WHAT IS A PATRIOT? A CROSS-NATIONAL STUDY IN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

Patriotism is a pervasive political force. However, not much is known about how people understand what it means to be "patriotic" in the first place. We conduct a cross-country study of mass understandings of patriotism. Through parallel national surveys in two global superpowers—China and the United States—we uncover the substantively different understandings of what it means to be "patriotic" between and within countries, and how the different understandings may map onto different policy preferences. In particular, while the literature draws a distinction between (benign) patriotism and (malign) nationalism, we find that most Chinese respondents—and about a third of American respondents—understand patriotism as nationalism. The nationalistic understanding of patriotism, in turn, corresponds to more hawkish foreign policy preferences. By unpacking folk intuitions about patriotism and mapping them onto existing scholarly debates, we bridge the distance between the academic literature and the mass political behavior it seeks to explain.

Keywords: patriotism, nationalism, national identity, China and the United States, public opinion, foreign policy preferences

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Patriotism is one of the most salient forces in modern politics. Indeed, few citizens would call themselves unpatriotic or tolerate others calling them so. But what does it mean to be "patriotic" in the first place? Many scholars argue that patriotism—the feeling of love for and pride in one's nation (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989)—is conceptually distinct from nationalism (e.g., de Figueiredo and Elkins 2003; Huddy and Khatib 2007), a view also shared among many political leaders who draw a clear line between patriotism and nationalism. Emmanuel Macron, for example, emphasized that "patriotism is the exact opposite of nationalism; nationalism is a betrayal of patriotism" (Reuters 2018). But while patriotism and nationalism are widely studied and debated in political science (e.g., Ariely 2020; Blank and Schmidt 2003; Davidov 2009; Druckman 1994; Herrmann, Isernia, and Segatti 2009; Huddy, Del Ponte, and Davies 2021; Johnston 2017; Mylonas and Tudor 2023; Piwoni and Mußotter 2023; Powers 2022; Theiss-Morse 2009; Weiss 2014), no research to date has systematically explored and provided direct evidence on what it means to be patriotic, in the first place, to the *people* themselves.

We therefore conduct a cross-country investigation of public understandings of patriotism by fielding parallel national surveys in China and the United States. Our case selection is guided by three considerations. First, both countries are substantively important in the international system. Political scientists and pundits have paid considerable attention to nationalism in both countries, as well as how they might reinforce one another as the two superpowers turn more antagonistic toward each other.[1] Second, the two countries are culturally different and have distinct sources of national identity. By comparing mass understandings of patriotism in both countries, we thus shed light on how differently (or similarly) people across the world may understand patriotism. Third, much of the existing literature centers on China and the United States, theorizing the causes and consequences of patriotism and nationalism in either country (e.g., Huddy and Khatib 2007; Johnston 2017; Powers 2022; Quek and Chan 2024; Sinkkonen 2013; Weiss 2014) or both countries (Gries et al. 2011; Ni, Wang, and Quek 2024). Our case selection thus allows us to connect

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1. Mearsheimer (2021), for example, observes a "nationalist backlash under President Trump" (1) and asserts that "the challenges posed to the United States by the rise of China and COVID-19 are likely to reinforce American nationalism" (8). Johnston (2017) suggests that "rising popular nationalism has led many U.S. government officials to worry that the Chinese leadership will engage in diversionary conflict when China's economic growth slows" (8).

our findings to the literature, which has provided guidance on how we might understand Chinese and American patriotism and nationalism, but has yet to explore their subjective meanings to the Chinese and American publics.

Synthesizing the existing literature, we devise a set of questions to gauge—from the standpoint of ordinary citizens—what it means to be patriotic. We find that most Chinese respondents, and a third of American respondents, understand patriotism as nationalism. A large majority of Chinese respondents and nearly half of American respondents conflate patriotism with strong personal identification with the state. Although many scholars and political leaders draw a distinction between (benign) patriotism and (malign) nationalism, many citizens—particularly those in China—conflate the two in their subjective understandings of patriotism. Further, we find that respondents subjected to Patriotic Education in China hold a more nationalistic notion of patriotism, and that this understanding of patriotism correlates positively with hawkish foreign policy preferences.

Our work offers two general contributions. First, we extend the literature on patriotism. Much research has focused on the conceptualization and operationalization of patriotism from the researcher's perspective (e.g., Ariely 2011; Davidov 2009; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Piwoni and Mußotter 2023; Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999), but has yet to investigate, from the citizens' view, what it means to be patriotic. This is an important gap to fill because, as we will explain in the next section, the stakes of mass understandings of patriotism are high in real-world politics. Second, we contribute to the nascent literature on public understandings of politically important and prevalent—yet frequently confused and contested—concepts such as democracy (Davis, Gåddie, and Goidel 2022; Lu and Chu 2021), diversity (Abascal, Xu, and Baldassarri 2021), terrorism (Huff and Kertzer 2018), and sovereignty (Lee, Zhang, and Herchenröder 2024). We document nuanced understandings of patriotism among the masses and suggest that such (mis)understandings may have downstream political consequences. By unpacking folk intuitions about patriotism and mapping them onto existing scholarly debates, we bridge the distance between the academic literature and the mass political behavior it seeks to explain.

THE STAKES OF DEFINING PATRIOTISM

Patriotism is meaningless if not for the masses. After all, the power of patriotism lies in the *people*—how they understand it and act on it. At the same time, however, patriotism is not only a unifying force but also a divisive term. Because of its power to unify and empower the mass public, political entrepreneurs have exploited the contentiousness of the concept and weaponized patriotism as part of their political campaigns.

Many nationalist movements and organizations in the United States, for instance, appear to be based on—and draw on people with—a nationalistic understanding of patriotism. In the 1990s, the Patriot Movement amassed a strong following from self-proclaimed "patriots"—mostly white, right-wing, and working-class males—and promoted political violence as a means to achieve its anti-globalization and pro-separatist ends. These individuals, as ethnographic and journalistic research documents, justified their paleoconservatism as *patriotism* and their militant acts as *patriotic* acts (Gallaher 2003; Neiwert 1999). The tendency of right-wing populists and nationalists to coopt the word "patriot" is also evident in the January 6 Capitol Attack, where rioters branded themselves and their fellow rioters as patriots (CNN 2021). Similarly, Patriot Front, the leading white nationalist group in the United States, emphasizes patriotism and stresses in its manifesto that the American nationhood should be bestowed upon the white culture, history, and identity.

The phenomenon that nationalist movements and organizations exploit patriotism to mobilize political support extends beyond the United States. In Rwanda, the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity changed its name to Rwandan Patriotic Front to mobilize the Hutu majority, before initiating the genocide against the Tutsi minority in 1994 (Mamdani 2001). In Spain, the left-wing nationalist party Podemos brands itself a patriotic party and labels political adversaries as "enemies of the fatherland" and "anti-patriots" (Custodi 2021, 706). In Brazil, supporters of Jair Bolsonaro exploited Brazilian flags and soccer shirts—-domestic symbols of patriotism—as a disguise of their anti-democratic behavior throughout the 2022–23 Brazilian election protests (Flores 2023). The contentiousness of patriotism as a political concept, therefore, generates strategic value for *patriotism* as a political mobilizer.

These dynamics are also exemplified in China. Following the 1989 pro-democracy movement, the Chinese Communist Party set up "patriotic education sites" across China to inculcate the nationalistic idea of "national humiliations," especially in cities with the greatest anti-regime potential (Liu and Ma 2018). Moreover, nationalist protests against Japan and the United States are often dressed up as a form of patriotic activism in China, which places the state in a dilemma because suppression would otherwise appear unpatriotic (Weiss 2014). The government has acquiesced to aggressive collective actions against foreign embassies (Gries, Steiger, and Wang 2016), while officials and state media often label citizens who express highly nationalistic views online as *patriots* (Fang and Repnikova 2018). Such framing of nationalistic behavior as *patriotism*, in turn, helps to normalize and legitimize nationalism among the Chinese public. Recent scholarship argues that popular nationalism helped the state counteract potential public backlash during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it encouraged the mass public to shift the blame onto foreign countries for the public health crisis (Ho 2022).

The political implications of mass understandings of patriotism prompt political elites to clarify or manipulate what it means to be a patriot. For instance, the Chinese Communist Party launched the Patriotic Education Campaign to equate loving the country with loving the party that governs the country (Zhao 1998; 2004). Bill Clinton and Emmanuel Macron, on the one hand, delineated the differences between patriotism and nationalism in their political discourse (New York Times 1994; Reuters 2018).[2] Donald Trump and Ivanka Trump, on the other hand, praised the Capitol Attack rioters as "American patriots," "great patriots," and "incredible patriots" on their media platforms (CNN 2021). Such contestation over the meaning of patriotism among the elites, and the real-world examples provided above, highlight not only the contentiousness of defining patriotism, but also the importance of understanding what patriotism means to ordinary citizens in the first place.

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2. Bill Clinton stressed that nationalism "transform[s] the healthy pride of nations, tribes, religious and ethnic groups into cancerous prejudice" (New York Times 1994). More recently, Joe Biden publicly stressed the importance of "principled patriotism" on Independence Day, which he defined as "a patriotism that recognizes that no person, no party, no interest can take precedent over the American project" (White House 2022).

PATRIOTISM IN THE EXISTING LITERATURE

Given the stakes, scholars have put considerable efforts into conceptualizing and clarifying the meaning of patriotism. Its meaning is generally clear to scholars, especially political psychologists (Huddy and Khatib 2007, 63). Patriotism is typically defined as an "affective attachment to the nation" (Conover and Feldman 1987, 1) or "love for and pride in one's nation" (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989, 271). De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003, 175) define patriotism more broadly by extending the concept to cover one's attachment to national institutions and values.

Patriotism is generally understood as benign and nationalism as malign.[3] This is because nationalism "includes more explicit comparisons between highly valued in-group traits and the devaluation of out-groups" (Johnston 2017, 13–14). Patriots take pride in their country, but they are not necessarily nationalistic such that they place their country above others (Smith and Kim 2006, 127). While patriots and nationalists are both committed to their country, nationalists are exclusionary and even hostile toward others (Druckman 1994, 47–48).[4] As such, nationalism has been viewed by some scholars as a corruption of patriotism (Viroli 1995).

On top of the conceptual differences, the empirical distinctions between patriotism and nationalism are also relatively clear in political psychology. Kosterman and Feshbach (1989), for example, find that patriotism simply "taps the affective component of one's feelings toward one's country" (271) and does not translate ingroup love to outgroup hate, whereas nationalism involves the downward comparisons of other countries vis-à-vis one's own country, thus "reflect[ing] a perception of national superiority and an orientation toward national dominance" (271). De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003) find that "[w]hile nationalists have a strong predilection for hostility toward immigrants, patriots show no more prejudice than does the average citizen" (171). Decompos-

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3. Theorists of liberal nationalism, however, have argued that national identities can foster solidarity and effective governance (e.g., Tamir 2019). Although they would view nationalism as less malign, this form of nationalism is associated with national chauvinism and could potentially create social tensions and outgroup animosity (e.g., Herrmann, Isernia, and Segatti 2009; Huddy and Del Ponte 2019). See also Jones (2014) on "enlightened nationalism" and Powers (2022) on "equality nationalism."

4. Recent work by Powers (2022) argues that "nationalism" might be less exclusionary and hostile in some societies where norms of equality are entrenched.

ing patriotism into "blind" and "constructive" patriotism, Schatz, Staub, and Lavine (1999) find that while nationalism is positively correlated with blind patriotism, it is unrelated to constructive patriotism. Adopting similar but simplified measures, Gries et al. (2011) and Sinkkonen (2013) document similar empirical relationships among Chinese college students.

Given their empirical distinctions, patriotism and nationalism have different implications for national identity and foreign policy preferences. While some scholars have treated patriotism and national identity as similar constructs (e.g., Bar-Tal 1997), others have shown that national identity is in fact distinct from patriotism as well as nationalism (Huddy and Khatib 2007; Theiss-Morse 2009). Blank and Schmidt (2003), for instance, find that "nationalism and patriotism are two different and specific manifestations of national identity" (63). Such distinctions, in turn, have implications for policy preferences. Among European citizens, nationalism increases, but patriotism decreases, support for nationalistic policies—including protectionism, anti-immigration, and anti-European integration (Huddy, Del Ponte, and Davies 2021). Among Chinese college students, nationalism strongly predicts foreign policy preferences, but patriotism does not (Gries et al. 2011; Sinkkonen 2013). Thus, while nationalism implies exclusionary attitudes toward foreigners, patriotism does not.

While the existing literature has conceptually distinguished patriotism from nationalism, some scholars refrain from viewing them as mutually exclusive. An important line of scholarship, mainly from the historical and sociological traditions, conceptualizes different forms of nationhood through the civic–ethnic distinction (e.g., Ariely 2013; Kohn 1944; Kunovich 2009; Larsen 2017). This framework casts doubt on the bipolarity of nation-based attitudes by suggesting that there are more nuanced forms of nation-based attitudes not captured by the patriotism–nationalism dichotomy, such as *constitutional patriotism* (Habermas 1996) that "is explicitly defined by a strong adherence to democratic principles assumed to hold a multicultural society together" (Piwoni and Mußotter 2023, 915) and *cultural patriotism* that underlies the principles of liberal nationalism (Ariely 2011). As such, recent scholarship draws on the civic–ethnic distinction to question the bipolarity of nation-based attitudes, suggesting researchers consider "patriotism as [centering] around the homeland and nationalism around the nation" (Piwoni and Mußotter 2023, 917). In-

deed, individuals can concurrently hold patriotic and nationalistic attitudes (e.g., Karasawa 2002; Kemmelmeier and Winter 2008), and the psychological foundations and sociopolitical attitudes between nationalistic and non-nationalistic patriots can be systematically different (Roccas and Berlin 2016; Satherley et al. 2019).

In this paper, we shift the focus from theoretical conceptualizations of patriotism to its subjective empirical meanings *to the people themselves*. Our goal is not to resolve the academic debate on what the concept of patriotism really is or is not,[5] but to shed light on the *understandings* of patriotism from the standpoint of the masses. We zero in on patriotism, rather than adjacent concepts such as national attachment, for two main reasons. First, patriotism is a politically salient concept. As real-world politicians often invoke the language of patriotism to mobilize the mass public, how citizens understand patriotism has important political implications. Second, studying public understandings of patriotism allows us to speak directly to the academic literature on nationhood. Much of the existing literature distinguishes between patriotism and nationalism from the top down. We contribute to this important and still expanding literature, particularly the nationalism–patriotism distinction paradigm (see Piwoni and Mußotter 2023), by examining their distinction from the bottom up.

SURVEY DESIGN

To investigate what it means to be patriotic in public discourse, we conducted parallel national surveys in March 2022 in the two most influential great powers in the international system—China and the United States. In both countries, we worked with our survey partners to recruit a national sample (1,578 American adults and 1,447 Chinese adults) to match the Census adult population on key demographic variables with quota sampling (see Appendix A for details).

There are challenges associated with collecting quality survey data in China. First is political sensitivity. Concerns about political repercussions make it challenging to conduct public-opinion surveys in China nowadays. Second is social desirability bias. Truthful responses from Chinese citizens could be difficult to elicit when they are concerned about government monitoring of their

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5. Readers interested in this debate may refer to Druckman (1994) and Huddy and Khatib (2007).

survey responses. To overcome these challenges, we protected our subjects by conducting our surveys online and opting out of collecting personally identifiable data. We also emphasized the full anonymity of the survey responses to our respondents before they entered our online survey. The online setting, along with our protection of subjects' anonymity, is particularly important in sensitive environments like China, as social desirability bias is reduced when respondents are able to answer questions in an unobserved and self-administered setting (Chang and Krosnick 2010). Finally, to make sure our measurement was not operationalized in a way that would trigger citizens' concerns about political sensitivity, we pretested our Chinese survey with several native Chinese citizens who were conversant with the sociocultural environment of China.

In the survey, respondents were asked three questions in randomized sequence. For each question, they saw a statement on what it means to be "patriotic," and were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a five-point scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The complete statements, and the corresponding academic references that illustrate how these statements map onto the existing literature, are shown in Table 1.

While our close-ended approach inevitably limits our ability to unpack qualitatively what patriotism means to individual respondents, the main advantage is that it enables us to directly connect lay understandings of patriotism to existing scholarly debates—which is critical as a first stab at the question.[6] Moreover, because our approach imposes a predefined structure, the cross-country comparisons we make would be more meaningful and the analytical challenge from linguistic differences would be more subdued. To further ensure that cross-country comparisons are meaningful and that the findings are not confounded by linguistic differences, four effectively bilingual researchers collaborated iteratively on the translation process before finalizing the Chinese version of each statement. We explain our translation procedure in Appendix B, and make both the English and Chinese versions of survey questions available in Appendix C.

We additionally collected a number of demographic and attitudinal variables. These variables include age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, partisanship, political knowledge, authoritarianism,

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6. For a similar approach, see Abascal, Xu, and Baldassarri (2021); Davis, Gåddie, and Goidel (2022); Huff and Kertzer (2018); Lu and Chu (2021).

Table 1. Question Statements and Correspondence to the Existing Literature

Concept	Statement	Mapping onto the Literature	Illustrative Reference
National pride	"To be patriotic means that one is proud of his or her country."	This statement is consistent with how the literature has operationalized patriotism (e.g., Kosterman and Feshbach 1989; Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999).	Kosterman and Feshbach (1989, 271): patriotism "assesses the degree of love for and pride in one's nation—in essence, the degree of attachment to the nation."
National superiority	"To be patriotic means that one believes his or her country is better than other countries."	This statement highlights a belief in national superiority, which is how scholars have demarcated nationalism in contrast to patriotism (e.g., Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999; de Figueiredo and Elkins 2003; Smith and Kim 2016).	De Figueiredo and Elkins (2003, 175): nationalism "refers to a belief in national superiority and dominance—that is, a commitment to the denigration of the alternatives to the nation's institutions and principles."
National identification	"To be patriotic means that one's personal identity is largely defined by his or her national identity."	This statement conflates the concept of national identity with patriotism and contrasts with the literature, which has shown that national identity is distinct from both patriotism and nationalism (e.g., Blank and Schmidt 2003; Huddy and Khatib 2007).	Blank and Schmidt (2003, 291): "national identity is the more general concept, whereas nationalism and patriotism describe more specific expressions of national identity."

Note: For the Chinese version of the statements, see Appendix C.

cosmopolitanism, and political efficacy. We explain them in detail in Appendix D.

Before reporting the survey results, we note that our design does not allow us to shed light on respondents' subjective beliefs about what *actions* are obligatory to fulfill patriotic loyalty. These actions may range from civic duties such as paying taxes, obeying the law, and participating in politics to more costly obligations such as serving to defend the nation. The cross- and within-country differences in what Chinese and American citizens think are the obligatory behaviors for patriots would have implications for the "nationalism as behavior" literature (Mylonas and Tudor 2021, 118–19) and would therefore be interesting to explore in future research.[7]

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7. Our survey, however, may indirectly capture the likely behaviors Chinese and American respondents think are obligatory for patriots to exhibit. Given the wording of the three statements, respondents understanding patriotism in pride terms may expect patriots to respect or even display the national flag (Skitka 2005); those understanding patriotism in superiority terms may expect patriots to advocate for their country's interests in protests (Weiss 2014); and

RESULTS

Figure 1 summarizes Chinese and American respondents' understandings of patriotism. Most respondents from China (90.7%) and the United States (77.6%) understand patriotism in pride terms (i.e., they agree that to be patriotic means that one is proud of his or her country). However, a majority of Chinese respondents (61.2%) and one-third of American respondents (35.2%) also understand patriotism as nationalism (i.e., to be patriotic means that one believes his or her country is better than other countries). Moreover, most Chinese respondents (85.9%) and half of American respondents (47.7%) understand patriotism in identity terms (i.e., to be patriotic means that one's personal identity is largely defined by his or her national identity).

**Figure 1.** Public Understandings of Patriotism in Pride, Superiority, and Identity Terms
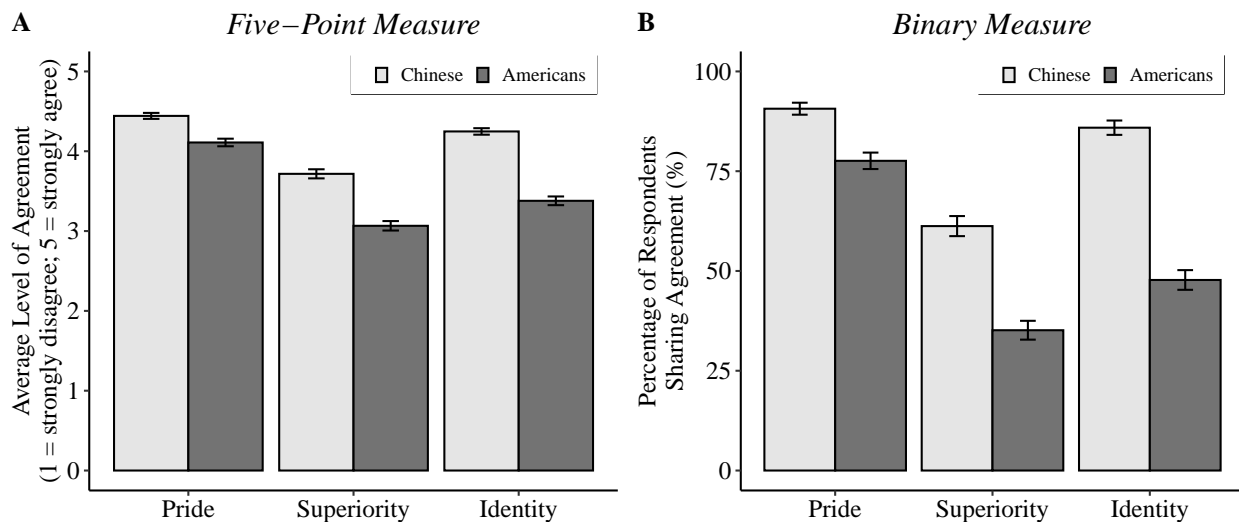
Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

These descriptive statistics highlight two important points. First, a clear majority of Chinese respondents—and a non-negligible number of American respondents—do not draw a distinction between (benign) patriotism and (malign) nationalism in their subjective understandings of patriotism. Second, Chinese respondents are much more likely than American respondents to understand patriotism in nationalistic terms (difference in proportions: +26.1%, $p < 0.0001$, $n = 3,021$) and

those understanding patriotism in identity terms may expect patriots to pay active attention to politics (Huddy and Khatib 2007).

in identity terms (difference in proportions: +38.2%, $p < 0.0001$, $n = 3,022$).[8] While recent research by Woods and Dickson (2017) finds that a majority of urban Chinese citizens are nationalist by expressing agreement with a set of statements that are widely used by political psychologists to measure nationalist attitudes,[9] our data reveal that many Chinese citizens subjectively equate patriotism with nationalism in the first place.

What predicts the different understandings of patriotism? Figure 2 shows the individual-level correlates of different understandings of patriotism (based on the five-point measures) as outcome variables. Two interesting patterns emerge. First, men are more likely than women to conflate patriotism with nationalism (Panel B) and strong personal identification with the state (Panel C) in the United States, but not in China.[10] Second, respondents who were exposed to Patriotic Education[11] in China hold a more nationalistic notion of patriotism, but not for the other notions of patriotism. This empirical pattern highlights the possibility that the nationalistic understanding of patriotism could be influenced or reinforced by the state. It also suggests that the more nationalistic notion of patriotism among Chinese citizens than among American citizens could be a function of state-led campaigns in China.[12]

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8. The cross-country differences are as striking if we turn to the five-point measure. The differences in means of understandings in superiority and identity terms are +0.651 ($p < 0.0001$ from a Welch's t-test with $t(3,019) = -15.53$) and +0.869 ($p < 0.0001$ from a Welch's t-test with $t(2,849) = -25.07$), respectively. The Welch's t-tests (instead of Student's t-tests) are justified because F-tests indicate that the variances are not equal ($F = 1.18$ with $p = 0.0017$ for the former; $F = 1.97$ with $p < 0.0001$ for the latter).

9. Over four-fifths of urban Chinese respondents in Woods and Dickson's (2017) survey either agreed or strongly agreed with each of the following statements: (1) "Generally speaking, China is better than most other countries." (2) "When other people criticize China, it is as though they are criticizing me." (3) "Even if I could pick any country in the world, I would still want to be a Chinese citizen."

10. Investigating why such gender heterogeneity exists in the United States but not in China is beyond our scope, but we believe it will be important for future work to study this phenomenon more closely.

11. The Patriotic Education Campaign is "an effort to inoculate China's youth against an alleged Western ideological 'peaceful evolution' strategy" (Johnston 2017, 7). Following Johnston (2017) and Weiss (2019), we code the population segment subjected to Patriotic Education as those who were fifteen years old or younger when the Campaign began in 1993–94. See Appendix D for more discussion about the campaign and the coding.

12. See the Patriotic Education Law of the People's Republic of China at https://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=42075, particularly Article 3.

Figure 2. Individual-Level Correlates of Different Understandings of Patriotism
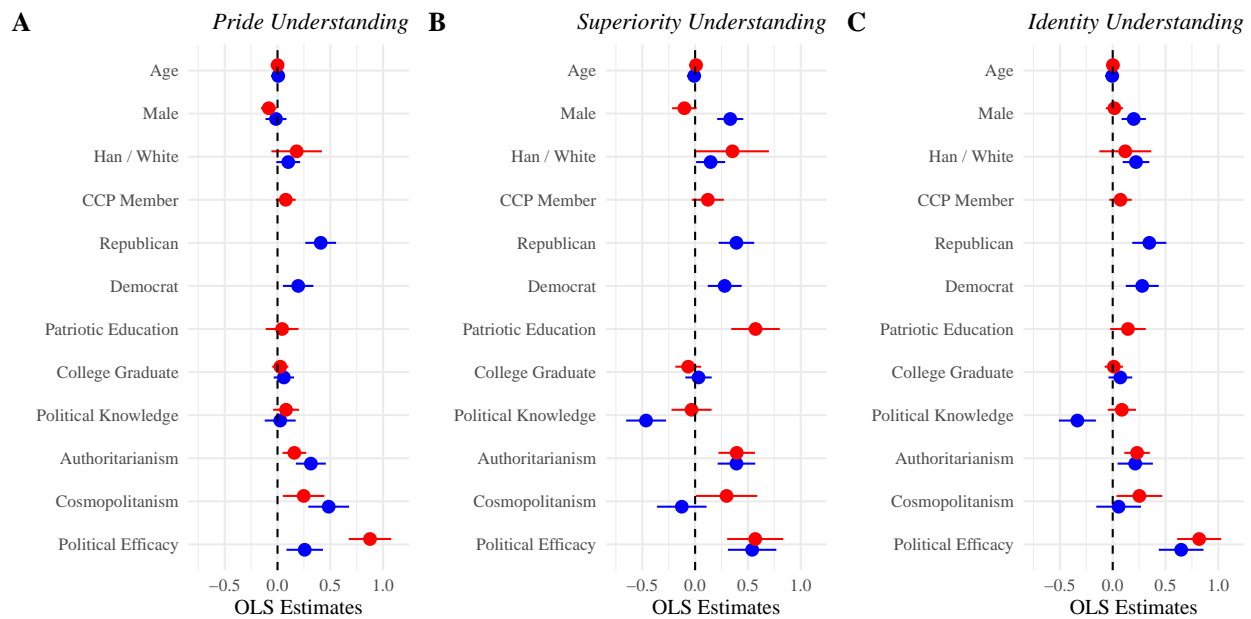
Note: Red indicates the Chinese sample, and blue the American sample. OLS estimates with 95% confidence intervals are based on HC2 robust standard errors. All covariates, except for age, range from 0 to 1. See Appendix D for our coding scheme and Appendix E for full regression estimates.

What, then, are the political implications for a nationalistic understanding of patriotism? We find that respondents conflating patriotism with nationalism also hold more hawkish foreign policy preferences (Figure 3).[13] In contrast, the two other understandings of patriotism are unrelated to, or only weakly correlated with, hawkish attitudes. These results not only suggest the uniqueness and ramifications of the nationalistic understanding of patriotism, but also shed new light on previous findings on the empirical relationship between patriotism, nationalism, and foreign policy preferences. Using psychological scales to measure Chinese students' patriotism and nationalism, Gries et al. (2011) and Sinkkonen (2013) find that while nationalists are less likely to favor international cooperation, patriotism does not predict such preferences. Using similar survey items to measure Americans' patriotism and nationalism, Federico, Golec, and Dial (2005) and Kosterman and Fes-

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13. Drawing on previous work (e.g., Brutger and Kertzer 2018), we measure hawkishness using the following statement: "Going to war is sometimes the only solution to international problems." Answers range from 1 ("disagree strongly") to 5 ("agree strongly"). Past research shows that it is a reliable measure of support for foreign military intervention and that it is empirically distinct from nationalism and other core political values such as morality and equality (Schwartz, Caprara, and Vecchione 2010; Vecchione et al. 2013). We report the full regression estimates, with different model specifications, in Appendix E.

hbach (1989) find that while nationalism predicts higher willingness to the use of military force and lower internationalism, patriotism does not.[14] Transcending the literature's focus on patriots and nationalists (as determined by a battery of psychological scales), we suggest that individuals' *subjective understandings* of patriotism also map over directly to foreign policy preferences: the nationalistic understanding of patriotism is a good predictor of hawkish attitudes, while the more benign understanding is not. While causal relationship is harder to prove (since we did not experimentally manipulate understandings of patriotism and it may not be ethical to do so in the first place), the associational descriptive inference documented here provides direct evidence that how people understand what it means to be "patriotic" may have downstream political consequences.[15] This finding contrasts with one suggestion in the literature that ingroup identification is tightly connected to outgroup derogation (e.g., Falomir-Pichastor and Frederic 2013; Meeus et al. 2010; Mummendey, Klink, and Brown 2001), and provides a new perspective on why it is conceptually and empirically meaningful to treat patriotism and nationalism as distinct constructs (e.g., Blank and Schmidt 2003; de Figueiredo and Elkins 2003; Smith and Kim 2006).

Overall, our results suggest that many ordinary citizens, especially those in China, conflate patriotism with nationalism. Moreover, Chinese respondents subjected to Patriotic Education have a more nationalistic understanding of patriotism. Such an understanding, in turn, corresponds to more hawkish foreign policy preferences—a pattern found not only in China but also in the United States. In an important study, Weiss (2019) finds that "younger Chinese, while perhaps not more nationalist in identity, may be more hawkish in their foreign policy beliefs than older generations" (679). The mechanism, however, remains an open question. Our results shed new light on this question by suggesting that the *subjective superiority understanding* of patriotism may play an important role in contributing to hawkish foreign policy preferences among younger Chinese. To

14. Herrmann, Isernia, and Segatti (2009) also find that both Americans and Italians high in nationalism have particularly strong militarist dispositions. For a review of the relationship between nationalism and foreign policy attitudes, see Mylonas and Kuo (2018).

15. In a recent study, Ko (2022) uses real-world videos as experimental stimuli and finds that Chinese respondents exposed to negative historical memories (which might stoke nationalism) become more hawkish in their foreign policy preferences. Those exposed to national achievements and greatness, however, become less hawkish.

Figure 3. Hawkish Foreign Policy Preferences and Different Understandings of Patriotism
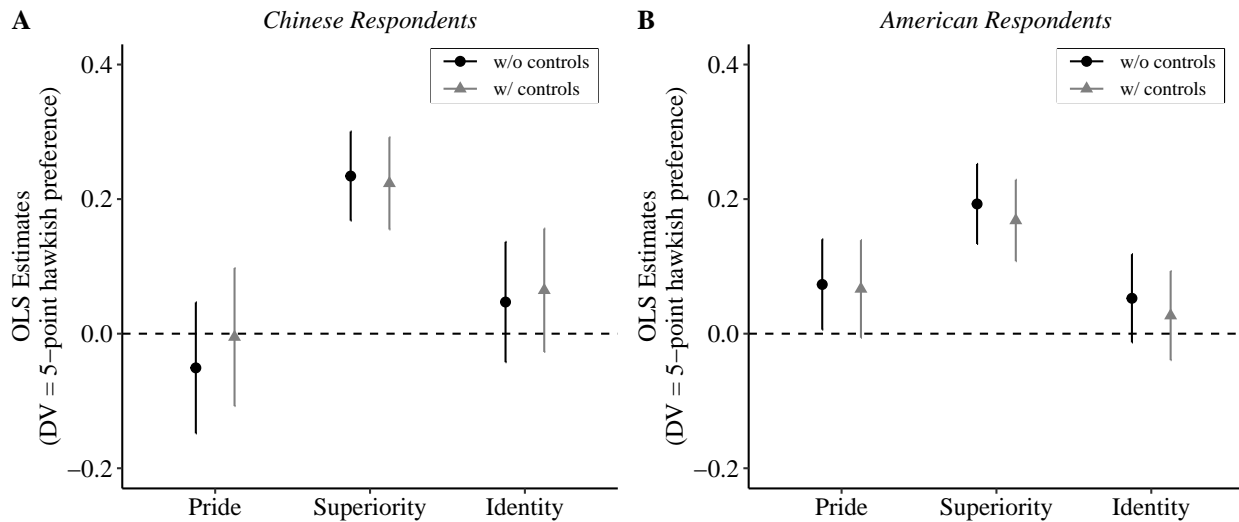
Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

the extent that such a nationalistic understanding of nationalism (which appears to facilitate the formation of hawkish attitudes) persists in China's public discourse, the prospects of cooperative cross-state behavior between China and the other countries would likely be more challenging.

In addition to these analyses, we explored the multidimensionality of patriotic understandings, and documented the results for interested readers in Appendix F.

CONCLUSION

Patriotism is a powerful and pervasive political force. Much has been written on how it should be conceptualized and operationalized. But little is known empirically about how the masses *themselves* understand what it means to be "patriotic" in the first place. We fill the empirical gap by studying whether and how understandings of patriotism differ within and between China and the United States. We find that a nationalistic understanding of patriotism, which corresponds to more hawkish foreign policy preferences, dominates among Chinese respondents but is rejected by most American respondents. Among the respondents in China, those exposed to the government's Patriotic Education curriculum were significantly more likely to understand patriotism in nationalistic terms.

In addition to our contribution to the scholarship on patriotism in particular (e.g., Ariely 2011;

2020; Blank and Schmidt 2003; Davidov 2009; de Figueiredo and Elkins 2003; Huddy, Del Ponte, and Davies 2021; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989; Piwoni and Mußotter 2023; Schatz, Staub, and Lavine 1999) and on lay understandings of contentious political concepts in general (Abascal, Xu, and Baldassarri 2021; Davis, Gåddie, and Goidel 2022; Huff and Kertzer 2018; Lee, Zhang, and Herchenröder 2024; Lu and Chu 2021), our findings also have policy implications. Today, nationalist movements and organizations, such as the Patriot Front in the United States and nationalist protests in China, are often window-dressed as "patriotic" activism. These movements, as their political activities have suggested, tend to attract and mobilize people with a nationalistic understanding of patriotism. If public influencers such as the media—endowed with leeway to frame contentious events—can decompose the different understandings of patriotism and make it clear that alternative (reasonable) understandings exist or even dominate in their society, it may become possible to diffuse the momentum in the rise of nationalistic activism in societies around the world today.

Several open questions would require future research: first, to uncover the political influences and personality traits associated with different understandings of patriotism;[16] second, to replicate the study in different countries and evaluate the extent to which the findings generalize; and third, to enrich our understanding of how people think about patriotism through in-depth personal interviews conducted systematically across different demographic segments. The latter will be politically and methodologically challenging to implement in authoritarian contexts,[17] but extremely useful in deepening our understanding of the nature and origins of patriotic beliefs.

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16. For example, the latest scholarship documents robust correlations between isolating personality traits and regime dissatisfaction in China (Truex 2022). Such personality traits, we suspect, may also predict understandings of patriotism.
17. Social desirability bias, for example, could be especially salient when respondents answer questions in the presence of a human interviewer (Chang and Krosnick 2010).

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SUPPLEMENTAL APPENDIX

What Is a Patriot?
A Cross-National Study in China and the United States

Eddy S. F. Yeung   Mengqiao Wang   Kai Quek

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A   Research Ethics and Sample Demographics

Before we fielded our survey, we obtained IRB approval in our institution. All respondents were given detailed information about their rights as a survey participant, and were required to give their consent before they began the survey. Our survey did not involve the use of deception. We compensated our participants based on their estimated completion time, as determined by our survey partners.

For the American sample, we partnered with Lucid and used quota sampling to match the demographic benchmarks from the US national adult population census. The survey platform has been positively evaluated by Coppock and McClellan (2019), whose replication studies reveal that, only with rare exceptions, "demographic and experimental findings on Lucid track well with US national benchmarks" (1). Recent publications that use Lucid include Guay and Johnston (2022), Hill and Huber (2019), and Tomz and Weeks (2020).

For the Chinese sample, we partnered with an anonymous survey company and used quota sampling to match the demographic benchmarks from the Chinese national adult population census. Our sample covered all provinces and capital municipalities in Mainland China.

Both of our American and Chinese surveys were part of a larger survey in respective countries. The median completion time for the full American survey was 13.7 minutes, and that for the full Chinese survey was 14.3 minutes. To reduce low-quality responses, we removed all "speeders"— defined as respondents whose survey completion time was less than 5 minutes—from our analysis (Greszki, Meyer, and Schoen 2015).[1] Upon removal of speeders, the sample sizes of the American and Chinese surveys are 1,578 and 1,447, respectively.

Table S1 shows that the sample demographics of our American sample (following the removal of speeders) closely match the demographic characteristics of the US adult population. Table S2 shows that the sample demographics of our Chinese sample (following the removal of speeders)

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1. Following this procedure, we only removed 44 American respondents and 1 Chinese respondent. We did not use attention checks because latest research suggests that respondents may find attention checks controlling or annoying, which motivates them to fail the questions deliberately (Silber, Roßmann, and Gummer 2022). We were also concerned these questions may be answered automatically by bots, as latest research shows (Pei et al. 2020).

mirror the key demographics of the Chinese adult population (with the exception of income).

Table S1. Demographics of the American Sample

		Benchmark	Sample
Sex	Male	48.7%	47.1%
	Female	51.3%	52.9%
Age	18–24	11.9%	11.8%
	25–34	17.9%	15.8%
	35–44	16.4%	16.5%
	45–54	16.0%	14.8%
	55–64	16.6%	13.8%
	65+	21.2%	27.2%
Ethnicity	White	64.1%	67.8%
	African American	12.0%	14.3%
	Native American	1.1%	1.7%
	Asian	6.1%	7.3%
	Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.6%
	Some Other Race	7.7%	4.6%
	Two or More Races	8.8%	3.7%
Hispanic	Yes	16.8%	17.0%
Income	< 15k	9.4%	11.7%
	15k–24k	8.7%	7.3%
	25k–49k	19.7%	19.8%
	50k–99k	28.6%	28.7%
	100k–149k	15.3%	17.4%
	$\geq$ 150k	18.2%	15.0%

Note: Percentages for sex, race, and Hispanic origin are based on the adult population. Sex and Age are calculated from Table S0101 of the 2019 American Community Survey (https://data .census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S0101&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S0101). Race figures (regardless of the Hispanic origin) are extracted from the Decennial Census (2020), PL 94-171, Table P3 (https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=P3&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P3). Hispanic origin figures are extracted from the Decennial Census (2020), PL 94-171, Table P4 (https://data.census. gov/cedsci/table?q=P4&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P4). Household income is retrieved from CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement (2021), Table HINC-01 (https://www.census.gov/data/ tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-hinc/hinc-01.html).

Table S2. Demographics of the Chinese Sample

		Benchmark	**Sample**
Sex	Male	50.7%	50.5%
	Female	49.3%	49.5%
Region	Northern	12.0%	14.7%
	Northeastern	7.0%	4.4%
	Eastern	30.0%	27.9%
	Central and Southern	29.1%	33.3%
	Southwestern	14.6%	14.4%
	Northwestern	7.3%	5.4%
Age	18–19	2.9%	2.8%
	20–29	16.3%	12.8%
	30–39	20.2%	25.4%
	40–49	19.0%	18.5%
	50–59	19.6%	17.0%
	60+	22.0%	23.5%
Ethnicity	Han	91.4%	96.7%
Household Income	Mean	84,355	265,510
	Median	72,155	130,000

Note: Figures obtained or calculated from the 2020 National Census (http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pcsj/rkpc/7rp/indexch.htm) and the 2021 Statistical Yearbook (http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2021/indexch.htm) published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China. UN estimates of the 2020 Chinese population calculated based on released datasets accessed via https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Interpolated. The income figure is calculated as the average/median disposable household income based on 2020 census data estimates. The 2020 nationwide per capita income is ¥32,189, and the median per capita disposable income is ¥27,540; the 2020 average family size is 2.62 (person per household). Percentages of age groups, males, and Han people among the adult population are extrapolated from the 2010 National Census. The National Bureau of Statistics divides China into 6 zones: Northern (Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia); Northeastern (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang); Eastern (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi and Shandong); Central and Southern (Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan); Southwestern (Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, and Tibet); and Northwestern (Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang).

B   Translation Procedure

The Chinese version of the survey instrument was independently translated by three native speakers who are effectively bilingual in Mandarin and English. The independent translations were then proofread, vetted, and adjusted by the fourth researcher, who is also bilingual. We arrived at the final version (see Appendix C) upon extensive deliberations among the research team.

We used "爱国" (*aiguo*) to refer to patriotism in our survey instrument. In Chinese, the character "爱" (*ai*) means "to love," and the character "国" (*guo*) refers to a "country," "nation," or "state." These two characters, when combined, could take the form of a noun, a verb, or an adjective. They are thus commonly understood by Chinese citizens as "patriotism," "to be patriotic," or "patriotic."[2] Indeed, the official Chinese term for the Patriotic Education Campaign is 爱国主义教育 (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu*), demonstrating a direct correspondence of "爱国" to "patriotic."

We also note that, in the Chinese language generally and in China specifically, "爱国主义" (*aiguo zhuyi*, or patriotism) and "民族主义" (*minzu zhuyi*, or nationalism) are quite different. Chinese citizens would draw a linguistic distinction between the two—with "民族主义" carrying a negative connotation in Chinese, akin to "nationalism" in English. An alternative to translating the term "to be patriotic" would be "我爱我的国家" (*wo ai wo de guojia*, or I love my country). Such a phrase, or such a combination of characters, however, is quite rare in both China and the Chinese language. Given all considerations above, we thus believe "爱国" is the best word choice that captures the concept of patriotism in the Chinese survey.

In addition to our contextual and linguistic knowledge that contributed to our translation choice, we provide additional justification: https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&tab=wT&sl=en&tl=zh -CN&text=to%20be%20patriotic&op=translate. In Google Translate, the suggested Chinese translation for "to be patriotic" is also "爱国": an imperfect but objective indicator that our word choice, closely deliberated among four bilingual researchers, makes intuitive sense.

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2. For the same linguistic interpretation of the term, see the encyclopedia page on "爱国" published by Baidu, the Chinese equivalent of Wikipedia: https://bit.ly/3ZKZpoK.

C   Survey Instruments in English and Chinese

This appendix documents the question wording for all variables, which went through the rigorous translation procedure outlined in B.

C.1   Understandings of Patriotism

To measure individual understandings of patriotism, we ask three questions in randomized sequence, preceded by the following statement: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" / "您有多同意或反对以下说法？"

Pride understanding

`pat_pride`: "To be patriotic means that one is proud of his or her country."

- Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Agree / Strongly Agree

`pat_pride`: "爱国就是对自己的国家感到自豪。"

- 非常同意 / 同意 / 既不同意也不反对 / 不同意 / 非常不同意

Superiority understanding

`pat_super`: "To be patriotic means that one believes his or her country is better than other countries."

- Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Agree / Strongly Agree

`pat_super`: "爱国就是认为自己的国家比其他国家都要好。"

- 非常同意 / 同意 / 既不同意也不反对 / 不同意 / 非常不同意

Identity understanding

`pat_natid`: "To be patriotic means that one's personal identity is largely defined by his or her national identity."

- Strongly Disagree / Disagree / Neither Agree nor Disagree / Agree / Strongly Agree

`pat_natid`: "爱国就是将国民身份作为个人身份的主要核心。"

- 非常同意 / 同意 / 既不同意也不反对 / 不同意 / 非常不同意

C.2   Individual Characteristics

Year of birth

`yob`: "In what year were you born?"

- 1911 / 1912 / . . . / 2009 / 2010 / Other

`yob`: "您的出生年份是："

- 1911 / 1912 / . . . / 2009 / 2010 / 其他

Sex

`sex`: "What is your sex?"

- Male / Female

`sex`: "您的性别："

- 男 / 女

Race

`hispanic`: "Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?" [for American respondents only]

- Yes / No

`race`: "Here is a list of different race categories. Which category best describes you? (Please note that for this survey, Hispanic origin is not a race.)" [for American respondents only]

- White / Black or African-American / American Indian or Alaska Native / Asian / Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander / Some other race / Two or more races

race: "您的所属民族：" [for Chinese respondents only]

- 汉族 / 壮族 / 满族 / 回族 / 苗族 / 维吾尔族 / 藏族 / 其他民族

- English translation: "Your ethnicity: [Han / Zhuang / Manchu / Hui / Hmong / Uighur / Tibetan / Other]"

Partisanship

pid1: "Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a..." [for American respondents only]

- Democrat / Republican / Independent / Other Party

pid2d: "Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?" [asked if pid1 = Democrat]

- Strong / Not very strong

pid2r: "Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?" [asked if pid1 = Republican]

- Strong / Not very strong

pid2n: "Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?" [asked if pid1 = Independent or pid1 = Other Party]

- Closer to the Republican Party / Closer to the Democratic Party / Neither

party: "共产党党籍：" [for Chinese respondents only]

- 有，现役党员 / 有，但已退党 / 没有，预备党员 / 没有，从未入党

- English translation: "Chinese Communist Party membership: [Yes, current member / Yes, but already quit / No, probationary member / No, never joined]"

Education

edu: "What is the highest level of education you have completed?"

- Less than High School / High School or GED / Some College / 2-year College Degree / 4-year College Degree / Master's Degree / Doctoral Degree / Professional Degree (JD, MD)

edu1: "您的教育程度："

- 未上过学 / 小学 / 初中 / 高中 / 大学专科 / 大学本科 / 硕士 / 博士

- English translation: "Your education level: [No schooling / Primary school / Junior high school / Senior high school / College Degree / Undergraduate Degree / Master's Degree / Doctoral Degree]"

edu2: "学业完成情况："

- 在校 / 毕业 / 肄业 / 辍学 / 其他

- English translation: "Academic completion status: [In school / Graduated / Incomplete / Dropped out / Other]"

Political knowledge

"The following questions will ask you about political affairs and events. Many people don't know the answers to these questions, but it is helpful for us if you answer, even if you're not sure what the correct answer is. Please just give your best guess." / "我们将询问您一些关于时事的问题。许多人并不知道这些问题的正确答案。即便如此，请您据您所知选出您认为正确的答案。"

know1: "To your knowledge, John Roberts's current office is:"

- Chief Justice / Secretary of Homeland Security / Secretary of Defense / Federal Reserve Board Chairman

know2: "To your knowledge, Janet Yellen's current office is:"

• Secretary of State / Attorney General / Senator / Secretary of the Treasury

know3: "To your knowledge, who holds the office of the Prime Minister of Australia?"

• Jacinda Ardern / Scott Morrison / Boris Johnson / Justin Trudeau

know4: "The U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics counts a person as unemployed if they are not employed at any job and are looking for work. By this definition, what percentage of Americans was unemployed in January of 2022?"

• Around 2 percent / Around 4 percent / Around 6 percent / Around 8 percent

know1: "据您所知，中国官方公布的2021年国内生产总值（GDP）的增幅是：”

• 少于5％ / 5.0％至5.9％ / 6.0％至6.9％ / 7.0％至7.9％ / 8.0％至8.9％ / 达到或超过9％

• English translation: "To your knowledge, China's official gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate in 2021 was: [Below 5% / Between 5.0% and 5.9% / Between 6.0% and 6.9% / Between 7.0% and 7.9% / Between 8.0% and 8.9% / 9% or above]"

know2: "据您所知，现任的中国人民银行行长是：”

• 易纲 / 王毅 / 林毅夫 / 华春莹

• English translation: "To your knowledge, the current governor of the People's Bank of China is: [Yi Gang / Wang Yi / Lin Yifu / Hua Chunying]"

know3: "据您所知，韩正的现任职位是：”

• 总理 / 副总理 / 外交部部长 / 中央纪律检查委员会书记

• English translation: "To your knowledge, Han Zheng's current office is: [Premier / Vice Premier / Minister of Foreign Affairs / Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection]"

know4: "据您所知，李光耀曾经是哪地的领导人：”

- 韩国 / 朝鲜 / 新加坡 / 台湾当局

- English translation: "To your knowledge, Lee Kuan Yew was the leader of: [South Korea / North Korea / Singapore / Taiwan authorities]"

C.3   Individual Predispositions

Authoritarian personality

"Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. Here are a few pairs of desirable qualities. Please tell us which one you think is more important for a child to have:" / "虽然我们都希望孩子们能具备某些特质，但我们都知道，有一些特质比起其他更为重要。以下是不同理想性格特质的组合。请您二择其一，从每个组合中选出您认为对孩子而言更重要的一个特质："

auth1: "Independence or respect for elders?"

- Independence / Respect for elders

auth2: "Curiosity or good manners?"

- Curiosity / Good manners

auth3: "Obedience or self-reliance?"

- Obedience / Self-reliance

auth1: "独立或尊重长辈"

- 独立 / 尊重长辈

auth2: "有好奇心或彬彬有礼"

- 有好奇心 / 彬彬有礼

auth3: "听话或自立"

- 听话 / 自立

Cosmopolitanism

`cosmo1`: "Have you ever been abroad in 2019 (the year before Covid-19)?"

- Yes / No

`cosmo2`: "Among your good friends, is anyone currently or has anyone ever studied, worked or lived abroad?"

- Yes / No

`cosmo3`: "Do you know any foreign language(s)?"

- Yes / No

`cosmo1`: "2019 年里（2019 新冠疫情爆发的前一年），您出过国吗？"

- 出过 / 没出过

`cosmo2`: "您的好朋友当中是否有人曾经或目前在国外学习、工作或生活？"

- 有 / 没有

`cosmo3`: "您是否懂外语？"

- 是 / 否

Political efficacy

`efficacy`: "How much can people like us affect what the government does?"

- Not at all / A little / A moderate amount / A lot / A great deal

`efficacy`: "人民对政府的影响有多大？"

- 非常大 / 有些大 / 中等 / 有一点影响 / 完全没影响

C.4 Hawkishness

Hawkish foreign policy preferences

`hawk`: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? 'Going to war is sometimes the only solution to international problems.'"

- Agree strongly / Agree somewhat / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree somewhat / Disagree strongly

`hawk`: "您有多同意或反对以下说法？「战争有时候是解决国际问题的唯一方法。」"

- 强烈同意 / 同意 / 既不同意也不反对 / 反对 / 强烈反对

D   Coding Scheme

This appendix details our coding scheme for the covariates used in Figure 2.

- **Age:** respondent's age.

- **Male:** respondent's self-reported sex. It takes the value of 1 if male, and 0 otherwise.

- **Han:** respondent's self-reported ethnicity. It takes the value of 1 if Han, and 0 otherwise.

- **White:** respondent's self-reported race. It takes the value of 1 if non-Hispanic White, and 0 otherwise.

- **CCP Member:** respondent's self-reported membership of the Chinese Communist Party. It takes the value of 1 if she is a member, and 0 otherwise.

- **Republican:** respondent's party identification with the Republican Party. It takes the value of 1 if she considers herself a strong, not very strong, or leaning Republican, and 0 otherwise.

- **Democrat:** respondent's party identification with the Democratic Party. It takes the value of 1 if she considers herself a strong, not very strong, or leaning Democrat, and 0 otherwise.

- **Patriotic Education:** calculated based on the respondent's age. The Patriotic Education Campaign officially started in 1993–94, as the State Council of the People's Republic of China issued the "Outline for the Implementation of Education in Patriotism" in September 1994.[3] Following the Campaign, the CCP introduced patriotic curricular materials in elementary, junior, and senior high schools. We follow Johnston's (2017) and Weiss's (2019) coding of the population segment subjected to Patriotic Education as those who were 15 years old or younger when Patriotic Education was implemented. The age cutoff is premised on the fact that those who were 16 years old or older when Patriotic Education was implemented either already finished schooling or did not receive the full Patriotic Education in

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3. For a copy of the official document, see https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/shuju/1994/gwyb1994 20.pdf.

senior high school (see Zhao 2004). The variable takes the value of 1 if the respondent is subjected to Patriotic Education, and 0 otherwise.

- **College Graduate:** respondent's self-reported education level. It takes the value of 1 if she has completed a Bachelor's degree or above, and 0 otherwise.

- **Political Knowledge:** respondent's political knowledge based on four items. The items include questions about global political leaders, current offices of famous politicians in the respondent's country, and latest economic statistics (e.g., GDP growth rate, unemployment) of the respondent's country. For each sample, we use principal component analysis (PCA) to estimate the political knowledge score of each respondent, followed by rescaling it from 0 (least knowledgeable) to 1 (most knowledgeable).

- **Authoritarianism:** respondent's authoritarian orientation based on child-rearing preferences (e.g., Hetherington and Suhay 2011). Specifically, we directly take three items from the ANES Authoritarianism scale. For each sample, we use PCA to estimate the authoritarianism of each respondent, followed by rescaling it from 0 (least authoritarian) to 1 (most authoritarian).

- **Cosmopolitanism:** respondent's identity as global citizen. We ask respondents whether they agree with the following statement: "We are citizens of the world, not just our country." The available answer options take a 5-point scale. We then rescale it from 0 ("disagree strongly") to 1 ("agree strongly").

- **Political Efficacy:** respondent's belief about the extent to which ordinary people can affect political process. We ask respondents the following question: "How much can people like us affect what the government does?" The available answer options take a 5-point scale. We then rescale it from 0 ("not at all") to 1 ("a great deal").

E   Full Regression Estimates for Figures 2 and 3

This appendix shows the full regression estimates, with different specifications, associated with Figures 2 and 3. Tables S3 and S4 present the regression estimates for Figure 2. Table S5 presents the regression estimates for Figure 3.

Table S3. Individual-Level Correlates of Different Understandings of Patriotism (Chinese Sample)

	Pride		Superiority		Identity	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	4.18***	3.18***	2.81***	1.84***	3.91***	2.88***
	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.32)	(0.35)	(0.22)	(0.24)
Age	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01*	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Male	−0.13**	−0.09*	−0.14*	−0.10	−0.03	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Han	0.21	0.18	0.40*	0.35*	0.15	0.12
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Patriotic Education	0.07	0.04	0.52***	0.57***	0.14	0.14
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.09)
College Graduate	0.03	0.03	−0.07	−0.07	0.02	0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(0.04)
CCP Member		0.08		0.12		0.07
		(0.05)		(0.08)		(0.05)
Political Knowledge		0.08		−0.03		0.09
		(0.06)		(0.10)		(0.07)
Authoritarianism		0.16**		0.39***		0.23***
		(0.06)		(0.09)		(0.06)
Cosmopolitanism		0.25*		0.30*		0.25*
		(0.10)		(0.15)		(0.11)
Political Efficacy		0.88***		0.57***		0.82***
		(0.10)		(0.14)		(0.11)
Adjusted R^2	0.01	0.11	0.03	0.07	0.00	0.08
Number of Respondents	1,445	1,418	1,445	1,418	1,447	1,418
RMSE	0.72	0.68	1.09	1.07	0.79	0.75

Note: Entries are OLS estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed with the following notations: ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

Table S4. Individual-Level Correlates of Different Understandings of Patriotism (American Sample)

	Pride		Superiority		Identity	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	3.60***	2.78***	3.32***	2.81***	3.45***	2.78***
	(0.07)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.15)	(0.08)	(0.14)
Age	0.01***	0.01***	−0.01***	−0.01***	−0.01***	−0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Male	−0.00	−0.01	0.33***	0.33***	0.21***	0.20***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
White	0.14*	0.10	0.14*	0.15*	0.19**	0.22***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
College Graduate	0.07	0.06	−0.03	0.03	0.05	0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Republican		0.41***		0.39***		0.35***
		(0.07)		(0.09)		(0.08)
Democrat		0.20**		0.28***		0.28***
		(0.07)		(0.08)		(0.08)
Political Knowledge		0.03		−0.46***		−0.33***
		(0.07)		(0.10)		(0.09)
Authoritarianism		0.32***		0.39***		0.21*
		(0.07)		(0.09)		(0.09)
Cosmopolitanism		0.48***		−0.13		0.06
		(0.10)		(0.12)		(0.11)
Political Efficacy		0.26**		0.54***		0.65***
		(0.09)		(0.12)		(0.11)
Adjusted R^2	0.04	0.10	0.03	0.09	0.01	0.07
Number of Respondents	1,575	1,539	1,575	1,539	1,574	1,540
RMSE	0.94	0.90	1.18	1.15	1.10	1.06

Note: Entries are OLS estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. All significance tests are two-tailed with the following notations: ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

Table S5. Hawkish Foreign Policy Preferences and Different Understandings of Patriotism

|	Chinese Respondents			American Respondents		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	2.20***	1.48***	1.83***	2.12***	2.13***	2.21***
	(0.21)	(0.38)	(0.41)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.19)
Pride Understanding	−0.05	−0.04	−0.01	0.07*	0.07	0.07
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Superiority Understanding	0.23***	0.22***	0.22***	0.19***	0.18***	0.17***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Identity Understanding	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.03
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Age		0.01	0.01		−0.00*	−0.00
		(0.00)	(0.00)		(0.00)	(0.00)
Male		0.09	0.06		0.34***	0.33***
		(0.06)	(0.06)		(0.06)	(0.06)
Han		0.09	0.09			
		(0.18)	(0.17)			
White					0.26***	0.22**
					(0.07)	(0.07)
Patriotic Education		0.39**	0.38**			
		(0.13)	(0.13)			
College Graduate		0.11	0.11		0.01	0.01
		(0.06)	(0.07)		(0.06)	(0.06)
CCP Member			−0.05			
			(0.08)			
Republican						0.30***
						(0.09)
Democrat						0.00
						(0.08)
Political Knowledge			−0.04			−0.14
			(0.10)			(0.10)
Authoritarianism			−0.21*			−0.27**
			(0.10)			(0.10)
Cosmopolitanism			−0.31			0.03
			(0.17)			(0.12)
Political Efficacy			−0.29			0.20
			(0.15)			(0.12)
Adjusted R^2	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.10
Number of Respondents	1,441	1,441	1,418	1,568	1,567	1,538
RMSE	1.19	1.18	1.18	1.19	1.17	1.16

Note: Entries are OLS estimates with robust standard errors in parentheses. The results "w/ controls" as visualized in Figure 3 correspond to the regression estimates reported in Models 3 and 6. All significance tests are two-tailed with the following notations: ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$.

F   Multidimensionality of Patriotic Understandings

This appendix explores the multidimensionality of different understandings of patriotism. Specifically, we conduct a series of exploratory analyses to examine whether and how the three understandings of patriotism overlap with one another, as well as the individual-level correlates of each overlap.

To begin with, we analyze how strongly the pride, superiority, and identity understandings of patriotism correlate with one another. The results are visualized in Figure S1. In general, the different understandings of patriotism are positively, but not very strongly, correlated. The correlation between pride and superiority understandings is much stronger among Chinese respondents ($r = 0.4$) than among American respondents ($r = 0.2$).

**Figure S1.** Pairwise Correlations of Different Understandings of Patriotism
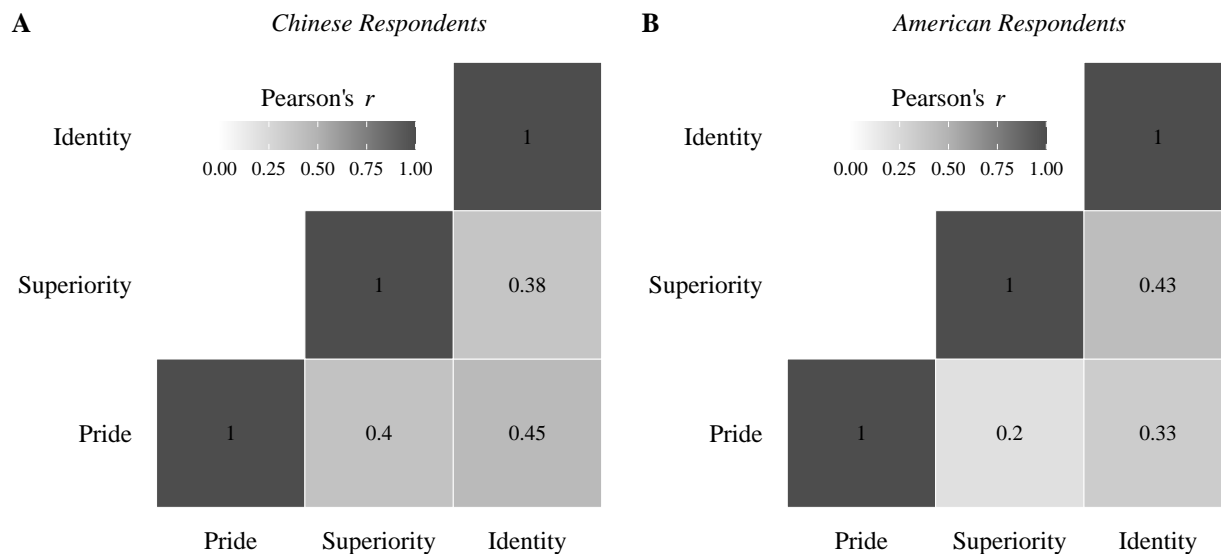
Note: We do not impute missing values in the cases where any one of the two variables in pairwise correlations is missing.

To further unpack the prevalence of overlapping subjective understandings of patriotism among Chinese and American respondents, we adopt a new coding scheme. We code respondents who indicate agreement with both "pride" and "superiority" statements as those who hold a *pride–superiority* understanding; respondents who indicate agreement with both "pride" and "identity"

statements as those who hold a *pride–identity* understanding; and respondents who indicate agreement with both "superiority" and "identity" statements as those who hold a *superiority–identity* understanding. The prevalence of these overlapping understandings of patriotism is illustrated in Figure S2. It shows that many Chinese respondents simultaneously understand patriotism in pride and identity terms, and over one-half of Chinese respondents also understand patriotism in both pride and superiority, or in both superiority and identity, terms. Among American respondents, however, overlapping understandings of patriotism—especially those involving a nationalistic notion—are less prevalent.

Figure S2. Public Understandings of Patriotism in Overlapping Terms
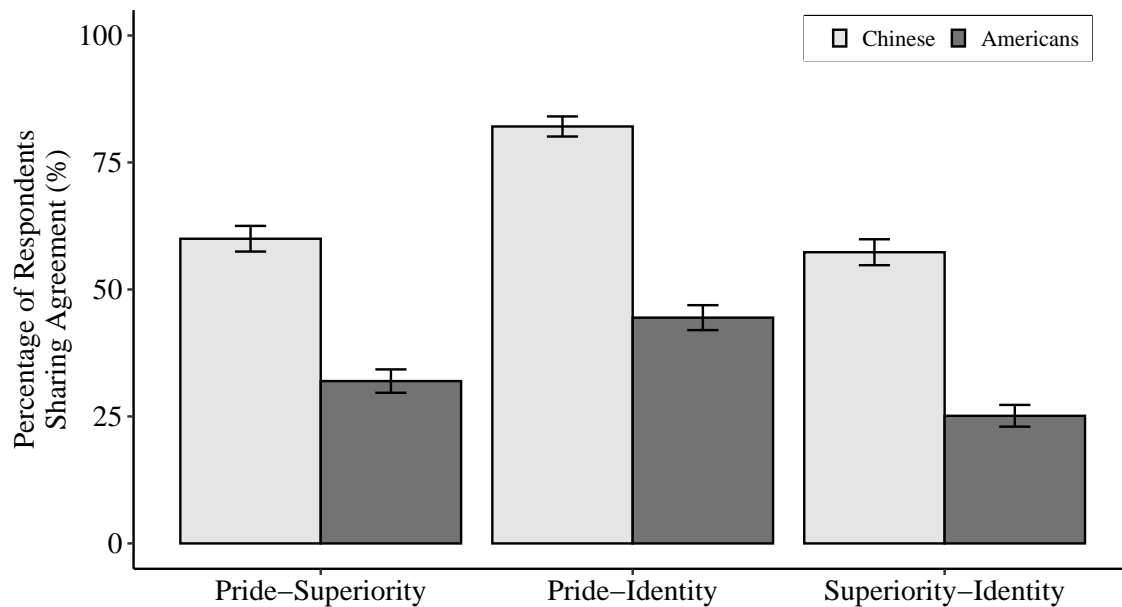
Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Finally, we explore the individual-level correlates of these overlapping understandings of patriotism (Figure S3). We find that Chinese respondents subjected to the Patriotic Education Campaign are more likely to hold overlapping understandings of patriotism—especially those involving a nationalistic notion. In the United States, men and non-Hispanic whites are more likely to do the same.

Figure S3. Individual-Level Correlates of Overlapping Understandings of Patriotism
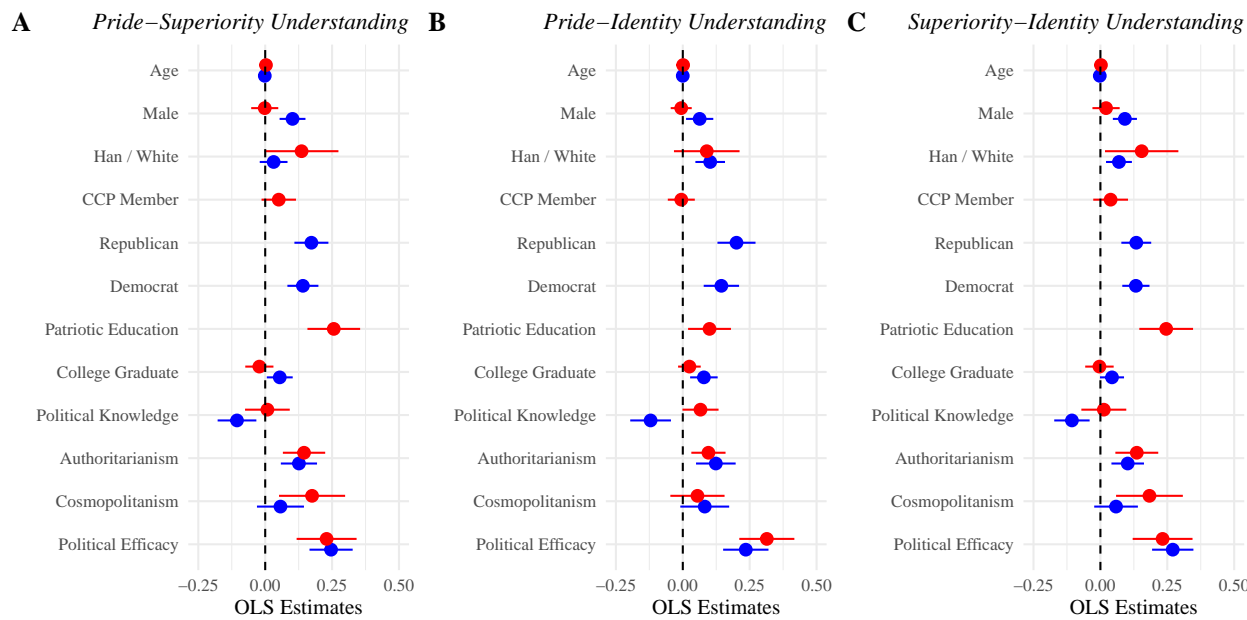
Note: Red indicates the Chinese sample, and blue the American sample. OLS estimates with 95% confidence intervals are based on HC2 robust standard errors. All covariates, except for age, range from 0 to 1. See Appendix D for our coding scheme and Appendix E for full regression estimates.

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