

# Disarticulation between Civic Values and Nationalism

Mapping Chinese State Nationalism in Post-handover Hong Kong

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**ABSTRACT:** Drawing upon the ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism, this article shows how Chinese state nationalism disarticulates from the civic values of Hong Kong in the post-handover years. Surveys from 2010 to 2016 in general reveal a dwindling pride in Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong, and its disarticulation from the treasured values of civic rights and qualities in the city. As seen in this study, Hong Kong Chinese articulation of nationalism in the form of Chinese ethnic icons shrank throughout the study period. The same study also shows that neither civic values nor cultural pride in Hong Kong are conducive to the building of Chinese state nationalism, nor are they a significant impetus to cultural resistance against China's nation-building project in Hong Kong. The article empirically shows the limitation of nation-building, which relies mainly on ethnic appeal but less on civic dimensions. It also discusses to what extent the ethnic-civic dialogue of nation-building could inform Chinese state nationalism and resistance to it in post-handover Hong Kong.

**KEYWORDS:** ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism, Chinese state nationalism, post-handover Hong Kong, Hong Kong identity.

## Introduction

Twenty years after the handover of sovereignty, China is still wrestling with its nation-building project in Hong Kong. Resumption of Chinese sovereignty over this former British colony has not smoothly nurtured a robust Chinese state nationalism that refers to national allegiance to and patriotic sentiment toward the Chinese state. While China has been pressing for state loyalty and Chinese national pride in Hong Kong through national education (Tse 2014) and political propaganda (Chan and Chan 2014), local civil society exhibits escalating China–Hong Kong conflicts in terms of political reform, socio-economic integration, and cultural tension (Chan 2014). The China-Hong Kong conflict has even been radicalised as discourses of localism, Hong Kong sub-nationalism, or even Hong Kong independence, which defies China's influence and efforts regarding Hong Kong's democratisation and civil liberties (Chan 2017; Fong 2017). In this article, the questions we would like to answer are: why is China's state nationalism still an "unfinished project" in Hong Kong? What are the factors that hinder it? What are the momentums behind controversies relating to Chinese nationalism in post-handover Hong Kong?

We tackle the above questions by drawing upon the ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism. The findings of Hong Kong identity surveys from 2010 to 2016 show that Chinese state nationalism mainly rides on people's pride in Chinese ethnic icons that are imbued with cultural and linguistic ties to the Chinese motherland. Meanwhile, civic values—referring to the degree of freedom that Hong Kong people take pride in—that have long been treasured by Hong Kong people do not contribute to their pride in Chinese state icons. Disarticulation of civic values hence becomes the major discourse or controversy that is mainly used to summarise the disputes in China-Hong Kong conflicts in the course of China's assertion of state nationalism over the city. Yet, the findings also demonstrate that positive perceptions of Hong

Kong's cultural icons and civic values do not directly or necessarily result in resistance against Chinese state nationalism. The findings indicate that emergent localism and sub-nationalism are unlikely to become mainstream discourses upheld by residents of Hong Kong.

In sum, this article empirically illustrates the limitations of state nationalism that relies largely on ethnic appeal but little on articulation of civic values. We also contend that Hong Kong people's embrace of local icons such as the Cantonese dialect, and pursuance of civic values such as freedom and human rights, do not directly result in resistance against Chinese state nationalism. Yet given China's growing assertion of state nationalism and policies that ignite public concern over civic values and local culture, we should anticipate upcoming China-Hong Kong cultural conflicts and their consequences on Chinese state nationalism.

Conceptually speaking, Chinese state nationalism in post-handover Hong Kong provides a case study revisiting the ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism. It shows how the ethnic appeal of nationalism is working on a highly modernised city with entrenched civic values. It illustrates the fundamental incongruence, if not contradiction, between the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationhood and civic values of human rights and liberties. Such ethnic-civic tension will plausibly result in further uncertainties regarding China's nation-building project in Hong Kong. Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong hence provides an empirical case study to examine scholarly questions that contemplate the formation of nationalism and national identities.

## Nationalism: An ethnic-civic dialogue

Understanding nationalism, nationalisation, and national identity has been a complex construct that cuts across cultural studies, political science, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, and various theories of modernisa-

tion. Put in simpler term, the cultural aspiration of an imagined feeling of belonging to a nation is coined as nationalism; its formation is nationalisation, and its implications for cultural positioning and practices can be seen as the people's national identity. Academic dialogue regarding these concepts has revealed substantial and concrete political implications for nationalist movements: the breaking up of multi-national and colonial empires, national unification and expansion, and even the restoration of ancient states (Geller 1983; Nairn 1977). Nationalism thus matters substantially to the social engineering of nation-building, which is inextricably tied to the establishment or replacement of governing regimes and their political legitimacy.

Formation of nationalism is closely associated with the rise of the nation-state since the Enlightenment period. Modernist theories and studies reveal that the political, socio-economic, and cultural shifts initiated by modernising forces have laid down foundations for the building of nation-states, the proliferation of nationalistic ideas, and the disruption of the traditional social order, including industrial capitalism, public education, social bureaucratisation, and Kantian ideas of self-determination from the Enlightenment (Smith 2010: 49-53). The modernist approach attributes nationalism to the cultural formation of citizenship, civic rights, and codes, which imbue nationhood with specific political sovereignty and national boundaries (Geller 1983). In short, modernists perceive nationalism as a constructionist process that conveys a sense of solidarity through civic participation and values (Smith 1996). Nationalism is hence a historical contingency given the rise of citizenship, civic values and rights, and nation-states since the Enlightenment era. However, the modernistic explanation hardly explains the existence of pre-modern nations and the blind, strong empathy and emotions relating to nationalism. In this regard, primordial origins offer an alternative version of the rise of nationalism: solidarity based on shared blood ties or biological roots, or the national glory and totems that are enshrined in common cultural and historical origins (Smith 2010: 55-60). These ethnic icons contain condensed cultural and historical meanings triggered by reactionary anxiety to foreign dominance and other entities of nationalism (Nairn 1997). The aforementioned scholarly deliberation of national imagination, its sources, political legitimacy, and social consequences are henceforth conceptualised as expressions of ethnic-civic nationalism.

While envisioning a dialogue on civic nationalism (nation-building based on citizenship, civic rights, and values) and ethnic nationalism (nationalistic passion hinged on historical glories, blood ties, and biological roots), both the aforementioned modernist theories and primordial discourses unravel a number of vital social thrusts that facilitate statist leverage for nation-building, such as the ideological apparatus of education systems, the administrative apparatus of urban management and population control, the economic apparatus of taxation, the construction of national myths, biological roots, historical glories, and totems. To different degrees, depending on the specific context, these modern state apparatuses and primordial origins pave the way for nation-building projects initiated by statist manoeuvres. Apart from the statist construction of nationhood, consciousness of national identity also stems from lived experience at the grassroots level, which has been called ethno-symbolism and reiterates the subtle but persistent impact of everyday life practices on the formation of national consciousness. Michael Billig emphasises habitual cultural reproduction as an illustration of a "banal nationalism" through which people internalise national awareness and identity: cultural practices such as hoisting national flags over public buildings and the use of a specific language are typical in-

stances (Billig 1995). Benedict Anderson's outlining of a notion of an "imagined community" has documented how the paradigm shift of linguistic usage based on print capitalism and the formation of cultural communities stemming from vernacular nationalism combine to give rise to national consciousness (Anderson 1983). Statist construction of nationhood and the everyday cultural experience of the people are therefore significant factors in the ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism.

## *Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong*

The ethnic-civic dialogue of nation-building is manifested in the evolution of Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong. Chinese nationalism in colonial Hong Kong exhibited a substantial ethnic appeal and the historical glory of Chinese nationhood, and demonstrated cultural resistance against colonial domination by "the West." Despite the constitutional separation from China during the colonial period, Hong Kong society was susceptible to various occasional political or statist mobilisations in the name of Chinese nationalism and its ethnic history. Hong Kong was a significant fund-raising base and safe haven for Chinese dissidents and political refugees who wrestled with the Manchu imperial Qing court in their efforts to restore a Han regime in China (Tsang 2007: 73-83). In 1925, propelled by zealous Chinese nationalism and labour disputes between Chinese workers and British troops in Shanghai, masses of Chinese workers in Hong Kong joined the Canton-Hong Kong strike that shook the colonial rulers, business elites, and the wider society (Tsang 2007: 84-101). A modern well-known saga of extended Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong involved the 1967 riots. Spearheaded by Maoist supporters of the Cultural Revolution in Communist China (1966-1976) who discredited colonial Hong Kong as an oppression of Western colonialism, Hong Kong experienced a period of social unrest, chaos, and the overwhelming shadow of being taken over by its Communist neighbour, although the event eventually ended thanks to the restrained approach of Mao's regime and the rigorous suppression of Maoists by Hong Kong's colonial regime (Yep 2009). Colonial Hong Kong continued to display calls for Chinese nationalism and its ethnic identity. Notable examples included protests against the territorial dispute between Japan and China over the Diaoyu Islands and the movement to recognise Chinese as an official language in Hong Kong, which frequently evoked Chinese folklore and the ethno-cultural ethos of a kind of pan-Chinese sentiment (Vickers and Kan 2003).

The ethnic appeal of Chinese nationalism nevertheless encountered a growing Hong Kong identity in the late colonial period. Hong Kong's desire for a sense of belonging to its own territory and its particular way of life further fostered a distinct cultural identity as colonial Hong Kong started experiencing economic upturn and a widening gap in living standards with mainland China in the 1970s (Mathews, Lui, and Ma 2008). More importantly, Hong Kong identity has gradually demonstrated civic values that go beyond the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationalism. The development of political discourse in Hong Kong took a more progressive stance toward democratisation and liberties after the constitutional reforms of the late colonial period, as a result of which the British regime was able to introduce directly-elected seats to the legislature (Ku 1999: 92-198). The desire for institutional reforms in favour of democratisation, civic liberties, and related growth in the political sphere has continued in the post-handover years (Ma 2007: 94-134). In the face of unremitting social aspirations for democratisation and civic liberties, however, China has been widely framed as the major political force barring Hong Kong from democratising its constitutional

structure and exercising civic rights. China's trump cards are local pro-China groups and business and industrial leaders combatting local democrats, and tycoons buying out Hong Kong media and thereby controlling the public voices in Hong Kong (Fong 2014; Hong Kong Journalists Association 2014). Despite the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China in 1997, the rise of China's geopolitical power since the 1990s, and the growing socio-economic interaction between Hong Kong and China in the post-handover years, the notion of Hong Kong identity has continued to represent cultural resistance against the looming Chinese regime (Fung 2001, 2007).

In addition to the civic values explicated by Hong Kong identity, the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationalism has also received controversial feedback in Hong Kong owing to local residents' puzzled or ambivalent (mis)perception of mainland Chinese people. Given the varying pace of modernisation and incongruence in terms of civic values, Hong Kong people's acknowledgement of themselves as Chinese nationals does not necessarily imply their embrace of immigrants and visitors from mainland China. Chinese in mainland China have been hovering between the position of "cultural other" and cultural affiliation to Chinese nationalism throughout the formation of Hong Kong identity (Lau 1997; Ma and Fung 2007). This paradoxical identity politics is fully manifested in disputes over the abode rights of mainland Chinese in Hong Kong, in which local public opinion calls for controlling residency in Hong Kong and stricter border control in order to avoid sharing social resources with people from mainland China (Ku and Pun 2004). Past surveys have shown that Hong Kong residents perceive mainland Chinese as less politically motivated and with lower civic qualities (Ma and Fung 1999). The unintended socio-economic consequences of trans-border interaction between China and Hong Kong, such as the influx of tourists from China and of Chinese capital for goods and services in the post-handover years, has further aggravated cultural resistance to mainland Chinese and Chinese identity by locals in Hong Kong (Chan 2017).

### Revisiting Chinese state nationalism

In short, Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong has been counting on the ethnic ties of Chinese nationhood and China's historical links, and is less responsive to the civic values of political rights and liberties embedded in the Hong Kong identity. This cultural incongruence has been further exposed by the statist manipulation of Chinese nationalism in the post-handover years. Chinese nationalism has become a pragmatic political means for the Chinese state to call for national unity, ruling legitimacy, and support for national greatness (Zhao 1997). The incongruity between the values of civil liberties and the nationalistic appeal for political allegiance to a specific Chinese state has paved the way for conflicting dynamics between Chinese nationalism and Hong Kong identity. Such discursive struggles and political contestations are vividly manifested in the implementation of national education in Hong Kong. Although the Chinese and Hong Kong governments are attempting to articulate a Chinese nationalism that engenders appreciation of and affection for the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the school curriculum of Hong Kong, this renationalisation project has encountered persistent resistance from civil society and an alternative attribution of Hong Kong citizenship that values global citizenship and civil liberties (Tse 2011). Another example is the political controversy surrounding the process of democratising the election of the Chief Executive: when China reiterated that only those who are loyal to the PRC could rule Hong Kong, local public opinion responded by asserting a liberalistic interpretation of

state allegiance (Chan and Chan 2014). Statist manipulation of Chinese nationalism demonstrated a tendency toward centralising power that erodes the local autonomy of Hong Kong by deterring democratisation, the exercise of liberties, and practices of international protocol (Fong 2017). Simply put, the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationalism has become a Chinese state nationalism that demands the political allegiance of Hong Kong people to the Chinese regime.

The Hong Kong story of Chinese state nationalism is therefore a case study that could provide an empirical account to illustrate the ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism by raising the following research questions:

- To what extent has China successfully promoted Chinese state nationalism in post-handover Hong Kong?
- To what extent is Chinese state nationalism compatible with the civic values of post-handover Hong Kong?
- To what extent is Chinese state nationalism compatible with Hong Kong identity?

These research questions explicate the compatibility between Chinese state nationalism and Hong Kong identity, in particular whether statist allegiance to the Chinese regime can incorporate the civil values of Hong Kong. Drawing upon Hong Kong identity surveys from 2010 to 2016, the following parts of this article will examine the correlation between Chinese state nationalism, the civic values of Hong Kong, cultural icons representing Hong Kong identity, and the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationhood. We will discuss the juxtaposition of the civic values of Hong Kong and the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationhood in the formation of Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong, and its implications in the ethnic-civic dialogue of nationalism. In particular, we are interested in whether and to what extent the civic values of Hong Kong are contradictory to the proliferation of Chinese state nationalism in post-handover Hong Kong.

### Research methods

To delineate the formation of Chinese state nationalism and its interaction with civic values in Hong Kong and Hong Kong identity, we systematically examine the results of identity surveys conducted in Hong Kong from 2010 to 2016. The track surveys were conducted by means of computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) with representative samples of the Hong Kong population. The surveys contained questions asking respondents to declare their cultural identities, their cultural affiliation to Hong Kong and China, their connection with mainland China, and their cultural impressions of mainland Chinese. These studies were all administered in October so as to avoid seasonal variation. A total of four surveys were conducted from 2010 to 2016. These CATI surveys covered Cantonese-speaking residents of Hong Kong aged 18 and above.<sup>(1)</sup> Interviewees were chosen by a random sampling of Hong Kong household telephone numbers. The "next birthday rule" was carried out whenever more than one household member was eligible to be interviewed. Response rates of the six surveys ranged from 35% to 65%,<sup>(2)</sup>

1. As Cantonese is the dominant spoken language in Hong Kong, the surveys were conducted in Cantonese. According to the census data of Hong Kong, 95.8% and 94.6% of the entire population used Cantonese as their spoken language or other language in 2011 and 2016 respectively. Although the surveys by-passed the non-Cantonese speaking population, we believe the sampling covers most of the population. The survey data are therefore representative of the Hong Kong population.
2. Response rates ranged from 52% to 65% when the surveys were conducted from 2006 to 2010. Yet, it dropped to 35% in the 2014 survey and increased a little to 39% in 2016 survey. Declining survey response rates have become common in Hong Kong in recent years, as people have become less tolerant of the rising number of tele-surveys.

with an acceptable sampling error ranging from +/- 3.1% to +/- 3.5%. We obtained a total of 937 samples in 2010, 816 samples in 2012, 797 samples in 2014, and 797 samples in 2016.

We re-organised the survey findings by sorting the following key variables:

- Chinese state nationalism

Three 5-point scale questions (1 = highly disagree, 5 = highly agree) are identified as indicators of Chinese state nationalism: pride in China's national flag, pride in China's national anthem, and pride in China's army (People's Liberation Army, PLA). Pride in the national flag, anthem, and military presence are the most common cultural icons representing people's political allegiance and loyalty to the state. Pride in these statist icons is illustrative of the existence of Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong.

- Perception of civic rights in Hong Kong

We select four 5-point scale questions (1 = highly disagree, 5 = highly agree) as indicators of how Hong Kong people value civic rights in their city. They are: "Hong Kong people treasure press freedom," "Hong Kong people treasure freedom of speech," "Hong Kong people treasure equal opportunity," and "Hong Kong people treasure privacy." These freedoms and civic rights demonstrate the significance of liberties and human rights that have become embedded in the citizenship of Hong Kong in the decades since its late colonial period.

- Perception of civic qualities in Hong Kong

We identify four 5-point scale questions (1 = highly disagree, 5 = highly agree) as indicators of how Hong Kong people value their civic qualities. They are: "Hong Kong people are friendly," "Hong Kong people are self-disciplined," "Hong Kong people are compassionate," and "Hong Kong people have independent thinking." As discussed in the literature review, the formation of Hong Kong identity explicates a discrepancy between civic qualities possessed by Hong Kong people and mainland Chinese. These questions are illustrative of the civic qualities perceived by Hong Kong people.

- Hong Kong's icons

To solicit people's cultural pride on Hong Kong identity, we identify three cultural icons representing Hong Kong: Victoria Harbour (a famous tourist spot in Hong Kong), Cantonese (the local dialect in Hong Kong), and the candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident (an annual ritual in Hong Kong commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Incident in Beijing). Respondents were asked to grade them on a 5-point scale (1 = highly disagree, 5 = highly agree) in order to show whether they were proud of these icons. Victoria Harbour suggests a general sense of belonging to the city. Cantonese specifies Hong Kong identity by differentiating the spoken language of the city from China's official spoken language, Putonghua. The candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident connotes an important collective memory of Hong Kong identity (Chan and Lee 2010). Hong Kong is the only place under Chinese rule that allows public mourning for victims of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre. That makes the candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident a significant cultural icon of Hong Kong.

- Chinese icons

The literature review for this article has explicated the significance of ethnic appeal in the construction of Chinese nationalism in Hong Kong. We therefore focus on two items from the survey data: cultural pride in the Great Wall of China and Putonghua. The Great Wall is one of the Seven Wonders of the World and symbolises Chinese history, while Putonghua is the official national language of China. Both indicate an ethnic bonding to Chinese nationhood.

- China-Hong Kong trans-border experience

Previous research shows that Hong Kong people with a richer trans-border experience and connection with mainland China show a stronger sympathy toward Chinese nationalism (Ma, Fung, and Lam 2011). We therefore constructed an index expressing the China-Hong Kong trans-border experience of respondents to the surveys. We designed three questions: "How frequently do you travel to mainland China?" (1 = once a month or more often, 0 = less than once a month), "Do you have a connection with relatives, classmates and / or colleagues who are mainland Chinese?" (1 = Yes, 2 = No), and "Have you ever lived in mainland China for one year or more?" (1 = Yes, 2 = No). Scores were added up to yield a component score for each respondent, and a China-Hong Kong trans-border experience index was compiled.

## Findings

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the key variables and their components. Firstly, respondents show a flagging pride in Chinese state nationalism from 2010 to 2016. Hong Kong people's pride in China's national flag and anthem dropped from 3.50 and 3.55 (out of 5 marks) respectively in 2010 to slightly below 3 in 2016. Likewise, Hong Kong people's pride in China's army also showed an obvious slide from 2.91 in 2010 to 2.44 in 2016. Meanwhile, respondents' pride in Chinese icons representing an ethnic bonding of Chinese nationhood also dipped accordingly. Hong Kong people's pride in the Great Wall, which stood at 4.03 in 2010, decreased to 3.53 in 2016. Hong Kong people also illustrated a shrinking affection toward China's official language Putonghua, with the mean score dropping from 2.94 in 2010 to 2.44 in 2016.

While Hong Kong people are less proud of Chinese state nationalism and its ethnic appeal, they simultaneously demonstrate an adamant embrace of the civic values of their hometown, in particular the aspect of liberties and human rights. Table 1 shows that respondents strongly agree that Hong Kong people treasure press freedom, freedom of speech, equal opportunity, and privacy throughout the study period. The mean scores of these four items remained steadily above 4 from 2010 to 2016. Relatively speaking, respondents indicate lower mean scores to the survey items representing the civic qualities of Hong Kong people when compared to those of civic rights. However, the mean scores of civic qualities are in general higher than those of Chinese state nationalism and Chinese icons conveying ethnic bonding of Chinese nationhood. The data hence inform us that Hong Kong people have a high regard for the civic values of their hometown, especially liberties and human rights.

Table 1 illustrates respondents' pride in cultural icons. The higher the pride, the stronger the Hong Kong identity. Contrary to the flagging mean scores of Chinese state nationalism and Chinese icons showing ethnic bonding of Chinese nationhood, pride in Hong Kong's cultural icons vary across the years. Hong Kong people's pride in the renowned Victoria Harbour remained stable from 2010 to 2016. They also showed a stronger pride in their spoken language Cantonese from 2012 to 2016.<sup>3</sup> However, Hong Kong people demonstrated a lower pride in the candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident. A possible explanation is that the Chinese nationalistic sentiment conveyed by the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident—the annual ritual largely stems from an ethnic bonding of Chinese nationhood with the victims of the 1989 Tiananmen

3. We add "Cantonese" and "Candlelight vigil of June 4th Incident" to the surveys since 2012.

**Table 1 – Chinese state nationalism, perception of civic rights and qualities, pride in Hong Kong icons, pride in Chinese icons, and China-Hong Kong trans-border experience of Hong Kong people (2010-2016)**

Chinese state nationalism*	2010	2012	2014	2016
Pride in national flag	3.50	3.01	2.80	2.95
Pride in national anthem	3.55	3.02	2.84	2.92
Pride in Chinese army	2.91	2.42	2.21	2.44
Cornbach's Alpha	0.889	0.905	0.902	0.933

  

Perception of civic rights*	2010	2012	2014	2016
HK people treasure press freedom	4.51	4.54	4.57	4.43
HK people treasure freedom of speech	4.52	4.59	4.61	4.48
HK people treasure equal opportunity	4.31	4.30	4.31	4.20
HK people treasure privacy	4.29	4.28	4.29	4.26
Cornbach's Alpha	0.827	0.791	0.834	0.849

  

Perception of civic qualities*	2010	2012	2014	2016
HK people are friendly	3.69	3.64	3.67	3.49
HK people are self-disciplined	3.89	3.92	3.94	3.74
HK people are compassionate	3.98	3.97	3.96	3.78
HK people have independent thinking	3.80	3.75	3.82	3.63
Cornbach's Alpha	0.795	0.743	0.742	0.778

  

Hong Kong's icons*	2010	2012	2014	2016
Victoria Harbour	3.93	3.91	3.87	4.04
Cantonese	N/A	3.62	3.72	3.93
Candlelight vigil for June 4th Incident	N/A	2.96	2.94	2.63

  

Chinese icons*	2010	2012	2014	2016
Great Wall	4.03	3.71	3.42	3.53
Putonghua	2.94	2.62	2.35	2.44
China-Hong Kong trans-border experience#	1.32	1.51	1.37	1.40

\*1 = highly disagree, 5 = highly agree

# Range from 0 to 3

massacre—may not be substantially compatible with increasing China-Hong Kong conflicts in recent years. Last but not least, Table 1 indicates that Hong Kong people generally maintain some degree of trans-border connection with mainland Chinese society. Rising China-Hong Kong conflicts have not apparently hindered trans-border connections throughout the study period.

To further analyse the data, we consolidated the survey items into three construct variables of "Chinese state nationalism" (pride in China's national flag, anthem, and army), "Perception of civic rights" (mean scores showing respondents' regard for liberties and human rights in Hong Kong), and "Perception of civic qualities" (mean scores showing respondents' regard for civic qualities in Hong Kong) for further regression analysis. The figures in Table 1 suggest acceptable levels of Cornbach's Alpha for the above construct variables. The three survey items for Hong Kong's icons are less consistent with each other (the pattern of mean scores for the candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident is different from that for the other two items), and the two survey items for Chinese icons also manifest varying patterns. We therefore do not group them into the construct variables for further analysis.

Table 2 is the regression analysis of Chinese state nationalism as the dependent variable of the models. The first finding is that the variances for Chinese state nationalism are largely explained by people's pride in Chinese icons pertinent to ethnic Chinese nationhood, but are minimally related to the civic values of Hong Kong. Throughout the years from 2010 to 2016, the Chinese icons of Putonghua and the Great Wall contributed the largest variance to the regression models (as indicated by the relatively large R<sup>2</sup> change and their significance). On the other hand, the R<sup>2</sup> changes indicated by the civic values of Hong Kong are only statistically significant in 2010 and 2014, not to mention the low absolute values of the scores. In general, perception of civic rights is unrelated to Chinese state nationalism. Perception of civic qualities shows a weak negative relationship to Chinese state nationalism in 2012. The findings demonstrate that Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong is primarily constituted by Chinese ethnic appeal, and fails to articulate to the robust civic values of the city.

Closer scrutiny unravels an intriguing relationship between Hong Kong identity and Chinese state nationalism. The Hong Kong icon of Victoria Harbour generally shows a positive relationship with Chinese state nationalism. Cantonese demonstrates a weak positive relationship with Chinese state nationalism in 2012, but no significant relationship in 2014 and 2016. Table 1 indicates a relatively high mean scores of pride in Victoria Harbour and Cantonese. Coupled with the data of tables 1 and 2, we conclude that pursuance of a Hong Kong identity does not hamper people's affiliation with Chinese state nationalism. This finding is somewhat contradictory to the views of Hong Kong localism, a discourse that frames Hong Kong identity as the opposite of Chinese nationalism (Chan 2017; Fong 2017).

Another point to note is the negative relationship between the candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident and Chinese state nationalism. This finding could be explained by Hong Kong people's collective memory of the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident—the local movement points directly to the culpability of Chinese leaders for their suppression of the student movement in 1989. This political stance inevitably challenges political allegiance to the incumbent Chinese regime, and hence curbs state nationalism. Another finding of Table 2 is the significant and slightly positive correlation between China-Hong Kong trans-border experience and Chinese state nationalism. Although connection with mainland Chinese society could be conducive to cultivating Chinese state nationalism, the contribution of such habitual practices and living experience should not be exaggerated based on the data in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Regression analysis of Chinese state nationalism#**

Demographics	2010	2012	2014	2016
Gender	-0.21	-0.013	-0.007	-0.21
Age	0.079***	0.050	0.095***	0.032
Education	-0.119***	-0.124***	-0.025	-0.133***
Family income	0.066**	-0.040	-0.060*	0.007
<i>R2 change of demographics</i>	0.057***	0.063***	0.100***	0.139***

  

Civic values of Hong Kong	2010	2012	2014	2016
Perception of civic rights	-0.006	0.002	-0.020	0.031
Perception of civic qualities	0.001	-0.069*	-0.030	-0.021
<i>R2 change of civic values of Hong Kong</i>	0.019***	0.000	0.035***	0.003

  

Hong Kong's icons	2010	2012	2014	2016
Victoria Harbour	0.064**	0.123***	-0.003	0.079***
Cantonese	N/A	0.066*	0.040	0.028
June 4th candlelight vigil	N/A	-0.158***	-0.204***	-0.174***
<i>R2 change of Hong Kong's icons</i>	0.122***	0.188***	0.179***	0.150***

  

Chinese icons	2010	2012	2014	2016
Putonghua	0.405***	0.395***	0.421***	0.487***
Great Wall	0.389***	0.329***	0.335***	0.284***
<i>R2 change of Chinese icons</i>	0.385***	0.316***	0.301***	0.423***

  

	2010	2012	2014	2016
China-Hong Kong trans-border experience	0.083***	0.082**	0.093***	0.087***
<i>R2 change of China-Hong Kong trans-border experience</i>	0.006***	0.006**	0.008***	0.007***

  

Adjusted R2	0.590***	0.566***	0.623***	0.716***
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\* p ≤ 0.05

\*\* p ≤ 0.01

\*\*\* p ≤ 0.001

# Dependent variable: Chinese state nationalism, missing values are subject to pair-wise analysis

Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong is so far still mainly nurtured by the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationhood.

Table 2 indicates that two demographic items are to a certain extent significant to the degree of Chinese state nationalism. Education level shows a significant negative relationship in 2010, 2012, and 2016. The age of respondents indicates a slightly positive relationship in 2010 and 2014. Family income illustrates a less stable relationship throughout the study period: a slightly positive relationship in 2010, but a somewhat negative relationship in 2014. Tables 3 and 4 below attempt to further uncover the possible impact of education level and age on the construction of Chinese state nationalism.

Table 3 indicates a correlational analysis between Chinese state nationalism and pride in Cantonese, pride in Victoria Harbour, and the perception of civic rights and civic qualities. Pride in Cantonese and Victoria Harbour, and the perception of civic rights and qualities all yield high mean scores in the surveys (see Table 1), therefore amply representing Hong Kong's identity. The other two variables inform the perceived civic values that proliferate in Hong Kong. Table 3 examines the education level of respondents: those who received matriculation education or below, and those who received undergraduate and post-graduate education.

Table 3 shows that less-educated people demonstrate a stronger correlation between Chinese state nationalism and Cantonese than highly-educated people. For pride in Victoria Harbour and its correlation with Chinese state nationalism, less-educated people show a stronger correlation in 2010 and 2012 than highly educated people, but a weaker one in 2014 and 2016. Despite the mixed pattern, pride in Victoria Harbour is generally positive to Chinese state nationalism. The findings show that pride in Cantonese or Victoria Harbour does not imply cultural resistance to the Chinese state. Less-educated people even have a stronger tendency to consider Cantonese as part of the Chinese language. Stable and positive correlations between Chinese state nationalism and Hong Kong's icons indicates that both highly educated and less-educated people tend not to regard Hong Kong identity as cultural resistance to statist loyalty to China. The negative coefficient of education level in regression analysis (Table 2) could be explained by less-educated people demonstrating a stronger connection between Chinese state nationalism and Hong Kong identity vis-à-vis their highly educated counterparts.

Perceptions of Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities do not show any significant correlation with Chinese state nationalism in 2012 and 2016. The correlation between civic rights and Chinese state nationalism is weak in 2010, yet less-educated people show a relatively stronger correlation between perceptions of civic qualities to Chinese state nationalism than do their highly educated counterparts in the same year. The most striking finding is that both perceptions demonstrate significant negative correlation with Chinese state nationalism in 2014, the year when the Occupy movement broke out and China and Hong Kong experienced major political conflicts over democratisation. Highly educated people showed a stronger negative correlation between perception of Hong Kong's civic qualities and Chinese state nationalism in 2014. Other than in 2014, perceptions of Hong Kong civic rights and qualities generally do not strongly and stably correlate with Chinese state nationalism when compared with pride in Hong Kong's icons.

Generally speaking, the effect of education levels on the formation of Chinese state nationalism is mixed over time, and is far from displaying a consistent pattern. People with higher education levels are less proud of Chinese state nationalism in general (as shown in the regression analysis of Table 2). Further correlational analysis of Table 3 reveals that while people with

**Table 3 – Correlations between Chinese state nationalism, Hong Kong's icons, perception of Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities (difference in educational level)#**

	Pride in Cantonese	Pride in Victoria Harbour	Perception of Hong Kong's civic rights	Perception of Hong Kong's civic qualities
<b>2010</b>				
Matriculation and below	N/A	0.362***	0.089*	0.217***
Undergrad and postgrad level	N/A	0.338***	0.069	0.109*
<b>2012</b>				
Matriculation and below	0.307***	0.381***	0.032	0.062
Undergrad and postgrad level	0.252***	0.251***	-0.033	-0.025
<b>2014</b>				
Matriculation and below	0.135**	0.199***	-0.123*	-0.113*
Undergrad and postgrad level	0.034	0.282***	-0.127*	-0.171**
<b>2016</b>				
Matriculation and below	0.188***	0.270***	-0.002	-0.018
Undergrad and postgrad level	0.113*	0.344***	-0.079	0.074

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ 

# Dependent variable: Chinese state nationalism

higher education levels show a lower correlation between Chinese state nationalism and pride in Cantonese (since 2012) and Victoria Harbour (in 2010 and 2012), the correlation itself is still positive, which means that Hong Kong residents do not regard Hong Kong identity as resistance to Chinese state nationalism. Education levels also do not show a strong and robust impact on the correlation between perception of civil rights and qualities and Chinese state nationalism.

Table 4 captures the age division of respondents and its impact on the correlations between Chinese state nationalism and all the variables listed in Table 3. People aged 30 or above demonstrate a stronger correlation between Cantonese and Chinese state nationalism than people aged 29 or below. The age division does not show a consistent impact on the correlation between their pride in Victoria Harbour and Chinese state nationalism, as the young cohort (people aged 29 or below) show a stronger correlation in 2010 and 2016, but not in 2012 and 2014. However, a conclusion is that icons belonging to Hong Kong (Cantonese and Victoria Harbour) once again do not represent a negative correlation with Chinese state nationalism to either young or adult cohorts (people aged 30 or above).

Correlations between perception of civic rights and qualities in Hong Kong and Chinese state nationalism, on the contrary, show an intriguing pattern. The adult cohort does not show a stable correlation between civic rights and qualities and Chinese state nationalism except for an apparent negative cor-

relation in 2014, the year the Umbrella Movement was launched in Hong Kong. This exceptional year could be explained by the extremity of China-Hong Kong conflicts over democratisation that year. The young cohort, however, demonstrates a positive correlation between Chinese state nationalism and perceptions of Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities in 2010, and an even stronger correlation in 2016. This finding of the young cohort can be read in two ways. The first is that young people perceive a compatibility between Chinese state nationalism and Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities specifically in 2016, two years after the 2014 Umbrella Movement. This reading, however, drastically contrasts with studies that document youth activism in Hong Kong, and find that Hong Kong youth by default detest Chinese state nationalism in the post-handover years (Chan 2013). An alternative reading is that this positive correlation in fact indicates a reduced recognition of Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities among young people after the Umbrella Movement. By this logic, it means that young people disappointed with the stalled democratisation of Hong Kong and the hard-line approach of China in 2014 at the same time express a declining appraisal of Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities. A closer scrutiny of the descriptive data gives stronger evidence of the second explanation. Mean scores for Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities among the young cohort decreased from 18.02 and 15.25 in 2014 to 16.65 and 13.85 in 2016, respectively. Meanwhile, mean scores for Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities among the adult cohort maintained a stable level (2014: civic rights = 17.73, civic qualities = 15.43; 2016: civic rights = 17.56, civic qualities = 14.83) after the Umbrella Movement.

## Discussion

The data in this article explicate empirical evidence responding to the three research questions delineated by the literature review. The first question is: to what extent has China successfully promoted Chinese state nationalism in post-handover Hong Kong? Shrinking cultural pride in China's national flag, anthem, and army from 2010 to 2016 indicates that the active dissemination of Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong has not met with positive response. By 2016, the mean scores for the aforementioned three items all fell below the "neutral" midpoint of the 5-point scale. Hong Kong people are also less proud of cultural icons (the Great Wall and the Chinese national language Putonghua) that represent their ethnic Chinese ties. Such findings, together with data regarding civic values, are a direct rejoinder to the second research question: to what extent is Chinese state nationalism compatible with the civic values of post-handover Hong Kong? Survey data illustrate that Hong Kong people robustly cling to their civic rights and civic qualities. Regression analysis, however, informs us that such cherished civic values in Hong Kong are quite independent of the formation of Chinese state nationalism. Generally speaking, civic values in Hong Kong neither contribute to nor substantially oppose political allegiance to the Chinese regime. The point to note here is the correlational analysis showing that Hong Kong's civic values are negatively correlated to Chinese state nationalism in 2014, the year when China and Hong Kong experienced enormous political conflicts over the process of democratisation. This finding reminds us that China may risk losing political allegiance in Hong Kong if it forcefully curtails the city's civic values.

The third research question is: to what extent is Chinese state nationalism compatible with Hong Kong identity? In fact, Hong Kong identity consists of various cultural imaginaries with different implications for Chinese state nationalism. Our data show that people's pride in Victoria Harbour (a gen-

**Table 4 – Correlations between Chinese state nationalism, Hong Kong's icons, perception of Hong Kong's civic rights and qualities (difference in age)#**

	Pride in Cantonese	Pride in Victoria Harbour	Perception of Hong Kong's civic rights	Perception of Hong Kong's civic qualities
<b>2010</b>				
Aged 29 or below	N/A	0.455***	0.163*	0.166*
Aged 30 or above	N/A	0.332***	0.063	0.193***
<b>2012</b>				
Aged 29 or below	0.222**	0.317***	0.042	0.060
Aged 30 or above	0.306***	0.326***	0.006	0.032
<b>2014</b>				
Aged 29 or below	-0.103	0.168**	-0.068	-0.096
Aged 30 or above	0.145***	0.235***	-0.114**	-0.122**
<b>2016</b>				
Aged 29 or below	0.102	0.289***	0.312***	0.365***
Aged 30 or above	0.187***	0.276***	-0.002	0.007

\*  $p \leq 0.05$

\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

# Dependent variable: Chinese state nationalism

eral sense of belonging to Hong Kong) and Cantonese (the predominant spoken language in Hong Kong) do not result in resistance to Chinese state nationalism. Informed by regression analysis, we could argue that people who are proud of Victoria Harbour are also slightly more faithful to China. However, those who support the candlelight vigil for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Incident (the annual ritual commemorating China's suppression of the 1989 democratic movement) tend not to embrace Chinese state nationalism. Contrary to media representations and the social imaginary of China-Hong Kong conflicts in recent years, our findings indicate that Hong Kong identity is a sophisticated social contingency that cannot be simplified as a cultural rival to Chinese state nationalism.

In a nutshell, Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong provides an empirical case study for examining ethnic-civic dialogue, if not contestation, in the course of China's construction of nationalism in Hong Kong. It testifies to the incongruence between the ethnic appeal of nationhood and the civic values stemming from a combination of colonial legacy, Hong Kong's unique development, and its cosmopolitan outlook. While traditional and ethnic ties as well as China's global rise could buttress the implementation of Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong, modernisation, including political development, in its late colonial period has endowed the city with civic values of liberty, human rights, law and order, and lifestyle that are starkly different from those in mainland China. To secure the political allegiance of Hong Kong after the handover, China has manipulated the ethnic bonds of Chinese nationalism by appealing to empathy with Chinese nationhood. This article, however, empirically shows that the nationalistic call for ethnic unity cannot easily override the incompat-

ibility of civic values. We have witnessed a weakening Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong in recent years. We have seen the robustness of civic values in this city, in particular the ever-increasing importance of civil liberties and human rights in public discourse. Those civic values closely adhere to the desire for democratisation, constitutional freedom, and individualised and cosmopolitan lifestyle (protection of privacy, friendliness to others, self-discipline for mutual respect, etc.) that are also common denominators in other global cities such as London, New York, Paris, and Tokyo. The story of Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong elucidates the limitations of ethnic appeal in the epoch of globalisation, when the civic values of democracy, freedom, and individual rights became the common language of the human world.

However, our data also reveal the subtle power of ethnic appeal in the construction of nationalism. While failing to enhance Hong Kong people's political loyalty to China, Chinese state nationalism has so far not induced substantial cultural resistance originating from Hong Kong people's civic values and identity. As reiterated in this article, Hong Kong's civic values are generally irrelevant and have yet to become resistant to the construction of Chinese state nationalism. Some of Hong Kong's cultural icons even exhibit a positive relationship to political allegiance to China. As informed by the previous studies, the social formation of Hong Kong society has been largely subject to the development of China as such—a nationalistic sentiment about building up a stronger and modern China since the late Qing period, the ethnic bonding resulting from familial networks in mainland China, the trans-border living experience due to socio-economic interaction between China and Hong Kong, and even the shared sense of ethnic history and national glory between Hong Kong people and mainland Chinese to a certain extent. Even the young and well-educated cohorts of the Hong Kong population do not demonstrate obvious defiance of Chinese state nationalism.

Yet, this tenacity of Chinese ethnic appeal in Hong Kong will be subject to further challenges if China insists on defying the liberties, human rights, current lifestyle, and cultural identity of Hong Kong. Correlational analysis shows that the civic values of Hong Kong tend to be negatively related to Chinese state nationalism in 2014, the year when China and Hong Kong had formidable conflicts over democratisation and freedom during the Umbrella Movement. Moreover, regression analysis demonstrates that Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong primarily relies on the ethnic appeal of Chinese nationhood. However, Hong Kong people are less proud of the Chinese national language and historical relics in recent years. We believe that worsening civic-ethnic tension in Chinese state nationalism will further delay and deter Hong Kong's political allegiance to China, as Hong Kong people generally show a significant inertia regarding their existing civic values, lifestyle, and local identity.

In addition, our survey data focus on the Cantonese-speaking community in Hong Kong rather than Hong Kong as a whole. As most of the Hong Kong population speaks Cantonese, the representativeness of our samples is not considered problematic now. However, the identity formation of non-Cantonese speaking residents of Hong Kong, in particular non-Chinese people, is also a significant topic when studying Hong Kong identity and its dynamics with Chinese state nationalism as more mainland Chinese have settled in Hong Kong since 1997. Could there be non-Cantonese speaking citizens who pledge loyalty to China in Hong Kong in future? Would this sector of the Hong Kong community be regarded as local subjects? These research questions could complicate the construction of Chinese state nationalism in Hong Kong.

## Conclusion

Chinese state nationalism in post-handover Hong Kong empirically shows the polemic deliberation of ethnic-civic dialogue in constructing nationalism. Hong Kong presents an illustrative case study that demonstrates the contradiction and confrontation between ethnic appeal and civic values when a state attempts to strategically construct its nationalism in a newly-integrated city. Ethnic nationhood is embedded in historical legacy and myths that are unequivocally significant to the nationalistic empathy, but modernisation and globalisation inevitably bring about civic values that challenge the political legitimacy of the state and advocate individual rights and freedoms. That makes the ethnic-civic dialogue a pressing agenda in the construction of nationalism and its state legitimacy.

Certainly, construction of nationalism does not necessarily imply a dichotomy between civic values and ethnic values. National glory and pride could incorporate civic values, as in the case of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, which can be considered indispensable parts of French and American nationalism. However, China is pursuing a governing legitimacy that counts on state nationalism rather than civic values in a more or less top-down approach, at a time when local demand is for a quicker pace

of democratisation and a stronger version of liberties and civic rights. The story of Hong Kong therefore epitomises the ethnic-civic tension of Chinese state nationalism on which China relies for the political legitimacy of its partisan leadership. It shows how a nation-making process is problemised by reliance on ethnic unity that takes minimal account of the pursuance of liberties and civic rights.

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