

## **Chinese National Pride and East Asian Regionalism among the Elite University Students in PRC<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** *The recently soaring Chinese national pride triggers wide concern about rising Chinese nationalism and its possible malicious effects on East Asia regionalism, which has always been curtailed by the rampant popular nationalisms in this region. Would the Chinese national pride undermine the Chinese support for East Asian regionalism? By surveying students from six elite universities in PRC, the research showed that students' national pride and regionalism, contrary to initial surmise, were positively correlated. The positive correlation, as revealed by further analysis, was mostly contributed by students' pride in "specific national achievements" rather than their "national pride emotions". Besides, among the four major areas of national achievements, pride in "domestic politics", "economic development" and "international influence" turned out to be closely and positively correlated with regionalism while pride in "traditions and culture" did not. To shed light on the results, two tentative explanations were offered relating to students' anti-West sentiments and broadened international horizons.*

**Keywords:** *nationalism, national pride, East Asian regionalism, East Asian identity*

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## Introduction

With a succession of media bombards of stirring national achievements such as the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the Shanghai Expo, the past several years have witnessed surging waves of national pride among common Chinese people (Jacobs 2008; Prasso 2007), including the young (Bell, 2008). According to a poll by the Reputation Institute in September 2009, the Chinese index of people's trust, admiration, respect and pride in their own country reached around 80 out of 100, one of the highest among the 33 surveyed nations (*The Economist Online*, 2009). And the 2008 Pew Global Attitude survey also demonstrated that among the 24 surveyed nations, the Chinese were the most satisfied with the way things were going in their countries, with about 80 per cent expressing their contentment (Pew Research center, 2008).

Would the swelling national pride, backed up by China's increasing military and economic power, evolve into a "great power nationalism" and threaten the nascent East Asian regionalism, which has been constantly quashed by vibrant nationalisms in this region, exacerbated sometimes by historical rivalries and territorial disputes? To seek an answer, we conducted a survey about national pride and support for East Asian regionalism among the students in China's six elite universities. Students in these universities have always been the avant-gardes in China's nationalist movements since the May 4<sup>th</sup> movement in 1919 (Israel 1966:3); what's more, they also have great potential to be the future decision-makers in China's central and local governments (Cheng and Bachman 1989; Cheng 1994). And the results showed that the students' national pride and support for East Asian regionalism were, indeed, positively correlated. And this suggests the current national pride among the elite universities students did not undermine their initiatives for East Asian regional cooperation. Before coming to the details of the research, it is necessary to clarify the two basic variables: national pride and East Asian regionalism.

## **Defining Chinese National Pride & East Asian Regionalism**

### **National Pride**

National pride was generally defined as “individuals’ *sentiments of pride* directed towards the nation-state based on their national identity” (Kedourie 1993; Smith 1994, Hjerm 1998). Its working definition in this paper is “the *positive affective bond* to specific achievements and symbols of the nation-state” (Müller-Peters 1998:704). It contains not only *affect* but also the cognition that underpins the pride affect, that is, the recognition of specific national achievements and symbols<sup>i</sup>. Hence, national pride, in this paper, comprises of two basic components: “National Pride in Specific Achievements” (NPSA) and “General National Pride” (GNP). NPSA here refers to the recognition and understanding of the nation-state’s achievements and attributes; GNP simply means the feelings and emotions towards the nation-state (here mainly pride).

National pride is not new in China. In fact, it has been closely associated with various Chinese nationalisms. For example, it is indispensable for almost all “inward-oriented”<sup>ii</sup> Chinese nationalisms like the Chinese cultural nationalism (Zhao 2004; Barmé 1995&2009; Guo 2004) “affirmative Chinese nationalism” (Whiting 1995) and “confident Chinese nationalism” which “is rooted in confidence that over time China can regain its former greatness” (Oksenberg 1986:505).

However, national pride is different from nationalism. Their difference, according to Billig (1985), is that national pride is mainly about individual attitudes towards the nation-state while nationalism contains not only individual attitudes but also an ideology which is about unity among members of a society. In Hjerm’s words, “nationalism and national pride operate on different levels”. National pride is more on individual level while nationalism concerns the whole society (Hjerm 1999:341).

## East Asian Regionalism

“East Asia”, in this paper, refers to the Northeast Asia which mainly covers China (including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau), Japan, North and South Korea.<sup>iii</sup> The reason for confining it to the Northeast Asian region is straightforward: the threat of Chinese nationalism on regionalism is more conspicuous in this area than the Southeast Asian region where, though rivalry towards China does exist, the Chinese nationalism itself does not regard these Southeast Asian neighbors as its primary or main targets, in spite of recent disputes concerning the South China Sea.

As for the term “regionalism”, it is notoriously difficult to define because “regionalism” actually covers quite a few interrelated phenomena. For example, Hurrell (1995) believed that regionalism contains at least five interrelated elements: regionalization, regional awareness and identity, regional interstate cooperation, state-promoted regional integration and regional cohesion. And in Rozman’s (2005) view, regionalism involves at least five dimensions: economic integration, institutional integration, social integration, formation of regional identity and security integration. Complicated as “regionalism” is, it can be reduced into two basic levels: one is “ideological level” which includes “regional awareness and identity”, and the other is “practical level” which comprises of regional cooperation and integration in various areas, whether led by the state or market force.

Regionalism, in this paper, only covers the “ideological dimension” and it means “the *proneness* of the governments and peoples of the states to establish voluntary associations and to pool together resources in order to create common functional and institutional arrangements” (Kacowicz 1999). Regionalism thus defined overlaps with Kim’s definition of regionalism--- “a normative concept referring to shared values, norms, identity, and aspirations”(Kim 2004:39); However, for regionalism in East Asia, unlike its European counterpart, it still remains arguable whether there exists a definite and common regional identity, especially among common people, as Anwar has pointed out that “Asia has not a settled identity at present; it is in the process of coming into being(Milner and Johnson 1997: 12)” Thus,

regionalism in this research, rather than purely focusing on shared values and norms whose existence is still in question, mainly refers to the “*proneness*” or “*willingness*” of the governments and peoples to initiate regionalist cooperation.

In line with the previous definition, East Asian regionalism, in this paper, comprises three major components: (1) East Asian identity,<sup>iv</sup> (2) views of the necessity for regional cooperation, and (3) views of other East Asian countries<sup>v</sup>, all of which also served as indicators in measuring regionalism in our survey.

## **Research Questions and Theories**

The research question is “*whether the national pride among elite universities students undermines their East Asian regionalism?*” The following part aims to review literature concerning the relations between the two; nevertheless, as regionalism in this paper is, in some ways, different from regionalism discussed elsewhere, the following part, instead, will review literature exploring connections between Chinese national pride and the components of East Asian regionalism: “East Asian identity” and “views of other East Asian countries” (as very few literature concerns “national pride” and “views of the necessity for regional cooperation”, connections between these two will not be addressed).

### **Relations between Chinese National Pride and “East Asian Identity”**

It is still under debate about how the Chinese national pride would affect the Chinese people’s identity with East Asia. On the one hand, the two seemed to be mutually compatible. In fact, the Chinese identity as East Asians has been argued to be an important part of modern Chinese national identity. Even during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, “...the creation of Asia as a regional imaginary and a political reality, along with the firm identification of China as Asian, was purposively taken up by a variety of Qing intellectuals (in their nationalist discourses)” (Karl 2002:153). Besides,

the intimate relationship between the two can be seen in the 1930s cultural debate about “Eastern spirituality versus Western materialism”, Mao Zedong’s “the third worldism” theory during the 1960s &70s and the recent popularity of “East Asian miracles” and “East Asian values” in China.

While on the other hand, the Chinese preoccupation with its own country was regarded as handicapping the development of regional identity. Gilbert Rozman argued that “the self-perceived centrality of China in this long history creates psychological barriers for the Beijing leadership to get out of the China-centric framework, to embrace regionalism ...” (Rozman 1998:114). Akaha also believed the sensitive concern with national sovereignty and popular nationalism in East Asia have long “impeded the development of a regional identity transcending national borders.”(Akaha 1995:367)

### **Relations between Chinese National Pride and and “Views about other East Asian Countries”**

The relations between the two are even more contentious. Controversy arose over whether the inflamed national pride would lead to derogation of other East Asian countries. There are two different opinions. On the one side, Whiting (1995) believed that “affirmative Chinese nationalism” (of which national pride is an indispensable part) only fosters patriotism and does not embody hostile implications towards other countries like aggressive and assertive nationalism. Oksenberg (1984) also argued that “confident Chinese nationalism” (of which national pride is an indispensable part) is patient and moderate in terms of foreign policy implications. And this view has its backup from some social-psychological theories which argued that positive in-group evaluation (like national pride) may not necessarily lead to the out-group derogation(Hinkle & Brown 1990; Mummendey & Simon 1997; Mummendey & Klink 2001).

On the other side, however, Callahan (2009) and Gries (2004) argued that the Chinese popular nationalism which contained strong national pride was sometimes hostile and even belligerent towards foreign countries. And this can be

shown in the university students' demonstrations against the US and Japanese government in 1999 and 2005 respectively (He 2007; Gries 2004). Besides, the social identity theory also lends credence to this view as this theory supports that "downward comparisons with other groups (nations)", that is, "derogation of other nations" leads to positive evaluation of one's nation (Tajfel & Turner 1984). And researches also support that people who are highly identified with their own group are especially quick to discriminate against others (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Hodson, Dovidio & Esses 2003).

In sum, the current literature, as is shown in the previous review, seems unable to generate any definite answer to the research question; therefore, it still remains to be tested as for the relationship between national pride and East Asian regionalism.

## **Research Methods**

### **Participants**

We conducted surveys among 600 students from six elite universities in Beijing and Guangzhou, PRC. And the choice of the these universities is based on the following considerations: first, these are all key universities in China's metropolitan cities, thus their students' demographic compositions could be quite diversified, which means we can possibly have access to students from all over the PRC.

Second, the combination of Beijing and Guangzhou is based on the assumption that national pride among Beijing students may be stronger than that among their counterparts in Guangzhou, given Beijing's status as China's capital city and that Guangzhou, a commercial city distant from the political center, has been devoid of big international show events until we conducted our survey. Thus, samples from the two cities can be more balanced and therefore more representative in reflecting the national pride among the elite university students in PRC.

Among the 600 participants, 48.7 per cent of them were male and 51.3 per cent were female; 93.7 per cent were Han nation, while 6.3 per cent, ethnic minorities. In addition, 11.7 per cent of them reported themselves as the Chinese

Communist Party members and 83.7 per cent, the Chinese Communist Youth League members. 77.8 per cent of them were undergraduate students and 22.2 per cent were postgraduate. As for their family income levels, 5% of them reported that their family income per month was over 9,000RMB, 17% ranging as 5,000-8,999RMB, 46.7% as 2,000-4999RMB, 31.3% as below 2,000RMB

### **Procedures**

To ensure representativeness of our sample, we used a sampling strategy which combines both stratified and random sampling methods. All the universities and colleges in these two cities, first of all, were classified into three groups: (1) comprehensive universities, (2) technological-institutes typed universities which focus on science and technology studies, and (3) universities concentrating on humanity and social sciences studies. Within each group, one elite university/institute/college was chosen. In this way, we chose three elite tertiary institutes in Beijing and Guangzhou respectively.<sup>vi</sup>

In each university, around 100 students were randomly selected and invited to finish the questionnaires for us. Virtually, all of them were very cooperative and all together we collected 600 valid questionnaires from the six universities.

### **Reserach Results and Discussions**

This section will, first of all, briefly outline the results of students' national pride and East Asian regionalism, then proceed to an extended analysis about the correlations between the two, and finally offer some explanations for the results.

#### **Results of Students' National Pride**

The students' national pride was measured by a 7-point Likert scale adopted from the 1995 National Identity Study (NIS) of the International Social Studies Program (ISSP), which consists of two parts: assessment of "National Pride in Specific Achievements" (NPSA) and "General National Pride" (GNP). NPSA part measures students' pride of national achievements in four domains: national economy, domestic



politics, tradition & culture, and international influence. GNP assesses general emotions of national pride like “I think China is a better country than most other countries in the world”. In both parts of the scale, the lowest value is 1, and highest, 7, which respond to the two extreme responses, “not proud at all” and “strongly proud” respectively. The reliability of the two parts of the scale were acceptable,  $\alpha(\text{NPSA})=.87$  &  $\alpha(\text{GNP})=.71$ . The specific questions are listed in table 1&2.

Most of the students, as the results demonstrate, had fervent national pride. They not only highly evaluated China’s current achievements but also showed frenzied emotions of national pride. The students’ evaluations of national achievements, except in the domain of “domestic politics”, were remarkably high. Their highest evaluations were made for China’s “traditions and culture”, the three indicators of which scored the highest mean values, above 5.5, among all national aspects (table1 & figure1). They also revealed their gratifications at achievements in “national economy” and “international influence”. The mean values in the two domains, in most cases, were above 5, the level of “somewhat proud”.

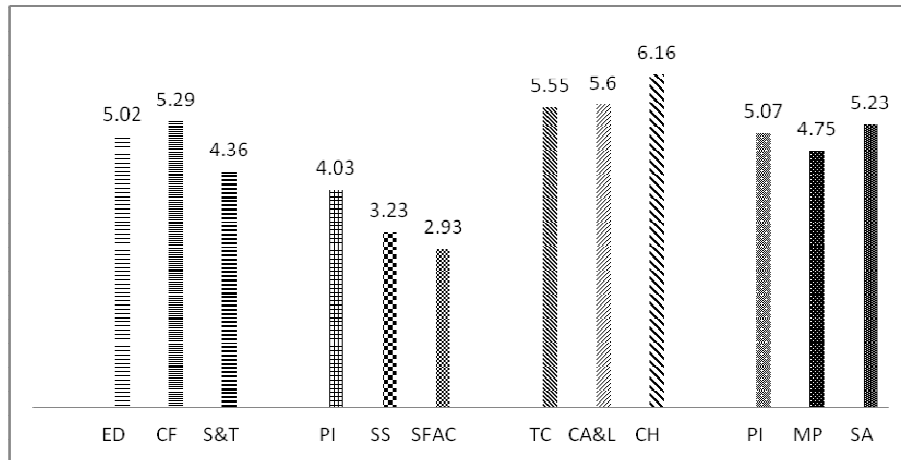
The results of “General National Pride” (GNP) are shown in table 2. The students, generally speaking, had frenzied national pride emotions. Over 90 per cent<sup>vii</sup> of them claimed to feel proud of being Chinese and very few of them agreed that they sometimes felt shameful for being Chinese (table 2). An overwhelming majority of them (over 85 per cent and 80 per cent) highly rated the Chinese people and China. Besides, around 70 per cent of them agreed that they have never considered changing nationalities.

**Table 1:** The students' pride in specific national achievements<sup>viii</sup>

Are you proud of ...?	Strongly proud	Proud	Somewhat Proud	Don't Know	Not Very Proud	Not Proud	Not Proud at all	Mean Value(Standard Deviation)
<b>National economy</b>								
Economic Development	11	16.2	49.5	12.7	9.3	1	0.3	5.02(1.11)
Confidence in the Future*	13	32.3	36.7	9.7	6.3	0.7	1.3	5.29(1.18)
Science & Technology	3.5	16.0	41.3	11.0	20.8	4.7	2.7	4.36(1.29)
<b>Domestic politics</b>								
Political Institutions	2.3	6.0	33.3	32.7	10.0	7.2	8.5	4.03(1.39)
Social Security	.0	3.3	13.2	28.5	25.0	18.7	11.3	3.23(1.29)
Social Fairness among All Classes	.7	2.0	8.3	31.3	16.0	19.3	22.3	2.93(1.42)
<b>Traditions &amp; culture</b>								
Traditional Culture	29.3	21.3	33.7	9	4.7	2	.0	5.56(1.24)
Contemporary Arts & Literature	25.3	31	27.5	11.5	4	0.7	.0	5.60(1.13)
Chinese History	49.7	24.5	17.2	7.3	1.2	.0	.0	6.16(1.00)
<b>International influence</b>								
Political Influence	6.3	28.0	42.3	15.0	7.0	.7	.7	5.07(1.06)
Military Power	4.3	15.7	42.0	30.3	6.5	.0	1.2	4.75(1.04)
Sports Achievement	13.7	29.3	35.2	12.0	7.5	2.0	.0	5.23(1.18)

Notes: \*Here the seven choosing items are “very strong”, “strong”, “somewhat strong”, “no idea”, “not very strong”, “not strong” and “not strong at all”. The numbers in the table except the last two columns are percentages. Numbers in the last two columns are the mean values and standard deviations of the students' pride in each national aspect, for all of which the lowest value was 1 and highest was 7.

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**Figure 1.** The mean values of the students' pride in specific national achievements (the abbreviations at the bottom, from the left to right, stand for the 12 items listed in table 1 from top to bottom)

**Table 2.** The students' general national pride

General national pride	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Don't Know	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
"I am proud of being a Chinese"	34.5	25.3	30.5	5.0	3.3	1.3	.0
"I sometimes feel shameful for being a Chinese"	.0	.0	.02	15.7	40.7	24.3	19.0
"The Chinese people, on the whole, is excellent"	31.8	32.0	23.2	8.3	3.3	.7	.7
"Generally speaking, China is a better country than most other countries"	30.2	31.2	19.5	11.0	4.7	3.3	.0
"I have never considered being citizens of other states"	15.3	28.3	22.7	16.0	13.0	3.2	1.5

Notes: the numbers in the table are percentages. They report students' evaluations on each of the statements in the first left column ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

## **Results of Students' East Asian Regionalism**

Compared with the overwhelming national pride, students' attitudes towards regionalism were mixed. The results of the three indicators of regionalism: (1) East Asian identity, (2) views on the necessity for regional cooperation and (3) attitudes towards other East Asian countries, painted a neither exciting nor depressing picture. Most of the students, on the one hand, identified themselves as East Asians and pledged support for regional cooperation; on the other hand, nevertheless, they did not perceive much commonality or interdependence between China and other regional countries. Their attitudes towards exclusive regional cooperation, therefore, were ambivalent or cautious at best. Besides, they held themselves somewhat aloof from other regional countries emotionally, which should have further hampered their enthusiasm for regionalism. The detailed results are displayed in the table 3, 4&5. And since results in this part are not the focus of this paper, no detailed analysis will be made except brief introduction of the measuring scales for the three components of regionalism.

### **East Asian Identity**

Their East Asian identity was evaluated by a 7-pointed Likert scale adopted from one previously used by Cinnirella in measuring European identity (Cinnirella 1997; Rutland and Cinnirella, 2000). The scale contains nine questions which aim to measure (1) the students' self-identification with East Asia (in the first six questions) and (2) their views of intra-group commonality, especially in culture (through the last 3 questions). Like the previous scale measuring national pride, the lowest value is 1, and highest, 7, which respond to the two extreme responses, "strong disagree" and "strongly agree" respectively. The scale reliability was acceptable,  $\alpha=.76$ . For specific questions and results, please refer to table 3.

### **Views about the Necessity for Regional Cooperation**

The students' views about the need for regional cooperation were evaluated by their responses to four

statements concerning common regional interests, regional cooperation, interdependence of China and other regional countries, building of an EU styled East Asian Community. The scale reliability was acceptable,  $\alpha=.76$ . For specific questions and results, please refer to table 4.

### **Attitudes towards other East Asian Countries**

Given the importance of Japan and South Korea in the regionalization process, “other East Asian countries”, in this research, were represented by the two countries. The students’ attitudes towards the two countries, their governments and common people were measured by their responses to statements like “I have favorable opinions towards...” In term of scale reliability, that for South Korea ( $\alpha=.858$ ) was higher than Japan ( $\alpha=.723$ ); and the results demonstrate that the students, on the whole, had only faint fondness of the two neighbors. For specific questions and results, please refer to table 5.

Table 3. The students' East Asian Identity

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Don't Know	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think I am an East Asian.	25.7	39.0	12.7	17.7	2.8	1.2	1.0	5.59	1.28
I feel emotionally attached to East Asia.	8.3	18	24	39.5	5.8	2	2.3	4.68	1.26
I am proud of being an East Asian.	6	15	33.7	35.2	8	1.3	0.8	4.69	1.09
I feel criticized if hearing someone blaming "East Asian people".	8.7	22.5	35.5	16	10	4.7	2	4.82	1.36
I feel I am a typical East Asian.	6.2	20.7	28.8	33.3	7.7	1.3	1.3	4.75	1.18
East Asian identity is important to me.	2.5	13.3	18.5	44.7	11	7	3	4.18	1.25
The East Asian countries share common Confucian traditions.	3.3	15	31.5	19	18.7	8	4.5	4.24	1.44
I feel intimate towards popular culture products from other East Asian countries.	1	14.3	19.5	28	18	10.7	8.5	3.87	1.48
I don't mind if people in other parts of the world think the Chinese, Japanese and Korean people belong to the same cultural group.	0.7	6.7	16.7	15.8	26	15.2	19	3.18	1.55

Notes:

The numbers in the table except the last two columns in the right are percentages. They report students' evaluations on each of the statements in the first left column. Numbers in the last two columns are the mean values and standard deviations for the students' evaluations in the nine statements, for all of which the lowest value was 1 and highest was 7

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**Table 4.** The students' views of the need for East Asian cooperation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Don't Know/Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
I think the East Asian countries share common interests	2.3	19.8	31.2	20.3	15.7	8.3	2.3	4.38	1.37
The East Asian regional cooperation is important for China	19.3	30.0	28.0	20.3	1.0	1.3	0	5.42	1.12
I think "other East Asian countries" are indispensable for China's development.	5.7	18.8	23.7	25.5	15.3	6.0	5.0	4.35	1.48
I support establishing an EU styled East Asian community where every country is equal.	6.5	13.7	19.3	36.0	13.0	6.3	5.2	4.26	1.45

*Notes:* The numbers in the table except the last two columns in the right are percentages. Numbers in the last two columns are the mean values and standard deviations for the students' evaluations in the four statements, for all of which the lowest value was 1 and highest was 7.

**Table 5.** The students' views about Japan and South Korea

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Don't Know/Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Favorable about Japan	.0	12.0	19.0	27.0	23.7	9.3	9.0	3.73	1.42
Favorable about Japanese government.	.2	4.7	7.3	22.0	35.0	15.8	15.0	3.06	1.32
Favorable about common Japanese people.	1.3	19.5	25.2	30.7	14.0	5.0	4.3	4.30	1.33
Favorable about the South Korea.	1.3	12.0	16.3	32.7	21.7	4.7	11.3	3.79	1.47
Favorable about South Korean government.	.2	6.3	13.5	42.7	20.0	7.0	10.3	3.62	1.29
Favorable about common South Korean people.	1.3	16.3	20.3	37.0	11.5	6.0	7.5	4.11	1.41

*Notes:* The numbers in the table except the last two columns in the right are percentages. Numbers in the last two columns are the mean values and standard deviations for the students' evaluations of the six items, for all of which the lowest value was 1 and highest was 7.

## **The Correlations between Chinese National Pride and East Asian Regionalism**

Correlation analysis between Chinese national pride and East Asian regionalism, by controlling the students' gender, ethnicity, family income, Party membership, differences in geographical locations (Beijing or Guangzhou) and university types (the three kinds of institutes mentioned in "procedure" part), showed that the two were positively correlated ( $r=.308$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This suggests that the students' national pride should possibly strengthen East Asian regionalism rather than obstruct it.

What accounted for the positive correlation? To explore this, we conducted further correlation analysis between the two components of national pride, NPSA & GNP, and regionalism, by controlling the students' gender, ethnicity, family income, Party membership, differences in geographical locations and university types. And the results, as can be seen in the 2nd and 3rd line in table 6, clearly displayed that "National Pride in Specific Achievements" (NPSA) was more positively correlated with regionalism than "General National Pride" (GNP). And this means NPSA weighed more than GNP in contributing to the positive correlations between Chinese national pride and regionalism.

To further trace the factors leading to the correlations between NPSA and regionalism, we made correlation analysis between the four elements of NPSA and regionalism, and the results, as are demonstrated in the last four lines in table 6, show that pride in "domestic politics", "economic development", and "international influence" were positively associated with regionalism while pride "traditions & culture" was not (table 6). Surprising and confusing as these correlation results may first seem to be, they are, in fact, rational as well as comprehensible. They revealed an important truth, that is, the ethnic pride (embodying in pride of "traditions and culture") and pure national pride emotion as measured by GNP, were not quite related with regionalism; rather, it was the students' views of national progress in politics, economy and international influence that positively correlated with their regionalism. Though



positive co-variations do not mean casual relations, they, at least, support that the national pride in those three domains were compatible, rather than in conflict, with regionalism. As for possible causes for their correlations, the paper offers two tentative explanations here.

**Table 6.** The correlation coefficients between Chinese national pride and East Asian regionalism controlling students' gender, ethnicity, family income, Party membership, differences in geographical locations and university types

	<b>East Asian Regionalism</b>
<b>Chinese National Pride</b>	.308**
General National Pride	.178**
National Pride in Specific Achievements	.316**
Pride in “domestic politics”	.304**
Pride in “economic development”	.294**
Pride in “traditions & culture”	.108
Pride in “international influence”	.252**

*Notes:*

The numbers in the table are Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients which show the correlations among the variables. SPSS tells that the correlation coefficient is statistically significant at  $p=.05$ (\*),  $p=.01$ (\*\*),  $p=.001$ (\*\*\*).

**Table 7.** The correlation coefficients between pride in “domestic politics”, “economic development” and “international influence” and three indicators of “East Asian regionalism”, controlling students' gender, ethnicity, family income, Party membership, differences in geographical locations and university types

NPSA	East Asian Regionalism		
	East Asian Identity	Views of Regional Cooperation	Views of Japan & South Korea
Pride in “domestic politics”	.321**	.087	.244**
Pride in “economic development”	.269**	.273**	.095

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Pride in “international influence”	.280**	.257**	.099
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*Notes:*

The numbers in the table are Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients which show the correlations among the variables. SPSS tells that the correlation coefficient is statistically significant at  $p=.05(*)$ ,  $p=.01(**)$ ,  $p=.001(***)$ .

First, an anti-Western assumption, may have underlain both students’ pride in “domestic politics” and their East Asian regionalism, and therefore accounted for their positive associations; There are, as we can see in table 7, positive correlations between “pride in domestic politics” and “East Asian identity” ( $r=.321$ ,  $p<.01$ ) /“views of Japan & South Korea” ( $r=.224$ ,  $p<.01$ ). And this simply means tendency exists that those more proud of China’s domestic politics are more likely to identify themselves as East Asians and approve of the two neighbors: Japan and South Korea.

The anti-Western assumption in the pride of “Chinese domestic politics” is obvious. China’s political institutions, from the liberalist’ point of view, are authoritarian or undemocratic, especially when compared with the Western democratic models; thus, those who still highly regard the Chinese domestic politics must, at least in some way, stand against liberalism but follow authoritarianism or the neo-authoritarianism, for which, an essential assumption is anti-Western stance.ix

Incidentally, the Chinese conception of “Dongya” (東亞) has also contained strong anti-Western assumptions. Even at the turn of the 20th century, “Yazhou(亞洲) and Yaxiya (亞細亞) as words implied the meanings of ‘non-Europe’ and non-Western” (Zhao 1991) . “From early 20th century onward, the Chinese concept of “Asia” or “East Asia” has always contained a sense of “anti-West” in its recurrence in Chinese modern and contemporary history”(Karl 2002:58). For example, the 1930s cultural debate about “Eastern spirituality versus Western materialism” which listed China and India as “Asian” and “Eastern” while Europe and US as “Western”; even the notorious Japanese “East Asian Co-prosperity Circle”, made purposeful use of the “anti-Western implications” that were wrapped in the word “East Asia”. And the recent “East Asian values”, once popular not only in China, also encompasses strong “anti-Western”, or at least “distinctive from the West”, connotations. Hence, it is

understandable that those take pride in “China’s domestic politics” are more inclined to conceive themselves as “East Asians” and view more favourably about Japan and South Korea, which, after all, at least geographically, are included in East Asia.

The second explanation concerns the students’ pride in China’s “international influence” & “economic development”, which, as is shown in table 6, are positively associated with “East Asian identity” and “views of regional cooperation”. And this suggests that students who commend national achievements in these two domains would possibly have stronger “East Asian identity” and attach more importance on “regional cooperation” than those do not. What is the rationale underneath the seemingly “far-fetched” links? Here is a surmise. If a student was proud of China’s “international influence”, it is assumed that they may have received and absorbed at least some information about China’s influence in other parts of the world, be it truth or just hype. And theoretically speaking, the broader the sphere where they perceived China’s influence has projected, the more proud they should be, as it is hard to imagine the students would take strong pride in China’s international influence if he conceived China’s influence as narrowly confined within a small area. Only the vision that China has become a powerful player in, at least, a large part of the world can sustain a strong pride. And this implies that those who were more proud of China’s international influence were more likely to view China with a broad, international horizon. And it is the horizon that gave rise to strengthened “East Asian identity” and support for “regional cooperation”, because in the enlarged international stage, their perception of other regions like Africa and European Union served as important “Others” for their conception of East Asia. After all, “East Asia” is only meaningful when in real or imagined presence of “Others”. And, in fact, the role of other regional actors like NAFTA and EU as “Others” in the East Asian regionalism, has already been widely recognized in academic discourses (Terada 2003; Stubbs 2002). Therefore, the enlarged international horizon, no matter where it comes from, may have served as links for the seemingly discursive positive correlations. Similarly, the students’ pride in “economic achievements” may have worked on their “East

Asian identity” and “views of regional cooperation” in roughly the same way, given China’s close involvement in global economy.

### **Conclusion: The Impact of Globalization on Malaysia**

As stated at the outset, the research aimed to explore whether rampant national pride would obstruct the nascent East Asian regionalism among the elite university students in PRC. The results show that, contrary to initial surmise, the two were positively correlated, which means students’ national pride, by no means, have weakened their initiatives for East Asian regionalism, and conversely, national pride may possibly bolster the regionalism, though direct causal links between the two can not be ascertained.

The primary contributing factor for the positive correlations, as further analysis has revealed, was students’ pride in specific national achievement (NPSA), which turned out to be more positively correlated with regionalism than their general national pride emotions (GNP). And this indicates that the students’ recognition of national progress played a larger and more decisive role than their emotions in the positive connections (between national pride and regionalism). Furthermore, among the four national aspects of NPSA, “domestic politics”, “economic development”, “international influence” and “traditions & culture”, only the pride in the first three aspects were in significantly positive relations with regionalism, with pride in the “traditions and culture” (ethnic pride) being not. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that students’ pride in “domestic politics”, “economic development” and “international influence” should be the ultimate factors in effecting the positive correlations between national pride and regionalism. As for the positive links between pride in those three national aspects and regionalism, they were, at last, tentatively ascribed to a shared anti-Western notion, which was encompassed in both “pride of domestic politics” and regionalism, and an enlarged international horizon, which, as a side effect of pride in “nation economy” and “international influence”, served also as a propeller for regionalism.

The data and analysis presented here, in all, are obviously only a small first step in understanding the Chinese national pride and its effects on East Asian regionalism among Chinese elite university students. Ideally, the survey needs to be expanded to larger elite universities student samples and followed up with both qualitative and quantitative researches verifying the two conjectured explanations for the positive connections between pride in specific national aspects and regionalism. And moreover, the results would be more meaningful, if the survey could be specifically targeted at international relations intellectuals or even political elites in China. Nevertheless, in all, given the Chinese government's heavy reliance on nationalism for its legitimacy at least in the near future (see Zhao 2004, Barmé 1995, Gries 2004), it is expected that the national pride would continue to exert influence on Chinese people and their East Asian regionalism.

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<sup>i</sup> The idea that “national pride” involves both cognition and affect was inspired from the *ABC model of attitudes* in social-psychology, which stemmed originally from *the Yale Communication and Attitude Change Program* in Yale University during the 1950s and 60s (see Hilgard1980).

<sup>ii</sup> This concept was first introduced by Comaroff and Stern (1995).

<sup>iii</sup> Despite the confinement, the reason for retaining the title “East Asia” here in this paper is because most of the respondents, in our pilot study, expressed that they were more accustomed to the Chinese word of “East Asia” than “Northeast Asia” in referring to the region. Consequently, “East Asia”, accompanied with clear instructions of the geographical boundary for NEA, was used in all our subsequent questionnaires to refer to the NEA for the students.

<sup>iv</sup> Though as mentioned before, there has not been a definite and shared regional identity in East Asia, many scholars believe that there is at least an “East Asian consciousness”, which is a kind of cultural identity based on common Confucian traditions shared among the East Asian countries.

For a detailed discussion of “East Asian consciousness”(“東亞意識”), please refer to Zhang(1998), Li (1998&2005) and Chen (2001).

<sup>v</sup> Researches show that attitudes towards other regional countries can also have an impact on regionalism. For a discussion of this, please see Tsuneo(1999).

<sup>vi</sup> The three in Beijing are Peking university, Tsinghua university and People’s University of China and the other three in Guangzhou are Sun Yet-sen University, South China Institute of Technology, Guangdong Foreign Studies University.

<sup>vii</sup> The percentage here includes those who moderately and strongly agreed with the statement in the left. And the following percentages in this paragraph do the same.

<sup>viii</sup> In this table, the 12 items about the 12 different national aspects are just roughly sorted into the four categories: “national economy”, “domestic politics”, “tradition & culture”, and “international influence”. Some items may be contentious for which category to be included in, such as “science and technology” which can be argued as belonging to the category of “culture” rather than “national economy”. However, considering the importance of science and technology in the current Chinese economy, we decide to put it into the “national economy” category.

<sup>ix</sup> About the anti-Western assumption of neo-authoritarianism, see Zheng (1999).