

Robert Weatherley · Qiang Zhang

History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China

A Double-Edged Sword

palgrave
macmillan

Aggressive Nationalism: Utilising the Yuanmingyuan Incident

On 18 October 1860, Britain's High Commissioner to China Lord James Elgin (son of Thomas Elgin of Elgin Marbles fame) ordered more than 3,500 British troops to set fire to Yuanmingyuan, comprising a vast complex of residential palaces, temples, ancestral shrines, libraries and art galleries situated in north-west Beijing. As the final act of the Second Opium War, the destruction of Yuanmingyuan was carried out in direct retaliation for the kidnap and torture of a small delegation of Anglo-French emissaries who had arrived in Beijing to insist on the enactment of the terms of the 1858 Treaty of Tianjin. Twenty members of the group died in captivity, including a correspondent for the London Times. The other sixteen, including the British envoys Henry Loch and Harry Parkes, were released after surviving for almost two weeks in the infamous Chinese Board of Punishments (Wolsey 1862; BBC 2015a). Prior to igniting the palaces, British and French troops stole thousands of priceless antiques, many of which are now displayed in museums around the world. Shortly after the site had been reduced to ruins, a sign was erected with the inscription 'this is the reward for perfidy and cruelty'.

Yuanmingyuan was ransacked again in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion when anti-Qing Chinese looters broke into the gardens to thief precious timber and raze the buildings that had been repaired after 1860 at the instruction of the Qing court. The troops of the Eight-Nation Alliance which had been dispatched to suppress the Boxers and relieve the siege of the foreign legations stole whatever remained of artistic or monetary value, including bronze statues, stone carvings and ceramic ornaments. Ironically,

given the nationality of those who ordered its annihilation, all that remains of the original site are the ruins of the European-style palaces which were never fully destroyed because they were made of stone and marble.

Although the destruction of Yuanmingyuan was largely ignored during the Mao era, the launch of the Patriotic Education Campaign saw a sharp increase in official references to the incident and this has continued in more recent years, especially in the build-up to the 150th anniversary of the incident. Sometimes the focus is on the wisdom of whether or not to restore the ruined site to its former glory. Sometimes there are impassioned calls for the return of the stolen antiques to their rightful home. In each case the CCP's objective is the same: to remind the Chinese people of the misery of foreign imperialism in an attempt to incite a sense of anger and indignation against foreign, particularly Western nations. This is what we refer to in this chapter as aggressive nationalism. In so doing, the CCP is also seeking to bolster its own nationalist credentials as the party which liberated China from the Century of Humiliation and has since transformed the motherland into a major international power.

However, as we will see below, the public response to the CCP's aggressive nationalist stance on Yuanmingyuan has not always been palatable for the ruling party. Whilst there is plenty of public outrage over the issue, not all of it is directed towards foreign powers. Some of it is directed at the party. Some critics suggest (no doubt correctly) that the official narrative on the burning and looting of the site has been extravagantly finessed by the party for its own propaganda purposes. Others question the appropriateness of the CCP's choice of Yuanmingyuan as a symbol of national suffering given the era of elitism and inequality during which it was built. Some are scathing about the time and money spent by the CCP in keeping the legacy of the incident alive, particularly given some of the more pressing socio-economic issues facing the PRC. Most significant of all are the accusations that China is still too submissive in its dealings with foreign powers, despite the party's claims to have freed the nation from imperialist subjugation. The irony here is that rather than strengthening its nationalist legitimacy, the debate that has arisen over Yuanmingyuan may well be serving to erode that legitimacy.

THE TRAGEDY OF YUANMINGYUAN

The origins of Yuanmingyuan date back to the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) when a collection of private gardens were created in an area of Beijing that was already resplendent with natural springs and scattered

hills. Successive emperors from the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) authorised an increase in the number of gardens, together with the construction of a summer residence around the gardens where emperors could retreat from the stifling ceremonial formality of the Forbidden City. But it was the Qianlong Emperor (1711–1799) who gave Yuanmingyuan its definitive identity, overseeing the creation of a vast complex of villas, pavilions, gardens, lakes and hills. Translating as Garden of Perfection and Brightness, Yuanmingyuan is better known to foreigners as the Old Summer Palace because of its status as the emperor's residence prior to the construction of the nearby Yiheyuan (or the Summer Palace). But it was more than just a summer residence. It served as a suburban administrative base for five successive generations of Manchu rulers from where they carried out their official business, including receiving foreign tributaries and convening important political conferences.

The tragedy of Yuanmingyuan's destruction is difficult to overstate. This is verified by descriptive eye witness accounts. When the French General de Montauban and his troops arrived in the gardens to begin the attack, he was apparently spellbound by what he saw, describing it as 'a vision of the Thousand and One Nights, one such that no wild imagination could dream the tangible reality that stood before one's eyes' (Broudehoux 2004, p. 58). According to Charles Gordon, captain of the British Royal Engineers who also participated in the attacks, 'we went out, and, after pillaging it, burned the whole place, destroying in a vandal-like manner'. Noting that it took more than three days to burn Yuanmingyuan to the ground, Gordon lamented that:

You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the palaces we burnt. It made one's heart sore to burn them; in fact these places were so large, and we were so pressed for time, that we could not plunder them carefully. Quantities of gold ornaments were burnt, considered as brass. It was wretchedly demoralising work for an army. (Opoku 2009)

Before the destruction commenced in full, many of Yuanmingyuan's finest art works were extracted and sent to England and France, sometimes straight to the residences of Queen Victoria and Napoleon III. Queen Victoria received a Pekinese dog from Yuanmingyuan, the first of its kind to be seen in Europe, which she appropriately (or perhaps inappropriately) called Looty. Another irony was that the artefacts stolen from Yuanmingyuan had originally been gifts to the Emperor from European monarchs. Charles Gordon managed to steal an entire imperial throne

which he donated to his regimental headquarters in Chatham, England, where it still stands today. Some items that were too cumbersome to carry away were sold to Beijing merchants. Other antiques were mindlessly destroyed, including ornate statues in the temples which were bayoneted in the search for the jewels they might contain (Broudehoux 2004, p. 58).

One consolation for the Chinese (if you can call it that) was that the Anglo-French troops preferred to steal the vast quantities of porcelain on display in the palaces rather than the bronze antiques, many of which dated back to the Shang (1556–1046 BC), Zhou (1046–256 BC) and Han dynasties (206 BC–220 AD). But not all the bronze was overlooked. Sculptures of the famous twelve zodiac animals were stolen, and their return to China has become a focal point of intense public attention, as we will see shortly.

One of the most high-profile foreign critics of the Yuanmingyuan incident was the French poet, novelist and dramatist Victor Hugo who famously wrote a letter in November 1861 to the English Captain Butler in which he condemned the Anglo-French actions:

One day two bandits entered the Summer Palace. One plundered, the other burned. Victory can be a thieving woman, or so it seems. The devastation of the Summer Palace was accomplished by the two victors acting jointly. (Opoku 2009)

Hugo continued:

All the treasures of all our cathedrals put together could not equal this formidable and splendid museum of the Orient. It contained not only masterpieces of art, but masses of jewellery. What a great exploit, what a windfall! One of the two victors filled his pockets; when the other saw this he filled his coffers. And back they came to Europe, arm in arm, laughing away. Such is the story of the two bandits. We Europeans are the civilised ones, and for us the Chinese are the barbarians. This is what civilization has done to barbarism. (Opoku 2009)

It appears that Hugo never actually travelled to China to view the site of the ruined palaces. Moreover, despite his apparent outrage at the incident, Hugo later admitted to having purchased some of the Chinese silk stolen from Yuanmingyuan by British officers (Broudehoux 2004, p. 59). Nevertheless, his critical words have been gleefully cited time and time again by the CCP in its efforts to keep the Yuanmingyuan incident firmly in the public consciousness.

NEGLECT OF THE SITE UNDER MAO

Despite the often anti-Western rhetoric of the Mao regime, official denunciations of the Yuanmingyuan incident were surprisingly rare under Mao. The apparent lack of significance attached to this incident was reflected in the physical neglect of the site, with little effort expended on protecting it despite the area being declared a municipal park at the request of Zhou Enlai. During the 1960s, much of Yuanmingyuan was allocated to local peasants and this led to further neglect and decay. As Haiyan Lee (2009, p. 161) explains 'in the years following the Great Leap Forward nearby production teams began to cut down trees, flatten the hills and fill the lakes and waterways, make rice paddies, build hog and poultry farms and set up factories and workshops'. By the mid-1970s, there were 15 work units, 20 villages and 270 families occupying the walled-off south-western part of the site (Broudehoux 2004, p. 24). This area has remained walled-off and was scathingly described by one disgruntled observer as follows:

This sacred site – 'the garden of all gardens' – has now become a festering ground crowded with garbage heaps, vegetable plots, pigsties, and beancurd presses! Motley groups of peasant and migrant families have converged here in the thousands to make a living and to multiply in a disorderly and slipshod manner, generating pollution at a shocking speed and hastening the final deterioration of Yuanmingyuan. (Wang 1999, p. 800)

Another observer bemoaned the woeful disregard of the site, concluding poignantly that 'no one with the slightest knowledge of Yuanmingyuan's history could stand amid such things and hold back their tears. Where were the world-renowned royal gardens? Where were the famed creations of the ingenious Chinese people?' (Wang 1999, p. 815).

It was not until the 1980s that the CCP began to turn its attention to Yuanmingyuan. A government bureau and a scholarly committee were formed, symposia and writing forums were held, and the party reclaimed Yuanmingyuan as a historical site, authorising the creation of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins Park which has been open to tourists for some years (Lee 2009, p. 156). The west side of Yuanmingyuan was modestly renovated in 2005, several small temples have been rebuilt, and there are a number of tourist attractions including a museum, a small funfair, countless souvenir shops and even jet-ski rides on one of the main lakes. Tourists are allowed to trample around and touch the ruins

with no restrictions placed on photography. Julia Lovell (2011, p. 345) believes that the CCP is finally capitalising on the propaganda value of the Yuanmingyuan ruins, 'replacing the pigsties and piles of rubbish with new signs littered across the gardens reminding visitors of what would have been there, if the British and French had not burnt or stolen it first'. But taken as a whole, the site remains largely untouched as the CCP contemplates what to do with it.

CONSTRUCTING A HISTORICAL LEGACY

In contrast to the physical fate of the site, the party has acted much more decisively over its historical legacy, placing this firmly on the Chinese political agenda and using its best endeavours to keep the incident firmly in the public memory. This was first apparent with the launching of the Patriotic Education Campaign. The 1991 'Circular on Fully Using Cultural Relics to Conduct Education in Patriotism and Revolutionary Traditions' noted in the previous chapter made direct reference to the destruction of Yuanmingyuan and stressed the importance of retrieving the antiques that were stolen by the Anglo-French forces, describing this as the patriotic duty of all Chinese citizens. As the campaign spread into the education sector, school children, including those at primary school level, were taught in great detail about the indignity suffered at Yuanmingyuan within the wider context of the Century of Humiliation. Compulsory first-year university courses on modern Chinese history which highlighted the suffering inflicted by the imperialists made explicit references to the Yuanmingyuan incident. Yuanmingyuan was designated as one of a number of patriotic education bases established throughout China during the early 1990s that students of all ages are required to visit (Wang 2008, p. 796). Anecdotal evidence suggests that, during such visits, students are encouraged to articulate their feelings of disgust towards former imperialist nations and then to repeat this process once they are back in the classroom. In addition, numerous signs have been erected in and around Yuanmingyuan reminding visitors of the incident. There is even a 'Never Forget National Humiliation' memorial wall on which is inscribed details of 'the sordid history of European and American incursions into China, of opium dealing, and the imposition of unequal treaties that made up the century of humiliation' (China Beat 2009).

Another way in which the party has sought to preserve the memory of Yuanmingyuan is to recall the incident when it believes that the West is

still acting aggressively towards China, using the state-controlled media to articulate its views. So, for example, following the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May 1999, an article published in the People's Daily made a direct comparison between the bombing and the destruction of Yuanmingyuan, stating dramatically that 'through the Embassy riddled with bullet holes covering the charred building, I can see reflected the destroyed ruins of Yuanmingyuan' (RMRB 1999b). Another People's Daily article angrily insisted that China would never again be downtrodden by Western powers, citing the burning of Yuanmingyuan as one in a series of past humiliations that must never be repeated:

This is not a period when Western forces can plunder the imperial palace at will, burn down Yuanmingyuan and snatch Hong Kong and Macao, nor is it the same period as when the corrupt Qing government or Chiang Kai-shek ruled. China has already stood up. (RMRB 1999a)

Similar impassioned analogies to the Yuanmingyuan incident were made to mark the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the US attack.

The hosting of international events in China has also been used by the CCP to resurrect the memory of Yuanmingyuan. This was first apparent during the 1990 Asian Games in Beijing when a number of newspaper articles made reference to the incident. One article suggested that China was much stronger domestically in 1990 than it was in 1860 and was in a much better position on the world stage as it moved towards the twenty-first century (JFJB 1990).

There were further references to Yuanmingyuan in the build-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. For example, the Xinhua News Agency used the Olympics to draw a symbolic comparison between the ruins of Olympia and the ruins of Yuanmingyuan. A further comparison was made between the flames of the Olympic torch and the flames that engulfed the palaces (XZX 2008). The tone became confrontational in Chinese state media reports about overseas demonstrators disrupting the Olympic torch relay in protest at China's human rights record in Tibet. Particular venom was directed towards French protestors and the perceived support given to them by the French government and media who were accused of gross hypocrisy in light of their participation in destroying Yuanmingyuan. As the People's Daily put it 'if France wants to talk to China about human rights, they first need to apologise for what they

did to Yuanmingyuan and then return the great quantity of Chinese relics that they stole' (RMRB 2008a). Following this, public opinion polls in China (cited enthusiastically in the *People's Daily*) showed a sharp decline in positive feelings towards France (RMRB 2008b) and a sudden increase in the public boycotting of French goods (XHW 2008).

Another high-profile event that provided an opportunity to evoke the memory of Yuanmingyuan was the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. In an article published by the *People's Liberation Army Daily* entitled 'Together the Military and Civilians Celebrate the Return of Hong Kong', the authors declared that the handover 'had finally removed the stains from the imperialists' burning of Yuanmingyuan' (JFJB 1997).

The media often publishes dramatic personal accounts made by visitors to the site. One article claims that 'in Yuanmingyuan's scorched ruins, I see a pool of blood' (RMRB 2009). Another article laments Yuanmingyuan's 'former imperial glory that has been reduced to a royal scar' (RMRB 2010a). A report in *China Aviation News* describes the ruins as 'like a bleeding wound, still tingling in each Chinese descendant' (ZHTB 2010). Even articles which refer fleetingly to Yuanmingyuan rarely fail to make mention of its destruction. A seemingly innocuous article about the completion of the Beijing Number 4 subway line observes how the new line passes through Yuanmingyuan and then automatically defaults to anguished and protracted descriptions of its annihilation, completely changing the original focus of the article (GZRB 2009).

We noted earlier the critical comments made by Victor Hugo and how these have often been recalled by the CCP by way of reminder of the incident. In a strongly worded article published by the *People's Liberation Army Daily* entitled 'Hugo's Letter Exposes the Face of the Two Robbers,' the authors insisted that 'we must not forget the bullying and oppression during that period of history and we must not forget this righteous Western author's loud calls from over 100 years ago' (JFJB 1995). A later article in *People's Liberation Army Daily* included a reading of the letter by Hugo's great granddaughter to mark the anniversary of his 200th birthday which was celebrated throughout China (JFJB 2002). Delegations of Chinese officials have visited Hugo's former residence in Paris, almost like a sacred pilgrimage and in 2010 a statue of Hugo was erected in Beijing (CQWB 2010). Media debates about whether or not to restore the ruined site invariably refer to Hugo (ZZX 2002) as do discussions about returning the stolen antiques to China (GZRB 2009).

The media interest in Yuanmingyuan reached its peak in the build-up to the 150th anniversary of its destruction on 18 October 2010. The first commemorative articles started appearing as early as January 2010, with the Wenhui Bao suggesting (somewhat controversially as it turned out) that China was considering inviting an Anglo-French delegation to attend the anniversary ceremony (WHB 2010). This was followed by a plethora of other articles and news reports about, for example, the month-long schedule of events prior to the anniversary date culminating in a live performance by Jackie Chan (XZX 2010a) and a salt sculpture exhibit in Taipei replicating the looted and much-heralded twelve zodiac animals, thereby emphasising the cross-strait significance of the occasion (ZXS 2010). There was also a story covering an official essay-writing contest about the ruins, specifically designed 'to arouse the population's patriotic passion and encourage the public to give more attention to the Yuanmingyuan incident' (ZJCB 2010).

THE NATIONALIST RATIONALE

The rationale for resurrecting the memory of Yuanmingyuan in such a deliberate, concerted and often provocative manner draws directly on the CCP's quest for nationalist legitimacy. We noted in the previous chapter how, after Tiananmen, the party was forced to redirect its popular appeal towards nationalism, presenting itself as the sole defender of Chinese national interests in the face of a seemingly hostile West. A key aspect of this approach has been to utilise the legacy of Yuanmingyuan which it has done in two inter-related ways. Firstly, Yuanmingyuan reminds the Chinese people just how bad life was during the Century of Humiliation. The destruction of the palaces, with their ruins still visible today, is ideal for these purposes, carefully depicted as the living epitome of a terrible period in China's history. By the same token, Yuanmingyuan is a reminder of just how good life is under the CCP, or so the propagandists would have us believe. After liberating China from foreign imperialism in 1949, the CCP is guiding China single-handedly towards superpower status and restoring China to its rightful place in the world. So the dual objective is to create public antagonism towards the West and simultaneously to create public gratitude towards the CCP.

Much of the party's rhetoric bears this out. We noted earlier a reference in the *People's Daily* to the West no longer being able to 'plunder the imperial palace at will, burn down the Yuanmingyuan and snatch

Hong Kong and Macao'. The message from this is clear: the Century of Humiliation is now over and the CCP ended it. Similarly, the claim that 'China has already stood up', drawing conveniently on Mao's words at the Gates of Heavenly Peace on 1 October 1949, strongly implies that the CCP is responsible for this standing up. Likewise, the references to Yuanmingyuan when China hosts major international events such as the Asian Games and the Olympics is intended to contrast the humiliations of the past with the triumphs of the present, again brought about by the CCP. Both of these events were depicted as epitomising national rejuvenation, proof that China, under the CCP, is no longer the "sick man of Asia".

THE DEBATE OVER RESTORATION

The increased focus on the Yuanmingyuan incident has given rise to a number of domestic debates. One of the most prominent concerns whether to restore the site to its former glory or leave it in its current ruinous state. Putting aside issues to do with reconstruction costs, the protection of the local environment and the aesthetics of a rebuild, the most important aspect of the debate for our purposes concerns the historical and political implications of restoring the site or leaving it be. The objective for participants on both sides of the argument is to ensure that Yuanmingyuan retains its symbolic role either as a powerful reminder of imperialist subjugation or as a symbol of China's new-found wealth and prosperity. For the CCP, seemingly undecided on precisely where it stands, the issue at hand is which route offers the best means of further enhancing its nationalist legitimacy.

Leave Alone

Those who want the site left alone insist that this is the only way to ensure the suffering inflicted on the Chinese people during the Century of Humiliation will never be forgotten and will retain its potency as evidence of a bygone era to which China must never return. According to one scholar cited in China Business News, the existing ruins are 'an eternal commemoration of the country's humiliation, such that to restore it would squander its historical, cultural and educational value'. He continues, 'Yuanmingyuan's primary worth today is not the splendour of the palace courtyard or imperial gardens from long ago, but the disgrace that remains from the destruction reaped by the invading armies' (ZGSB 2004).

Ye Yanfang from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) agrees with this perspective. Ye insists that the destruction of Yuanmingyuan is 'like a scar left by the powerful Western nations on the back of the Chinese nation'. For Ye it is crucial to leave the site in its dilapidated state because 'preserving the ruins in Beijing would protect the true facts of history' (China.org 2006). Similarly, Ruan Yisan, Director of the State Institute of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities at Tongji University in Shanghai asserts that 'the present day ruins serves as a testimony to that period of humiliating history' (China.org 2006).

Another opponent of restoration is the internationally acclaimed writer Cong Weixi who suggests that most other countries in the world would not dream of rebuilding their historical monuments. Noting that a Berlin church steeple damaged during the Second World War remains in its original state of disrepair right in the middle of a modern shopping centre, Cong concludes that the intention is 'to remind Germans of a past they dared not forget' (Kutcher 2003, p. 32). For the same reason, Cong suggests, a pillar in Koblenz on which once stood a bronze statue of Germany's combative last emperor, Wilhelm II, has never been replaced after it was completely destroyed during the Second World War. By contrast, Cong believes 'if there had existed such a statue in my country, it would long ago have been replaced. We Chinese have always preferred to repair our history' (Kutcher 2003, p. 32).

A slightly different argument from the anti-restorationist camp is that to rebuild the site would bring yet further shame and embarrassment to China. One frequently made point is that the Western tradition of non-restoration is the better way and to create what some people deride as a fake antique on such a historic and sacred site would simply demonstrate that China remains a backward and inferior nation. According to an article carried by the Xinhua News Agency entitled 'Netizens Against Rebuilding the Yuanmingyuan', this point is commonly made by Chinese internet users. The article also claims that the general online consensus is hostile towards restoration (China.org 2007).

Liao Baoping of the Yancheng Evening News shares this perspective. He believes that Yuanmingyuan, as it once was, comprised a symbol of all that was wrong with China, a self-indulgent nation blinded by its own superiority complex and woefully ignorant of the giant strides in economic and military development being taken by Western nations. As Liao puts it, 'while the West was making great headway in science, technology, and navigation and began imperialist expansion around the

world, the Qing Dynasty rulers were immersed in the illusion of a prosperous era'. To rebuild the palaces would simply remind the Chinese people of 'the extravagance of the Qing Dynasty' (Beijing Review 2011).

Some opponents of restoration believe that proposals to rebuild the old site are purely motivated by financial gain. The architectural historian Chen Zhihua has branded restoration proposals as an exercise in money worship. He points to a reconstructed section of the Great Wall at Badaling where a KFC restaurant and a crowd of noisy vendors have destroyed the rich history of that frontier fortress. Rebuilding Yuanmingyuan, Chen suggests, would ensure the same ghastly outcome (Kutcher 2003, p. 32).

Restore

The most famous exponent of restoring Yuanmingyuan was Zhou Enlai who believed that renovation work could be carried out when national conditions were right. This is seized upon by modern-day restorationists who argue that national conditions are now right. As the second largest economy in the world destined to overtake the USA in the not too distant future, China has a vast reservoir of financial reserves with which to bankroll a major reconstruction project. More importantly, to do so would send the following powerful statement to the rest of world: just as the torching of Yuanmingyuan symbolised a China that was weak, submissive and easy to invade, the reconstruction of the site would symbolise China's spectacular re-emergence on the international scene and laying to rest its legacy of misery and humiliation (ZQZX 2010). This point is also made by Xu Wenrong, chairman of the Hengdian Social and Economic Federation, which completed the largest part of a full-size replica of Yuanmingyuan in Hengdian (Zhejiang Province) in May 2015. According to Xu 'the Old Summer Palace is the pain and pride of China. I want to prove that the Chinese people have the ability to rebuild it on our own' (Global Times 2015). Ironically, the replica Yuanmingyuan has caused almost as much controversy as the original in Beijing, with the administrative department of the latter threatening to sue Xu for breach of intellectual property (Global Times 2015).

So as to accentuate the point that a "new" Yuanmingyuan implies national strength, some restorationists insist that only the Chinese-style quarters should be restored to their earlier dazzling splendour, whilst the stone and marble Western architectural ruins should remain completely untouched.

According to an article in the Chongqing Evening News, to do this would draw a perfect contrast between the vitality of contemporary China and the erosion of modern-day Western power and influence (CQWB 2011). Restoration of the Chinese-style areas only would also allow Yuanmingyuan to retain its currency as a symbol of Western imperialism. As Liu Yang of the Beijing Times suggests 'on the one hand, the grandiosity of the garden can be partly restored. On the other hand, reconstruction and renovation will not demolish the evidence of a Western invasion' (Beijing Review 2011). Likewise, not to restore at least some features of Yuanmingyuan would be to completely squander its value as a reminder of Western imperialism, it is argued. According to Liu, without immediate renovation much of the site will erode completely: 'when the relic site is no longer there, how can you still expect to see the symbol of national humiliation? To reconstruct it aims to better protect it' (Beijing Review 2011). This is a view shared by others such as Tong Shujie of the Dazhong Daily (Beijing Review 2011) and Xu Wenrong (XHNA, 2006).

It is worth noting that Yiheyuan, also situated in north-west Beijing and known simply as the Summer Palace, was likewise decimated in 1860 by the British and French. After being rebuilt during the 1880s, it was attacked again during the assault by the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900 and then restored again shortly afterwards. According to Robert Weil (2013, p. 96) the funds for the reconstruction were diverted away from reserves originally intended to help fortify the Chinese military against further foreign encroachments, the most striking symbol of which 'is the magnificent marble boat that sits dead in its waters, a useless mimic of the real navy that the country desperately needed to repel the modern gunboats of the imperialist invaders'. Weil describes the restoration of Yiheyuan as something which 'speaks to Chinese efforts over the centuries to hold onto and restore their glorious past'. But perhaps the more important point is that the restoration has removed the historical significance of the site as somewhere that epitomised their humiliating past. As Weil puts it, the numerous tourists 'who flock to its grounds are largely spared any sense of its past destruction'.

As noted earlier, the CCP's stance on the restoration debate is not altogether clear, most likely because it can see benefits on both sides of the argument. To leave Yuanmingyuan in its current state as a vast wasteland punctuated by Western-style ruins helps to send a chilling reminder to the Chinese people of Western imperialist subjugation. This gives the party scope to continue using the site as a means of inciting

a public frenzy of anti-foreign jingoism as and when it is deemed necessary, an approach referred to in this book as aggressive nationalism. On the other hand, the full restoration of the site would make a powerful statement about China's ascendancy. The CCP could use this to demonstrate that China has returned as a great power and that the CCP is entirely responsible for this greatness. What better way for the party to prove its worth to the nation than to lavish millions on restoring an ancient monument so close the public's heart? The restoration of about ten per cent of the site in the last few years suggests that the CCP is veering towards full restoration. But the fact that the site remains only partially restored suggests that the party wants to carry on enjoying the best of both worlds.

RETURNING THE BOOTY

Whilst the restoration debate can be divided broadly into two camps, there is a much greater consensus about what should be done with the thousands of relics that were looted by the British and French in 1860 and are now scattered throughout the world—they should all be brought back to China, to their rightful home. The number of Yuanmingyuan artefacts situated overseas is difficult to quantify. According to a CNTV (2010a) news report, UNESCO has estimated that of the 1.6 million Chinese antiques stored in more than 200 museums across 47 countries, about one million were stolen from Yuanmingyuan. These include a two-metre-high Buddhist stupa currently housed at the Chinese pavilion in the Fontainebleau Palace near Paris and a painting of one of the "forty scenic sites" of Yuanmingyuan displayed in the Paris National Library.

Although there was sporadic media coverage of the lost antiques during the 1990s (JFJB, 1998), the China Youth Daily identifies 2009 as the year in which there was a significant increase in public demand for the return of the stolen relics, noting a massive rise in internet blogging and newspaper articles on the subject (ZQB 2009). During the same year, a group of Chinese lawyers working overseas formed a "patriotic alliance" for the return of the lost relics, seeking to apply international law to resolve the situation (China View 2009). In 2010, the CCP paid for a team of experts to travel across the world and make contact with foreign museums in an effort to bring back the stolen items (XZX 2010b).

The nationalist symbolism associated with the stolen treasures is palpable and has been enthusiastically developed and exploited by the CCP in its quest to whip up a nationalist zeal against former imperialist powers. For example, the theft of the treasures is depicted as a devastating wound struck at the very heart of the Chinese nation, a wound which can only be fully healed once all the treasures are returned to China. One newspaper has likened the return of the antiques to 'a long and arduous road towards national salvation' (JFJB 2009a). When certain items have been returned (see immediately below), this is seized upon as a great victory for the Chinese nation (BJRB 2011). But it is only a partial victory. The state-controlled media frequently reminds the Chinese public that many antiques remain scattered throughout the world and this constitutes a continued humiliation for China (JFJB 2009b).

The strength of feeling over the return of the Yuanmingyuan treasures is reflected by the astronomical prices paid for them by Chinese bidders at auctions across the world. At a 2007 Christie's auction in Hong Kong, a bidder from Macao called Ho Hung-sun paid 70 million Hong Kong Dollars for a horse head sculpture, one of the stolen twelve zodiac animals (CNTV 2010a). Three years later, Ho purchased two more bronze pieces for 76 million Hong Kong Dollars, donating both of them to the Yuanmingyuan Museum in Beijing (CNTV 2010b).

The return of Yuanmingyuan antiques to China by Chinese bidders is welcomed by the Chinese media. There has been much praise for the actions of Ho Hong-sun. In addition, praise was heaped on a New Zealander called Mary Kempson who returned two porcelain vases looted by her ancestor Major William Kempson who served in the British 99th Regiment. Kempson travelled with the vases to Beijing where she attended a special ceremony put on in her name and 'apologized to the Chinese people' (CNTV 2010c).

However, sometimes reports on foreign auctions of the Yuanmingyuan antiques are designed to generate public resentment and anger, especially when Chinese bidders pay a fortune to buy back what was stolen from China in the first place. The Liberation Army Daily derided these auctions as an affront to China's national dignity 'going against the spirit of international conventions and inflicting serious harm on China's cultural rights and national emotions' (JFJB 2009b). A People's Daily article condemned foreign claims that there was nothing wrong in auctioning the antiques as an example of the continuing 'undisguised gangster logic' and the 'cultural hegemony' of Western nations (RMRB 2010b).

The most high-profile foreign auction of Yuanmingyuan relics took place in Paris in 2009. When Christie's offered for purchase the rat and rabbit zodiac heads collection owned by the late fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent and his business partner Pierre Berge, there was widespread condemnation in China and demands that the statues should be given back to China free of charge. There was particular outrage at comments made by Berge after he said that he would happily return the antiques if China improved its human rights record, returned Tibet to the Tibetans and authorised the safe return of the Dalai Lama (JFJB 2009b). This sparked a number of angry protests in China, and numerous petitions were signed demanding that the antiques be handed back immediately not sold at auction (Weil 2013, p. 132). A group of 81 Chinese lawyers filed a suit in France in an attempt to halt the proposed auction (Weil 2013, p. 132). Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhoxu condemned the hypocrisy of Western nations on the question of human rights and noted that 'Western imperial powers have looted a lot of Chinese cultural relics. These cultural relics should be returned' (New York Times 2009).

In the end, the auction went ahead but ended in farce. Although the antiques were "sold" to Cai Mingchao, an established Chinese collector and adviser to China's National Treasures Fund for 15 million Euros each, Cai refused to pay, claiming, in what can only have been a publicity stunt approved by the party, that his bid was made purely 'on patriotic grounds' (BBC 2009). Cai was hailed as a hero back in China, but Christie's declared his actions unlawful and threatened to bring a suit against him. Ownership of the two heads reverted back to Pierre Berge. However, in April 2013 they were returned to China by the family of the French billionaire Francois-Henri Pinault who now owns Christie's. Neither Christie's nor the family office would confirm whether or not the Pinaults has purchased the heads from Berge prior to their return. However the gesture was a clear attempt at strengthening economic ties between France and China since it coincided with an official visit to China by Francois Hollande, accompanied by Francois-Henri Pinault (Bloomberg 2013).

Norway has also sought to enhance relations with China by returning Yuanmingyuan relics at a strategic moment. Seven Yuanmingyuan marble columns, acquired more than a century ago by a former Norwegian cavalry officer who had settled in China, were "presented" to the private real estate developer Huang Nubo by the Kode Art Museum in

Bergen where the columns had been displayed for almost eighty years. In return, Huang donated ten million Norwegian Krone to the museum and arranged for the columns to be displayed at Huang's alma mater Beijing University, located adjacent to Yuanmingyuan and which has an academic cooperation programme with the art museum. Although both Huang and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry played down any political element to this transaction, it is widely thought to have been an attempt by Norway to thaw relations with Beijing after the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the 2010 Peace Prize to the Chinese democracy activist and *bête noir* of the CCP, Liu Xiaobo (New York Times 2014).

PUBLIC DISCOURSE

In his book entitled 'What Does China Think?', Mark Leonard (2008 p. 10) has described the destruction of Yuanmingyuan 'as an open wound that can be salted whenever citizens need to be mobilized or reminded of how the Communist Party saved China from foreign defeat'. To some extent, Leonard's analysis is accurate. In response to the frequent official reminders of the incident, some people have obediently towed the party line by expressing their outrage at the incident. The blogger Wei Yahua (2012) who was active on the neo-Maoist website Utopia (since shut down by the CCP) proclaimed angrily in a blog entitled *Is the Humiliation of the Burning of Yuanmingyuan Repeating Itself?* that the imperialists entered the territory unhindered, like a wolf entering a flock of sheep. Wei continued this was not a war, it was a slaughter. Another blogger known only as Miriam (2012) insisted that China will never fully recover from the devastation inflicted in 1860, despite the passing of more than 150 years and the re-emergence of China on the international scene: 'history's smoke may have cleared, but it has solidified in our hearts as eternal pain'. One commonly made observation is that although China is on the rise, the Chinese people should remain vigilant against the West and must never forget Yuanmingyuan otherwise something analogous may happen in the future. In a blog entitled *The Regret of the Yuanmingyuan*, the writer Jia Chenxi (2011) warns that 'we cannot forget our past history, otherwise the nightmare will repeat itself'. This resonates closely with the CCP's approach, especially, as noted earlier, when it feels under threat by a perceived act of foreign aggression.

Expressions of outrage over the destruction of Yuanmingyuan also occur at the site itself. Robert Bickers (2011) in his article *China's Age of Fragility* recalls how, as an Englishman, he encountered direct hostility from a group of Chinese school children on a visit to Yuanmingyuan. Anecdotal evidence confirms that it is wise not to reveal your true nationality to inquisitive passers-by if you are a British or French visitor to the site. Speaking from personal experience as one of the authors of this book, it is not unusual to face racial abuse as an Englishman visiting the site.

Others are more positive about the legacy of Yuanmingyuan. Instead of dwelling mournfully on the past, they believe that the Chinese people should exploit the incident as a means of embracing and celebrating the present. Writing in 2008 about the national significance of the Olympics being staged in Beijing, Wei Guihua (2008) noted with reference to Yuanmingyuan that 'China was once called the sick man of Asia, but is now able to host the Olympics, in itself a type of pride, a type of validation'. In line with Leonard's observation, some people insist that China's rise from the ashes of Yuanmingyuan is solely attributable to the CCP. According to a blogger known only as Cedar (2012) 'this glorious victory of modern history is down to the CCP, which, as before, has risen up as the backbone of Chinese people, uniting everyone to bring about a unity of strength'.

Fabricating History

But not everyone automatically rallies behind the CCP at the mere mention of the Yuanmingyuan incident. We will see in Chap. 5 that there is growing disaffection over the CCP's true role in the Second Sino-Japanese War, with some very serious accusations being made that the party deliberately fabricated the official war history to suit its own political purposes. Accusations of a similar nature have been made about the official narrative on Yuanmingyuan. A particularly vocal critic with the blog name Dai35408 (2010) vehemently rejects the party's interpretation of the incident, dismissing it as riddled with 'politically motivated biases and inaccuracies' which have culminated in 'more than half a century of patriotic education brainwashing'. The basis of Dai's accusations derives from the convenient paucity of information in Chinese text books and media coverage about the brutal maltreatment of the Anglo-French delegation prior to the burning and looting of the palaces. Another

blogger Li Wei (2012) criticises the scant official references to the plundering of the site that took place during the Boxer Rebellion, the vandalism and theft inflicted by Chinese warlords during the Republican era and the sporadic Red Guard attacks during the Cultural Revolution. Instead, the destruction is conveniently linked to the attack in 1900 by the Eight-Nation Alliance sent to quell the Boxer Rebellion.

The Shenzhen-based writer Yan Changhai (2014) has also criticised the CCP's unbalanced portrayal of the Yuanmingyuan incident. In a blog entitled 'Why Don't You Ask Why Yuanmingyuan Was Burnt', Yan blames the destruction of the palaces (and the start of the Second Opium War) on what he describes as the provocative actions of the Qing government under Emperor Xianfeng, most notably the torture and execution of the Anglo-French delegation. Like other bloggers, Yan notes how this fact is deliberately omitted from the CCP narrative on the incident. Leading on from this, Yan accuses 'corrupt CCP officials' of using nationalism for their own political purposes as 'a tool to fan up populism'. Yan then draws parallels with other examples of state-controlled popular nationalism that have allegedly been used as a smokescreen for illegal financial gain:

Let us take the oilfields in the South China Sea which caused confrontation, as an example. What quantity of the resources eventually went into the pockets of corrupt Chinese party officials? How much of it actually ended up in the treasury? How much of it has been used to the benefit of the Chinese people? These are the questions that mainland China never dares to confront.

Blaming China

A less vociferous, but no less critical perspective on the imbalances of the party line on Yuanmingyuan has come from Yuan Weishi (2010a), an historian at the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou. In an article published in the journal *History Reference* to coincide with the anniversary of the founding of the PRC, Yuan argued that the Qing government must share some of the blame for the incineration of the palaces due to a series of grave diplomatic blunders. This included not only the maltreatment of the Anglo-French delegation when they arrived in Beijing, but incidents that took place before their arrival such as the Chinese attack on Anglo-French forces at the fort of Dagukou in Tianjin and the execution of a French missionary in Guangxi Province. According to Yuan,

these and other similar acts were the 'terrible consequence of the insularity and ignorance of both the Qing court on high and the masses below. In other words, the disaster resulted from the gap between ignorance and civilisation'.

Whilst this statement in itself is not overtly critical of the CCP, Yuan concluded the article with a subtle dig at the party's tendency to focus exclusively on the evils of foreign imperialism when discussing the Yuanmingyuan incident, whilst deliberately glossing over any contribution that China may have made to its own downfall:

As a nation that suffered a lot from aggression and oppression, the Chinese should remember history. We should truthfully remember that our suffering was not only caused by outside invaders, but to an even larger extent, it was a result of our own backwardness and insularity.

Yuan (2006) made a similar claim a few years earlier in article entitled *Modernisation and History Textbooks* published by the *Bingdian Weekly*, a supplement to the *China Youth Daily*. In this article Yuan's focus was on a propensity for Chinese history textbooks to ignore or underplay the late Qing role in the collapse of the empire across a range of incidents (e.g. the Boxer Rebellion) not just Yuanmingyuan. However, on Yuanmingyuan, Yuan wrote that:

In the face of aggressive and strong enemies, the Qing empire was in a weak position and would have been wise to strictly enforce the existing treaties, avoid a head-on confrontation and try to win time to reform and develop itself. But the government and officials at the time were completely under the influence of extreme emotions and foolishly violated treaties on small matters, leading to a catastrophe. Had the Qing decision-makers and the relevant local officials not been so ignorant, this disaster could have been avoided.

Why Remember Yuanmingyuan?

Just as doubts have been raised about the historical accuracy (and indeed honesty) of the official narrative on Yuanmingyuan, so there are doubts about the appropriateness of sporadically resuscitating the memory of the incident. Some people note that the very existence of Yuanmingyuan reflected a shameful era of elitism and inequality. It was, after all, an inordinately expensive complex of palaces and gardens inhabited by an

imperial royal family, built on the back of slave labour and yet completely inaccessible to the impoverished general public. As Tong Shujie puts it, Yuanmingyuan was 'nothing but a place for the Qing Dynasty emperors to live a luxurious life. It is a symbol of a waste of money and resources and the then imperial family's greediness' (Beijing Review 2011). Likewise, Liao Baoping notes that Yuanmingyuan was 'a place for the Qing emperors to enjoy life and kill time. It was used to show the superiority of the imperial family to the ordinary people' (Beijing Review 2011). One blogger using the name Zhexuejia gua le (2014) which translates as *The Philosopher is Dead* has suggested on Weibo that the common people deeply resented the greed and luxury associated with Yuanmingyuan, indeed so much so that when it was attacked by Anglo-French forces 'they did not feel a thing and many even clapped and helped the Anglo-French forces'. It has only been in recent years, to suit the CCP's nationalist purposes, that Yuanmingyuan 'has been elevated to a national event. But actually burning it made ordinary people feel avenged'. Another blogger with the name Zijia Yuanzi Li Xiongwei (2013) which translates as *Li Xiongwei's Own Garden*, has insisted that 'for a dynasty that did not consider the welfare of its people, the more beautiful and spectacular their buildings were, the worse their crimes'. This blogger even asserts that 'the Western powers did not do enough by burning these buildings. They should have burnt their owners too'.

Yan Changhai (2014) suggests that even if Yuanmingyuan had not been burned down, it would remain inaccessible to the Chinese public, asking, in a clear dig at the continued secretiveness of the CCP, 'would it not have turned into today's Zhongnanhai [the central headquarters of the CCP]? He continues, 'as a forbidden area, it is better for Yuanmingyuan to have been burnt. At least ordinary people are able to see the ruins'.

Other people express misgivings about the continued relevance of the incident and the amount of column space devoted to it by the Chinese media in light of current social pressures, such as passing exams, finding work and raising a family (Milkragers 2010). A first-hand example of this is nicely captured by Lovell (2011, pp. 352–353) in conversation with a Chinese visitor to Yuanmingyuan who, in one breath, expressed his outrage at the destruction of the site, but in the next breath asked about opportunities to study at law school in England (of all places!).

Leading on from this, there is a feeling amongst some people that the CCP should not be wasting its time and more importantly public money on setting up delegations to scour the world for lost Yuanmingyuan

treasures or on rebuilding the old site, albeit only partially at this stage. Instead, there are more important issues to contend with such as unprecedented environmental degradation, spiralling unemployment and official corruption. It is these ongoing issues, unattended to by CCP, which shame the nation. Wang Feng of the Qilu Evening News insists that, 'it's more meaningful to build more quality schools than to spend so much money on the reconstruction program' (Beijing Review 2011). Similarly, as one blogger poignantly remarks:

What is national humiliation? It is when government buildings are extravagant in the extreme and village schools are shabby and leaking, this is national humiliation. When we believe that building the Birds Nest, constructing arenas and rebuilding Yuanmingyuan are able to 'restore the nation's glory' and the dignity of the Chinese people, to take ignorance and treat it as honour, that is the biggest national humiliation. (Nmgzhongjing 2011)

Comments such as this constitute a significant challenge to the CCP, but so too do the comments of others who fully appreciate the continued importance and relevance of the Yuanmingyuan legacy. Strongly implied within Jia Chenxi's blog cited earlier that China must beware of future foreign encroachments is the suggestion that the CCP may not be doing enough to circumvent such an eventuality and that the party should be more forceful in its dealings with foreign powers. Jia is well-known for his candid online allegations of the CCP's failure to confront Japan over the Diaoyu islands dispute, so it does not seem unreasonable to assume that he is also being critical in his references to Yuanmingyuan. Another blog about the incident entitled 'The Destruction of the Yuanmingyuan finishes with a statement: 'a country which remains poor, backward and weak is likely to come under attack once again' (Benniu007 2012). This blogger, like Jia, is well-known for his online accusations of CCP weakness over Diaoyu.

Time to Stand up

But if some people only imply that the CCP is too timid in its interactions with foreign powers, others are more forthright in this assertion. One impassioned blogger known as PLANavy (2012) insists that Western imperialists are still trying to degrade and embarrass China as they did at Yuanmingyuan, calling on the CCP to finally 'wake the sleeping Chinese

dragon'. In a blog entitled *Forgotten Memories*, Zui Huayin (2010) has insisted that 'China must wake up! We cannot again lag behind, we cannot be weak again! We cannot allow a tragedy like Yuanmingyuan to happen again!'. In addition, there were reports of widespread internet anger over suggestions that the CCP was considering inviting British and French officials to the events marking the 150th anniversary of the Yuanmingyuan incident, with angry claims that China was putting 'salt in the nation's wounds' (ZZX 2010) by 'inviting the invading forces' (DFRB 2010). In the end the scale of opposition on this issue forced the party to back down on its original plans.

The US presence in the South China Sea has also triggered online criticism of China's lack of national assertiveness via historical references to Yuanmingyuan. In October 2015, a US aircraft carrier sailed inside the 12 nautical mile radius that China claims as its territorial waters around one of its recently reclaimed islands, followed shortly afterwards by a visit from the then US Defence Secretary Ash Carter whose helicopter landed on the aircraft carrier. If this caused irritation to the Chinese Foreign Ministry (BBC 2015b), it was nothing compared to the outrage expressed by a significantly large number Weibo users. The most vocal came from Yike de Weibo (2015) which translates as Stranger's Weibo:

Having slapped the left side of your face [by sailing into Chinese territory], they [the US] are coming to slap the right side of your face. Let us see how the CCP leadership will explain this to the people. Today, it is the South China Sea, tomorrow it will be Tianjin Port. Yuanmingyuan has been burnt, Yiheyuan will be next.

A similar level of anger was expressed by bloggers following comments published in the *Global Times* (2014) made by the former commander of the US Pacific Fleet Gary Roughead who stated that the USA would stand by its treaty with Japan, no matter what. According to dgc5 (2015) if in its negotiations with foreign powers 'China fails to make any progress, it would not be strange at all if the Eight-Nation Alliance burns Yuanmingyuan again'. In referring to Eight-Nation Alliance, the blogger means the Anglo-French Alliance, a common mistake made by bloggers on this subject.

PICKING OVER THE ASHES

We will see in the next three chapters that there has been a significant official backlash against the various dissenting views contained in those chapters, ranging from carefully worded rebuttals published in the state-controlled media to the harassment, arrest and sometimes incarceration of some dissenters. By contrast, heavy-handed government reaction on Yuanmingyuan-related discord is less apparent, with one or two exceptions. One such exception is an article published in *Chinese Social Sciences Today*, a theoretical publication run by CASS (Li and Wen 2010). In it, the authors criticise the views of Yuan Weishi who, as we noted earlier, suggested that the Qing government was partly to blame for the Anglo-French attack on the palaces and that the CCP has conveniently ignored this point in its historical interpretation of the incident. Without naming him directly, Yuan's views are derided as a form of 'historical nihilism' and as constituting 'a misconception that Western civilisation is good and Chinese civilisation is backward'. The authors continue:

According to this argument, backward nations naturally lose their right to independent existence and development so that it would somehow have been natural for Yuanmingyuan to be looted and burnt. This is nothing but a Chinese version of the West's defence for its looting and burning of Yuanmingyuan!

The logic of this reposte is not altogether clear in that it does not appear to bear any obvious relevance to the main points that Yuan was trying to establish. However, it does suggest that there is an acute sensitivity in official circles to any suggestion that China was culpable for the attack on Yuanmingyuan. This is reinforced by the fact that the party shut down the *Bingdian Weekly* shortly after Yuan's 2006 article criticising Chinese history textbooks for their version of late Qing history, including Yuanmingyuan. The reason given was that the publication contained 'articles incompatible with the mainstream ideology which had had very bad effects'. In an open letter protesting against the closure, the editor Li Datong said that he had been handed a 'Cultural Revolution-style critique' of the article published by Yuan (UPI 2006).

One important point to be expanded upon in the concluding chapter is whether the dissent faced by the CCP on matters of national sensitivity actually impacts on how the party behaves or on the decisions that it takes. Looking at this question from a purely Yuanmingyuan-related perspective, we noted earlier the mounting internet opposition to a proposal

to invite an Anglo-French delegation to attend the 150th anniversary of the incident and how, in the end, the scale and intensity of this opposition forced the Beijing authorities to jettison the idea. So the party is clearly sensitive to netizen views on this thorny issue and is seemingly prepared to act in accordance with these views.

Another indirectly related example is the success of an online campaign launched by Rui Chenggang in 2009 in getting a Starbucks café removed from inside the Forbidden City. An important part of the campaign was the use of evocative imagery of the Yuanmingyuan ruins to rally public support for the cause. According to the views of one blogger, which was very indicative of the general mood:

When I see the Starbucks against the repaired broken wall inside the Forbidden City, I cannot help recalling the invasion of the Eight-Power Allied Forces, as well as the burning, killing, robbing, and plundering at Yuanmingyuan by the British and French Allied Forces. (Gang and Ai 2009, p. 398)

By way of summary, we have examined in this chapter the deliberate cultivation by the CCP of an aggressive mode of Chinese nationalism, relating specifically to the 1860 Yuanmingyuan incident. In an effort to bolster its nationalist credentials as the party which saved China from the Century of Humiliation, the CCP has frequently reminded the Chinese public of exactly what happened during those fateful few days. Intrinsic to this intended message is another message—that since 1949, the CCP has single-handedly made China strong by overseeing remarkable growth in the economy, the strengthening of the Chinese military and the (re-)emergence of China as a respected international power, thereby ensuring that China will never return to the bad old days.

For some people, however, those bad old days have never really gone away. Some critics have argued that, notwithstanding its anti-imperialist posturing, the party is no more assertive now than the Qing government was back in 1860, an accusation that is usually levelled when there is a foreign infringement of Chinese national sovereignty to which the party is perceived as not responding to with adequate force. Others have used the Yuanmingyuan discussions to accuse the party of reinventing the history of the incident for its own nationalist purposes. Some have challenged the appropriateness of spending public money on partially restoring the ruined site or sending expensive delegations overseas in an attempt to retrieve the stolen antiques when this money would

have been better spent on much-needed domestic projects such as repairing China's schools and hospitals. Ironically, therefore, rather than bolstering, the party's nationalist legitimacy, the backlash on Yuanmingyuan risks eroding it, a pattern which has been repeated on the subject of Japan as we will see in the next chapter.

REFERENCES

- BBC. (2009, March 2). *China "Patriot" sabotages auction*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7918128.stm>.
- BBC. (2015a, February 2). *The palace of shame that makes China angry*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-30810596>.
- BBC. (2015b, November 5). *South China sea: US defence chief Ash Carter wades into row*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-34737051>.
- Beijing Review. (2011, December 15). *Is it necessary to reconstruct the Yuanmingyuan?* Retrieved from http://www.bjreview.com.cn/forum/txt/2011-12/12/content_411014.htm.
- Benniu007. (2012, May 27). *Yuanmingyuan de Huimie* [The destruction of the Yuanmingyuan]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Bickers, R. (2011). China's age of fragility. *History Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.historytoday.com/robert-bickers/chinas-age-fragility>.
- BJR. (2011, June 14). *Si Jian Yuanmingyuan Shou Shou Jiang Jushou Wuhan* [Four old summer palace animal head statues will 'Meet' in Wuhan]. *Beijing Ribao* [Beijing Daily]. Retrieved from <http://www.bjd.com>.
- Bloomberg. (2013, April 27). *Pinault family gives China \$40 million disputed bronze*. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-04-26/christie-s-pinault-donates-40-million-bronzes-to-china>.
- Broudehoux, A.-M. (2004). *The making and selling of post-Mao Beijing*. London: Routledge.
- Cedar. (2012, March 24). *Zhongguoren de Shi Yao Zhongguoren Ziji Ban - Yao Gan yu Shihang Baogao* [Chinese matters need Chinese self-management - responding to the world bank report]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- China Beat. (2009, February 24). *James Heria on summer palace relics*. Retrieved from <http://www.thechinabeat.org/?p=372>.
- China.org. (2006, September 27). *Yuanmingyuan Park to be Rebuilt?* *China.org.cn*. Retrieved from <http://www.china.org.cn> <http://www.china.org.cn/english/travel/182412.htm>.
- China.org. (2007, December 21). *Netizens against rebuilding the old summer palace*. *China.org.cn*. Retrieved from <http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/236455.htm>.
- China View. (2009). *Lawyers abroad form alliance for return of lost cultural relics*. *Xinhua News Agency*. Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/04/content_10942816.htm.
- CNTV. (2010a, October 20). *1.6 Million Chinese relics held by 47 museums worldwide*. Retrieved from <http://english.cntv.cn/program/china24/20101020/100840.shtml>.
- CNTV. (2010b, October 20). *Arduous journey to recovering relics*. Retrieved from <http://english.cntv.cn/program/china24/20101019/101180.shtml>.
- CNTV. (2010c, October 20). *New Zealander returns looted Yuanmingyuan treasures*. Retrieved from <http://english.cntv.cn/program/cultureexpress/20101019/101188.shtml>.
- CQWB. (2010, December 17). *Babai Zhuangshi Zuihou Laobing Yang Yangzheng Zou le* [Yang Yangzheng, the last of the eight hundred heroes, passed away yesterday]. *Chongqing Wanbao* [Chongqing Evening News]. Retrieved from <http://www.cqwb.com.cn/NewsFiles/201012/17/20100017120000412114.shtml>.
- CQWB. (2011, November 28). *Yuanmingyuan Shifou Chongjian Yin Zhengyi* [The continuing restoration debate regarding Yuanmingyuan]. *Chongqing Wanbao* [Chongqing Evening News]. Retrieved from <http://news.cqwb.com>.
- Dai35408. (2010, October 23). *Du Junli: Fang Bu Xia De Yuanmingyuan Qingjie* [Unable to let go of the Yuanmingyuan complex]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- DFRB. (2010, January 15). *Huoshao Yuanmingyuan 150 Nian Yao Qinlu Guo* [Invitation to the invading countries to attend the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the burning of the Yuanmingyuan]. *Dongfang Ribao* [Oriental Daily News]. Retrieved from <http://global.factva.com>.
- dgc5. (2015, January 26). Retrieved from <http://www.weibo.com/1829885151/C1qaUyNkT>.
- Han, G., & Zhang, A. (2009). Starbucks is Forbidden in the Forbidden City: Blog Circuit of Culture and Informal Public Relations Campaign in China. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 395–401.
- Global Times. (2014, December 8). *US, China can work together to cool disputes*. Retrieved from <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/895600.shtml>.
- Global Times. (2015, May 13). *Zhejiang businessman attempts to recreate old summer palace, turn it into theme park*. Retrieved from <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/921513.shtml>.
- GZRB. (2009, November 3). *Yanzhe Beijing Si Hao Xian Chihe Wanle* [Food and amusements along the Beijing number 4 line]. *Guangzhou Ribao* [Guangzhou Daily]. Retrieved from <http://gzdaily.dayoo.com>.
- JFJB. (1990, September 23). *Zhongguo: Zouxiang 21 Shiji* [China: Moving towards the 21st century]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.

- JFJB. (1995, January 16). Yuguo Shuxin Jieli Liang ge Qiangdao Zuilian [Hugo letter exposes the face of the two robbers]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.
- JFJB. (1997, July 2). Junmin Gongqing Xianggang Huigui [Together the military and civilians celebrate the return of Hong Kong]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.
- JFJB. (1998, February 9). Dangdai Zibenzhuji Guojia Gongren Jieji de Bianhua Deng [Working class changes in a contemporary capitalist country]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.
- JFJB. (2002, May 20). Yuguo de Zhongguo Xin [Hugo's China heart]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.
- JFJB. (2009a, February 28). Guobao Huigui Lu Manman [The road to returning the national treasures is very slow]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.
- JFJB. (2009b, February 25). Yi Renquan wei Qihao Qinfan Zhongguo Renmin de Jiben Wenhua Quanli shi Huangmiu de [To use the banner of human rights to infringe on the Chinese people's basic cultural rights is absurd]. *Jiefangjun Bao* [People's Liberation Army Daily]. Retrieved from <http://dlib.eastview.com>.
- Jia, C. (2011, November 17). Yuanmingyuan de Wanxi [The regret of the Yuanmingyuan]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Kutcher, N. (2003). China's palace of memory. *Wilson Quarterly*, 27(1), 30–39.
- Lee, H. (2009). The ruins of Yuanmingyuan or how to enjoy a national wound. *Modern China*, 35(4), 155–190.
- Leonard, M. (2008). *What does China think?* London: Fourth Estate.
- Li, S., & Wen, Z. (2010, November 2). Mingji Lishi, Mianxiang Weilai [Remember history and face the future]. *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Bao* [Chinese Social Sciences Today]. Retrieved from http://news.ifeng.com/history/shixueyuan/detail_2010_11/19/3167937_0.shtml.
- Li, W. (2012, September 17). Zai Minguo [In the Republic]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Lovell, J. (2011). *The opium war: Drugs, dreams and the making of China*. London: Picador.
- Milkrangers. (2010, November 15). Bu Neng Wangque de Jinian [Never forget to commemorate]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Miriam. (2012, February 27). Beijing, Beijing: Jiyi Zhong de Yuanmingyuan [Beijing, Beijing: The memory of Yuanmingyuan]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- New York Times. (2009, February 26). *China fails to halt sale of looted relics at Paris auction*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/27/world/europe/27auction.html>.
- New York Times. (2014, February 9). *Despite frigid relations, Chinese relics coming home from Norway*. Retrieved from http://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/despite-frigid-relations-chinese-relics-coming-home-from-norway/?_r=0.
- Ninghongxing. (2011, November 20). Shenme shi Guochi? [What is national humiliation?]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Opoku, K. (2009, October 23). Chinese research artefacts looted in Anglo-French attach on summer palace in 1860: Do Great museums not keep records? *Modern Ghana*. Retrieved from <https://www.modernghana.com/news/245039/1/chinese-research-artefacts-looted-in-anglo-french-.html>.
- PLANavy. (2012, March 29). Nandao Yao Muiy Tianxia, Zhongguo Cai Hui Suxing Ma? [Is it possible to be the mother under heaven and earth, until China is able to wake up?]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- RMRB. (1999a, May 12). Zhongguo bu shi Yibai Jiujiu [This is not the China of 1899]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://huylpd.twinbridge.com>.
- RMRB. (1999b, May 25). Zhengyi de Nahan [Righteous cry]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://huylpd.twinbridge.com>.
- RMRB. (2008a, April 11) Wangmin Rey de Xinwen: Aoyun Shenghuo Chuandi Zao Xirao' [Netizens hot news: Olympic torch relay disrupted]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://news.xinhuanet.com>.
- RMRB. (2008b, May 17). Cong Faguo Kan Xifang Minzhu yu Guojia Liji de Beilun [From France we see a western democracy and national interest paradox]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://world.people.com>.
- RMRB. (2009, January 13). Jiu zai Nin de Xingxiang li [Only in your image]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://huylpd.twinbridge.com>.
- RMRB. (2010a, October 18). Daguo Mianzi: Yuanmingyuan 150 Nian Jiachou yu Guochi [Great power honour: Yuanmingyuan's 150th anniversary of animosity and humiliation]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://www.people.com>.
- RMRB. (2010b, November 19). Wenwu Zhuisuo Shi bu Wo Dai [Cultural relic recourse waits for no one]. *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily]. Retrieved from <http://huylpd.twinbridge.com>.
- UPI. (2006, January 26). *China closes another liberal publication*. Retrieved from <http://www.upi.com/China-closes-another-liberal-publication/74971138267495/>.
- Wang, D. (1999). *Yuanmingyuan: Lishi, Xianzhang, Lunzheng* [Yuanmingyuan: Debates past and present]. Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe.

- Wang, C. (2008). Recent research on republican Chinese history. *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, 2(1), 89–97.
- Wei, G. (2008, April 17). Aoyunhui, bu shi Yuanmingyuan [The olympic games are not the Yuanmingyuan]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Wei, Y. (2012, April 3). Huoshao Yuanmingyuan de Guochi Hai Hui Zhongyan Ma? [Is the humiliation of the burning of Yuanmingyuan repeating itself?]. *Xinlang Boke* [Sina Blog]. Retrieved from <http://blog.sina.com>.
- Weil, R. (2013). Yuanmingyuan revisited: The confrontation of China and the west. *Socialism and Democracy*, 27(1), 99–135.
- WHB. (2010, January 15). Yuanmingyuan Linan 150 Zhounian Huo Yao Yingfa Zhengyao Chuxi [British and French officials might be invited to attend the 150th anniversary of the Yuanmingyuan]. *Wenhui Bao* [Wenhui Newspaper]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- Wolsey, J. (1862). *Narrative of the war with China in 1860; to which is added the account of a short residence with the Tai-ping rebels at nanking and a voyage from Thence to Hankow*. London: Longman.
- XHW. (2008, April 14). Aoyun Huojia Chuandi Bali Shouzu Wangmin Zhenglun “Dizhi Fagno Huo” [Olympic torch relay in Paris blocked, internet users argue for ‘French goods boycott’]. *Xinhua Wang* [Xinhua Network]. Retrieved from <http://news.xinhuanet.com>.
- XZX. (2008, March 4). Aoyun Shenghuo Caiji yu Chuandi Quwen [Olympic torch lighting and relay story]. *Xinhuashe Zhongwen Xinwen* [Xinhua News Agency]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- XZX. (2010a, September 25). Yuanmingyuan Jiang Qidong Lijie 150 Zhounian Xilie Jinianhuodong [Yuanmingyuan is launching 150th anniversary commemoration events]. *Xinhuashe Zhongwen Xinwen*. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- XZX. (2010b, January 18). Zhongguo Zhuanjia Cheng Haiwai Faxian Xin de Yuanmingyuan Liushi Wenwu [China expert goes abroad to discover new lost Yuanmingyuan relics]. *Xinhuashe Zhongwen Xinwen*. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- Yan, C. (2014, July 22). *Why don't you ask why Yuanmingyuan was burnt?* Retrieved from <http://yanchh.blogchina.com/2214016.html>.
- Yike de Weibo. (2015, November 5). Retrieved from <http://www.weibo.com/1204278217/D2pkVvFkh>.
- Yuan, W. (2006, January 11). Xiandaihua yu Lishi Jiaokeshu [Modernisation and history textbooks]. *Bingdian Weekly* [Freezing Point]. Retrieved from <http://edu.people.com.cn/GB/1055/4016350.html>.
- Yuan, W. (2010a, October 1). Yuanmingyuan Lijie 150 Zhounian Ji - Kunan Laijiyu Luohou he Fengbi [Marking the 150th anniversary of the Yuanmingyuan catastrophe - suffering comes from backwardness and

- insularity]. *Wenshi Cankao* [History Reference]. Retrieved from <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/198221/198819/204160/12859078.html>.
- Yuan, W. (2010b, November 1). Mao Yushi Deng: Huishou Xinhai Bainian, [Mao Yushi et al: Reviewing the century since the 1911 revolution]. *Zhongguo Gaige Luntan* [China Reform Website]. Retrieved from http://www.chinareform.org.cn/explore/explore/201011/t20101101_49427.htm.
- ZGSB. (2004, September 11). Xiufu Tuanhe Xingong Weihe Meiyou Zhengyi [Why the restoration of the Tuanhe temple is not controversial]. *Zhongguo Shangbao* [China Business News]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- Zhexuejia gua le. (2014, June 10). Retrieved from <http://www.weibo.com/1215029183/B8jJP3c7l?type=comment>.
- ZHTB. (2010, May 27). Xuannao de Zhong Cai Wusheng De Baimiao: Xie Zai Yuanmingyuan Lijie 150 Zhounian Zhiji [Noisy colouring, silent lines: Written during the 150th anniversary of the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan]. *Zhongguo Hangtian Bao* [China Aviation News]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- Zijia Yuanzi Li Xiongwei. (2013, December 7). Retrieved from <http://www.weibo.com/3873998774/AmbdebbZU>.
- ZJCB. (2010, July 10). Jinian Yuanmingyuan Lijie 150 Zhounian You Jiang Zhengwen Huodong Juban [To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Yuanmingyuan calamity an essay writing contest will be held]. *Zhongguo Jiancai Bao* [China Building Materials Daily]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- ZQB. (2009, October 27). Yuanmingyuan Wenwu Mo Di You Duoshao Mohu Jidai Qingxi [Assessing the Yuanmingyuan cultural relics and the need to be clear how many there are]. *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* [China Youth Daily]. Retrieved from <http://zqb.cyol.com>.
- ZQZX. (2010, October 20). Yuanmingyuan Linan 150 Zhounian: Keyi Kuanshu Dan bu Neng Yiwan [The 150th anniversary of the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan: Possible to forgive but not to forget]. *Zhongqing Zaixian* [Youth Daily Online]. Retrieved from <http://zqb.cyol.com>.
- Zui, H. (2010, November 6). Weile Wangque de Jiye [For forgotten memories]. *Wo de Sobu* [Sobu Blog]. Retrieved from <http://guguzg.blog.sohu.com>.
- ZXS. (2010, February 26). Taiwan Zhanchu Yong Yan Diaosu de Yuanmingyuan shi Er Shou Shou [Taiwan exhibit uses salt statues of Yuanmingyuan's twelve zodiac animals]. *Zhongguo Xinwenshe* [China News Service]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.
- ZZX. (2002, December 13). Beijing Yuanmingyuan Bainian Daxiu Zhengshi Qidong [Beijing old summer palace's one hundred year official overhaul launched]. *Zhongguangshe Zhongwen Xinwen* [Central News Agency]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.

ZZX. (2010, January 19). Shangkou Sayan? Yuanmingyuan Mengnan 150 Zhounian Ban Huodong Zaopi [Salt in the wound? The 150th anniversary activities of the destruction of the Yuanmingyuan meets with criticism]. *Zhongyangshe Zhongwen Xinwen* [Central News Agency]. Retrieved from <http://global.factiva.com>.

CHAPTER 4

Aggressive Nationalism: The Legacy of Japanese Imperialism

This chapter provides our second case study of aggressive nationalism which relates to the legacy of Japanese imperialism. Stretching back to the early 1890s, Japan's record of exploitation and murder in China is considerable and remains a highly incendiary issue amongst the Chinese public, one which is sporadically and easily ignited by the CCP. As with Yuanmingyuan, the party enflames public opinion by issuing reminders of Japan's imperialist past in the state-controlled media or via high-level official statements. This is usually done during diplomatic fallouts in which Japan is perceived and portrayed to be acting as though it was still an aggressive colonial power. As we will see below, topics of dispute between the two nations include assertions of Japanese sovereignty over the disputed Diaoyu Islands, revisions to Japanese history textbooks deemed as whitewashing Japan's war history and visits by Japanese politicians to the Yasukuni Shrine.

As well as issuing strategically timed reminders about Japanese imperialism, the party has also attempted to incite public animosity through its media exposure of events occurring during disputes with Japan. So, for example, following the 2010 collision between a Chinese fishing trawler and two Japanese coast guard vessels near the Diaoyu Islands, Beijing gave prominent media coverage to a series of right-wing, anti-Chinese protests in Japan that supported Japanese sovereignty over Diaoyu, knowing full well the likely impact this would have on the viewing Chinese public. As anticipated, this precipitated widespread popular calls to stage anti-Japanese public demonstrations which the CCP duly

© The Author(s) 2017

R. Weatherley and Q. Zhang, *History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-47947-1_4