Abstract: Nationalism has been used in clichéd and hegemonic discourses of the West to describe China’s national feeling. In this paper, the author first analyzes the epistemological, political and globalization origins of the myth of Chinese nationalism, which are embodied in political nationalism, ethnic nationalism, and cultural nationalism. He argues that to shape a new Chinese national identity through modifying the so-called “new nationalism” is merely to continue the myth of Chinese nationalism in the new era. The author then puts forward a new analysis of the frameworks of “of the nation, by the nation, for the nation” and “nationalization stage—modernization stage—internationalization stage.” He points out that the future Chinese national identity should include three aspects: an open and inclusive national spirit, a harmonious national character, and a moderate sense of national pride. As the largest developing country in the world and a rising world power, China has to achieve modernization and internationalization at the same time and to unite the motherland and realize nationalization, accomplishing the whole task at one stroke and binding together the trinity of historical traditions, international trends, and world identity. In the course of building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity, China is seeking her new identity as a responsible country. Finally, the author concludes that China’s peaceful development is shaping China’s new identity and will naturally destroy all kinds of myths about Chinese nationalism.

I. Introduction: Nationalism as a Hegemonic Discourse

Since the end of the Cold War, nationalism has been willfully used by Westerners have willfully used “nationalism” as a discriminatory discourse or label to identify Chinese politics and culture, just as they
generally called socialist national ideology as Communism during the Cold War. From the perspective of the Western society, nationalism has now become an important or even the mainstream ideology of the third world. Besides ideology, another key reason behind the abuse of nationalism stems from cultural difference. The Chinese culture is so complex that it is often misunderstood in a conceptionalized and labellized way just as that “guanxi” seems to have been regarded as the master key to understand Chinese politics and culture. It is in this sense that the Chinese nationalism is only a myth. What is a myth? This paper defines it as the sort of conceptionalized and labellized misunderstanding about others’ identity that one draws from imagination and his own experience.

Being aware of this problem, some domestic scholars have tried to develop the useful and discard the useless part of nationalism by saying: “Nationalism represents the resistance of the weak, what the strong needs is patriotism and stateism,” “when the state is weak and humiliated, patriotism and stateism must be transformed into nationalism; when the state is powerful and influential, nationalism must be transformed into patriotism and stateism. Why? Because patriotism and stateism are spatial and static, and nationalism is temporal and dynamic.”¹ Some other scholars have also made efforts to “clarify” nationalism, urging people not to demonize nationalism while insisting that there should be a limit to nationalism.²

In fact, it is futile to try to revise or save the image of nationalism. Since nationalism itself is the source of problem, it is dead-ended to work on nationalism. Taking a historical and dialectic look at nationalism, we will find all the paradoxes in the discrimination against nationalism. Nationalism, in essence, has become a hegemonic discourse of the West.

Though its national history is very long, there was no mention of “nation” in ancient China but ethnic groups and tribes. According to textual research, the Chinese term of “nation” was translated from Japanese. The term of “nation” was first used by Wang Tao in an article