

China's Pragmatic Nationalism: Is It Manageable?

China's rise as an economic, political, and military power has been accompanied by an outburst of nationalism among its population. In his recent book, while acknowledging that China has "legitimate grievances" against Western powers, China watcher Peter Gries warns that an emotionally popular nationalism empowered by "victim narratives ... [is] beginning to influence the making of Chinese foreign policy."¹ Sure enough, many in the West were shocked earlier this year to discover an Internet posting with more than 20 million Chinese signatures opposing Japan's bid to join the UN Security Council. In early April 2005, thousands of Chinese protesters demonstrated in major Chinese cities, enraged over Japan's approval of history textbooks that protestors claim whitewashed Japan's wartime atrocities, as well as Japan's recent pledge to help the United States defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack. In May 2005, Beijing's dramatic last-minute cancellation of a meeting between Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chinese vice minister Wu Yi to protest Koizumi's contentious visits to the war-tainted Yasukuni Shrine, which serves as a memorial for Japan's war dead, including convicted World War II criminals, plunged relations between Beijing and Tokyo to a perilous low.

Whereas some observers have been cautious about exploring its limits and determining its motivations, others have decried this rise in nationalism as a reckless movement driven by China's traditional Sino-centrism and contemporary aspirations for great-power status. Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro have previously admonished that, "[d]riven by nationalist sentiment, a yearning to redeem the humiliations of the past, and the simple

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urge for international power, China is seeking to replace the United States as the dominant power in Asia.”² Massive anti-U.S. demonstrations, for example, erupted in front of the U.S. diplomatic missions in China after U.S.-led NATO forces mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999. Many Western observers were astonished by the immediate assumption among the Chinese that the bombing had been deliberate. After a midair collision between a U.S. Navy EP-3 surveillance plane and a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea in April 2001, popular nationalist sentiment exploded again. Wang Wei, the Chinese pilot killed in the collision, was quickly declared a “martyr of the revolution” and praised as a heroic defender of the motherland.³

Anxiety is growing in Asia and the West that a virulent nationalism has emerged out of China’s “century of shame and humiliation,” threatening to make China’s rise less peaceful.⁴ Yet, Chinese nationalism is a phenomenon much more complex than the expression of its emotional rhetoric on the streets. Although the Chinese government is hardly above exploiting nationalist sentiment when doing so suits its purposes, Beijing has practiced a pragmatic nationalism tempered by diplomatic prudence. State-led and largely reactive, pragmatic nationalism is not fixed, objectified, and defined for all time; nor is it driven by any ideology, religious beliefs, or other abstract ideas. Rather, pragmatic nationalism is an instrument that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses to bolster the population’s faith in a troubled political system and to hold the country together during its period of rapid and turbulent transformation into a post-Communist society. These leaders have set peace and development as China’s primary international goals and have tried to avoid confrontations with the United States and other Western powers that hold the key to China’s modernization. They have made use of nationalism to rally public support, but they realize that, if allowed to persist unrestrained, nationalist sentiments could jeopardize the overarching objectives of political stability and economic modernization on which the CCP’s legitimacy is ultimately based. The question remains, can Beijing keep this nationalism reined in, or will it begin to accelerate out of control?

The Rise of Alternate Nationalisms

Before the nineteenth century, when China was still an empire, nationalism did not exist. The Chinese political elite begin to embrace modern nationalist doctrines for China’s defense and regeneration only after China’s disastrous defeat by British troops in the 1840–1842 Opium War, which led not only to the eventual disintegration of the Chinese empire but also to the loss of national sovereignty to imperialist powers. Since that time, the na-

tionalist quest to blot out the humiliation China suffered at the hands of imperialists has been a recurring theme in Chinese politics. Almost all powerful Chinese political leaders from the early twentieth century through today have shared a deep bitterness at this humiliation and have determined to restore China's pride and prestige, as well as its rightful place in the world.

In one of its earliest forms during the early twentieth century, Chinese nationalism began not pragmatically, but rather as an ethnic state-seeking movement led by the Han majority to overthrow the Qing Dynasty, under which China was ruled by the Manchu minority. Ethnic nationalism views the nation as a politicized ethnic group and often produces a state-seeking movement to create an ethnic nation-state. After the fall of the Qing in 1911, the Kuomintang (KMT) and then the CCP in 1949 defined China as a multiethnic political community. Today, ethnic nationalism has remained alive only among ethnic minorities on China's frontiers, such as Tibetans, Uygurs, and Mongols, who are denied the right to establish separate states. From Beijing's perspective, these groups pose a serious threat to the unity of a multiethnic Chinese state, and as a result, great care has been taken to suppress ethnic nationalism.

Liberal nationalism was introduced in the early twentieth century as a means to improve China through political and social reforms. It defines the nation as a group of citizens who have a duty to support and defend the rights of their state in the world of nation-states, but also to pursue individual freedoms. After suffering at the hands of the Communists under Mao Zedong, the post-Mao reforms in the 1980s coupled with Deng Xiaoping's call for thought liberation created new opportunities for liberal nationalism to gain greater influence in contemporary China. Although liberal nationalists have identified with the Chinese state in its battle against foreign imperialism, they have not necessarily supported the Communist party, pressing for greater public participation in the political process and challenging authoritarian rule. After the end of the Cold War, liberal nationalists have called explicitly for the adoption of liberal democratic ideals as the best means of promoting China's renewal.

The CCP has found itself criticized as neither confident nor competent enough to safeguard China's vital national interests. Today's Chinese leaders must therefore compete with both ethnic and liberal nationalism to offer its own nationalist vision to build a nation-state and assure that nationalism is a force over which the party maintains control.

Unrestrained nationalism could jeopardize political stability and economic modernization.

A Fragile Legitimacy

The result has been pragmatic nationalism, which considers the nation as a territorial-political unit, gives the Communist state the responsibility to speak in the name of the nation and demands that citizens subordinate their individual interests to China's national ones. As Communist ideology quickly lost its credibility after Deng launched market-oriented economic reform in the early 1980s, the CCP, unable to advance any new ideology as an integrative force, compensated by replacing communism with expedient slogans such as to "get rich is glorious" (*zifu guangrong*). People were urged to consume, seize business opportunities, become entrepreneurs, and to compete openly with one another. Yet when reform in the late 1980s resulted in hardships such as high inflation, corruption, and unemployment and the regime was unable to compensate people for their losses, it was left without an effective ideology or long-term vision with which to inspire its citizens to bear these hardships for the sake of a better future. This situation greatly weakened mass support for the CCP and eroded its basis of legitimacy. Dissatisfaction and demands for democracy culminated in the massive antigovernment demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989 and the regime's subsequent violent crackdown. In the years which followed, finding a way to restore legitimacy and build broad-based national support became the most serious challenge facing China's leadership.

Deng Xiaoping and his successors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, wrapped themselves in the mantle of pragmatic nationalism, which they found remained the most reliable claim to the Chinese people's loyalty and the only important value shared by the regime and its critics. Pragmatic leaders moved quickly to position themselves as the defenders of China's national pride and interests by resisting Western sanctions after the Tiananmen crackdown, promoting China's business interests by entering the World Trade Organization, dissuading Taiwan from declaring independence, and winning its bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. Pragmatic nationalism has resonated with the Chinese people as they have pursued greater wealth, at the same time as the regime's leaders have promoted the quest for power and prosperity. Deng's "cat theory" during the early stages of China's opening after the Cultural Revolution exemplified pragmatism: "a cat, whether it is white or black, is a good one as long as it is able to catch mice." Justified by the slogan "building socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*jianshe zhongguo teshe de shehui zhuyi*), pragmatic leaders have continued to undertake a comprehensive effort to strengthen China by gaining access to the world's most advanced science and technology and establishing commercial and cultural exchanges with the international community, including liberal

democracies. They have also rejected anything, including ideas of liberal democracy, that they deem may threaten the CCP's grip on power and have deemed contrary to "Chinese characteristics."

Pragmatic nationalism identifies China closely with the CCP, rendering the two indistinguishable. Nationalist sentiment is officially expressed as "loving the state" (*aiguo*) or "patriotism or love and support for China" (*aiguo zhuyi*). As the diplomatic historian Michael Hunt has observed, "[B]y professing *aiguo*, [the] Chinese usually expressed loyalty to and a desire to serve the state, either as it was or as it would be in its renovated form."⁵ From this perspective, Chinese pragmatic nationalism is state-centric. The Communist state as the embodiment of the nation's will seeks the loyalty and support of the people for the party just as they would embrace the nation itself.

Pragmatic nationalism identifies China closely with the Communist party.

In the 1990s, Beijing launched an extensive propaganda campaign to educate the people in patriotism. The campaign appealed to nationalism in the name of patriotism as a way to ensure the loyalty of a population stewing in domestic discontent. At the core was "education in national conditions" (*guoqing jiaoyu*), which emphasized how China's unique national conditions make it unprepared to adopt Western-style liberal democracy. The current one-party rule, they claimed, would help maintain political stability, a prerequisite for rapid economic development. Pragmatic leaders' assertions that foreign powers were bullying China were an indication that China's backwardness in economic development should share some blame for its past humiliations and current weakness. Reinforcing China's national confidence and turning past humiliation and current weakness into a driving force for China's modernization, nationalism has become an effective instrument for enhancing the CCP's legitimacy, allowing for it to be redefined on the claim that the regime would provide political stability and economic prosperity.

Global Implications

Chinese people share a deeply rooted historical sense of injustice at the hands of foreign countries, as well as a "dream of a strong China" (*qiangguomeng*). For this reason, the nationalist card is particularly effective when China faces hostility and challenges from abroad. According to one former Chinese senior official, if Chinese people felt threatened by external forces, the solidarity among the Chinese would be strengthened, and nationalism would be

a useful tool for the regime to justify its leadership role.⁶ In fact, even though corruption and social as well as economic problems have undermined the CCP's legitimacy to an extent, many people side with the government when foreigners criticize it, believing that, no matter how corrupt the government is, foreigners have no right to make unwarranted remarks about China and its people. Many Chinese people are upset by U.S. pressure on issues such as human rights, intellectual property rights, trade deficits, weapons

Liberal nationalists have called for popular participation in foreign policy making.

proliferation, and Taiwan because they believe that the United States has used these issues to demonize China in an effort to prevent it from achieving great-power status.⁷

Historically, nationalism has influenced Chinese foreign policy in different ways, with different strains of nationalists pursuing divergent paths to their common goal of returning China to a state of national greatness. Varying nationalist perspectives on foreign policy, each with a different view about the

sources of national weakness and a distinctive approach to revitalizing China, have resulted. Nativism, antitraditionalism, and liberal nationalism are three strands with which the pragmatic nationalists in the current Chinese government must contend.

Nativism traces the roots of weakness to the impact of imperialism on China's self-esteem as well as the subversion of indigenous Chinese virtues, such as Confucian ethics, and calls for a return to self-reliance and Chinese tradition. In terms of foreign policy implications, nativism is often linked with confrontational antiforeignism and xenophobia. Nativists are hypersensitive to perceived foreign insults and militant in their reaction to them. The most extreme examples of nativist antiforeignism in modern China occurred during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, when the hostility toward foreign influence led to the murder of many foreigners, the destruction of stores carrying foreign books and other merchandise, and finally to the burning of the British legation in Beijing and the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s, when Mao pursued a policy of autarchy, isolating China almost completely from the rest of the world. Nativism lost its momentum in the 1980s but has regained some ground among elites who have reacted militantly to the so-called Western hegemony and cultural colonialism since the 1990s. Nativism has also been kept alive among some political elites who have suspected a U.S. intention to prevent China from rising to its rightful place in the post-Cold War world.

In contrast, antitraditionalism holds that China's very traditions, such as a rigid Confucian hierarchy and an inward-looking culture, are the source of

its weakness and calls for their complete rejection while adopting foreign culture and Western models of economic and political development. The antitraditionalists' foreign policy approach is to accommodate a progressive, or modern, international system. In the 1950s, advocates led China to adopt the Soviet model and were willing to accept a Soviet-led Communist world. In the 1980s, antitraditionalists called on the Chinese people to rejuvenate the nation by assimilating Western culture, adopting Western models of modernization, and adjusting to the capitalist world system. To achieve this goal, they demanded a fundamental change in the Chinese mind-set, toward one that supports the spirit of science and democracy.

Since 1989, both nativism and antitraditionalism have found their expressions in liberal nationalism. Nativism has become more acceptable to liberal nationalists as mainstream Chinese intellectual discourse shifted dramatically in the 1990s in response to China's deteriorating relations with major Western countries, particularly the United States, and the Western media's rising advocacy to contain China. Many liberal nationalists came to suspect that the Western powers, particularly the United States and Japan, were conspiring to prevent China from rising to the status of a great power and voiced strong criticisms in response. In fact, liberal nationalism propelled the anti-U.S. demonstrators in May 1999 and the anti-Japanese demonstrators in April 2005. Because of their vocal attacks on Western countries' "evil" intentions, some Western observers have labeled liberal nationalists as neo-authoritarianists who have argued that a centralized power structure must be strengthened to maintain China's social stability and economic development.

This label is simplistic, however, because, even though the CCP regime and the liberal nationalists share the dream of a strong China, the latter group does not identify itself with the Communist state, nor does it stop criticizing the government's policies that limit personal freedoms and political participation. Qin Hui, a professor of history in Beijing, vividly described liberal nationalists' split personality when he wrote that it is not right to be slaves of foreign powers, nor is it right to be slaves of their own state,⁸ reflecting parallel efforts to promote national interests in international politics and individual rights in domestic politics. In the arena of international competition, Chinese people should defend their national rights. In the domestic arena, they should fight for their personal rights of participation against the authoritarian Communist state.

Liberal nationalism increasingly threatens the state's monopoly on power.

Pragmatic nationalism seeks cooperative relations with major powers.

Liberal nationalists have called for popular participation in foreign policy making, an area that has long been a monopolized domain of the state, and they often take on a populist tone in their criticism of the government's foreign policy. In an interview with Wang Xiaodong, a leading liberal nationalist, a Western reporter found that "Wang's nationalism begins, surprisingly for some, with an unequivocal commitment to democracy" because Wang demanded that the Chinese leadership be accountable to the Chinese public for safeguarding national interests.⁹ Wang was angry at the failure of the state-controlled Chinese media to report that Beijing had paid a \$2.87 million settlement for the damage that demonstrators had inflicted on U.S. consular properties in China in 1999 after the U.S. bombing of

the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia. According to Wang, if China were a democracy, the media would have to tell the truth, the government would seek people's consent before making this kind of concession to the United States, and the Chinese people would have the right to vote out of office the leaders they see as inadequately defending their national interests.¹⁰ Liberal nationalists have routinely charged that the current regime has been too chummy with Japan and too soft in its dealings with the United States in recent years.

CCP leaders recognize the dangers that nativists, antitraditionalists, and liberal nationalists pose to China's stable and cooperative relations with the major foreign powers that have held the key to its economic modernization and, in response, have promoted pragmatic nationalism in their conduct of foreign affairs. Pragmatic nationalism has prevailed in China since the inception of market-oriented economic reforms in the early 1980s. Although nativism and antitraditionalism continue to lurk in the background, the increasing assertiveness of liberal nationalism threatens the state's monopoly on power. In turn, Chinese leaders have grown determined to prevent liberal nationalist sentiment from getting out of control and severely damaging China's foreign relations. Pragmatic nationalism takes a middle road. Citing lack of modernization as the reason China became an easy target for Western imperialism in the first place, pragmatic nationalism would adopt any foreign policy approach that could accelerate China's development. It promotes adapting to the changing world and is a nationalistic but interest-driven, not ideological, doctrine.

Pragmatic leaders recognize that the Soviet Union failed largely as a result of its strategy to confront the United States and compete to become the

world's superpower, exhausting its economic and military capacity in the process. In the post-Cold War era, Beijing has envisioned a multipolar community of sovereign nations that mutually respects the principle of noninterference, and it strives to promote the multipolar world, rejecting unipolarity. This position is illustrated by the author of a popular Chinese book, *China Does Not Want to Be Mr. No*, who suggested in 1998 that, as one of the weaker players in a multipolar world, China should not become the second "Mr. No," following in the footsteps of the former Soviet Union by confronting the United States. Instead, China should defend its national interests by conducting shrewd diplomacy, which "requires rationality and calmness."¹¹

Pragmatic nationalism thus seeks a foreign policy approach that defends China's national interests by working to develop cooperative relations with major powers, unlike nativists and liberal nationalists. Pragmatic nationalists' tactics are flexible and their strategy subtle. They avoid appearing confrontational, although they are uncompromising with foreign demands that involve China's vital interests or trigger historical sensitivities such as territorial disputes with Japan or Taiwan's independence claims. Pragmatic nationalism is thus more reactive than proactive, in the sense that pragmatic leaders appeal to nationalism when responding to perceived foreign pressures that are said to erode, corrode, or endanger China's national interests.

Beijing's Efforts to Control Nationalism

Beijing's pragmatists have been cautious to prevent the Chinese people's nationalist sentiment from turning into a criticism of the government's foreign policy. Although some of the Chinese public have called on the government to take a hard line against what they perceive as provocations coming from the United States and Japan on issues such as Taiwan and trade, pragmatic Chinese leaders know that China's economic success depends heavily on integration with the outside world, particularly on cooperative relations with advanced Western countries. Therefore, in discussions of China's rise both in domestic and international forums, these leaders have emphasized principles of peaceful coexistence, peaceful orientation, peaceful ascendancy, and peaceful development. In a speech in New York in December 2003, for example, Premier Wen Jiabao used the concept of "China's peaceful rise" to assure that China would not want to take a confrontational policy against the United States. Later, concerned that using the word "rise" may intimidate Washington, as well as some of China's neighbors, Hu instead used "peaceful development" in his speech at the 2004 Boao forum in Hainan. To reconcile the terms "rise" and "development," Zheng Bijian, a senior aide to Hu, elaborated in his 2005 Boao forum speech that "China has chosen a

strategy to develop by taking advantage of the peaceful international environment, and at the same time to maintain world peace through its development. This is a strategy of peaceful rise, namely, a strategy of peaceful development.”¹²

Acting on these principles, pragmatic leaders have described nationalism as a force whose expression must be “channeled.” For example, the government has restrained or even banned students from holding antiforeign (particularly anti-U.S. and anti-Japanese) demonstrations, at times using

Despite China’s rising-power status, its leaders have a deep sense of political insecurity.

heavy-handed tactics. Beijing had learned its lesson the hard way from its handling of several past crises, including the protests that erupted after the 1999 Chinese embassy bombing in Belgrade. Large numbers of university students demonstrated in front of the U.S. embassy in Beijing and U.S. consulates in other cities, throwing eggs and stones to express their anger. In the beginning, the Chinese government encouraged or at least tolerated demonstrations. The protests quickly

spiraled out of control, however, threatening to damage Sino-U.S. relations but also provoking domestic criticism that the CCP leadership was unwilling to confront the United States.

To warn the demonstrators of the potential damage their actions could cause to China’s national interests, the government-controlled *People’s Daily* reported that various Western countries had issued advisories against traveling to China, a step that hurt both tourism and foreign investment. Two days after the bombing, China’s then-vice president, Hu, delivered a televised speech extending government support for the students’ patriotism but also warning against extreme and destabilizing behavior. Meeting with foreign visitors on May 11, then-President Zemin sought to put an end to the situation by stating that life in China should now return to normal and that it was time to turn a new page in the name of economic necessity.

Just less than two years later, after the U.S. spy plane/Chinese jet fighter midair collision, pragmatic leaders were determined to avoid a resurgence of the post-Belgrade protests. In response to rising nationalist sentiment, Chinese leaders talked tough, but in reality, they followed a more measured policy. Although Beijing’s public stance was uncompromising, demanding that the crew of the spy plane would be released only after Washington issued a formal apology and promised to stop military spying and other provocative activities along China’s coast, Beijing internally decided to “separate the airplane and the crew members” (meaning, to release the crewmembers while holding the airplane in China) and to

prohibit any repetition of the anti-U.S. demonstrations that had occurred in 1999. The leadership moved to censor the vocal anti-U.S. sentiment that had been spreading rapidly on the Internet and, to some extent, in the state-run media. In Beijing and other major cities, the government prohibited demonstrations outside U.S. diplomatic missions and the intimidation of foreigners. As proof of his confidence in the leadership's ability to resolve this incident, Jiang did not cancel a previously scheduled state visit to Latin America and departed four days after the collision occurred. When then-Secretary of State Colin Powell used the words "very sorry," referring to the loss of the pilot and aircraft, Beijing accepted it as a close equivalent to an apology for the whole incident and released the U.S. crew the next day. In a face-saving solution to the problem and as testament to pragmatic leaders' tactical flexibility, the Chinese official media was instructed to translate Powell's phrase as *baoqian*, which differs by just one letter from but has almost the identical meaning as *daoqian*, the Chinese expression of apology that Beijing had initially demanded. China's pragmatic leaders apparently did not alter their tough rhetoric for domestic reasons, but they took necessary measures to avoid confrontation with the United States and to maintain a framework of cooperation with Washington during the crisis.

More recently, officials in Beijing watched anti-Japanese demonstrations unfold in early April 2005 with great alarm, concerned both about the risk of confrontation with a foreign power and that the public's passions could turn against the government. When leaders discovered an Internet posting calling for even larger-scale demonstrations on May 4, the anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, Beijing ordered an end to the demonstrations in late April. The May Fourth Movement, which resulted from the anger triggered by the terms of the Versailles Treaty in 1919 granting Japan control of parts of China's Shandong Province, remains a symbol of social reform, individual emancipation, and resistance to foreign aggression in China. The government sent a blizzard of text messages to cellular phone users in major Chinese cities warning against "spreading rumors, believing rumors, or joining illegal demonstrations."¹³ Law enforcement officers detained several organizers of online petition drives and popular protests. In Shanghai, one major state-run newspaper published a viciously worded editorial warning that anti-Japanese protests were a cover for an "evil conspiracy" to undermine the Chinese government. Police in major cities throughout China went on full alert to prevent a recurrence of demonstrations. Busloads of riot police were stationed outside the Japanese embassy in Beijing, and scores of police patrolled nearby streets. Authorities in Shanghai closed the area around the Japanese consulate to traffic, and hundreds of police stood guard around the building. In another apparent attempt to thwart protests,

Tiananmen Square was closed to the public for a government-organized coming-of-age ceremony for 18-year-olds.

China's pragmatic leaders recognize that nationalism is a double-edged sword. It is both a means to legitimate the CCP's rule and, if not adequately upheld, a means for the Chinese people, particularly the liberal nationalist elite, to judge the performance of the Communist state. As *New York Times* columnist Nicholas D. Kristof observed, "All this makes nationalism a particularly interesting force in China, given its potential not just for conferring legitimacy on the government but also for taking it away."¹⁴ If China's leaders do not deliver on their nationalist promises, they become vulnerable to nationalistic criticism. Nationalism thus could become the regime's Pandora's box. Without constraints, it could produce unexpected consequences. If the Chinese people were to repudiate the regime in the near future, they would very possibly do so for nationalist reasons after a conspicuous failure in the government's foreign policy or economic development program.

Can Pragmatic Nationalism Be Controlled Today?

China has boasted the world's fastest-growing economy in the two decades since the inception of market-oriented reforms and has been at least rhetorically more welcome to the great-power club since the September 11 attacks. Beijing is reluctant to admit its membership, yet because there has been no direct foreign threat to China's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, it has grown more secure and confident in the international arena. With Washington heavily preoccupied with the war on terrorism and notionally embracing great-power cooperation more closely, China has generally dismissed the possibility of a new Cold War.

Chinese leaders today retain a peculiar and persistent sense of insecurity or vulnerability on the world stage, driven mostly by their concern over the post-Cold War ideological conflict between China and the Western powers, particularly the United States, as the rest of the globe's Communist regimes collapse. Despite China's rising-power status, its leaders have not fundamentally changed their pragmatic attitude toward nationalism. As one of the few remaining nominally Communist countries, they have a deeply rooted sense of political insecurity exacerbated by the growing problems of political legitimacy and governance in an increasingly pluralistic society. The CCP perceives a combined challenge coming from foreign forces outside China and liberal nationalists inside, given the Bush administration's intensified calls for democracy promotion and the increasing signs of domestic pressure for political reform toward democratization, as a threat to China's political system and the current regime's survival.

For Western or Japanese analysts who fear that Beijing is inciting a rampant rise in Chinese nationalism, the reality is that Beijing is seeking to rein in rising Chinese nationalism, particularly its liberal strand, while preventing the even more threatening nativist and antitraditionalist strands from emerging. It is certainly not in the government's interest to allow the emotional, nationalistic rhetoric heard on the street to dictate Chinese foreign policy. Although pragmatic leaders have consciously cultivated nationalism as a way to counter elements of Western policy perceived as containment, strong nationalist rhetoric is often followed by prudential policy actions. Beijing talks tough but acts in a highly calculated manner.

Despite the warnings of some China watchers, the rise of nationalism in China has not made Beijing's foreign policy particularly uncooperative or irrational. Of course, the future might be different. Although China has nominally remained a Communist authoritarian state, it is no longer ruled by charismatic leaders such as Mao or Deng who had the authority to arbitrate disputes among the leadership or to set the country's course personally. Current Chinese leaders must cater to a range of constituencies and will be increasingly constrained by rising nationalist sentiment. More than two decades of opening and reform has made the regime more responsive to public opinion. In particular, the telephone and the Internet give the average Chinese citizen instant access to information, as well as new means to express their views, including their nationalist feelings. China's pragmatic leaders have maintained their authoritarian power and prevented nationalism from getting out of hand thus far, but it remains to be seen how long their absolute control can last.

The reality is that Beijing is seeking to rein in rising Chinese nationalism.

Notes

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3. John Pomfret, "New Nationalism Drives Beijing; Hard Line Reflects Popular Mood," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2001, p. A1.
4. See, for example, James Lilley, *China Hands* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); Maria Hsia Chang, *Return of the Dragon: China's Wounded Nationalism* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2001).
5. Michael Hunt, "Chinese National Identity and the Strong State: The Late Qing-Republican Crisis," in *China's Quest for National Identity*, eds. Lowell Dittmer and

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6. Liu Ji, "Making the Right Choices in Twenty-First-Century Sino-American Relations," *Journal of Contemporary China* 7, no. 17 (1998): 92.
 7. See, for example, Liu Kang et al., *Zai Yaomohua Zhongguo de Beihou* [Behind the scenes of demonizing China] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexie Chubanshe, 1996).
 8. Qin Hui, "Zhiyou zhuyi yi minzu zhuyi de qihedian zai nali?" [Where is the convergent point between liberalism and nationalism?], in *Zhishifengzhi lichang: Minzu Zhuyi yu Zhuanxingqi Zhongguo de Mingyun* [The positions of intellectuals: Nationalism and China's future in the transitional period], ed. Li Shitao (Changchun: Shidai Wenyi Chubanshe, 2000), p. 385.
 9. Susan V. Lawrence, "China—The Say No Club," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 13, 2000, p. 16.
 10. Ibid.
 11. Shen Jiru, *Zhongguo Budang Bu Xiansheng: Dangdai Zhongguo de Guoji Zhanlue Wenti* [China does not want to be Mr. No: Problems of international strategy for today's China] (Beijing: Jinri Zhongguo Chubanshe, 1998), p. 62.
 12. Zheng Bijian, "China's Peaceful Rise and New Role of Asia," *China Forum*, Autumn 2005, p. 3.
 13. Joseph Kahn, "Beijing Finds Anti-Japan Propaganda a Two-Edged Sword," *New York Times*, May 3, 2005, p. A3.
 14. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Guess Who's a Chinese Nationalist Now?" *New York Times*, April, 22, 2001, sec. 4, p. 1.