Note that Table 6 in the online and print version has mistakenly flipped the labels of the "Nationalist Critical" and "Nationalist Neutral" groups as well as the "Non-Nationalist critical" and the "Non-Nationalist Neutral" groups. While the findings, discussion and argument are not affected, the author feels extremely sorry for being so careless. This preprint version has corrected the error.

Cyber Nationalism and Regime Support under Xi Jinping:

The Effects of the 2018 Constitutional Revision

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ABSTRACT

This article examines popular nationalism and regime support in the Xi era by evaluating news comments from a major overseas Chinese website on the 2018 constitutional amendments removing presidential term limits. It finds that the event was not only contested among overseas and domestic Chinese, but also has alienated many nationalists who previously supported the regime. Even the subsequent pro-regime discourse is less focused on support for Xi or the regime, and more about distrust of the West and dissidents. However, some citizens have become less critical toward the regime out of the concern of external threats. The findings confirm the Xi Jinping effect on nationalist regime support, and show how China's international and domestic environments may activate nationalist sentiment differently.

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Nationalism in China has demonstrated a pro-regime tendency,[1] yet may contest the state's bid to nationalist legitimacy.[2] To work nationalism to its advantage, the Chinese state has resorted to nationalist rhetoric to legitimize its rule and made serious effort to control, manage, and co-opt popular nationalist forces.[3] However, nationalism and its impact on the regime can be shaped by many other factors beyond the state's manipulation. As China has experienced dramatic socio-political transformations under President Xi Jinping, one may wonder how nationalism and the regime's claim to nationalistic credit have been affected. Besides directly tapping into nationalism with the 'Chinese dream' rhetoric for popular support, policy initiatives such as anti-corruption and poverty alleviation may have enhanced nationalist support for the regime; the economic slowdown and heightened state-society tensions may hurt nationalist legitimacy; and China's struggling foreign relations and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic are likely having more ambivalent and more complicated implications for nationalism and regime-support.

How has Xi's rule influenced popular support for the authoritarian regime, especially among the nationalists? This article analyses popular reaction on a popular overseas Chinese website to the controversial constitutional revision in 2018 as a window into the trend of cyber nationalism and regime support in the Xi era. The constitutional revision, by removing the presidential term limits, essentially undid Deng Xiaoping's two most critical legacies that have helped stabilize and legitimize the regime, i.e. orderly succession and collective leadership,[4] thus has caused huge backlash within the Party, among the public, and in the international community.[5] Chinese people, at home and abroad, have also mobilized to show their discontent.[6] Through tracing netizens' attitude changes toward the regime and the evolution of discourse over the event, this article shows that the unpopular move has triggered widespread criticism and overall resulted in alienation of many citizens who used to support the regime. Even the pro-regime discourse that remained despite the shock is less focused on support for Xi or the regime, but more about distrust in the West and dissidents. However, some citizens may have become slightly less critical toward the regime as they perceive the pervasive criticism of the regime as an indicator of external threats to China. The findings confirm the Xi Jinping effect on nationalism and regime support, illustrating the need to analyse nationalist regime support in specific socio-political contexts, while also demonstrating how nationalist sentiment and its

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[1] For instance, see Wenfang Tang, *Populist Authoritarianism: Chinese Political Culture and Regime Sustainability* (Oxford University Press, 2016); Peter Hays Gries, 'Chinese Nationalism: Challenging the State?', *Current History* 104(683), (2005), pp. 251-56.

[2] Simon Shen and Shaun Breslin, eds., *Online Chinese Nationalism and China's Bilateral Relations* (Lexington Books, 2010); James Leibold, 'More Than a Category: Han Supremacism on the Chinese Internet', *The China Quarterly* 203(2010), pp. 539–59; Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy* (New York:Columbia University Press, 2013).

[3] For instance, see Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[4] Melanie Manion, 'Politics and Policy in Post-Mao Cadre Retirement', *The China Quarterly* 129(1992), pp. 1–25; Andrew Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14(1), (2003), pp. 6–17; Susan L. Shirk, 'China in Xi's "New Era": The Return to Personalistic Rule', *Journal of Democracy* 29(2), (2018), pp. 22–36.

[5] Shirk, 'China in Xi's "New Era"'; Neil Conner, '"It goes against civilised politics" - rare protests in China over Xi Jinping's power play', *Telegraph*, February 28, 2018, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/28/goes-against-civilised-politics-rare-protests-china-xi-jinpings/.

[6] Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, 'Chinese students in America say "Not My President"', *Foreign Policy*, March 7, 2018, accessed August 2, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/07/chinese-students-in-america-say-not-my-president-xi-jinping-china/.

implications for authoritarian rule can be activated differently depending on how one perceives China's international and domestic environments.

Nationalism, Cyber Nationalism and Authoritarian Rule in China

The relationship between nationalism and authoritarian rule is highly intriguing in contemporary China.[7] While it did not shine as the major ideological foundation of the Maoist era, nationalism was an important source of regime legitimacy: as Wenfang Tang argues, the People's Republic founded in 1949 was as much a result of the nationalist movement as the communist revolution.[8] In the reform era, multiple reasons such as the memory of the disastrous Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen democratic movement, and the end of the Cold War have all made communism less appealing to the Chinese population. And by introducing the market and opening up China for international trade, the economic reform indicated that the Party itself has betrayed its own ideological root. As a result, the Party-state has turned to performance and nationalist legitimacy to justify its rule.[9] While the communist rhetoric still persists in official discourse, the Party now hails slogans like the 'Chinese dream' and 'the great revival of the Chinese nation.'[10] This shift in the regime's ideological basis explains why the Party-state since the 1990s has actively constructed and enacted nationalism through propaganda and patriotic education campaigns.[11] Such 'state-led nationalism' echoes Benedict Anderson's notion of 'official nationalism', i.e., the state's top-down effort to arouse nationalist sentiment in order to hold on to power and garner support.[12]

However, some scholars explain nationalism in the reform era from a bottom-up perspective, arguing that rather than a result of state propaganda, 'the nationalist wave in China is a spontaneous public reaction to a series of international events.'[13] This argument echoes Anderson's 'popular nationalism' idea, which represents the effort by the people to take power

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[7] Patriotism and nationalism are conceptually different, with the first often seen as benign love of one's own nation and the latter a more malign blind patriotism with uncritical support for the authorities. For instance, see Linda J. Skitka, 'Patriotism or Nationalism? Understanding Post-September 11, 2001, Flag-Display Behavior', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 35(10), (2005), pp. 1995–2011. But this article does not highlight the differences because it focuses precisely on how one's love of the nation and the support for authorities may interact. The analysis shows that the two concepts are empirically mixed, with love of China (patriotism) often going hand in hand with regime support (nationalism), though such support is not unconditional (not nationalism).

[8] Tang, *Populist Authoritarianism*.

[9] Hongxing Yang and Dingxin Zhao, 'Performance Legitimacy, State Autonomy and China's Economic Miracle', *Journal of Contemporary China* 24(91), (2015), pp. 64–82; Suisheng Zhao, 'A State-Led Nationalism: The Patriotic Education Campaign in Post-Tiananmen China', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31(3), (1998), pp. 287-302.

[10] The Economist, 'Xi Jinping's Vision: Chasing the Chinese Dream', *The Economist* 407(8834), (2013), p. 24; Graham Allison, 'What Xi Jinping Wants', *The Atlantic*, May 31, 2017, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/what-china-wants/528561/.

[11] Zhao, 'A State-Led Nationalism'; Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction;* Zeng Wang, 'National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China', *International Studies Quarterly* 52(4), (2008), pp. 783-806.

[12] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

[13] Ming Zhang, 'The New Thinking of Sino-US Relations - An Interview Note', *Journal of Contemporary China* 6(14), (1997), p. 122. Also see Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Gries, 'Chinese Nationalism';

into their own hands, thus posing a threat to the ruling class.[14] Compared to 'state-led nationalism', Chinese 'popular nationalism', precisely because of the spontaneity and lack of state-sponsorship, bears more complicated and nuanced implications for authoritarian rule: while it oftentimes does not seek to challenge but rather champions populist support for the Party-state,[15] it may inspire disruptive movements, limit the state's foreign policy choices, and contest the state's nationalist legitimacy claim.[16]

Like print capitalism that has played a crucial role in the rise of modern nationalism, the Internet has significantly shaped contemporary nationalist ideas and mobilization while further complicating the implications for authoritarian rule. By providing freer and more affordable means for mass communications, organization, and mobilization, the Internet has empowered critical expression and social activism.[17] But strong authoritarian states have also adapted to better control, manipulate and take advantage of the Internet.[18] When it comes to nationalism in China, the Internet has produced a similar two-fold impact. First, the Internet has provided room for the spontaneous origin and evolution of Chinese cyber nationalism relatively free from state-sponsorship,[19] and even opened up 'new spaces for non-mainstream identity articulation'[20] such as 'Han Supremacism' that challenges the Party's official policy. Second, scholars find that the Internet has enabled the state to promote official nationalism and work popular nationalism to its advantage,[21] making nationalism overall more of a blessing than a threat to the regime.

In sum, despite the overall tendency of nationalism to support authoritarian rule in China, there is no scholarly consensus regarding how popular nationalism and regime support interact, especially in the digital age. In particular, scholars disagree in terms of what explains the nationalism and regime-support 'symbiosis.' Some see it is more about the state's control and manipulation of popular nationalism.[22] Others find that state intervention might not be effective,

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[14] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[15] Tang, *Populist Authoritarianism*; Rongbin Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

[16] Weiss, *Powerful Patriots*; Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State*; Shen and Breslin, eds., *Online Chinese Nationalism and China's Bilateral Relations*.

[17] See Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia University press, 2009); Ashley Esarey and Qiang Xiao, 'Political Expression in the Chinese Blogosphere', *Asian Survey* 48(5), (2008), pp. 752-72; Susan Shirk, ed., *Changing Media, Changing China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[18] Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, 'How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression', *American Political Science Review* 107(2), (2013), pp. 1-18; Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, 'How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument', *American Political Science Review* 111(3), (2017), pp. 484-501; Johan Lagerkvist, 'Internet Ideotainment in the PRC: National Responses to Cultural Globalization', *Journal of Contemporary China* 17(54), (2008), pp. 121-40; Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*; Margaret E. Roberts, *Censored: Distraction and Diversion Inside China's Great Firewall* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Jesper Schlæger and Min Jiang, 'Official Microblogging and Social Management by Local Governments in China', *China Information* 28(2), (2014), pp. 189-213; Ashley Esarey, 'Winning Hearts and Minds? Cadres as Microbloggers in China', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44(2), (2015), pp. 69-103.

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

[20] Leibold, 'More Than a Category', p. 539.

[21] Florian Schneider, *China's Digital Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Christopher Rene Hughes, 'Nationalism in Chinese Cyberspace', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 13(2), (2000), pp. 195-209.

[22] Schneider, *China's Digital Nationalism.*

arguing that popular nationalism has voluntarily sided with the state, often due to the disdain for the regime critics and perception of external threats.[23] This latter argument resonates with studies that emphasize the spontaneity of Chinese nationalism,[24] suggesting that nationalist support for the regime is conditional. While this perspective is inspiring, few studies have examined how popular nationalism and its impact on authoritarian rule would be shaped by factors other than state mobilization and China's past and ongoing interactions with foreign actors.

To what extent do popular nationalism and regime support in China go hand-in-hand but for state manipulation? How does the relationship evolve to the changing socio-political realities? Could it dissolve under certain circumstances? The Xi Jinping era provides a rare opportunity to address these important gaps in the literature. Through analysis of how netizens from a popular overseas Chinese forum reacted to the constitutional revision, the following sections reveal the contested nature of Xi's rule to identify the Xi Jinping effect on nationalism and regime support. By examining netizens' attitude changes and the discourse competition surrounding the event, the article highlights how nationalist sentiment can be activated differently based on citizens' divergent perceptions of China's internal and external environments, which illuminates a nuanced mechanism of nationalist legitimation of authoritarian rule.

Data

For the purpose of this study, an ideal site to focus on should (1) attract a significant number of visitors from both in and outside China; and (2) not be attached to or controlled by the Chinese state or dissident groups. For these considerations, platforms based in China are ruled out because they are subject to direct state control and manipulation. Among the overseas sites, 6park.com stands out. [25] Table 1 lists the major overseas Chinese online communities, excluding those associated with dissident groups such as Falun Gong or major Chinese news portals such as Sina.cn. Among these sites, mitbbs.com and huaren.us are forums that are difficult to collect data from, creaders.net attracts too few users from China, and Wenxuecity.com and backchina.com provide a more limited scope of data than 6park.com, which provides access to news reports and user activities dating back to as early as February 4, 2016. [26] In addition, 6park.com also allows users to comment on, upvote, and downvote news reports and other's

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[23] Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*; Rongbin Han, 'Withering Gongzhi: Cyber Criticism of Chinese Public Intellectuals', *International Journal of Communication* 12, (2018), pp. 1966–87; Rongbin Han, 'Patriotism without State Blessing: Chinese Cyber Nationalists in a Predicament', in *Handbook of Dissent and Protest in China*, ed. Teresa Wright (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2019), pp. 346–60; Ying Jiang, *Cyber-Nationalism in China: Challenging Western Media Portrayals of Internet Censorship in China* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2012).

[24] See Gries, *China's New Nationalism*; Gries, 'Chinese Nationalism'; Zhang, 'The New Thinking of Sino-US Relations'; Wu, *Chinese Cyber Nationalism*.

[25] One may question whether the sample can represent the Chinese population. While it is a legitimate concern, it should not be an issue because: (1) the Chinese cyber nationalism is cross-national by nature, with Chinese at home and abroad sharing agenda and constantly interacting with each other; (2) indicative evidence such as Alexa audience source analysis shows that a significant portion of 6park.com users accesses the site from inside China; (3) most of the comments are in simplified Chinese, suggesting that the users are likely of Mainland Chinese origin, or are simply temporary visitors like students who ultimately may return to China; and (4) the constitutional revision provides a natural experiment to examine the Xi effect, making sample representativeness less a problem.

[26] Backchina.com shows only the latest 100 news entries in each of its news channels and wenxuecity.com only allows access to its 'Focus News' dated January 1, 2017 onwards.

comments. Such 'click speech' (e.g. the act of 'liking' or 'loving'), which has thus far been understudied, can be useful to study online expression.[27]

Table 1: Major Overseas Chinese Online Platforms

Websites	Global Ranking	U.S. Ranking	China Ranking	Top 2 Audience Sources (%)	
6park.com	8869	5993	4763	U.S. (21.9%)	China (20.4%)
wenxuecity.com	2113	1133	915	China (35.7%)	U.S. (33.7%)
backchina.com	5547	3542	1478	China (49.0%)	U.S. (24.4%)
creaders.net	3750	1293	NA	U.S. (46.71%)	Canada (18.15%)
mitbbs.com	7641	2155	3657	U.S. (57.1%)	China (27.3%)
huaren.us	19241	5989	12146	U.S. (57.3%)	China (25.0%)

Source: www.alexa.com/siteinfo (as of May 22, 2019). Given the Great Firewall, the audience sources data are indicative only, which according to alexa.com, are estimates based on traffic patterns of millions of web users throughout the world and corrected with data normalization.

The project uses only data from 6park.com's *Headline Digest* (头条精选) because the channel covers the longest time span—it provides access to news feeds and user activities dated back to February 2006—and includes only major socio-political news topics that attract users, thus making data collection and cleaning easier. Data used in this project were collected in two waves. The initial wave, done from January 30, 2018 to March 13, 2018, collected all news threads from the *Headline Digest* dated between February 4, 2016 and March 13, 2018. The resulting dataset contains 21,418 news reports. For each report, the variables include the title, link to the title, date, source, number of reads, number of comments, and link to comments. Between January 30 and February 7, 2019, the second wave of data collection was conducted, covering variables included in the first wave as well as the following new variables on the reports: number of up-votes, number of down-votes, and all comment entries. For each comment entry, collected data include the username, post time, text of the comment, and up-votes or down-votes the comment receives. This wave successfully gathered data on 21211 threads,[28] 631,772 comments, and 21,074 users. On average, each thread has about 30 comments, and each user has produced about 29 comments in the entire dataset.

Comments and User Attitudes on the Constitutional Revision

To commence the identification and analysis of views related to Xi's abolition of presidential term limits, the author selected all reports with 'constitutional revision' (修宪) in the title. This resulted in 34 reports between December 27, 2017, when the rumor of the proposed constitutional revision broke out, and March 13, 2018, when data were collected. A total of 19 media sources are involved, with three from Mainland China (*Xinhua*, *People's Daily*, and *Global Times*) contributing to two reports only, and the remaining 17 media outlets are all from

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[27] Tai-Yee Wu, Anne Oeldorf-Hirsch, and David Atkin, 'A Click Is Worth a Thousand Words: Probing the Predictors of Using Click Speech for Online Opinion Expression', *International Journal of Communication* 14, (2020), pp. 2687–2706.

[28] Compared to the first wave data, 10 threads were missing, 82 had no comments, and 115 were censored. Among the 115 censored threads, 113 have Guo Wengui in their titles, and two on porn. While it is puzzling why Guo Wengui was censored, this should not be a huge concern here given the relatively small ratio of deletion.

the U.S., Europe, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The top three contributors are *BBC* (and *BBC Chinese*), *Radio France Internationale (RFI)*, and *Voice of America (VOA)*, with seven, five, and five reports from each. Evidently and understandably, Western media outlets that share a critical tone toward the regime were more active while the Chinese state media were much quieter.

The 34 reports received 3,512 comments in total, an average of 103 comments per report, which is significantly higher than the average comment count (30) for the entire dataset. The higher level of commenting enthusiasm indicates online activism and mobilization on the topic. On average, each report received 4.47 up-votes and 10.35 down-votes. The report with the most down-votes (63) is 'NPC Passes Proposed Constitutional Amendments with Only 2 Objections; Party Papers Say It Reflects Public Opinion.' The report also received 16 up-votes, ranking second among all the 34 reports in terms of flower counts. The most up-voted report (19 times) is 'Overseas Chinese Students Protests against the Constitutional Amendments by Posting Anti-Xi "Emperor" Slogans.' The same report received 30 down-votes, only second to the previous report. These two reports are also the No. 1 and No. 4 most commented reports, receiving 536 and 184 comments, respectively. Such click-speech data again reveal the contested nature of the constitutional revision among netizens.

The author then manually coded all 3,512 comments into four simple categories: pro-regime, critical, neutral or indifferent, and unclear or irrelevant (see Appendix 1 for the detailed coding scheme and sample comments). The pro-regime category includes comments that defend Xi, the regime, the constitutional revision, as well as those attacking critical users. The critical category includes those criticizing Xi, the regime, the constitutional amendments, or pro-regime users. Neutral or indifferent comments are those that do not pick a side or present a relatively balanced view toward the event.[29] The Other category includes those that contain too little information to judge or are irrelevant to the topic. The four simple categories help increase the reliability of coding. Table 2 presents the coding results of the comments.

Table 2: Sentiments on the Constitutional Revision

Row Labels	Comment Counts	Percentage
Pro-regime	1113	31.75%
Critical	1874	53.33%
Neutral/Indifferent	227	6.41%
Other	298	8.51%
Grand Total	**3512**	**100%**

Users are then coded in terms of their attitude based on the overall tone of their comments (critical=-1; neutral/indifferent=0; positive=1; or unknown), with a little more weight attached to pro-regime or critical comments than neutral comments. For example, a user with two pro-regime comments, one critical comment, and three neutral comments would be coded as

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[29] The coding of sarcastic comments is done in a contextualized manner. For instance, 'Long Live Emperor Xi' is apparently critical. Sometimes it is a bit hard to tell. One user with a mixed record of pro- or anti- regime comments stated bluntly in an earlier comment that he intended 'to disrupt the ideology of Chinese society and Chinese people' in order to overthrow the regime. All his extreme and sarcastic pro-regime comments are coded as critical.

neutral; but a user with one pro-regime comment, two critical comments, and two neutral comments would be coded as critical. Users with equal numbers of pro-regime and critical comments are coded as neutral. The results (Table 3) show that more users are against the constitutional revision, and these critics are more active in commenting on the event.

Table 3: User Attitudes toward the Constitutional Revision

Row Labels	# of Users	Percentage	# Comment Per User
Pro-regime	414	34.67%	2.93
Critical	609	50.79%	3.3
Neutral/Indifferent	84	7.02%	2.05
Other	89	7.52%	1.29
Grand Total	**1197**	**100%**	**2.93**

Additional evidence suggests that the coding results are reliable. On March 5, 2018, 6park.com did a poll asking: How do you feel about China's constitutional revision to do away with the presidential term limits? Users had only two options, either agree or disagree. Of the 16740 users who responded within 20 hours, 10954 (65.4%) disagreed and 5786 (34.6%) agreed with the constitutional revision.[30] Such results are quite similar to the coding results in Tables 2 and 3.

User Attitude Changes

To measure attitudinal changes, the author sampled 153 users out of the 1,197 who commented on the constitutional amendments by including the top 15 most active and an additional 36 randomly sampled users from each of the pro-, anti-, and neutral categories. The author then further traced commenting activities of these 153 users before the constitutional revision to identify their prior nationalistic tendency (yes=1; no=0; or unknown) and attitude toward the regime (pro-regime=1; critical=-1; neutral/indifferent=0; or unknown).[31] Comparing users' prior attitude toward the regime to that reflected in their comments on the constitutional revision results in four scenarios: (1) the user becomes more critical=-1; (2) no change=0; (3) the user becomes less critical=1; and (4) unknown, when not enough information is available to judge whether there is an attitude change or not.

The results (Table 4) reveal two interesting findings. First, among the 153 users, 23 (15%) have become more critical after the constitutional revision. Specifically, 2 out of the 15 most active criticizers of the constitutional revision were previously neutral or supportive of the regime; seven out of the top 15 active users who show mixed or neutral feelings about the event were previously pro-regime; among the less active users, 10 out of the 36 criticizers were previously either pro-regime or at least neutral; 4 out of the 36 neutral users were previously pro-regime. The results show that the event's negative impact on regime support seems to be greater

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[30] See '问卷调查公布:65.4%海外华人网友反对修宪' [Survey results published: 65.4% of overseas Chinese netizens opposed the constitutional amendments], March 5, 2018, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.6parknews.com/newspark/view.php?app=news&act=view&nid=287600
[31] For detailed coding scheme, see Appendix 1.

among more active users. In total, 9 out of 45 (20%) become less supportive of the regime, while among the 108 less active users, 14 (13%) show a similar tendency. This might be because the more active users have a higher level of political efficacy and political awareness, leading to a stronger reaction to the event that moves China closer toward dictatorship. Having said that, among the nine active users who changed their attitude, only two become critical while seven changed from pro-regime to neutral; moreover, the majority of the most active criticizers (13 out 15, or about 87%) were already heavy regime critics before the event. Thus, while the impact is not negligible, it should not be overestimated.

Table 4: Attitude Change Due to the Constitutional Revision

Groups	No change	More critical	Less Critical	Unknown
Top 15 Pro-regime (n=15)	15	0	0	0
Top 15 Critical (n=15)	13	2	0	0
Top 15 Neutral (n=15)	7	7	0	1
Less Active Pro-regime (n=36)	26	0	6	4
Less Active Critical (n=36)	24	10	0	2
Less Active Neutral (n=36)	19	4	11	2
Total (N=153)	**104**	**23**	**17**	**9**

Second, given the generally unpopular nature of the constitutional revision, it is surprising to see that 17 of the 153 sampled users (over 11%) actually become less critical. Closer examination reveals several potential mechanisms that can help explain this puzzle. First, all these 17 users are from the less active users sample. These users might have left too few comments to fully reflect their attitude toward the event. The 108 less active users on average have only 1.8 comments on the constitutional revision, 67 of which have only one comment. In other words, they may in reality be more critical than the dataset records. Second, these politically less active users may have been activated by the pervasive criticism toward the constitutional revision, thus temporarily reacting to the critics rather than truly supporting Xi or the regime. This dynamic reflects one mechanism of regime support online: netizens might choose to side with the regime even on an unpopular policy because they disdain dissidents and foreign powers even more.[32]

Overall, the results suggest that the constitutional revision was generally an unpopular policy move, especially among previously active pro-regime users. However, active and less active users with different prior attitudes toward the regime have reacted differently to the constitutional revision. It is quite intriguing to see some of the less active users become more supportive of the regime.

Nationalism and Regime Support

How do nationalism and the attitude change interact? To answer this question, the author first ran ordinal logistic regressions with the coding results (see Appendix 2). The results show a high positive correlation between nationalism (yes=1; no=0) and attitude toward the regime prior to

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[32] Han, *Contesting Cyberspace in China*.

the constitutional revision (pro-regime=1; critical=-1; neutral/indifferent=0)—from non-nationalistic to nationalistic, the log odds of having a higher level of pro-regime tendency increases by 3.078 ($p<0.01$, n=144),[33] which corroborates the findings of previous studies.[34] After the constitutional revision, nationalism still positively associates with one's attitude toward the regime, but the coefficient is smaller (2.066, $p<0.01$, n=144),[35] showing that the event dampens nationalism-boosted regime support. The reasoning is confirmed as nationalism negatively correlates with attitude change (more critical=-1; no change=0; less critical=1), suggesting that nationalism makes it more likely for a user to become more critical toward the regime because of the constitutional revision (coefficient=-1.282, $p<0.01$, n=144).[36]

Direct examination of the coding results leads to similar findings. As Table 5 shows, upon the constitutional amendments, both nationalistic and non-nationalistic users might change their attitude, and such changes could be against or for the regime. However, overall the changes are toward more critical, with nationalism being a catalyst rather than a restraining factor. In Table 5, among nationalistic users, 21% become more critical and 8% become less critical; in comparison, among non-nationalistic users, 19.6% become less critical and only 4.3% become more critical.[37]

Table 5: Attitude Change by Nationalism

	Less critical	No change	More critical	NA	**Total**
Nationalistic	8	69	21	2	**100**
Not Nationalistic	9	35	2	0	**46**
Unknown	0	0	0	7	**7**
Total	**17**	**104**	**23**	**9**	**153**

The analysis presents strong evidence that the constitutional revision was overall unpopular even among the nationalistic citizens. There is one more scenario to consider: some users, while they did not change their attitude, might become less or more active following the event. This was especially likely among regime supporters who might feel disappointed in the regime or ashamed to continue defending it, and thus choose to remain silent. To test this idea, the author calculated the average ratio of comments on the constitutional amendments to the total comments for each user group according to their attitude and activeness on the topic. In general, the less-active regime-supporters were slightly dampened while more avid regime-defenders

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[33] This means for a nationalistic user as compared to a non-nationalistic user, the odds of being pro-regime versus the combined categories being neutral and critical are 20.7 times greater. Likewise, the odds of the combined categories of being pro-regime and neutral versus being critical are 20.7 times greater.

[34] Tang, *Populist Authoritarianism*; Fang and Repnikova, 'Demystifying "Little Pink"'.

[35] For a nationalistic user, the odds of being pro-regime versus the combined categories being neutral and critical are 6.89 times greater.

[36] For a nationalistic user, the odds of a positive attitude change versus the combined null or negative change categories decreases by 72%.

[37] Given the unpopular nature of constitutional revision, it is puzzling to see nearly 20% of non-nationalists becoming less critical. Closer examination shows that some of these users are actually critical toward both the regime and the critics, and their very few comments on the constitutional revision happened to be attacking the regime critics. This again confirms the earlier observation that some less active users were activated by criticism toward the regime.

became even more active. A similar analysis of user activeness according to one's nationalist inclination and attitude toward the constitutional revision reveals that nationalists supporting the constitutional revision are more active than both non-nationalist and nationalist critics; nationalists with a neutral attitude toward the constitutional revision the least active.[38] See Table 6 for the results.

Table 6: Comparative Activeness

Groups	Avg. # of Comments on Const. Revision	Total # of Comments	Ratio (%)
Active Critical (N=15)	30.2	1060.87	2.85
Less active Critical (N=36)	2.39	132.11	1.81
Active Neutral (N=15)	5.53	406.8	1.36
Less Active Neutral (N=36)	1.25	196.64	0.64
Active Pro-Regime (N=15)	22.67	684.47	3.31
Less-Active Pro-Regime (N=36)	1.81	103.25	1.75
Groups (excluding users with unknown nationalist inclination)	Avg. # of Comments on Const. Revision	Total # of Comments	Ratio (%)
Non-Nationalist Pro-Regime (N=4)	1	33.25	3.01
Non-Nationalist Critical (N=30)	13	476.73	2.73
Non-Nationalist Neutral (N=12)	1.75	128	1.37
Nationalist Pro-Regime (N=44)	9.02	314.70	2.87
Nationalist Critical (N=19)	7.68	334.79	2.3
Nationalist Neutral (N=37)	2.78	314.62	0.88

Discourse Analysis

The attitudinal analysis indicates that the constitutional revision had triggered an online struggle in which netizens were not simply reacting to the event itself but engaging each other in a discourse competition. To further contextualize the discussion and explore the dynamics between cyber-nationalism and regime support, this section conducts the discourse analysis using a combined method of computer-aided frequent word analysis and an in-depth reading of specific comments. Table 7 presents the top 50 most frequently used words of supportive, critical, or neutral comments.

These three lists of frequent words tell distinctive stories regarding the interactions between nationalism and regime support, as will be illustrated further in the analysis of the pro-regime and critical discourses below. Before that, a few general observations deserve some discussion. First, the fact that terms such as 'China' (中国), 'the nation/state' (国家), 'people'

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[38] Only four non-nationalists support the constitutional revision, each contributing only one comment on the event. Though they are seemingly more active than any other groups, the results may not be reliable, thus not discussed here.

(人民), and 'history' (历史) appear and rank high in both pro-regime and critical comments demonstrates the significant role of popular nationalism in the debate. It shows that despite the divide over the highly controversial topic, there is a shared nationalistic perspective that is not only present, but also dominant. Both sides, above everything else are concerned with the implications of the constitutional revision for the Chinese nation, the people, and the history, though they disagree with each other regarding the specific pros and cons of the current regime. This explains why nationalism overall catalyzes attitude change toward more critical—the nationalist regime support is not unconditional.

Table 7: Top 50 Frequent Words in Three Types of Comments

Critical		Pro-Regime		Neutral	
中国	617	中国	632	中国	126
国家	207	美国	286	宪法	53
人民	185	国家	253	国家	40
主席	174	狗粮	203	法律	32
修宪	133	民主	126	修宪	26
宪法	129	台湾	107	主席	22
习近平	126	西方	105	保护	20
包子	117	支持	100	不同	20
五毛	114	习近平	88	美国	20
反对	103	修宪	87	连任	19
历史	93	人民	82	人民	19
代表	92	反对	80	支持	19
支持	92	政治	75	限制	18
美国	91	主席	72	权利	17
知道	91	社会	71	问题	17
皇帝	79	发展	70	习近平	17
人大代表	78	知道	69	必须	16
独裁	69	问题	67	反对	16
制度	68	墨黑	65	权力	16
万岁	65	人口	65	政治	16
民主	63	制度	63	公民	15
问题	61	连任	57	海外	15
群众	59	民族	52	发展	14
终身制	57	移民	51	经济	14
权力	54	世界	50	知道	14
纪念堂	52	媒体	49	领导人	13
任期	52	独裁	48	任期	13
大家	51	生活	48	时代	13
遗体	50	日本	46	政府	13
共产党	49	反华	45	二代	12
连任	49	国内	43	个人	12

政治	48	历史	43	民主	12
国内	47	华人	42	十条	12
投票	45	事情	40	下台	12
以后	45	任期	39	独裁	11
奴才	44	杂居	39	历史	11
西方	44	大陆	38	世界	11
反对票	41	共产党	34	事情	11
希望	41	时代	34	台湾	11
建议	40	德国	33	修改	11
毛泽东	39	经济	33	保障	10
修改	39	留学生	33	邓小平	10
中共	38	稳定	33	对外	10
太监	37	希望	33	领导	10
限制	37	总统	33	之后	10
意见	37	代表	32	财产	9
领导人	36	国外	32	出现	9
领导	35	继续	32	规定	9
能力	35	领导人	31	时间	9
社会	35	海外	29	文革	9

Second, some words appear in more than one list but convey quite different meanings and sentiments. For instance, 'democracy' (民主) appears in all three lists. Anti-Xi and anti-regime users often use it to criticize the regime for lacking or suppressing democracy; but in the pro-Xi or pro-regime comments, 'democracy' is either redefined, or seen as malfunctioning and inefficient, or treated as a tool of western powers to subjugate other countries like China. According to one user, 'science and technology are democracy.'[39] For another user, '[China] shall not democratize. After democratization it is not the people who will call the shots. It will be the officials and the rich calling the shots, not the people.'[40]

In addition, the relative ranking of the words matters in terms of the construction of the discourses. For instance, 'democracy' is the 5th most frequently used word in pro-Xi comments and only the 22nd in the anti-Xi comments, which is somewhat counterintuitive. This is because, besides having different interpretations of the term, critical and pro-regime users play the 'democracy' card very differently. In the anti-Xi discourse, 'democracy' is a vehicle to criticize Xi, but not the most important one—while Xi is moving toward dictatorship (独裁), 'democracy' was never the reality in China anyways. Nor was it the biggest common denominator among those criticizing Xi—many do not actually worry about China lacking or not moving toward

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[39] See user comment on '习近平修宪 中国搜索"移民"的频率暴增 10 倍', [Xi Jinping revises constitution and China's search for 'immigrants' soars 10 times], February 26, 2018, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.6parknews.com/newspark/index.php/index.php?act=view&nid=286487
[40] Ibid.

democracy; rather, they criticize Xi for disrupting existing institutions that have kept 'China' and the 'nation' moving upward. In contrast, pro-regime users refer to democracy more frequently because defaming 'democracy' is an inherent element of their rhetoric and an effective tactic to justify the constitutional revision, as discussed in the next paragraph.

The Pro-Regime Discourse

Those who are pro-Xi and pro-regime articulate their discourse and frame the issue in specific ways. In particular, echoing earlier studies that reveal the reactive nature of Chinese nationalism,[41] the pro-regime discourse on the constitutional amendments is built on the attacks of others. They see the West, the U.S., and Taiwan as vicious enemy forces that intend to disrupt China's rise and subjugate China using all means. This is why 'the United States' (美国), 'the West' (西方), 'democracy' (民主), 'media' (媒体) and 'Taiwan' (台湾) rank high. Taiwan appears in pro-regime comments not just as a hostile force or bad example of democracy, but also as a target or trophy for nationalists. Multiple users claim that Xi eliminates the term limits so that China can reunify Taiwan, and as long as Xi does that, he has their support. One user, who clearly disdains Xi, comments, 'Don't make me feel sick. Take the [presidential] seat as long as you want! But you must recover Taiwan during your term!'[42]

These comments also accuse the regime critics as foreign surrogates, as reflected in the term 'dog-food party' (狗粮). The high frequency of the term (203 times) as well as attacks on foreign hostile forces (the West, the U.S., Western media, etc.) reveals a discourse competition tactic of those defending Xi—it is much easier to attack the opponents' intention than to articulate a reason to support the regime. The attacks on the regime critics and perceived hostile forces also reveal how nationalism is converted into regime support. Many comments depict the regime as a necessary evil against external threats. Thus, the presence of criticism from Western countries, instead of pushing China toward democracy, is transformed into a justification for authoritarian rule. This is why those defending Xi and the regime cite the criticism as a 'reverse-indicator', claiming that whenever the West (Western countries, or the media) gets upset about what is going on in China, it means that China (the Party) has done something right.

The pro-regime discourse also exploits the Chinese identity by referring to overseas Chinese and their living experiences. For example, 'immigrants' (移民), 'overseas Chinese' (华人), and 'overseas students' (留学生) are more emphasized in the pro-regime comments, partially to invoke the Chinese identity among the users—the majority of whom are based overseas—and partially to divert the attack on the constitutional amendments to domestic issues of the host countries. For instance, Germany is often mentioned together with the refugee crisis; 'Mexicans and African Americans' are often used to describe the crises the United States faces.

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[41] Gries, *China's New Nationalism*; Gries, 'Chinese Nationalism'; Jiang, *Cyber-Nationalism in China*; Li, Marketing Japanese Products in the Context of Chinese Nationalism.

[42] See user comment on '习近平首次就修宪表态:发扬了民主 体现民意' [Xi Jinping expressed his opinion on the constitutional amendments for the first time: Promoting democracy and reflecting public opinion], March 7, 2018, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.6parknews.com/newspark/view.php?app=news&act=view&nid=288062

In addition, terms like 'development' (发展), 'economy' (经济), 'life' (生活) and 'stability' (稳定) appear frequently only in the pro-regime discourse. Evidently, many users support the regime (and Xi) because of its performance legitimacy.[43] As one user puts it, 'I support [him] if he makes the people rich.'[44] Closer examination shows that these terms are used not just to legitimize the regime, but also to defame dissidents and foreign powers by pitting growth, development, improved livelihood and stability against liberalization and democratization. In other words, all these good things could be lost if China had taken (in 1989, for instance) or now takes a different path. For this reason, even those who do not actively support Xi or the regime, express passive, albeit unwilling, tolerance of it. In one user's words, 'What can the masses do? It is OK so far as we have no internal strife and no civil wars.'[45]

The Critical Discourse

Not surprisingly, the critical discourse overall shows a strong distaste of the communist regime and a favor of democracy and the West in general. There are some quite derogatory terms to attack Xi, the regime, and regime supporters. The criticism of Xi is quite personal: his nickname 'the Bun' (包子) was mentioned 117 times while his real name appears only nine times more (126 times). The nickname mocked a political stunt—Xi dined at a Beijing bun shop in 2013 as a gesture to show how relatable he is to the public. Terms like 'emperor' (皇帝), 'to long live' (万岁), 'dictatorship' (独裁), 'Mao Zedong' (毛泽东), 'history' (历史), and so forth are all used to directly attack or indirectly mock Xi as well as the institutional setback and historical retrogression in the Chinese political system. Moreover, terms like 'submissive minions' (奴才) and 'eunuch' (太监) are used to describe the People's Representatives who approved the constitutional revision and all citizens not protesting against it. Those critical toward Xi have also labeled their opponents in the debate as state agents, as reflected in the term 'fifty-cent party' (五毛). The high frequency of this term (114 times) reveals the dynamics of the discourse competition just like the term 'dog-food party' for those who support Xi on the constitutional revision.

The critical discourse also defends the West, especially the U.S. against pro-regime users' criticism, citing liberal democracies as good examples, especially among non-nationalistic users. This is why terms such as 'America' (美国), 'democracy' (民主) and 'the West' (西方) are frequently referred to. This makes sense as pro-liberal Chinese are generally less nationalistic and open to the West.[46] In this sense, the critical discourse is more pluralized.

It is worth highlighting again that anti-Xi users, to a certain extent, share the nationalist perspective with those who support Xi. The top three frequent words in the critical comments, 'China' (中国), 'the nation/state' (国家), and 'people' (人民) convey that message clearly. This means regime criticizers can be nationalistic, though they may have a different view of what is

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[43] Yang and Zhao, 'Performance Legitimacy.'
[44] See user comment on '习近平首次就修宪表态.'
[45] Ibid.
[46] Han, 'Withering Gongzhi.'

good and bad for China. In this specific case, regime critics either believe that China can be better off were it to liberalize and democratize, or they see the removal of presidential term limits doing severe damage to China—the second reason is primarily why some nationalistic users become more critical toward the regime. Many articulate that even if Xi can be president for life, no one can guarantee a good successor after him and the institutional damage is irrecoverable. One user, who changed his attitude from supporting the regime to critical, states, 'I will be transformed from a semi-[member of] the "fifty-cent army" to a semi-[member of] the "dog food party." It is a shame that we lost such a good [political] institution.'[47]

In sum, citizens are divided on the constitutional revision, resulting in highly vibrant discourses that are against each other. To the regime's relief, there is still a major pro-regime discourse defending the regime and Xi. However, this discourse is to a large extent reactive and defensive as it is more about responding to the critics and perceived hostile forces than actively supporting the regime. The Party-state is depicted as a necessary evil, suggesting the support is conditional: were the threats gone or the regime more disappointing, it could disappear. The critical discourse is more pluralized. Though many of the regime critics simply embrace liberal democracy without strong nationalistic motives, quite some nationalists have become more critical because they dislike Xi and the constitutional revision out of the belief that orderly succession is better for China. Overall, the discourse analysis shows that the constitutional revision has weakened the linkage between nationalism and regime support, yet the perception of external threats have somehow alleviated the impact.

Conclusion

By tracing attitude changes among 6park.com users in response to the constitutional revision, this article reveals the intriguing relationship between cyber nationalism and regime support under Xi. It finds that unpopular policies such as removing presidential term limits can have a negative impact on support for authoritarian rule. More specifically, while diehard regime supporters may defend the constitutional revision, many users, nationalists or not, have become more critical; and the impact appears to be stronger among more active users. That being said, some users have actually become less critical toward the regime because they are activated by criticism toward the regime that reminds them about external threats, though such a change in attitude can be slight, accidental, or not quite sincere.

The discourse analysis shows that both regime defenders and critics can be nationalists, while just having different views about what is best for the nation. However, the two sides may adopt highly different framing tactics with distinctive topic emphases. Overall, the pro-regime discourse depends more on nationalist rhetoric and is more defensive in nature as it is less about actively praising the regime and more about highlighting the threats to the nation. While the critical discourse may also adopt nationalist elements, it is primarily not constructed around

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[47] See user comment on '中国正面临一个前所未有的重大危机 不是修宪' [China Faces an unprecedented critical crisis other than the constitutional amendments], March 5, 2018, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.6parknews.com/newspark/index.php?act=view&nid=287719

nationalism, but rather features an embrace of liberal democratic values as well as heavy attacks on the authoritarian regime and Xi.

One may wonder if the user comments are polluted by the notorious fifty-cent army, thus affecting the findings. While the possibility cannot be ruled out entirely, there are several reasons why this is unlikely the case. First, current studies have identified several traits of government sponsored-trolls such as repetition of posts, narrow topic focus, or cheer-leading in tone,[48] none of which appear in the sample of pro-Xi users. Second, one would expect state trolls to actively and constantly defend Xi and the regime. However, the active users in this study only become less supportive of the regime rather than more supportive. This means the causal impact at least is valid, though it might be underestimated. Third, the data show that users who have repeatedly posted the same comment are critical toward the regime.[49] Though they could be strongly motivated individual users, this is a sign of dissident astroturfing rather than Party trolling. This echoes an earlier study that finds information manipulation on Twitter being associated with anti-Chinese-state rather than pro-Chinese-state perspectives.[50]

This article shows that the interaction between nationalism and regime support can be contextualized in at least two senses. First, it is helpful to situate the analysis into specific socio-political realities. Popular nationalism in China is not simply a product of state propaganda and manipulation or a reaction to the nation's interaction with foreign forces; it is also shaped by citizens' living experiences within the socio-political structure. Thus the constitutional revision, while seemingly irrelevant to nationalist mobilization, has resulted in attitude changes toward the regime among many nationalists. The constitutional revision is not the only event that affects nationalist support for authoritarian rule. Rather, citizens have been continuously observing and reacting to the changing social, economic, and political realities. For instance, even before the constitutional revision, one previously pro-regime user expressed his disappointment toward the regime upon reading a report on Beijing authorities forcibly driving away the so-called 'low-end population.' The user commented, 'I am highly disappointed at what the Beijing authorities have done this time. I really want to defend them. But there is nothing to defend on.'[51]

Second, it is crucial to inspect how nationalist sentiment and regime support are activated differently among different social groups. Popular reactions to the constitutional revision did not happen in a complete vacuum. Rather, the international environment and how citizens, including the nationalists, perceive the external threats matter. Thus, while the constitutional revision and

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[48] Rongbin Han, Manufacturing Consent in Cyberspace: China's Fifty-Cent Army, *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44(2), (2015), pp. 105-134; King, Pan, and Roberts, 'How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction'.

[49] In total, five comments were repeated more than five times, all of which are critical toward the regime. The most repeated comment appears 25 times with only minor alterations. A closer examination of these users reveals a behavior pattern of astroturfing, as they tend to comment exclusively on China-related political topics and frequently repeat their comments across reports.

[50] Gillian Bolsover and Philip Howard, 'Chinese Computational Propaganda: Automation, Algorithms and the Manipulation of Information about Chinese Politics on Twitter and Weibo', *Information, Communication & Society* 22(14), (2019), pp. 2063-80.

[51] See user comments on '北京暴力驱赶低端人口 打工者拿刀自保' [Beijing violently drives away low-end population; Migrant workers take knives to protect themselves], December 10, 2017, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.6parknews.com/newspark/index.php?act=view&nid=273697

other state policies under Xi may have alienated nationalistic citizens, events such as the U.S.-China trade war may boost nationalist support for the regime. The rationale is: Xi is not good; but given the foreign encroachment, he is a necessary evil, or even a good choice.[52] And the regime is smart enough to exploit that. As former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd perceptively reasons, President Trump's tough rhetoric on the U.S.-China trade war actually plays into Chinese economic nationalism, thus working to the advantage of President Xi.[53] Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic, which might have hurt the regime's legitimacy initially, could boost nationalist support for the regime at later stages when China appeared to be comparatively successful in containing the virus and when politicians in the West, especially in the U.S., blamed China for the outbreak. In this sense, this research is only exploratory. More empirical studies that situate the interaction between nationalism and regime support into more specific contexts will be helpful to more fully understand this relationship.

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[52] Many Chinese deem themselves as 'patriots first and democrats second.' See Suisheng Zhao, '"We Are Patriots First and Democrats Second": The Rise of Chinese Nationalism in the 1990s', in *What If China Doesn't Democratize? Implications for War and Peace*, ed. Edward Friedman and Barrett L. McCormick (Armonk, N.Y.; London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 21–48.

[53] Kevin Rudd, 'Trump Hands China an Easy Win in the Trade War: The president's tough rhetoric plays into Chinese economic nationalism', *New York Times,* May 29, 2019, accessed August 2, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/29/opinion/trump-china-trade-war.html.

Appendix 1: Coding Scheme and Examples

Attitude toward Regime (before/upon the Constitutional Amendments)	
Categories	**Sample Comments**
Pro-regime (=1) Comments being positive or defensive about the regime, the Party, the government, its policies, & the leaders or those attacking critical users.	海外牧羊犬看国内永远是奴才呗，奴才了几十年，中国发展成这样，谁在乎你们整天奴才不奴才。你们看政治除了评书观点，称帝不称帝的，还有啥。永远是昨天中国是民主的，今天又倒退了。中国人一直是奴才。继续当你的狗吧，狗眼看人低很正常。 Overseas foreign-admiring dogs always see domestic Chinese as slaves. After decades of slavery, China has developed so much. Who cares you [call them] slaves or not all day long. Other than expressing opinions such as [Xi] crowning or not crowning, what else do you see in Politics? [Your story] is always that China was more democratic yesterday and now it is going backwards; Chinese have always been slaves. Just contine play your role as [foreign-admiring] dogs. It is normal for dogs to be snobs anyways. 实话实说，这么些任主席，除了邓小平没觉得其他哪一位比习好点的，按现在的趋势中国还有希望能再次硬起来，支持连任。至于这新闻，看了来源都懒的看内容了。 Honestly, all those presidents other than Deng, no one is better than Xi. If the trend goes on, China still has the hope to become strong. Support his tenure. For this report, I don't even want to read it seeing where it is from. 白皮婊及其走狗為中国操碎了心。 The White-skinned bitches and their running dogs truly worry about China. 坚决支持习延长做到解放台湾 Strongly support Xi to extend his term until Taiwan is liberated.
Neutral (0) Comments not picking a side, relatively balanced or indifferent.	特地晚点来，来看骂人贴，生活很无聊，草民凑热闹。 [I] come late on purpose to read all the cursing posts. Life is boring and ordinary people like me enjoy the show. 共产党也写在宪法里，反共的也没有尊重过。中国意识形态还处在斗争中，虽然多少有些过时了。 [Dominance of] CCP is also written in the Constitution. Those dissidents never respected that. China is still in the phase of ideological struggle, even though that is somewhat outdated. … 一党专政确实不好，但是也确实高效，民主确实好，但是也确实金贵着不好养。锋利的刀确实好切肉，但是也更容易杀人，关键看什么时候什么人用。所以，这一切的结果才有了所谓的"生老病死"的过程，世间万物都逃不出这个规律，一个国家也是如此。所以，有时候也要看命，不管你有何种抱负，迎合了自己的命数，极致地发挥出来，就是一个时代的英雄！ … One-party dictatorship is indeed not good, but it can be really efficient. Democracy is indeed good, but it is indeed expensive and difficult to maintain. A sharp knife, indeed good for cutting meat, can also kill a person more easily and the key is when and who uses it. So there is the life cycle of 'birth, aging, sickness and death.' Nothing in the world can escape this law, and so is a country. Therefore, sometimes it all depends on the fate. No matter what ambitions you have, if you cater to your fate, you will excel and become the hero of an era!
Critical (=-1) Comments criticizing the regime, the Party, the government, its policies, the leaders and pro-regime users.	贪权是比贪财更恶的腐败！ Greed for power is a worse form of corruption than greed for money. 修改国家主席任期变为終身制，将为祸无穷，可以预见中国未來 50 年必然由独裁者统治，人祸必多，数以亿计中国人会死于非命。习將是始作俑者，野心家，杀人犯，叛国者及历史的罪人。人大將是共犯，中国人要记住这些人，把这些人的名字刻在石碑上,永远被羞辱。 Changing presidency to life-long tenure will cause endless misfortunes. One can foresee China being ruled by dicators in the next 50 years, causing many man-made disasters and tragic deaths of millions of Chinese. Xi will be the initiator of evil, careerist, murderer, traitor and criminal of history. The People's Congress will be the accomplice Chinese shall remember all those people, engrave their names on stone and shame them forever. 独裁者的走狗！不配做中国人 Running dogs of the dictator! Do not deserve to be called Chinese.
Other (NA) Comments with insufficient information or not relevant.	留个印吧，这贴必火。 Leaving a mark. This post will be hot. 可以重复投票 呵呵 Multiple votes allowed [for this online survey] , hehe

Nationalism (based on comments before the Constitutional Amendments)	
Categories	**Sample Comments**
Yes (=1): comments being positive or defensive about Chinese nation, culture, people, society, etc.	我就不明白了，为什么这些狗，中国每一个进步都要骂一回，高铁不是挺过来了吗？ I simply don't get it why these dogs would bark every time China makes progress. Hasn't high-speed railway lived through [their barking]? 我的亲爷爷就是被中国镇压去世，但是，我始终是世界和中国和平和建设的主人: 无论何时何地, 我始终热爱中国, 这与任何人任何时候没半毛钱关系, 是我的事; 有昭一日希望你不仅全家死绝, 而且祝你九族珠灭, 无根无芽无弟弟. My grandpa died because of the suppression by China [the CCP]. But I have always been the one for the peace and construction of China and the world: no matter when and where, I always love China. This has nothing to do with anyone at any time, it is my own mission; I hope that not just your family, but also your entire clan will be eliminated one day so that you have no roots and no siblings. 恭喜你!我的祖国!十年磨一剑虽然艰辛，但能成功，依然是中华民族的骄傲。但愿祖国继续厉精图奋，让中国人站在世界的最前端。 Congrats, my motherland! It is trying and difficult to grind a sword for ten years. But the success would be the pride of our Chinese nation. I hope my motherland will continue working hard and let us Chinese stand at the forefront of the world.
No (=0): comments criticizing China, Chinese culture, the people and society, etc.	神烦，总是自吹自擂，牛不牛逼别人说了才算，国外民间对你认可才是真认可，自己国家内部吹牛逼，自己人民都不相信，吹什么翻身啊第一的？ So annoying. Always bragging. You are only truly awesome if others say so; the recognition of people from other countries is a true recognition. Foreigners' recognition of you is the real recognition. Bragging only in your own country and even your own people don't believe it. How can we say [China] becomes No. 1? 文化程度越低，收入越低，社会层级越低的人爱国情绪越激动，越容易走极端。这些人成天期待着能打土豪分田地的机会 The lower one's education level, income, and social status, the stronger his patriotic emotion will be and the more likely he would go to the extreme. These people are hoping all day long for an opportunity to strike the rich and redistribute the wealth 奥巴马当然是很笨。不过，中国人也不要把高铁想象的太了不起。美国不太需要高铁。 Of course, Obama is dumb. But the Chinese should not overestimate importance of the high-speed rail. The U.S. does not really need it that much.
Other (NA): comments irrlevant (e.g. spam and system notification, etc.)	此评论已被删除，相关原因说明，请查看新闻评论公告 This comment has been removed; for an explanation, see News Comments Annoucement 面向英国\美国\加拿大\澳洲\新西兰\日本\韩国\德国\法国等国家大学文凭和真实教育部认证。 留学生提供以下服务: ... [We offer] the following services for overseas students regarding college diploma and genuine Ministry of Education Verification Certificate in the UK\US\Canada\Australia\New Zealand\Japan\Korea\Germany\France: [Details omitted here]

Appendix 2: Ordinal Logit Regression Models

VARIABLES	Model (1) Pre-Attitude	Model (2) After-Attitude	Model (3) Attitude Change
Nationalism	3.078***	2.066***	-1.282***
	(0.430)	(0.380)	(0.432)
Constant cut1	1.131***	0.633**	-2.637***
	(0.330)	(0.305)	(0.423)
Constant cut2	2.676***	2.316***	1.294***
	(0.401)	(0.361)	(0.332)
Observations	144	144	144

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1