



**Contemporary Japan and East-Asian Studies**

**April 1, 2018 Vol. 2 No. 3**

<http://jeast.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>

**Anti-Western Sentiment in Chinese Politics:  
Why China Rejects Universal Values**

**Edited and Published by**

**Society for Contemporary Japan and East-Asian Studies**



# Contents

■ Abstract.....	I
■ Thesis	
Introduction .....	1
Conflating Criticism of Westernization and Subversion with Criticism of Universal Values.....	1
The Origins of Criticism of the West in Chinese Nationalism.....	6
Conclusion.....	12
■ Note.....	i
■ Profile of the Author.....	ii



# Abstract

This paper investigates anti-Western sentiment in Chinese nationalism and discusses why the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) reject the supposedly universal values that are espoused by the West. These “universal values”—values originating from Western society but held to be universal throughout the world—are opposed by the CPC and the PRC government in favor of the values with Chinese characteristics . What does this stance mean? First, this paper examines how the CPC distinguishes between its “core socialist values” and universal values, with a conflated criticism of “Westernization and subversion” [xihua-fenhua]. Second, this paper explains the dynamism of anti-Western sentiments in China, through the dominance of four elements of Chinese official nationalism. Finally, this paper warns that, as long as the concept of Chinese uniqueness—as emphasized in Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream—is coupled with criticism of Westernization, China will no doubt continue to reject universal values.

## 摘要

本研究是透过考察中国民族主义当中的中国反西方情绪，来探讨中国为何无法接受西方普遍的价值。中国共产党以及政府拒绝起源于西方社会且被视为人类全体规范的「普世价值」，同时主张中国有中国特色的价值观。究竟该如何理解这样的中国主张呢？

在考察此问题之际，本文首先将检讨共产党政权如何透过对「西化分化」之批判，来区分其独有的社会主义核心价值与「普世价值」之差异。接着，本文将透过分析中国的官方民族主义的四大要素，来解释反「西方」情绪之动力究竟是如何产生。最后，本文的结论是，习近平政权的「中国梦」所强调的「中国特色」只要伴随着对「西方化」之批判，对于「普世价值」的否定也将会持续下去。

# **Anti-Western Sentiment in Chinese Politics: Why China Rejects Universal Values**

ETO Naoko

Research Fellow

Institute of Developing Economies

Japan External Trade Organization

## **Introduction**

In the field of political science, a particular concept of universal values—liberal values such as peace, freedom, equality, and human rights—make up the model for humanity’s aspirations. Up to the present, tacit agreement has existed among the members of international political organizations, such as the United Nations, to work together to uphold this agreement, protecting peace and freedom and respecting equality and human rights. The People’s Republic of China (hereafter China or the PRC) similarly respects the concepts of peace, freedom, and equality, but the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government reject the universal values as such, values originating in Western society but held to be universal throughout the world, maintaining that values with Chinese characteristics exist. What does this stance mean? This paper discusses anti-Western sentiment in Chinese nationalism and investigates why China rejects the universal values that are espoused by the West.

## **Conflating Criticism of Westernization and Subversion with Criticism of Universal Values**

### **1. The Debate over Universal Values and the Background to Repression**

The idea of universal values arrived in the Chinese conversation quite recently. The catalyst was an article in the newspaper *Southern Weekend* that reported on developments in the Sichuan earthquake in 2008. On May 22, 2008, *Southern Weekend* carried an item describing relief efforts following the earthquake, saying, in part, that since the lives of citizens are extremely important to the state, “[through its actions, the state] demonstrated to its people and the world that it has accepted the universal values of the international community.” The response to this was vigorous discussion, both for and against this concept of universal values, in both traditional media and online, which

evolved into a long-running debate.<sup>1</sup> A view espoused by some was that China's progress to that point owed itself to an acceptance of the universal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights, and the country would continue to develop if it maintains this direction. The opposing, conservative, view was that universal values remain a Western or capitalist concept that China must reject.

The culmination of this debate was the manifesto Charter 08. Released online in December 2008, Charter 08 urged political reform and proclaimed that "freedom, equality and human rights are universal common values shared by all humankind" and that "democracy, a republic, and constitutionalism constitute the basic structural framework of modern governance." This declaration was signed by 303 democracy activists, scholars, and lawyers, under their own names, and later even more signatures were collected from petitioners within China and abroad. The Hu Jintao government cracked down on this movement and arrested Liu Xiaobo,<sup>2</sup> one of its leaders, taking action to severely repress free speech, removing from the internet all mention of Liu Xiaobo and any content related to Charter 08.

This repressive control exposes important issues closely connected to China's rejection of universal values and the issue of human rights. The control of free speech leads to limitations on speech, but more importantly, the methods used in the crackdown amounted to, in many cases, an invasion of human rights, which provoked condemnation throughout the international community. For example, in July 2015, the news that the authorities had detained and interrogated nearly 250 human-rights lawyers was widely reported in the international media. In July 2017, the world learned of the death of Liu Xiaobo, who was ill with terminal liver cancer, while in detention. The Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee commented that the Chinese government "bore grave responsibility" for Liu's death, and the White House issued a statement stating that "Liu Xiaobo devoted his life to the pursuit of freedom and democracy." Even in the face of international condemnation, however, China has tightened its repression of free speech, continuing to reject universal values.

## 2. Wariness of the West: Why Does China Distinguish between Universal Values and

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Zhang Yinglin and Kang Fengyun, who have catalogued trends in the study of universal values between 2008 and 2013, various opinions were can be found expressed during this time. For example, this range includes statements that there are no universal values in human society; there are no absolute universal values, but only relative universal values exist; and universal values exist in human society. (Zhang, Yinglin. and Fengyun Kang. (2013), "Study of on 'Universal Values': The Last 5 Years of Domestic Research Achievement," *Academic Bulletin of Shentou University*, Vol. 29 No. 2.).

<sup>2</sup> Liu Xiaobo was a well-known human rights activist and the winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. He played a central role in negotiations with the military during the 1989 Tiananmen incident and became a symbol of the democracy movement in China.



## Core Socialist Values?

At the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held in November 2012, then-General Secretary Hu Jintao said, “We will lay down the foundations for the socialist core value system.” According to the “Guideline on Cultivating and Observing Core Socialist Values” issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee in December 2013, the “core socialist values” found a moral ideology that exists on three levels: at the national level, riches and power, democracy, civilization, and harmonious discourse; at the social level, freedom, equality, fairness, and the rule of law; and at the personal level, patriotism, industriousness, integrity, and friendship. At least on paper, these values, as espoused by the CPC and the state, resemble the Western idea of universal values. Democracy and freedom are included in the CPC list, although they have a different meaning than is common in the West. They are in fact positioned as unique concepts that match the given domestic situation of China, and Xi Jinping’s government upholds the core values of socialism, as stated.

Why then does the CPC overtly deny the Western idea of universal values? Some historical background is required to come to an understanding of this attitude. At the end of the 1970s, China adopted a policy of increased openness, prompting a flow of science, technology, and capital into the country from abroad. Information about economic conditions in industrialized nations and the workings of the market economy flowed in as well, along with news of political conditions and ideas. These effects accelerated moves to introduce diversity and political reforms into Chinese society. These included the so-called “Beijing spring,” lasting from the fall of 1978 to March 1979; a pro-democracy movement led by Fang Lizhi and others that was active from fall to winter 1986; and the pro-democracy drives that were ongoing from the second half of 1987 until the military crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests in June 1989, which provided the final denouement. The official view put forward by the PRC government was that the incident was the result of a plot by Western countries that were attempting to overthrow the government by peaceful means and that it was a rebellion in response to a call for “bourgeois freedom” from within the country. CPC leadership feared that, if a liberal political philosophy—particularly the idea of democratization—spread, such movements would incite the public to demand a reform of the political system. This was viewed as a direct threat to the CPC’s domination, and the response was severe repression.

The CPC regime was already on the receiving end of criticism from the West in the 1980s. This was primarily related to the issue of Tibet, which began to claim attention as if in sympathy with the contemporary pro-democracy movement. Riots broke out all

over Tibet in September and October 1987, and, until 1989, demonstrators were often clashing with police and the military. A major clash between demonstrators and police broke out in Lhasa in March 1989, resulting in Lhasa being placed under a curfew on March 7. The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile began to work to bring the Tibet issue to the forefront of the international conversation, further complicating the situation.

The Dalai Lama's Five-Point Peace Plan, which was announced before the human-rights subcommittee of the United States House of Representatives on September 21, 1987, called for greater respect for fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms. Within the American political scene, this gradually shifted the Tibet issue from a question of the separation of a territory from China and its possible independence to an issue of human rights and democracy. In October 1987, an amended resolution was adopted by the United States Senate that condemned China for trampling on human rights in Tibet. The Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to the Dalai Lama in 1989 further focused international attention on the issue. The international economic sanctions imposed on China after Tiananmen and the discussion in the United States of renewing China's trade status as a most favored nation became linked with conversations around human rights, which continued to dog Chinese diplomacy throughout the 1990s. As is clear from the foregoing, makes clear, the lesson learned at this time, that the influence of Western political philosophy could destabilize the CPC governance, lay at the root of China's rejection of Western universal values.

### 3. The Politics behind the Xi Government's View of Values

Following the global financial crisis of 2008, China realized that it was a major economic power, and as the international community came to acknowledge this status, Xi Jinping, who assumed power in 2012, began talking about something he called the Chinese Dream. While his government continued to adhere to the concept of "restoring the greatness of the Chinese nation," in his statements, Xi emphasized the distinctive characteristics of China to a much greater extent than his predecessors did. For example, at an August 2013 National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, Xi emphasized China's uniqueness, saying that "to explain and comment on China's distinctness, we must clearly state that the ethnic groups that make up this nation, our history and traditions, our cultural achievements and the basic conditions within our borders are not uniform but naturally acquired different characteristics as they developed" (Yamamoto, 2014).

Interestingly enough, the criticism of the "Westernization and subversion"

[xihua-fenhua] that were imputed to outside hostile forces grew at the same time as the increased emphasis on the distinctive characteristics of China. At the close of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 15th CPC Central Committee on September 15, 1999, Jiang Zemin declared his opposition to “political intrigue by outside hostile forces and separatist elements within the country aiming to advance Westernization or subversion.” This criticism of the West, which was common during the 1990s,<sup>3</sup> abated in the 2000s, although it has come to the fore again in the 2010s.

This certainly was true of a major speech that was delivered by Hu Jintao at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee in October 2011. This speech was reported in January 2012 by the CPC party magazine *Qiushi*, and in reading this account, it is clear that Hu took a wary posture toward the West, emphasizing the need to strengthen socialist ideology, saying, “What we must clearly recognize is that hostile outside forces are devising even stronger strategies for Westernizing or subverting this country and that they are concentrating on penetrating our thought or our culture as part of their long-range plan. We must realize the importance and complexity of the fight in the ideological realm” (Hu, 2012).

The Xi government inherited this perception, and its repression of free speech is even stronger than it had been. In May 2013, the Central Committee General Office issued an internal directive (so-called Central Document No. 9). This document, which concerned ideological control, called for vigilance against Western anti-Chinese forces and domestic dissidents spreading the “seven perils”: ideas of Western constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society, new liberalism, Western media views, historical nihilism,<sup>4</sup> and doubts about economic liberalism. These seven subjects were off limits and university professors in Beijing and Shanghai were cautioned not to discuss them with students.

Those providing the theoretical background for the CPC’s view also espoused the New Left movement in political thought. Leading members included Hu Angang and Wang Shaoguang, who, in a 2011 book, maintained that universal values accompany one model of development among many, but China’s leaders had never believed in the existence of any universal model or universal values that could be applied throughout the world and China had achieved its own mode of development in a practical sense.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Jiang Zemin’s statements regarding “Westernization and subversion” have been collected and published in *Qiushi Lilun* (Chinese), March 20, 2010. Accessed at [http://www.qstheory.cn/zl/llzz/jzmlyzqts/201003/t20100320\\_24745.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/zl/llzz/jzmlyzqts/201003/t20100320_24745.htm), July 29, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> “Historical nihilism” implies negative criticism of the CPC’s past and denial of the official party line on this subject.

<sup>5</sup> This part comes largely from the publication by Wang Shaoguang, Hu, Angang, Zhou, Jianming, and Han, Yuhai. (translated by Nakanishi Makoto) of “China’s Path to Development and the Communist Party

Meanwhile, criticism of Westernization also strikes a chord among ordinary citizens: among middle- and lower-income groups, there is anti-Western sentiment because they are dissatisfied with changes in society appearing after the shift to a market economy. They have experienced growing economic inequality and declines in social morality: people have come to worship money.

Viewed in an opposite context, the sense of crisis felt throughout China regarding “Westernization and subversion” constitutes proof of the growing influence of the international community on Chinese society through globalization and the existence of groups within China that are agitating for political change. For that reason, Xi Jinping, although his leadership is more confident now that China is an acknowledged great power, continues to restrict free speech to an even greater degree, while, at the same time, he is working to develop new values as an alternative to the universal values held by the West.

## **The Origins of Criticism of the West in Chinese Nationalism**

### **1. Existing Research: Nationalism and Anti-Western Sentiment**

This section examines how the West has been discussed in the context of Chinese political history. Here the West refers to the most industrialized nations, including Japan, which was part of the West within the Cold War framework and which highly influenced the development of Chinese nationalism. Here, I will discuss the connection the West has with the development of Chinese nationalism.

The existence of anti-Western sentiment in today’s Chinese society is due, first of all, to the historical trauma caused by the Great Powers’ invasions,<sup>6</sup> with the war of resistance against Japanese military incursions creating a major catalyst for the unification of the country. Considering these origins of Chinese nationalism, it follows that Chinese nationalism would be negatively disposed toward Western countries, including Japan. Even in Japan, the view that the origins of the anti-foreign feelings in Chinese nationalism can be found in the modern history of these two countries is widely shared.

A considerable body of research has focused on the revival of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s and has attempted to assess its political impact. Regarding xenophobia and taking into account the late Qing dynasty attempt to establish Western-style statism, Zheng Yongnian, explained the creation of a this “new nationalism”, which began in the 1980s, in this way. After adopting a policy of economic liberalization, China initially

---

of China” (Japanese), Duan Press, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Zheng claimed, using examples of political friction between China, the United States, and Japan, that historical memory influenced international-relations policies (Wang, 2014).

followed a process of modernization that was modeled on Western development. In the 1990s, however, Chinese elites began to perceive that the West was negatively impacting Chinese traditional culture, which interfered with China's development. According to Zheng, those who viewed Westernization negatively and rejected it began to create a Chinese-style model of development. The emergence of this so-called New Left was coupled with the collapse of the structures of the Cold War and revived nationalism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, in the form of a popular nationalism that was in opposition to the West (Zheng, 1999). Chen Zhimin, meanwhile, explained the xenophobia of Chinese nationalism from 1979 to the present in terms of varying intensities of positive nationalism, whose end was to achieve an unfulfilled national mission of economic development, nation-building, political unity, and independence, and the realization of a greater China (Chen, 2005).

The main points of these two approaches have been dealt with by previous studies, but few of these actually discussed the dynamics of anti-Western sentiment in Chinese nationalism.<sup>7</sup> In fact, a re-examination of the attitudes toward outsiders taken by China since its modern foundation shows that at certain times, there was no direct connection between rising nationalism and strengthening xenophobia. Even though patriotism was on the rise in the 1980s, for example, public opinion toward the West (and especially toward Japan) was conciliatory (Eto, 2014). The years leading up to the Beijing Summer Olympics (2006–2010) did witness rising nationalism, but opinion surveys indicated that sentiments with regard to Japan were improving (The Genron NPO, People's Daily Press, 2014). While more aggression became visible in Chinese diplomacy after 2010, it has been shown that domestically, popular nationalism was not strengthening at that time (Johnston, 2017). This phenomenon cannot be explained simply by the assertion that stronger Chinese nationalism feeds anti-Western sentiment.

For these reasons, I will attempt to explain the dynamics of political changes in Chinese nationalism and their impact on China's international-relations policies. Given spatial limits, however, my examination will focus on official nationalism, which within China is often treated as patriotism, as it defined by the CPC and the Chinese state.<sup>8</sup> Because overheated popular nationalism, as manifested by rioting, often collides with the ideology of CPC and the Chinese state ideology, I will also touch on the official

---

<sup>7</sup> In her recent article, Yinan He argued "national identity can shift as a function of an elite." (He, 2017).  
the West, 2003–2012  
strategy to exclude internal others through opposition to foreign others"

<sup>8</sup> The validity of this study is confirmed by the following two points: first, because Chinese nationalism is tightly controlled by the CPC and the Chinese state and is essentially a "top-down" nationalism; second, because official nationalism exhibits confidence that it reflects popular sentiment and in fact is even occasionally adjusted to match changes in popular nationalism.

nationalism's limitations of as a means of influencing public opinion.

## 2. The Four Elements of Chinese Nationalism

In this study, I treat Chinese nationalism as a comprehensive political ideology. I find that unifying force of official nationalism,<sup>9</sup> as determined by the CPC and the Chinese state, consists of the following four elements:<sup>10</sup>

1. Ethnic identity: subsuming the various peoples existing within China's borders into the greater body of "the Chinese people," a concept based on the idea of ethnic identity
2. Socialism: founding the national identity as the expression of a socialist state, guided by socialist ideology as the unifying force
3. Economic growth: directing the people toward a shared goal of economic growth for to improve living standards
4. Chinese "greatness": developing a shared awareness of China as a great country to function as a unifying force

Under the CPC and the Chinese state, official nationalism has undergone three main qualitative changes since the 1970s, as a result of the CPC's own changing political positions, taken up in response to immediate circumstantial requirements. When Deng Xiaoping introduced the principles of the market economy to enrich and strengthen China, the CPC initiated a "united patriotic front" campaign, creating a new concept of patriotism as the heir to socialism and, at the same time, the advocating development. This phrase, united front, had formerly referred to the unified, organized resistance against the Japanese incursions during World War II: according to this policy, all resistance forces in China, including the Kuomintang, joined hands and fought against the Japanese. Creating an analogy to this time, Deng Xiaoping defined those participating in the united patriotic front as "socialist workers, starting with the leaders of the working classes—the worker and peasant federations—and the patriots who protect socialism," (CPC central literature laboratory, 1992: 523–524), making patriotism the only requirement for joining the movement.

Next, the Jiang Zemin government, shocked to realize that the main body

---

<sup>9</sup> Official nationalism refers to politically motivated nationalism, which is intended to unify the public. With this definition, Anderson explains that the process of China's transformation from a dynasty to a nation state in the 19th century, to maintain the legitimacy of royal authority, formerly dominant classes tried to "naturalize" their own loyalty and that of the populace's national (Anderson, 2007: 146–148).

<sup>10</sup> The details are provided in Eto (2014).

challenging the CPC in the Tiananmen protests was the public, added further support to socialist ideology-based party leadership and unified public opinion within the country by propagating patriotic education.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that the promulgation of this patriotism and resistance to hostile outside forces were found together. For example, at the Fourth Plenary Session of the 13th Central Committee, Jiang Zemin said, “in the years [since the introduction of economic reforms], erroneous ideas, and in particular corrosive Western bourgeois thinking, have become prevalent. It is obvious that this is now a serious issue.” Jiang believed that the entry of Western ideas into China that began following economic liberalization posed a threat and advocated education on domestic conditions (CPC central literature laboratory, 1991: 547–554).

Anti-Western sentiment in Chinese society only grew in the 1990s, with the publication of nationalistic bestsellers like *China Can Say No*. Anti-Americanism, in particular, strengthened: demonstrations erupted to protest the accidental bombing by the United States of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and there were heated mutual denunciations in the wake of a midair collision between a United States Navy EP-3E intelligence aircraft and a Chinese Navy interceptor fighter jet. As a result, anti-Western sentiments increased in both official and popular nationalism between the 1990s and the early 2000s.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the CPC and the Chinese state became more aware of the dangers posed by popular nationalism, which was often being turned to nonconstructive ends; at the end of the decade, a new official nationalism was devised to reassert control: “restoring the greatness of the Chinese nation.” In a speech on October 1, 1999, on the 50th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, Jiang Zemin declared that “the people have risen, ever since [the PRC was founded], and the glorious development of the Chinese people has entered a new era.” He also expressed, “the Chinese people, stronger than ever, will take their place among the peoples of the world.”<sup>12</sup>

The CPC created the restoration of the greatness of the Chinese nation as a goal, orienting it as an outcome longed for by the Chinese people, who had already overcome so many trials and which would be achieved by contemporary citizens. Asserting that China would regain its power and prestige, which had always existed and was only temporarily eclipsed, was used to shape a public opinion that would rest on the notion

---

<sup>11</sup> In Central Document No. 7, the “Outline for Implementing Patriotic Education” issued on August 23, 1994, the objective was that “patriotism must be the main theme, in order to promote an atmosphere of fervent patriotism, and the people must be exposed to and educated about the ideology and spirit of patriotism in every aspect of their daily lives (CPC central literature laboratory, 1996: 919-933).

<sup>12</sup> *Beijing Zhoubao* (Beijing Review) 1999 (No. 42), 8-9.

of China as a great country.

Hu Jintao, who assumed power in 2002, inherited the idea of “restoring the greatness of the Chinese nation.” In a September 3, 2005, speech on the 60th anniversary of victory in the Chinese war of resistance and the defeat of Japanese militarism, Hu spoke of “the great spirit of the Chinese people, with patriotism at its core,” posing the inseparability of patriotism and ethnic identity to the public consciousness (People's Daily, September 4, 2005). This statement was a contribution to the propagation of a new official nationalism centered on the great country theory and the national goal of further economic growth.

These nationalist elements were introduced at different times. The elements of ethnic identity and socialism were already part of official nationalism at the founding of the PRC, and the element of economic growth was introduced by the economic reforms of the late 1970s. The newest element, the promotion of the great country, is one that many Chinese had already subscribed to but was only being clearly enunciated within official nationalism at the end of the 1990s. Today, this element is strongly reflected in Xi Jinping’s statements concerning the Chinese Dream.

### 3. The Dynamics of Anti-Western Sentiment

Taking into account that Chinese nationalism often features strongly anti-Western sentiments, the four elements of Chinese nationalism described earlier can be expanded to incorporate these negative perceptions of the West:

1. Ethnic identity: The sanctioned historical interpretations of the period of the founding of the PRC fostered animosity toward the Western/Great Powers, particularly Japan, and this had the effect of impeding movements toward increased ethnic independence. Since a shared historical consciousness is part of the foundation of Chinese identity, the Chinese react strongly to historical interpretations that involve Japan.
2. Socialism: During the Cold War, China developed a hostile attitude toward Western capitalist countries. After the country’s shift to a market economy in the 1980s, attention moved to the political sphere, leading to criticisms of “Westernization and subversion” beginning in the 1990s.<sup>13</sup> “Socialism with

---

<sup>13</sup> “Westernization” here refers to the acceptance of universal values, such as democracy, freedom, and so forth, as espoused by the West. “Subversion,” in the literal sense, refers to movements to tear countries apart, although here it refers to anti-government sentiment in minority autonomous regions, especially Tibet and Xinxiang. In other words, the crisis implied by fears of “Westernization and subversion” comes from the perception that hostile foreign elements are strategically propagating erroneous ideas and



Chinese characteristics” subsequently became a key phrase for China’s model of economic development.

3. Economic growth: Pursuing an international climate that is favorable to economic growth, has let China to adopt a conciliatory attitude toward Western countries.
4. China as a “great country”: Although it remains dissatisfied with its inferior status, as it became a great country, China emphasized peaceful emergence and followed a policy of cooperation with the international community. Since 2008, when it gained confidence in its status as a major economic power, however, China has become more assertive about the rights it possesses that relate to its national interest. Conflicts could arise where something threatens those interests. China has confidence in its own type of political and economic system.

Taking these characteristics into account, we can see that the dynamics of anti-Western sentiment in Chinese nationalism have changed over time. From the founding of the PRC up to the 1970s, China perceived the West negatively: both because of the trauma inflicted by the Great Powers and because of the global confrontation between East West during the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> This is the main source for the aspects of ethnic identity and socialism aspects in official nationalism.

The economic reforms that began to take effect in the late 1970s stimulated expectations and aspirations among many government officials and academic experts oriented to the advanced economies of the West. In line with the economic growth aspect of nationalism, Deng Xiaoping proposed a new “united patriotic front” at that time to encourage the people to become involved in economic development. In this approach, the CPC and the state maintained a cooperative diplomatic stance toward Japan and the Western countries, stressing the economic issues, and anti-Western sentiment was quiescent. Resurgent focus on ethnic identity as part of the united patriotic front campaign and a retrospective look at history led to friction with Japan over the contents of Japanese history textbooks and worship by Japanese government ministers at Yasukuni Shrine, where some Japanese war criminals are enshrined, but the overall positivity of attitudes toward the West meant that these issues were not major impediments for Sino-Japanese relations.

---

spreading foreign cultures to destroy China from within.

<sup>14</sup> For example, in 1938, Mao Zedong said “Party members must think of patriotism and internationalism as belonging together. We are internationalists and nationalists at the same time” (CPC Publishing Committee for Selection of Mao Zedong, 1968: 279-280). The internationalism mentioned here relates to the international solidarity of workers, but in the specific context of Mao’s remarks, it refers to the liberation of the peoples of the world through the destruction of imperialism in China through the victory of the anti-Japanese resistance forces.

With the Tiananmen Square protests and the contemporaneous development of the movement for Tibetan independence in the late 1980s, Jiang Zemin came to believe that separatists and hostile foreign forces were taking advantage of ethnic and religious tensions within China. At an enlarged meeting of the Central Military Commission in 1995, Jiang declared, “of course we cannot stay idle in the face of hostile Western forces.” In the 1990s, the government also promoted patriotic education, and criticism of hostile Western forces increased due to a resurgent national sense of ethnic identity and socialism. Popular nationalism intensified anti-Western sentiments and rioting and destructive behavior that expressed opposition to the United States and Japan increased in the late 1990s.

In the context of this deterioration of esteem for Western countries, the “restoring the greatness of the Chinese nation” propaganda campaign was rolled out at the end of the 1990s. The great country element in this campaign stressed that China was a responsible actor that was contributing to world peace, and it emphasized the cooperative relationship China had with the international community. At the same time, the campaign also propagated a sense of the country as one of the victors of World War II, to calm populist feeling. This manipulation of public opinion by the state—not just concerning less visits to Yasukuni Shrine by members of the Japanese Diet—was why the troubled question of history between the two countries was featuring less prominently by the late-2000s.

Since the 2010s, Xi Jinping has been weaving the concept of the uniqueness of China into expressions of the Chinese Dream. This, using Marxist ideology, emphasizes China’s distinctness and offers a vision of China as a great country that does not need a Western political model any longer, now that it is a powerful economy. This image is an attempt to exert social control through strong political control. It is difficult to judge how much success this approach has had at this point, but the discussion clearly aims to establish a differentiation from the methodologies employed by the West. As long as this idea is coupled with criticism of Westernization, anti-Western passions may well arise again. Xi’s policy of rejecting the universal values of the West is an extension of this.<sup>15</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The Chinese government’s repression of the spread of Western universal values

---

<sup>15</sup> The Xi administration has already launched a government campaign to construct systems of discourse [*huayu tixi*] to boost China’s discourse power. See Naoko Eto (2017), “China’s Quest for Huayu Quan: Can Xi Jinping Change the Terms of International Discourse?” The Tokyo Foundation, *Views on China*. Available at <http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2017/china2019s-quest-for-huayu-quan-can-xi-jinping-change-the-terms-of-international-discourse>.

and its actions against the presence of an increasing diversity of values within its society go hand-in-hand: the more that diversity in political thought takes root within China through the spread of globalization, the stronger the criticism of “Westernization and subversion” becomes. In other words, liberal values, which are mainly espoused by the intelligentsia, have to some degree penetrated Chinese society, but the largest result of this is the provocation of even more stringent crackdowns by the CPC and the Chinese state.

Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has been wary of declarations of universal values, particularly those of democratization and human rights. In the 1990s, criticism of “Westernization and subversion” took center stage in government discourse, and universal values were rejected in the renewed 2008 debates over the direction of the country. In the present decade, not only has China rejected universal values, it attempts to force the international community to acknowledge a new discourse, developing alternatives to Western values based on a strong sense—cultivated by Chinese nationalism—of China as a great country. In other words, Xi Jinping, building on the precedent image of China as a great country, using the four elements of official nationalism discussed in this paper, is forcefully working to reshape public opinion. Diversity has developed somewhat in Chinese society, but in the context of grand theories of nationalism that were developed to change existing Chinese society into a more cohesive one, China doubtless continue to reject universal values.

## Reference

- Anderson, Benedict. (1991), *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Revised and extended ed.), London: Verso.
- Chen, Zhimin. (2005), "Nationalism, Internationalism and Chinese Foreign Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.14, issue42 (February 2005), pp.35-53.
- CPC central literature laboratory ed. (1991), *Important Documents since The 13th National Congress* (Chinese), Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- CPC central literature laboratory ed. (1992), *Chronological record of Deng Xiaoping 1975-1997* (Chinese), Beijing: Central Party Literature Press.
- CPC Publishing Committee for Selection of Mao Zhedong ed. "CPC's status during the National War (Oct. 1938)," *Selection of Mao Zhedong* Vol.2, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Eto, Naoko. (2014), *Japan in the Context of Chinese Nationalism: The Transformation of "Patriotism" and the Issue of Differing Historical Perspectives* (Japanese), Tokyo: Keiso Shobo.
- Genron NPO and China Daily. (2014), *The Japan-China Joint Opinion Survey 2014*, accessed at <http://www.genron-npo.net/world/genre/tokyobeijing/10-7.html>.
- He, Yinan. (2017), "Domestic troubles, national identity discourse, and China's attitude towards," *Nations and Nationalism*, December 2017, pp.1-26.
- Hu, Jingtao. (2011), "Adhering to the Socialist Cultural Development Path with Chinese Characteristics and Striving to Build a Country with a Strong Socialist Culture (October 18, 2011)," *Qiushi Lilun*, accessed at [http://www.qstheory.cn/zywz/201201/t20120101\\_133218.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/zywz/201201/t20120101_133218.htm).
- Johnston, Alastair Ian. (2017), "Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing," *International Security*, Vol.41, Issue 3 (Winter 2016/17), pp.7-43.
- Wang, Zheng. (2012), *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Yamamoto, Kenji. (2014), "Chinese journalism, Ideology and campaign for defending constitutionalism," *Journalism and Media* (Japanese), Vol7 (Mar 2014), pp. 386-394.
- Zheng, Yongnian. (1999), *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and International relations* (Cambridge Asia-Pacific Studies), New York: Cambridge University Press.

## Note

This article is based on the author's previous works in *Asian Studies* 61(4), 2015, and *Ajiken World Trend* No. 266, 2017 (both in Japanese).

## Profile of the Author

**Naoko Eto** 江藤名保子

Education: Ph.D. in Law, Keio University, 2013

Current Position: Research Fellow, East Asian Studies Group, Area Studies Center,  
Institute of Developing Economies (IDE), Japan External Trade  
Organization (JETRO)

Research field: Chinese Policy, Japan-China Relations, International Relations  
in East Asia

Webpage: [http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Researchers/eto\\_naoko\\_en.html](http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Researchers/eto_naoko_en.html)

# Contemporary Japan and East-Asian Studies

**Date of Publication: April 1, 2018**

**Publisher: Society for Contemporary Japan and East-Asian Studies**

**Editorial Office:**

**Editor in Chief: Yasuhiro MATSUDA, Ph.D**

**Vice Editor in Chief: Urara SHIMIZU, Ph.D**

**Vice Editor in Chief and Executive Editor: Wei-Hsiu Huang, Ph.D**

**Assistant Editor: Iying WEI**

当代日本与东亚研究 2017年8月1日创刊

出版日：2018年4月1日

出版者：当代日本与东亚研究会

编辑部：

主编：松田康博

副主编：清水 丽

副主编兼执行编辑：黄 伟修

助理编辑：魏 逸瑩

# 当代日本与东亚研究

第2卷第3号 2018年4月

<http://jeast.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>

中国政治中之反西方情绪：  
为何中国无法接受普世价值

当代日本与东亚研究会 编印