

Nationalism and State Legitimacy in Contemporary China

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National governments are facing unprecedented challenge for governing as globalization has become an eroding force to state capacity and legitimacy. Growth, economic security, ethnic conflict, democratization, transnational organizations, social movements, all these, among many other factors, contribute to the decline of state capacities. The public opinion is consequently moving in divergent directions, very much away from government's wishes. This decline of public support, or waning of state legitimacy, in turn, is damaging the psychological and ideological base of state capacity of surviving these difficulties.

The world thus has witnessed increasing instances of legitimacy crises that contribute to state failure. The political turbulence inflicts legitimacy crisis not only in authoritarian states and new democracies but also in established democracies, although to a less severe degree¹. Yet, for transitional societies, which include both authoritarian states that are under pressure for political openness and new democracies that are confounded by consolidation problems, the task is much more difficult than in their advanced counterparts. More sophisticated measures are called for.

In the meantime, however, the challenge also forces states to seek a variety of measures to reinforce their legitimacy and weather the storm of globalization. Political elites are not passive actors that only manage to escape. On the contrary, they are quite capable of taking advantage of the situation to reinforce their control. They, as Cohen argues, are fighting back, for good or for ill². They retain their freedom of maneuver, and often succeed.

The way politicians maintain their control varies depending upon the circumstances states face and resources politicians can employ. Yet, a common strategy is to use nationalist sentiment to influence public opinion so as to build up a psychological and ideological basis for legitimacy. The relevant literature has documented numerous cases on how nationalism is used in a variety of conditions. Yet, as Robinson claims, "most theories focus on nationalism's power to transform societies, but its origins and mechanisms remain too complex to encompass in a single formulation"³

This study contributes to this literature by (1) offering a quantitative analysis of the sources of nationalism, that is, the factors that are crucial to promote nationalism; (2) applying the analysis into a particular context, contemporary China, which in many ways encourages researchers to reflect on the existing literature.

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¹ Delton, Russell, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1996) and Pippa Norris, *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

² Cohen, Samy, *The Resilience of the State: Democracy and the Challenges of Globalization* (Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2006)

³ Robinson, Michael, "Enduring Anxieties: Cultural Nationalism and Modern East Asia" in Harumi Befu, ed. *Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asia Studies: Univ of Cal 1993),170

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This article is organized as follows. The first section is a discussion of the literature of nationalism in general. The second section discusses the relationships between nationalism and legitimacy. The following section presents a discussion of nationalism in China's specific context. After clarifying the controversies surrounding the concept of nationalism, I present a quantitative analysis using the dataset from the fourth wave of the World Values Surveys (WVS) conducted in China in 2000. The fourth section presents data description and model specification. The following section presents findings and offers a discussion. In Conclusion, I discuss policy implications of nationalism from a comparative perspective.

Nationalism: A Conceptual Clarification

State legitimacy is rooted in many things. At the psychological level, loyalties cultivated through nationalism are crucial for legitimacy. Nationalism is a powerful tool to build and maintain loyalty among citizens within the state. According to Alter, this power comes from its ability to allocate "the source of individual identity within a 'people,' which is seen as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity."⁴

Yet, the power of nationalism is often obscured by the fact that there has been very little consensus on its definition and meaning. The concept of nationalism is deemed as "one of the most ambiguous concepts in the present-day vocabulary of political and analytical thought"⁵. The controversies surrounding the concept are so enormous that the literature has been described as a "terminological jungle"⁶.

The concepts that are most relevant to nationalism are national identity and state attachment, which are often interchangeable. Fearon and Laitin define "identity" as "a social category...and in particular to a social category that an individual member either takes special pride in or views as a more-or-less unchangeable and socially consequential attribute."⁷ Thus, national identity and state attachment refer to citizens' loyalty to the nation, or a political community consisting of a group of people with a high degree of solidarity, a shared sense of history and culture or common language, an attachment to a particular territory, and in some cases desire for sovereign power over the territory.⁸

Many authors distinguish the two variants of national identity: patriotism and nationalism, which refer to the benign and malevolent sides of national identity.⁹ This is what splits scholars on the relationship between national identity and nationalism. In the above argument, nationalism is the extreme form of national identity, a malevolent sentiment containing prejudice toward outsiders. However, from a different perspective, other scholars consider this extreme form as Chauvinism, rather than nationalism. For these authors, nationalism is to a large extent

⁴ Alter, Peter, Nationalism (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 1

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Akzin, Benjamin, State and Nation (London: Hutchinson, 1964) 10

⁷ Fearon, James and David Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identities", International Organization (Autumn, 2000) 845-877.

⁸ Hechter, M., Containing Nationalism, (New York: Oxford University Press 2000), 10-15

⁹ Elkins, Z. and J. Sides, "Can Institutions Build Unity in Multiethnic States", 2006, Unpublished Manuscript. Kosterman, R. and S. Feshback, "Toward a Measure of Patriotic and Nationalistic Attitudes" Political Psychology, 10:257-274. Schatz, R. E. Staub and H. Lavine, "On the Varieties of National Attachment: Bland Versus Constructive Patriotism" Political Psychology, 1999, 20 (1), 151-174

equal to national identity and state attachment. Comaroff and Stern, for instance, made a distinction on nationalism between the “inward-directed sentiments” that hold a nation together and the “out-ward-directed sentiments” that heap hostility upon others.¹⁰ This is exactly how the previous group of authors defines national identity.

Notice that, both concepts, national identity and nationalism, are multidimensional. Scholars choose one over another for specific meaning and purpose of research. But in many cases the two concepts converge, referring to the psychological basis of legitimacy rooted in the loyalty of the public to the political community. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that underpin this loyalty rather than distinguishing whether this loyalty is inward-directed or outward-directed. For this purpose, the two concepts can be measured by the same indices in survey questions. The items usually include connection to countrymen, national belonging, and national pride. National pride is particularly common in survey design. It is also the index in the WVS, which is the data source the analysis this study is based on.

Nationalism, Legitimacy, and Elite Discourse

Nevertheless, a justification is needed on why nationalism instead of national identity is chosen as the subject in this study if the two concepts are similar. This brings in another concern of this study: the role of political elites.

Nationalism is more often than national identity to be treated as a political tool used by governments and political elites to maneuver mass attitudes. That makes nationalism often negative because of its potential to promote irrational devotion to the nation as well as prejudice towards outsiders.

From a positive perspective, scholars in framing literature on public opinion recognize that public opinion is often shaped by, or even originated from, elite discourse via various means, of which the most influential one is media¹¹. Political elites, as defined by Zaller, are those “persons who devote themselves full time to some aspect of politics or public affairs...These elites include politicians, higher-level government officials, journalists, some activists, and many kinds of experts and policy specialists”.¹² The central argument of framing literature, descending from Schattschneider’s classic statement,¹³ is that political elites define the terms of debate and people can do no more than choose among the offered options. Modern interpretation of this argument is that individuals vary in their opinions due to their exposure to political information and argumentation in the media. In constructing their opinion statements, people make greatest use of ideas that are most immediately salient to them. That is, their attitudes depend on a large scale upon elite discourse and communications. The key element in the underlying mechanism is information – elites control the information necessary for the mass to form preferences.

¹⁰Comaroff, J. L. and P.C. Stern, “New Perspectives on Nationalism and War” in Comaroff and Stern, Perspectives on Nationalism and War (Luxembourg: Gordon and Breach 1995)

¹¹Zaller, John, the Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) Iyenger, S. and D.Kinder, News that Matters (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), Iyenger, S., Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993)

¹²Zaller op. cit. 6

¹³Schattschneider, E.E., The Semi Sovereign People (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960).

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This mechanism of forming public opinions is often called framing. Druckman defines framing effect as the following: “A framing effect occurs when in the course of describing an issue or event, a speaker’s emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions.”¹⁴

Against this argument, however, other studies, labeled as “deliberation literature,” defend the ability of the public of making sense of politics and responding to elite influence in an active way. They argue that the public is rational in that they selectively take cues from political elites and fellow citizens as well. Even though most individual citizens do not make sense of politics, they, collectively, act and think reasonably and rationally. What this argument suggests is that the frames on which people form their political opinions not only come from elites but also from interpersonal conversations. Furthermore, the public is capable of influencing elite discourse as well, even though they depend on elites to provide information and cues.¹⁵

From a comparative perspective, both sides of the above arguments are supported by concrete evidence. For the framing literature, the argument is echoed by the scholars that see “nation” as a “constructed” or “invented” concept. That is, nation is the outcome of a rational choice of individuals in order to achieve common interests.¹⁶ In this process, political entrepreneurs play the central role in that they use the concept to mobilize the public in response to specific circumstances. They often take advantage of national identity to promote their interests, for good or for ill. On the other hand, as already recognized in the literature of nationalism, nationalist sentiment is both a constructive and destructive force for states because this very tool can be utilized by citizens to pursue political rights and freedom, for both individual and group interests.¹⁷

To compromise the debate, I argue that nationalism is a rational choice for both the public and elites as well. They chose nationalism as a measure to sustain their belief system and tie themselves to the nation for the common interests. This argument seems obvious. Yet, a question is often ignored: Why is nationalism chosen at the first place? Can it play a universal role in different contexts?

To answer these questions is beyond the scope of this study, which is merely tempted to identify sources of nationalism. In specific, the main purpose is to identify whether and to what extent nationalism is shaped by elite discourse. Yet, a tentative answer may be that the extent to which nationalism takes effect relies on to what extent democracy has been established and consolidated in the given nation. A plausible explanation is that, a nation where democracy has not yet internalized among citizens as the cornerstone of their belief system, nationalism is more likely to be used to play such a role because of its irrational side that is often effective in mobilizing emotion and affection.

¹⁴ Druckman, James, The Implications of Framing for Citizen Competence, *Political Behavior*, 23, 2001, 225-256

¹⁵ Page, B. and Shapiro, R., *The Rational Public* (Chicago University Press 1992). Sniderman, P., R. Brody and P. Tetlock, *the Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Lupia A., M. McCubbins and S. Popkin, eds, *Elements of Reason: Understanding and Expanding the Limits of Political Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Kuklinski J. H. ed, *Citizen and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2001)

¹⁶ Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). Hobsbawm, E “Introduction: Inventing Traditions and Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914” In E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983)

¹⁷ Greenfield, Liah, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), Tibi, Bassam, Arab Nationalism, *A Critical Inquiry* (London: McMillan, 1981). Snyder, Jack, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: Norton and Company, 2000).

In a dialectic manner, nationalism, particularly in transitional societies, is the outcome of interaction between mass nationalist sentiment and elite discourse. That is, the sources of nationalism are rooted in the interests of both mass and elites. Both sides call for an ideological, psychological, and emotional substitution to fill the vacuum of traditional ideologies such as communism that have died away along with market expansion and decline of political control. This trend exists literally everywhere, but particularly salient in those transitional societies where the established belief systems either are challenged or have gone but democracy has not yet established or consolidated so as to offer a solid basis for a new belief system.

Nationalism in Contemporary China: Convergence of Elite Discourse and Mass Demand

Although the Communist ideologies have largely waned away since the reforms in China have taken place in the late 1970s, nationalism did not become appealing to both the Chinese government and its citizens until the early 1990s. Then the orthodox Communist ideologies, which in a large part subsume nationalist rhetoric into internationalist rhetoric, lost steam. The turning point is 1989 Tiananmen Square student protests as well as the fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union during the same period, which eventually destroyed the influence of Communist ideologies. Early 1990s witnessed a short period of ideological and moral disorder for both the government and intellectuals in China. At the same time when the authority gave up communism as an effective tool to mobilize, liberal intellectuals also found themselves distant away from western liberal-democratic ideologies that they once embraced wholeheartedly. A pragmatic mode led both sides to seeking an alternative and both believed that this alternative must be something that appealed to the practical need of the masses.

For the public, corruption and economic hardship that emerged since the late 1980s produced a mood of nostalgia for Mao's regime, which, in the memory of the public, was clean, moral, and ordered. A cynical sense among the public towards the authority was so evident and widespread that it was hard to dispute that the Communist authority was, after a decade recovering, facing another legitimacy crisis.

A patriotic education campaign that was launched in early 1990s marks the beginning of massive governmental efforts to promote nationalism to restore legitimacy.¹⁸ Zhao documented the campaign in great detail and found that this "state-led" nationalism successfully restored the respect among the public to the communist authority. Indeed, the 1990s and onward are marked as the period that popular nationalism—that is, nationalism embraced by the public without being mobilized by the government—prevails in China.¹⁹

Moreover, intellectuals began to uphold patriotism and nationalism as well. Well-known "say no" sentiment—following the 1996 bestseller "China Can Say No" provoked anti-US sentiment—represents an extreme form of intellectual discourse shifting towards government's interests.²⁰ The trend among the whole intellectual circle, however, is fundamentally not very far from this position. Many who were liberalists prior to Tiananmen event have turned to

¹⁸Zhao, Suisheng, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2004)

¹⁹Zhao, *Ibid.*, 225.

²⁰Zheng, Yongnian, Et. Al, *China That Can Say No*, (Beijing: Zhonghua Gongshang Lianhe Chubanshe, 1996)

nationalism. (Two of the four authors of the “Say No” book were actually among the students participating in Tiananmen protests). Observers admit that “nationalist sentiment has come to dominate the thousands of Chinese students and scholars, if not the whole nation”.²¹

Even more noticeable is that intellectuals have become a significant force to assist the government in promoting nationalism. The “Say No” book, though representing an extreme opinion from an academic perspective, is not extreme in a popular sense. It indicates a convergence of elite nationalism and popular nationalism. As one of the authors of the book argues, “[S]ome say we have aroused popular opinion. It would be better to say that popular opinion aroused us”.²²

It is certainly important to notice that recent Chinese nationalist sentiment has its market and international origins. Rising economic standards since the mid 1990s contribute to the resurgence of nationalism a great deal. Meanwhile, international relations always play a big role in stimulating nationalism, particularly when a nation is seeking to regain international respect. Wealth, openness, and raising international status have introduced more frequent international confrontation between China and the western world.²³ Along with a series of events such as Hong Kong and Macau returns (1997 and 1999), Belgrade Bombing protests (1999), bidding for hosting 2008 Olympic game (2000), the nationalist sentiment has eventually accumulated into a prominent force in the late 1990s.

Measuring Nationalism in China

The above sketch on recent nationalist sentiment in China indicates that nationalism has its origins in various sources, although the primary emphasis in this study is given to the interaction between elite discourse and mass demands for an ideological and emotional basis of legitimacy. Numerous studies have been devoted to understanding the issue. Yet, much of the literature fails to provide concrete evidence on whether these factors among many others play a role in shaping nationalist sentiment among the public and, more importantly, what their magnitudes are. The part of the reason, besides that the subject has been understudied, is the lack of data that allow researchers to measure. Yet, recent survey studies have provided opportunities for such research. This study offers such an effort using one of these datasets and provides some preliminary evidence.

The WVS is one of the survey datasets that have been respected for their qualities and been frequently used for various studies because of the broad coverage of their questionnaire and the nations surveyed. There have been five waves of WVS surveys across the globe from 1985 to 2005, for every five years (the 2005 WVS is not yet available). Its China survey began from the second wave in 1990. In the 1990 and 1995 surveys, the sampling was proportionately in favor of urban population. The fourth wave of survey conducted in 2000 began using nationwide

²¹Gries, P.H., China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy (Berkeley: University of Cal Press 2004). Liew, Leong and Shaoguang Wang, Nationalism, Democracy and National Integration in China (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004)

²²Quoted in Gries, op cit, 127

²³Chang, Maria Shia, Returned of the Dragon: China's Wounded Nationalism (Westview Press, 2001). He, Baogang and Guo Yingjie, Nationalism, National Identity and Democratization in China (Brookfield: Ash Gate, 2000). Zhang, Yunling, China-US-Japan Relations in Transition, (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 1997). Zheng, Yongman, Discover Chinese Nationalism in China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

random sampling. Thus the dataset from 2000 survey can be considered as one of the most important ones conducted in China by private survey institutions. The only another globe-wide survey with similar scope is the Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2002. But its sampling only covers a few major cities. Therefore I use the WVS 2000 dataset in this study.

To uncover the nature of nationalism in contemporary China, the empirical task is (1) to identify meaningful measures of nationalism, (2) to identify the key variables that determine nationalism, and (3) to estimate their effects on nationalism with appropriate models.

Dependent Variable

In WVS, there are two questions that can be used to measure nationalism. One is self-categorization as a member of the state. In the question, respondents were asked “How proud are you to be Chinese?” Another question that is often used by scholars (e.g. Norris, 1999; Klingemann, 1999) as a measure of national identity asks respondents about willingness to volunteer for military service: “Of course we all hope that there will not be another war, but if it were to come to that, would you be willing to fight for your country? (1) Yes, (2) No.”

The second question would be a good indicator of the malevolent nature of nationalism. Yet, according to Chinese respondents in 2000 overwhelmingly gave a positive answer to this question. There were only 3.1 % among 1000 respondents giving negative answers, compared to 89.9% of positive answers. This makes this variable meaningless in an analysis. Thus I will only use the first question as the measure of nationalism.

Explanatory Variables

I use a battery of variables to uncover the causes of nationalism in contemporary China. These include economic, social, demographic aspects. Statistical description of all the variables including the dependent variable is presented in Table 1. I also present missing values for all the variables following their observation number, given the fact that a large portion of missing value may seriously affect estimation. Fortunately, all the variables I choose except “ownership” and “competition” have missing values more than 10 percent (13.7 and 13.1). Since the acceptable percentage of missing values usually is 15 percent, these are quite pleasant figures (see Table 1).

Political exposure

As discussed in the previous section, the main focus in this study is on the interaction between elite discourse and mass demands for nationalism. Cultivating national identity is not a self-fulfilling process by individuals themselves. Rather, it is often the result of interaction between political elites and individuals. The primary mediator that sustains this interaction is the media. As one is exposed to the media, his or her attitudes are likely to be affected by the discourse of elites and the government. A question in WVS that measures the extent to which individuals are exposed to political influence asks “How often do you follow political news?” I predict that an individual that is exposed to political news is more likely than others to have stronger nationalist sentiment.

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Table 1 Data Description (Data Source: the World Values Survey 2000)

Variables	Obs (% of missing value)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Nationalist Sentiment	952 (4.8)	3.037	.752	1	4
Income Level	954 (4.6)	1.852	0.786	1	3
Economic security	993 (0.7)	5.647	2.658	1	10
Social status	935 (6.5)	2.430	2.867	1	5
Income gaps	909 (9.1)	6.263	3.111	1	10
Ownership	863 (13.7)	4.214	2.867	1	10
Responsibility	904 (9.6)	5.165	3.220	1	10
Competition	869 (13.1)	2.720	2.186	1	10
Educational level	1,000 (0)	3.471	1.772	1	8
Age	1,000 (0)	3.063	1.161	1	6
Sex (male =1)	1,000 (0)	0.494	0.500	0	1
Peasant	900 (10.0)	0.622	0.485	0	1
Political Exposure	959	3.781	1.349	1	5
Geographic attachment	924 (7.6)	2.530	1.009	1	5
Total sample $N = 1,000$					

Economic Growth

There are many other variables besides political exposure that may also affect individuals' nationalist attitudes. Those variables are also necessary to be controlled in order to truly uncover the magnitudes of the impact of nationalism. For example, it is very natural to assume that national pride can be promoted by the increasing level of wealth a country achieves. As becoming richer, one may cultivate more attachment to the nation. Yet, at the same time, the opposite argument may also be true – in an authoritarian regime, increasing level of wealth may educate individuals to become independent from the regime. Because of the close link between national identity and political support for the regime, the potential eroding effect of wealth to

national identity also presents a threat to regime survival.²⁴ Both hypotheses will be tested in the models constructed in this study.

Another economic variable is economic security individuals perceive from the rapid and turbulent transition. Individuals at the similar income level may have quite different perception about how well the economy has been going because of the different circumstances they live in. Together with income level, economic security helps to measure economic effect from both subjective and objective aspects. To measure respondents' perception of their economic situation, I use a question that asks "How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household?"

Perceived Social Status

Social status often is associated with the sense of nationalist sentiment. In the literature of social dominance theory, it is argued that higher-status groups feel a greater sense of "ownership" of the national identity.²⁵ Although the main purpose of social dominance theory is to explain prejudice, it is relevant here to connect social status to national pride.

In the WVS, respondents are asked to describe themselves as one of five classes – upper class, upper middle class, lower middle class, working class, and lower class.

Economic Ideologies

When individuals hold certain ideologies with regard to how societies should be organized and how governments should manage markets, they may have a different level of attachment to the state. Dissatisfaction with the way the society is organized may diminish one's attachment to the nation. I use four questions asked in the WVS to measure economic ideology. From different aspects, these questions measure whether respondents are pro-market or are prone to traditional socialist ideologies.

The first question asks about income gaps – whether incomes should be made more equal or whether the society needs larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.

Second one is on ownership – whether private ownership or government ownership of business and industry should be increased.

In the third question, respondents are asked whether respondents believe that it is the government or it is people themselves that should take responsibility for their well-being.

The last question is about competition – whether competition is good to stimulate people to work hard or it is harmful to their lives.

Educational level

How does education affect individual's national identity? Is a higher level of education conducive to higher level of nationalist sentiment because of the knowledge and consciousness of being a member of the nation? Yet, the same knowledge may also educate one to be sober on their relationship to the nation. Those with lower educational level may blindly follow their emotion. This may be more the case in an authoritarian regime that is undergoing market reform. The model will test both hypotheses.

²⁴Shou, Huisheng, *Nationalism and Political Support in Reforming China*: In S. J. Guo ed, *Challenges Facing Chinese Political Development* (Rowman and Littlefield Publish, forthcoming)

²⁵Figueiredo, Rui and Zachary Elkins: "Are Patriots Bigots? Inquiry into the Views of In-group Pride", *American Journal of Political Science*, 47:1 (Jan 2003) 171-188

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Gender

Being a male or a female may have different effects on one's national identity. Yet, whether a male is more likely than a female to have stronger nationalist sentiment, or the other way around, is subject to empirical test.

Age

Age often affects an individual's attitudes. As individuals grow older, their nationalist attachment may grow as well.

Geographic Attachment

It is easily assumed that today's globalization presents a powerful threat to a nation's control over its citizens. Individuals may find themselves less attached emotionally to their nations and local communities as they are exposed to the world. Thus individuals' nationalist sentiment may be affected by their perception of their community and regional attachments. That is, geographical identity has an impact on how individuals perceive their relationship to the nation. I focus on answers to the question "To which of these geographical groups would you say you belong first of all? (1) Locality or town where you live? (2) State or region of country where you live? (3) The country as a whole? (4) The continent where you live? (5) The world as a whole?"

Peasant

The last variable that may have an impact on one's national identity is whether respondents are urban or rural residents. This is particularly pertinent to China's situation where the urban and rural gap has tremendous influence on many issues including mass opinions. It is subject to empirical test, however, to say whether being a peasant makes one more conservative and more likely to hold strong nationalist sentiment and of what magnitude. In the WVS question on occupation, there are thirteen categories. The category "agricultural worker" explicitly refers to "peasant" in the Chinese questionnaire. None of the others would be perceived to be closely related to peasant in China. Therefore I created a dummy variable with 1 for peasant and 0 otherwise.

Findings and Discussion

To estimate the effects of those variables on individuals' nationalist sentiment, I construct six models. The first model is a full model which includes all the variables considered. It serves as a baseline upon which the later models will be constructed and compared. The results are presented in Table 2.

Political Exposure

The results presented in Table 2 highlight several variables that are important across all models. First is political exposure, which is highly significant as indicated by its z score which is the largest across all models, suggesting that political exposure is the most relevant variable to explain nationalist sentiment. Its coefficient is only occasionally smaller than others but only in a

slight degree, suggesting that a significant proportion of variation in the dependent variable can be accounted for by political exposure.

Table 2 Logit Estimates of Nationalist Sentiment in China (World Values Survey, 2000)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Income Level	0.251* (.120)	0.325** (.115)	0.273* (.119)	0.133 (0.105)	0.167 (0.103)		
Economic Security	0.006 (.033)	0.0236 (.031)	0.010 (.033)	0.019 (0.031)	0.023 (0.031)	0.021 (0.032)	0.045 (0.029)
Social Status	0.249* (.108)		0.272* (.107)	0.257* (0.101)	0.273** (0.101)	0.286** (0.105)	
Income Gaps	-0.056* (.026)	-0.061* (.025)	-0.055* (.026)	-0.056* (0.245)	-0.057* (0.024)	-0.054* (0.026)	-0.061* (0.025)
Ownership	0.005 (.029)	0.000** (.029)	-0.000 (0.029)	0.014 (0.028)	0.009 (0.027)	0.001 (0.028)	-0.005 (0.028)
Responsibility	-0.069** (.025)	-0.082 (.024)	-0.072** (0.025)	-0.067** (0.024)	-0.070** (0.024)	-0.073** (0.025)	-0.089*** (0.024)
Competition	-0.052 (.037)	-0.063 (.036)	-0.043 (0.037)	-0.030 (0.035)	-0.023 (0.035)	-0.049 (0.036)	-0.057 (0.035)
Educational Level	0.034 (.055)	0.051 (.054)	0.054 (0.054)	0.013 (0.049)	0.039 (0.048)	0.049 (0.054)	0.072 (0.053)
Age	-0.072 (.073)	-.069 (.072)	-0.050 (0.072)	-0.027 (0.068)	-0.006 (0.068)	-0.061 (0.071)	-0.057 (0.070)
Sex (male =1)	-0.096 (.162)	-.123 (.159)	-0.022 (0.160)	-0.161 (0.153)	-0.086 (0.151)	-0.153 (0.160)	-0.198 (0.156)
Political Exposure	0.222** (.069)	-.250*** (.067)		0.215** (0.064)		0.222** (0.068)	0.258*** (0.066)
Geographic Attachment	0.018 (.080)	.024 (.079)	0.033 (0.079)	-0.008 (0.075)	0.012 (0.075)	0.037 (0.079)	0.046 (0.077)
Peasant	0.408* (.196)	.506** (.192)	0.334 (0.192)			0.238 (0.179)	0.295 (0.176)
LR chi2	49.27	51.15	39.78	49.27	38.89	45.61	45.72
log like	-661.43	-681.27	-669.92	-735.11	-744.67	-675.01	-702.87
Pseudo R ²	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
N (obs.)	642	656	646	703	708	656	675

Note: standard errors in parentheses. ***p<0.001 **p<0.01 *p<0.05

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A conclusion that can be drawn from this simple glance is that the findings confirm my main hypothesis: political exposure significantly influences individuals' formation of nationalist sentiment. Although this is not sufficient to confirm the argument of the framing literature that elite discourse determines the public's attitudes – we lack the variable to measure to what extent the interpersonal conversation contributes to the formation of nationalist sentiment – it does show that the public's opinions are strongly affected by their degree of political exposure. This argument is further supported by the fact that we control the impacts of a battery of variables such as income level, social status, ideologies, educational level, and demographic variables.

Social Status

We have to admit, however, political exposure is not the only variable that determines the nationalist sentiment among the public. Social status, for example, exerts an almost equally strong impact. The higher the social status one perceives to belong to, the more likely the person holds stronger nationalist sentiments. This confirms the very argument made by social dominance theory we previously discussed that higher-status groups feel a greater sense of “ownership” of the national identity.

Economic ideologies

Pro-market economic ideologies are not as straightforward a predictor as political exposure and social status. Among four indicators of economic ideologies, ownership and competition are not significant at all in any models. But the other two are significant in all models. Responsibility is particularly salient, right next to political exposure for both its z value and coefficient.

That ownership is not significant is understandable in China's context in that property rights are never as clearly defined as it is in western societies. The two decades of reform seldom focus upon cultivating private property rights as the main goal on its agenda. For the public, only a small portion of the populace that is heavily concentrated in urban areas, may hold strong sense of private property rights. Among the rest of the populace, majority of the urban residents still have a variety of connections to the public sector. Rural residents are still influenced by the sense of community because of the slow pace of suburbanization and heavy reliance upon the public assets of the village and township community in most areas. If anything, the public may hope the government to sustain the public ownership in the course of market reform. This would connect the public ownership with nationalist sentiment in a positive way. The positive sign of the variable in most models confirms this assumption, although the low correlation does not permit any firm conclusion.

In contrast, three other variables, income gap, responsibility, and competition, have negative signs, suggesting that pro-market ideologies are likely to decrease individuals' nationalist sentiment. Yet, this conclusion is not warranted if we look closer at these three variables. Income gap and government responsibility are not representative of pro-market ideologies in China's context because of their very unique meanings in the country. An egalitarian society in which the government takes responsibility for one's wellbeing traditionally has its legitimate position among Chinese, especially with the socialist influence remaining. The market reforms have not yet fundamentally changed this perception. Thus it is predictable that those who believe that income gap should be small and government should take responsibility

will hold strong nationalist sentiment, because they would believe that the nation is going in the right way and social justice has been maintained during the process of market reform. In contrast, competition is a more accurate indicator of pro-market ideologies because it does not have a close relationship with social justice and therefore lacks the support in traditional China. If there is any relationship between pro-market ideologies and nationalist sentiment, competition should be such an indicator in the first place. Yet, though the sign of the variable is correct, statistically there is no significant correlation between competition and nationalist sentiment. Thus the result rejects the claim that pro-market ideologies diminish nationalist sentiment.

The correlation between pro-market ideologies and decline of nationalist sentiment appeared in the table, hence, is superficial and misleading in that it fails to take China's specific social context into account. We can only conclude that there is no such relationship statistically and substantively. Yet, this does not suggest that economic ideologies are trivial. Rather, the findings suggest that they still matter but in a different way: it is egalitarian values embedded in socialist ideologies that have strong and positive impact on Chinese citizens' perception of nationalism. Where the values on social justice and government responsibility are strong, individuals are more likely to hold nationalist attachment.

Economic Growth and Peasant

Income level and perceived economic security measure the impact of economic growth from both objective and subjective aspects. The findings suggest that perceived economic security has no substantial impact at all in any of the models. Income level, on the other hand, varies depending upon specific models.

In order to uncover the nature of income level and nationalist sentiment under the influence of other variables, I construct the following models in which some variables that are significant in the full model (Model 1) are excluded. These models also serve to further test the influence of other variables such as political exposure, social status, economic ideologies, and peasant status.

After I exclude variables of economic ideologies, either by excluding any one of them or four of them together, none of the other variables has significantly been changed. I did not report the results in order to save space.

I suspect that income level is associated with social status, and thus is affected by the latter. In model 2, in which social status is excluded with other variables unchanged, the z score of income level increases by 0.71, and coefficient increases by 0.074. This might not be a huge change, but the higher z score does deserve one more star to indicate a higher level of significance.

Political exposure may also influence income level since it is such a strong regressor that may take too much effect away from other variables. If we exclude this variable, we may see some increase of impact from other variables. In Model 3, I exclude political exposure and find no substantial change on income level and most of the other variables as well, except that peasant becomes only marginally significant from being significant before.

What about peasant? In Model 4 where peasant is excluded, income level then suddenly becomes insignificant at all with z score merely 1.28, a substantial drop. To further confirm this result, I exclude peasant and political exposure as well in Model 5 on the speculation that

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political exposure may have an impact on the relationship, although there is no theoretical ground for this assumption. The result, however, does not change much the z score of income level. Again, I construct Model 6, in which I exclude income level, to test whether the association between income level and being a peasant in affecting one's nationalist sentiment still holds. The finding confirms the relationship: when income level is excluded, peasant becomes non-significant as well, with z score dropping substantially from 2.09 to 1.33. Thus the results give such a conclusion: income level is mainly associated with being a peasant, and also with social status to a lesser degree, in affecting one's nationalist sentiment.

What other variables affect peasant? In model 2 mentioned above, social status not only changes income level and drives its significance level up, but also increases the significance level of a peasant, with its z score increasing from 2.09 to 2.64, not a trivial increase. Model 7 further confirms this result when both income level and social status are dropped. Peasant then becomes not significant. Furthermore, the result in Model 2 not only shows the impact of social status on peasant, but also shows that income level and being a peasant are associated in affecting the nationalist sentiment, since the two variables are simultaneously affected by increasing their significance level after dropping social status.

These findings appear very challenging for proper interpretation. Income level and being a peasant may affect one's nationalist sentiment but the relationships are ambiguous, subject to the impact of social status, or potentially other latent variables not detected in these models. Why do income level and being a peasant go together to have an impact on nationalist sentiment? Do they necessarily depend upon each other in explaining nationalist sentiment? Further more, why does social status have an impact on the relationship between both income level and being peasant and nationalist sentiment? What mechanisms underpin the relationships among the three variables? The result of a bivariate correlation test among the three variables is presented below. It shows that income level is correlated with both being a peasant and social status at a moderate level (correlation coefficients are -.439 and .303 respectively). But being a peasant is not correlated with social status at all (-.01). The bivariate correlation test for each of them respectively with dependent variable also yields moderate correlation. It is possible that these variables are interacting, so one variable's impact cannot fully be detected without another one. I plug the interactions among income level, being a peasant, and social status in each model, finding no substantial change in any of the models (results not reported). All these suggest that these relationships are not straightforward and will be prudent in giving any final conclusion but instead leave it to further studies.

Table 3 Bivariate Correlations of Income Level, Peasant, and Social Status

	peasant	income	social status	national pride
peasant	1			
income	-.439(**)	1		
social status	-.010	.303(**)	1	
national pride	-.028	.147(**)	.162(**)	1
<i>N</i>	858	912	900	952

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Educational level and other Demographic Variables

Educational level, along with age, gender, and geographic attachment are far from significant, with z score seldom larger than 1, indicating that these variables play no role in determining nationalist sentiment. I interact education level and other variables that are important in Model 1, but the results do not give any substantial change (results are not reported here). However, we still can look at the relationships from their signs, though they are not significant at all. For education and geographic attachment, the signs are positive, meaning that increasing level of education or geographical attachment yields stronger nationalist sentiment.

On the other hand, age and being male are negatively related to nationalist sentiment, a surprising finding in contrast to the assumption made previously that being a male and being older should positively contribute to nationalist sentiment. The dataset used in this study is unable to provide further information to explain this counterfactual. Further studies are needed.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this study help to identify the major factors determining nationalist sentiment among Chinese citizens. To recapitulate the findings, the most important factors are political exposure, social status, and socialist economic ideologies – the more an individual is subject to political influence through the media, the more likely this person holds a strong nationalist sentiment; a higher social status contributes to this sentiment as well; a government that emphasizes social justice and responsibility is more likely to elicit nationalist sentiment. Whether nationalist sentiment depends on income level may matter in particular for rural residents, but the relationship is not quite straightforward. Other variables, such as educational level, age, gender, and geographic attachment have no significant contribution to nationalist sentiment.

A lesson drawn from this study is that the studies on transitional societies must be context-specific. All the findings and interpretations in this study must be firmly placed in the specific context of contemporary China. To further constrain the condition, we should say that they are valid only for the period of the late 1990s when China had undergone substantial economic and political changes and yet many relevant changes still had not yet occurred. Thus the conclusions drawn from this study need to be taken in a careful manner for generalization. Some of them may be universally applicable to other societies but others may not. For example, political exposure has been a commonly used strategy for governments in transitional societies to elicit public support and maintain legitimacy. The strategy has been proven effective, even though consequences in the long run are far from straightforward.

Similarly, social status is also meaningful for legitimacy in most contexts. Its policy implication is that authorities should rely more upon those people who consider themselves as being among the high-status group. This suggests that social stratification, which is not necessarily associated with income level, should be treated seriously in policy making.

Social justice and government responsibility may be more relevant to the post-communist societies because citizens in these countries are, at least in present time, more likely to rely on their socialist experiences to form their nationalist attachment and other political attitudes as well.

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However, in those countries with no socialist traditions or experiences, these values should still matter, though probably in different ways.

Finally, income level and being a peasant have ambiguous impact in this study where the two variables take effect only when they go together. Therefore it is difficult to assert whether increasing income can be considered a usual strategy for legitimacy. Yet, without taking the effects into a comparative perspective, no conclusion can be drawn on whether or not they are universally applicable.

In brief, this study sheds new lights on the sources of nationalism, which are essential for the government to elicit political support from citizens. Another study this author conducted confirms this relationship by showing that nationalist sentiment is the most critical factor determining individuals' political support at different levels such as regime, political institutions, and incumbent officials.²⁶ The findings and the conclusions in this study, though targeting China's specific case, are meant to provide a preliminary effort for the further studies in a cross-national perspective that allows researchers to take into account the variation of specific contexts of nations to make generalizable conclusion.

²⁶Shou, *op cit.*