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Constructed Community: Rise and Engines of Chinese Nationalism Under Xi Jinping

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ABSTRACT

The Chinese state-sponsored campaign for nationalism has intensified since the last decade. This article is an empirical study focusing on Chinese mass nationalism in the same period. Drawing data from the World Values Surveys, it finds that mass nationalism significantly increased from 2012/13 to 2018, ranked second with a growth rate of 13.7% among 27 selected countries and regions. The origin of this remarkable rise of mass nationalism is rooted in elite construction. The findings suggest that constructivism is the most potent theory to explain nationalism during Xi's presidency. The intensification of mass nationalism in China will continue as long as the construction of state nationalism is maintained. One backlash against this trend may come from social media.

A Worldwide Resurgence of Nationalism

As a result of globalization, the world is inundated with a growing number of non-state actors and their networks, including international organizations, transboundary corporations, non-governmental organizations, new kinds of political, social and economic networks, empowering the international regime interwoven by international law, norms, and rules, but the nation-state, undergoing a process of reinvention instead of being superseded, is still the main actor in the global arena.[1] Realism, as a basic assumption of the relationship between nations pursuing power in international anarchy, is still alive and well today,[2] and nationalism is reawakening on a worldwide scale. In the United States, Barak Obama, the 44th president, claimed in 2014 that 'America must always lead on the world stage', and he predicted that his nation would lead the planet for the next 100 years.[3] Two years later, Donald Trump's campaign slogans of 'Make America Great Again' and 'America First' contributed to his electoral victory as the 45th president.[4] In Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, who took Trump as an example and ran a campaign sloganeering 'make Brazil great again', easily won the

[1]Bob Jessop, 'Hollowing out the "Nation-State" and Multi-Level Governance', in *A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy, 2nd Ed.*, ed. Patricia Kennett (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013); John W. Meyer and others, 'World Society and the Nation-State', *American Journal of Sociology* 103, (1997), p. 144.

[2]Robert Jervis, 'Realism in the Study of World Politics', *International Organization* 52, (1998), p. 971; John J. Mearsheimer, '3. Structural Realism', in *International Relations Theories* ed. John J. Mearsheimer (Oxford University Press, 2020).

[3]'Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony' (*whitehouse.gov*, 28 May 2014). Accessed April 8, 2023. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony; 'Obama Says the U.S. Will Lead the World for the next 100 Years. China Disagrees'. *Washington Post* (30 May 2014). Accessed April 8, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/05/30/obama-says-the-u-s-will-lead-the-world-for-the-next-100-years-china-disagrees/.

[4]Karen Tumulty, 'How Donald Trump Came up with "Make America Great Again"' *Washington Post* (18 January 2017). Accessed April 8, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-donald-trump-came-up-with-make-america-great-again/2017/01/17/fb6acf5e-dbf7-11e6-ad42-f3375f271c9c_story.html.

2018 presidential election.[5] In India, the Hindu nationalism that Prime Minister Narendra Modi kept calling for helped him win elections in India as a 'national-populist hero'.[6] In Russia, President Vladimir Putin even directly identified himself as the 'most genuine and most effective nationalist' at the Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club in 2018.[7] In the U.K., nationalism is a driving force in its decision to leave the European Union in 2020, partly because of the increasing burden to subsidize foreign immigrants.[8]

China has always been a frontrunner in contemporary nationalist movements. Under the nationalist appeal, Mao Zedong led the CCP to defeat the pro-Western Kuomintang regime in 1949. Xi Jinping continued Mao's call for nationalism by reviving the 'Chinese dream' as the 'rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' in the beginning of his first term in 2012,[9] shortly after being selected as the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. Xi, widely regarded as the most influential leader after Mao Zedong, is closely focused on consolidating a 'strong sense of community for the Chinese nation (*zhulao zhonghuaminzu gongtongti yishi*)'[10] and currently serving his third five-year term.

The rise of nationalism in different countries has different reasons. In China, one of the possible sources of the resurgence of nationalism is the dissatisfaction with the U.S.- led world order. Since the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, the United States, as the only superpower left, has played a leading role in the world. It pursued a 'liberal hegemony' foreign policy, aiming to remake the world built on its own ideas.[11] Its dominant values of democracy, freedom, openness, the capitalist mode of production and consumption, globalized trade networks, and a Western liberal democratic political system were considered the best way for all human societies to function. 'History' seemed to have ended in its final form: liberal democracy, as declared by Francis Fukuyama.[12] However, this wave of globalization, with Western values at its foundation and the American liberal hegemonic foreign policy as its principal driver, with the dream to end history, turned out to be a 'great delusion',[13] lingering in shadows of scrutiny and criticism. More and more countries have realized that history is not ending.

In the Chinese government narrative, the Western model cannot perfectly adapt to diverse societies around the world.[14] For example, it's overselling of individualism is incompatible with traditional values of collectivism in some Asian communities.[15] More seriously, by justifying 'using force to turn autocracies into liberal democracies',[16] the United States' liberal hegemony was excessively aggressive to the point of interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries, even starting wars. This external threat would be an important source of popular nationalism. External threat, both contemporary and historical 'national humiliation' (*guochi*), is consistently used by the Chinese government to boost a sense of popular nationalism and promote regime support.[17]

[5]Marina Lopes, 'Making Brazil Great Again: How Jair Bolsonaro Mirrors and Courts Trump' *Washington Post* (31 December 2018). Accessed April 8, 2023 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/making-brazil-great-again-how-jair-bolsonaro-mirrors-and-courts-trump/2018/12/29/df8bf7fa-f1d9-11e8-99c2-cfca6fcf610c_story.html.

[6]Christophe Jaffrelot and Cynthia Schoch, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

[7]Helge Blakkisrud, '*Russkii* as the New *Rossiiskii*? Nation-Building in Russia After 1991', *Nationalities Papers* 51, (2023), p. 64.

[8]Craig Calhoun, 'Populism, Nationalism and Brexit', in *Brexit: Sociological Responses* ed. William Outhwaite (Anthem Press, 2017).

[9]'Achieving Rejuvenation Is the Dream of the Chinese People'. Accessed April 7, 2023. http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/c23934/202006/32191c5bbdb04cbab6df01e5077d1c60.shtml.

[10]'A Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation', (*China.org.cn*). Accessed April 7, 2023. http://www.china.org.cn/english/china_key_words/2019-04/16/content_74687268.html.

[11]John J. Mearsheimer, *Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (Yale University Press, 2018).

[12]Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest* (1989), p. 3.

[13]Mearsheimer (n 11).

[14]'Chinese Modernization: New Opportunities for the World' (*Qiushi Journal*, 21 April 2023). Accessed March 11, 2024. https://subsites.chinadaily.com.cn/Qiushi/2023-04/23/c_880083.html.

[15]Wenfang Tang, 'Understanding Authoritarianism', *V American Affairs* (2022), p. 139.

[16]Mearsheimer (n 11).

[17]William A Callahan, *China: The Pessoptimist Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2009). Accessed March 10, 2024. https://academic.oup.com/book/8407; Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (Columbia University Press, 2012); Jessica Chen Weiss, 'The Stories China Tells: The New Historical Memory Reshaping Chinese Nationalism Reviews & Responses', *Foreign Affairs* 100, (2021), p. 192.

Furthermore, China saw that the U.S.-led world order also worsened global inequalities. As Immanuel Wallerstein points out, the world system is an exploitative hierarchy of three parts: the core zone, the semi-periphery, and the periphery area.[18] The periphery and semi-periphery are linked to the core zone, which is home to the United States and its allies, in an exploitative connection where wealth is drained away from the edge to the core.[19] Despite the fact that the United States tremendously benefits from its fortunate position in this unbalanced global system, its extensive involvement in international affairs greatly fuels domestic nationalist sentiment.

Driven by the growing nationalist sentiment, and facing the significant growth of Chinese national power, after 2009, the Obama administration implemented the American Pivot to Asia policy to confront China's rise.[20] And this confrontation got even more intensified during Donald Trump's presidency. America's anti-China policy led to disputes and frictions between the two nations, further stirring up fiercely hostile nationalist sentiment in China.

Given the intensification of international competition at the state level as discussed above, this article focuses on Chinese nationalism, especially the state of mass nationalism under Xi Jinping's leadership. It addresses two research questions: Has Chinese mass nationalism grown since Xi came to power in 2012? If yes, what are the sources of the growth of mass nationalism?

National Identity and Nationalism

Before moving on to answering the two research questions, it is necessary to clarify the two core concepts in this article: national identity and nationalism.

National Identity

Identification, self-understanding, and groupness are three indications that the concept of 'identity' can refer to, according to the reflection by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper.[21] Based on their insight, this article defines the term 'national identity' in three dimensions, namely, it is a categorical identification originally from outside, but evolves inward into a cognitive self-understanding, and finally, projects outwards and converge into a powerful force as a bounded sense of groupness.

National Identity Comes from External Categorical Identification

'Identification' is a process that invites people to specify the agent of identifying and its procedure, which is seen as the first indication of 'identity'.[22] From this perspective, 'identity' can be classified along two dimensions, relational versus categorical (i.e. identified by position in a relational web or by membership in a community), and self-identification and external-identification (i.e. one identifies oneself or identified by others).[23] Based on these two dimensions of 'identity', the modern 'national identity' can be clarified as an outcome of an external state-constructed identification based on a categorical commonality. In pre-modern societies, the identification of 'national identity' was usually based on relational connectedness by family, tribe, clan, etc., as agents. But in modern societies, the identification process is usually laid on categorical commonality instead of relational connectedness. The 'formalized, codified, and objectified'[24] state-constructed categorization schemes take the place of traditional small-scale relation-based identification in the creation of 'national identity'.

[18]Immanuel Wallerstein, 'A World-System Perspective on the Social Sciences', *The British Journal of Sociology* 27, (1976), p. 343.
[19]ibid.
[20]Kenneth G. Lieberthal, 'The American Pivot to Asia' (*Brookings*, 21 December 2011). Accessed January 7, 2024. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-american-pivot-to-asia/.
[21]Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', Theory and Society 29, (2000), p. 1.
[22]ibid.
[23]ibid.
[24]ibid.

National identity is a Self-Understanding that is Cognitive and Emotional

'National identity' originates from external state-constructed identification in modern societies but it turns into an internal self-understanding. Self-understanding, contrasting with self-interest, is the second indication of 'identity'. As pointed out by Brubaker and Cooper, it follows a sense of appropriateness instead of a logic of consequences.[25] As Walker Connor shows, 'National identity' is an irrational psychological sense of belonging to a specific nation-state.[26] 'National identity' comes from external state-constructed identification but it develops into a deeper emotional level, becoming a self-awareness that reveals a 'situated subjectivity' that is both cognitive and emotional.[27]

National Identity is a Severely Bounded Sense of Groupness

Groupness is the third indication of 'identity', as the 'sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group', which is established on commonality (from categorical identification) or connectedness (from relational identification).[28] Groupness is the ultimate expression of 'national identity'. The modern 'national identity' is externally identified/constructed by the state in the first place and then projects this external identification inward to a self-understanding, and finally, this self-understanding reprojects outward to a sense of groupness. It is worth noting that in modern societies, groupness is mainly based on commonality instead of connectedness. As Brubaker and Cooper stated, 'when a diffuse self-understanding as a member of a particular nation crystallizes into a strongly bounded sense of groupness, this is likely to depend not on relational connectedness, but rather on a powerfully imagined and strongly felt commonality'.[29] Groupness has a great power. It can 'bind fellow nationals together'[30] and even 'inspire great sacrifice for the public good—from fighting in wars and national service to mundane behaviors such as wearing face masks in pandemics'.[31]

To sum up, 'national identity' comes from external categorical identification and evolves inward into a cognitive and emotional self-understanding, then manifests outward as a strongly bounded sense of groupness. The 'national identity' building process involves internal and external interaction and results in cognitive power.

Nationalism

Nationalism is a reflection of national identity. 'Political versus quotidian' and 'ideology versus practice' are two dimensions of 'nationalism' classified by Bart Bonikowski.[32] The dimension of 'Political versus quotidian' indicates that 'nationalism' can be divided into top-down state/elite nationalism and bottom-up mass nationalism. The dimension of 'ideology versus practice' suggests that nationalism can be both an ideology and a set of social practices.[33] State nationalism is an ideology as a 'political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent',[34] and also as a range of social practices with the objective of altering how people perceive themselves, mobilizing loyalties, sparking energies, and articulating demands based on a 'claim on people's loyalty, on their attention, on their solidarity'.[35] Mass nationalism is also both political as a "perception of national superiority and an

[25]ibid.
[26]Walker Connor, 'A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group Is a . . . ', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (1978), p. 377.
[27]Brubaker and Cooper (n 21).
[28]ibid.
[29]ibid.
[30]Anna Triandafyllidou, 'National Identity and the "Other"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, (1998), p. 593.
[31]Harris Mylonas and Maya Tudor, 'Nationalism: What We Know and What We Still Need to Know', *Annual Review of Political Science* 24, (2021), p. 109.
[32]Bart Bonikowski, 'Nationalism in Settled Times', *Annual Review of Sociology* 42, (2016) , p. 427.
[33]ibid.
[34]Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism (New Perspectives on the Past)* (Basil Blackwell, 1983); Bonikowski (n 32).
[35]Rogers Brubaker, 'In the Name of the Nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism', *Citizenship Studies* 8, (2004), p. 115; Bonikowski (n 32).

orientation toward national dominance",[36] and as a diverse set of popular '""nation""-oriented idioms, practices, and possibilities that are continuously available or '"endemic"' in modern cultural and political life'.[37]

National identity and nationalism are intertwined. State nationalism reflects the state effort at promoting national identity. Mass nationalism, which is the topic of this study, can be seen as the consequence of the state trying to shape national identity.

Nationalism in China

After clarifying the difference between 'national identity' and 'nationalism', this article moves to its main theme: nationalism in China, particularly focusing on the developments brought forth under Xi Jinping's leadership since 2012.

Chinese nationalism attracted much scholarly attention in the past. Many studies have contributed to the understanding of this subject.[38] In general, a considerable body of research is dedicated to exploring the historical roots of Chinese nationalism in the late 1800s and early 1900s, as well as its impact on contemporary nationalist sentiments.[39] The second characteristic of research on Chinese nationalism is the predominant focus on the role of elites; in other words, state nationalism has been studied more extensively than mass nationalism.[40] In terms of mass nationalism, online nationalism has emerged as a key area of research with the advancement of new technologies. A recent review paper showed that 'the online (re)production of official nationalism remains driven by the Party state', Chinese digital nationalism is in a state-driven ecosystem.[41] Few studies on mass nationalism incorporate comprehensive empirical data from national survey research with representative samples.[42] Some studies concentrate solely on a specific city (e.g. 1998–2015 Beijing Area Study),[43] others focus on a particular topic (e.g. 2013 Chinese Maritime Disputes Public Opinion Survey),[44] and some are

[36]Rick Kosterman and Seymour Feshbach, 'Toward a Measure of Patriotic and Nationalistic Attitudes', Political Psychology 10, (1989), p. 257; Bonikowski (n 32).

[37]Rogers Brubaker, Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Bonikowski (n 32).

[38]Suisheng Zhao, A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism (Stanford University Press, 2004); Yongnian Zheng, Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International Relations (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jessica Chen Weiss, Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations (Oxford University Press, 2014); Susan L. Shirk (ed), Changing Media, Changing China (Oxford University Press, 2011); Sara Johnson, Nationalism with Chinese Characteristics: Xi Jinping's Nationalist Agenda in Three Cases (Johns Hopkins University, 2021); Wenfang Tang and Benjamin Darr, 'Chinese Nationalism and Its Political and Social Origins', Journal of Contemporary China 21, (2012), p. 811.

[39]David R Stroup, 'Chinese Nationalism: Insights and Opportunities for Comparative Studies', Nationalities Papers 51, (2023), p. 497; Wang (n 17); Callahan (n 17); Yinan He, 'History, Chinese Nationalism and the Emerging Sino-Japanese Conflict', (2007), p. 16 Yinan He; Jason Cong Lin, 'Rethinking Nationalistic History in China: Towards a Multicultural Chinese Identity', Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism 23, (2023), p. 178.

[40]Stroup (n 39); Virginie Arantes, 'Towards a Green Nationalism with Chinese Characteristics?', Journal of Contemporary China 33, (2024), p. 65; Jason Cong Lin, 'The Rising China Is Not a "Sick Man" Anymore: Cultural Nationalism in the Xi Jinping Era', Journal of Contemporary China 33, (2023); Johnson (n 38); Chandler Rosenberger, '"Make the Past Serve the Present": Cultural Confidence and Chinese Nationalism in Xi Jinping Thought', Research Handbook on Nationalism (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020); Abanti Bhattacharya, 'Chinese Nationalism Under Xi Jinping Revisited', India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs 75, (2019), p. 245; Jiayu Wang, 'Representing Chinese Nationalism/Patriotism through President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" Discourse', Journal of Language and Politics 16, (2017), p. 830.

[41]Xiaoyu Zhang, Delia Dumitrica and Jeroen Jansz, 'Mapping Chinese Digital Nationalism: A Literature Review', International Journal of Communication 18, (2024), p. 22.

[42]Tang and Darr (n 38); Jackson S. Woods and Bruce J. Dickson, 'Victims and Patriots: Disaggregating Nationalism in Urban China', Journal of Contemporary China 26, (2017), p. 167.

[43]Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing', International Security 41, (2017), p. 7; Jessica Chen Weiss, 'How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public? Another Look at "Rising Nationalism" and Chinese Foreign Policy', Journal of Contemporary China 28, (2019), p. 679.

[44]David Denemark and Andrew Chubb, 'Citizen Attitudes towards China's Maritime Territorial Disputes: Traditional Media and Internet Usage as Distinctive Conduits of Political Views in China', Information, Communication & Society 19, (2016), p. 59; Weiss, 'How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public?' (n 43).

limited to particular group of people like university students[45] or netizen that lack representativeness of the general population (e.g. 2015–16 Weiss/Dafoe Netizen survey).[46]

This study fills the research gaps in three ways. First, it focuses on the Xi era that few academic studies have paid attention to. Second, with a few exceptions, most of the previous studies were about state nationalism, not about mass nationalism. Third, there has been even less studies on mass nationalism that are based on systematic evidence from public opinion surveys with representative samples.

There are various types of Chinese nationalism according to different ways of classification, such as the trichotomy of ethnic nationalism, liberal nationalism, and state nationalism,[47] and the dichotomy of state nationalism and popular nationalism.[48] This article follows the latter dichotomous classification, examining Chinese nationalism in the 'political versus quotidian' dimensions.[49] According to Suisheng Zhao, Chinese nationalism has been primarily fueled by two forces coming from two opposing directions: the top-down power from the incumbent state elites and the bottom-up influence of populist societal forces.[50] The top-down power is known as state/elite nationalism, and the bottom-up one is described as mass/popular nationalism.

State nationalism has visibly strengthened and risen under Xi Jinping's leadership. Xi Jinping, the paramount leader of China, came to power in 2012 when he was elected as the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). In 2013, he was elected as the president of the People's Republic of China. With his effort to revive the Maoist populist ideology, strengthen the CCP leadership, launch a major anti-corruption campaign, and carry out a wolf-warrior foreign policy, he was widely regarded as the most influential leader of China since Mao Zedong.[51]

A set of slogans emphasizing national identity has been advocated under Xi's leadership. One of these slogans was the 'Chinese Dream (*zhongguomeng*)'. It called for 'achieving the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (*shixian zhonghuaminzu weida fuxing*)'. This slogan was first proclaimed by Xi Jinping in 2012 in a speech when visiting the exhibition 'The Road to Rejuvenation (*fuxing zhilu*)'.[52] In his remarks, he pointed out that 'this dream embodies the long-cherished hope of several generations of the Chinese people, gives expression to the overall interests of the Chinese nation and the Chinese people, and represents the shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation'.[53] Later in 2014, Xi Jinping promoted the idea of 'a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation (*zhulao zhonghuaminzu gongtongti yishi*)' at the Central Conference on Ethnic Affairs, by stating that 'to consolidate the unity of the Chinese nation, an effective long-term approach is to foster shared cultural identity and cultural belonging, and create a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation'.[54] He reiterated this view in his report to the 19th National Congress of the CPC in 2017. He called for more exchanges and interactions among different ethnic groups so that they would unite closely and work together for shared prosperity and development.

Furthermore, China's foreign policy has also demonstrated growing state nationalism. Under Xi's leadership, China became more assertive, proactive, and even aggressive in international affairs.[55]

[45]Peter Hays Gries and others, 'Patriotism, Nationalism and China's US Policy: Structures and Consequences of Chinese National Identity', *The China Quarterly* 205, (2011), p. 1.

[46]Weiss, 'How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public?' (n 43).

[47]Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction* (n 38).

[48]Suisheng Zhao, 'Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: The Strident Turn', *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, (2013), p. 535.

[49]Bonikowski (n 32).

[50]Zhao, 'Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited' (n 48).

[51]Wenfang Tang, *Populist Authoritarianism: Chinese Political Culture and Regime Sustainability* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

[52]'Achieving Rejuvenation Is the Dream of the Chinese People' (n 9).

[53]ibid.

[54]'A Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation' (n 10).

[55]Danson Cheong, 'China's Foreign Policy More "proactive" under President Xi Jinping, Says Chinese Expert' *The Straits Times* (Singapore, 9 January 2018). Accessed August 30, 2023. https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/chinas-foreign-policy-more-proactive-under-president-xi-jinping-says-chinese-expert.

Departing from Deng Xiaoping's strategy of 'keeping a low profile (*taoguangyanghui*)", Xi called for "striving for achievement (*fenfayouwei*)' as a new diplomatic tactic in his speech at the foreign affairs conference of the Chinese Communist Party in 2013.[56] One well-known policy following the 'striving for achievement' strategy is the Belt and Road Initiative, known as the 'New Silk Road', unveiled by Xi in 2013. The 'New Silk Road' inherits the name and cultural heritage of the ancient Silk Road, where the glory of ancient Chinese civilization once radiated, indicating the ambition of returning to the glorious past and reclaiming the position of the world center. Moreover, 'wolf-warrior diplomacy (*zhanlang waijiao*)', which refers to Chinese diplomats' assertive and aggressive defense of China's national interests,[57] is another manifestation of the shifted foreign strategy driven by rising nationalism.

The main question that this study is to address is the societal impact of the above-discussed top-down effort to promote state nationalism. It is expected that mass nationalism grew significantly since Xi Jinping assumed power in China since 2012 (hypothesis 1):

Hypothesis 1. Mass nationalism in China is expected to increase significantly since 2012 under Xi Jinping's leadership.

Sources of Nationalism

The second question this study aims to answer is the sources of nationalism in China. In the literature, there are at least three influential theories about nationalism: functionalism, culturalism, and constructivism.[58] Their various interpretations of the origins of nationalism are actually based on their different understandings of national identity. Brubaker and Cooper described two fundamentally different perceptions of 'identity': strong and weak.[59] Strong identity emphasizes that there is a fundamental sameness—'sameness across persons or sameness over time' within 'identity'.[60] Weak identity downplays the importance of the underlying sameness but focuses on elite effort of identity construction. This study classifies the three most influential theories of nationalism into these two categories (strong and weak) according to their different understandings of 'national identity', and then analyses their different views of the sources of nationalism.

Understanding National Identity in a Strong Sense: Functionalism and Culturalism

Functionalism and culturalism both understand 'national identity' in a strong sense, since they emphasize that there is a fundamental sameness across persons or over time within 'national identity'. And the sameness they focus on is the core of 'national identity'.

Functionalism stresses the sameness across persons within a modern state: the 'anonymity' of populations under a homogeneous culture coming from a standardized educational system.[61] The key traits of nationalism, indicated by Ernest Gellner, are 'homogeneity', 'anonymity', and 'literacy'.[62] The functionalist idea highlights nationalism as a corresponding consequence of modern society. As pointed out by Gellner, 'nationalism is a very distinctive species

[56]Xuetong Yan, 'From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, (2014), p. 153.
[57]'Interpreting China's "Wolf-Warrior Diplomacy"'. Accessed April 6, 2023. https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/.
[58]Tang (n 51).
[59]Brubaker and Cooper (n 21).
[60]ibid.
[61]Gellner (n 34).
[62]ibid.

of patriotism ... ... which in fact prevail in the modern world, and nowhere else'.[63] Functionalism narrates nationalism within the framework of modernization, focusing on the influence of economic development and the accompanying popularization and standardization of education.[64] Demand for standardized education to provide uniform knowledge grew with industrialization and economic expansion. This uniform education can generate a high level of literacy and forms the basis of a homogeneous culture ('homogeneity'), which can reduce parochial cultural variation within a state and lead to cultural homogeneity. Under such homogeneity, populations become anonymous ('anonymity'), and a broader range of cohesive 'national identity' can be subsequently formed. This theory of functionalism leads to the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Those with more traits of modernity would demonstrate strong sense of mass nationalism, such as education, urbanization and income.

Culturalism emphasizes the sameness over time within one nation from pre-modern to modern times: the deep-rooted and durable ethnicity resides in common history, myths, memories, shared values, and symbols.[65] Gellner tells the story of nationalism within the framework of modernization, but as pointed out by Anthony D Smith, he still 'leaves open the question of the extent and durability of ethnicity prior to the modern era'.[66] Smith claimed that "there could be neither nations nor nationalism" without ethnicity, which "resides in this quartet of""myths, memories, values and symbols"''.[67] And this pre-modern tie of ethnicity is 'deep-rooted and socially penetrative, persisting over many centuries',[68] forming the core of 'national identity'.

Although functionalism and culturalism both understand 'national identity' in a strong sense, but they focus on different 'sameness'. The functionalist view emphasizes the same 'anonymity'[69] across persons, generated in modernization, as the basic condition for the emergence of 'national identity'. However, culturalism emphasizes the same pre-modern 'ethnicity' over time, which infers to common '"myths, memories, values and symbols"',[70] as the basis of 'national identity'. Accordingly, those with more Chinese traditional cultural traits are expected to demonstrate more mass nationalism (hypothesis 3):

Hypothesis 3. Traditional Chinese values are expected to promote more mass nationalism.

Understanding National Identity in a Weak Sense: Constructivism

Differing from the previous two theories, constructivism understands national identity in a weak sense by casting doubt on the consistent sameness within 'national identity'. Constructivist idea believes that national identity is 'fluid and malleable', which can be purposefully manipulated by elites in order to support the legitimacy of the current political order.[71]

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[63]ibid.
[64]ibid.
[65]Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Reprint, Wiley-Blackwell, 1991).
[66]ibid.
[67]ibid.
[68]ibid.
[69]Gellner (n 34).
[70]Smith (n 65).
[71]Tang and Darr (n 38).

'Nation is an imagined political community', as indicated by Anderson.[72] He believed that the interaction between 'fatality' (human linguistic diversity), technology (print/radio/television), and capitalism (state capitalism) makes nations imaginable.[73] By utilizing symbols, media, state-controlled economic institutions, political parties, and other means, elites can purposefully construct the 'national identity' of the public, which lead to the final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. Those who are subject to more state political mobilization are expected to show stronger sense of mass nationalism.

Data and Measurements

This study uses individual-level data from the World Values Surveys (WVS)[74] to measure mass nationalism in hypothesis 1 with two national identity-related questions[75]

(1) How proud are you to be the nationality of this country?
(2) 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?

The above two closely related questions are combined into a nationalism thermometer index in a factor analysis (see Appendix A for details). The index is a continuous variable ranging from zero (no nationalism) to one (maximum nationalism). The 5th, 6th and 7th waves of the WVS data are used to examine the change of mass nationalism over time. Wave Five was conducted in China in 2007 prior to Xi's presidency. Wave Six was completed in late 2012 and early 2013, the very beginning of Xi's presidency. Wave Seven was conducted in 2018, about six years after Xi came to power. These three waves of data provide a perfect opportunity to examine the change of mass nationalism over time before and after 2012 when Xi came into power.

To test hypothesis 2 about functionalism, the respondents' education, income and urban residency are used as measures of modernity. As discussed above, functionalism understands 'national identity' in a strong sense since it emphasizes that there is a fundamental sameness across persons within 'national identity': the 'anonymity' of populations under a homogeneous culture coming from a standardized educational system generated in modernization.[76] It places nationalism within the context of modernization and underlines the effects of education participation and economic development. Thus, according to functionalism, at the mass level, nationalism can be positively influenced by education, income, and urbanization.

Education is measured by the highest degree completed, which is coded as no formal education, elementary school, junior middle school, high school, and college and above from 0 to 4. Income is measured by the question: what level do you feel your household income is situated from 0 to 10? 1 to 2 are coded as the low-income group, 3 to 5 as the middle-income group, and 6 to 10 as the high-

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[72]Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised edition, Verso, 2016).

[73]ibid.

[74]Christian Haerpfer and others, 'World Values Survey Time-Series (1981–2022) Cross-National Data-Set'. Accessed April 7, 2023. https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWVL.jsp.

[75]We are aware of the limitation of measuring mass nationalism with only two questions. They may not capture the richness of the concept of mass nationalism. These are the only questions in the 3 waves of the World Values Surveys that are related to the respondents' sense of national identity. They can nevertheless demonstrate the change over time which is a key question this study aims to address. Similar trend of mass nationalism can also be found in other surveys based on similar measures, such as the Asian Barometer Surveys. See HYPERLINK 'https://www.asianbarometer.org/'.

[76]Gellner (n 34).

income group. Urban inhabitants are measured by urban household registration (city *hukou*), coded as 1 if they hold a city *hukou* and 0 if not.

Hypothesis 3 is about culturalism. Functionalism situates the history of nationalism within the framework of modernity, but culturalism tries to integrate and prioritize the deep-rooted and durable 'ethnicity' resides in '"myths, memories, values and symbols"'[77] in the analytical framework. Culturalism also understands 'national identity' in a strong sense, but it emphasizes the sameness over time within one nation from pre-modern to modern times. This pre-modern tie of 'ethnicity' is 'deep-rooted and socially penetrative, persisting over many centuries',[78] forms the core of "national identity" in culturalist perspective. One important component of the premodern "ethnicity" is religion. Religiosity is embedded and manifests itself in ''myths, memories, values and symbols''. Religiosity is a broader concept than affiliation with a particular religious denomination. It would be inaccurate to gauge religiosity only by affiliation with a particular denomination, since it may be diffused and exist in private activities or in the inner values, and it may not always show itself in public actions.[79] In this study, religiosity as one premodern 'ethnicity' is measured by an index generated by combining two closely related questions through factor analysis (see Appendix B). The two questions are:

(1) How important is religion in your life?
(2) Do you consider yourself a religious person regardless of whether you attend religious services?

Additionally, based on the culturalist view, globalization may have a negative effect on nationalism since it may diminish one's sense of local 'ethnicity'. At the mass level, globalization can be measured by the respondents' international travel experience, coded as 1 if one has the experience of traveling to another country or region and 0 if not.

To sum up, Chinese cultural values, measured by religiosity and international travel experience, are expected to positively (religiosity) and negatively (international travel) affect mass nationalism.

The final hypothesis to be tested is hypothesis 4 on constructivism. Different from hypotheses 2 and 3, constructivism understands national identity in a weak sense by casting doubt on the consistent sameness within 'national identity'. The constructivist idea believes that national identity is 'fluid and malleable', which can be purposefully manipulated by elites in order to support the legitimacy of the current political order.[80] By using symbols, media, state-controlled economic institutions, and other new methods, 'national identity' of the public can be purposefully constructed by state political mobilization. In this sense, Chinese Communist Party members and those working for the government, state-owned companies and institutions (*guoyou qi shiye danwei*) may display higher degrees of nationalism because they received more indoctrination from the official rhetoric.

In addition, this study classified individuals into six generation groups regarding the time they turned 18: Xi generation (people turned 18 during 2013–2018), Hu generation (people turned 18 during 2003–2012), Jiang generation (people turned 18 during 1990–2002), Deng generation (people turned 18 during 1979–1989), Hua-generation (people turned 18 during 1977–1978), Mao generation (people turned 18 during 1949–1976). Given that state nationalism has evidently grown and strengthened under Xi Jinping's leadership as previously introduced, the level of mass nationalism among the Xi generation is also expected to be higher than that of past generations, with the exception of the Mao generation, which underwent more political construction.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, media is a vital means for the elite to construct the 'national identity'. In China, television is representative of traditional media and the main channel of the

[77]Smith (n 65).
[78]ibid.
[79]See Wenfang Tang, 'The Worshipping Atheist: Institutional and Diffused Religiosities in China', *China: An International Journal* 12, (2014), p. 1.
[80]Tang and Darr (n 38).

official voice. So, it is predicted that increased television consumption would benefit nationalism. However, social media, as a less controlled form comparing to traditional media, is seen as a deconstructive power of elite narrative. Social media provides the chance to get free, fast, massive, and interactive information to ordinary citizens. They are given the opportunity to access more information, to express themselves and communicate with each other freely, and even to mobilize and organize themselves to launch social movements. Even under government monitoring, and influenced by capital, the cyberspace is a far livelier and more diversified area[81] than carefully regulated TV programming, where consumers passively consume officially filtered content but cannot provide criticism. People are quite optimistic that the advancement of digital technology will allow for the end of authoritarian media domination. Someone even proposed a 'techno-utopianism', defined by Evgeny Morozov as 'the belief that free and unfettered access to information, combined with new tools of mobilization afforded by blogs and social networks, leads to the opening up of authoritarian societies and their eventual democratization'.[82] Thus, more social media consumption is expected to weaken the elite-constructed nationalism.

In short, political mobilization in the constructivist hypothesis is measured by party membership, employees in state-owned work units, the Xi generation, and viewers of state-controlled media as compared to social media.

Party membership is coded as 1 if one is a member of the Chinese Communist Party and 0 if not. Following the same logic, employees of government, state owned enterprises and institutions are coded as 1 if one works for any one of these units (*danwei*) or 0 if not. A dichotomous indicator measures television consumption: TV-viewing frequency, coded as 1 if one watches television greater than or equal to weekly, or 0 if one watches television less than or equal to monthly. Social media consumption is also measured by a dichotomous indicator: frequency of social media use, coded as 1 if one uses social media greater than or equal to weekly, or 0 if one uses social media less than or equal to monthly.

Data analysis is conducted in two stages. In the first stage, mass nationalism will be examined over the three waves of the World Values Survey. In the second stage, an OLS regression analysis is performed with the dependent variable of mass nationalism as a continuous variable. Based on the functionalist, culturalist and constructivist hypotheses, the independent variables include income, education, urban household registration (city *hukou*), religiosity index, international travel experience, party membership (CPC), state work, generation, television and social media consumption. In the second stage, only the 6th and 7th waves are included because these two waves provide the most clear contrast of the changing sources of mass nationalism in China over time.

Findings I: Change of Chinese Mass Nationalism Over Time

Figure 1 shows the levels of Chinese mass nationalism in 2007, 2012/13 and 2018.

In Figure 1, the Chinese nationalism index was 0.717 in 2007, 0.732 in 2012/13, and 0.832 in 2018, increasing significantly at a pace of 16% from 2007 to 2011. It is worth noting that most of this growth occurred after 2013. When compared with other countries and regions, the increase of Chinese mass nationalism from Wave Six (2012/13) to Wave Seven (2018) ranked second highest with a growth rate of 13.7% among the 26 selected societies in the roughly same period, only after Ukraine, a country facing severe external threats (Figure 2).

Thus, the findings in Figures 1 and 2 confirm hypothesis 1. Chinese mass nationalism had grown significantly since Xi came to power in 2012.

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[81]Gary King, Jennifer Pan and Margaret E Roberts, 'How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression', *American Political Science Review* 107, (2013), p. 326.
[82]Evgeny Morozov, 'The Digital Dictatorship' (20 February 2010). Accessed April 11, 2023. https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703983004575073911147404540.
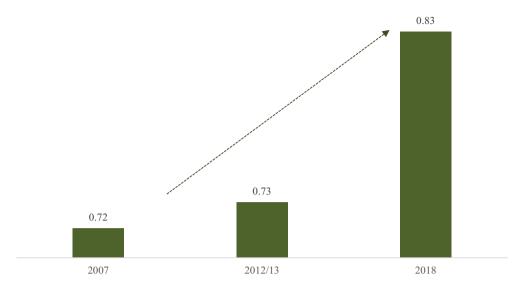
Figure 1. Levels of Chinese Mass Nationalism in 2007, 2012/13 and 2018. Notes: 1) Nationalism is an imputed factor index of two survey questions: 1) How proud are you to be of the nationality of this country? 2) Of course, we all hope that there will not be another war, but if it were to come to that, would you be willing to fight for your country? The nationalism indices of 2012/13 and 2018 are weighted by the 2010 census data. The details of the weighting can be found in *Sampling and Field Implementation Report, World Value Survey, China 2012*, published by the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking University. Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 5 (2007), Wave 6 (2012/13), Wave 7 (2018).

Findings II: Sources of Chinese Mass Nationalism

Figure 3 shows the results of the OLS multivariate regression analysis about the sources of mass nationalism, including functionalism measured by income, education, and urban hukou, culturalism measured by religiosity and international travel, and constructivism measured by party membership, state job, generation cohorts, viewers of official TV and social media.

In Figure 3, in both waves of the World Values Survey, income played insignificant role in promoting nationalism, while urban household registration resulted in less nationalism. In 2012/13, education only began to promote nationalism at the level of high school and above; but in 2018, the effect of education was seen at all levels, starting from elementary education, junior and senior high school, to college education and above. These findings, particularly about income and urbanization, do not seem to support the functionalist hypothesis (hypothesis 2).

On the surface, education may partially support the functionalist theory. Yet the fact that education promoted mass nationalism at an earlier stage in 2018 than in 2012/13 seems to suggest that education may be a better measure of elite construction than functionalism. In fact, patriotic education (*aiguozhuyijiaoyu*) was strengthened under Xi Jinping's leadership. In a speech given in December 2015 at a gathering of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping stated that patriotism is the spiritual core of the Chinese nation and that patriotic education should permeate the entire educational system of the country.[83] In 2019, a government document, *an outline on conducting patriotic education in the new era* emphasized that patriotic education should be organically integrated with professional curricular related to philosophy and social sciences in colleges and

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[83]Xinying Zhao, 'Government Leads in Patriotic Education' (*Chinadaily.com.cn*). Accessed April 13, 2023. https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201710/02/WS5a0bf20aa31061a738405490.html.

Figure 2. An International Comparison of Nationalism Growth Rate. Notes: Nationalism is an imputed factor index of two survey questions: 1) How proud are you to be of nationality of this country? 2) 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?. The growth rate = (nationalism (Wave 7)- nationalism (Wave 6))/nationalism (Wave 6). Source: World Values Survey Wave 6 (2010-2014), Wave 7 (2017-2022).

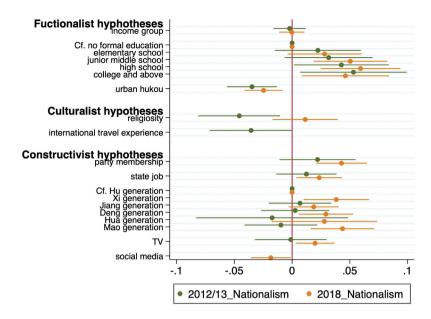**Figure 3.** Sources of Chinese Nationalism. Notes: 1) Nationalism is an imputed factor index of two survey questions (1. How proud are you to be of the nationality of this country? 2. Of course, we all hope that there will not be another war, but if it were to come to that, would you be willing to fight for your country?). 2) Religiosity is an imputed factor index of two survey questions (1. How important is religion in your life? 2. Do you consider yourself a religious person regardless of whether you attend religious services?). 3) Also see Appendix C for the summary statistics of the variables in the figure and Appendix D for the full models. Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 6 (2012/13), Wave 7 (2018).

universities.[84] Such effort of state construction in education and its effect in promoting nationalism may continue beyond the time period of this study's data that only covers until 2018. In this sense, education as a measure of elite mobilization provides support for the constructivist hypothesis.

The findings in Figure 3 only partially support the culturalist hypothesis (hypothesis 3). As a measure of one's worldly perspective and the weakening of one's sense of ethnocentrism, international travel experience reduced the level of nationalism in 2012/13 where the survey data were available (no data for 2018). Religiosity, another measure of culturalism, did not increase mass nationalism as predicted. It was negatively related to nationalism in 2012/13 but played no significant role in 2018.

One possible reason for the insignificant effect of religiosity as a cultural factor in promoting nationalism is that it became a victim of the official effort at constructing the socialist culture. In his report at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017, Xi presented that 'socialist culture with Chinese characteristics is derived from China's fine traditional culture, which was born of the Chinese civilization and nurtured over more than 5,000 years; it has grown out of the revolutionary and advanced socialist culture that developed over the course of the Chinese people's revolution, and through construction, and reform under the Party's leadership; it is rooted in the great practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics'.[85] Under this policy, religion was not selected to represent such traditional culture. Consequently, its influence was weakened by the official

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[84]'Zhonggong Zhongyang Guowuyuan Yinfa "Xinshidai Aiguozhuyi Jiaoyu Shishigangyao" [The Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the State Council Have Published an Outline for Promoting Patriotic Education in the New Era]' (*Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China*). Accessed April 14, 2023. http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xxgk/moe_1777/moe_1778/201911/t20191113_407983.html; 'China Unveils Outline for Strengthening Patriotic Education'. Accessed April 14, 2023. http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/201911/13/content_WS5dcb3985c6d0bcf8c4c16fa2.html.

[85]'Why Is Culture at the Heart of China's Rejuvenation Plan?' (*CGTN*). Accessed April 14, 2023. https://www.cgtn.com/how-china-works/news/2021-06-10/Why-is-culture-at-the-heart-of-China-s-rejuvenation-plan–10YzqdKgl7u/share.html.

enhancement of the 'socialist culture with Chinese characteristics', which was the core of the political construction of Chinese nationalism.

The remaining results in Figure 3 seem to support hypothesis 4 that the significant rise of Chinese mass nationalism under Xi Jinping's leadership from 2012/13 to 2018 is primarily caused by elite construction. Nearly all of the constructivist independent variables showed significant influences on nationalism in 2018 but not in 2012/13. Three specific pieces of evidence further explain this argument.

First, the Chinese Communist Party members and employees of the government, state-owned enterprises and institutions (*guoyou qi shiye danwei*) showed statistically significant 4.3% and 2.3% higher degrees of nationalism respectively in 2018. But they showed no effect in 2012/13. Since Xi Jinping took office, party building effort has been thoroughly strengthened to confront the escalating ideological liberalization and official corruption. He initiated a well-known anti-corruption campaign and improved the ideological cohesion of the Party through institutional reform and ideological education of the rank-and-file party members. The Party members and employees of government, state-owned enterprises and institutions (*guoyou qi shiye danwei*) who stood at the core naturally received more reinforced political construction.

Secondly, the age cohorts also reflect the elite political mobilization effect. Compared to the Hu generation, the Mao, Xi, Deng and Jiang generations all demonstrated higher levels of nationalism — 4.4%, 3.8%, 2.9%, and 1.9% respectively, while the Hua generation showed no difference from the Hu generation. The Mao generation and the Xi generation ranked the highest and the second highest in their nationalism sentiment. The Mao generation, once living in a communist utopia, has experienced the most radical elite political construction. The Xi generation, influenced by the strengthened construction of state nationalism and enhancement of constructive methods under Xi Jinping's leadership, also showed a high level of nationalism accordingly.

One may ask that, if the reason of the Mao generation's high level of nationalism is their experience in the most radical elite political construction, why did they not exhibit a significant positive relationship with nationalism in the 2012/13 data? A reasonable explanation is that present constructions require the activation of past constructions. People are more susceptible to the current constructs and exhibit more nationalistic feelings when the old constructs are activated and connected by the present. State nationalism is being thoroughly strengthened under Xi Jinping's presidency, and this was a revival of the national identity construction of the past. For example, there was a reinforcement of the study of history in Xi Jinping's presidency, particularly Party history, as seen in the initiatives such as the push for Party history learning and ideological education. The campaign tagline 'keep in mind why we started' (*buwangchuxin*) can resonate more with people who have experienced the period of Communist utopia in the Mao generation, while such effort was not as visible before 2012 during Hu Jintao's presidency.

Thirdly, people who watched TV more frequently (weekly or more) in 2018 showed higher nationalism than those who watched less than weekly, but they showed no significant difference in 2012/13. As an official instrument, media played a vital signaling function of the Party policy.[86] Xi Jinping attached great importance to the work of the press and public opinion, emphasizing the critical role of the media in promoting the Party's views and spreading mainstream voices. China's closely regulated TV programming is a primary method of the elite for constructing mass nationalism by disseminating state nationalism. Consequently, TV showed its effectiveness as an official constructive instrument of national identity.

Social media users, on the other hand, demonstrated less mass nationalism than non-users. This is understandable since social media is less directly controlled by the state compared to TV and there is more diversity in the sources of information on the social media platforms. One may argue that there

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[86]Kyle Jaros and Jennifer Pan, 'China's Newsmakers: Official Media Coverage and Political Shifts in the Xi Jinping Era', *The China Quarterly* 233, (2018), p. 111.

is plenty of cyber-nationalism among social media users.[87] This is possible because TV viewers and social media users overlap with each other and the latter are very likely influenced by the former (TV viewers). Yet for the time being, our statistically significant empirical evidence in Figure 3 seems to support the independent effect of the social media in reducing mass nationalism.

Summary and Conclusions

This study produced two important findings. Firstly, state nationalism has been strengthened in ideology and practice since Xi Jinping took office. In the meantime, Chinese mass nationalism has grown significantly, ranked second with a growth rate of 13.7% among the other 26 societies in the roughly same period. Secondly, the origin of this remarkable ascendance of mass nationalism is in elite construction. The construction is composed of the ideological unification within the Party, through the improvement of the Party's overall leadership, utilizing traditional media, strengthening of patriotic education, and construction of a 'socialist culture with Chinese characteristics'. This illustrates that mass nationalism is strongly influenced by state nationalism under Xi's leadership.

The findings seem to provide more support for the constructivism hypothesis (hypothesis 4) than the functionalist hypothesis (hypothesis 2) and the culturalist hypothesis (hypothesis 3). The limitation of the data in this study prevents us from making further claims about other possible theories of mass nationalism. More studies with new data will likely cast new lights in the rise of Chinese mass nationalism.

The intensification of mass nationalism in China is likely to continue as long as the construction of state nationalism is promoted and maintained. And this construction is likely to continue because external threat increases the Chinese state's incentive to win in international conflicts and to gain greater domestic political legitimacy.

One backlash against the rising trend of mass nationalism may come from social media, a relatively new medium in China with less control and growing impact. Social media may significantly amplify the voices of the people, demonstrating the effectiveness of deconstructing national identities that elites have categorically identified. Can mass nationalism breaks through the influence of state nationalism and speak out its own voice in the future? The consequence of the clash between elite narrative and popular narrative on the formation of national identity is yet to be explored.

Disclosure statement

Funding

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[87]Xu Wu, *Chinese Cyber Nationalism: Evolution, Characteristics, and Implications* (Lexington Books, 2007).

Appendix

Appendix A. Factor Analysis of the two national identity-related variables: Nationality Proud and Willing to fight for Country

2012/13 China Data

```
Factor analysis/correlation                 Number of obs   =      2,276
    Method: principal factors               Retained factors =         1
    Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)  Number of params =         1

    --------------------------------------------------------------------
        Factor  |    Variance  Difference      Proportion   Cumulative
    ------------+-------------------------------------------------------
        Factor1 |     0.12707          .           4.8837      4.8837
    --------------------------------------------------------------------
    LR test: independent vs. saturated:  chi2(1)  =   29.78 Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

    ----------------------------------------
        Variable |  Factor1 |   Uniqueness
    ------------+----------+--------------
        proudnaty |   0.2521 |     0.9365
        willfight |   0.2521 |     0.9365
    ----------------------------------------

Factor rotation matrix

    -----------------------
               | Factor1
    ------------+---------
        Factor1 |  1.0000
    -----------------------
```

Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 6 (2012/13).

2018 China Data

```
Factor analysis/correlation                    Number of obs    =      3,033
    Method: principal factors                  Retained factors =         1
    Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)  Number of params =         1

    -------------------------------------------------------------------------
         Factor |    Variance   Difference        Proportion   Cumulative
    ------------+------------------------------------------------------------
        Factor1 |     0.19327           .            3.5160       3.5160
    -------------------------------------------------------------------------
    LR test: independent vs. saturated:  chi2(1)  =   84.48 Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

    ----------------------------------------
       Variable |  Factor1 |   Uniqueness
    ------------+----------+----------------
      proudnaty |   0.3109 |     0.9034
      willfight |   0.3109 |     0.9034
    ----------------------------------------

Factor rotation matrix

    -----------------------
             | Factor1
    ---------+---------
      Factor1 |  1.0000
    -----------------------
```

Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 7 (2018).

Appendix B. Factor Analysis of the two religiosity-related variables: importance of religion in life, consider oneself is a religious person

2012/13 China Data

```
Factor analysis/correlation                    Number of obs   =      2,278
    Method: principal factors                  Retained factors =         1
    Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)  Number of params =         1

    ---------------------------------------------------------------------
         Factor  |    Variance   Difference      Proportion   Cumulative
    -------------+-------------------------------------------------------
        Factor1  |     0.54593          .           1.7750       1.7750
    ---------------------------------------------------------------------
    LR test: independent vs. saturated:  chi2(1)  = 380.12 Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

    ---------------------------------------
        Variable |  Factor1 |   Uniqueness
    -------------+----------+--------------
       religlife |  0.5225  |    0.7270
      religperson |  0.5225  |    0.7270
    ---------------------------------------

Factor rotation matrix

    -----------------------
             |  Factor1
    -------------+---------
       Factor1 |  1.0000
    -----------------------
```

Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 6 (2012/13).

2018 China Data

```
Factor analysis/correlation                  Number of obs    =      2,974
    Method: principal factors                Retained factors =          1
    Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)  Number of params =          1


    ----------------------------------------------------------------------
         Factor  |   Variance   Difference      Proportion   Cumulative
    -------------+--------------------------------------------------------
        Factor1  |    0.47294           .          1.9275       1.9275
    ----------------------------------------------------------------------
    LR test: independent vs. saturated:  chi2(1)  =  389.06 Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

    ---------------------------------------
        Variable |  Factor1 |   Uniqueness
    -------------+----------+--------------
       religlife |  0.4863  |    0.7635
     religperson |  0.4863  |    0.7635
    ---------------------------------------

Factor rotation matrix

    -----------------------
             |  Factor1
    -------------+---------
        Factor1 |  1.0000
    -----------------------
```

Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 7 (2018).

Appendix C. Summary Statistics

2012/13 China Data

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
nationalism	2276	.735	.192	0	1
nationalism (weighted)	2276	.732	.19	0	1
income group	2055	2.12	.667	1	3
degree	.	.	.	.	.
no formal education	2300	.076	.265	0	1
elementary school	2300	.232	.422	0	1
junior middle school	2300	.308	.462	0	1
high school	2300	.215	.411	0	1
college and above	2300	.169	.375	0	1
urban hukou	2291	.427	.495	0	1
religiosity	2278	.324	.253	0	1
international travel	2282	.078	.269	0	1
Party membership	2297	.082	.275	0	1
public sector employment	2252	.201	.401	0	1
Generation	.	.	.	.	.
Hu-generation	2300	.191	.393	0	1
Jiang-generation	2300	.271	.445	0	1
Deng-generation	2300	.24	.427	0	1
Hua-generation	2300	.022	.147	0	1
Mao-generation	2300	.276	.447	0	1
TV	2112	.898	.303	0	1

2018 China Data

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
nationalism	3033	.832	.19	0	1
nationalism (weighted)	3033	.832	.187	0	1
income group	3010	2.023	.659	1	3
degree	.	.	.	.	.
no formal education	3036	.062	.241	0	1
elementary school	3036	.175	.38	0	1
junior middle school	3036	.305	.46	0	1
high school	3036	.227	.419	0	1
college and above	3036	.232	.422	0	1
urban hukou	3025	.406	.491	0	1
religiosity	2974	.318	.244	0	1
Party membership	3022	.125	.331	0	1
public sector employment	2989	.197	.398	0	1
generation	.	.	.	.	.
Xi-generation	3036	.093	.291	0	1
Hu-generation	3036	.17	.376	0	1
Jiang-generation	3036	.271	.444	0	1
Deng-generation	3036	.238	.426	0	1
Hua-generation	3036	.028	.164	0	1

(*Continued*)

(Continued).

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Mao-generation	3036	.2	.4	0	1
TV	3036	.765	.424	0	1
Social media	3036	.644	.479	0	1

Notes: 1) Nationalism is an imputed factor index of two survey questions (1. How proud are you to be of nationality of this country? 2. 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?). 2) The nationalism (weighted) is weighted by the 2010 census data. The details of the weighting can be found in *Sampling and Field Implementation Report, World Value Survey, China 2012*, published by the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking University. 3) Religiosity is an imputed factor index of two survey questions (1. How important is religion in your life? 2. Do you consider yourself a religious person regardless of whether you attend religious services?).
Source: World Values Survey China Data Wave 6 (2012/13), Wave 7 (2018).

Appendix D. Sources of Chinese Nationalism

	DV: nationalism	
	(1) 2012/13	(2) 2018
income group	−0.002	−0.000
	(−0.38)	(−0.05)
no formal education (comparison)		
elementary school	0.022	0.028*
	(1.18)	(1.72)
junior middle school	0.032	0.050***
	(1.63)	(3.10)
high school	0.043**	0.059***
	(2.04)	(3.37)
college and above	0.053**	0.046**
	(2.26)	(2.40)
urban hukou	−0.035***	−0.025***
	(−3.16)	(−2.92)
religiosity	−0.046**	0.011
	(−2.53)	(0.79)
international travel experience	−0.036**	
	(−1.94)	
party membership	0.022	0.043***
	(1.31)	(3.82)
state job	0.012	0.023**
	(0.93)	(2.32)
Hu generation (comparison)		
Xi generation		0.038***
		(2.65)
Jiang generation	0.007	0.019*
	(0.50)	(1.70)
Deng generation	0.003	0.029**
	(0.18)	(2.44)
Hua generation	−0.017	0.028
	(−0.52)	(1.20)

(Continued)

(Continued).

	DV: nationalism	
	(1) 2012/13	(2) 2018
Mao generation	−0.010	0.044***
	(−0.60)	(3.12)
TV	−0.001	0.020**
	(−0.07)	(2.31)
social media		−0.018**
		(−2.11)
_cons	0.740***	0.756***
	(26.91)	(35.41)
N	1817	2892
r2	0.019	0.023
ar2	0.011	0.018

Notes: *$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$. Source: World Values Survey China Data, Wave 6, Wave 7.