

吕景胜：评清华阎学通教授“爱国主义不需要教育”

**Lu Jingsheng: On Tsinghua University Professor Yan Xuotong  
saying “Patriotism need not be taught”**

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**Article title in Chinese:** 吕景胜：评清华阎学通教授“爱国主义不需要教育”

**Article source:**

<https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/BHzDmUx4ihnuh7mQahpEHQ>

The draft of the Patriotic Education Law of the People's Republic of China was submitted for a review for the first time to the Third Plenary Session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress on June 26. While stipulating patriotism for the citizens, the draft stresses on education of youth and children in schools and households and even patriotic education of different groups including civil servants, employees of enterprises, industries and work units, rural residents, representatives, teachers, religious practitioners, compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and overseas Chinese. It distinguishes the groups and accordingly puts forth targeted stipulations.

In the video, Tsinghua University Professor Yan Xuetong did not approve of this and even clearly said that he does not like any patriotic education. The reason being that to love one's nation is the same as to love one's parents and family members, and it develops naturally and instinctively and need not be taught or trained. Even if Yue Fei did not have "Devotion and Dedication to the Kingdom" tattooed on his back, he would still have spared no effort to fight the enemy and so on.

[Yue Fei (1103-1142), born in Henan province and died in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, a military general during Southern Song Dynasty, is generally considered a folk hero for his patriotism but died a controversial figure. According to historians, Yue was imprisoned and later executed on unproven charges of treason. As recent as in 2002, a controversy arose when according to the Chinese Education Ministry revised guidelines, Yue Fei was declared as not a national hero. However, the Communist Party of China continues to celebrate Yue Fei as a national hero of China – Editor]

His words might not seem to be a problem at first but there are many loopholes when minutely pondered upon.

1. The patriotism of Yue Fei as well as that of all the patriots in Chinese history cannot be equated with that of contemporary and future Chinese generations. Though the patriotic consciousness of the majority of the people is not a farce, there are those who do not love but rather hate the country. The words and deeds of such people can influence or maybe has already negatively impacted the youth. Patriotic education is important to hedge against and dispel the harm caused on such people.

2. Even though loving one's parents, family members and loving the nation are analogous, they are not entirely the same. Loving one's parents and family is fundamentally because of blood ties and self-interest. Patriotism is communitarian and is a form of mainstream culture, social ambience and national spirit that is crafted nationally. Its communitarianism also contains altruism and self-interest i.e. the public goods and state functions stemming from patriotism are beneficial to all members of the society.

3. Over the past several years, patriotism has declined that is why some Chinese youth ostentatiously take pictures wearing Japanese military uniforms at commemorative sites of the War of Resistance against Japan; the Chinese consciousness and (Chinese) ethnic identity of some youths in Taiwan have been weakening and decaying – leading to the rampant rise of “Taiwan independence”; and there have been youths in Hong Kong involved in protests and rioting on the streets amid the Hong Kong turmoil. I wonder what opinion Prof. Yan Xuetong holds towards such issues!

Public intellectuals have had an ill reputation for several years. They have

vilified patriotism and have been habitual offenders of smearing patriotism. Earlier they said patriotism was brainwashing, ignorant and populist. Denouncing patriotism as diverting from internal contradictions, they said that patriotism would lead to war. They defamed patriotic youth by calling them "little pinks", "50 cents", "left evils" and "boxers". They also said that patriotism is "mouthing off" and that "there is no patriotic education abroad". They distorted Lenin's statement "Patriotism is the sanctuary of hooligans". They divorced the statement with its temporal and historical context and concrete meaning of its specific events.

Public intellectuals advocate that patriotism is not loving the government or the system. Some of these public intellectuals even state that their patriotism is loving the ancient State of Qi. Of course, the ancient State shares a historical and cultural relationship with each one of us but after all, the real country is the one that provides the people with real public services and public goods, resists foreign invasion, provides relief against calamities, and protects against all odds. The real country is the community where the citizens share the same fate. Its problems and shortcomings can be

rectified but it is very pretentious to act like "all others are drunk while I am the only sober one". How hypocritical to think of progress and reforms as conflicting with patriotism!

Some public intellectuals ridiculed citizens mourning national distress and humiliation in front of the Old Summer Palace. They said the imperial gardens do not have any relationship with you. Gardens are a part of our culture, can't there be a tinge of pain when culture is slaughtered? As long as people with a little conscience express pain and anger for the slaughter of their nation and national culture, this really need not be taught. Is this point not clear to such knowledgeable and wise public intellectuals? Need this be taught too?

Recently, Public intellectual's opposition to patriotism has been manifested in the guise of criticising freedom of speech; in negating the hard-line national policy of self-defence against oppression from the United States and the West; in negating the policy of upholding sovereignty and maritime, trade and tech wars that safeguard national interests..., in ridiculing Huawei, in vilifying \*Meng Wanzhou, in defaming diplomatic spokespersons as *wolf warriors*, in advocating for the abandonment of Diaoyu Islands and the

South China Sea arbitration, and in vilifying martyrs, etc.

[Meng Wenzhou, also known as Cathy Meng and Sabrina Meng, also informally known in China as the "Princess of Huawei", is a Chinese business executive. She is the deputy chair of the board and chief financial officer of Huawei which was founded by her father Ren Zhengfei. On 1 December 2018, Meng was detained upon arrival at Vancouver International Airport by Canada Border Services Agency officers for questioning. She was eventually put under house arrest by the Canadian authorities on a provisional extradition request for fraud by the US government. The issue turned into a major diplomatic row between the PR China and Canada. Meng eventually became a national symbol of patriotism in China and was released after 1000 days of detention in Vancouver. – Editor]

Does patriotism really need not be taught? All nations formulate history lessons at all levels of education to teach generations of youth about the history of their nation's formation and development. In the United States, one is required to study history from primary school till the university so as to inculcate deep sentiments for the nation. History education has inculcated such an outlook among the Americans: I

am proud to be an American! Japan has lessons on national history at all levels of education, even national history is taught as per the different age groups of the students. Apart from history lessons, the curriculum has specialised patriotic content. Every country calls such a curriculum by a different name. For instance, Bulgaria calls it “Motherland Studies”, the former German Democratic Republic called it “Fatherland Studies”; the United States, Japan and Singapore call it “Civil Education” while the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany call it “Political Studies”.

Each country propagates patriotism by holding patriotic festivals. For instance, the major patriotic festivals in the United States include Independence Day, Memorial Day, Veterans’ Day, and Flag Day etc. During each of such festivals, celebrations or rallies, everyone at all places, including on cars would put up the national flag. The US Star-Spangled banner adorns the backs of many cars and beside it are pasted symbolic slogans such as “Support our military”, “God bless America”, etc.

Every nation highly values educating youth in their conduct towards the national

flag and their awareness towards the national anthem. Hoisting the national flag and singing the national anthem are important forms of Patriotic education. American national paraphernalia such as the national flag, national anthem and the images of the Presidents can be seen and heard everywhere in primary and middle schools. Almost all grades hang the national flag and the image of the President. Love for the national flag is an important part of the patriotic education of students.

The primary and middle schools in the United States hold a pledge ceremony everyday: “I pledge my allegiance to the national flag of the United States of America and to the federation she represents— an indivisible nation under the blue sky.” The new teaching curriculum promulgated by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 1990 demands every primary and middle school student to hoist the national flag and sing the national anthem during the school commencement and graduation ceremonies so as to make students accurately understand the meaning of the national flag and the national anthem.

A teacher who does not stand during the flag hoisting in Japanese schools incurs legal punishment. A television show called “I love Germany” on the Deutsche Satellite Television invites celebrities and ordinary people every week to participate in a quiz regarding their knowledge about Germany. Everyone in the show must sing the national anthem. Even Indians play the national anthem during movies and academic conferences.

Finally, to sum up:

1. Interestingly, for the past many years, the more the public intellectuals vilify patriotism, the more the masses refuse to acknowledge such acts. Faced with the reality and the domestic and international environment, the patriotism of the masses has risen and become more conscious year after year. In vilifying patriotism, public intellectuals have alienated themselves from the masses, they even bemoaned themselves for the failure of masses’ “awakening”. Nearly justifying what Premier Zhou Enlai once said, who are you to despise what the majority of people love to see and hear?
2. The more the public intellectuals deny, shatter and hate patriotism, the more the country would not be fooled and the more firmly rooted the safeguarding of

patriotism would become. In reality, not only has the recently legislated patriotic education law been promulgated but also the policies and legislative activities focused on strengthening and carrying forward patriotism have been on the rise. In January 2017, the Ministry of Education issued a notice on Patriotic Education. In November 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council published the “Outline to implement patriotic education in the New Era”. In July 2020, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the “Work Plan to Implement the Key Points of the 'Outline to Implement Patriotic Education in the New Era' in Primary and Middle Schools”.

Early on, Russia too had a similar rich and comprehensive legislation which made them steal a march over us. Because the Russian people experienced the pain of their country’s decline they know its value and cherished its value. It is only when one is weak that one wants to become strong. It is only when one is bullied that they don't want to be bullied. The Chinese people have seen through the domestic and international situations and firmly believe that the strength or weakness of the nation definitely has something to do with themselves. Patriotism can make the

nation strong, and a strong nation is related to people's happiness.

However, I do wonder, whether some elites really do not know or they simply pretend to not know this all is common sense!

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*The views expressed here are those of the original author and not necessarily of the translator or of the Institute of Chinese Studies*



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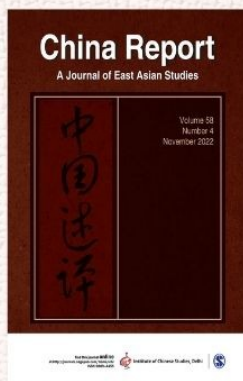


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