to the ethno-nationalist wing in the movement. Its lineage can be traced from influential core activists such as *Tianyazaixiaolou* in the mid-2000s to the "female celestials' faction" (*xiannüdang*) in the late 2010s.

As a study on ethnic dress or an ethnography of Chinese ethno-nationalists, this book is very valuable. But its contribution to the theorization of nationalism and the understanding of Chinese nationalism is questionable.

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China's Governance Puzzle: Enabling Transparency and Participation in a Single-Party State

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If we were only to look at standard measures of governance, like the Polity or Freedom House indices, we would mistakenly conclude that the Chinese political system has remained completely stagnant for the past 30 years. Such indices fail to capture smaller governance innovations within the Chinese Communist Party's