Democracy and international higher education in China

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There is substantial evidence that supports the theory that higher education and democracy are highly correlated. Throughout modern history, students have been at the forefront of democratic movements, including the 1989 pro-democracy uprising in China. Since then, and despite the increased availability of Western-style education within and without its borders, China has bucked the trend. Using system justification theory as its theoretical framework, this study investigates why a Western-style education in China has done little to inculcate revolutionary movements. Findings indicate that a Western-style education does not facilitate student desire for democratisation in China because of the control imposed on student behaviour by Chinese authorities, including student subscription to Chinese Communist Party-endorsed notions of national pride and student ambition for postgraduate socioeconomic reward. Culturally grounded notions of social harmony were less evident than might have been expected.

Democracy is usually understood to be a human rights-oriented system of government based on universal suffrage. Democracy is generally assumed to refer to rule by the people through direct and secret representation and is historically defined as being opposite to any form of authoritarianism and totalitarianism (Popper, 1971). Hence, mainland China fits the definition of a non-democratic state because National Party Congress delegates are not elected by secret popular vote (Miles, 2011) but are, for all intents and purposes, decided by Communist Party allocation.

Moreover, China could also be construed as being a totalitarian state because its leaders conduct themselves under the ideological banner of communism, and while not everyone in the National Party Congress is a member of the Communist Party of China (CCP), no other party membership is allowed into the decision-making process and contestation of either the Congress or its membership is officially discouraged. Public criticism is not allowed; when it does occur, it can result in severe punishment. In December 2011, for instance, Chen Xi was jailed for 10 years for writing a series of essays, published on websites outside China, criticising the Chinese government. At the same time another democracy campaigner, Chen Wei, was sentenced to nine years in a similar but unrelated case (Hennock, 2011). But while China cannot be said to be a democracy by any accepted definition, Chinese officials occasionally use such terms as 'socialist democracy' (China Daily, 2012), an oxymoron that ex-Premier Wen Jiabao used to describe a form of ersatz democratic government that does not guarantee basic human rights, doesn't require the separation

of powers, doesn't ensure freedom of speech and is not based on universal suffrage.

There exists a growing body of scholarly work to support the proposition that more universally available and more internationally focused higher education within a non-democratic state may lead to increased student-led agitation for democratisation (Glaeser *et al.*, 2006; Lipset, 1959, 1960). More specifically, in their meta-analysis of survey data on the effectiveness factors of civic education, Gainous and Martens (2012) considered education to be the most important in creating attitudes and values vital for a participant governance. Earlier, and somewhat prophetically, Zehra Arat (1988, p. 22) posited the idea that education with urbanisation and media growth are the essential factors for the creation of a desire for democracy in the Middle East:

> Using survey data from Middle Eastern countries, Lerner identified urbanisation, education, and media growth (or communication) as the essential factors for the process of democratic development. He considered urbanisation to be a factor stimulating education, which in turn accelerates media growth and eventually democratic development.

Not all media commentators agree that youth use social media to create a self-directed political force (Bratich, 2011) and the outcomes of the various uprisings in the region continue to be mixed in terms of democratisation (Dalacoura, 2011). Nonetheless, there is a general acknowledgement that disempowered young people are increasingly using social media to demand social justice (Vadrevu & Lim, 2012).

Contemporary China has so far bucked this trend. Since the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising was quashed, there have not been any significant attempts by students to push society towards a democracy that values human rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of association and the right to vote for political leaders, despite Chinese students having a reputation for being sociopolitically active and at the forefront of Chinese politics in the 20th century (Zhao, 2002). It is noticeable that there does not appear to be any visible or significant appetite for democracy among the contemporary student population in China, even among those students who have had significant exposure to Western ideas through tertiary education abroad or at home. Although those numbers are relatively small compared to the total Chinese population, they are growing. China's Ministry of Education statistics indicate that a total of 339,700 Chinese students went abroad for graduate and undergraduate studies in 2011, an increase of 19.32 per cent over that of 2010 (Yu, 2012). The number of students who return after studying abroad has also been exponentially growing. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, in 2011 a total of 186,200 Chinese students, or about 55 per cent of the total, returned to work in China – an increase of 38 per cent compared to 2010 (Zhu, 2012). There are no studies that report these students show a greater inclination to agitate for political reform.

One subset of foreign educated Chinese students is comprised of those who complete their course in a Sino-foreign joint-venture university. Whereas at first glance it may be presumed that these providers engender a more actively pursued notion of social justice and democracy among its cohorts, it is in fact just as possible that they are complicit in preventing Chinese students' access to democratic principles. It may be that their very presence in China indicates compliance with the CCP's requirement of tight control of student behaviour while maximum educational and economic benefits are extracted (Gow, 2012).

It is undoubtedly true that the primary purpose of in-country transnational universities is educating the best and brightest Chinese and international students to high undergraduate and postgraduate standards; not to inculcate revolutionary fervent, particularly as the overseas partners in these ventures acknowledge potential and actual financial gain, albeit usually couched in terms of mutual benefit (Greenaway & Rudd, 2012; Gilbertson 2011). Nonetheless, this does not comfortably explain the lack of revolutionary movement among Chinese students. The intentions, per se, of the executives and managers at the helm of Western universities in China do not necessarily preclude students' political activity: in fact, historically speaking, Chinese students have been remarkably resilient in the face of state intervention.

The current lack of student enthusiasm for political revolt may be attributed to the state having too close a control over them to allow dissent and/or ambition to foment. The fact that China is allowing Western-style education to be delivered within its borders suggests that the state is confident in its control mechanisms. These mechanisms operate on the micro level as ubiquitous surveillance within the campus and on the macro level by referring to Confucian notions of social cohesion and national identity (Onsman, 2012), a strategy that works as an underlying psychosocial mechanism acting as a counterforce to the desire for democratisation sweeping the world (Huntington, 1991).

In the recent past, Chinese students have shown that they are not averse to protest when the cause is mean-

ingful to them, which suggests that students may be less predisposed towards overt political action in this instance because the idea of democracy is less appealing to them than the West assumes. In simple terms then, students may show little interest in pushing for democracy because they are constrained by strictures within the university or they do not see democracy as an intrinsically worthwhile goal. This study explores the relationship between the two factors.

The study

The study was conducted between 1 February and 31 May 2012 in the University of Nottingham Ningbo China (hereafter UNNC), the first officially sanctioned Sino–foreign university in China (Onsman, 2011). UNNC offers a wholly British education and encourages international student mobility; about one-fifth of Chinese students spend part of their degree programs in Western countries.

The study was comprised of three parts: a qualitative examination of the organisational structure of UNNC, semi-structured interviews with six individuals, conducted with the assurance of complete anonymity, and a questionnaire, translated into Chinese and distributed to 200 students: 100 at UNNC and, for comparison purposes, 100 university-age Chinese students not affiliated to the university. Ethics clearance was provided by UNNC.

Analysis of UNNC's student support structure

Much of student activity in UNNC is controlled and monitored by the Student Affairs Office. To gain an initial impression of how far-reaching its influence is, the main features and functions of its work were classified and rated on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not a factor in ensuring that students justify the social system and 5 = major factor in ensuring that students justify the social system). Of the 25 identified features, seven were rated as not being a factor in maintaining the sociopolitical status quo, which suggests that most of the work of the Student Affairs Office is entirely devoted to ensuring political control of the students. In addition, this is specifically CCP control, as opposed to general control by the authorities.

The analysis of function and purpose indicated that student support is peripheral to the primary duties formalised in the student affairs manual. The work of the 20 or so employees is, specifically, to build and entrench the power and control of the Party among the student body. The unit's work calendar indicates that at least 40 per cent of all projects are directly related to the Party. The remainder are indirectly related to the Party and all are related to facilitating information gathering, recording and monitoring of students for political purposes. The social structure of the university and the work carried out by the Student Affairs Office are designed specifically to ensure that students do not develop revolutionary movements. Rather, the structures are specifically designed to cajole or coerce the student population into supporting or justifying the rule of a political elite.

Table 1. Student Affairs Office functions identified as factors ensuring student compliance

ID	*Description*	*Compliance impact rating*
1	Reporting lines	5
2	Diary of activities	4
3	Psychological counselling	5
4	Student Union management	5
5	Career guidance	1
6	Disability support	1
7	Student enrolment	5
8	Student card	3
9	Student transport concession	1
10	Student insurance	1
11	Student record	5
12	'Party Work Handbook of UNNC implementation'	5
13	Party membership management	5
14	Lost property	1
15	Student 'emergencies' plan (including demonstrations)	5
16	Assigned roles in emergencies	5
17	Incident reporting systems	5
18	Response plans for all emergencies, led by Party secretary	4
19	Graduation ceremony	1
20	Monitoring of student organisations	4
21	Sports events: selection of participants.	4
22	Assigned roles in cultural activities	1
23	Party recruitment	5
24	Preliminary calendar of events (mostly CCP-related activities)	5

Key: 1 = not factor in ensuring student compliance; 5 = major factor in ensuring student compliance

In compliance with China's Archives Law, the Student Affairs Office gathers information and keeps detailed files on every student, including contact information for friends and relatives, as well as ideological issues in connection with students' families and social groups. These files arrive at the university from schools and are passed on to future employers and other government departments when students graduate or drop out. Student Affairs Office officers are required to include information about each student's health, grades, rewards and punishments, and details related to Party affiliation and interest. The presence of these files – and the knowledge that whatever one says or does that is non-routine will be immediately reported to an authority and stay on your record for life – serves as a mechanism to keep students very cautious about airing their views on political issues or, indeed, acting to make any change. The fear of being punished later, by, for example, not being awarded employment on the basis of a student misdemeanour, is a major factor in ensuring that people err on the side of caution in giving their opinions and acting in a way that may seem as if they are opposed to the Party or not be supportive of it.

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Shortly after the start of the academic year in September, students are actively encouraged to join the Party or be promoted within its ranks. They are first introduced to the class leadership structures, and then class Party leadership structures. There is little that is subtle about the encouragement. Party loyalists are rewarded with accolades and positive notes on their records; only athletes who are Party members are chosen for competitive sporting events. Peer pressure is utilised as a social control tool, with students acting as agents to help Student Affairs Office officers gather detailed information about each student. The Student Affairs Office keeps a tight rein on student organisations by establishing leadership groups of trusted students and effectively controlling all student activities. It is evident that the pressure to join the Party comes from a formalised structure implemented by UNNC together with the Party.

Although UNNC has a career development office in its administration, much of the career-oriented student support is managed by the Student Affairs Office. At least 15 per cent of its time is allocated to student employment issues, such as arranging internship opportunities. The same people coordinate Party meetings and make recommendations for the recognition of outstanding Party members as well as for outstanding academic achievement. The intertwining of the three functions – educational, political and career development – reinforces the impression for students that membership of the Party and employment opportunities are directly related.

Further supporting the argument that Student Affairs Office officers primarily serve a political function for the Party are the details of how emergencies at the university are prioritised. Along with major health epidemics, such as SARS (a highly contagious and potentially deadly virus), pulmonary anthrax and radiation damage, 'student group incidents' is cited as an 'extremely major incident', scoring the highest grade of emergency. Student group incidents are defined as '[u]ncontrollable gathering incidents of students, unapproved large-scale demonstrations, rallies, hunger strikes, sit-ins, petitions, and other incidents that seriously affect social stability; on-campus student group incidents which interrupt the normal teaching and administrative work'. Protest action, even for minor causes, is not permitted at UNNC. Were they to occur, they would be stopped and offenders reported to Party authorities.

Also worth noting is that the leader in times of emergency is not the Provost and Chief Executive Officer of UNNC, a secondment from University of Nottingham (UK). According to the manual, responsibility for handling emergencies falls under the Student Affairs Office, with the Party Secretary ultimately accountable for all issues, ranging from food poisoning on campus to major catastrophes. Heads of the Student Affairs Office, logistics and student apartment security are on the 'leading team'. The controversial point arises when the emergency would not be deemed an emergency in another country – for example, a student sit-in or protest activity. Democratic freedom of speech activities are not permitted, the ban being enforced by the Party through its agents at the university.

Student Affairs Office officials, as agents of the Party, are very powerful in influencing the future lives of students; as a result, students treat them with healthy respect and obedience, referring to them as their 'leaders' and 'bosses'. The contents of the operational manual indicate

that although the university is labelled a UK university in China, it is only the academic provision that is British. The university experience and all other facets of the university are Chinese and are under the control of the Party – effectively, a ruling elite in a totalitarian state. This works as an effective counterweight to the development of a revolutionary movement and, in addition, serves to counteract academic experiences that might lead to a change in social attitude or behaviour. However, as has been evident in social upheavals elsewhere, institutional and administrative constraints are unlikely to be effective at suppressing revolt if the desire for change gains enough traction among the student population. In light of this, the paper turns to the question of whether such a desire for change to democracy is evident among Chinese students in a transnational university. Where there is no will, the way becomes irrelevant.

Interviews

Ten individuals were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews; six agreed. Given the sensitivity of discussing political issues in China and that indicating a lack of support for the governing CCP can lead to censure and even harsh penalties in extreme cases, the interviews were conducted on the basis of strict anonymity and all candidates were informed that they could end the interview at any stage. The aim of the interviews was to assess the extent to which the list of factors identified by Jost and Hunyady (2002, 2005) might be directly applicable to Chinese individuals. In order to prevent any interviewee discomfort with overtly political terminology or judgment-laden terms such 'conservative' and 'protest', the descriptors of the categories were removed.

Each interview began with respondents being asked to identify the category they most identified with by circling the letter next to the description that best fits their worldview. A series of questions followed, phrased according to context, about the perceived likelihood of student attitude moving in favour of Western democracy in the long run, as well as whether there was any likelihood in the near future of political activism that had the introduction of democracy as an objective. The focus was on resistance to change ('I would be reluctant to make any large-scale changes to the social order' and 'I have a preference for maintaining stability in society, even if there seem to be problems with the current system'). Specific questions included:

1. Why do you think students at UNNC don't engage in political behaviour?
2. Why don't students here show any desire to change the way things work at the university or in China?
3. Do you think that students in China are interested in democracy?
4. Do you think that students think about the social system in China?
5. How important is Confucianism, in terms of its principles, in China today?

If the interviewee indicated discomfort with being recorded, answers were recorded in writing, either in situ or post hoc.

Interview responses

A common thread among all the recorded responses was that Party-constructed situational factors at UNNC outweigh individual dispositional factors likely to motivate Chinese students towards seeking political change and developing social movements. For example, one interviewee noted that the computer and internet systems accessed by students are specifically set up to prevent the development of protest action. She said: 'In our university we have to log in via software; it was produced by security services … if students want to organise protest, the internet can be disrupted immediately. It's not difficult.' Another highlighted the Party spectre over the lives of students by noting: 'Every Chinese university head of Student Affairs must know everything; they are very powerful. They can meet parents. They can access information. Even those from the education bureau say to them: "You could control this", like who moves to a single room, for priorities and other privileges.' These responses illustrate a perception that control is ultimately located in the Party and other state organs.

Most interviewees believed a system involving 'monitors' is effective in diffusing any political tension at the university. Interviewees who expressed support for the Party suggested that the Student Affairs Office monitors encourage individuals to air grievances and, in so doing, act as a political pressure valve.

All interviewees made comments alluding to the Party machinery becoming more rather than less pervasive and constrictive as UNNC had evolved since it was established in 2003. The pervasiveness of the Party was cited as a factor in students failing to show any interest in student political activities, or any criticism of the state or authorities. Said one interviewee: 'Many, not all, student activities are organised by the Party. You are brainwashed, you are living surrounded by the Communist Party, the Youth League. The question then is: Why are you protest-

ing against it? Those are your friends.' This attitude suggests that the notion that Western education leads to a change in social attitudes is not applicable in the context of this study because, in this instance, a Western education has not succeeded in breaking down the attitude towards the Party.

Fear of the state and punishment for not being openly supportive of the Party were cited as major reasons for students failing to exhibit any overtly political behaviour. One said students were worried about anything construed as 'misbehaviour' being 'put into files that go along with you your entire life', a reference to the Student Affairs Office' record-keeping. One interviewee summed up the approach of Chinese people thus: 'In China there's an old saying that 'A bird who stands out from other birds will be shot by the hunters'. So, if you are really outstanding someone will attack you or hurt you. You aren't supposed to be rebellious. You are better to keep a low key, a low profile [sic].'

The main patterns that emerged from the interview data included that there are distinct encouragements and rewards in place for students who unflinchingly toe the Party line, and many financial and social disadvantages for those who don't.

Another theme recurring in most interviews is that students do not believe UNNC is a safe environment in which to openly share intellectual views that are not compatible with the latest views of the Party leadership. Despite institutional rhetoric to the contrary, not all students and staff regard UNNC as a proper UK educational institution – linking this to the Chinese structural aspects, or characteristics, as well as the quality of the academic delivery. Opined one interviewee: 'Maybe the system limits the university's ambition to help. It is not a fully Western university. The university is helping students to think in various ways, but it is not doing its best.'

Significantly, all respondents picked up on the theme of individuals feeling overwhelmed at the enormity of the task of making any changes. This response resonates with Jost and Hunyadi (2005), who recorded that, for many individuals justifying the status quo in the US, it was a case of it being easier to do nothing than to resist or change a situation and it is easier to make a mental adjustment in favour of the status quo than in opposition to it. System-justifying ideologies 'serve a palliative function in that they make people feel better about their own situation' (Jost & Hunyady, 2002 p. 37). This thought process is illustrated by comments such as: 'Many people are telling me: You can't change the world. You must recognise the big situation, the big trend of society. This is the world; get used to it', and 'The people have to just learn how to survive within the system, even though the system is harmful to the people. The system is too harsh … but Chinese people have got used to living within a harsh system … unlike Western society they aren't trying to build a better society but survive.'

When asked why students don't even protest about minor issues or non-political issues such as poor food quality in the face of a lack of action by the university, which is a common social and social media complaint, one interviewee said: 'The Students' Union doesn't support this idea to protest in front of the administration building, because it isn't within their culture. They think if a protest is organised it will become a big issue for the Ningbo government. The Ningbo government will intervene. They [students] don't have the courage. Protest in China is seldom. You will be put in prison. Even if you apply for a protest you may be harassed by police officers.' The fear of retribution for what would be regarded elsewhere in the world as a minor political protest was echoed by other interviewees. Whether the recent social protest concerning environmental issue in Ningbo impacts on this attitude remains to be seen.

The main patterns that emerged from the interview data included that there are distinct encouragements and rewards place students who unflinchingly toe the Party line, and many financial and social disadvantages for those who don't. There is the overwhelming belief that the Party is ultimately in charge at UNNC. Said one interviewee: 'This university is not totally Western; the administrative staff are all controlled by Chinese people. British leaders can't influence Chinese staff', indicating that administrative employees are controlled by the Party. Evidently, the design of the system has been effective in ensuring that a Western-style education provider operating in China does not actually provide a Western education beyond its academic curriculum. If Jost's theory holds, it could be expected that Chinese people exhibit a similar psychological pattern as American people do in supporting a non-beneficial political elite.

Finally, and counter to expectation, there was overall agreement that, despite Party rhetoric, an additional category that focused on Confucian principles would be inappropriate: 'Confucianism is not embedded. This is the traditional past.'

Student surveys

The conclusions reached from the theoretical and qualitative research focused the student survey on dispositional aspects. On the assumption that justification of the social order is implicit or subconscious, the questionnaire aimed to test attitudes towards democracy and democratic principles without specifically referring to the core political concepts. Despite the interview data indicating a reluctance to ascribe significant agency to it, questions about Confucianism and the extent to which individuals believed the principles still apply in modern China were included because nationalism and Confucianism are seen by some as forces counter to democracy (Hu, 1997; Chen, 2013; Mitter, 2013).

The questionnaire was adapted from Pillay *et al.* (2006), who used a rating scale structure designed to gauge social attitudes among a group of respondents whose primary language is not English. The structure minimises time spent and increases completion rates. Response time was less than two minutes. Preceding the main section of the survey were five demographic questions: gender, age, nationality, level of education and university affiliation. A bank of questions that surveyed attitudes and opinion followed.

While all questions polled feelings of patriotism, questions 8, 13 and 16 sought to elicit specific attitudes relevant to the current study. Question 8 sought to establish whether students were concerned about social justice issues in China. A concern is acknowledged here regarding the variation between Chinese and English students in perceived meanings of the term 'ashamed' (Liu, 2012; Wong & Tsai, 2007; Li *et al.*, 2004), but for the purposes of the current study an indication of general concern was sought. Question 13 attempted to establish whether Chinese students have formulated a social framework for acceptance. The final question aimed to elicit whether students were optimistic about their future. A commonly purported view is that Chinese citizens will not revolt against the current government if living standards keep improving. As Zhu (2012) notes on the state-controlled Global Times website: 'Economic development is the fundamental factor for social stability … A social stability risk assessment mechanism requires the government serve its people by making use of its economic achievements.' If students believe living standards will continue to improve, they will be less likely to engage in demands for social reform.

Table 2: Survey Items

1	I am proud of China's economic achievement
2	I am proud of China's political achievement
3	I am proud of China's social achievement
4	I am proud of China's scientific achievement
5	I am proud of China's artistic achievement
6	I am proud of China's military achievement
7	I am proud of China's history
8	China treats all its people fairly and equitably
9	I would rather be Chinese than anything else
10	China makes the world a better place
11	I am ashamed about some things in China
12	China is a better country than most others
13	Chinese people should support China even if it does something wrong
14	I am proud when China has international sporting success.
15	I am often less proud of China than I would like to be.
16	China will continue to improve over the next five years.

Student survey findings

Table 3 shows that the sample size of UNNC students was (n = 100). Demographic data indicated that 83 per cent were female, 99 per cent were older than 18 and 40 per cent were postgraduate students. The sample size for non-UNNC students was (n = 108). Demographic data indicated that 65 per cent were female, all were older than 18 and 52 per cent were postgraduate students. All respondents were Chinese. In general, the survey results (Tables 3 and 4) indicate that Chinese students at UNNC are overwhelmingly proud of China and of being Chinese citizens and that their Western-style education has not dampened their loyalty towards the state. The items that drew the most positive responses were, in order: pride in China's international sporting success (93 per cent), pride in China's history (86 per cent strongly agree/agree) and pride in its economic achievement (63 per cent). It is notable that pride in sport and history are fairly neutral and uncontroversial social indicators.

It is also noteworthy that although students generally supported the notion that Chinese people should support their government no matter what, they also recognised that their government was far from equitable and fair when it came to dealing with its citizenry.

The pattern of responses was similar for UNNC and non-UNNC respondents. The only significant difference between the two sets of students was whether they felt

Table 3: Questionnaire Responses

Item number and descriptor		*SA*	*A*	*N*	*D*	*SD*	*Mean*	σ
1 Proud of economic	UNNC	18	45	31	5	0	3.54	18.53
	State	10	42	44	5	2	3.76	20.65
2 Proud of political	UNNC	6	29	47	15	3	3.23	18.16
	State	7	28	58	10	2	2.73	22.48
3 Proud of social	UNNC	7	23	39	23	6	2.99	13.63
	State	5	18	52	25	2	3.05	20.00
4 Proud of scientific	UNNC	6	32	45	15	3	3.28	17.53
	State	6	33	51	12	2	3.23	20.68
5 Proud of artistic	UNNC	21	26	35	14	5	3.77	11.11
	State	34	28	31	7	3	3.44	14.46
6 Proud of military	UNNC	16	34	44	5	1	3.02	17.89
	State	6	31	42	17	4	3.61	16.32
7 Proud of history	UNNC	51	35	10	3	1	4.11	22.00
	State	45	35	14	4	1	4.32	19.38
8 All of its people fairly	UNNC	3	6	42	28	20	1.81	15.72
	State	5	16	43	33	4	2.43	17.28
9 I would rather be Chinese	UNNC	15	37	26	16	3	3.61	19.17
	State	11	44	34	5	0	3.73	19.17
10 Makes the world better	UNNC	5	18	40	34	2	3.29	16.03
	State	7	21	43	23	2	3.08	16.03
11 Ashamed some things	UNNC	14	60	18	6	2	3.22	13.06
	State	10	42	19	12	14	3.23	13.06
12 China better country	UNNC	5	29	37	21	6	3.06	15.91
	State	8	24	42	23	1	3.15	15.91
13 Support China, even if wrong	UNNC	4	17	24	38	17	3.92	18.33
	State	38	41	13	7	1	4.08	18.33
14 Proud of sporting	UNNC	36	35	20	9	3	3.92	23.50
	State	44	47	8	1	0	4.34	23.50
15 Often less proud	UNNC	3	19	40	28	6	2.57	12.75
	State	6	11	39	22	22	2.38	12.70
16 China improve in next 5 yrs	UNNC	11	60	16	8	3	3.51	23.07
	State	14	70	12	4	1	3.89	25.08

SA = Strongly Agree; A=Agree; N + Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

ashamed of some things in China (Item 11). The significantly higher level of strong agreement with the statement among UNNC students may be due to their exposure to a broader range of information on such topics. In both cases, less than 15 per cent of the 200 students surveyed expect living conditions to decline over the next five years (Item 16), with a vast majority (> 70 per cent) indicating that they expect things to improve. Such expectations may well mitigate the desire for any major shift in social attitudes. As one respondent in the interviews said: 'Many students come from rich families; they are very happy with their lives.'

The most significant difference between UNNC students and students at a mainstream Chinese university was in their responses to Item 11. Whereas more than 83 per cent of UNNC respondents indicated that they

were ashamed or very ashamed of some things in China, the proportion in the case of the non-UNNC students dropped to just over 53 per cent. It may be that UNNC students are exposed to more unpalatable events in Chinese current affairs than are their non-UNNC counterparts, that they are simply more aware. This difference becomes even more significant for Item 13. Non-UNNC students are four times as likely to believe that people should support 'their country right or wrong' than are UNNC students. Yet this difference is insignificant in comparison with their response to Item 9, in which more than half of all respondents indicated that they would rather be Chinese than anything else. Overall, it suggests that, while they are aware of their country's failings, they nonetheless are proud to be Chinese, a similar psychological pattern to that found in democratic countries.

In general, initial findings of the surveys confirmed that, regardless of the style of higher education, State-sponsored patriotism and national pride form significant factors in acting against the motivation to develop a pro-democracy movement. The pattern of responses was similar for UNNC and non-UNNC students, a predictable result, given that the monitoring of students is, in effect, similar in local and transnational institutions. This may indicate that the restrictive structure of the institution and the increasingly better personal circumstances are factors consolidating the belief that China's government warrants their support, which is essentially system justification.

Conclusions

This study investigated potential factors influencing why a Western-style education in China appears to have done little to inculcate socially constructed demands for democracy among Chinese students. Two possible inhibitory factors were deduced from a literature scan. First, it may be that the administrative structure of the institution actively precludes the freedom to protest. Second, it may be that the sociopolitical constructs of the circumjacent society focuses on social harmony, with a corollary that the focus is fuelled by reference to Confucianism as a traditional characteristic of Chinese society. It is apparent that the factors are intertwined, with a distinct likelihood that the second, as a more pervasive trend, will be made manifest in the first.

Findings indicate that the administration of Western-style higher education providers is structured so that the Chinese Communist Party maintains overt and covert control over student behaviour. Even in transnational universities that deliver curricula from the overseas institution, the Party maintains a visible physical presence. This is hardly surprising, as the Party at the national level controls the recognition of foreign degrees, while at provincial level it controls operational accreditation of the institution. The notion that a foreign university operating as a joint venture within China can deliver Western-style education without acceding to Party demands is unrealistic. Still, there is little evidence to indicate that Confucian thought is central to the preference for social harmony among Chinese students. Rather, there seems to be a complex interplay between increasingly self-centred ambition and social justification, as proposed by Jost and Hunyday (2002, 2005).

The notion that the emphasis on social harmony over democracy is national policy rather than a matter of individual choice is far more elusive to confirm. While it seems that, in practical terms, Confucianism may be less influential as a framework for social cohesion than suggested by Party rhetoric and theoretical analyses, a great deal more work needs to be done in this area before any worthwhile understanding can be reached. For the purposes of this study, the focus was to ascertain whether a general social ethos contributed to the lack of demand for democracy among the students. Results from the survey indicate that, regardless of whether any particular social or political theory influences the apparent disinclination for democracy, Chinese students are less inclined to overthrow what is essentially an oppressive regime because they are essentially happy with their personal circumstance. This may of course be due to the fact that as students in an international university they are among the nation's most privileged. While they acknowledge that there are aspects of the Chinese regime that are undesirable, they expect their own lives to keep improving in terms of material wealth. This lack of empathy with less fortunate compatriots, at odds with the notion of social responsibility that lies at heart of Confucianism, may be explained by the suggestion that the desire for democracy is only loosely tied to social justice and far more strongly to the desire for personal opportunity for social advancement. However, that notion is beyond the scope of this paper.

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