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Editor’s Preface to the Fall Edition

Here at Elon University, we are extremely grateful to host The Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics. We are proud to present the Fall 2021 issue and congratulate all authors published in this issue for their high achievement.

This publication seeks to highlight the intellectual curiosity that leads to innovative scholarship in all subfields of political science, scholarship that addresses timely questions, is carefully crafted, and utilizes diverse methodologies. We are committed to intellectual integrity, a fair and objective review process, and a high standard of scholarship as we showcase the work of undergraduate scholars, some of whom pursue questions that have been traditionally ignored in scholarship but that drive our discipline forward.

Following the lead of the American Political Science Review (APSR) Editorial Board, we are excited to publish research in the areas of “American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public law and policy, racial and ethnic politics, the politics of gender and sexuality and qualitative and quantitative research methods.” This publication also values the relationships formed through student-faculty collaboration and aims to build a culture of scholarship that expands beyond the college campus. We hope to encourage and empower students to seek out knowledge and pursue their potential, contributing to scholarship in a variety of disciplines.

This year, we thank our advisors Dr. Baris Kesgin and Dr. Aaron Sparks for their support, without which the issue would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the entirety of the Political Science and Policy Studies Department at Elon University, especially Dr. Laura Roselle; our Faculty Advisory Board; and all the students who shared their exceptional work with us this semester.

We are excited to present the Fall 2021 edition of the Journal. Thank you for your continued support and readership of our publication; we hope you enjoy the edition.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Board at Elon University
Submission of Manuscripts

The Journal accepts manuscripts from undergraduates of any class and major. Members of Pi Sigma Alpha are especially encouraged to submit their work. We strive to publish papers of the highest quality in all areas of political science.

Generally, selected manuscripts have been well-written works with a fully developed thesis and strong argumentation stemming from original analysis. Authors may be asked to revise their work before being accepted for publication.

Submission deadlines are October 1st for the Fall edition and February 15th for the Spring edition. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis; therefore early submissions are strongly encouraged.

Students may submit their work through Elon University’s submission portal, found here: https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/arts-and-sciences/political-science/psa-journal/

Alternatively, students may email psajournal@elon.edu with an attached Word document of the manuscript. In the body of the email, students are asked to include their name and university, the title of the manuscript, and the closest subfield of political science to which their manuscript pertains (American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, or policy studies). Due to the time committed to the manuscript review process, we ask students to submit only one manuscript at a time.

Submitted manuscripts must include a short abstract (approximately 150 words) and citations/references that follow the APSA Style Manual for Political Science. Please do not exceed the maximum page length of 35 double-spaced pages, which includes references, tables, figures, and appendices.

The Journal is a student-run enterprise with editors and an Editorial Board that are undergraduate students and Pi Sigma Alpha members at Elon University. The Editorial Board relies heavily on the help of our Faculty Advisory Board, which consists of political science faculty from across the nation, including members of the Pi Sigma Alpha Executive Council.

Please direct any questions about submissions or the Journal’s upcoming editions to the editors at Elon University: psajournalelon@gmail.com.
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The Modern Totem: An Overview of the National Animal On its Role in Forming National Identity

Jintao Zhu, The London School of Economics and Political Science

National symbols play a significant role in contemporary politics by shaping national identities. However, national animals receive little attention in scholarship. This paper provides a study of the animal as a national symbol, proposing a possible model to fit the national animal into the rich nationalism literature. It generates theories about the formation, strengths, and challenges of the national animal, supported with case study analysis. The central hypothesis is that the national animal is a distinctive national symbol. It is a symbol of the national rather than of the nation. It is not a purely top-down political design; it embeds concrete traits; and it creates space for international interaction. Theoretically, the national animal can forge a strong national identity. However, many real-life challenges prevent it from becoming prominent in modern nations.

INTRODUCTION

If you are a fan of political cartoons, you are probably familiar with the idea of using animals to represent countries. Politicizing animals as a symbol for the nation is not a new practice, but it receives little dedicated research attention. Scholars have conducted in-depth research on many national symbols but not national animals. There are papers studying the significance of an animal species to a particular nation (De Visser and Coleman 2008; Platoff 2012). However, no one has evaluated the national animal as a distinctive political symbol, comparing it with other national symbols. This paper studies the national animal in general, exploring its origins and history as well as its present political effects.

In doing so, this paper seeks to add to the literature on nationalism. It should be made clear that this paper does not aim to offer a rigorously worked out alternative to existing approaches to nationalism. Rather, it is a discussion piece, aiming to open up debate. This paper proposes a possible model to fit the national animal into the rich nationalism literature. Constrained by the availability of data and existing literature, this paper should be viewed primarily as a tool of encouraging and pinpointing future research into this topic.

The central hypothesis is that the national animal is a special national symbol with the distinctively strong power to forge national identity. To investigate this hypothesis, the paper proceeds as follows: first, it starts with a review of national symbols and national identity. Second, it highlights the challenges of conventional national symbols before discussing the national animal. Then it will analyse the national animal around four topics: history, formation, strengths and challenges. Finally, it proposes some directions for future study, explaining why the study of national animals is significant.

NATIONAL SYMBOLS AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

National symbols are entities that represent a nation. A national symbol can be a song, a flag, or a ceremony, among other things. While a national symbol has many functions (Marsland 2001, 521–30), its main purpose is forming, maintaining and consolidating national identity (Geisler 2005). National identity refers to the quality or condition of believing oneself to be part of a nation. Despite some disagreements, the most prominent schools of thought, namely social constructionism (Anderson 2006; Hobsbawm 1994) and ethnosymbolism (Smith and Hutchinson 2000), agree that national identity is crucial for modern nations. National identity offers international exclusiveness and intranational inclusiveness. Externally, it justifies the rights and duties exclusively shared by nationals. It delegitimizes foreign intervention in domestic issues, especially from former colonizers. Internally, it provides a bond among domestic individuals, creating a social cohesion that functions at a national level.

Forming national identity requires the participation of the national symbol for two reasons. Firstly, the concept of nation is abstract. People cannot directly see or feel the existence of a nation (Walzer 1967, 194). Benedict Anderson (2006) famously described the nation as an imagined community formed by people you never meet. The concrete national symbol crystallizes the abstract national identity. It
makes the identity tangible. Nationals are able to project their feelings towards the nation on the symbol, which otherwise might be impossible to meaningfully express and apprehend (Geisler 2005). Secondly, it is hard to achieve unity or “oneness” at the national level. Nationals are naturally and socially heterogeneous. Every nation more or less experiences some internal diversity in terms of ethnicity, economic status, religion and history. A national symbol aims to create a focal point above all diversities. It helps form national identity by temporarily weakening one’s individual or sub-national identities and highlighting the commonality shared with other nationals.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY: A SOURCE OF THE MEANING

Most national symbols’ symbolic power does not originate from their physical properties. There are no inherent qualities that reflect a symbol’s national significance (Kolstø 2006, 696). Colours, lines, lyrics, or bricks are useful in disseminating or preserving a message, but they do not produce the message. Instead, the emblematic power relies on the community’s interaction with the symbol. Successful symbols are the “witness” or “participant” of the shared experience. They remind nationals of their common endeavour, which triggers a sense of belonging and unity. This explains why many national anthems are old-fashioned battle songs (Mosse 1993). They allow nationals to recall the wars they suffered through together as a nation. The American “Star-Spangled Banner,” the French “La Marseillaise,” and the Chinese “March of the Volunteers” are some good examples. When these anthems are played, nationals feel they are sent back to the battlefield where they put their lives in each other’s hands. War-time trust and solidarity among nationals serve as the source for unified national identity in peacetime.

However, only limited generations experience direct interaction with the symbol. For citizens who never participate in those unforgettable communal events, the power of the national symbol is indirectly activated via collective memory. Collective memory is a hotchpotch of historical facts, cultural myths, unconscious absorption and conscious manipulation (E. Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012; Kansteiner 2002; Reicher and Hopkins 2000). It is a subjective contemporary interpretation of the past. Philosophers like John Stuart Mill and Ernest Renan embrace collective memory as an important pillar for national identity (Renan 1990, 19; Tombs 2014). They argue that collective memory is the underlying force in many if not most national symbols. Think of the Scots and Bannockburn, the French and the Bastille, the English and Trafalgar Square. These places are still symbolically powerful for people today because they appear to refer to unique events of central importance to the nation. It is the relevant stories, anecdotes and artistic emulations, rather than the actual experience, that trigger the sense of national identity among the modern population.

Collective memory is dynamic. It is continually edited, renegotiated, rewritten, or newly created by different generations (Geisler 2005). It is subject to unconscious (Berger 2009, 490) or active (Reicher and Hopkins 2000) construction. The flexible nature of collective memory is crucial in forming national unity. By transforming and renewing the national narrative, collective memory can adjust itself to new challenges and social progress. Adjustable collective memory preserves the appeal of the national symbol even for new generations. For example, to ensure Muay Thai’s national trappings are not eroded, the Thai government created a royalist national history from nowhere, with concretization in the form of museums, academic institutions and official-led publicity (Vail 2014).

However, the same flexibility also brings problems. When a national symbol fully relies on collective memory, it is hard to form a concrete, determined national identity. By singing “The Star-Spangled Banner,” people have a strong sense that they are Americans. However, people do not have an answer on the concrete meaning of “being an American,” or “Americanness.” In other words, given the wide range of possible interpretations, it is hard for nationals to agree on the criteria for national self-definition. There is very little information behind the homogeneity or “oneness” of national identity.

Mainstream wisdom argues that ambiguity is beneficial for nation-building. With undetermined criteria, national identity tolerates different interpretations and appeals to many sub-national groups. However, absence of a specified, concrete interpretation also means the constructed image of the nation is fuzzy. As the embedded national identity is vague, a symbol can accommodate competing interpretations from groups with conflicting agendas (Perera 2005). For instance, the British flag has been used to “connote imperial power, tradition and national pride” by far-right groups; but it was also adopted by anti-authoritarian mobs to convey “progressive modishness” in the 1960s (Edensor 2016, 25–26). Such contradictory symbolic meaning of “both traditional and fashionable” is caused by the abstractness of the flag symbol (Edensor 2016, 25–26). If varying interpretations of the same symbol cannot coexist, existing inter-group hostility can intensify.

Besides, national symbols with a vague national identity do not have instrumental power. A concrete national identity not only unifies the people, but also infuses illusionary national personalities into the individual (Hassin et al. 2007). Concomitant personalities can affect a person’s thoughts and behaviours (Rafaeli and Pratt 2006). For instance, if one believes that being the national of country X means fighting for freedom, then they are inclined to support the proposal to violently overthrow an authoritarian foreign government, even if the national is a peace-loving individual in daily lives. On the contrary, if a symbol only constructs a vague identity, it provides “psychological abstraction.” The identity has very limited influence on nationals’ concrete political engagement. It only provides blind patriotism. The nationals are strongly emotionally

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Ancient Totemism and the Modern History of National Animals

The national animal is not a novel modern creation. Its historical roots trace back to ancient totemism. While I cannot conclude that the national animal is the direct heir of ancient totems, the great similarities mean it is beneficial to study the two concepts side by side. In this section, I present an overview of Émile Durkheim’s study of totemism. In his work, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Durkheim studies totemic societies in Australia from a sociological perspective.

Durkheim (1995, 169) argues that totemism stresses the sacred and reverential qualities given to the totemic animal, which serves the purpose of social organization. Members of a single clan are not necessarily consanguineous or live close to each other. The cult of the common totemic beast serves as an “anonymous and impersonal force” (Durkheim 1995, 191) that is identifiable in all but identical to none.

Totemism is not zoolatry (animal worshipping). It presupposes a human-animal consubstantiality (W. R. Smith and Ignác 1907). The relation between the alive totemic animal and the tribe members is genealogical. Each person has dual identities: an individual human-being and a collective animal-being. When the person takes the animal identity, she shares the perceived (sometimes mystical) qualities of the totemic animal. For example, the Eagle tribe members have the ability to see the future; members from the Bear tribe are clumsy and easily trapped. In some closed communities, there is even cross-tribe recognition. The Snake people are recognized by other tribes as having snake attributes. If one totemic animal is universally despised, all the members from that animal tribe suffer humiliation from other tribes (Durkheim 1995, 160–61).

Totemism consecrates the figurative representation of the totemic animal, which is usually a stone or a piece of wood with animal emblems (Durkheim 1995, 118). It is an interesting observation that the emblems are taken almost exclusively from animals (rather than plants, stones or other things). Durkheim provides two explanations. Firstly, there is the kindred relation joining human species and other animals, which creates a natural intimacy. Secondly, animals play a significant role in people’s economic life (for both hunting and fishing populations), which creates a social intimacy. The two types of intimacies are not enjoyed by plants, stars or the sun (Durkheim 1995, 235–36). While the religious colour seems to be fading, the ancient totem’s social function is preserved by the modern national animal.

National animals have heterogeneous origins. Some result from top-down design, and others are more appropriately categorized as bottom-up creations. In fact, the modern national animal can be inherited, created or imported. Firstly, historical inheritance is a common way of forming a national animal. Some animals have a strong historical connection with nationals. The animal may be featured prominently in local mythologies, live closely with the indigenous population, or play a significant economic role. It is natural for modern nationals to embrace such an animal as their collective symbol. For example, the brown bear is the widely acknowledged national animal of Finland (Weaver 2014). It has a very strong cultural root. According to Kalevala, the national epic poetry of Finland that compiles Finnish folklore and mythology, the bear was regarded as a woodland deity by the ancient indigenous population. Finns widely practiced bear-worshipping (Bonser 1928, 350). Reverence towards the bear continues in modern Finland. The beast is regionally perceived as the “king of the forest” (Weaver 2014).

For some countries, the national animal is a new creation. This can be caused by the absence of a prominent pre-political animal, or the intention to break away from old cultures. For instance, the USA’s bald eagle was officially established in 1782. Six years after the establishment of the new country, Americans were trying to cut the link with their previous metropole in London. After discussions and disagreements, the founding elites confirmed the bald eagle as the national symbol (Nix 2018). They believed the big bird well represented the USA’s “supreme power,” “courage” and “struggle for freedom.” At the beginning, the bird was only used officially. After great efforts of publicity and practice, the bald eagle has been accepted by the American public as a national symbol.

The national animal can also be imported. For example, the French cock was initially imposed by foreign countries before being acknowledged and adopted by the locals. In the thirteenth century, several foreign writers started to compare the French to cocks. In the middle of the fifteenth century, hostile neighbours of the Valois dynasty used the cock to humiliate the French king and his subjects. They adopted a pejorative image of the cock: vain, combative, oversexed, ostentatious. However, in the late Middle Ages, several Valois sovereigns started to acknowledge and even embrace the cock symbol, with reinterpreted positive attributes of the cock from Christian symbolism. The cock became the symbol of courage, victory and vigilance. Decades later, the cock shifted from royal propaganda to a civil representation (Pastoureau 1998).
FORMATION OF NATIONAL ANIMALS

The characteristics of the animals in their natural forms inspire the symbolic meaning of the national animal. However, the connection is not straightforward. In this section, I hypothesize a mechanism explaining how national animal identity is constructed from the natural animal.

Natural Animal → Constructed Animal

Animals are natural beings. However, animals in human conversations are constructed beings (DeMello 2012, 19). Humans’ attempt to make sense of foreign species (Kellert and Wilson 1993), together with the capacity of mentalization (Frith and Frith 2001), prompt them to assume human mental processes in alien species. This practice of treating non-humans as humans is anthropomorphism. This paper focuses on animal anthropomorphism. Humans project human personalities, such as “evil,” “aggressive,” “cowardly” on natural animals (Midgley 2002, 344). There are two levels of animal anthropomorphism. In pet ownership, individual anthropomorphism is practiced by the pet owner to comprehend the individual thinking of their pet. The more common practice is collective anthropomorphism. Humans de-individualize animals and treat the whole species as homogenous (Servais 2018). For instance, many societies stereotype that lions are brave, rabbits are cowardly, and pigs are lazy. This is also evident by the prevalent usage of animal idioms such as “as busy as a beaver” and “as sly as a fox.”

Many contributing factors determine the human attributes assigned to animal species. One factor is animals’ biological traits. These include the animal’s diet, physical properties and living environment. For instance, carnivores such as lions and tigers are often labelled as powerful and charismatic. The Mandarin duck always acts in pairs, so it represents enduring love in Chinese culture. Bats live in dark caves. They are affiliated with “evil” and “witchery” in many cultures (Lawrence 1993).

Another crucial factor is human-animal interaction. Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders (1996) developed a sociozoological scale to categorize animals based on their influence on human society (DeMello 2012, 51). Based on their theory, the animals that bring benefits to humans usually have positive human traits. For example, cows provide milk to humans and are thus labelled as selfless and hard-working. Dogs, serving as humans’ companions, are perceived as loyal and faithful. On the contrary, animals that hurt humans are given negative traits. Rats are perceived as filthy and evil partially because of their association with plague and many other deadly diseases (DeMello 2012, 52). Religions and mythologies illustrate the cultural human-animal interaction. Christian theology plays a significant role in the Western world’s anthropomorphism. The story about Noah’s Ark in Genesis 8:7 portrays doves as the messenger for peace and good news, while ravens symbolize ignorance and bad news (DeMello 2012, 311). Being the incarnation of Jesus, lions and lambs are given positive traits such as courage and purity. These connections are strengthened by the medieval bestiary, the compendium that illustrates beasts with small moral stories (Morrison n.d.). Many of these matches are succeeded by contemporary societies, even among non-believers.

While different contributing factors can enforce each other, sometimes they are also contradictory. It is impossible to lay out a general mechanism for the formation of the constructed animal. Cases vary in different societies. Large predators, specifically tigers, lions and bears, are seen positively in some societies despite the threat they have posed to humans in the past. However, the same species can be seen negatively in other societies.

Constructed Animal → National Animals

As a national symbol, the national animal represents the nation. The specific political usage implies the national animal’s attributes must be similar but distinctive from the socially constructed attributes. Firstly, the national animal’s attributes should be similar to those of the constructed animal. The constructed animal represents the community’s general impression about the animal. If the attributes of the national animal are very different, it will be difficult to convince the public. For example, establishing the wolf as the national animal with the attributes “affectionate” and “contented” will be challenging in a community that has long deemed wolves as “wicked” and “bloodthirsty.” The obvious incoherence between the national animal and the socially constructed animal hinders the credibility of the symbol.

Meanwhile, the national animal requires careful modifications. Socially constructed attributes are derived from the mixture of biological traits, socio-zoological scale and theological portrayal. A tiger can be both courageous and overbearing; a cock can be both vigilant and oversexed. However, for the national animal, with a clear purpose as a self-representation, undesirable traits must be abandoned. This practice can be explained by social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). People seek a positive understanding of themselves (Reicher and Hopkins 2000, 33). When it comes to a collective group, they have a predilection for a positive collective image. The national animal’s attributes are cautiously modified to represent the self-perception of the nation. They express and reaffirm the ideal shared values of the nationals.

When nationals interpret their own national animals, they will not perceive eagles as “bullying” but “sharp-sighted.” Similarly, even if both “clumsy” and “powerful” are aligned with the general social impression about bears, the nationals will pick “powerful” while ignoring “clumsy.”

Natural Animal → Natural Animal Identity

Different from conventional national symbols, the national animal is not merely a tangible representation of a group (Schatz and Lavine 2007, 332). Instead, it takes a step forward, transforming state representation (symbol of the nation) into personal self-understanding (symbol of the
enables nationals to adopt the tangible traits of the anthropomorphized national animal.

Positive animalization is possible thanks to human-animal intimacy. From a biological perspective, Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory has provided strong scientific support for human-animal similarity. Humans share 98% genes with chimpanzees (Marks 2003). Many traits which we once perceived as unique to humans such as complex communication systems and sophisticated emotions are in fact possessed by many animals (DeMello 2012, 42). Humans also have been socially close to animals for a very long time. In hunter societies, humans treat animals as equal sharers of natural resources. Research papers have demonstrated animals’ ability to understand and respond to human emotions and vice versa (Alger and Alger 1997; Fidler, Light, and Costall 1996; Sanders 2003). Additionally, as I have mentioned, the practice of humans taking animal identity has a long history. Totemic tribes believed tribe members possessed the characteristics of the totem animal. The shamans believed they could hold animal spirits temporarily (Durkheim 1995).

**ACTIVATION OF NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTITY**

In modern societies where people possess multiple identities, national animal identity cannot be dominant at all times. Even in aboriginal societies, the totem is not significant in everyday economic life (Durkheim 1995, 116). It is reasonable to argue that national animal identity requires some activation. Externally, it requires some national political upheavals. This can be caused by a war, a disaster or even an intense national election.

Upheaval serves two purposes. Firstly, it brings affront to the citizens’ national perspective. It urges people to temporarily put aside their global perspectives as cosmopolitans and displace their individual sentiments in the collective national identity. National identity becomes the main source of decision-making. Secondly, upheaval creates an identity crisis that generates widespread anxiety, stress, and trauma. Political upheavals temporarily or permanently challenge or destroy some long-established social networks, such as families, neighbourhoods, political parties or ideological alliances. In such situations, citizens are desperate to find a stable vicarious identity to relieve ontological anxiety (Browning, Joenniemi, and Steele 2021). They are more vulnerable to provocative, emotionally appealing propaganda and political campaigning, in order to make sense of themselves in relation to their surroundings. They become more receptive to the constructed national animal identity and its affiliated traits, even if the animal identity does not reflect the real traits and preferences of the individual.

Internally, the active role of governments cannot be ignored. Through compelling posters or charismatic leaders’ speeches, governments not only remind citizens of their animal identity, but also link the identity to specific actions or policies. By these top-down means, the government can exploit animal identity to further their agendas.

In a broadcast on May 14, 1943, UK prime minister Sir Winston Churchill (1944) made an explicit mention of the British lion identity:

> [If] the Nazi villains drop down upon us from the skies any night, in raid or heavy attack upon the key production centres, you will make it clear to them that they have not alighted in the poultry-run, or in the rabbit-farm, or even in the sheep-fold, but that they have come down in the lion’s den at the Zoo!

Churchill reminded the British that they were not cowardly animals that waited for the Nazis’ slaughter. Rather, the British were proud lions that were never afraid of challenges and provocation. They must stand up against the Nazis and bravely fight back. Churchill connected the nationals (British), the animal identity (Lion), the animal trait (Proud), and the specific action (Never give in to the Nazi).

Similarly, in 2014, when Russia suffered from disapproval and sanctions because of its military action in Crimea, President Vladimir Putin used a bear metaphor to describe the Western attitude towards Russia in a domestically televised conference:

> [T]he bear guards his Taiga (forest)...Sometimes I think, maybe they’ll let the bear eat berries and honey in the forest, maybe they will leave it in peace...They will not. Because they will always try to put him on a chain, and as soon as they succeed in doing so they tear out his fangs and his claws...Do we want our bear to just become a stuffed animal? (Cullinane 2014; Saul 2014)

The metaphor highlighted the Western countries’ undoubtful threat to Russia and its people. By depicting the image of a stuffed bear bullied by the West, Putin urged the public to support his leadership and his government’s foreign military actions. The trapped Russian nationals needed to stand up to preserve the freedom and great power that characterized the Russian bear.

**THE ROLE OF POPULAR CULTURE**

A symbol must be convincing to be effective. Like all the other national symbols, the national animal needs endemic and continual ritual-like activities to consolidate its relevance. However, the national animal does not have the privilege of being emphasized by political elites. Limited top-down support makes bottom-up consolidation crucial. Indeed, the national animal relies on popular culture to stay relevant.

Popular culture is the culture that involves mass consumption. Contrast to “high culture” which is sophisticated
and exclusive, popular culture is accessible and embraced by commoners (Dittmer and Bos 2019, 23–24). The broad audience base grants popular culture a great outreach capacity. It fosters common understandings among the population (Dittmer and Bos 2019, 30). Popular culture is usually intriguing and attractive. The masses are drawn by dramatic, funny, mysterious elements. This means the identity formation process can be “mindless, occurring as other activities are being consciously engaged in” (Billig 1995, 41). This makes the identity enforcement process effective because there is little conscious resistance, which frequently occurs during explicit, purposeful political propaganda.

Popular culture facilitates anthropomorphism well. By utilizing the power of analogy and exaggeration, it captures and amplifies the constructed attributes of the animals. A good example is animal tales. According to Aesop’s Fables, snakes are always evil (“The Farmer and the Viper”) and foxes are always sly (“The Fox and the Crow”). Rudyard Kipling’s Just So Stories, as well as the works of Beatrix Potter, also personify animals with constructed traits. Animal tales rely on the existing social impression of the animals. Stereotypical impressions can convey the stories’ moral lessons effectively. The popularity of animal tales further strengthens the social impressions of the animals.

In Homer’s Odyssey, Argos the dog waits for his master for a decade before it dies, emphasizing the quality of loyalty (Homer 1990). In George Orwell’s 1945 novel Animal Farm, the power-lusting dictating class is portrayed as pigs, drawing on and enforcing the social impression that pigs are lazy, filthy and greedy.

Popular culture also facilitates the formation of the national animal and national animal identity. This can take the explicit form of putting the national animal together with other established national symbols. A lion with a Union Jack decorated helmet is a good example. Sometimes, the link is implicit. A newspaper headline “The British are roaring” connects the nation with the action of the animal. The political cartoon is one important form of popular culture. It has made a great contribution in connecting the animal and the nation. Many political cartoons embrace the usage of national animals in order to deliver their political messages in a simple, comprehensive but relatively unprovocative way. The PUNCH magazine, a well-established popular political magazine in the UK, is one of the pioneers. PUNCH publishes many cartoons that use lions as the representative of Britain and its people. Most of these cartoons reflect the UK’s international status, especially its relationship with other nations.

Figure 1 portrays the British as a huge lion and Australians and Canadians as much smaller lion cub soldiers who wait for

Figure 1: PUNCH cartoon 1 “My Boys” (Tenniel 1885)
The lion’s command. It emphasizes the lion’s great leadership as a father-like figure. This illustrates Britain’s international status as the leader of the British Empire, and its relationship of dominance with the member nations of the Empire. Figure 2 is about the British leading the way in putting down the uprising in Egypt. The cartoon illustrates many animal representatives including the bear (Russia), donkey (Spain), eagle (Germany), double-headed eagle (Austria) as well as Italy and Turkey. They are all around the lion and waiting for its decision on the share of the dead crocodile (Egypt). This cartoon assumes the lion’s central role in the animal kingdom. It signals the unquestionable leadership and significant status of the British in international society, with trust and loyalty from other countries.

The influence of the PUNCH spread beyond cartoons. In the 1967 film *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, PUNCH cartoons were used in the opening of the movie, narrating a story about how the British lion (with the support of the French cock) saved the Turkish turkey from the Russian bear. The influence of the political cartoon is so strong and long-lasting that the depiction of British lions in the 1850s still resonated with a British audience in the 1960s.

**THEORETICAL STRENGTHS OF THE NATIONAL ANIMAL**

The national animal has its unique strengths as a national symbol. It creates a more concrete national identity and introduces the international dimension. Firstly, the national animal forms a concrete national identity. Thanks to anthropomorphism and positive animalization, concrete personalities are embedded in national animal identity. Compared to one’s “Star-Spangled Banner” identity, it is much easier to visualize one’s “bald eagle” identity (which reminds people of traits such as “fearless” and “fight for freedom”). National animal identity provides the population a holistic national self-perception and a specific guidance for thinking and actions.

Certainly, national animal identity is not invincible to political sways and manipulations. However, it is more resilient compared to other symbols. This is because conventional national symbols are purely political entities. Political agencies dominate the power to interpret their meanings. In contrast, animals not only have a political presence, they also have salient presence in the natural world, in operas, in novels and many other everyday aspects beyond the political realm. When political elites attempt to reinterpret the national animal for their own agenda, they are chained by the existing social understanding of the animal. It is very costly for political elites to fight against popular culture and overturn the social impression of the animal. When the social impression remains unchanged, the image of the national animal is relatively stable.

An important caveat is that these concrete national attributes are illusionary. Just as national animal identity

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**Figure 2: PUNCH cartoon 2 “The Lion’s Just Share” (Swain 1882)**

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itself, these national attributes are imaginary constructions. The predominant opinion among psychologists is that there is no distinctive personality difference among people with different nationalities (Inkeles and Levinson 1969). Within the nation, citizens possess very different characteristics. However, illusionary attributes are sufficient to affect citizens’ self-evaluations and policy preferences. After all, we see people willing to sacrifice their lives for unknown strangers just because they are members of the same country (Anderson 2006). It is reasonable to assume that, with some top-down influence, the citizens will choose policy preferences based on their imaginary animal traits.

Secondly, the national animal provides an international dimension for national identity. Conventional national symbols are inward-oriented. They construct commonality among nationals while assuming an oversimplified understanding about foreign countries. There is only a demarcation between “domestic” and “foreign.” While the uniqueness of the homeland is heavily emphasized, the uniqueness of individual foreign countries is sacrificed. To the concern of the domestic people, the complex nature of bilateral and multilateral international relations is neglected. The same type of symbols from individual countries are parallel to each other without meaningful interaction. For example, putting the national flag of China and the USA side by side does not create meaningful space to illustrate the Sino-US relation.

On the contrary, the national animal has an international dimension thanks to the presence of the zoological interspecific interactions. For an ecologist, the main types of interspecific interactions include competition, predation, mutualism, commensalism and parasitism (Brewer 1979). However, the discussion about the national animal concerns the socially constructed interspecific interaction rather than the natural interaction among natural animals. When the local national animal is placed together with animals that represent foreign countries in an artful way, it can convey a clear and convincing message. The second PUNCH cartoon quoted earlier is a good example. British leadership in Figure 2 is persuasive because the lion is socially believed to have the highest ranking in the zoological food chain.

Figure 3 is another good example. This Pulitzer Prize winning cartoon by Bruce Alexander Russell illustrates the Cold War US-USSR Rivalry well by portraying the national animals of the USA and the Soviet Union. The two beasts aggressively stare at each other without any sign of compromise. The competitive, hostile bilateral relationship cannot be more explicit. Readers can easily get this message because they know that both the bald eagle and the bear are powerful, fierce regional giants in the natural world. Any conflict between them will be disastrous.

In brief, the national animal enables nationals to have a concrete identity at the international level. They do more than merely assemble the masses based on some abstract commonality. They never advocate for blind patriotism or support for the nation and the governing regimes. Rather, they advocate for actions aligned with certain values and attributes.

**CHALLENGES OF THE NATIONAL ANIMAL**

Despite its strengths, the national animal does not enjoy the same political attention as many other symbols. Even the very limited promotion efforts are mostly along the conservation line, rather than for the sake of delivering political messages. This section is devoted to analysing why the national animal is not favoured by political elites.

The obvious answer is traditions and norms. Conventional symbols, even if they cannot provide a concrete national identity, have been functioning well to provide a sense of unity. Prominent symbols have been embedded into the mainstream system. For instance, national anthems and flags are given the status as the essential elements of a sovereign country in international society. They are stated in many countries’ constitutions. In many international organizations, all member states have their national flags exhibited in the headquarters to indicate their membership. National animals do not enjoy such prominence. It is much easier for national governments to promote a symbol that has been unquestionably tied to the nation, rather than creating and promoting a new symbol.
However, the tradition of prioritizing other national symbols is more a consequence of lacking popularity than a reason. As we have seen, using animals to form group unity used to be orthodox in totemic societies. A more plausible reason is concern about the uniqueness of the symbol. The desirable national identity must be internationally exclusive. If the symbol is shared by other countries, it will undermine the distinctiveness of national identity. Conventional national symbols such as the flag are new creations by modern nations. They are designed to be unique and exclusive. In contrast, uniqueness is much less attainable for the national animal. Different from the ancient totemic societies that are formed by very few totem tribes, modern international society consists of hundreds of nations. While there are countless animal species, only very few have meaningful interaction with the community and therefore have the potential to arouse public sentiment. The list is even shorter because people desire species with superior social attributes in order to boost national morale or get an “imaginary competitive edge” over others.

Finding an internationally unique animal is not the only challenge. Selling it to the public is equally difficult. We have mentioned that the national animal can be constructed, inherited or imported. If the animal is inherited, it should be culturally rooted in the region. However, modern nations hardly have a homogenous culture. There are many sections (e.g., different religions, ethnic groups) and therefore many cultures in a single nation. Each culture can have its own culturally significant animal. Promoting one animal rather than the others may be interpreted as the government’s bias and favouritism. Thus, it is hard to pin down a particular animal without causing disunity or exacerbating existing social conflicts. For example, India officially established the Royal Bengal Tiger as the national Animal in 1972 (IndaiGov n.d.). The tiger has a strong historical significance in India, but mostly within Hinduism. It represents power in Hindu mythology and the Vedic era. However, the tiger is not as prominent in Islam, which is another popular religion in India. India’s constitutional commitment to secularism and its use of a “Hindu animal” as a national symbol bring accusations of hypocrisy, especially when the Hindu-Islamic relation is intense. Proposals about changing the national animal to the cow or the elephant have been raised in recent years (Oneindia Staff Writer 2017; Thapar 2015).

Even for a relatively homogenous population, there can still be debates. For instance, competition between the beaver and the polar bear occurred in Canada in 2011. The beaver was adopted as the official national animal of Canada in 1975. It has a strong historical and cultural significance. The beaver was also central in the fur trade, the pillar economic industry for Canada. The animal has been featured in many places including the back of the Canadian nickel. In Canada, it has a long-established reputation of being diligent, humble and efficient. However, the beaver’s critics argue the beaver is agriculturally destructive and represents a colonial past (Mallinder 2011). The polar bear, on the other hand, is majestic, noble and beautiful. It is a symbol of power, resourcefulness and dignity (Reuters Staff 2011). The beaver’s supporters accuse the polar bear of being a bullying, aggressive animal, violating the Canadian people’s peace-loving trait. The debate has undermined the credibility of the beaver as the national symbol. People become more sceptical about their “beaver national identity.”

For those countries that construct or import the national animal, establishing a convincing symbol is equally, if not more challenging. Only if the animal is closely relevant to the masses, and has a strong cultural significance, is it likely to be stable and lasting. Some countries promote an official national animal linked with particular ideologies, parties, regimes or persons. Narrow affiliation with these ephemeral elements makes the animal vulnerable. During the First Empire in France, Napoleon I favoured the eagle over the cock. In his eyes, the cock was a “poor bird at grips with the eagles of Austria, Prussia, and Russia” (Pastoureau 1998, 421). Hence, he chose the eagle as the national animal. The eagle did not have mass support and was merely attached to the Napoleon regime. Unsurprisingly, it immediately lost its prominent status after the collapse of the First Empire. The eagle only made a short comeback with Napoleon III’s Second Empire, while the cock had a triumphant return with the revival of the Republic after 1870.

Even if governments successfully establish the national animal, it is increasingly difficult to convince citizens that they possess the animal identity. In modern society, humans keep away from animals, treating the latter as inferior beings. The human-animal divide could originate from human domestication of animals. It has turned the human-animal relationship from competitors to “the controller and the controlled.” In the West, the divide is reinforced by classical Greek thoughts and biblical narratives (DeMello 2012, 37). In Politics, Aristotle argues animals were created to serve humans; based on Genesis 1:26 in the Bible, humans were created emulating the look of God and were given domination over animals. The more abominable forces for today’s human-animal divide are modernization and industrialization. Modernization exacerbates the physical, and subsequently emotional, alienation between humans and animals. Animal zoos and factory farms mean animals are no longer treated as independent living beings. They are downgraded to mere sources of nutrition or tools for entertainment. Animals are seen as having no agency, and therefore are used metaphorically to derogate others. Negative animalization is also popular at the national level. Some political artworks depict one country as a brutal animal while depicting the other as humans in the same piece, to demonstrate the former’s barbarism and cruelty. This is evident by Figure 4 where Russia is portrayed as a violent bear trying to seize Ukraine while the USA and the European Union are portrayed in the human form trying to stop the injustice from happening.
Additionally, political elites may worry about the elite-mass fissure created by the national animal. The national animal is a symbol of the nationals rather than a symbol of the nation. Conventional abstract national symbols crystallize the nation. They serve as the object of worship. By venerating and protecting the symbol, the citizens foster loyalty and respect towards the nation and its governing body. National unity comes from the sharing of the common target of worshipping. Political elites, as guardians of the country, enjoy great privileges and support from the people. However, the national animal does not provide a target of worshipping. Instead, it highlights a common (constructed) trait within each citizens’ personality. The national unity is formed based on the similarity among members. The common admiration and trust towards a third party is not central. The national animal is not as effective in creating fanaticism towards the nation, which facilitates blind support towards the government decisions. Rather, there can be criticisms and rejections if governments fail to demonstrate the common traits that nationals should uphold. The potential fissure between nationals and the government is exemplified by the phrase “lions led by donkeys.” The phrase was originally used to describe the defeated British soldiers led by the British generals in the First World War. In the last few years, it was recycled to criticize the British politicians such as Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage for leading the British people into the Brexit abyss. It hints these political leaders have betrayed their national “lion” identity that contains courage, responsibility and great leadership.

Political elites may also have concerns about the national animal’s close connection with the social impression, especially on the international stage. Different countries can have different opinions about the same species. If the national animal has a bad foreign reputation, it can negatively affect the international image of the nation and its nationals. Durkheim mentioned how ancient tribes perceived members of the Bear Tribe as clumsy and easily trapped. The same applies to

Figure 4: “Ukraine: The Russian giant has awoken” (Latuff 2014)
modern national animals. For example, the dragon has been historically treated as the totem for the Chinese people. It has a very positive local image. It is thought to bring rain to the farmers to help the development of agriculture. It is associated with wealth, power, and mercy. However, in Western culture, especially in the Christian thinking, the dragon is a symbol for Satan and evil. It is the monster that destroys the castle and snatches the princess. The awful impression about the dragon in the West makes the dragon a convenient tool to disseminate anti-Sino sentiments and provoke the China threat theory among the Western population. This harms China’s international development.

THE ROAD AHEAD
In conclusion, this paper analyses the national animal’s history, formation, strengths and challenges as a political symbol. It argues that the national animal is distinctive from other national symbols because it is not merely backed up by collective memory, but also by the animal’s natural traits and the communal impression. Its unique formation process enables it to create a concrete national identity that puts emphasis on the similarity among nationals. It has the potential to create illusionary national traits that can guide citizens’ political behaviours. Also, the existence of zoological interactions means that the national symbol can illustrate international interactions. However, political elites hesitate in using the national animal for political purposes. The biggest challenge is finding an animal species that is not adopted by other countries and can also be widely acknowledged within the domestic border. Also, the human-animal division in modern society means positive animalization is increasingly difficult. The mobilizing power of the national animal is weakened because people are not willing to adopt the animal identity.

In the last section, I will explain how researchers can continue working on the subject. As I have acknowledged, not all claims in this article are backed up by strong empirical evidence. We need to find creative ways to explore many interesting questions. Whether a popularly acknowledged national animal(s) exists in all countries? For those countries that have adopted an official national animal, is the animal merely a cultural symbol or does it have a political meaning? Other than serving as a tool to consolidate national identity, does it also send political messages to the international community? For example, some argue Canada’s debate about replacing the beaver with the polar bear in 2011 coincided with tougher Canadian foreign policy (Mallinder 2011). Is it true that countries with more aggressive (based on conventional understanding) animals have more aggressive foreign policies?

At the more theoretical level, the study of the national animal should relaunch our discussion about the meaning of nationalism and national identity. We should reflect on whether national identity emphasizes the relation between nationals or the relation between nationals and the nation. Many people are unsatisfied with blind patriotism and worshipping of the motherland. Should we put emphasis on (illusory) common national traits instead? Will national animals successfully form a national identity that facilitates solidarity, unity but also tolerance?

Lastly, we may want to study national symbols as a system. It is interesting to explore how the national animal complements other symbols that are traditionally prominent. What kind of national identity will we obtain if we combine abstract patterns and the concrete animal image? For example, some countries’ national flags consist of the animal image. Are these flags more effective in unifying the nation? Is there an ecosystem for national symbols that maximizes their influence? Answers to these questions can help us solve many problems in political psychology and political iconography.

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NOTES

1 This paper defines “national animal” as the animal that is broadly embraced by the nationals of a country as the representation of its community. National animals include both non-mythical and mythical creatures. And official political endorsement is unnecessary.

2 American identity is so nebulous that authorities thought it was necessary to establish an Un-American Activities Committee in the early 1950s, trying to establish what was not American behaviour (Carr 1951).

3 From the perspective of evolutionary anthropology, this practice can be traced back to the era when humans lived in hunter societies (Mithen 1999). On the one hand, human hunters tend to perceive animals as intelligent counterparts who share the same natural resources for survival (Ingold 1994). On the other hand, the capability to “understand animals’ thinking” is a societal survival value (Serpell and Paul 2002) because hunters need to think like prey to predict their actions in order to capture them (Mithen 1999).

4 Natural wolves behave like “faithful spouses and parents” and seldom kill more than they need for survival (Midgley 2002, 26–27). However, when it comes to credibility, what matters is the social impression.

5 Positive animalization is different from dehumanization, which involves depriving humans of their dignity or treating humans as a mere means (Bar-Tal 1989, 172).

6 The social impression can be different for different cultures. For example, rabbits are stupid and arrogant in some cultures (think about “The Tortoise and the Hare” in \textit{Aesop’s Fables}). However, they are intelligent and sly in African culture (DeMello 2012, 307).

7 Although French elites successfully turned the image of the cock positive, they did not fight against popular culture. The bad personalities of the cock were popular in neighbouring countries. However, at the domestic level, the cock actually enjoyed historical significance. In the Gallo-Roman era, the cock was frequently connected to the cult of Mercury, which the people venerated (Pastoureau 1998, 406).

8 The socially constructed interaction is likely to be simplified and naïve. It largely resembles the food chain, with the species at upper chains dominating the species at the lower chains. The relation between species at similar ranks are contingent and ambiguous. Again, popular culture plays a huge role in constructing this interaction.

9 These are representative animals perceived by foreigners. Locals may not endorse the representation.

10 Fortunately, the socially constructed human-animal division is not universal. There is still a strong animistic culture in some societies. Australian aboriginal tribes believe humans are equal to other animals, sharing the same rights and obligations to nature (Flannery 2002). Other examples include the native American Indian cultures, the San cultures in Africa and the Maori cultures in New Zealand.