Reading the May 30 Movement in Newspapers:
The Shanghai International Settlement and Newspaper Nationalism, 1925

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Abstract

The shooting of Chinese protesters by the foreign-controlled Shanghai Municipal Police on May 30, 1925, triggered a wave of anti-foreign protests including a triple stoppage of labor, commerce, and education and a boycott of foreign goods. The Beijing government and the Shanghai local elite negotiated with the diplomatic bodies of the Powers. The heat of the movement cooled down in the late summer, leaving the political arrangement of the International Settlement largely unchanged.

The story of the May 30 movement happened in the Shanghai International Settlement, which was governed by the foreign Shanghai Municipal Council. In 1925, the International Settlement had a predominantly Chinese population, and it was also the center of China’s publishing industry.

While most scholarly literature on the May 30 movement focuses on the events that happened in the streets or at the negotiation table, this thesis analyzes newspapers as sites of politics. Using three Shanghai newspaper publications, Xinwenbao (The News), Rexue ribao (The Hot-Blood Daily), and Dongfang zazhi (The Eastern Miscellany), I examine how Shanghai newspaper editors responded to the events following the May 30 Incident. Each of the publications had an implied readership. From the editor’s strategies for speaking to the implied readership to the publication of the reader’s letters and essays, I explore the multiple voices of newspaper nationalism.
The expression of nationalism in Shanghai newspapers during the May 30 movement depended on the political environment of the Shanghai International Settlement and the implied reader’s social status, ideological stance, and economic interests as perceived by the editor. *Xinwenbao*’s implied readership was the Shanghai lower-middle class, especially small shopkeepers. Deferring to the foreign authorities, *Xinwenbao* promoted national products as the proper response to the May 30 Movement. *Rexue ribao* catered to the militant section of the lower-middle class. The paper questioned the efficacy of the national product movement advocated by *Xinwenbao* and accused the Shanghai merchant elite of betraying the nation. *Dongfang zazhi* had a professional implied readership. This magazine openly challenged the foreign authorities of the International Settlement and envisioned a Westernized professional class that would co-opt the administration of Shanghai.
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Introduction

On May 30, 1925, the Shanghai Municipal Police opened fire on the crowd gathering in front of the Laozha police station on Nanjing Road. The shooting immediately killed four, and among the wounded, five later died in hospital.¹ The killing on Nanjing Road led to the May 30 movement, during which Chinese workers, merchants, and students participated in the strike that paralyzed entire Shanghai was in the summer of 1925.

While few had expected the shooting and the subsequent strike, the International Settlement of Shanghai had been unquiet for months. Since February of 1925, workers in Japanese mills of the concession carried out a large-scale strike. On May 7, the conflict in one Japanese mill led to the death of a worker named Gu Zhenghong. After this conflict, students organized anti-Japanese protests and took to the streets to lecture about the cause of the workers throughout the rest of May.²

Workers and students were not the only groups feeling angry at the time. Other sectors of the Chinese community in Shanghai were also enraged but for a different reason. The government body of the International Settlement, the Shanghai Municipal Council, attempted to pass four by-laws that would impose restrictions on Chinese activities in the concession. With no representatives on board of the Ratepayer’s Association, the Chinese had no say in the by-laws. The legislative attempt provoked the Chinese to question the legality of the Ratepayers’

Association’s power to pass the by-laws, as they were not guaranteed by the treaties that China had signed with the Powers.³

The two separate grievances conflated in the protest organized by students on May 30. The second day after the incident on Nanjing Road, the representatives of workers, merchants, and students held a triple stoppage of these three sectors and demanded indemnities, the punishment of the police responsible for the shooting, the better treatment of workers, the withdrawal of the four by-laws, and other measures to improve the civil rights of the Chinese living in the concession.⁴ The Beijing government cooperated with Shanghai’s local elite to conduct a negotiation with diplomatic bodies of the Powers.⁵ The heat of the movement cooled down in the late summer. The strike and the negotiation, however, did not achieve the desired result other than the suspension of two police chiefs, who were found responsible for the shooting.⁶

A Note on Terminologies
I use the term the May 30 Incident to describe the police shooting on Nanjing Road on May 30, 1925, and the term the May 30 movement to denote the constellation of reactions of the Chinese in the aftermath of the May 30 Incident. These acts were provoked by the May 30 Incident and by subsequent events related to the incident. They included but were not limited to the strike and the diplomatic negotiation during the summer of 1925.⁷ Not only did newspapers reflect the movement, but the editor’s very act of writing and assembling texts constituted a part of the movement.

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³ Ibid, 33-34.
⁴ Ibid, 39.
⁵ I avoid using the term Chinese government because China was fragmented by the warlord politics. Although the Beijing government was not officially recognized by other countries, it claimed to be central government. During the May 30 movement, it sent a commission to Shanghai to negotiate with the Powers. Ibid, 46.
⁷ I recognize that the terminology of the May 30 Movement is mainly used by the student of history. I use the lowercase “m” rather than uppercase “M” to avoid presuming a single linear narrative of the movement.
The Shanghai International Settlement

The story of the May 30 movement happened in the International Settlement of Shanghai. The treaty port of Shanghai was opened in 1842 to foreign trade after the First Opium War. It was divided into the Chinese municipality, French Concession, and International Settlement. The International Settlement was governed by the Shanghai Municipal Council. Britons dominated the settlement both economically and politically, but the Municipal Council was officially answerable only to the ratepayers of the settlement. Originally intended only for foreign residents, the International Settlement administered a population predominantly Chinese and collected most of its tax revenues from the Chinese population in 1925.

Trades with both interior China and foreign countries flourished in Shanghai. Economic prosperity enabled the city to develop a cosmopolitan urban culture. It witnessed China’s first newspapers and maintained its position as the center of the country’s printing industry during the Republican period. Contemporaries compared Wangping Street in the International Settlement, where the publishers concentrated, to London’s Fleet Street, and many of the newspapers published in the concession had a national readership. The thriving publishing industry and the rich texts it generated enabled newspapers to participate in the May 30 movement.

Secondary Literature Review

Existing histories of the May 30 movement have adopted either a top-down or a bottom-up approach. The literature with the first approach writes about protests at the street level and emphasizes the workers’ strike during the movement. Labor historian Jean Chesneaux argues that

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through their strike, Shanghai workers became the leaders of the May 30 movement. Following the Marxist thesis, this tradition regards the strike as an essential step towards class consciousness for the workers. Labor organizers gained experience on forming unions. The isolation of the workers from conservative labor gangs and capitalists in the later stage of the strike contributed to the class’ realization of its distinct identity and interests.

The scholarship from the second perspective analyzes the activities of political authorities and characterizes the movement as nationalist. Availing of Chinese and British diplomatic files, scholars have produced a detailed chronological study of the policies of China and the Powers during the movement. Facing the pressure from the public, the Chinese government temporarily supported this movement and protested the Powers via diplomacy. Local Shanghai political figures such as Yu Qiaqing mediated between the petitions from below and the diplomatic bodies from above. Meanwhile, the Powers’ stances on the negotiation diverged, and they negotiated for separate settlements with the Chinese authorities. The movement lost its momentum when the British and the Chinese reached a compromise in early September.

My approach differs from the previous two interpretative traditions in that I treat newspapers as sites of politics. I analyze newspapers as texts and argue that the ways in which

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11 Elizabeth Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 82-84; Chesneaux, *Chinese Labor Movement*, 271; Historian Karl Gerth’s comment on the contemporary perception of the economic boycott during the May 30 movement sheds light on the literature of the field’s focus on labor activism. He remarks, “many have seen the boycott of 1925 as an event run by the fledgling Communist party, whose labor activism undoubtedly played an important role.” The prevalent contemporary opinion that the communists played an important role in the movement might have helped to shape the scholarly literature’s emphasis. Gerth, *China Made*, 168.
14 Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, 127-143.
Shanghai newspapers selected, organized, and communicated information in the aftermath of the Nanjing Road shooting were political. This re-orientation of focus brings attention to the mentalities of the reading public of Shanghai, especially those of the lower-middle class, which has a small role in the existing literature on the May 30 movement. The newspaper market in the 1920s increasingly catered to readers from lower walks of life. The price of newspapers became more affordable, and the language of the press more colloquial. The readership thus not only consisted of the elite of Shanghai but also included the lower-middle class encompassing shopkeepers, clerks, students, and secretaries. However, the newspaper market had not yet extended its reach to workers and the urban poor.

**Introducing Sources**

The publications that I will examine are *Xinwenbao* (The News), *Rexue ribao* (Hot-Bloody Daily), and *Dongfang zazhi*, (The Eastern Miscellany). These three sources offer different contemporary interpretations of the May 30 movement. *Xinwenbao* was an established commercial newspaper. It provided extensive coverage to both domestic and foreign news. Nearly half of the newspaper’s space was devoted to advertisements. The specialization in commercial news

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19 The English translations of *Xinwenbao* and *Dongfangzazhi*’s titles are provided by the publishers themselves on the front page of the two publication’s each issue. I use the translation of *Rexue ribao* in the news reports of the police raiding the paper’s office from the *North China Daily News*, an established English-language newspaper that represented the British interests in Shanghai. *North China Daily News*, July 11, 1925.
suggests that the editor had merchants of Shanghai in mind.\textsuperscript{20} Although \textit{Xinwenbao} catered to a broad range of readers, the major implied readership of \textit{Xinwenbao} was the small shopkeeper.

\textit{Rexue ribao} was a tabloid-style daily published by early communists. During its short life, \textit{Rexue ribao} exclusively covered the events of the May 30 movement. The paper was devoid of pictures, and most of its articles were editorials and readers’ essays rather than news reports. The paper’s implied readership was similar to that of \textit{Xinwenbao}, being the lower-middle class of the city.

\textit{Dongfang zazhi} was a bi-monthly magazine published by a group of left-leaning nationalistic editors of the famous Commercial Press.\textsuperscript{21} This magazine also had a special issue for the May 30 movement. Articles in \textit{Dongfang zazhi} were written in a more literary style than those in the other two publications. The occasional inclusion of foreign-language phrases implied an intellectual, professional readership.

Each of the three newspapers had an implied readership. From the editor’s strategies of speaking to that readership and the publication of the reader’s letters and essays, one gets clues about how the reader thought about the movement. This perspective is supported by reader-response criticism, as “texts invariably contain clues as to how they are to be interpreted: audiences are evoked, or, often enough, represented in the text.”\textsuperscript{22} While using the implied readership as the center of my interpretation, I recognize the difference between the implied and actual readership.

\textsuperscript{20} Terry Narramore, \textit{Making the News in Shanghai: Shen Bao and the Politics of Newspaper Journalism, 1912-1937} (Australian National University, 1989), 174.
The evidence that I glean from the newspapers about the reader is not conclusive. It is possible that the reader might ignore what was said on the paper. However, with the lack of direct sources about the actual reader, analyzing the implied reader sheds light on the actual reader’s mentalities.

**The Question of the Public Sphere**

In a sense, the reader participated in the May 30 movement by reading newspapers. The concern with the events carrying nationalist implications distinguished the act of reading newspapers during the May 30 movement from a private activity. What was on the pages of the publications such as *Xinwenbao, Rexue ribao*, and *Dongfang zazhi* constituted the public opinion of the time. The formation of the public opinion was not independent of either state or society. I adopt historian Philip Huang’s formulation of the public sphere in early twentieth-century China. It is “an intermediary space between state and society, in which both participated.” Certain aspects of this space underwent changes of state-ification or societalization, but neither sector could dominate this the public sphere.23

The picture of the public sphere became more complicated with the existence of treaty ports such as Shanghai. Since the Chinese state had no rights to administer foreign concessions, the Chinese public sphere was not coterminous with the Chinese nation-state.24 The proximity to Western institutions and culture in Shanghai also created spatial differences in the public sphere. Foreign influences and the legal exemption from the Chinese state facilitated the development of a prosperous newspaper market and other modern forms of sociability in Shanghai. The structure and interests of public discussions in the treaty port might differ from that of the interior.25

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Therefore, I do not intend to generalize my study of Shanghai newspapers’ treatments of the May 30 movement as exemplifying the response of all Chinese newspapers to the events that happened in 1925. Instead, the special circumstances of the city serve to illustrate the complexity of the Chinese public sphere.

My reading of the three publications shows that the content of Shanghai newspapers was constantly negotiated by state and society. Although the Shanghai Municipal Council exerted censorship pressure on Chinese newspapers to avoid publishing remarks antagonistic to the foreign control of Shanghai, *Rexue ribao* and *Dongfang zazhi* advocated for the abolition of foreign concessions. Meanwhile, the newspapers were not autonomous from the state control either. The threats imposed by the Municipal Council were effective in shutting down *Rexue ribao* and making *Xinwenbao* publish propaganda materials.

**Multiple Voices of the Nation**

The interference of the foreign-controlled Municipal Council in the public sphere, nevertheless, did not prevent Shanghai newspapers from creating an awareness of the Chinese nation. As powerfully articulated by political scientist Benedict Anderson, newspapers can forge a national identity among people who “will never know most their fellow-members, meet them, or hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion.”26 The representation of the May 30 movement helped the reader distinguish between “us” and “other” and reinforced the image of a weak Chinese nation against powerful imperialist nations, but the nationalism fostered by the circulation of newspapers was not a totalizing force for the

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Shanghainese (Shanghairen).27 Embedded in different publications were diverse identities of the implied readerships.

Nationalism in Shanghai newspapers during the May 30 movement was not a monolithic voice. The expression of it on a paper was dependent on the implied reader’s social status, ideological stance, and economic interests as perceived by the editor. The constraints and possibilities brought by the foreign administration of Shanghai also influenced nationalism in newspapers. Deferring to the foreign authorities, Xinwenbao promoted national products as the proper response to the May 30 movement. Suspicious of the Shanghai merchant elite’s involvement in the diplomatic negotiation, Rexue ribao called for the organization of a revolutionary party and military forces consisting of common people. At the same time, Dongfang zazhi challenged the foreign control of Shanghai and envisioned a Westernized professional class co-opting the administration of the International Settlement.

Despite the differences in the nationalist actions advocated by these three publications, the imagined readerships of all three publications demonstrated a fascination with the privileges of living in the International Settlement. For Xinwenbao’s readers, they included the social stability in the midst of civil wars and Western material culture. For Rexue ribao’s readers, they were the economic opportunities offered by foreigners and convenient infrastructure. For Dongfang zazhi’s readers, the privilege was the access to Western knowledge and science. This fascination with what was foreign speaks to the conflicted identity of the Shanghaise caught in a

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27 I intend use historian Prasenjit Duara’s theoretical framework to help uncover the possibilities and alternative narratives of the nation, which are buried in a linear, teleological narrative. See Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation Questioning Narratives of Modern China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3-16.
tug-war between the humiliation of the Chinese nation and the privileges of living in the International Settlement.

**Section Overview**

Section I details the editorial response of the established commercial newspaper Xinwenbao during the May 30 movement. The editors’ silence on the responsibility of Shanghai Municipal Council in the shooting of Nanjing Road suggests that Xinwenbao deferred to the foreign authorities of Shanghai. The paper demonstrated an introverted nationalism, as it accused Chinese warlords and the Beijing government for causing China’s weakness. Although the newspaper never officially endorsed an anti-foreign stance, Xinwenbao editors created a space for nationalist expression by publishing circular telegrams and meeting proceedings submitted by the reader.

Section II broadens the scope of textual analysis from news reports, editorials, and readers’ letters to advertisements. Rather than blocking nationalist sentiments on the paper, the censorship pressure from the foreign authorities displaced them from street protests and strikes to the promotion of national products. Situating Xinwenbao’s promotion of national products in the context of the national product movement emerged repeatedly in the history of Republican China, I bring to attention the attraction of Western material culture to the lower-middle class of Shanghai. Thus, nationalism in Xinwenbao was not only shaped by the censorship pressure from the foreign authorities but also by the perceived reluctance of the reader to forsake the existing lifestyle.

Section III discusses the communist tabloid Rexue ribao’s editorial reaction to the May 30 movement. Rexue ribao questioned the efficacy of economic boycotts and argued that the organization of a revolutionary party was the precondition of any form of effective nationalist
resistance. The paper simultaneously depicted its readership as watchful of the treachery of the merchant elite and as forgetful of national humiliation, thus in need of moral education. The radical paper was short-lived due to the police raids by the foreign authorities.

Section IV examines intellectual Dongfang zazhi, which had a professional implied readership, to offer a comparative perspective to the reading of Xinwenbao and Rexue ribao, which catered to the lower-middle class. Dongfang zazhi advocated the abolition of foreign concessions. It published essays on Western municipal management and legal system in the course of the movement. The paper demonstrated a fascination with Western intellectual trends and the ambition of the emerging Shanghai professional class to co-opt the foreign administration of the International Settlement.
Section I. Xinwenbao’s Editorial Strategies

Founded by American John Feguson on Wangping Street in the International Settlement, Xinwenbao (The News) was one of the most successful commercial newspapers in Shanghai. The paper employed economic and business news as its specialized niches in the Shanghai newspaper market, and it drew its main income source from advertising. Most of Xinwenbao’s articles were descriptive and involved little opinion. In each issue, three paragraph-length editorials offered the editor’s interpretations of current events, and, oftentimes, these editorials spoke with an exhortative tone.

The ownership and the geographical location of the paper influenced its editorial strategies. Xinwenbao was intended for the Chinese, but during the May 30 movement, the Shanghai Municipal Council was able to force it to publish propaganda materials. Sandwiched between an angry Chinese lower-middle class readership and the settlement authority trying to dampen the movement, Xinwenbao treaded an uneasy path and sought to present the May 30 movement in a way acceptable to both parties.

Xinwenbao’s Initial Reaction

In the immediate aftermath of the May 30 Incident, the course of events was unclear to Xinwenbao editors. They introduced a multiplicity of voices in their report in the May 31 issue to avoid taking an explicit stance on the shooting. Under the column heading, “The Tragedy of Nanjing Road Yesterday,” the editors provided news reports of the shooting from different

30 Narramore, Making the News, 274.
Most of these reports were written in an objective tone, without involving the authors’ personal opinions. For example, in the first report, the author writes,

[Students] distributed handbills and gave lectures when walking down the streets. They also pasted these handbills on utility poles. When they passed Nanjing Road, the police saw their activities and intervened. The students did not comply with the police’s order, and several of them were taken to the Laozha police station. A crowd pressed on towards the station, so the police released the students. The crowd did not leave, and then the police shot.

This report contains the protesters and police’s actions conveyed through verbal phrases. The parsimony of the description left room for various interpretations of the event. The reader was not told what happened between the release of the students from the police station and the shooting. Using multiple sources, Xinwenbao avoided endorsing any one of them. The editors’ efforts to withhold the paper’s official opinion in this issue are also demonstrated by the publication of a handbill seized by the municipal police from the protesters on May 30.

The handbill listed four grievances of the Chinese nation under the oppression of the Powers: the foreign control of the Chinese customs under the treaty system, the Powers’ lending of resources to the warlords, the arrest of protesting workers and students, and the construction of roads outside the settlement. In the end, the handbill concludes by calling for solidarity among the Chinese nationals and for the overthrow of the imperialists. The paper refused to comment on the handbill. The grievances voiced in the handbill could lend justification to the protesters’ actions to a sympathetic reader, yet the call for the overthrow of the foreign authorities would also support the police’s claim of a radical and violent crowd on Nanjing Road.

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31 The editors used the phrases such as “message from another source (youxun)” and “heard from another source (youwen)” to introduce an alternative narrative of the same event. “Zuori nanjing lu canju” 昨日南京路慘劇 [The tragedy on Nanjing Road yesterday], Xinwenbao, May 31, 1925, 10.

32 This quotation as well as all other quotations of primary sources in this thesis were translated by me. Xinwenbao, May 31, 1925, 10.
These two different interpretations contested with each other in the May 31 issue. In addition to carrying news reports, this issue provided statements made by the Municipal Council and student unions. The statement from the Municipal Council depicted the protesters as a violent crowd. In this statement, the protesters first beat and shamed two policemen, and then they attempted to storm the Laozha police station. While shouting, “kill the foreigners,” the protesters started to seize the weapons from the police. It was only after seeing these threatening gestures by the crowd that the police opened fire. The Municipal Council’s defense for the actions of the police contrasted with the Chinese students’ interpretation of the event on the same page.

These student’s accounts were written in the form of a telegram. One telegram opened with the phrase, “extremely urgent (shiwăn huoji).” It was from the Shanghai Student Union to the “elders of the nation (quanguo fulao).” In contrast to the Municipal Council’s narrative of the event, this telegram claims that when the students were out on the streets lecturing, the police “first arrested [them] without any reason, and then fired liberally into the crowd.” The author of the telegram then encouraged the readers to provide help to the protesting students promptly. In contrast to the violent crowd depicted by the official statement from the Municipal Council, the students were engaged in a peaceful demonstration in the form of lecturing. The shooting of the police was thus a sheer manifestation of the police brutality.

The concise style of news-writing and the publication of documents authored by the Shanghai Municipal Council and student organizations show Xinwenbao editors’ intention to dissociate themselves from any side of the conflict. They wanted the May 31 issue of the newspaper to reflect the event and opinions of different parties. The titles of the documents such as “A Report from the Municipal Council” and “A Telegram from A Student Union” were markers
of voices that distinguished the official opinion of the newspaper from those expressed in the newspaper’s articles.

Although the May 31 issue devoted one page to covering the shooting on Nanjing Road, over the course of the next few days, Xinwenbao increased the number of pages reserved for the May 30 movement. This increase enabled the editors to publish documents sent in by readers. The editors did not officially side with the opinions expressed in these texts, but the prominence of outside voices in the newspaper transformed the experience of reading Xinwenbao. Readers were able to see not only the sketch of events in the news but also the criticisms of the foreign authorities and interpretations of the events by their peers.

A Space for Nationalist Sentiments

After May 31, Xinwenbao’s editors created a column titled “Telegrams from All Sides (gefäng wendian)” to publish telegrams related to the May 30 movement. The lengths of some texts suggest that they might have never been sent to the intended recipients because of the high cost. Nevertheless, the format of telegram conveyed a sense of urgency. The texts in “Telegrams from All Sides” had a formulaic structure. One can identify the voice of the lower middle class in this column.

The telegrams were sent by local associations to the Beijing government and some other Chinese organizations that wielded influence in the negotiation with the Powers such as the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce (GCC), which represented the merchant elite’s interests. A few telegrams also addressed to the whole nation. They used the phrases such as

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33 The number of pages devoted to the May 30 movement on May 31 was one. The paper increased the number of pages to four on June 3 and maintained a similar page number in all subsequent issues before the end of June.
34 For the constitution of the GCC’s membership, see Joseph Fewsmith, Party, State, and Local Elites in Republican China: Merchant Organizations and Politics in Shanghai, 1890-1930 (University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 53.
“citizens of the entire nation (quanguo guomin)” and “patriots of the entire nation (quangguo aiguo renshi).” The first part of a telegram condemned the foreign authorities for the Nanjing Road shooting, and later in June, for other incidents of violence. The second part then urged the intended recipient to take the negotiation with the foreign authorities seriously.

These telegrams fell into the category of circular telegrams (tongdian), which were written for a public audience and usually sent to multiple recipients. In the early twentieth century, circular telegrams frequently featured in Chinese newspapers. They were authoritative texts and propagated just and collective causes. The form of these texts bore a resemblance to that of the traditional imperial texts xiwen, which were used to denounce usurpers and summon an army in times of war. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu remarks, “the ‘elevated style’ […] is the means by which a discourse declares itself to be authorized, invested, by virtue of its very conformity, with the authority of a body of people especially mandated to exercise a kind of conceptual magistrature.”

Circular telegrams’ closeness to xiwen and the authors’ insistence to the formulaic structure enabled the members of the lower middle class to subvert the social hierarchy temporarily and to speak with authority.

On June 7, the paper published a telegram coauthored by the South Shanghai Merchant Association, Shanghai Student and Merchant Association, Shanghai Agriculture Association, Shanghai Autonomous Administration Study Group, Pudong Public Association to the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce:

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35 One can find the phrase “citizens of the entire nation” in the telegram “An Announcement by the National Support Group for the Diplomatic Negotiation,” June 7, 1925, 12. The phrase “patriots of the entire nation” can be seen in “The Shanghai General Labor Union’s Telegram to the Public,” Xinwenbao, June 13, 1925, 12.
36 Yongming Zhou, Historicizing Online Politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and Political Participation in China (Stanford University Press, 2006), 55, 105-107.
The entire nation was shocked after the British police of Shanghai shot the students. [...] The police opened fire only ten seconds after giving the warning. [...] They look down upon Chinese lives and have had the determination to kill from a long time ago. This special telegram entreats you to argue with courage and to conduct the negotiation with graveness so that the honor of the nation can be preserved, and the spirit of the dead can rest in peace.  

That the South Shanghai Merchant Association and Shanghai Student and Merchant Association petitioned to the GCC shows that the membership of these two associations consisted of small merchants. Since the May Fourth Movement of 1919, disappointed by the conciliatory attitude of the merchant elite towards the foreign authorities, shopkeepers running businesses on the same street had organized themselves into street associations, which became organizational bases for boycott activities such as tax strikes. The two street associations mentioned here had a more militant stance on the movement than the big merchants did. Most of the telegrams issued by other street associations expressed similar views. Nevertheless, merchant associations’ telegrams such as the one quoted above did not propose a radical change in the status of the International Settlement of Shanghai. Therefore, one should not construe the condemnation of the foreign authorities in Shanghai by the lower middle class via telegrams as the intention to abolish foreign concessions.

The nationalist sentiment of the lower middle class was limited, and it did not make them forsake the privileges of living in the foreign concessions. This mixture of feelings was encapsulated in the following telegram from the Merchant Association of Henan Road to the Chinese Foreign Office in Beijing.

Since the British do not show any sincerity in the negotiation, the people have become increasingly indignant. The shops in Shanghai are still closed. This situation hurts the

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38 “Shanghai shi tuanti zhi zongshanghui dian” 上海市團體致總商會電 [The Associations of Shanghai to the General Chamber of Commerce], Xinwenbao, June 7, 1925, 12.
39 Fewsmith, Party, State, and Local Elites, 57-60. Similar telegrams from various street associations can be found in almost every issue of Xinwenbao in the summer of 1925. For the composition of Shanghai street associations, see Fewsmith, Party, State, and Local Elites, 68.
merchants’ interests, and if it persists, it will cause even more harm. Therefore, we entreat you to base this grave negotiation on the preliminary four demands by the Union of Labor, Commerce, and Education, so that the order of the International Settlement can be restored. Other demands can be discussed in the future.\textsuperscript{40}

The preliminary four demands referred to the first four demands in the list of seventeen demands composed by the Union of Labor, Commerce, and Education (ULCE) on June 7. They included the issuance of a proclamation by the Municipal Council to cancel the state of emergency in Shanghai, the withdrawal of the landing military forces from gunboats, the release of persons arrested related to the protest, and the return of schools and colleges seized by the Municipal Council. These demands were concerned with restoring the Settlement to its normal state, yet they did not touch upon the privileges that foreign nations enjoyed in China. In ULCE’s original proclamation, the satisfaction of these four demands by the Powers was the precondition for the Chinese side to come to the negotiation table.\textsuperscript{41} The telegram by the Merchant Association of Henan Road intended to reduce the demands of the negotiation to the preconditions, implying that the members of the Association preferred a prompt return to the normal state to potential benefits from a prolonged struggle with the Powers.

The nationalist interpretation of the May 30 movement tends to obscure Chinese Shanghai’s struggle between the nationalist feeling and the tangible economic interests of living in the foreign concession.\textsuperscript{42} The telegram from the Merchant Association of Henan Road shows that at least for the lower middle class of the city, the anger towards the foreign authorities and the willingness to make compromises with the same parties could coexist.

\textsuperscript{40}“Henan lu shanglianhu zhi wabu dian” 河南路商聯會致外部電 [Telegram from the merchant association of Henan Road to the Foreign Office], Xinwenbao, June 23, 1925, 12.

\textsuperscript{41}Rigby, \textit{May 30 Movement}, 45. See also “The Official Demands by the Union of Labor, Commerce, and Education Concerning the May 30 Incident,” Rexue ribao, June 8, 1925, 2.

\textsuperscript{42}Examples of the nationalist interpretation are Clifford, \textit{Spoilt Children of Empire}; Jackson, \textit{Shaping Modern Shanghai}. 
Besides “Telegrams from All Sides,” Xinwenbao allowed the expression of the antagonism against the foreign authorities through association meeting proceedings. Under the column heading “Meetings of Various Organizations (getuanti huiyi xiaoxi),” the editors published records of meetings from Chinese associations in Shanghai. Similar to the texts appearing in “Telegrams from All Sides,” these meeting proceedings were exclusively in support of the negotiation and protested against the foreign authorities. They also had a set structure: an urgent meeting was called, in which the leader of the association briefed the grave national situation after the Nanjing Road shooting. Then the proceeding provided a list of resolutions regarding the stance of the association on the movement. Merchant groups featured extensively in “Meetings of Various Organizations.”

On June 16, Xinwenbao published a meeting proceeding from the Merchant Association of No. 9 Xinzha Road. In the meeting, the vice-chair of the association addressed to more than a hundred participants,

After the tragedy on May 30, the shop-owners [of our street] closed businesses spontaneously. Ten days have elapsed, but the British still have not shown any sign of regret. However, because we are patriotic merchants who are willing to sacrifice, we should hold on to the end when good results are achieved.

The vice chair then points out that the reason that the foreigners were able to oppress the Chinese was that people preferred foreign products. To solve the problem, the vice-chair proposed that the members of the association should boycott imported goods. The members of the meeting unanimously passed the proposal.43

While the editors did not formally identify with either the reader’s opinion or the official stance of the Municipal Council, the sheer number of documents from the readership in the form

43 “Xinzha jiulu shanglianhui” 新閘九路商聯合 “Merchant association of No. 9 Xinzha Road,” Xinwenbao, June 16, 1925, 12.
of meeting proceedings and circular telegrams created a sense of community bound by common indignation against the brutality of the Municipal police. Because the original readership of the telegrams and meeting proceedings in Xinwenbao was not the paper’s reader, the paper published circular telegrams and meeting proceedings to avoid accusations of betraying the Chinese nation.

The creation of columns for documents condemning the Municipal Council was accompanied by the displacement of the official statements from the foreign authorities in Xinwenbao. Unlike the May 31 issue that juxtaposed a Municipal Council report with telegrams from student unions on the same page, all the subsequent issues put the official statements on the pages exclusive for advertisements.44 The change of status of Municipal Council’s statements from news to advertisements might have influenced the reader’s perception of the paper’s stance on the movement. Now Xinwenbao published official statements only for financial reasons, and the editors made it clear that Xinwenbao did not endorse the messages from the foreign authorities.

The publication of documents from the public and the displacement of the official statements suggest that the editors implicitly sided with the readers. In a sense, the paper provided a space for nationalist sentiments without admitting it. The spatial organization of Xinwenbao formed a part of the paper’s publication strategy to navigate through the expectations of the Chinese readership, its American owner, and the foreign authorities of the International Settlement. The paper could not openly criticize the foreign authorities in a way that the reader would desire to see because it had a foreign owner and faced pressure from the Municipal Council. At the same time, the editors had to show its readers that Xinwenbao was not affiliated with the Municipal Council and that it was a newspaper for the Chinese.

44 For an example, see “Gongbuju jinggao” 工部局警告 [Warnings from the Municipal Council], Xinwenbao, June 3, 1925, 7.
Introverted Nationalism of the Editors

Now I turn my attention from the creation of the space of nationalist sentiments in *Xinwenbao* to the content of the paper’s editorials. My reading of *Xinwenbao*’s editorials confirms historian Barbara Mittler’s observation of *Shen Bao* from 1910 to 1927: the nationalism of established commercial newspapers in Shanghai shows a “self-lacerating” tendency, and “those who demonstrated their nationalism in action were not those who recorded nationalist thoughts in the papers.”\(^{45}\) In the political environment of the International Settlement, *Xinwenbao* published nationalist editorials, but these editorials leveled attacks not against the Powers but against Chinese warlords and the Beijing government. Moreover, the editorials attempted to dampen the protests on the streets. In the editors’ view, street protests would hinder the official negotiation between the Chinese authorities and the Powers. They would also endanger the prosperity of the International Settlement, which benefited the Chinese residents.

Throughout the summer of 1925, editors of *Xinwenbao* were concerned about warlord politics. From their editorials, one can infer that the fresh memory of the brutality from the Second Zhili-Fengtian War might have prompted the newspaper’s editors to downplay the importance of the killing by the Shanghai Municipal Police.

In 1924, the then powerful Zhili faction invaded the Shanghai territory controlled by the weak Anfu faction to gain access to the economic resources of the prosperous city. To preempt the Zhili faction’s total dominance of the Chinese politics, the Fengtian warlord Zhang Zuolin, whose base was in Manchuria, declared war with the Zhili faction in North China. This war, however, settled into a stalemate until the Zhili faction’s close ally Feng Yuxiang threw in his lot with Zhang Zuolin and started a coup in the nation’s capital Beijing. Feng’s shift of allegiance not only broke

\(^{45}\) Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, 398.
the balance of the war but also caused a sudden disintegration of the Zhili faction. The control of
the Beijing government went from the Zhili faction to Duan Qirui, the leader of the Anfu faction.46

The use of modern weapons and tactics that had first appeared in World War I made the
Second Zhili-Fengtian War one of the most destructive military conflict that China had ever
witnessed. Around Shanghai, nine prosperous counties were especially hard hit.47 The effect of the
war spilled over into the Shanghai city proper. The warring parties looted the Chinese city of
Shanghai, and people fled to the two foreign concessions. By the end of the war, a quarter of
million displaced refugees escaped to the International Settlement protected by the Powers.48

In the May 31 issue of Xinwenbao, only one out of three editorials discussed the shooting
on Nanjing Road. The first editorial dealt with Duan Qirui’s policy to Zhang Zuolin. The second
editorial commented on the Beijing government’s ambivalent attitude to the war in Guangdong.
The preoccupation with the warlord politics also shaped the writing of the third editorial, which
mentioned the killing of protesters by the Municipal Police.

In the third editorial titled “Tragedies,” the author Journalist claims that there were two
tragic events that happened on May 30: One was the fight among the military officers in the
Chinese city, and the other was the killing of students by the Western police. In the author’s view,
the killing of the students was different and much more severe than the fight breaking out among
the officers because the students were unarmed while the officers were used to fighting. The author
described the death of the students as “hurting the hearts and saddening the eyes (Shangxin canmu)”
for him. However, instead of accusing the police of wrongdoings, the author expressed worries

46 Arthur Waldron, From War to Nationalism: China’s Turning Point, 1924-1925, Cambridge Studies in Chinese
47 Ibid., 50, 159.
48 Clifford, Spoilt Children of Empire, 92.
about the Beijing government’s capability of conducting a successful negotiation with the Powers. He lamented, “I don’t know what our government [the Beijing government] would think of this incident. […] The result of the negotiation is yet unknown. Even if the negotiation can get a fair result, but the dead cannot come back to life. This type of matter has never taken place in Shanghai.”

This commentary suggests that the author was not able to escape the framework of warlord politics when discussing violence. He brought out the Nanjing Road shooting by juxtaposing it with the local military conflict. The local fighting occurred when the Shandong warlord Zhang Zhongchang sent a commissar to Shanghai to investigate his Shanghai subordinates’ participation in smuggling opium. After arguing with the local military officers, the commissar’s group exchanged fire with them, and several were killed. The killing of the protesting students struck the author precisely because it did not occur on the Chinese-controlled territory and was not part of the widespread violence that arose from conflicts among the warlords.

When expressing sympathy to the deaths of the students, the author was not willing to challenge the foreign administration of the International Settlement. The only party that the editorial openly criticized was Duan Qirui’s Beijing government, which came to power as the result of the Second Zhili-Fengtian War. Journalist doubted that the Beijing government would even sympathize with the dead students. To some extent, the author was protective of the International Settlement when he claimed that the killing of students had not taken place in Shanghai. The reference to warlord politics and the reluctance to criticize the foreign authorities

50 Ibid.
reveal an inner struggle between Journalist’s sympathy towards the victims on Nanjing Road and the attachment to the political stability of the International Settlement.

The editorial’s silence on the responsibility of the foreign authorities reflects the author’s assumption that his reader, a Chinese living in the International Settlement, would be reluctant to demand a radical transformation of the status quo. At the end of the commentary, Journalist wrote, “even nationals outside of Shanghai will pay attention to the negotiation conducted by the Beijing government.” The guilty party of the May 30 Incident became the feckless Chinese government whom the reader should place under scrutiny.

In Xinwenbao, the May 30 movement was never able to eclipse warlord politics. The editors contended that there was a causal relationship between the two. When another warlord conflict was about to unfold in Shantou in mid-June, editor Zhewen commented, “the tragedy of May 30 happened as a result of China’s international status as a weak nation. Warlords’ fighting for their private interests precipitated this status.” Events such as the May 30 Incident would not only cause suffering among the people, but as “the hair stays only with the skin (picunmaofu),” they would also cause the fall of the warlords. Zhewen hoped that the warlords could awaken to this principle.51

While the previous two editors’ comments were directed towards the political elite of China, some other editorials expressed disappointment about the people, whose open confrontations with the Powers created obstacles for the ongoing negotiation. On June 11, inspired by the May 30 Incident, a Chinese crowd with makeshift weapons penetrated the British concession of Hankou, a trading port 800 kilometers up the Yangtze River from Shanghai and attacked foreigners.

51 Zhewen 哲文, “Xu hong beizhan” 許洪備戰 [War preparations by Xu and Hong], Xinwenbao, June 27, 1925, 6. All Xinwenbao editors used pen names.
Subsequently, the guards of the concession opened fire into the crowd and left four dead.\(^5^2\) In the editorial “Spirit of Self-Control,” the Xishen recognized the patriotism of the crowd, but he contended that the spread of radical protest actions from Shanghai to other parts of China such as Hankou enlarged the scope of the negotiation, making the Chinese demands difficult to be accepted. The proper action advocated by Xishen was to wait with patience and endurance until the negotiation was successfully settled.\(^5^3\)

If “Spirit of Self-Control” shows Xinwenbao editors’ desire to resume peace in foreign concessions, the following editorial expresses their worries about the potential economic loss resulted from the merchants’ participation in a prolonged strike. On May 31, when the GCC was discussing the desirability of a stoppage of trading with the UCLE, a massive crowd of demonstrators arrived at the scene. It pressured the reluctant GCC to sign the proclamation of a joint strike of workers, students, and merchants. On the next day, except for some large business concerns, most Chinese stores in the International Settlement were closed.\(^5^4\) Responding to this halt in commercial activities, Journalist intended to diffuse the enthusiasm of the striking merchants.

Writing for the reader, who was potentially a small shopkeeper, Journalist started the editorial with the warning, “Shutting down the market would definitely hurt the interests of the business sector.” While pointing out the financial consequence of the strike, the editor endorsed the readers’ nationalist sentiments. Nevertheless, these sentiments should not “bring out chaos to

\(^{52}\) Rigby, *May 30 Movement*, 64.

\(^{53}\) Xishen 西神, “Zizhi jingshen” 自治精神 [Spirit of self-control], *Xinwenbao*, June 27, 1925, 6.

the International Settlement.” He writes, “I hope everything will return to its normal state again so that nothing unwanted will happen, [...] and order of Shanghai will be maintained.”

The stance of Journalist in this editorial was not unlike what he voiced on May 31. The editor recognized the grievance of Chinese Shanghai, but he strongly opposed an open conflict with the foreign authorities. Xinwenbao urged the reader to scrutinize the Beijing government as well as to support the official negotiation. Violence and stoppage of commerce were to be averted, as the merchant reader had much to gain from stable and prosperous Shanghai amid political uncertainties created by warlord politics. The paper’s concern with business interests and resistance to political changes resurfaced when it started to advocate national product consumption as a rational response to the killing by the Municipal Police. The next section explores Xinwenbao’s role in the national product movement in the aftermath of the May 30 Incident.

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55 Journalist 记者, “Bashi 罷市 [Closing the market], Xinwenbao, June 2, 1925, 8.
Section II. *Xinwenbao*: Saving the Nation Through Consumption

Following the May 30 Incident, the lower-middle class of Shanghai responded to the Nanjing Road shooting by boycotting foreign goods and consuming national products. *Xinwenbao* was not neutral in this process. The editors actively promoted nationalist consumption during the movement by publishing national product advertisements and writing editorials. Consuming national products did not impose a threat to the foreign control of Shanghai in the present but provided Chinese consumers with the hope of political changes in the future. Although the enthusiasm about national product consumption helped to reaffirm the consumers’ Chinese national identity, it reflects Shanghai residents’ acquiescence of the rule by the foreign authorities of the International Settlement.

**Defining National Products**

Scholarship on Chinese consumer culture has pointed out that the promotion of domestically produced products had been instrumental for forging a Chinese national identity in the 1920s and 1930s. One group of literature highlights the economic rationale for purchasing national products as substitutes for imports.\(^{56}\) The notion of product-nationality acquired an intricate definition that included national origins of the materials, labor, managerial expertise, and production venue. Patriotic nationals were supposed to resist the temptation of foreign products, which were often cheaper, had better quality, and symbolized fashion and purchase national products (*guohuo*) with all four factors of production from China.\(^{57}\)

Imports enjoyed unfair competitive advantage in the Chinese market. In 1925, China did not have the tariff autonomy, for the Powers used treaty rights to set the import duty arbitrarily.

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\(^{56}\) For examples of this group, see Gerth, *China Made*; Weipin Tsai, *Reading Shenbao: Nationalism, Consumerism and Individuality in China 1919-37* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 120-125.

\(^{57}\) Gerth, *China Made*, 2-5.
low at five percent. Moreover, imported goods were not subject to internal transit tolls. The awareness of foreign dominance in the market and the shared sense of urgency to develop a robust native industry provided incentives for the Chinese to consume national products. Chinese merchants fostered and took advantage of the notion of product-nationality by stressing the weakness of the Chinese economy in their advertisements.

Another group of literature looks at the commemorative aspect of Chinese consumerism in the same historical period. A considerable amount of advertisements and even products themselves carried symbols invoking the history of national humiliation since the First Opium War. The proliferation of products that had memorial purposes suggests a desire for the Chinese to memorize this history. Still, the very act of using mnemonic objects to help memories attests to the prevalence of forgetfulness. In the following discussion, I will extend the definition of national products to encompass this category of consumer goods. During the May 30 movement, both types of nationalist consumerisms emerged in Shanghai newspapers as a response to the killing on Nanjing Road and the subsequent diplomatic negotiation.

Xinwenbao facilitated the transfer of the space of nationalist actions from streets to stores. This relocation of nationalist actions implies an acquiescence of the foreign rule of Shanghai and a fascination with the Westernized lifestyle brought by foreign influences. It reaffirms my larger

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59 Gerth, China Made, 40-41.  
60 Ibid, 1-25; Weipin Tsai, Reading Shenbao, 120-125.  
thesis that the Shanghai lower-middle class was caught in the struggle between their nationalist sentiments and the privileges of living in the International Settlement.

As I pointed out in the previous section, Xinwenbao’s editors were reticent about the Shanghai Municipal Council’s responsibility during the Nanjing Road shooting, but they created columns for telegrams and meeting proceedings condemning the foreign authorities to appear on the newspapers. In addition to these texts, various local associations and individuals published statements expressing their support for national products. Advertisements for national products also flourished on the pages of Xinwenbao.

**Forms of Advertisements**

After the May 30 Incident, there was a surge in the number of advertisements for national products in the paper. With the more substantial presence of national product advertisements, the share of British product advertisements decreased and eventually disappeared. Moreover, Xinwenbao published public announcements about national products in the local news section. These announcements had the same typesetting as news reports, and their headlines were marked by bullet points. Although the extolling language of these articles was similar to that found in national product advertisements, the authors attempted to shape their texts as reports of events.

Two common themes were the rising sales of a product and distributing national products for free or at a discounted price.64

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62 One can compare the issue on May 30 to those from several days after the incident to see the leap in the number of national product advertisements.

63 The last piece of advertisement from the British American Tobacco in the summer of 1925 is on the June 3 issue. Xinwenbao, June 3, 1925, 14.

64 For other examples of the first theme, see “Guohuo dianqi fengshan chushou” [National electric fans being sold] and “Quchenshi qishui gongsi yingye fada” [Wastons Sparkling Water Company has a roaring sale] in Xinwenbao, June 21, 12; “Zhongnan yan gongsi zhi guohuo xiangyan” [Zhongnan Tobacco Company’s National Cigarettes], Xinwenbao, June 5, 11. For examples of the second theme, see “Zengsong guochi xiaozhi” [Distributing A Brief History of National
In the news section of June 10, *Xinwenbao* editors published a notice from Lianyi Company, which specialized in the production of papers, to provide May 30 memorial letter paper gratuitously. This notice was juxtaposed with two reports of local thievery. The company claimed that the paper was made of domestic material and had a memorial purpose. On top of each piece, there were characters for “May 30 Bloodletting.” After describing the paper, the author explained that the company wanted to make the public forever remember the incident, so the manager decided to give out this letter paper to the public upon request. A week later, the report about the same company's letter paper appeared again in the news section to recount an
“unceasing enthusiasm” from the readers for the memorial letter paper. People both in and outside the city wrote the company to request the item.\(^6^7\)

Whether the blurring of the boundary between news and advertisements in Xinwenbao was driven by financial motivation, it signaled the eminence of national products in Xinwenbao and the paper’s efforts to transform national products into events of national products. The June 10 and June 17 advertisements of Lianyi Company's letter paper told the reader what had transpired in the city of Shanghai: the company decided to offer free products for a patriotic reason, and consumers enthusiastically requested the letter paper. These announcements thus helped create a commercial community engaged in the activities related to national product consumption. The editors also sent the message that similar to local theft, the public responses to national products were events merited the reader's attention. The making of advertisements into the news was not an accidental editorial choice but formed a part of the paper’s consistent strategy to channel the nationalist sentiments generated by the Nanjing Road shooting into the promotion of national products. If participating in the May 30 movement meant a change in consumer habits, Xinwenbao reinforced this change. The following discussion will illustrate the rationale for participating in the movement as a consumer.

Why Can National Products Save the Nation?
A statement by the Shanghai National Product Preservation Group (Shanghai guohuo weichihui) captured the economic reason behind the heated interest in national products. This statement starts with the warning, “if [one] desires to wash away the extraordinary humiliation of the present, [one] needs to start to use national products immediately, never to lose the habit, and
persist to the end.” The text then explained that the extraordinary humiliation referred to the ruthless killing of protesters on May 30. The author claimed, "the Shanghai Municipal Police has always regarded itself as a just institution. However, without careful investigation, the police opened fire only ten seconds after warning the crowd.” In the author's view, the Shanghai Municipal Police debased the lives of the Chinese because of the weakness of the Chinese nation, and so he argued, “the strength of a nation depends on the economy of the nation. The economy of the nation depends on the popularity of national products. […] The Eastern and Western nations have become strong because those peoples have been willing to use national products.”

From the Shanghai National Product Preservation Group's warning, one can see that the themes of national shame and developing a strong native industry were intertwined during the May 30 movement. The promotion of national products would “wash away” China’s humiliation under the political dominance by the Powers. The author implied that China’s economic development stimulated by the popularity of national products would improve the nation's political position. Shanghai would rid itself of foreign control eventually.

Nevertheless, the desire to right China's political situation in the long run did not amount to a challenge of the foreign authorities in the immediate future. The author was vague about the timeframe in which the plan would take effect. At the end of the statement, he wrote, “don’t let the passage of time change your determination […] lest others accuse you of having a ‘five-minute’ enthusiasm.” To change Shanghai’s political arrangement via the development of a

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68 Shanghai Product Preservation Group 上海國貨維持會, “Shanghai guohuo weichihui jinggao” 上海國貨維持會警告 [Warning from Shanghai National Product Preservation Group], Xinwenbao, June 10, 1925, 2.
69 Ibid.
native industry was ultimately a long-term goal. The author’s focus on a distant future masked his ambivalent attitude towards the existence of foreign concessions.

The hope of a change taking place in an indeterminate future was also prevalent in the advertisements that emphasized the mnemonic function of national products. Changyu Winery advertised its brandy on June 23 with the following rhymed verse,

The bloodletting on May 30 has made us extremely sad. Lying on brushwood and tasting gall let one remember and never forget. All Chinese native products have high quality. Changyu's products are on the top of the top. Saving and loving the nation, one first takes a sip. National shame can be washed away, and national products will gain their glory.70

![Image of Changyu Winery's National Humiliation Theme Brandy Advertisement.](Xinwenbao, June 23, 15)

This verse alluded to the story of Goujian, a king in the Spring and Autumn period. After being defeated by Fuchai, the king of another ruling house, Goujian was captured and forced into

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70 “Sanshi nian bailandi jiu” 三十年白蘭地酒 [Thirty-Year-Old Brandy]. *Xinwenbao*, June 23, 15.
servitude by Fuchai. Although Fuchai let Goujian return to his native place eventually, Goujian decided to revenge for the shame that he suffered. To remember his shame, he slept on a brushwood bed every night and tasted gall at each meal. Twenty-one years later, Goujian rebuilt his army and conquered Fuchai’s state.\textsuperscript{71}

Goujian was able to resist forgetfulness by repetitive acts of experiencing bitterness. Changyu Winery presented its products as having a similar function of helping the reader keep the memory of the May 30 Incident. The advertisement encouraged the reader to develop the habit of sipping Changyu brandy, so he could remember the national shame daily as Goujian did. However, Goujian’s saga was not only about resisting forgetfulness but also about refraining from taking drastic actions in the present. This banal nationalism advocated by Changyu Winery’s advertisement would only achieve the result of “washing away” national shame in the very long term.

The economic and mnemonic reasons for purchasing of national products diverted the people’s attention from the present to the future. The rhetoric surrounding the promotion of national products enabled Chinese consumers to reaffirm their identity as responsible Chinese nationals while exempting them from the need to challenge the status quo of the foreign-controlled Shanghai. Moreover, for Chinese consumers living in the International Settlement, using national products did not imply returning to a frugal lifestyle or abandoning Western fashion.\textsuperscript{72} The nationalist consumers expected national products to keep their current Westernized lifestyle intact. Ideally, national products were replicas of imported goods while having their material, labor, and managerial inputs drawn from China.

\textsuperscript{71} Cohen, “Remembering and Forgetting,” 2-3.
\textsuperscript{72} Gerth, \textit{China Made}, 316-317.
National Products of Western Modernity
An article from the China National Product Preservation Group (zhonghua guohuo weichihui), which promoted Guangsheng Trading House’s cosmetic products, shows that the efforts to replace imports with domestic products in the aftermath of May 30 Incident coexisted with the acceptance of the Western material culture. Cosmetics were an example of the infiltration of Western material culture in China. After being introduced to Shanghai, the market for Western cosmetic products expanded quickly in the treaty port in the early twentieth century. Initially, there was a lack of supply of these foreign-made products, so cosmetics were luxury items in the early periods. With the establishment of Chinese companies competing in the market, cosmetics became a daily necessity.73

The author of the article explained that his promotion of Guangsheng’s products was closely related to the killing on Nanjing Road. In his words, “since the tragedies in Shanghai, Hankou, and Canton, compatriots of the nation have been in grief. Except for promoting national products, there are no other ways [for the nation] to survive and self-strengthen.”74 The boycott of imports, however, did not make the author deny the quality of foreign cosmetics. Guangsheng’s merchandise were “exquisite beyond comparison and superior to imports.” As a result, they “could replace foreign products.”75

In this article, the quality of national cosmetics was measured against imports. The claim that products from Guangsheng were superior and could replace imports suggests the author’s

73 Gerth, China Made, 52-55.
74 The tragedy in Shanghai refers to the Nanjing Road shooting. The incident in Hankou was discussed in Section I. The tragedy in Canton happened on June 23, 1925, when the Europeans in Canton’s foreign concession fired into a large Chinese procession including military cadets from the Whampoa Academy. This incident greatly elevated the seriousness of the Canton-Hongkong Strike. Rigby, The May 30 Movement, 65.
assumption that Chinese products generally were inferior imitations of Western ones. More importantly, this reaction against the brutality of the Shanghai Municipal Police was far away from a denial of the city’s Westernized lifestyle. The article encouraged the daily use of modern cosmetics made by a Chinese manufacturer to aid the economic development of the nation.

In a letter to the Sincere and Wing On Department Stores, the author Shao Songshan envisaged the transformation of national products into symbols of Westernized modernity through their display at the two modern department stores. Opened on Nanjing Road in the 1910s, Sincere and Wing On were the first Chinese-owned department stores in Shanghai. The founders of these two stores unabashedly made their enterprise windows into Western material culture. Not only did the owners decide to strictly follow the operation model of Sydney’s largest department store, Anthony Horden & Company, but the architecture design of the two stores also adopted the Beaux-Arts style typical in Western commercial and public buildings. The elaborate display featured mostly imported goods, and the two department stores sent agents to Europe to actively seek the latest fashion items.

In Shao's opinion, the status of the two department stores as beacons of a tasteful, Europeanized lifestyle could potentially facilitate a change in people’s perception of national products. Shao urged the managers of Sincere and Wing On to reserve the most prominent display sections for national products:

Since the tragedy on May 30, the indignant Chines nationals regarded the economic boycott and promotion of national products as the only fundamental solutions to the present situation. Because you have witnessed the tragedy, you should be as enraged, if not more so, as other people. […] I implore you to devote the most important sections of

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your stores to the display of national products, [...] and this change will do a great favor to the future of national products.\textsuperscript{78}

Although this letter did not change Sincere and Wing On’s business strategy, as foreign goods continued to dominate the two department stores’ merchandise, it nevertheless suggests that for Shanghai consumers, the notion of Chinese product-nationality did not conflict with Western material culture. The sense of national crisis created by the shooting on Nanjing national Road made Shao promote national products. However, Shao considered that the elevation of national products’ status among Chinese consumers needed to be accomplished by their display in the Sincere and Wing On Department Stores, which symbolized Western modernity.

\textit{Figure 3.}\textsuperscript{79} The Sincere Department Store and Bustling Nanjing Road.

\textsuperscript{78} Shao Songshan 邵嵩山, “Shao songshan zhi xianshi yongan liang gongsi han” 邵嵩山致先施永安兩公司函 [Shao Songshan’s letter to the Sincere and Wing On Department Stores], \textit{Xinwenbao}, July 7, 1925, 14; Sincere and Wing On are the only large department stores in Shanghai in 1925. Chan, “Selling Goods and Promoting a New Commercial Culture,” 23-24.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, 30.
Shao’s endorsement of Western material culture provided a clue on his view of foreign concessions. After all, the political stability and cultural exchange in the International Settlement provided the precondition for the existence of the two department stores. Economic historian Marie-Claire Bergère argues that the security offered by the Shanghai Municipal Council enabled the Settlement to enjoy a golden decade of economic development preceding 1925. It was not coincidental that most Western retail stores located in the International Settlement. The fascination with Western modernity exerted a dampening effect on the Chinese desire to seek a radical or violent reaction against the concession authorities because a disorder might challenge the International Settlement's ability to sustain Western material culture.

From Streets to Stores
Editors of Xinwenbao shared Shao's view on Western cultural influences and advocated the substitution of imports with national products. Different from Xinwebao editor’s attempts to hide the newspaper's stance on who constituted the responsible party of the shooting, the editorials on national products show that the editors endorsed the promotion of national products during the May 30 movement as both a practical and responsible reaction.

The earliest editorial on national products published after the May 30 Incident was Journalist’s “On National Products and the Strike,” on the June 11 issue of Xinwenbao. This editorial responded to the proclamation of the triple stoppage of workers, merchants, and students signed by the GCC on May 31, after which strikes took place in both foreign and Chinese mills. The editor discouraged striking in Chinese establishments. He wrote that Chinese factories should consider “letting employees work overtime to manufacture more

products and reverse the draining of economic rights (*liquan*). They also need to consider hiring the striking workers from foreign mills.”

The stoppage in Chinese factories would aid the incursion of foreign products in the domestic market. While dismissing striking as passive, the editor proposed the promotion of national products as an effective alternative that could “reverse the draining of economic rights.” The phrase “draining of economic rights (*louzhi*),” which referred to China's loss of tariff autonomy, frequently featured on the pages of *Xinwenbao* in the aftermath of the Nanjing Road shooting. The editor suggested that the national product movement had a more profound effect than influencing the course of the diplomatic negotiation; it could stem the inflow of foreign goods caused by the loss of tariff autonomy. The role of Chinese factories in this movement was to produce enough products to fill the domestic market.

In addition to producing sufficient products for Chinese consumers, *Xinwenbao*’s editors expected domestic companies to spend more effort into advertising their products. On June 24, Journalist expressed his approval of the China National Product Preservation Group’s organization of a street procession to promote national products. The editor pointed out the fluctuation of Chinese consumers’ enthusiasm for purchasing domestically produced goods resulted in limited benefits to the native industry. Therefore, the editor viewed street processions as helpful for maintaining the enthusiasm stirred up by the May 30 killing. Journalist stated,

> The reason to hold street processions is to […] encourage the producers to compete with each other and to please the users aesthetically. I think in preparation for processions, the factories should select their best products. Then, they need to decorate and display the

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82 Journalist 記者, “Tichang guohuo yu bagong” 提倡國貨與罷工 [The promotion of national products and the strike], *Xinwenbao*, June 11, 1925, 10.
products with care in the processions. These events should be like temple festivals, the livelier, the better. The editorial's emphasis on the graceful display of products in street processions indicates that similar to Shao Songshan, Journalist advocated the transformation of national products into symbols of Westernized material culture. Whether being displayed in the fancy glass cases in the Nanjing Road department stores or the bustling street processions, national products carried the connotation of abundance and taste. Moreover, as in the case of blurring the boundary between advertisements and news reports, which I discussed earlier, the editor's support for the street processions illustrates the editors' tendency to create events of national products on the pages of Xinwenbao. In historian Karl Gerth's words, events of nationalist commodity spectacles enabled the participants to imagine “a wealthy and powerful nation despite the constraints of imperialism.”

In the late summer, an article titled “On Fashionable Shanghainese Purchasing National Products” documented a change in consumer behavior among the Shanghainese: “after the May 30 tragedy, the Shanghainese were indignant. Although in the past, purchasing foreign products meant prestige and distinction, they have a different attitude now and purchase national products eagerly.”

The change observed by the author of the article demonstrates that the Shanghainese were willing to nationalize their consumer habits. Nevertheless, the abundance of texts advocating national products provided evidence that the nationalism of the Shanghai lower-middle class and Chinese consumers in general after the May 30 Incident was not radical. The

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84 Gerth, China Made, 281.
85 Jiangjun 將軍, “Shanghai shimao ren zhi gouyong guohuo tan” 上海時髦人購用國貨談 [On fashionable Shanghainese purchasing national products], Xinwenbao, August 19, 14.
political change effected by economic measures would only realize in the long term, and the status quo of the International Settlement was to be maintained. In the present, the consumers needed to take pains to overcome their preference for foreign products while the merchants must find ways to expand their premises' productive capacity. The phenomenon of responding major diplomatic setbacks with economic boycotts and the promotion of national products figured repetitively in the early twentieth century with a cyclic pattern. Each time, the widespread enthusiasm about national products ended when government suppression and consumers’ inertia set in.\(^{86}\) Eventually, the enthusiasm for national products during the May 30 movement died down, completing another cycle of the national product movement.

\(^{86}\) Gerth, *China Made*, 125-126.
Section III. Rexue ribao: Identifying the National Traitor

On June 15, Rexue ribao (The Hot-Blood Daily) published an advertisement in Xinwenbao among those of national products. The publisher claimed that the purpose of the paper was to “cry out and keep the national salvation movement on its right course.” The circulation of the paper had reached 30,000 copies. In the publisher’s view, the paper became popular because of its outspokenness and of “the people’s undying spirit (minxin weisi).” The very need to “cry out” suggests that the more radical readers of Xinwenbao objected to this established commercial newspaper’s editorial strategies in the aftermath of the May 30 Incident.

Rexue ribao was a tabloid-style four-page newspaper by early communists. The chief editor was Qu Qiubai, a communist theoretician trained in Russia. The first issue of Rexue ribao appeared on June 4, 1925. After the popularity and inflammatory language of the paper attracted the attention of the concession authorities, the Shanghai Municipal Police raided its office on June 27. Unlike Xinwenbao’s editorial decision to include three paragraph-length editorials in each issue, Rexue ribao was openly opinionated. More than half of the articles in the newspaper were commentaries by the editors. The style of the paper was less literary than that of Xinwenbao. Not satisfied with economic boycotts, a more militant faction of the Shanghai lower middle class found echoes in Rexue ribao’s call for radical responses.

87 “Rexue ribao’s Advertisement,” Xinwenbao, 15 June, 1925. A circulation of 30,000 copies was large at the time. The most successful Shanghai newspaper, Shenbao, only reached this figure in 1920. Timothy B. Weston, “Minding the Newspaper Business: The Theory and Practice of Journalism in 1920s China,” Twentieth-Century China 31, no. 2 (April 2006): 17.
90 Later, I will argue that Rexue ribao assumes the role of a moralizer to the reader. This editorial voice provides further evidence for the paper’s lower-middle class readership.
According to Lin Yutang, a contemporary observer of Chinese journalism, radical leftist publications were common in the Shanghai newspaper market, but most of them only existed for a short period of time before being suppressed by political authorities. Editors of these publications would soon resume the same paper under another name. Lin’s observation helps explain the distinct voice of Rexue ribao from that of Xinwenbao despite the overlapping of these two papers’ readerships: Rexue ribao was less constrained by the censorship of the Shanghai Municipal Council because its publishers did not need to make the paper last a long time.

The pressure from the Municipal Council was only one of the factors that shaped the editorial policies of Xinwenbao throughout the May 30 movement. Rexue ribao’s stance was the result of interactions among editors, readers, and the concession authorities. The paper criticized the economic solution to the May 30 Incident proposed by Xinwenbao as ineffective. It argued that the Chinese had to organize a revolutionary party and even to declare war with the Powers. It also attributed the stalemate of the diplomatic negotiation to the treachery of big merchants in Shanghai. Editors of Rexue ribao simultaneously depicted the reader as hostile to the presence of foreign interests in Shanghai and as seized by the privileges of living in the foreign. The paper encouraged militant readers to maintain their vigilance and assumed the role of a moralizer to the forgetful reader.

Nationalism in the aftermath of the Nanjing Road shooting was not the single voice that determined the actions of Shanghai's lower-middle class. Even the more radical section of the social group failed to transform their nationalist sentiments into the revolutionary acts proposed by Rexue ribao. During the summer of 1925, the call for organizing a revolutionary party

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dissipated gradually. The paper’s plan to evict the foreigners from the International Settlement using armed forces never realized.92

**Questioning the National Product Movement**

The editorial titled “Who Says the Chinese Have Wakened from Their Dream?” on the June 19 issue summarizes the paper’s position on political strategies to be adopted and targets to be criticized in the aftermath of the Nanjing Road shooting. The author, whose pen name was Fangcao, launched an attack at what he saw as a degradation of the nationalist movement since the May 30 Incident.

At the beginning of this movement, I was optimistic about the situation. [...] This incident exposed the crime of the imperialism (diguo zhuyi) in oppressing China. It also stimulated the awareness of the nationals and made it possible for a grand national independence movement (minzu duli yundong). [...] However, this revolutionary movement could not persist. The big merchants conspire with the bureaucracy and sacrifice the interests of the nation and the common people (minzhong). They have made compromises with the imperialists and asked for a quick settlement.93

The author’s explicit denunciation of the foreign encroachment of China contrasts with *Xinwenbao*’s reticence on this topic. The major domestic enemy shifted from the feckless Beijing government and warlords to the merchant elite of Shanghai. In Fangcao’s view, the reactions against the Municipal Council in the aftermath of the May 30 Incident had the potential to fulfill Lenin’s vision that the oppressed Asian nations would participate in nationalist revolutions against the capitalist nations.94 Nevertheless, this potential was lost in the treachery of Shanghai big merchants.

92 For the later developments of the May 30 Movement, see Rigby, *May 30 Movement*, 56-62.
93 Fangcao 芳草, “Shui shuo zhongguo ren de meng xing” 誰說中國人的夢醒了 [Who says the Chinese have wakened from their dream?], *Rexue ribao*, June 19, 1925, 4. All editors of *Rexue ribao* used pen names.
94 Leninism in the 1920s envisioned two types of world revolutions: one aimed to unite all workers of the world against capitalists, and the other called for the oppressed nations to gain independence from the imperialists. These two visions differed in their emphasis on class agitation. A nationalistic revolution would prioritize a vertical integration of classes over inter-class conflicts. Michael Y. L. Luk, *The Origins of Chinese Bolshevism: An Ideology in the Making, 1920-1928* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 178-179.
Not only did the merchant elite make compromises at negotiation tables, but they also led the common people to purchase national products but forget national shame. Under the big merchants’ influence, “the miserable Chinese people had reverted to the rotten and ineffective economic boycott used in 1915, but the great call for the national revolution had almost disappeared.”

In 1915, the Japanese government presented the Twenty-One Demands to the Yuan Shikai government. The Chinese perceived these demands as grave encroachments of their national sovereignty and started a wave of boycotts against Japan goods. Despite the boycotts, the Yuan Shikai government accepted a revised version of the demands. Fangcao invoked the history of 1915 to show that the ongoing economic boycotts would fail to deliver China’s national independence, which had to be gained from a revolutionary movement.

In one letter to his friend Renxiu, Fangcao made it clear that this revolutionary movement involved the organization of a revolutionary party and preparation for armed conflicts with the Powers. Renxiu was a student who participated in the protest by giving street lectures following the Nanjing Road shooting. In the letter, the editor criticized Renxiu’s argument in his lectures that developing the domestic industry and promoting national products could save the nation. In the editor’s opinion, as long as the Powers controlled China’s tariff, the national product movement could never succeed. Therefore, Renxiu should propagate the idea of revoking all unequal treaties. To reach this aim, the common people first had to organize themselves into a revolutionary.

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95 Fangcao, “Who Says the Chinese Have Wakened from Their Dream?”
96 The two demands that most provoked the Chinese were the transfer of the German rights in Shandong province to Japan and the placement of Japanese advisors in all branches of the government. Karl Gerth, China Made, 134; Charles Remer, A Study of Chinese Boycotts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), 46-49.
97 Fangcao 芳草, “Yu youren tan zenyang jiuguo” 与友人談怎樣救國 [Discuss How to Save the Nation with My Friend], Rexue ribao, June 13, 1925, 4.
Exposing the Merchant Elite

Compared to Xinwenbao whose critical targets were the Beijing government and warlords, Rexue ribao had a more localized focus for its criticisms. The paper accused the merchant elite of Shanghai of sabotaging the national salvation movement. It published stories of treacherous big merchants. The imagined readership would closely monitor the activities of the merchant elite by reading these stories.

On June 10, 1925, the GCC joined the negotiation which had been conducted by the UCLE and Beijing government officials. The merchant elite of the GCC pressured the ULCE to retract its earlier demands that would improve the working conditions for the workers and the rights to unionize in the International Settlement. Rexue ribao reacted to the reduction of the ULCE’s demands by publishing “A Roster of National Traitors,” a collection of accounts of Chinese managers who refused to support the triple stoppage. In one story, the editor attributed the cause of the regular operation of two tramlines during the strike to the interference by the Chinese manager of the tramline company, Ni Tiansheng. Being informed of the forthcoming strike, Ni suggested to the British to arrest and kill striking workers. A small number of tramline workers were threatened to stay at their posts. At the end of the article, the author remarked that it was not the lack of awareness of the national crisis that prevented the workers from joining the strike. It was Ni’s treason to the Chinese nation.

This trope acquired more potency in the June 19 issue, in which the newspaper published a long story, “The Criminal History of the Treacherous Sugar Merchant Chen Yuren.” The story of Chen started from his speculation during the May 4 Movement six years ago. The narrator

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99 “Hanjian timin lu” 漢奸題名録 [A roster of national traitors], Rexue ribao, June 12, 1925, 2.
described Chen as addictive to opium, so that “whenever he was not at foreign trade houses and meeting with other brokers, Chen lied on his bed and took opium.” In the aftermath of the May 30 Incident, Chen appeared to support the economic boycott against the Powers but stocked a vast amount of Japanese sugar, which he planned to disguise as national products. His accountant Deng was enraged by Chen’s business transactions with the Japanese. After a failed attempt to persuade Chen to join the economic boycott, Deng decided to take a fatal dose of opium and jumped in a river. Once he was pulled out from the water, Deng jumped for the second time. He was saved again and sent to hospital. The story ended with Deng’s recuperation, but Deng was fired because of his objection to Chen’s speculation.100

In “The Criminal History,” the narrator contrasted the determined patriotism of Deng with Chen’s greed for profits. The story established the patriotism of Deng through his repetitive attempts to commit suicide. In Deng’s hand, even the use of opium became a subversive way to demonstrate his devotion to the nation. Suicides in early Republican China carried didactic messages. They continued the long tradition of using death as a dissenting moral response to the state’s corruption.101 Therefore, the depiction of Deng’s suicide attempts constituted a polemic against those who prioritized profits over the nation during the national product movement.

Although the status of merchants carried connotations of moral degradation in traditional Chinese thinking, it was not this status per se that made the editor label Chen as a treacherous merchant. Rather, it was Chen’s refusal to adhere to the new merchant morality that put the

100 “Tangye jianshang chen yuren zhi zuishi” 糖業奸商陳裕仁之罪史 [The criminal history of the treacherous sugar merchant Chen Yuren], Rexue ribao, June 19, 1925, 2.
national product movement above personal gains.\textsuperscript{102} “A Roster of National Traitors” and “The Criminal History” closely linked one’s social status as a big merchant to the ethical threat of violating the expected moral standard. By attacking the big merchants, \textit{Rexue ribao} encouraged small shopkeepers, who were likely to form a significant part of the paper’s readership, to uphold the moral standard by closing their shops in the triple stoppage and resisting the profits of foreign imports. The socioeconomic status of Deng as a clerk might also have made the lower-middle class readers bring themselves into Deng’s subjectivity.

Next to “The Criminal History,” an editor provided a side note stating the Sugar Merchant Association, which Chen belonged to, had planned to move their premise from the International Settlement to the Chinese city. Nevertheless, afraid of the interference from the people who heard about the story in the Chinese city, the association postponed the plan.\textsuperscript{103} This note fostered a sense of community for those scrutinizing treacherous merchants. It also told the reader that even the powerful merchant elite feared the power of the popular press.

\textbf{The Channel of Truthful Information}

\textit{Rexue ribao} facilitated the militant readership’s scrutiny of the corrupt elite by providing an alternative source of information when the same elite blocked the mainstream media. Fangcao wrote an editorial on the June 15 issue, claiming that the GCC secretly changed the demands proposed by the UCLE to the foreigners without the UCLE’s knowledge. At the same time, the GCC also controlled the established presses of Shanghai. All major newspapers published statements that the GCC had reached a consensus with the UCLE before changing the demands. Although the UCLE sent letters to newspapers to clarify that it was not being informed, only two

\textsuperscript{102} For a discussion on the question of merchant morality in the national product movement, see Gerth, China Made, 161.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Rexue ribao}, June 19, 1925, 2.

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established papers were willing to publish the UCLE’s letter. This editorial concluded with the remark, “the national traitors in the GCC and the big newspapers joined in a conspiracy to cover everyone’s eyes and ears.” By presenting established newspapers as corrupt and untrustworthy, the editor suggested to the reader that facts had to come from an alternative channel, that was, the tabloid paper *Rexue ribao.*

The construction of a vigilant readership hinged on the tabloid format of *Rexue ribao.* In early Republican Shanghai, the size of a newspaper was closely related to the type of content that it published. The small papers (*xiaobao*), which had four to eight pages, were expected to embody a dissenting voice. The frustrated intellectuals of the late Qing published the earliest small papers. They resorted to political satires to voice their frustration of the court politics. In early Republican Shanghai, the content of small papers usually featured radical political opinions, insider news, escapist entertainment, and serialized novels. Yu Daxiong, the editor of another successful small paper *Jingbao* (The Crystal), remarked that the principles of his publication policies were to say what other papers were unwilling to say and to ensure the veracity of the news.

The format that the *Rexue ribao* editors chose for their paper indicates their intention to fashion the paper as an unorthodox but truthful source of information for the vigilant readers, who were not able to get reliable news because of the established presses bowed down to the foreign authorities and the merchant elite. In an editorial on the June 5 issue, editor Shuya drew

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104 Fangcao 芳草, “Yu yishou yanjin tianxia ermu” 欲一手掩盡天下耳目 [Covering everyone’s eyes and ears], *Rexue ribao*, 15 June, 1925, 4.
a parallel between the publishing strategies of Jingbao and Rexue ribao. He considered that both papers aimed to provide information censored by the elite-controlled press.\textsuperscript{107}

To enhance the truthfulness of the paper, Rexue ribao published a large number of readers’ letters. In historian Bryna Goodman’s view, newspapers could embody the public and convey authenticity through rituals of public enunciation such as publishing readers’ letters.\textsuperscript{108}

The submitted texts by Rexue ribao readers shared the editors’ stance during the May 30 movement. Most of the readers’ writings expressed doubts over the government officials and merchants’ involvement in the diplomatic negotiation with the Powers. They supported a revolutionary party and armed resistance. Rexue ribao did not reserve separate columns for readers’ letters or essays as Xinwenbao did for circular telegrams, and so the submissions were mixed with editorials on the pages of the paper. The proximity between readers’ letters and editorials in both physical space and stance molded the submitted texts into an extension of the editors’ voice. It reinforced the perception of the paper as the channel of truthful information.

\textbf{A Bribery Episode}

If the small size of Rexue ribao implies veritable information and a readership scrutinizing the activities of the merchant elite in the aftermath of the May 30 Incident, the image of a militant readership was further developed when the readers were invited to share their insider information about the corruption of the Chinese elite. On June 18, Rexue Ribao published a letter from the reader Member of the Nation (\textit{guomin yi fenzi}), who claimed to be informed by a certain Western missionary that Yu Qiaqing, the chair of the GCC, received 600,000 yuan from the British. Member of the Nation wrote, “the only strategy for Chinese nationals in this situation

\textsuperscript{107} Shuyan 舒嚴, “Shanghai xinwenjie zhi weiqie” 上海新聞界的畏怯 [The cowardly Shanghai press], 5 June, 1925, 2.

was to watch closely this person who has the heart of a beast and takes no actions in the negotiation.” 109 The pen name of the anonymous writer was suggestive. It was the responsibility of a member of the nation to disclose the scandals of the traitorous members of the nation. The editor commented after the letter, “we do not know if the news is true, but we know that the GCC has conspired with big newspapers and the commissars from the Beijing government. It has altered the demands of the UCLE, which represents the people’s will. […] [This letter] has its grounds.”

Although the editor qualified the letter by questioning the veracity of the bribery scandal, this scandal resurfaced on June 22 when Rexue Ribao published the letter “Enriching Private Purses.” Zhang Yong, a reader of the newspaper, wrote that he was a friend to an employee of the Shanghai Municipal Council. When the friend came to him to complain about the current state of affairs in China, the informer told him that although the negotiation with the Powers appeared to have moved to Beijing, in fact, it had already ceased because all the Chinese officials in charge of the negotiation received bribes. Zhang could not believe the informer’s words initially. Nevertheless, after thinking about Member of the Nation’s bribery episode about Yu Qiaqing, Zhang was enraged and called for the elimination of the national traitors.110 Zhang’s story suggests that Rexue Ribao carried factual weight among its readership. The doubtful Zhang became convinced of the scandal after reflecting on the Member of the Nation’s report of Yu’s corruption. Readers’ letters would reveal truthful news blocked by the major presses.

Similar to the editorial response to Member of the Nation’s letter, the editorial comment after the exposé by Zhang conceded that there was a chance that the scandal was not entirely

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109 Member of the Nation 國民一份子, “Yu qiaqin shouhui liushiwian yuan” 虞洽卿與六十萬元 “Yu Qiaqing and 600,000 yuan,” Rexue Ribao, 18 June 1925, 4.
110 Zhang Yong 張庸, “Baonang” 飽囊 [Enriching private purses], Rexue Ribao, 22 June 1925, 4.
true. The editor explained, “the sentences and title were entirely from Mr. Zhang. We cannot trust this type of report entirely. However, the stalemate of the negotiation must have caused this type of thinking.” Then the editor claimed that he had another source that reported a scandal of a similar type. All these scandals showed to him that the British must have attempted bribery.111 By justifying the motivations of Member of the Nation and Zhang to accuse of Yu Qiaqing of corruption, Rexue ribao editors encouraged the readers to expose the merchant elite’s betrayal of the nation. The qualifications in the editorial comments did not so much discredit the letters as to lend credit to the writers’ cause.

The paper’s construction of the militant readership who was hostile to the big merchants, however, was constrained by the readers’ divergent interests. On the same page where Zhang’s letter is published, the editors inserted a disclaimer by Yu stating that he did not receive any bribe from the British. According to Zheng Chaolin, one of the paper’s editors at the time, Rexue ribao’s decision to put this note was to appease the readers who were from the same native place as Yu. They went to the newspaper’s office and told the editors that they took offense at Member of the Nation’s letter.112

The next day, the editor published a message to Member of the Nation, asking for the name of “a certain missionary.” The editor wrote, “I admire your letter, but who is ‘a certain missionary’? Can you tell me the name? If you can tell me the name, our newspaper will publish his name together with your letter to scare the traitors.”113 The editor did not mention the subject of this message explicitly, but from the timing and the phrase “a certain missionary,” which

111 Rexue Ribao, 22 June 1925, 4.
113 Rexue Ribao, 23 June 1925, 2.
Member of the Nation used several days ago, it was likely that he had reacted to Yu’s self-justification by writing another letter to the editor. This message suggests that the editors published Yu’s disclaimer a day before only reluctantly. The disclaimer by Yu did not remove the suspicion that the editors had for Yu, and the newspaper encouraged the readers to expose scandals of the merchant elite.

Member of Nation’s second letter was eventually not published, but Rexue ribao’s encouragement for readers to write about the corruption of big merchants shows that the editors used the readers’ letters for a specific end: they intended to project the image of a militant readership that would conform to the contour of a nationalist low-middle class. However, as the episode of Yu’s disclaimer demonstrates, even for Rexue ribao’s readers, who held a radical stance during the May 30 movement, the nationalist identity failed to override native-place connection. The accusation launched against the big merchants, who chose personal gains over the nation, might reflect the anxiety and struggle of the readers, who faced a similar struggle.

Besides the militant readership, Rexue ribao presented a readership who were captivated by the social stability and material comfort of living in the International Settlement.

Rexue ribao as a Moralizer

On multiple occasions, editors of Rexue ribao assumed the role of a moralizer educating the reader, who was unaware of the ongoing national crisis. To make its message heard, Rexue ribao used an explicit vocal style of writing. The editor often spoke in the first-person voice and addressed the reader directly. The paper adopted the tradition of vocal performance as a way of mass education. In the late Qing, intellectuals deemed speechifying as effective for the enlightenment for the lower classes. Making dramatic speeches in tea or opera houses provided education on issues such as opium-smoking, foot-binding, and the Power’s exploitation of
Aiming at providing a nationalist education to awaken the indifferent Shanghainese to the gravity of the killing on Nanjing Road, editor Yixue wrote a passionate speech, “Laughter that Hurts” to comment on what he saw in a procession protesting the foreign control of Shanghai. Yixue remarked,

> A procession of thousands of people was indeed a spectacle. However, it was different from a temple fair in the time of peace. It distressed me that the compatriots looking at the procession held the same mindset as if they were in a temple fair. “See, there are many people over there! Such a lively scene,” some spectators said. They made jokes with each other. Huh, it was sad!

The author imagined that he was recounting what had transpired at the procession to his audience in person. The narrative contained not only the author’s speech but also the spectators’ words.

While mourning the stupor of the passers-by who construed the protest as no different from one in a festival, Yixue intended to replicate the procession scene to the reader. The vivid description of the procession turned into a warning to the spectator, “our procession was to arouse you. We cry out to warn you. […] China belongs to you and us. If the nation dies, you too will suffer! It is sad news for both you and us that foreigners killed Chinese nationals."

This polemic contained two layers of messages. The first layer targeted the people who laughed at the procession. The author created a distinction between “you” and “us.” The indifferent bystanders were temporarily excluded from the nation because of their unawareness of national grievances. At the same time, the reader could also construe the ambiguous pronoun “you” as intending for the reader, who might have shared the same mentality as those bystanders if he had been present at the scene. In either case, Yixue emphasized the shared nationality

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114 Li Xiaoti 李孝悌. *Qingmo de xiaceng shehui qimeng yundong, 1901-1911* 清末的下層社會啓蒙運動, 1901-1911 [Lower class enlightenment in the late Qing period, 1901-1911] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 81-103.

between those who were killed and the rest of the Chinese. This nationality implied a precarious existential condition for everyone. Even the ones who enjoyed the privileges of foreign concessions could not escape, as shown by the victims shot dead by the Municipal Police.

The style of Yixue’s story illustrates the inclusion of vocal elements in *Rexue ribao* editorials. This distinct style implies a readership in need of education. Editors of *Rexue ribao* extended the vocality of the paper beyond their commentaries by publishing lyrics of folk songs that had an anti-imperialist theme in the column “Voices of Crying out.” For example, the “May 30 Memorial Song” and “Song of National Solidarity” offered chronologies of the May 30 movement using rhyming schemes from folk opera.116

In the early 1920s, Qu Qiubai argued that to approach the mass, the leftist intellectuals had to use traditional popular art forms such as the operas and folk songs, which did not require literacy to understand.117 Although *Rexue ribao* was a literary medium, the inclusion of folk songs implies that the editors perceived themselves as intellectuals responsible for providing nationalist education to the mass. A picture in the June 9 issue of *Jingbao* confirms the contemporaries’ perception of the *Rexue ribao*’s resemblance to a vocal medium. In this picture, a speechmaker is standing on a stage and addressing the public. The caption in the image included the names of three newspapers: “*Rexue ribao,*” *Gongli ribao (Justice Daily),” and “*Jiuguo huabao (Nation-Saving Pictorial).”*118

The vocality of the *Rexue ribao* and the editors’ fashioning of the paper as an educational tool also featured in the paper’s use of bulletin-like frames to give warnings to the reader. In the

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116 *Rexue riabo*, 15 June, 1925, 4; *Rexue ribao* 20 June, 1925, 4.
118 *Jingbao*, 9 June, 1925, 3.
June 5 issue, the newspaper included a rectangular frame resembling a bulletin in the streets. It listed six warnings printed in large characters with a parallel structure: “Don't sell meat and vegetables to the foreigners,” “Don't work as a servant for the foreigners,” “Don’t work as a nanny for the foreigners,” “Don’t work at foreign trading houses,” “Don’t use foreign currencies,” and “Don’t smoke foreign cigarettes.” The format of the frame would remind the reader of the street scene of a crowd reading out a bulletin in a market place.

The six warnings provided evidence on the identity of the reader as one who enjoyed the privileges of living in the foreign concession. The first four warnings show that the foreign presence in Shanghai created employment opportunities and incomes. The last two warnings presumed the reader as someone who had spending power and enjoyed the Western material culture. None of the warnings indicated that the reader was a worker in a factory. The imagined

Figure 4. The Bulletin of Warnings (Rexue ribao, June 5, 3)

The six warnings provided evidence on the identity of the reader as one who enjoyed the privileges of living in the foreign concession. The first four warnings show that the foreign presence in Shanghai created employment opportunities and incomes. The last two warnings presumed the reader as someone who had spending power and enjoyed the Western material culture. None of the warnings indicated that the reader was a worker in a factory. The imagined

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119 Rexue ribao, 5 June, 1925, 3.
120 Weiping Tsai makes a similar argument for a Shenbao advertisement in Tsai, Reading Shenbao, 27.
readership represented in the bulletin consisted of shopkeepers, clerks, and servants for foreigners.

Although the editorials cited previously deemed economic boycotts as ineffective, these warnings nevertheless instructed the readers to participate in the ongoing boycott. In each issue of the paper, the slogan, “everyone should not work for the foreigners. Combine forces to relieve the situations of striking workers,” occupied a prominent position on the third page. The divergence between the paper’s stance on the nationalist movement seen through the editorials and that seen through the warnings and the slogan reflect the gap between the revolution in the thought and revolution in the streets.

**The Revolution in Practice**

Editors and readers of *Xinwenbao* criticized economic boycotts and advocated for the organization of a revolutionary party and armed resistance to foreign authorities. However, these plans stayed on paper. The ones who called for a radical response to the Nanjing Road shooting ultimately had to face the day-to-day life and the attractions of the International Settlement. The very need for *Rexue ribao* to publish the warnings and slogan that called for an economic boycott reflects the difficulty of the reader to take actual actions, despite his eagerness to discuss a revolutionary plan.

In the June 22 issue, *Rexue ribao* published an article from an anonymous reader commenting on the failure of the Shanghainese to boycott British-owned tramlines. The author stated that immediately after the May 30 Incident, the Chinese boycott of the tramlines were effective, and the revenue of the tramline company decreased sharply. Then he listed the daily revenues of the company from June 4 to June 16, which showed an incremental pattern. From the
daily revenues, the author deduced that from June 7, there was an increase of 2,000 Chinese passengers per day. Basing on the figures, the author addressed the reader,

My compatriots, you should know that the tramline company of the International Settlement has descended into financial difficulties. [...] Why then do people go back to the tram? That is because the tram is cheaper and more convenient than the rickshaw. Although it is only a matter of several copper coins, the petty gains sometimes are more attractive than anything. When the heat of the movement is high, people hate the tram, but when time elapses, people lose their sense of shame.121

The readership who advocated for radical actions against the foreign authorities in the International Settlement had to face the “petty gain” of taking the foreign-owned tram. Rexue ribao’s militant stance during the May 30 movement do not suggest that the paper’s readers did not go through the struggle of Xinwenbao’s readers between the privileges of living in the International Settlement and national identity. Even the overlapping of the readership suggests that they did.

In “The Mentality of Taking the Tram,” editor Laughter described a mental struggle of a hypothetical passenger:

Now assume that a passenger is going from the north state to the west gate. A tram comes, and a rickshaw is also next to him. He starts to make some calculations: Is tram faster or rickshaw faster? Is tram cheaper or rickshaw cheaper? In the past, he would hop into the tram, but now he has to look at the tram to see if there is anybody in there. [...] He also has to check if there are any acquaintances of his on the tram.122

This calculation aptly encapsulates the revolution in practice: nationalist sentiments were one factor influencing a revolution, but they by no means determined it. The coexistence of the militant and the regressive images of the readership in Rexue ribao suggests that despite the paper’s revolutionary plans and the criticisms of the merchant elite, readers were reluctant to

participate in the revolution. The denunciation of the merchant elite who prioritized private
profits over national salvation mirrored the anxiety of the readers facing the same choices. The
paper’s moralizing voice reveals that the readers needed to be constantly awakened and
reminded of their national identity.
Section IV. Dongfang zazhi: Co-opting the Foreign Administration of Shanghai

*Dongfang zazhi* (The Eastern Miscellany) was a leftist bimonthly magazine published by the biggest printing establishment in China, the Commercial Press. Each issue of the magazine consisted of commentaries on recent Chinese and Western political developments, essays introducing Western science, and translations of foreign literature. Besides the heavy focus on what was Western, the magazine occasionally used untranslated English paragraphs and even had foreign-language advertisements, suggesting a professional readership with a cosmopolitan outlook.

Despite the magazine’s self-perception as the disseminator of new knowledge (*xinzi*), the editor of *Dongfang zazi*’s enthusiasm about Western modernity was not unreserved. The First World War made the commentators in the magazine to “[voice] concern about the possible bankruptcy of Western civilization.” In the aftermath of the Nanjing Road shooting, *Dongfang zazhi* published a special issue to memorize the incident and raised the issue of the morality of the imperialist nations. While challenging the foreign control of Shanghai, the editors endorsed the Western administrative and legal systems. The future of the International Settlement would fall on the shoulders of educated Chinese professionals empowered by their Western knowledge.

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124 Glen Peterson in his study on the representation of overseas Chinese on *Dongfang zazhi* also argues that the readership of the magazine was the professional class of the city. Glen Peterson, “Migration and China’s Urban Reading Public: Shifting Representations of “Overseas Chinese” in Shanghai’s *Dongfang Zazhi* (Eastern Miscellany),” in *Migration, Indigenization and Interaction: Chinese Overseas and Globalization*, ed. Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: World Scientific, 2011), 279-280.
125 Lee, *Shanghai Modern*, 45-47. The magazine’s stance on science is similarly filled with ambivalence. On one hand, it is one of the harbingers introducing science to the Chinese readership. On the other hand, the articles convey concerns about the limit of what science can achieve. Jiří Hudeček, “Science and Cultural Conservatism in the *Dongfang zazhi* (Eastern Miscellany), 1911–1927” (Paper presented at the 8th Annual Czech and Slovak Sinological Conference, Palacký University, Olomouc, 7-8 November 2014), 81.
Essays on Municipal Management

The initial response of Dongfang zazhi to the May 30 movement was similar to that of Xinwenbao. The editors refused to take a stance on the Nanjing Road shooting. The political commentaries of the first two issues published after May 30 did not broach the topic. The magazine broke its reticence early July with outspoken criticisms of the Shanghai Municipal Council when it devoted a special issue to the memorial of May 30. Because of this special issue, the Municipal Council brought a lawsuit against the Commercial Press for violating the publication law of the settlement. Although there lacks direct evidence explaining Dongfang zazhi’s abrupt change of stance, the lawsuit suggests the censorship pressure from the Municipal Council might have resulted in the Press’s initial refusal to comment on the brutality of the Shanghai Municipal Police.

The magazine’s initial silence on the May 30 movement coincided with the editorial decision to publish essays on municipal management. Dongfang zazhi included essays on municipal management starting in its June 10 issue, the magazine’s first publication after the incident, and continued to do so in the June 25 issue and the July 10 issue, the first regular issue to comment on the May 30 movement. The magazine published another essay on the same topic in its July 10 publication, These essays contrast the advanced municipal administration in Western countries with the backward state of Chinese cities and offered suggestions on

126 Dongfang zazhi 22, no. 11, June 10, 1925; Dongfang zazhi 22, no. 12, June 25, 1925.
127 "Shangwu yinshu guan zongbianji bei kong" 商務印書館總編輯被控 “An accusation against the editor of the Commercial Press,” Xinwenbao, September 11, 1925, 12.
improving Chinese cities based on Western models. The publication of essays on municipal management in *Dongfang zazhi* reflects the Shanghai intellectuals’ ambition to replace Shanghai’s foreign authorities with a Chinese administration body while retaining Western management methods.

In the essay “On Municipal Management and Ways to Improve Municipal Management,” published in the June 10 issue, the author Zang Qifang praised the mass participation in municipal politics in Western nations. He analyzed the devolvement of power in French, Prussian, English, and American cities from the elite to the mass. The result of this transformation was that “citizens were no longer suspicious of the local government, and they paid more attention to local politics.”129 From histories of Western cities, Zang concluded that Western citizens were more public-spirited than their counterparts in China. The author observed that the knowledge of the citizen, universal suffrage movement, and politicians’ promotion of education all contributed to the formation of this public spirit.130

Besides imparting *Dongfang zazhi*’s professional readership with histories of Western cities, Zang expressed an appreciation of Western methods for city management in foreign concessions of China. He states, “every Chinese national who has been to Europe or America would feel shame after comparing our cities to theirs. Even those who have only been to the foreign concessions in Tianjin, Shanghai, Hankou can realize the Western management of cities is much superior to our management.”131 The backwardness of Chinese cities prompted Zang to

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129 Zang Qifang 臧啟芳, “Zhizheng yu chujin zhizheng zhi fangfa” 市政與促進市政之方法 [On municipal management and ways to improve municipal management], *Dongfang zazhi* 22, no. 11, June 10, 1925, 19.
131 Ibid, 25.
argue that China needed an educated class who mastered Western municipal management. This educated class would cultivate a responsible citizen body that was ready for local politics.¹³²

Even though foreign concessions in China were better managed than Chinese cities, the International Settlement of Shanghai failed to deliver participatory politics to the Chinese residents. Zang’s desire to graft the Western municipal model to Chinese cities matched with one of the May 30 diplomatic negotiation demands, which asked for the right of Chinese taxpayers to be elected on board of the Shanghai Municipal Council. By the time of the Nanjing Road shooting, the board decided the law of the International Settlement and consisted of six British, two Japanese, and one American.¹³³ In this context, the magazine’s publication of Zang’s essay demonstrated not only Shanghai intellectuals’ fascination with Western city administration but also their desire to implement the Western model by themselves. Through reading literature on city management, the professional reader of the magazine could become a member of the educated class active in municipal politics envisioned by Zang.¹³⁴ As a consequence, the Chinese would no longer need foreign authorities to administer the prosperous International Settlement.

**The Modern Legal System**

In addition to Western municipal management based on participatory politics, the modern legal system attracted the attention of *Dongfang zazhi* in the aftermath of the May 30 Incident. The details accorded to the representation of Chinese on the board of the Municipal Council and to the rendition of the Mixed Court in the demands presented by the Chinese delegates to foreign diplomats suggest that the upper strata of Chinese Shanghai were concerned about these two

¹³² Ibid, 29.
¹³⁴ In the July 25 issue, *Dongfang zazhi* had an advertisement of the municipal management books published by the Commercial Press. *Dongfang zazhi* 22, no. 14, July 25, 1925, ix.
As the previous three issues discussed the political representation in Western cities, the July 25 issue included essays on international law. One essay titled “The Problem of the Rendition of the Mixed Court” challenged the foreign jurisdiction on cases involving only Chinese.136

Under The Agreement on Establishing the Mixed Court signed in 1868, the Powers obtained extraterritoriality in the International Settlement. Cases that had Chinese parties were tried in the Mixed Court. This Mixed Court was under the Chinese jurisdiction, and foreign assessors could sit in cases involving foreign interests. However, during the 1911 revolution, the Shanghai Municipal Council took over the jurisdiction of the Mixed Court, and foreign assessors tried all cases, even those only involving Chinese.137 The Chinese delegates negotiating with foreign diplomats asked for the return of the jurisdiction over Chinese cases in the Mixed Court.138

Chen Tingrui, a lawyer from the Shanghai Bar, argued in “The Problem of the Rendition of the Mixed Court” that the foreign jurisdiction on Chinese cases in the International Settlement did not have a legal basis in the treaties signed between China and the Powers. Chen explained the difference between extraterritoriality and the right to try cases in the Mixed Court, which many contemporaries misunderstand as the same issue.139 Chen pointed out that

135 Rigby, May 30 Movement, 47.
136 The other three essays on the international law in the same issue are “Guoji fating” 国際法庭 [The Court of International Justice], “Guoji lianmeng xiuding guoji fa” 國際聯盟修訂國際法 【The League of Nations and the ratification of the international law,” and “Guojifa xuezhe abenhai zhuan” 國際法學者阿本海傳 [A biography of the international law scholar Oppenheim]. Dongfang zazhi 22, no. 14, July 25, 1925.
137 Xu, Chinese Professionals, 229-230. The Shanghai Bar actively sought the return of the Mixed Court from 1912 to 1930. Ibid, 231.
extraterritoriality violated the principle of equality. Nevertheless, he considered that the Powers had the right to exercise extraterritoriality because it did not violate international law or Chinese law. In a sense, Chen’s challenge of the International Settlement’s jurisdiction did not imply his objection to the international legal system. He only argued for the return of the Mixed Court and expected the Chinese legal system could integrate into the existing framework of international law. In terms of the rendition of the Mixed Court, Chen was more vocal in his criticisms of the imperialist nations. Each time when the Chinese government demanded the return of the court, the Powers maintained their control through coercion. Moreover, the legal practices at the Mixed Court were corrupt, as the foreign assessors and solicitors abused their power. For Chen, the current situation of the Mixed Court suggested the moral degradation of Western countries.

Modern professionals’ activism in Shanghai’s politics also featured in Chen’s intellectual essay. Chen wrote about past attempts by Shanghai lawyers to reclaim the Mixed Court for China. In 1924, upon the petition by several Shanghai local associations, Chen and three other lawyers visited Chinese politicians and foreign diplomats in Beijing to facilitate negotiation on the status of the Mixed Court. However, the Second Zhili-Fengtian War thwarted the lawyers’ efforts. The author concluded with a criticism of the soft stance of the Chinese delegates responsible for the negotiation with the Powers, who stated, “the Chinese government does not demand an immediate return of the Mixed Court, but a return on a future arranged date.” In Chen’s opinion, the interference from the bureaucracy and warlords was responsible for the persistence of foreign control of the Mixed Court. This essay contrasted the image of

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140 Chen, “Rendition of the Mixed Court,” 17.
141 Ibid, 17.
142 Ibid, 18-19.
Westernized but anti-Imperialist professionals with the corrupt Chinese ruling class. The emergence of this new Chinese elite created the possibility of a reformed Chinese polity based on Western institutions.

In the special issue in memorial of May 30, the appreciation of the Western legal system coexisted with the antagonism against the foreign authorities of the International Settlement. The bulk of this special issue was devoted to the records of the trial in which the Shanghai Municipal Police prosecuted the protesters of May 30. This trial led to the provisional release of the protesters on bail.\textsuperscript{143} Drawing from the trial records and major Shanghai newspapers, Tao Xiwang argued in the article “The Analysis and Proof of the Facts in the May 30 Massacre” that the protesters were engaged in a peaceful demonstration and that the police opened fire without justifiable reasons. The incident itself was divided into small pieces of factual statements by the author. He provided proof for each of the statements. The following excerpt illustrates the style of this article.

\begin{quote}
The crowd did not intend to commit violent acts. Proof – […] The testimony from [the witness] Edison – ‘The protesters were not as orderly as usual, because they were going to stop the traffic. Except for this fact, they did not have other activities.’ Question: ‘Was the crowd under the police’s control?’ Answer: ‘Yes.’ Question: ‘when they moved ahead, did they seem to commit violent acts?’ Answer: ‘In my view, they did not commit violent acts. When they moved ahead, those from behind pushed them.’\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

This excerpt shows that for Tao, the trial records carried with them the implication of truthfulness, as he equated the records as the facts that had transpired on May 30. Ironically, it was the foreign-controlled Mixed Court that produced these records and enabled Tao to construct a narrative of the Municipal Council oppressing the protesters. Tao’s article, which demonstrated

\textsuperscript{143} Rigby, \textit{May 30 Movement}, 196.
\textsuperscript{144} Tao Xiwang 陶希望, “Wusa cansha Shijian shihi zhi fenxi yu zhengming” 五卅殘殺事件事實之分析與證明 [Analysis and proof of the facts in the May 30 massacre], \textit{Dongfang zazhi} 22, Special Issue in Memorial of the May 30 Incident, July, 1925, 11.
the brutality of the Municipal Police, only called for the removal of the foreign authorities. The existing institutions of the International Settlement were not to be challenged.

The need to publish the trial records or articles that could prove the “facts” about the May 30 Incident in *Dongfang zazhi* suggests the contested nature of the event. Tao termed his usage of evidence from trial records and newspaper articles as proof, but the very process to select materials to support his arguments constituted his attempts to limit the interpretative possibility of the incident that could have alternative meanings. Sometimes, Tao’s evidence failed to substantiate his claim adequately. For example, in his proof to show that the protesters made no attempt to take the police’s guns, Tao included the testimony of the vice police inspector present at the scene, who stated that “‘one policeman was pushed to the ground, and if there had been nothing that tied his gun to his belt, the gun must have been taken.’” To counter the police officer’s claim, Tao wrote “despite that, the witness Edison said, ‘I saw no one grab guns from the police.’”\(^{145}\)

Despite the ambiguous evidence, Tao pieced together a conclusive interpretation of the May 30 Incident: the incident symbolized the oppression of the Chinese people by the Shanghai Municipal Council. This tendency to smooth out contradictions and produce a linear narrative became more pronounced in the editor Hu Yuzhi’s article “A Factual Account of the May 30 Events.”

**A Nationalist Linear Narrative**

*Dongfang zazhi* was engaged in making the May 30 movement into the May 30 Movement, a national myth. My reading of the magazine suggests that the process of shaping events into a nationalist linear narrative of the May 30 Movement did not begin in later national

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governments or historians’ writings. It had already started during the movement, by the pens of the Shanghai intellectual class.

In the opening paragraph of “A Factual Account of the May 30 Events,” Hu stated, “the date of May 30 had left more unforgettable memories in our brains than May 7 and May 9. It will even attain the same status of October 10, […] because May 30 was the start of the movement to achieve the independence of the Chinese nationation.”

May 7 and May 9 were the national humiliation days in memorial of Japan’s presentation of the Twenty-One Demands to the Yuan Shikai government in 1915, and October 10 was the national day celebrating the Wuchang uprising of 1911. Since the participation in national day celebrations could help affirm the participants’ status of Chinese citizens, the elevation of May 30 as a date to be memorialized as the other three dates provided a nationalist meaning for the events following the Nanjing Road shooting.

In addition to promoting May 30 as a national anniversary, Hu supplied an alternative nationalist interpretation of the national product movement. While Xinwenbao encouraged the readers to purchase national products to develop a domestic industry and memorialize national shame, Hu wrote as an observer. The magazine’s emphasis on political agency and professional self-confidence made the editor recast the rationale of the economic boycott against the Powers.

In Dongfang zazhi, the substitution of foreign imports with domestically produced goods had more to do with the exercise of political agency. Economic boycotts became the only viable

146 Hu Yuzhi 胡愈之, “Wusa Shijian jishi” 五卅事件紀實 [A factual account of the May 30 events], Dongfang zazhi 22, Special Issue in Memorial of the May 30 Incident, July, 1925, 57.
147 Paul Cohen, “Remembering and Forgetting,” 5; Henrietta Harrison, The Making of the Republican Citizen, 93.
148 Harrison, Making of the Republican Citizen, 124-125.
way for the Chinese nationals to pressure the imperialist nations in the face of a corrupt Chinese
government and warlords. Hu wrote,

The nationals saw the weakness of the central government and the ignorance of the
warlords. They understood that the negotiation had a little chance of success. They also
knew that declaring war with the Powers was useless. As a result, the nationals resorted
to economic boycotts in the hope of engaging in a prolonged war with the foreigners
using their own power.149

Instead of persuading his readers to participate in the economic boycott, Hu presented the
national product movement as a fait accompli. The motivation behind the movement was to
bypass the Chinese ruling class. For the editor, the perception of a failed Chinese government
made the people devise new ways to enter politics. Compared to the rationales articulated by
Xinwenbao, Hu’s interpretation shows that economic boycotts carried different meanings
depending on the reader groups.

The May 30 Incident itself did not preclude alternative interpretations. The editor pointed
out that the people who “regarded the incident as the accidental misconduct of the Municipal
police […] or as an event local to the International Settlement” were all mistaken. For Hu, the
shooting signaled the weakness of the Chinese nation manifesting in its loss of territorial
sovereignty and political rights in foreign concessions. Besides the incident itself, the nation’s
backwardness caused the foreign control of the Mixed Court and the lack of political
representations of the Chinese living in the International Settlement. As a consequence, the May
30 Incident was “a threat to the entire Chinese nation.”150 By making connections between the
Chinese nation and the grievances that the Shanghaiese, Hu provided a definitive interpretation
of the May 30 movement in the nationalist framework. This interpretation contrasts with the

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150 Ibid, 58-60.
The author depicted the events ensuing the Nanjing Road shooting as stemming from nationalist sentiments, well-organized, and devoid of internal conflicts. Hu stated,

The Shanghainese realized that […] only when the entire nation struggled [against the Powers], can the Powers realize their mistakes and the rights of the nation be maintained. The first step of the struggle is to mobilize the entire city to participate in a triple stoppage consisting of workers, merchants, and students. The second step was to propagate the truth of the May 30 Incident, both domestically and internationally. The third step was to demand the government to negotiate seriously and to demand justice, indemnities, and apologies [from the foreigners].

The hindsight of the author enabled him to summarize the May 30 Movement up to the time of writing as three steps. Hu then elaborated on the enthusiastic participation of the Chinese in these three forms of protest. Workers, merchants, and students all decided to strike, including the conservative General Chamber of Commerce and bankers. The widespread of the Movement was reflected by a two-page table consisting of the breakdown of the striking worker number by factories. The patriotic striking workers received donations from various parties both in and out of Shanghai through the intermediary of the General Chamber of Commerce. The ULCE formed to organize the massive triple stoppage. Even the warlords suspended their conflicts temporarily and lent support for the Movement. The Fengtian warlord Zhang Zuolin, who was prepared to enter Beijing and extend his political control of the central government, postponed

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151 Ibid, 67.
152 Ibid, 67-68.
his plan. Noticeable in this linear narrative of the events was the lack of dissonant voices. All parties agreed to compromise their private interests for the higher aim of national salvation. In other words, Hu’s article made the nationalist motivation the internal logic of the protest movement following the May 30 Incident, and in doing so, he helped shape the May 30 Movement as a nationalist event.

Intellectual *Dongfang zazhi*’s response to the May 30 movement represented a different voice of nationalism from that of the Shanghai lower middle class. *Xinwenbao* and *Rexue ribao*’s responses in the aftermath of the Nanjing Road shooting were characterized by the papers’ fascination with the material culture and convenience brought by Western modernity. Meanwhile, *Dongfang zazhi* demonstrated an intense interest in Euro-American political and legal institutions. The magazine insisted on the return of administrative rights of foreign concessions and expressed the ambition of the emerging professional class of Shanghai to co-opt Western institutions. Moreover, the editor of the magazine intended to produce a shared history of the nation by creating a nationalist linear narrative of the events following the Nanjing Road shooting. While the two newspapers were reacting to events, *Dongfang zazhi* was making the May 30 Movement.

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154 Ibid, 71-72.
Conclusion

On August 4, 1925, Xinwenbao published its first entertainment supplement after suspending it in mourning for the May 30 victims. Although editor Duhe remarked that the resumption of the supplementary was not to suggest an absence of grief but to keep the people optimistic about the future, the appearance of the entertaining stories and jokes in Xinwenbao suggests the fading of the May 30 movement.\(^{155}\) The Shanghainese needed to return to their normal lifestyle. Chinese nationalism, as expressed by Shanghai newspapers, was shaped and constrained by other identities of the reader.

When the Nanjing Road shooting provoked nationalist sentiments among the Shanghainese, these sentiments had to compete with the same people’s fascination with Western modernity and attachment to the privileges of living in the International Settlement before they could be turned into any concrete protest activities. I do not intend to argue that the multiplicity of the reader’s identity in newspapers caused the cyclic pattern of the national product movement or the termination of the triple stoppage in late summer, but it presented, in historian Barbara Mittler’s words, the “possibilities of the publishing marketplace.”\(^{156}\)

It was possible that the real lower-middle class reader joined the triple stoppage only reluctantly, that the real nationalist revolutionary could not escape mundane concerns, and that the real Shanghai professional was too fascinated with Western institutions to challenge the Shanghai Municipal Council. Whether these possibilities turned into historical realities matters as much as the very existence of these possibilities, which shows that nationalism was not a

\(^{155}\) Duhe 獨鶴, “Xiaobie chongfeng hou de yixi hua” 小別重逢後的一席話 [Words for reunion], Xinwenbao, August 4, 1925, 17

\(^{156}\) Mittler, A Newspaper for China?, 419.
totalizing force in 1920s Shanghai. Nationalism did not wipe out alternative representations of the people who constituted the nation. Nor did it acquire a definite meaning. In newspapers, the nationalist action could be purchasing national products, joining the revolutionary party, or introducing Western institutions and managerial science to China.

Despite the multiple voices of the nation expressed by Shanghai newspapers, the May 30 movement as a nationalist linear narrative became the master narrative of the events when it was appropriated by the Nanjing government established by nationalist Guomindang in 1927. The new government further developed the account given by Dongfang zazhi’s editor Hu Yuzhi. Now the May 30 movement acquired a definite position in the nationalist history.

On the fifth anniversary of the May 30 Incident, Minguo ribao (The Republican Daily), a party newspaper of Guomindang, published a special supplement in memorial of the May 30 Incident.157 This supplement claimed that the May 30 Incident was the beginning of the Chinese national independence movement and that it was equally momentous as the founding of the Chinese Republic on October 10, 1911. Echoing Dongfang zazhi’s narrative, Minguo ribao divided the movement into three parts: a concerted strike among different sectors of Shanghai, the propagation of the truth of the incident, and a diplomatic negotiation aimed to reclaim foreign concessions. In this new narrative, the national product movement simply disappeared. The communists’ attack on Shanghai big merchants threatened the unity of the Chinese nation. Foreign concessions became symbols of the imperialist’s oppression and China’s loss of sovereignty. This sovereignty was to be regained under the leadership of Guomindang.158 But

before the master narrative was in full swing, the divergent political advocacies and interpretations of the May 30 movement in *Xinwenbao, Rexue ribao*, and *Dongfangzazhi* reflected a polyphonic nature of Chinese nationalism.
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