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# Why Do Chinese Democrats Tend to Be More Nationalistic? Explaining Popular Nationalism in Urban China

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## ABSTRACT

Popular nationalism remains strong in China. What drives this strong nationalistic sentiment? This is the key question this study attempts to answer. The authors are particularly interested in the connection between domestic politics and outward nationalist feelings among Chinese urban residents, specifically the relationship between democratic orientation and regime support on the one hand and nationalist feelings on the other. Descriptive findings from random survey data on Chinese urban residents in 34 Chinese cities reveal that democracy-oriented Chinese urbanites tend to show stronger nationalistic feelings. A large volume of literature on the relationship between democratic value and nationalistic sentiments, however, generally suggests that people with more liberal democratic values tend to be less nationalistic. How should one, then, reconcile and explain this seemingly contradictory relationship in China? Upon further research, the study finds that system support is a confounding factor affecting Chinese urban residents' nationalistic sentiments. People with more nationalistic feelings tend to be those who show less support for the current system in China. Popular political discontent with the Chinese domestic system may very well have a spill-over effect on Chinese people's nationalist feelings toward the outside world.

## Introduction

In recent years the world has witnessed open expression of strong Chinese nationalism both on the street and on the Internet in China.<sup>1</sup> People still remember one of the most recent massive anti-Japan popular protests that turned violent in many parts of China in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Japanese restaurants owned by Chinese citizens and Japanese cars made in China and driven by Chinese citizens were viciously attacked. Popular protests against South Korea over the deployment of **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense** (or THAAD) in South Korea against potential North Korean missile attacks in 2017 dismayed and alarmed many in the international community. The protesting and boycotting targets were South Korean Lotte department stores that were operated in China because Lotte gave up a piece of its lands to the Korean government for the deployment of the THAAD system. Strong nationalistic sentiments are widely expressed on the Internet in China, targeting mostly

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<sup>1</sup>Jessica Chen Weiss methodically described the nationwide popular nationalist protests in China since the 1980s. Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jackson Woods and Bruce Dickson, 'Victims or Patriots: Disaggregating Nationalism in Urban China', *Journal of Contemporary China* 26(104), (2017), pp. 167–68. The authors do acknowledge that there is a debate among China watchers on whether nationalism is rising in China in the last few decades; Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing', *International Security* 41(3), (2016/2017), pp. 7–43.

<sup>2</sup>Min Zhou and Hanning Wang, 'Anti-Japanese Sentiment among Chinese University Students: The Influence of Contemporary Nationalist Propaganda', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 46(1), (2017), p. 169.

western countries and China's neighboring countries that have territorial disputes with China. In fact, the Internet has become a major tool or platform for Chinese nationalists, especially for *fen qings* (angry youth who were born after the 1980s), to express their nationalist feelings.<sup>3</sup>

What drives the popular nationalistic sentiments? This is the key question the authors will attempt to answer in this research. The authors are particularly interested in the relationship between domestic views such as democratic values and regime support and nationalist feelings among Chinese citizens. According to news reports, young people (often referred to as *fen qings*) are often the main participants of popular nationalistic protests in recent years in China.<sup>4</sup> The world learns from the literature on Chinese political culture that young people in China also tend to be more supportive of democratic values and more critical of the Chinese authorities than the older generations.<sup>5</sup> Descriptive findings from the survey research on Chinese urban residents in this article also reveal that democracy-oriented Chinese urbanites tend to show stronger nationalistic feelings. This is contrary to what has been claimed that Chinese nationalists tend to have authoritarian personality.<sup>6</sup>

A large volume of literature on the relationship between democratic value and nationalistic sentiments, however, generally suggests that they are negatively related to each other. In other words, people with more liberal democratic values tend to be less nationalistic. How do we, then, reconcile and explain this seemingly contradictory relationship in China? Studying this relationship carries importance in both theoretical terms and practical implications. Is the Chinese case a deviation with regard to the relationship between democratic values and nationalist feelings? Is popular nationalism indeed a double-edged sword for the Chinese government?

The major findings of this article are summarized as follows. The authors found that strong nationalistic feelings among Chinese urban residents are associated with democratic orientation: support for electoral democracy in China and freedom of expression. These findings seem to contradict the incompatible theory between democratic values and nationalism. The authors further found that system support is a confounding factor affecting Chinese urban residents' nationalistic sentiments. People with more nationalistic feelings tend to be those who show less support for the current system in China. In other words, popular discontent among Chinese urbanites with Chinese domestic politics spills over into their feelings toward Chinese foreign policies. Chinese people who feel they are deprived of their democratic and civil rights at home also expect China to be properly respected by other countries in international affairs.

## Relationship Between Democracy and Nationalism

Democracy and nationalism are probably the two most researched and most controversial topics in contemporary political science. Yet, this relationship is not sufficiently studied, and there is much less consensus on the relationship between the two. Modern nationalism started with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which led to the formation of nation-states in Europe. Nationalism in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was perceived as a progressive and positive term describing national independent and liberation movements against imperial control. The rise of Nazism in Germany and aggressive imperialism of Japan in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century turned nationalism into a somewhat negative term. Nationalism in today's Western lexicon is often associated with narrow-minded parochialism, especially in the age of globalization. Democracy as a functioning political system, on the other hand, occurred much later than

<sup>3</sup>See Shameer Modongal, 'Development of nationalism in China', *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, (2016), pp. 1–7, accessed November 16, 2018, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/23311886.2016.1235749>.

<sup>4</sup>See Lijun Yang and Yongnian Zheng, 'Fen Qing (Angry Youth) in Contemporary China', *Journal of Contemporary China* 21(76), (2012), pp. 637–53.

<sup>5</sup>Yongnian Zheng, 'Development and Democracy: Are They Compatible in China?', *Political Science Quarterly* 9, (1994), pp. 235–259; Yang Zhong, 'Democratic Values among Chinese Peasantry: An Empirical Study', *China: An International Journal* 3(2), (2005), p. 209; Alfred Chan and Paul Nesbitt-Larking, 'Critical Citizenship and Civil Society in Contemporary China', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 28(2), (1995), p. 308.

<sup>6</sup>Cong Riyun, 'Nationalism and Democratization in Contemporary China', *Journal of Contemporary China* 18(62), (2009), pp. 841–43.

modern nation-state. Earlier democracies such as the United States and some Western European countries were founded in already well-established national boundaries and nation-states.

In general, there are two schools of thought with regard to the relationship between nationalism and democracy: the compatible view and the incompatible view. The compatible view is based upon the following connections between nationalism and democracy. The first compatible connection between the two can be dated back to the revolutionary idea of the nation put forward by French political activist Emmanuel Sieyès.<sup>7</sup> According to Sieyès, the concept of nation is associated with constitutional government and political participation. Democracy, emancipation, political participation and self-determination are all treated as the same. Sieyès also linked the concept of a nation-state with social contract. As Van De Putte puts it,

The nation is not a body to which one naturally belongs by fate; nationality is not a natural determination. The integration and sense of community which characterize the nation are that of an abstract legal community that does not exist by nature, but is only constituted in and through the mutual recognition of one another's rights ... . A nation has no natural borders based on language, race, or ethnicity, but only political-moral borders, and they reach only as far as the principles of the social contract holds.<sup>8</sup>

It seems that the revolutionary concept of the nation is that of modern-day's civic nation. A nation defined as such is more of a political concept than anything else. Furthermore, Liah Greenfeld believed that 'nationalism was the form in which democracy appeared in the world'.<sup>9</sup> Sovereignty and equality are key elements of both nationalism and democracy. The French Revolution symbolized this type of symbiotic relationship between nationalism and democracy.<sup>10</sup> It should be pointed out that Sieyès' conception of the nation also does not exclude diversity because a democratic nation has to be pluralistic and multi-cultural. Obviously, the revolutionary concept of the nation is an ideal type and tends to blur the lines between the concept of a nation and a democracy.

The argument that common national identity or unity is a necessary precondition for a functioning democracy offers another explanation for the positive connection between nationalism and democracy. This view dates back to John Steward Mill who believed that the stronger the national bond the more effective of the democratic system.<sup>11</sup> According to this view, nationalism creates compassion, care, intimacy and solidarity among fellow nationals which provide favorable conditions for democracy and strengthen democratic system. History does show that countries with stronger national cohesion and unity have a better chance for being stable democracies. Moreover, nationalism promotes democracy via political trust and participation. As well researched, political trust and participation are positive factors contributing to functioning democracy. It is easier to establish trust among people with strong national bond and shared identity.<sup>12</sup> Political participation is another key to the success of any democracy. According to Margaret Moore, political engagement strengthens shared national identity and fosters cooperation.<sup>13</sup> It has also been mentioned that common language facilitates political communication and participation among citizens in a democracy.<sup>14</sup> In addition, any democracy has to have territorial boundary, and a nation-state provides that boundary.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the authors argue that any modern democracy has to be built upon a nation-state.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Andre van de Putte, 'Democracy and Nationalism', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 22, (1992), pp. 161–195.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 167–68.

<sup>9</sup>Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 10.

<sup>10</sup>Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 39–49.

<sup>11</sup>Andre van de Putte, 'Democracy and Nationalism', p. 177.

<sup>12</sup>Russell Dalton, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 58–59; David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup>Margaret Moore, 'Normative Justifications for Liberal Nationalism: Justice, Democracy and National Identity', *Nations and Nationalism* 7(1), (2001), pp. 1–20.

<sup>14</sup>Dominique Schnapper, 'Linguistic Pluralism as a Serious Challenge to Democratic Life', in *Cultural Diversity versus Solidarity*, ed. Philippe Van Parijs (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2004), pp. 213–25.

<sup>15</sup>Marc Helbling, 'Nationalism and Democracy: Competing or Complementary Logics', *Living Reviews in Democracy* 1, (2009), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup>Wang Shaoguang, 'Nationalism and Democracy', *China Public Administration Review* 1, (2004), pp. 83–99.

The third positive connection between nationalism and democracy manifests in historical events. Democratization and nationalist movements often occur simultaneously. The world's oldest democracy was born out of a nationalist movement; the American Revolution is an example. Recent examples come from Eastern European countries and the former Soviet republics where democratization coincided with resurgence of nationalism.<sup>17</sup> In fact, regaining national independence became a major goal of the democratization movement among Eastern European countries and the former USSR republics which were controlled by the Soviet empire.

Meanwhile, the opposing view argues that nationalism and democracy are incompatible with each other. First of all, these two concepts fundamentally conflict with each other. Nationalism is about exclusion while democracy emphasizes inclusion and diversity.<sup>18</sup> Nationalism creates 'us' versus 'them' mentality, which may further lead to conformity among members of the same nationality and lack of tolerance. In other words, people of the same national group are expected to think and act alike. Minority or moderate nationalists may be branded as unpatriotic or even traitors by extreme nationalists. Tolerance and open-mindedness are considered essential in a functioning democracy.

Furthermore, it also often happens that non-citizens of a country are treated unfairly and are excluded from participation in the democratic process of the country of their residence. For example, Russians who lived in the former Soviet republics in the Baltics were not offered citizenship after the collapse of the Soviet Union due to resurgent nationalism in those countries. Therefore, nationalism does not promote real democracy. History also shows that extreme nationalism could lead to military aggression against democracies, as shown by Hitler's Germany in the 1930s. Second, it is also argued that there is lack of evidence to show that shared cultural or national identity necessarily facilitates communication and promotes mutual trust among fellow nationals.<sup>19</sup> In fact, shared political ideology, moral values and material interests play much a more important role in fostering inter-personal communication and trust than shared language and skin color. This has been demonstrated time and again by patterns of voting behavior in democratic systems.<sup>20</sup>

What is the relationship between democracy and nationalism in contemporary China? Democratic movements and nationalist movements in China were intricately related to each other prior to 1949 since the two movements shared many of the same ideals, such as national equality, national self-determination, and national liberation.<sup>21</sup> The republican revolution led by Dr. Sun Yatsen was initially a nationalistic movement by Han Chinese to overthrow the Manchu-dominated Qing Dynasty. The birth of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 was directly impacted by the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement which was both a popular nationalist movement and a democratic movement.

The argument of this article is that Chinese nationalist feelings toward the outside world are intricately linked to Chinese people's views of Chinese domestic politics. The authors are particularly interested in the relationship between democratic values and system support on the one hand and popular nationalism on the other. As mentioned earlier, much of Western literature on the relationship between nationalism and democratic values suggests that people with stronger democratic values tend to be less nationalistic since an important element of democratic values is tolerance and preference for peaceful resolution of dispute. In fact, this belief leads to the democratic peace theory arguing that it is less likely that democracies fight other democracies.<sup>22</sup> In the Chinese case, however, modern Chinese history indicates that nationalism is often associated with the drive for democracy. More importantly, the authors are particularly interested in the

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<sup>17</sup>Peter Rutland, 'Nationalism and Democracy in Armenia', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46(5), (1994), pp. 839–61.

<sup>18</sup>Arash Abizadeh, 'Does Liberal Democracy Presuppose a Cultural Nation? Four Arguments', *American Political Science Review* 96(3), (2002), pp. 495–509.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>George Rabinowitz and Stuart MacDonald, 'A Directional Theory of Issue Voting', *American Political Science Review* 83(1), (1989), pp. 93–121.

<sup>21</sup>Wang Shaoguang, 'Nationalism and Democracy'.

<sup>22</sup>Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, 'Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986', *American Political Science Review* 87(3), (1993), pp. 624–638.

relationship between domestic political views and popular nationalism. The authors suspect that people's political dismay or dissatisfaction with domestic politics is contagious and may very well have a spillover effect on their outward nationalist feelings. Therefore, two general hypotheses of this article are that both democratic values and system support among urban residents in China are positively related to their strong nationalist feelings.

The authors base their hypotheses on the intricate connection between domestic politics and foreign affairs. There is extensive literature on the relationship between domestic politics and international relations.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it is often said that a country's foreign policy is an extension of its domestic politics. Authoritarian China is no exception to the 'two-level game' of interaction between domestic and international politics,<sup>24</sup> even though the focus in this research is on the population level. A number of studies have found that personal values affect foreign policy attitudes.<sup>25</sup> In their study, Rathbun, Kertzer, Reifler, Goren and Scotto found that people in the United States take foreign policy personally.<sup>26</sup> Individuals' basic values define their foreign policy attitudes. People with conservation values are linked to support for more militant and hawkish foreign policies and people holding universalistic values tend to be more supportive of international cooperation.

With a similar logic, the authors argue that people's dissatisfaction and deprivation in domestic politics affect their nationalist feelings toward the outside world. Many Chinese people have become frustrated with the domestic politics and the current political system in China. One of the reasons for this feeling of unhappiness and frustration is that China is not a democratic country. Due to lack of democracy, many Chinese people may feel that they are deprived of their democratic rights and civil liberties. This feeling of deprivation travels to the domain of foreign affairs. Given China's century of humiliation between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of China as an economic power in the last few decades, this same group of people may also feel that China's international status is not well respected and China is deprived of its proper place on the international stage. In this regard, they are likely to strongly support bigger role for China in the international arena and more nationalistic policies with respect to disputes with neighboring countries.

## Data

Data for this research were collected in a random telephone survey covering 34 large cities throughout China, most of which are provincial capital cities.<sup>27</sup> The cities represent different regions and different levels of economic development. The survey was carried out between October and November of 2013 by Center for Public Opinion Research of Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The sample size for each city is approximately 100 people, totaling 3,491 observations from all 34 cities. The sampling frame includes both stationary and cell phone numbers in these cities. Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system generated random telephone numbers. Trained graduate and undergraduate students at Shanghai Jiao Tong University and several

<sup>23</sup>Robert Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games', *International Organization* 42(3), (1988), pp. 427–460.

<sup>24</sup>Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations*, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup>Joh Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, 'How are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model', *American Political Science Review* 81(4), (1987), pp. 1218–31; Richard K. Herrmann, Philip E. Tetlock and Penny S. Visser, 'Mass Public Decisions to Go to War: A Cognitive-Interactionist Framework', *American Political Science Review* 93(3), (1999), pp. 553–73; Brian C. Rathbun, 'Hierarchy and Community at Home and Abroad: Evidence of a Common Structure of Domestic and Foreign-Policy Beliefs in American Elites', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51(3), (2007), pp. 379–407; William O. Chittick, Keith R. Billingsley and Rick Travis, 'A Three-Dimensional Model of American Foreign-policy beliefs', *International Studies Quarterly* 39(3), (1995), pp. 313–31.

<sup>26</sup>Brian C. Rathbun et al., 'Taking Foreign Policy Personally: Personal Values and Foreign Policy Attitudes', *International Studies Quarterly* 60(1), (2016), pp. 124–137.

<sup>27</sup>The following is the list of the surveyed cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Chongqing, Changchun, Changsha, Chengdu, Dalian, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Guizhou, Harbin, Haikou, Hangzhou, Hefei, Huhhot, Jinan, Kunming, Lanzhou, Nanchang, Nanjing, Nanning, Ningbo, Qingdao, Shenyang, Shenzhen, Shijiazhuang, Taiyuan, Wuhan, Xian, Xining, Xiamen, Yinchuan, and Zhengzhou.

other surrounding universities in Shanghai conducted the anonymous survey.<sup>28</sup> Surveyees' responses can be influenced by city-level factors such as the level of economic development. To address this hierarchical structure of our data and explain variation across cities, this article employs a multilevel model with varying intercepts.

## Research Design

As many scholars have pointed out, nationalism is an ambiguous term lacking a consensus definition.<sup>29</sup> Benedict Anderson's famous definition of a nation as 'an imagined community'<sup>30</sup> implies that national self-identity is at the core of nationalism. National identity involves feelings and passion.<sup>31</sup> Yongnian Zheng argues that there is an international dimension of nationalism. In his view, 'Nationalism [here] is about people's perceptions of China's position in the nation-state system' and 'it is about China's sovereignty, independence and its proper relations with other nation-states'.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Anna Costa points out that, 'The majority of English language literature on Chinese nationalism deals with Chinese foreign policy and China's position in the world politics—often prompted by concerns about the influence of nationalism on China's interactions with the outside world.'<sup>33</sup> In this research, nationalist feelings among Chinese urban residents about China's place in the world and the sovereignty issue of Diaoyu Islands, a disputed territory with Japan, are the dependent variables, and they are measured based on answers to three questions. The first two questions ask the respondents about China's role in Asia and the world, which measure more benign nationalist feelings (see Table 1). Benign nationalism refers to a feeling of national pride not necessarily associated with national prejudice and ill intention against other nations. This type of nationalism is often referred to as 'patriotism'.<sup>34</sup> Majority or close to 70% of the urban residents in the survey either strongly agree or agree that China should play a leading role in Asian affairs. As for China's place in the world, about half of respondents believe that China should play a leading role in world affairs. This may not be the case 20 or even 10 years ago. A third question asks the respondents' support for the government over the Diaoyu Islands dispute: 'Do you support the Chinese government to take Diaoyu Islands back by force even though such an action may cause a war with Japan?' This question measures more aggressive nationalistic feelings. Aggressive nationalism often involves hostile feelings against other nations or countries. Surprisingly more than half of the urban respondents support such an action by the Chinese government (see Table 1). The authors combine answers to these questions to create the variable of Chinese urbanites' nationalism, of which value ranges from 3 (very non-nationalistic) to 13 (very nationalistic). Alternatively, the authors use only answers to the question on Diaoyu to generate the aggressive nationalism variable, ranging from 1 (non-nationalistic), 2 (neutral), to 3 (nationalistic), and answers to the questions on the role of China in Asian and world affairs to generate the benign nationalism variable, ranging from 2 (non-nationalistic) to 10 (very nationalistic). Then, for the purpose of comparison with the aggressive nationalism, the benign nationalism is coded as 1 (non-nationalistic), 2 (neutral), and 3 (nationalistic). The mean value of nationalism is about 9.5, implying that more than half of the respondents are nationalistic.

<sup>28</sup>On survey research in China, see Melanie Manion, 'A Survey of Survey Research on Chinese Politics: What Have We Learned?', in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods and Field Strategies*, ed. Allen Carlson, Mary Gallagher, Kenneth Lieberthal and Melanie Manion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 181–200.

<sup>29</sup>Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations*, pp. ix-x.

<sup>30</sup>Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (NY, U.S.A.: Verso, 1983).

<sup>31</sup>Arthur Waldron, 'Theories of Nationalism and Historical Explanation', *World Politics* 37(3), (1985), p. 417.

<sup>32</sup>Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China*, p. xi.

<sup>33</sup>Anna Costa, 'Focusing on Chinese Nationalism: An Inherently Flawed Perspective? A Reply to Allen Carlson', *Nations and Nationalism* 20(1), (2014), p. 94.

<sup>34</sup>On the concept of patriotism, see Elina Sinkkonen, 'Nationalism, Patriotism and Foreign Policy Attitudes among Chinese University Students', *The China Quarterly* 216, (2013), pp. 1046–1047.

**Table 1.** Nationalist Feelings of Chinese Urban Residents (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Hard to say	N
China should play a leading role in Asian affairs	33.5	33.2	12.3	4.9	16.1	3491
China should play a leading role in world affairs	23.2	32.7	18.0	7.7	18.4	3491
Hard to say	Support		Not support		Hard to say	N
Do you support the Chinese government to take Diaoyu Islands back by force even though such an action may cause a war with Japan?	54.6		29.4		16.0	3491

Source: *Social and Political Values of Chinese Urban Residents, 2013.*

The explanatory variables in the analysis of nationalist feelings among Chinese urbanites are two democratic value factors. The first factor is public support for freedom of speech. Those who support freedom of speech are likely to be nationalistic. The respondents were asked about their opinions on whether everyone should be allowed to express their political views. Most respondents strongly agreed (59.2%) or agreed (29%). Only a small percent of them disagreed (6.9%) or strongly disagreed (2.4%).

The second factor is public support for electoral democracy in China. Chinese national leaders are currently not directly elected by the population. The survey examined respondents' attitudes toward democracy by asking their opinions on whether central government leaders in China should be directly democratically elected by the people. More than half of the respondents either strongly agreed (33.1%) or agreed (26.7%) with the direct election of Chinese top leaders. About 18.3 and 10.9% of them disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, while the remaining 11% of them were neutral. The authors argue that those who support electoral democracy tend to be nationalistic.

Meanwhile, as discussed above, the authors suspect that there exists a confounding variable, *System Support*, in the models of Chinese nationalism. In other words, a respondent's support for the regime could be the real driving factor that affects nationalism through its impact on support for *Democratic Election* and *Freedom of Speech*. This is because people who are not happy with the domestic system are likely to maintain negative views on anything that is being done by the regime, including both domestic and foreign policies. Therefore, it is crucial to include *System Support* as the key variable in the model of nationalism to explore the connection between domestic politics and outward nationalist feelings among Chinese urbanites.

Methodologically, however, if *System Support* works as a confounding variable in the model, this article faces an endogeneity issue that may cause biased estimates. To control for a potential endogenous relationship between *System Support* and *Democratic Election* (along with *Freedom of Speech*), the authors take a two-stage estimation method. In the first stage, the authors formulate a model for democratic election, in which the system support variable along with other theoretically associated variables such as freedom of speech, and education are used as predictors. Similarly, the authors estimate a model for freedom of speech.<sup>35</sup> In this stage, therefore, the authors can generate a residual term of electoral democracy or freedom of speech from each model. Simply, each residual term includes only the remained variation in the variable unaccounted by system support or other control variables. Therefore, the authors can minimize the concern about a potential endogeneity between system support and democratic election or freedom of speech in the model of nationalism.<sup>36</sup> In the second stage, the authors use these two residual terms obtained in the first stage on behalf of their original variables.

<sup>35</sup>In these models, the system support variable has a very significant negative impact on the variable of support for democratic election or freedom of speech. The results confirm that those who do not support the regime are very likely to favor democratic election or freedom of speech. The F-statistics of the first-stage regression are 15.52 and 7.7 in each model, which are statistically significantly different from zero. Thus, the instrumentals have a strong first stage.

<sup>36</sup>See Erik Gartzke, 'Preferences and the Democratic Peace', *International Studies Quarterly* 44(2), (2000), pp. 191–210.



As mentioned earlier, people's nationalist feelings and pride are often accompanied and strengthened by the economic success of the country they live in. China has been experiencing rapid economic growth in the last three decades which has made China the second largest economy in the world. It is only natural to expect China's economic achievement has propped up popular nationalism in China. Therefore, in the analyses, the authors also include people's sense of economic achievement or success as a factor affecting Chinese urban residents' nationalistic feelings. Survey respondents were asked what kind of economic success China has made during the reform era. On the one hand, a minority of people either say that China has achieved no economic success (1.7%) or insignificant economic success (13.3%) with 11.9% of them finding it hard to answer this question. On the other hand, close to a quarter (23.7%) of our urban respondents believe that China has achieved significant economic success and about half (49.4%) of them say China has achieved some economic success.

There are several control variables in the analysis. A respondent's personal characteristics can be associated with their support for the regime and nationalism. *Male* is coded '1' for male respondents and '0' otherwise. *Age* is coded '1' for those who are younger than 30, '2' for their thirties, '3' for their forties, '4' for their fifties, and '5' for those who are older than 59. *Education* is coded 1 for those who finish no school education, '2' for elementary school, '3' for middle school, '4' for high school, and '5' for college and above education. *Income* is coded '1' for those who make below 1000 Chinese yuan as monthly income, '2' for between 1000 and 2000, '3' for between 2001 and 3000, and so on. The maximum value is 11 for those who make more than 10000 Chinese yuan monthly. *Han* is coded '1' for Han Chinese and '0' otherwise.

Finally, since surveyees' responses can be influenced by city-level factors, the authors include a control variable at the city level. The level of economic development as represented by GDP per capita for the 34 cities included in our study.<sup>37</sup> Since economic development is positively associated with satisfaction with the system, people living in economically developed cities are less likely to be nationalistic than people in relatively poor cities.

Since this research measures nationalism in three different ways, the authors utilize the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression (Table 2) and the ordered logit (Tables 3 and 4) model for estimation. In the ordered logit models in Tables 2 and 3, it is necessary to check the parallel-lines (proportional odds) assumption that the effects of predictors on the dependent variable are constant across all contrasts. According to Brant test of the assumption, three variables, *System Support*, *Freedom of Speech*, and *Male*, violate the assumption. To correct the violation of the assumption, therefore, the authors also employ the generalized ordered logit model in Models 7 and 11.

Meanwhile, since surveyees' responses can be grouped based on their living cities, the data have a hierarchical structure. Unless the hierarchical structure of the data is properly addressed, the hypothesis testing results could be misleading. The authors specify the hierarchical structure using a multilevel model with varying intercepts. This specification allows the intercept term to be a function of the city level GDP per capita. Therefore, the city level economic development is assumed to affect the baseline level of nationalism in different cities. In addition, the multilevel model allows us to generate two different disturbance terms: the city level disturbance and the individual level disturbance. By testing whether the city level disturbance term is statistically different from zero, which means that there are no significant variances remained to be explained at the city level, it can be checked whether the city level GDP per capita is a good predictor of varying intercepts across cities. To generate reliable estimates from the multilevel model, the authors employ Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) estimation methods using MLwiN software program (version 3.01). Fifty-thousand iterations along with 10,000 iterations for the burn-in period are simulated for estimation.

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<sup>37</sup>This variable is the annual GDP per capita of the 34 cities in 2012, obtained from the government websites of the 34 cities.

**Table 2.** System Support and Nationalism in China (34 cities)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4†
<i>DV: Nationalism†</i>	(OLS)	(OLS)	(OLS)	(multilevel)
Fixed effects				
<i>Individual level</i>				
<i>System Support</i>		-0.143 (0.056)***	-0.149 (0.055)***	-0.150 (0.056)***
<i>Democratic Election</i>	0.187 (0.032)***	0.223 (0.032)***	0.223 (0.032)***	0.221 (0.030)***
<i>Freedom of Speech</i>	0.240 (0.045)***	0.293 (0.046)***	0.293 (0.046)***	0.291 (0.042)***
<i>Economic Success</i>	0.225 (0.042)***	0.223 (0.042)***	0.227 (0.042)***	0.226 (0.040)***
<i>Male</i>	0.373 (0.084)***	0.368 (0.084)***	0.360 (0.083)***	0.357 (0.084)***
<i>Age</i>	0.266 (0.038)***	0.243 (0.038)***	0.235 (0.036)***	0.230 (0.036)***
<i>Education</i>	0.092 (0.045)**	0.034 (0.045)		
<i>Income</i>	0.039 (0.016)**	0.033 (0.016)*	0.034 (0.016)**	0.036 (0.016)**
<i>Han</i>	0.240 (0.147)	0.244 (0.147)*	0.249 (0.147)*	0.294 (0.145)**
<i>Constant</i>	5.411 (0.371)***	7.726 (0.334)***	7.877 (0.265)***	9.840 (1.586)***
<i>City level</i>				
<i>GDP per capita</i>				-0.180 (0.143)
Random effects				
<i>City level</i>				
<i>Individual level</i>				0.026 (0.019)
<i>N</i>	3491	3491	3491	5.565 (0.134)***
<i>F-statistic</i>	23.99***	22.04***	24.72***	3491
<i>Root MSE</i>	2.370	2.369	2.368	
<i>Deviance</i>				15,912.80

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. *P*-values: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ . The hypotheses tests are based on two-tailed tests.

†The dependent variable is created based on three questions: Diaoyu, the role of China in Asian Affairs and also in the world affairs. Its value ranges from 3 (very non-nationalistic) to 13 (very nationalistic).

‡ Multilevel analysis with MCMC estimation (50,000 iterations, 10,000 burn-in period). Significant credibility intervals: \*\*\* 99%, \*\* 95%, \* 90%.

## Results and Analysis

In Models 1 through 4 in Table 2, *Nationalism*, the dependent variable, is created based on three questions on Diaoyu, the role of China in Asian affairs and also in world affairs. In Model 1, the authors do not include *System Support* as the key variable to evaluate how exclusion of this variable may affect performance of other variables. Therefore, in Model 2, the authors include *System Support* as the key variable and control for its endogenous relationship with *Democratic Election* and *Freedom of Speech*. It is well known that education and income variables are highly correlated. To control for potential effects that this correlation may generate in the model, the authors also estimate the same model without the education variable in Model 3. Finally, to address the hierarchical structure of the data, the authors utilize a multilevel model in Model 4.

The system support variable has a statistically significant negative impact on nationalism as appeared in Models 2, 3, and 4. The results confirm our expectation that people who do not support the regime are likely to be nationalistic. The two variables, ‘support for democratic election’ and ‘freedom of speech’, have strong positive effects on nationalism in Model 1, as expected. Even after the authors include the key variable, *System Support*, and control for the potential endogeneity issue in Models 2, 3, and 4, these variables remain to be statistically significant. However, the sizes of impact of these variables on nationalism become a bit bigger in later models. This implies that, by overlooking the confounding variable and its endogenous relationship with the two variables, the authors are likely to underestimate their impact on nationalism.

In the models involving aggressive nationalism in Table 3, overall the empirical results and their implications remain to be consistent with the ones in Table 2. However, one notable difference is found in Model 7. While *System Support* appears to have significant negative effects on nationalism in all other models, the results in the generalized ordered logit model tell a bit different story. The system support variable does not have significant effects on creating differences between two groups of people, one who chooses to not support the government aggressive action against

**Table 3.** System Support and Aggressive Nationalism in China (34 cities)

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7†	Model 8‡
<i>DV: Aggressive Nationalism</i>	(ordered logit)	(ordered logit)	(generalized ordered logit)	(multilevel ordered logit)
Fixed effects				
<i>Individual level</i>				
<i>System Support</i>		-0.130 (0.047)***		-0.133 (0.048)**
<i>S.S. (1 vs. 2, 3)</i>			0.039 (0.053)	
<i>S.S. (1, 2 vs. 3)</i>			-0.218 (0.049)***	
<i>Democratic Election</i>	0.073 (0.025)***	0.088 (0.026)***	0.088 (0.026)***	0.089 (0.025)***
<i>Freedom of Speech</i>	0.173 (0.033)***	0.192 (0.034)***	0.191 (0.034)***	0.192 (0.034)***
<i>Economic Success</i>	-0.008 (0.034)	-0.015 (0.034)	-0.015 (0.034)	-0.016 (0.034)
<i>Male</i>	0.493 (0.068)***	0.493 (0.068)***		0.502 (0.069)***
<i>Male (1 vs. 2,3)</i>			0.400 (0.078)***	
<i>Male (1,2 vs.3)</i>			0.554 (0.072)***	
<i>Age</i>	0.124 (0.031)***	0.120 (0.030)***	0.120 (0.031)***	0.119 (0.031)***
<i>Income</i>	-0.009 (0.013)	-0.015 (0.013)	-0.016 (0.013)	-0.014 (0.013)
<i>Han</i>	0.130 (0.112)	0.128 (0.113)	0.122 (0.113)	0.160 (0.120)
<i>Constant (1 vs. 2,3)</i>	0.700 (0.242)***	-0.642 (0.215)***	0.354 (0.220)	1.393 (1.466)
<i>Constant (1,2 vs. 3)</i>	1.410 (0.244)***	0.069 (0.214)	0.073 (0.214)	0.675 (1.466)
<i>City level</i>				
<i>GDP per capita</i>				-0.070 (0.131)
Random effects				
<i>City level</i>				
<i>Individual level</i>				0.042 (0.022)***
<i>N</i>	3491	3491	3491	3491
$\chi^2$	109.26***	113.37***	163.95***	
<i>DIC</i>				6754.67

Note: The dependent variable is created based on the question on Diaoyu. The ordinal variable consists of three values: 1 (non-nationalistic), 2 (indifferent), and 3 (nationalistic). Standard errors are in parentheses. *P*-values: \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ . two-tailed tests.

† Corrections of the violation of the parallel-lines (proportionality) assumption. A coefficient (1 vs. 2, 3) indicates the effect of the variable on the difference between 'non-nationalistic' group and the group of 'indifferent and nationalistic.' A coefficient (1, 2 vs. 3) shows the effect of the variables on the difference between 'non-nationalistic and indifferent' group and 'nationalistic' group.

‡ Multilevel analysis with MCMC estimation (50,000 iterations, 10,000 burn-in period). Significant credibility intervals: \*\*\* 99%, \*\* 95%, \* 90%.

Japan over the Diaoyu issue and the other who takes neutral position or choose to support the government on the issue. However, the system support variable is creating significant differences between the group of people who support the government aggressive action over the issue and the others who do not support or take neutral position on the disputed islands issue. In other words, those people who are not happy with the system are very likely to support taking the Diaoyu Islands back by force.

In the models concerning benign nationalism in Table 4, overall the substantive findings remain the same. However, one notable difference found in Model 11 is the system support variable. With respect to benign nationalism, this variable has significant positive impact on nationalism when it comes to the differences between two groups of people, one who do not support the role of China in Asian and world affairs and the other who are indifferent or support the role of China. However, the system support variable has significant negative effects on benign nationalism when it comes to the differences between two groups of people, one who support the role of China and the others. In other words, those people who do not support the system or are indifferent are very likely to link to benign nationalism.

To effectively measure substantive effects of predictors on nationalism, this article simulated Models 3, 6, and 10 using Clarify simulation Program<sup>38</sup> and report the simulated results in Table 5. To this end, the authors fixed all dummy variables at their zeros and all other variables at their mean values. Holding all other covariates constant, when the value of the system support variable changes

<sup>38</sup>Michael Tomz, Jason Wittenberg, and Gary King, *Clarify: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results*, January 5, 2003, accessed July 12, 2017, <http://gking.harvard.edu/clarify/>.

**Table 4.** System Support and Benign Nationalism in China (34 cities)

	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11†	Model 12‡
<i>DV: Benign Nationalism</i>	<i>(ordered logit)</i>	<i>(ordered logit)</i>	<i>(generalized ordered logit)</i>	<i>(multilevel ordered logit)</i>
<b>Fixed effects</b>				
<i>Individual level</i>				
<i>System Support</i>		-0.122 (0.044)***		-0.123 (0.045)***
<i>S.S. (1 vs. 2, 3)</i>			0.193 (0.059)***	
<i>S.S. (1, 2 vs. 3)</i>			-0.214 (0.047)***	
<i>Democratic Election</i>	0.135 (0.025)***	0.159 (0.025)***	0.160 (0.025)***	0.159 (0.025)***
<i>Freedom of Speech</i>	0.090 (0.035)***	0.129 (0.036)***	0.191 (0.046)***	0.129 (0.034)***
<i>S.S. (1 vs. 2, 3)</i>			0.106 (0.036)***	
<i>S.S. (1, 2 vs. 3)</i>				
<i>Economic Success</i>	0.214 (0.033)***	0.208 (0.033)***	0.208 (0.033)***	0.211 (0.033)**
<i>Male</i>	0.105 (0.068)	0.113 (0.068)*		0.110 (0.069)*
<i>Male (1 vs. 2,3)</i>			-0.030 (0.100)	
<i>Male (1,2 vs.3)</i>			0.156 (0.072)**	
<i>Age</i>	0.120 (0.030)***	0.120 (0.030)***	0.122 (0.030)***	0.119 (0.030)***
<i>Income</i>	0.032 (0.013)**	0.025 (0.013)*	0.025 (0.013)*	0.026 (0.013)**
<i>Han</i>	0.173 (0.120)	0.170 (0.121)	0.162 (0.120)	0.204 (0.121)**
<i>Constant (1 vs. 2,3)</i>	0.439 (0.254)	-0.730 (0.218)***	0.189 (0.231)	1.717 (1.332)
<i>Constant (1,2 vs. 3)</i>	2.105 (0.256)***	0.940 (0.215)	-0.783 (0.214)***	0.040 (1.332)
<i>City level</i>				
<i>GDP per capita</i>				-0.093 (0.122)
<b>Random effects</b>				
<i>City level</i>				
<i>Individual Level</i>				0.013 (0.013)
<i>N</i>	3491	3491	3491	3491
$\chi^2$	110.23***	123.71***	174.53***	
<i>DIC</i>				6707.74

Note: The dependent variable is created based on two questions: the role of China in Asian Affairs and also in the world affairs. Its value ranges from 1 (very non-nationalistic), 2 (indifferent), to 3 (nationalistic). Standard errors are in parentheses. *P*-values: \*\*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\* *p* < 0.05, \* *p* < 0.10. two-tailed tests.

† Corrections of the violation of the parallel-lines (proportionality) assumption. A coefficient (1 vs. 2, 3) indicates the effect of the variable on the difference between 'non-nationalistic' and 'indifferent and nationalistic' groups. A coefficient (1, 2 vs. 3) shows the effect of the variables on the difference between 'non-nationalistic and indifferent' group and 'nationalistic' group.

‡ Multilevel analysis with MCMC estimation (50,000 iterations, 10,000 burn-in period). Significant credibility intervals: \*\*\* 99%, \*\* 95%, \* 90%.

from 4 (strongly support) to 1 (strongly not support), the value of nationalism increases from 7.29 to 7.74 in Model 3, and the probability of being nationalistic increases from 56.4% to 65.5% in Model 6 and from 74.6% to 80.9% in Model 10. These results imply that the system support variable has a bit bigger substantive impact on aggressive nationalism than benign nationalism.

The two democratic value variables have significant substantive effects on nationalism. The change in the democratic election variable from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) increases the value of nationalism from 6.57 to 7.9 in Model 3 and the probability of being nationalistic from 43.6% to 56.4% in Model 6 and from 53.7% to 74.6% in Model 10. An increase of the freedom of speech variable from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) also increases the value of nationalism from 6.79 to 8.28 in Model 3 and the probability of being nationalistic from 33.2% to 56.4% in Model 6 and from 60.6% to 74.6% in Model 10.

The authors' findings in this regard are different from what Wenfang Tang and Benjamin Darr found in their study of the association between nationalism and democratic values in China. Their study, based on a nationwide survey, reveals that Chinese nationalists tend to hold anti-democratic values.<sup>39</sup> The differences in findings might be due to the fact that their survey is a nationwide survey and the authors' survey is focused on urban China. In addition, the authors' study measures outward nationalistic feelings while their study focuses on national identity.

<sup>39</sup>Wenfang Tang and Benjamin Barr, 'Chinese Nationalism and Its Political and Social Origins', *Journal of Contemporary China* 21 (77), (2012), pp. 822-23.

**Table 5.** Substantive Effects of Predictors on Nationalism†

Changes in Predictors	Nationalism (aggressive & benign) (3 = very non-nationalistic, 13 = very nationalistic)		
		Aggressive Nationalism (Probability of being Nationalistic vs. being non-nationalistic or indifferent)	Benign Nationalism (Probability of being Nationalistic vs. being non-nationalistic or indifferent)
<i>System Support</i> (4 → 1)	7.29 [6.78, 7.73] → 7.74 [7.25, 8.23]	56.4 [45.9, 67.1] → 65.5 [55.8, 74.3]	74.6 [65.6, 82.9] → 80.9 [74.3, 86.8]
<i>Democratic Election</i> (1 → 5)	6.57 [6.04, 7.10] → 7.90 [7.37, 8.39]	43.6 [33.5, 54.5] → 56.4 [45.9, 67.1]	53.7 [42.8, 65.4] → 74.6 [65.5, 82.9]
<i>Freedom of Speech</i> (1 → 5)	6.79 [6.20, 7.37] → 8.28 [7.72, 8.77]	33.2 [23.4, 44.2] → 56.4 [45.9, 67.1]	60.6 [49.1, 71.1] → 74.6 [65.5, 82.9]
<i>Economic Success</i> (1 → 5)	8.51 [7.98, 8.97] → 9.41 [8.94, 9.87]	57.7 [46.5, 68.8] → 56.4 [45.9, 67.1]	56.3 [44.0, 67.8] → 74.6 [65.5, 82.9]
<i>Male</i> (0 → 1)	7.29 [6.78, 7.73] → 7.64 [7.14, 8.12]	56.4 [45.9, 67.1] → 67.8 [58.8, 76.4]	74.6 [65.6, 82.9] → 76.7 [68.1, 84.0]
<i>Han</i> (0 → 1)	9.41 [8.94, 9.87] → 9.66 [9.26, 10.04]	56.4 [45.9, 67.1] → 59.5 [50.2, 68.4]	74.6 [65.6, 82.9] → 77.7 [70.1, 84.3]
<i>Age</i> (1 → 5)	9.64 [9.18, 10.10] → 10.58 [10.11, 11.10]	44.8 [35.2, 54.9] → 56.4 [45.9, 67.1]	64.5 [54.6, 73.7] → 74.6 [65.5, 82.9]
<i>Income</i> (1 → 11)	10.62 [10.15, 11.13] → 10.96 [10.45, 11.51]	60.0 [50.6, 69.0] → 56.4 [45.9, 67.1]	69.6 [60.1, 77.2] → 74.6 [65.5, 82.9]

† Simulated results using *Clarify* Program by Tomz, Wittenberg, and King. To obtain the results, the authors fix all dummy variables at their zeros and all other variables at their mean values using Models 3, 6, and 10. Values in parentheses are 95% confidence intervals.

In addition, the authors did find that people's assessment of China's economic success does have an impact on overall nationalist feelings among Chinese urbanites (as shown in Table 2). However, when examined closely, we find that China's economic success only affects benign nationalism, i.e., people's view of China's role in the world (see Table 4) but not aggressive nationalism, i.e., using force to solve territorial disputes (see Table 3). In other words, economic rise of China may foster normal Chinese nationalism, but not necessarily extreme nationalism. The change in the economic success variable from 1 (no success) to 5 (significant success) increases the probability of being nationalistic from 56.3% to 74.6% in Model 10 of benign nationalism.

As for the control variables, the authors found that male respondents in contrast to female respondents or older people in contrast to younger people are more likely to be nationalistic. High-income earners tend to be more nationalistic than low-income earners in Tables 2 and 4. But, the statistical significance disappears in models in Table 3. In general, there is no statistically meaningful difference between Han Chinese and non-Han Chinese in their nationalistic tendency.

As shown in Models 4 and 8, the hierarchical structure of the data does not generate significantly different outcomes in these models. In other words, even though it matters theoretically, the city-level factor of economic development is not important in explaining variations in nationalism among our Chinese urban respondents.

## Conclusion

With rapid economic growth and the fact that China has become the second largest economy in the world, Chinese foreign policy has become increasingly more assertive. Deng Xiaoping's 'staying low' (*taoguang yanhui*) approach to international affairs has been quietly abandoned by the current Xi Jinping administration. The 'one belt, one road' initiative is the latest example that China is trying to expand its international influence and be a leader on the world stage. In fact, China has a unique opportunity to play a leadership role in world affairs due to the decline of the United States and unpopularity of President Donald Trump's policies and his 'America first' international approach around the world. The authors' findings show that this new Chinese assertive foreign policy does have popular support among Chinese urban residents. About half of the urban

respondents agree that China should play a leading role in world affairs and even more people support for China's leading role in the region of Asia. A more surprising finding is that more than half of Chinese urban residents are supportive of Chinese government using force to take the disputed Diaoyu islands back from Japan even though such an action risks a war with Japan (and potential with the United States).

What drives popular Chinese nationalism? the analytical findings of this article show that male, older people and higher income earners tend to be more nationalistic. But more importantly, the authors found that people who support for electoral democracy in China and freedom of expression tend also to hold more nationalistic feelings. Upon further research, the authors found that system support is a confounding factor affecting Chinese urban residents' nationalistic sentiments. People who show less support for the current system in China also happen to exhibit more outward nationalistic feelings. China's official position is that Diaoyu islands are historically Chinese territories. However, the Chinese government has been refrained from taking military actions to challenge the *de facto* control of those islands by Japan. Therefore, it may very well be the case that the strong support for military action over Diaoyu islands among Chinese urban residents is a reflection of their popular frustration with the Chinese government over its inaction with regard to its island dispute with Japan. The linkage between views on democratic values and regime support in China on one hand and nationalist feelings among Chinese urbanites on the other may be explained by feelings of deprivation. People who hold democratic values and are not supportive of the current political system in China may feel that they are deprived of their democratic and civil liberty rights. This feeling of deprivation carries over to foreign affairs. They may also feel that China's proper place and power status is also deprived on the world stage.

What are the implications from these findings? First of all, the authors documented strong popular Chinese nationalism, which has the potential of putting pressure on the Chinese government to be more assertive in its foreign policy. Studies have shown that public opinion does influence Chinese foreign policy.<sup>40</sup> Second, nationalism may prove to be a double-edged sword in China since this article found the connection between satisfaction with domestic affairs and feelings toward international affairs among our Chinese urban residents. Popular political discontent may very well have a spill-over effect on Chinese people's nationalist feelings toward the outside world. For both implications, the Chinese government has to be very careful in using nationalistic sentiments in the population to strengthen its political legitimacy. As James Reilly states, 'relying upon nationalism to shore up political legitimacy remains a risky choice, since nationalism identifies the people themselves as the bearers of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis for collective security'.<sup>41</sup> Gaining political legitimacy from domestic sources by reducing domestic discontent and granting people more democratic and civil rights might be a good strategy for the Chinese government to lower extreme nationalist feelings. Finally, the authors' findings suggest that the relationship between democracy or democratic values and nationalist feelings is a complicated one. This relationship may be confounded by many other factors, such as domestic regime type and regime support. More studies need to be conducted to explore this complicated relationship in authoritarian settings.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

<sup>40</sup>Suisheng Zhao, 'Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: the Strident Turn', *Journal of Contemporary China* 22(82), (2013), pp. 535–53; Peter Hayes Gries, Derek Steiger and Tao Wang, 'Popular Nationalism and China's Japan Policy: the Diaoyu Islands Protest, 2012–2013', *Journal of Contemporary China* 25(98), (2016), pp. 246–76.

<sup>41</sup>James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 38.

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