Is Patriotism Distinct from Nationalism? The Meaning of "Patriotism" in China in the 2000s.

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The Meaning of "Patriotism" in China in the 2000s

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, vigorous debate concerning a number of key issues has taken place within the study of Chinese nationalism. Scholars have tended to differentiate between diverse types of nationalism. For example, many studies distinguish between a malign nationalism on the one hand and a benign patriotism on the other. The strongest evidence for such a distinction can be found in survey research, which has demonstrated that patriotism, meaning love for the country, is empirically distinct from nationalism, i.e. the belief in the superiority of one's country over other countries. In this paper, I take issue with this distinction. I argue that even though such surveys have contributed important insights to our understanding of Chinese national identity, the sharp distinction between patriotism and nationalism risks obfuscating the more important question of what actors are willing to do in the name of patriotism. If people are prepared to die and kill out of love for the country, the distinction between a benign patriotism and a malign nationalism cannot be so easily upheld. Based on a case study of the popular protests against Japan in China in autumn 2012, the Chinese media and government's response, as well as the content of Chinese patriotic education, I demonstrate that the *meaning* of patriotism is a key aspect of Chinese identity politics, which has hitherto not been granted sufficient attention.

> 爱国和害国，有时候只是一步之遥。
>
> *Aiguo he haiguo, you shihou zhishi yibu zhi yao.*
> *Sometimes there is only a single step between loving the country and harming the country* (*Zhongguo Qingnianbao* 2012b).

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Introduction

Since the 1990s, a large number of studies dealing with Chinese nationalism have been published and vigorous debate concerning a number of key issues has taken place (e.g. Carlson 2009). For example, some have argued that the state forges nationalism from above (Zhao 2004; Dittmer and Kim 1993; Pye 1993; He 2009), while others have criticized this state-centric approach and instead highlighted popular nationalism (Gries 2004; Wu 2007) or the interaction between the two (Callahan 2010; Shen 2007). In this and other ways, analysts have tended to differentiate between diverse types of nationalism. One important distinction, which is often made, is that between a malign nationalism on the one hand and a benign patriotism (or positive or pragmatic nationalism) on the other (Chen 2005; Zhao 2004). It has been argued that in the Chinese context, patriotism, i.e. love for the country, is empirically distinct from nationalism taken to mean the belief in the superiority of one's own country over other countries (Gries *et al.* 2011). Even though such studies have certainly provided valuable insights, I suggest that the relationship between patriotism and nationalism is more complex and that the two cannot be so easily separated in political practice and debate.

Through a case study of the large-scale popular protests against Japan in China in autumn 2012, the Chinese media and government's response, as well as the content of Chinese patriotic education, I show that the *meaning* of patriotism has to be taken into account. The paper demonstrates that in both the protests and the reactions to violent acts the meaning of patriotism was central. Protests, peaceful as well as hostile, were launched in the name of patriotism and violent demonstrations were dealt with through attempts to define the meaning of patriotism. Patriotism is a unifying force at the heart of Chinese national identity. Yet, its meaning, i.e. how love for the country is to be expressed, is not given but can be understood in different ways. Nationalist politics therefore involve acts that serve to define the meaning of patriotism. In addition, it is concluded that patriotic education is not merely an attempt to instil patriotic sentiments but also an effort to *define* the meaning of patriotism in a way that serves the objectives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Research on Chinese nationalism that distinguishes between a "good" patriotism and a "bad" nationalism has so far failed to appreciate that the meaning of patriotism is not fixed. If the key issue concerns what people are willing to do out of love for the country, the distinction between a benign patriotism and a malign nationalism cannot be so easily upheld.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First, I discuss how patriotism and nationalism has been distinguished in existing research on

Chinese nationalism and outline my theoretical assumptions. I then proceed with a brief background of discourses about patriotism in China. In the short section that follows I discuss "traitor" discourse, which is closely related to discourses on patriotism. I then move on to the case study of the autumn 2012 protests against Japan. This is followed by a brief analysis of how patriotic education is used to define the meaning of patriotism.

Studying nationalism and patriotism

A number of scholars of Chinese nationalism separate a malign nationalism from a benign patriotism. Whiting, for example, distinguishes between affirmative, assertive and aggressive nationalism. Affirmative nationalism "fosters patriotism and targets attitude", whereas aggressive nationalism "arouses anger and mobilizes behaviour". "The implications for foreign policy are minimal in the first case but potentially major in the second. Assertive nationalism lies between the two, sharing attributes of each and tending towards either depending on its intensity" (Whiting 1995: 295; see also Esteban 2006). Yuan similarly differentiates between on the one hand nationalism embedded in patriotism, which emphasizes pride in Chinese civilization and achievements, and on the other hand sentimental nationalism based on victim mentality and perceived injustice and insults (Yuan 2008).

The most convincing case for a separation of nationalism and patriotism is presented in the survey research conducted by Gries *et al.*, which distinguishes between expressions of nationalism and a more positive patriotism. They comment on the clashes in spring 2008 between Chinese protestors and pro-Tibet demonstrators during the Olympic torch relay in France and elsewhere, as well as calls for boycotts of the French supermarket Carrefour: "Although discourse about 'our Olympics' (*woguo Aoyun* 我国奥运) was frequently quite nationalistic, the summer Olympics themselves seemed to exhibit a more positive inward looking patriotism than the hostile anti-foreign nationalism of the spring" (Gries *et al.* 2011: 2). The authors demonstrate that in their survey research, "Love of or attachment to country – patriotism (*aiguozhuyi* 爱国主义) – and the belief in the superiority of one's country over other countries – nationalism (*minzuzhuyi* 民族主义)" (Gries *et al.* 2011: 2–3) are empirically distinct in China. While it has certainly provided interesting insights, such survey research reveals little about what people are willing to do out of love for the country. One possible way of measuring what people are prepared to do out of love for their country is the "willingness to fight for

one's country" measure used in the World Values Survey. According to the 2005 survey, 76 per cent of Chinese respondents were willing to fight for their country (down from 90 per cent in 2000). The corresponding figure for the USA was 63 per cent in 2005 (as well as in 2000) and a mere 15 per cent in Japan (16 per cent in 2000) (Diéz-Nicholás 2010: 10). Of course, whether respondents who claim to be willing to fight for the country would actually do so is a different matter. Respondents may answer in accordance with what they believe is appropriate. Nonetheless, this measure complicates the findings of research that merely attempt to measure whether people love their country or believe their county is superior to other countries without taking into account what respondents are willing to do for their countries.

Even though it does not make it entirely explicit, Geremie Barmé's intriguing 1995 article "To screw foreigners is patriotic" suggests a different way of approaching Chinese national identity according to which the meaning of patriotism is not fixed. In addition, the article indicates that agents may rationalize their actions as patriotic acts (Barmé 1995). This indicates that "patriotism" is a central term in the Chinese politics of identity and that agents whose national identities are strong may hold the belief that they should act in a patriotic manner. The present study builds on these implications of Barmé's analysis. It is concerned not with how people respond to survey questions but how patriotism is understood and what people are willing to do in the name of love for the country. If a wide array of actions, ranging from benign to malign, can be legitimized in the name of patriotism, is patriotism then so distinct from nationalism? Can it really be convincingly argued that there are different types of patriotism? If people are willing to die and/or kill for the country, the distinction made in survey research may be less significant than it appears. Scholars of nationalism critical of attempts to distinguish a "healthy" patriotism from a "belligerent" nationalism common in research on the topic have argued that the assumption that people are willing to go to war out of hatred for the out-group rather than love of the in-group is a simplification and that the latter actually precedes the former. In other words, a strong love of and pride in the country (i.e. patriotism) is suggested as a more fundamental motivation for self-sacrifice than hatred of the other (Billig 1995: 55–59; cf. Anderson 1983: 7). Of course, not all members of an imagined community are willing to die as an expression of their patriotism but they may be willing to do other things out of love for the country. This suggests that an analysis of what patriotism means to different actors and what people are prepared to do in the name of patriotism is in

order. As a corollary, ideas about what constitutes *un*-patriotic or traitorous behaviour also need to be examined.

If being patriotic is valued, some members of the imagined community may be labelled unpatriotic. In other words, the politics of patriotism also involve self-proclaimed patriots branding some of their fellow nationals traitors. This is another aspect of the politics of patriotism not captured in survey research and studies that clearly distinguish between patriotism and nationalism. Just as the issues I have discussed above, it relates to the *meaning* of patriotism. If certain behaviour is deemed patriotic, as an expression of love for the nation, it is only logical that behaviour that diverts from those ideas is understood as traitorous. These issues are arguably at the heart of the politics of national identity as the answers to such questions may be seen as indicating different nation-views (Duara 1995).

Several scholars have pointed out that patriotism has become increasingly central in Chinese society. For example, it has been claimed that "(w)hen patriotism became a buzzword in Chinese public discourse, more people wanted to proclaim their uncritical love for China and their desire to defend it from aggressive foreigners" (He 2009: 248). Another scholar mentions the development of a nationalist or patriotic culture: "Thanks to the party-state's effort, there is also the direct establishment of a nationalist culture through icons created to pervade everyday life, in the hope of demonstrating the significance of values both consciously and subconsciously. This can be achieved positively by giving nationalist heroes the titles of 'martyrs' or the status of idols, or be achieved negatively by labelling traitors '*hanjian*' (traitors the ethnic Han)" (Shen 2007: 20). This culture prescribes patriotic conduct and proscribes unpatriotic behaviour. In other words, there is a broad consensus concerning the need to be patriotic. Patriotism might be described as the norm. Norms, as understood here,

> describe collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity. In some situations norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor, thus having 'constitutive effects' that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognise a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. In such instances norms have 'regulative' effects that specify standards of proper behaviour. Norms thus either define (or constitute) identities

> or prescribe (or regulate) behaviour, or they do both (Katzenstein 1996: 5).

According to the norm, as a Chinese one should be patriotic, i.e. love one's country. This means acting according to a logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1998: 952–53), which stipulates that patriotic behaviour is appropriate. Yet, there is nonetheless room for struggle over the *meaning* of "patriotism", i.e. how to properly express it.

Due to the centrality of patriotism, an analysis of how the word has been used in recent years is appropriate. If patriotism entails love for one's country, then how should such love be expressed? By focusing on this question, this paper illustrates the link between discourse and action as it demonstrates that discourse prescribes and proscribes certain behaviour. The aim of this article is to further explore the role of the term "patriotism" in Chinese national identity politics. In its focus on discourse, the study follows Hughes (2005, 2006). However, its scope is narrower as it concentrates on the use of one central concept only—patriotism. This article draws loosely on discourse theory (e.g. Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 24–59; Howarth *et al.* 2000). I assume that "discourse constructs the world in meaning, and that, owing to the fundamental instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed" (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 6). This means that meaning is constantly being altered through discursive struggle. Such discursive struggle over meaning involves attempts to achieve hegemony, i.e. to achieve the dominance of a specific perspective. In other words, attempts are made to fix meaning even though its ultimate fixation is impossible. This guarantees that such struggle will continue even though a specific perspective may at a certain time dominate while another is weak (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 6–7). The partial fixation of meaning is achieved through the exclusion of alternative meanings. However, these alternative meanings may reappear and are therefore potentially subversive to the dominant definition (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 26–27). Because pre-existing discourses are sometimes referred to explicitly or implicitly as they may have an empowering effect if they resonate within a society, it is useful to begin with a brief overview of such discourses.

Discourses on patriotism in twentieth-century China

This section provides a brief overview of discourses on patriotism in twentieth-century China. It does not intend to give an exhaustive account but is merely meant to serve as background to current discourses on present-day Chinese patriotism. Emphasis is put on the use of the word "patriotism" in popular protests.

In 1915, the Chinese government accepted parts of the Twenty-One Demands put forward by Japan, a move that infringed on Chinese sovereignty. This led to popular protests not only against Japan but also directed at the Chinese government. The latter was criticized as traitorous for giving in to Japan. Indeed, a discussion took place concerning which day should be labelled a national humiliation day—the day the Japanese government presented its demands or the day the Chinese government signed the treaty. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Chinese government, as well as other groups, portrayed the episode as a "national humiliation" that needed to be remembered and cleansed. National humiliation days were celebrated in order to raise national awareness. In some cases, groups within Chinese society attempted to use such events to criticize the government and to promote their own agendas by appealing to patriotic emotions. The government countered these moves by trying to monopolize celebrations (Callahan 2006: 190–92, 2010: 68–69, 73; Cohen 2003: 160–64; Luo 1993: 209–12). As indicated above, humiliation discourse during and before the War of Resistance against Japan was not concerned merely with the infliction of humiliation by external enemies but also with how the Chinese government had submitted to demands instead of resisting. In other words, the government was denounced as being unpatriotic. In Chinese wartime journalist accounts, on the other hand, Chinese heroic resistance was emphasized in order to boost morale even when Chinese forces were defeated and forced to retreat (Coble 2010: 435–56). This propaganda might be seen as an attempt to depict the government's war effort as patriotic.

One significant incident in which ideas about patriotism were central occurred in 1936. After the Nationalist government had imprisoned seven young members of a patriotic association who had criticized the government for not dealing sufficiently with the increasingly large Japanese presence in parts of China, a slogan, according to which one is innocent if one is patriotic, was used (爱国无罪). A movement to set the seven free was organized. The members of the movement argued that if the seven were to be imprisoned, then patriots all over the country, including those belonging to the movement, would also have to be sent to prison. After protests took place, in

which the slogan was central, the seven were released. The gist of the slogan in its 1936 meaning was that if you do something as a patriotic act it is not a political crime and should not be punished. In other words, if one acts out of love for the country one can act against the government (Funabashi 2005; Wang 2005: 39–42). Significantly, this way of using the slogan also suggested that the government was not sufficiently patriotic.

During the war against Japan unity and patriotic national struggle was emphasized for some years, however, this changed after the war. The civil war broke out shortly after Japan had been defeated. This meant that both the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Guomindang (GMD) were occupied by civil war, and dealing with the internal enemy was a more acute challenge than remembrance of the struggle against the external enemy. Japan was no longer a threat. For the GMD, the immediate task at hand was to deal with the CCP and those who had collaborated with the Japanese invaders. For the CCP, on the other hand, the GMD and its American ally were regarded as the main threats. Nonetheless, the Nationalists held war crimes trials shortly after the war and the CCP followed in 1956. The GMD sought an alliance with Japan and were relatively lenient towards Japanese war criminals while they punished Chinese traitors, i.e. those who had not acted patriotically, more severely (Yoshida 2006: 62–70).

After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, history as well as current events was understood in terms of class struggle rather than national struggle. China's modern history was seen as involving "the ruling classes, consisting of landowners and capitalists and represented by the Nationalist government, exploiting the masses and collaborating with foreign imperialists" (Yang 2001: 54). The Chinese leadership during the Mao era also applied class as an interpretive lens to Sino-Japanese relations. The wartime militarist Japanese leaders were hence regarded as having exploited the Japanese people (Callahan 2007).

As Chinese society was transformed during the 1980s as a result of the economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping, class as the main interpretive lens became progressively subversive as market reforms allowed some to get rich before others. Furthermore, China's opening up meant that the Chinese were subjected to potentially disruptive foreign, especially Western, influences. As communist ideology was increasingly diluted, class was downplayed and, instead, as was the case before the Mao era, a patriotism emphasizing the Chinese national community became central. The previous out-group, the GMD, was to an increasing extent included into the Chinese national community as the Taiwanese came to be regarded as compatriots. In

the 1990s, with the intensification of patriotic education, history textbooks in the PRC were revised. The previously dominant view of history, based on a Marxist interpretative framework, had underscored the civil war as a class struggle and portrayed Japanese and Chinese peasants and workers as victims belonging to the same class. In the new textbooks, however, the civil war was less important while international conflicts were highlighted. In the portrayal of the War of Resistance against Japan, which had formerly been depicted as a struggle fought mainly by the Communists, the role of the GMD was reassessed so that it was portrayed as having made a contribution to the national struggle against the Japanese invaders. Patriotic struggle hence came to replace class struggle (Wang 2008: 790–91).

In 1986, student demonstrations broke out at the Hefei University of Science and Technology and spread to Shanghai, Tianjin and Beijing. Already in the previous year, students had protested against corruption and poor on-campus living conditions. However, these issues had been combined with a demand for a boycott of Japanese goods in the aftermath of Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. The students hence made sure that they were perceived as being patriotic because patriotic demands were more likely to be met. They also made references to the 1936 incident. Hu Yaobang, who had received Nakasone in Beijing in November 1985, criticized the students for being short sighted and instead called for a "sober-minded patriotism". Not long thereafter, he was removed from his post (Hughes 2006: 37–39). The students protesting in the spring and early summer of 1989 similarly referred to the 1919 May 4th movement as they made attempts to present their claims as patriotic. For such student movements it is crucial to voice dissent in patriotic terms to avoid appearing as traitors that might disrupt China's overall stability. This is evidence of the strength of the patriotic discourse. At the same time, the Chinese government, in dealing with such protests, also need to appear patriotic. The use of patriotism by the democracy movements of the late 1980s therefore made it imperative for the legitimacy of the party leadership to present itself as patriotic in the 1990s (Hughes 2006: 52–53). It has been argued that the student demonstrations had a subversive appeal because they presented an alternative to the official celebration of the movement (Callahan 2010: 34). Criticism of foreign imperialism can, in other words, be directed at the Chinese leadership or other Chinese who are perceived as being traitors or not sufficiently patriotic (Callahan 2010:26–27).

In the 2000s, as the Internet increasingly becomes a space in which social problems are discussed, "netizens" are more and more influential. The

Internet is not just used to criticize adulterers but also corrupt officials and, most significantly for the purposes of this article, "unpatriotic" citizens (Downey 2010). The Chinese *fenqing* (愤青), or "angry youth" have, in a number of incidents voiced nationalist opinions online in response to everything from riots against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in the late 1990s to biased reports in the Western press concerning the ethnic riots in Tibet (Osnos 2008).

Patriotism has been central to a number of Japan-related incidents in the 2000s. For example, from 16–18 September 2003, what was described as an orgy involving Japanese businessmen and local prostitutes took place at a hotel in Zhuhai in southern China's Guangdong province. After a local newspaper published the story, Chinese Internet activists interpreted the incident as an act of deliberate "national humiliation" since it occurred on the anniversary of the Mukhden incident, 18 September 1931, when the Japanese Kantō Army blew up the railway outside Mukhden (now Shenyang) in Manchuria, blamed Chinese nationalists for the explosion and used it as an excuse to initiate hostilities. On the Internet, Chinese activists demanded that the hotel be burned down, the Chinese organizers, who were described as traitors of the Chinese nation, be killed and that Japanese goods be boycotted (Wu 2007: 78–79).

In March 2005, the then Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Kofi Annan, presented a proposal to enlarge the UN Security Council (UNSC). He later suggested that Japan and Germany, because of their significant financial contributions to the UN budget, should be regarded as the prime candidates for UNSC membership. Chinese Internet activists teamed up with overseas groups and gathered signatures for a petition against the proposal. During this period the Japanese textbook screening process took place and, among other history textbooks, the Japanese revisionist group *Tsukurukai's* history textbook, which is considered to make light of atrocities committed by the Japanese military during the war, was approved for usage in Japanese junior high schools. On 9 April 2005, large-scale demonstrations calling for a boycott of Japanese goods and opposing Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat took place in Beijing. Protests, partly violent in character, spread to other cities, such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Shanghai (Hughes 2006: 151–52; Wu 2007: 82–87). While the Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhaoxing, took a tough stance against Japan and refused to apologize for the violence and damage to Japanese property, measures were still taken to deal with the demonstrators and Li told Chinese at a meeting to: "Turn your patriotic fervour toward concrete actions in your work and

diligent studies, so as to contribute to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Hughes 2006: 152). The demonstrators were regarded as expressing love for their country but, as is clear from the statement, encouraged to do so in other ways.

When police were sent to deal with the demonstrators, they screamed the old slogan mentioned above according to which one is innocent of political crimes if one is patriotic (爱国无罪) (Funabashi 2005). When the demonstrators used the slogan they were referring to the event that occurred in 1936 and attempting to use the positive connotations of the phrase. It seems reasonable to believe that the use of the slogan and the word "patriotism", which is now a central ideological pillar of the state, worried the Chinese government. While the CCP's way of using the term has involved trying to tie it to love for the party-state, the demonstrators drew on a discourse according to which a patriot who defies the government is innocent of political crimes. When the demonstrators used the term "patriotism" in 2005, the CCP could not afford to appear weak or unpatriotic. It is not so much that the Chinese government *creates* legitimacy by criticizing Japan; it is rather the case that the CCP risks *losing* legitimacy if it is not perceived as being sufficiently patriotic.

Attacks on "traitors" in the 2000s: Patriotic and unpatriotic behaviour

Before moving on to the case study of the autumn 2012 protests, it is necessary to provide some additional background concerning the use of "traitor" discourse in the 2000s. During this time, several Japan-related incidents have targeted Chinese who have been labelled "traitors".

In a photo shoot for a fashion magazine in 2001, shortly after Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, film star and fashion model Zhao Wei was dressed in an imperial Japanese flag. She was denounced as a "traitor" and insulted on the Internet. Even though she issued an apology, a young man later attacked and smeared faeces on her when she appeared on stage during a public event (Hughes 2006: 148; Wu 2007: 62–63; Gries 2005: 832–34). Chinese actor and film director Jiang Wen, famous for *Red Sorghum*, a patriotic film about Chinese villagers fighting Japanese invaders, said in an interview in the *Asahi Shimbun* that he had visited the Yasukuni Shrine several times. He later explained that he did so for research purposes to get inspiration for *Devils on the Doorstep*

(鬼子来了), a film dealing with the war. After Jiang's visits were reported in China, he was nonetheless fiercely criticized on the Internet (Gries 2005: 834–36). The issue of what constitutes patriotic and unpatriotic behaviour was central to the criticism of both Zhao and Jiang.

These incidents prompted Ma Licheng, a journalist at *The People's Daily*, to write an article with the title "New Thinking on Sino-Japanese Relations" for the journal *Strategy and Management* in which he voiced his opinions on recent expressions of anti-Japanese feelings in China. The article's main arguments were that anti-Japanese behaviour was creating a negative image of China abroad, especially in Japan, and that Japan had already apologized sufficiently for the war and was no longer a militaristic country. In Ma's opinion, the Chinese should hence adopt a noble attitude and let bygones be bygones. Ma's "new thinking" was initially supported by the elite media but on the Internet he was labelled a traitor, received death threats and as a result retired early from his position at the *People's Daily* and moved to Hong Kong (Hughes 2006: 148–49, Wu 2007: 66–68, Gries 2005: 836–39). It has been pointed out that because of the fierce criticism of the moderates who took part in the debate and the labelling of them as traitors, "members of the Chinese elites are reluctant to express moderate views on Japan" (He 2007: 62). In addition, in the context of calls for boycotting Japanese goods in order to stop Japanese "economic aggression", the label *hanjian* (汉奸) "can be applied to those working for a Japanese company or simply buying a Japanese product" (Yang 2002: 14).

In April 2009, the movie *Nanjing! Nanjing!*, dealing with the Nanjing massacre, premiered at Chinese cinemas. The director Lu Chuan received death threats and was branded a "traitor" because the film depicted one of the Japanese protagonists in what was understood as an overly nuanced way. According to the director, the film was close to being cancelled in its first week on the big screen because of the harsh criticism it was subjected to on the Internet (Wong 2009). This affair further demonstrates that it sometimes does not take much to be labelled a "traitor".

These incidents demonstrate that being patriotic is not only about loving the country but also about not being unpatriotic. The politics of patriotism concerns identity. Of course, patriotism is related to identification with the country or nation and is therefore constructed in relation to other such entities. However, it is not only about being one of "us" rather than one of them, although for some it is also about being one of "us" to a greater extent than other members of the in-group. When self-proclaimed patriots stress

how patriotic they are they tend to do so by comparing themselves to other members of the in-group who they depict as traitors.

The 2012 protests against Japan

This section contains a case study of the autumn 2012 protests against Japan during which the centrality of the meaning of patriotism arguably became clearer than ever before. During the demonstrations, protestors attacked Japanese businesses in the name of patriotism. In addition, they vandalized Japanese cars (owned by Chinese). In other words, owning a Japanese car was all it took to be seen as a traitor. These events prompted reactions on behalf of government-run media. While the media voiced understanding for the demonstrators' patriotic zeal, it still stated that patriotism should be expressed "rationally".

In mid-August 2012, activists from Hong Kong landed on one of the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. This was followed by a similar Japanese expedition. In response, protests against Japan broke out in several Chinese cities. One commentary mentioned that some demonstrators had "smashed cars driven by their compatriots". Such behaviour, the article asserted, would "only make Japanese happy", "ran counter to 'patriotism'" and was consequently labelled "fake patriotism" (*weiaiguo*) (*Renminwang* 2012a).

An article in the *China Youth Daily* commented that the destructive behaviour of some demonstrators did not constitute "love for the country" but was "irrational" and was actually "hurting the country". It further stated that the youngsters' patriotic passion in response to the mistaken behaviour by the Japanese side was worthy of praise. Yet, it criticized the violent expressions of patriotism in the form of the destruction of their compatriot's property as "silly" (*yuchun*), argued that it destroyed social order, was damaging to China's image and would only make Japanese right-wingers happy: "the stupid behaviour is not love of the country, on the contrary, it harms the country" (*bu shi aiguo, er shi hai guo*). It further asserted: "Such 'patriotism' will forever be unable to receive praise and will merely make the genuine patriots feel ashamed" (*Zhongguo Qingnianbao* 2012a).

Another article revealed that when the Japanese coast guard arrested the Hong Kong activists it had prompted much discussion on the Internet. Many had called for a "punitive expedition against Japan" and some had even expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the government had handled the issue. As other articles published around this time, it emphasized the importance of expressing patriotism rationally by taking into account the

long-term national interest instead of acting hastily. In today's globalized world, the article argued, declaring war does not serve the national interest well. In addition, the author stressed that the Chinese government had been able to effectuate the release of the detained activists through negotiations with the Japanese side. This was described as a "great victory", which demonstrated the Chinese government's "political wisdom" and "great power behaviour", which "boosted the morale of the Chinese people". It was, in the words of the author, a "victory for rational patriotism" as well as a "victory for patriotic knowledge" (*Renminwang* 2012d). The article might be understood as a defence of the government in a situation in which its actions ran the risk of being understood as not sufficiently patriotic and therefore might even be labelled "traitorous" for not dealing with Japan firmly enough.

In September 2012, protests broke out once more following the Japanese government's nationalization of three of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands when it purchased them from their private (Japanese) owner. Again, some of the protests turned violent with attacks on Japanese restaurants, department stores, factories and diplomatic missions causing considerable material damage. This time, the *China Youth Daily* commented that during such demonstrations it was necessary to exercise "cool-headed restraint" and "stay rational". Furthermore, it stated:

> Cars turned over, smoking streets and aggressive facial expressions serve to make the Japanese media gloatingly describe Chinese resistance against Japan as having sunk into 'rioting' and predict that it might lead to an upheaval in Chinese society. 'Irrational' protests are exactly what the Japanese right-wing forces represented by Ishihara Shintarō are hoping for (*Zhongguo Qingnianbao* 2012b).

Furthermore, the article argued that "vindictive patriotism cannot defend the Diaoyu Islands and is even less able to defend the national interest and the dignity of the nation". The article stated that "sometimes there is only a single step between loving the country and harming the country" (*aiguo he haiguo, you shihou zhishi yibu zhi yao*). At the same time, it praised the behaviour of protestors that demonstrated in Beijing on 15 September, who, according to the police, "in the course of expressing their patriotic passion had all maintained a rational attitude" (*Zhongguo Qingnianbao* 2012b). Several articles pointed out that in a state governed by the rule of law it is correct to

punish those who resort to violence such as the demonstrators who smashed Japanese cars (e.g. *Xinhuawang* 2012a). One common Japanese criticism of the Chinese government's handling of protests against Japan is that it allowed violent behaviour, which is taken to prove that China is not ruled by law and that in the name of patriotism anything is permissible (e.g. *Yomiuri Shimbun* 2005).

The connection between the need to express patriotism in a "rational" fashion and Japanese right-wingers' political agenda was further stressed in an article published in the *Global Times.* The title of the article, which had originally been published by the *People's Daily Online*, was "Japanese right-wingers fear the most that the Chinese masses rationally [express] patriotism". While it conveyed understanding for the patriotic feelings expressed by demonstrators arguing that a "nation that lacks an unyielding spirit is doomed to be bullied and humiliated", the article nonetheless contended that irrational behaviour cannot defend the Diaoyu Islands. It claimed that in today's globalized world it is necessary to make the world see that China grows peacefully, that the government's administration is progressing and that the people's standards have improved. In order to gain support from the international community, rational expression of patriotism is necessary (*Huanqiu* 2012).

A *Renminwang* article summarized how a number of Chinese news media discussed the issue of how patriotism ought to be expressed around the time of the protests against Japan. It quoted one newspaper as having argued that "patriotism should say no to 'beating, smashing and looting'". Another newspaper was cited as having provided an explicit answer to the question of how to properly express patriotism. The answer was to 1) "support the government's foreign policy actions", 2) "comply with the country's laws and respect fellow countrymen's property", 3) "unite a large number of compatriots, properly express patriotic passion, defend the sovereignty of the country and safeguard territorial integrity", 4) "work hard and do one's job well and make the motherland even richer and stronger". The message delivered in all the articles discussed was more or less the same—patriotism should be expressed rationally, i.e. in accordance with the law (*Renminwang* 2012c), and arguably in accordance with the interests of the CCP.

While the protests were taking place, additional events related to patriotism were organized. For example, a *Xinhua* article discussed several academic events, which took place on 18 September 2012, the anniversary of the Mukhden Incident when soldiers belonging to the Japanese Kantō Army blew up a section of a railroad operated by Japan close to Mukhden (now

Shenyang), blamed Chinese soldiers for the incident and used it as a pretext to occupy Manchuria. Most revealing for the purposes of this paper is the title of a large symposium for students and teachers held at Tongji University in Shanghai: "How do we love our country today?" A similar event held at Shanghai Normal University bore a title that suggested an answer to the query: "Study diligently, think good [thoughts], love the country rationally". At the event, it was reported that students spontaneously put up a banner stating, "Don't forget national humiliation, [express] patriotism rationally, study hard, and exert us to strengthen ourselves". At Shaanxi University in Xi'an another event was organized. According to the article, the students and teachers believed that "the proper meaning of patriotism is rational patriotism" (*Xinhuawang* 2012b).

Not only newspapers and universities, but the police also joined in the efforts to emphasize how patriotism ought to be expressed. The website of the local police authorities in Meizhou, Guangdong province, called for citizens to express patriotism rationally and protest in accordance with the law. In addition, it suggested that the best way to express patriotism is to work and study "to the best of one's ability" (Meizhou Gonganju 2012).

The demonstrations, which ended after 18 September, spurred much debate among Chinese netizens. These discussions clearly illustrate the link between patriotism and traitor discourse. Around the time of the outbreak of the first protests in August 2012, calls for boycotts of Japanese goods were made in the name of patriotism. Around the same time, Hong Kong singer Fiona Sit posted photos on her Weibo account of a visit to a Japanese restaurant together with her pet cat Ponyo (named after the character in a Japanese animated film) during which the cat feasted on Japanese food. Netizens besieged the singer and her cat with abuse and branded her a traitor (*hanjian, zougou, maiguozei*). In an interview following this fierce reaction, the singer stated that it was perhaps a sensitive time and that if her post had made someone feel unhappy she was also unhappy and wished to say she was sorry (*buhaoyisi*) (*Renminwang* 2012b).

An article in the *China Youth Daily* made the significance of the use of the term "traitor" even clearer. It discussed the "extreme ghost behind the label 'traitor' (*hanjian*)" in an article published a week after the authorities had stopped the large-scale demonstrations. During the protests, a professor at a university in Beijing had slapped an old man on the ear because he was, according to the professor, a "traitor" (*hanjian*). The professor had argued that "sorting the old man out was reasonable and fair" as he was a traitor. The commentary stated that even though many opposed the professor's behaviour,

there were also those who supported it. The controversy over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands was followed by much online discussion, some of which, the article argued, was disturbing. In particular, the fact that some people who want to express their own patriotism label the views of those who disagree with their opinions "unpatriotic" was described as problematic. "Those who advocate a rational and cool-headed response to the Diaoyu Islands dispute and oppose the boycott of Japanese goods are frequently verbally abused as 'traitors' (*maiguo*), even to the extent that they are labelled *hanjian*". The article pointed out that in recent years, negative labelling in online debates has become common with a number of insulting terms being used. The vilest among these is said to be "traitor" (*maiguozei* and *hanjian*).

The article argued that "it is not possible to have only one understanding of patriotism" because there are "different ways of protecting the national interest". It explicitly asserted that the term "'patriotism' must not be monopolized and forcibly occupied by anyone" and that citizens may choose to be patriotic in different ways. It mentioned several examples; even those who do not participate in demonstrations against Japan or advocate a tough policy toward the country may be patriotic by assisting or taking care of their compatriots. Or, even those who do not sacrifice their lives for the country may be equally patriotic by "working hard" and "paying taxes". In addition, the article criticized those who have caused a furore by calling for "getting rid of traitors" (*qingchu hanjian*) (*Zhongguo Qingnianbao* 2012c). Such notices, according to which the key to dealing with Japan is to first sort out traitors since a "fort is most easily attacked and taken from the inside", circulated in chat rooms around the time of the demonstrations.[1]

The way in which patriotic (and traitorous) behaviour is understood has implications for Chinese foreign policy. The understanding of patriotism embedded in the actions of the university professor (and others) discussed above indicates exactly what is at stake. The Chinese government has to be tough and unyielding in its relations with Japan. If it were to accept such an understanding of the term patriotism, its policy options in Sino-Japanese relations would be rather limited. In contrast, the understanding endorsed by the author of the article would make it possible not only for Chinese citizens to express patriotism in various ways but also for the Chinese government to adopt a softer approach and go further in negotiations with its Japanese counterpart without running the risk of being labelled "traitors". The range of options available to the Chinese leadership would be considerably broader.

[1] See for example the following post on the *Shidai jianbing* (Vanguard of the times) blog: http://blog.huanqiu.com/542063/2012-09-11/2600234/, accessed 18 July 2013.

This all suggests that the way in which the meaning of patriotism is understood in China is absolutely crucial to China's international relations as well as to its domestic legitimacy.

Significantly, by drawing a clear line between behaviour seen as genuine or rational patriotism and irrational or improper patriotism, the former is presented as normal and praiseworthy while the latter is condemned. Nonetheless, many of the demonstrations described as peaceful involved protestors carrying banners demanding violence, for example, by calling for China to declare war on Japan.

During the protests in August and September 2012, some demonstrators carried portraits of Chairman Mao Zedong and banners stating, "the Diaoyu Islands belong to China, Bo Xilai belongs to the people" (Yu 2012). These demonstrators used the opportunity provided by the protests against Japan to criticize the Chinese government. Whereas such demonstrations are generally not permitted, protests against Japan nonetheless provide opportunities to voice such grievances. This suggests an additional way of expressing (and defining the meaning of) patriotism and further indicates that the Chinese government has an interest in attempting to fix the meaning of patriotism.

The massive number of articles emphasizing the importance of expressing patriotism rationally demonstrates the centrality of the term patriotism in China. Even though this concerted attempt consists of articles that all argue for the importance of "rationally" expressing patriotism, the fact that this effort is so massive, consisting of a large number of articles, suggests that other ways of understanding and expressing patriotism are understood as a real threat. There is clearly a perceived need to highlight the importance of expressing patriotism "rationally".

It is obvious from the discussion above that even when condemned, violent behaviour on behalf of some demonstrators was nonetheless understood as having been carried out in the name of patriotism, i.e. love of the country. However, it was denounced as "stupid", "irrational", "fake" and "harmful" to the country. While this response presented a certain understanding of how patriotism ought to be expressed, it also clearly revealed that there are divergent understandings of what constitutes "rational" and "genuine" expressions of patriotism. It is not self-evident what encompasses patriotic behaviour. The meaning of the concept is not fixed. Yet, the responses to the violent expressions of patriotism represent attempts to define and fix its meaning. In other words, the debate testifies to the proximity between what are labelled "violent" and "harmful" expressions of a "fake" patriotism on the one hand, and a "rational" and "genuine" patriotism on the other. This

closeness suggests that the difference between a benign patriotism and a malign nationalism presented in previous research is perhaps not so easily distinguished as the authors of such works and the results of survey research seem to suggest.

Patriotic education and the meaning of patriotism

In the previous section, I demonstrated that Chinese government media responded to the partly violent protests against Japan in autumn 2012 by emphasizing the need to express patriotism rationally. Chinese patriotic education similarly attempts to fix the meaning of the term "patriotism" in a way that benefits the CCP. However, whereas the media campaign was a response to particular events, patriotic education is a more long-term effort to define the meaning of patriotism in a particular way.

Much has been written about Chinese patriotic education. In this section, it is demonstrated that this education is not merely an attempt to foster patriotism in general but to establish a certain definition of patriotism. Many museums dealing with the War of Resistance against Japan interpret the historical narrative presented in exhibitions in ways that seek to define patriotic behaviour. For example, at the Chinese People's War of Resistance Museum, listed as a model patriotic education base (Zhongxuanbu 1998: 9), on the outskirts of Beijing, an explicit interpretation of the museum's narrative is delivered in the last written section of the exhibition. In this conclusion, lessons to be learnt from this historical episode, i.e. the interpretation of the story told, are provided. Here, the tone is quite hortative; telling the visitor what must be done. In other words, the visitor is not just told how to interpret the story told but also that it is of the essence that s/he acts in accordance with the interpretation.

The conclusion starts by stating that the "Chinese people have always ardently loved world peace". It then mentions that the Chinese nation, through its War of Resistance, made a great national sacrifice and historic contribution to world peace. This positive self-representation is followed by an instruction not to forget history. Towards the end, the visitor is given clear directives concerning the future:

> To accelerate the promotion of modernisation, complete the unification of the motherland, defend world peace and

promote joint development is the solemn mission history and this era have bestowed on us.

In this sentence, the word us (women), obviously refers to all Chinese, as indicated by the use of the word "motherland" (or "ancestor land"). In the following and final sentence, "we" (women) are told to unite around Hu Jintao and persist in taking the theories of Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin as guiding principles. Furthermore, "we" are told to "persist in walking the road of peaceful development, uphold the fundamental national policy of opening up to the outside world" and to "make an even greater contribution to the lofty cause of promoting peace and development for humanity". Again, the "we" means those belonging to the Chinese nation, a nation whose struggles are dealt with in the exhibition. Once the role of the CCP as saviour has been stressed throughout much of the exhibition, the importance of uniting around the CCP leaders and their policies is presented as necessary. World peace is mentioned together with development. Just as the Chinese people's war effort, at the CCP's initiative, is portrayed as a great contribution to the world, Chinese development, under the CCP's leadership, is framed as part of a "solemn mission" that will become another great contribution to the world. The "unification of the motherland" is also mentioned as part of the Chinese nation's "solemn mission". This unification, it seems, is only possible if all of "us" support the policies of the CCP. Just as during the War of Resistance, sacrifices may need to be made, but the people should persist and continue to have faith in the party that made it possible for the nation to "move from decline to revitalization". In this way, patriotic behaviour is defined as adhering to the CCP's policies.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the centrality of the concept "patriotism" in Chinese identity politics. Activists in China portray themselves as patriotic and some of them also depict other Chinese as "unpatriotic" or as "traitors". Meanwhile, the CCP attempts to define the meaning of patriotism in a way that suits its own agenda. Its patriotic education campaign, including representations in museum exhibitions and history textbooks, involves an attempt by the CCP to define and fix the meaning of the word "patriotism" for its own purposes. The CCP, it might be said, is participating in an ongoing struggle over the meaning of patriotism in the PRC. Meaning,

however, can only be partially fixed and other actors are able to challenge the understanding of patriotism put forward by the CCP.

It has not been my intention to provide a full account of the politics of patriotism in China. Nonetheless, the case study has problematized the distinction between nationalism and patriotism in previous research and suggested that it cannot be so easily upheld. The key issue, as has been demonstrated, is what political actors are willing to do in the name of patriotism and how the concept is invoked to serve various political agendas. One implication for further research is that survey research should take into account what people are willing to do in the name of patriotism. Of course, there may very well be a difference between what respondents claim to be willing to do out of love for the country and what they actually do in the heat of the moment.

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