

Ear to Asia Episode 26: Manufacturing nationalism in China

Title: Manufacturing nationalism in China

Description: Is rising nationalism among citizens of China a natural result of the country's growing power, or is it being manufactured and stoked by a Chinese Communist Party only looking out for its own interests? In this episode of Ear to Asia, Asia Institute political scientists Dr Sow Keat Tok and Dr Delia Lin consider the origins and implications of a patriotism with Chinese characteristics. Presented by Peter Clarke.

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Peter Clarke: Hello, I'm Peter Clarke, this is Ear To Asia.

Lisa Fletcher: Is popular nationalism in China, a state led strategy that's aimed at bolstering its legitimacy and state control?

Marga Ortigas: They're calling for war at the enemy's gates. Chinese protesters besiege the Japanese embassy in Beijing, angry over Japan's purchase of disputed islands. It's a message the Chinese government seemed in no hurry to suppress.

John Minnich: As we're starting to see, nationalism, especially in the country is large and internally diverse as China is a complex and combustible concept that can easily exceed the limits of party management.

Peter Clarke: In this episode of the Ear To Asia, we discuss the rising tide of nationalism, authentic or confected in China. Ear To Asia is the podcast from Asia Institute, the Asia research specialist at the University of Melbourne. In Ear To Asia, we talk with Asia researchers to unpack the issues behind the news in a region that's rapidly changing the world.

When he addressed the Chinese Communist Party's 19th National Congress, recently, China's President, Xi Jinping, exhorted delegates to, 'tell the China story well, and build China's soft power.' Bolstered by China's meteoric economic rise, and the perception at higher levels within the Chinese government that the West is in decline, Beijing's propaganda machine is according to some moving into a higher gear, pumping out an increasingly nationalist message for consumption at home and abroad.

This propaganda's apparent success seems to be taking many forms from Chinese student groups publicly denouncing a University of Sydney lecturer for using a map showing disputed territory under Indian control. To the destruction of Japanese branded cars in Chinese cities over yet another territorial squabble, to a growing army of volunteer internet trolls at the ready to pounce on any and all who would dare to criticize China online.

We'd be hard put to name a country that doesn't practice and promote nationalism of one form or another. Governments will for a range of reasons seek to build on or exploit the natural proclivity, that tribal reflex of citizens to have pride in their country. But how does nationalism actually figure in an increasingly assertive China? Is the Chinese citizenry really gripped by an organic nationalistic fervor on a scale of responding to and proportionate to its newfound power? How much is that natural patriotism being induced, being manufactured, and amplified for use by a one party government primarily looking out for its own interests, its own future.

On this episode of Ear To Asia, Asia Institute political scientists Dr. Sow Keat Tok, and Dr. Delia Lin are with us to examine the machinations behind, and the implications of a growing nationalism in China. Welcome to Ear To Asia to you both.

Delia Lin: Thank you.

Sow Keat Tok: A pleasure to be here.

Peter Clarke: Now, I've already used that term, rising nationalism? I can't read anywhere nationalism in connection with China without adding that qualify rising. Is it truly rising to your things Sow Keat, or is it pretty much a function of an increased focus of largely the Western media?

Sow Keat Tok: I think it is rising. We have to probably put in context what's happened in the last 25 years or so. After Tiananmen in 1989, the Tiananmen Incident, China, or the Chinese Communist Party or the CCP embarked on this nationalism or what they call the patriotism education campaign in the early 1990s-

Peter Clarke: Under Jiang Zemin

Sow Keat Tok: That was during the early Jiang Zemin time, that's true. But since that point, you see a slowly, more politicized and socialized society and a generation of young Chinese people that grew up with the nationalist narrative and started to believe in what the regime is trying to tell them who they belong to, and how they belong et cetera.

Through the early 2000s, where you see the rising Chinese economy, the successful holding of the Olympic Games, et cetera. That entrenched that nationalist feeling over time. So, yes, I do agree that it is rising and still rising as we speak.

Peter Clarke: As I said, in the opening almost any government around the world; the democracies, more totalitarian governments use that narrative, use the propaganda, use the national narrative as part of what they do in governing. How is it different in China?

Sow Keat Tok: I agree with you, every nation state in the world is obliged to create a nation. That is part of our historical experience. Where states in the past were just recognized because there's a crown in the state. In the early 20th century, our state transitioned from one of the traditional state to a modern nation states where a lot of states are expected to have a nation encapsulated within the state. With that very, very rapid decolonization in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, you see that a lot of those colonies were suddenly the sovereignty was just bestowed on them. Then they were expected to create the nation state.

They have to somehow embark on a program to create the nation. So, yes, it doesn't matter whether it's China, United States, Russia or a country in Africa for example. They're all trying to create that nation. Now, what is different with China is that, that nation or the sense of nationalism was created primarily based on humiliation rather than pride. That is something very peculiar to Chinese.

In China, any sense of nationalism is about China being bullied by the West, China being conquered, being colonized, semi-colonnized in their terms. Is only very recent years that this narrative changed to include more of the pride being a Chinese by mobilizing the narrative of history, by mobilizing the narrative of new achievements such as astronauts in space, and so on and so forth.

So, it comes from a different direction I'll say it that way, the Chinese nation.

Peter Clarke: That century of humiliation plank in the propaganda, in the nationalistic narrative if you like. That's very potent isn't it?

Sow Keat Tok: Absolutely. I think in 1949 when the myth ... Okay, I have to emphasize that that was a myth, that Mao actually stood in front of the Chinese people in Tiananmen Square and declared that Chinese people finally stood up. Of course, it was now highly disputed, but that kind of statement somehow became entrenched in the mentality. Until that point of history, Chinese people were being bent by the powers of history, and they were not able to lift up their spine and say probably to the world that we are the Chinese nation.

That was a very powerful message that was sent across and remembered by Chinese.

Peter Clarke: Delia, obviously, and objectively China, largely the Han Chinese have a long and deep cultural history. It's an amazing history and with an enormous amount of culture attached to that, whether it's the characters, the performances, the literature, et cetera. How do we tell from outside what's a natural patriotism compared to a manufactured nationalism?

Delia Lin: I think how we differentiate this organic national pride from manufactured nationalism. Very much embedded in nationalism is also this discourse of exclusiveness. This is us versus others. So, who are the others, who other we?

This is very much entrenched in a whole discourse of nationalism as well. It doesn't matter whether that's for national rejuvenation, or that's declared Han identity, as there was always this discourse, right through Sun Yat Sen's time. This discourse of exclusiveness.

How is this exclusiveness created? It is created through some fabricated, fixed rewriting of history, and through the language, through the stories. So, some stories are not to be disputed. So this 5000 years of continuous history of China that homogeneous kind of history of China, is not to be disputed.

So, that's in the storytelling of the government and also the way that academic work even is monitored. If you have academic work that looks at interaction between China and the West, way back in history for example, even talking about building the Xian Terracotta Army, is that just purely Chinese doing, or Europeans helped as well? Was there Greek influence and European DNA were found? But these kind of stories were not taught in public media. In social media, maybe. This kind of research is pretty quiet, and there's abundance of research material there but not known to the general public.

Peter Clarke: A lot of symbolism here. You mentioned the Terracotta Warriors, the Qing Dynasty over 2200 years ago, the very palpable symbol of the Great Wall of China. You talk about exclusivity, these stories and people's understanding of them, how alive are they still within nationalist propaganda?

Delia Lin: They are definitely well alive. It's not that everybody believes it. And definitely, there was skepticism, there was resistance, that's for sure. But because those stories are not to be disputed, and those sort of facts are fixed, for example, the Nanjing Massacre, how many people were killed? 300000. That's a story told by the government. If anybody starts to question the number, then that will be considered as a sign of being against this whole nationalistic education, and perhaps be accused of not loving the country.

So, some of the stories are fixed. And that's what we call in manufacturing, and that's why it is fabricated because it's a narrative that you cannot dispute.

Peter Clarke: So, we're really talking Sow Keat about narrative wrangling aren't we? How does this work with the still growing Chinese middle class, better educated class, with more access to perhaps social media outside beyond the reach of the Chinese Communist Party? How does this narrative wrangling work with them?

Sow Keat Tok: I think we have to look at things from two perspective. At one end, there is this state narrative. A narrative that the state wants the people to believe in, or to buy into. However, at the social level, there are lots of questionings, rumblings under the surface of the water. Especially as you mentioned, with the rise of social media, with better access to different narratives, to different voices overseas, the middle class and I wouldn't use the word middle class, but the highly connected-

Peter Clarke: More the elite?

Sow Keat Tok: Not necessarily the elite, the netizens in China can come from a range of different social background. But with better access to internet contents, they are definitely capturing different narratives from outside China. However, my thought is that when you were brought up, and you are socialized in a particular environment, you are basically within a box. It is very difficult to place perspective or content outside the box. More some successfully integrate other forms of knowledge into their world outlook. Most of them would reject narratives outside the box that they were accustomed with.

That seems to be the case for a lot of people. That box, I'd like to add, is very much governed by the government - the regime in China. Anyone who stood outside the box will be liable to sanctioning by the regime. Some would have alternative thoughts. But as far as possible, their outlook, the way that they tried to behave or hold themselves in public, they'll try to fit themselves into the box. That box is something that is very safe, is something that unless they find themselves in private situations where they can freely exchange ideas, they're not willing to go out from.

This is how I felt when I talked to Chinese people. I did research on Chinese students, for example, and the narratives that we try to get them to talk about in terms of Great Leap Forward, in terms of the Cultural Revolution, in terms of Tiananmen, they were pretty much more comfortable talking within that box rather than outside. Even though we guaranteed that is something that is private, we are not going to divulge their identity and so on and so forth, they're not willing to really step out of it.

I like to also mentioned that the Chinese government has one of the world's most sophisticated regimes in governing the internet. What we call the Great Firewall of China. That is something that has very effectively blocking out dissident voices on the internet and controlling the inward flow and outward flow of information in the internal internet within China.

Peter Clarke: While we're talking about nationalism, we've all got Xi Jinping in our minds. Recently, of course, he was given, I guess, effectively presidency for life. How does his newfound status, the apparent expunging of the collective leadership as opaque as it is, with now that leading figure, his thoughts revered. How does that play into our discussion of nationalism?

Sow Keat Tok: Without reading too much into the whole affinity towards a central individual, what Xi did since he came to power, was really the consolidation of the historical narrative in China. If I'm not wrong, it was in 2014 he first mentioned in the Central Party School that we should all learn from history. History is the best textbook. From there on, you see that continuous trend of trying to use history as a way to validate the party's legitimacy, as well to legitimize on his own hang on to power.

Subsequently, you see the passing for what we call commemorative days by the National People's Congress. We have now today in China's political and social calendar, we now have four commemorative day. One being the victory against the Japanese. So, the victory of the War of Resistance against the Japanese. Then you have the Martyrs' day, you have the Constitution Day, and you have the Nanjing Massacre day.

So, within four years, they passed for commemorative days. All, if you look at them, is really tied into the pain of modernization of that national identity. Is about the creation of the nation state through constitution, is about the humiliation of people through the narrative on Nanjing Massacre, is again, the humiliation of people and how Chinese stood up against foreign bullying in the Martyr's Day. And of course, the victory against the Japanese. It just tells all.

it's very much that kind of narrative that they want people to believe in. Since 2015, Xi actually effectively locked down any revisionists ideas of the party's history. So, party history is no longer subject to discussion, is lock and cast in stone. That is something that cannot change anymore. In fact, a lot of social media like Weibo and WeChat, the notice was out to say that any discussion on history will be locked, the account will be locked and the person will be investigated for all the narratives.

Delia Lin: Not only the person who actually talked about that alternative narrative, but also the person who initiated the WeChat group. So, if a person talks about it within a WeChat group, then the so called group leader, the person who initiated it in the WeChat group will be persecuted as well.

Peter Clarke: Now, that a disincentive isn't it? And it shows you how crucial the narrative wrangling actually is. Here in Australia and in the Anglosphere, we talked about World War II. But in China, they don't call it World War II at all, it really has Japan, as you've already alluded to embedded in that description of World War II. Just recently, the actual length of that war that we call World War II was extended right back to what 1931 to make sure that the Communist Party of China was part of that narrative. How does that focus on Japan continue to be really a central part of nationalism in China?

Delia Lin: Part of nationalism, building or manufacturing nationalism is to build the other as well. The other groups, or the other race. It could be anybody. Since Sun Yat Sen's time when he was talking about nationalism as well, we'll have to kick out all the Barbarian mentors as well, whatever reasons you have to create an enemy or create a group of people that the whole nation should have this antagonistic view towards.

So, Japan is the baddie - created the baddie through that whole Japan story, then to establish legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party as what Sow Keat just mentioned, all those commemorative dates and all those remembers days. So, all those stories about the humiliated past is also declared the glorious

imagination of the Chinese Communist Party. To say, who is the one who brought you out of this humiliation? Is the Chinese Communist Party.

When we talk about nationalism, we usually talk about love for the country, and love for the state. But in China as a one party state, then love for the country is tied up with the love for the party. And especially under Xi Jinping, that the party now is above the state. It won't be exaggeration to say that party leads all.

So, love for the party and love for the country together. Then of course, they want people on social media to say that I love my country, but I don't have the party. That kind of voice is certainly a voice that will be censored.

Peter Clarke: So, Japan, or hatred of you like for Japan is a tap that can be turned on or off or adjusted, finessed, if you like. There's some real politic involved here, geopolitics, the relationship between Japan and China in the real world if you like. Is that a threat or danger to the Communist Party managing that?

Delia Lin: Yes and no, because when we talk about international relations, we talk about the state to state and also sub national relationships, and also people relationships. Certainly, it would affect people to people relationships to a great extent when that hatred, that baseless hatred is amongst many people. But with a lot of people traveling to Japan and seeing a different country, and also write about their stories, resistance is also very strong as well. Resistance is tremendous via social media. Even with the strong censorship.

Peter Clarke: Resistance from specifically?

Delia Lin: Resistance from the people. From the people who are seeing a different world and who are thinking and who are questioning. Even though, perhaps they tend to think within their box and even though that kind of resistance can be futile and it can be suppressed very easily. But the resistance is there. So, the stronger the control is, I believe stronger the resistance is. And people are very intelligent, they try to find ways through all the censored social media expression of views.

Sow Keat Tok: I agree with Delia about the resistance however, I think a lot of those resistance were internalized rather than externalized. In my chats with some of the Chinese students around Melbourne, a lot of the students while they are aware of Tiananmen Incident, for example, while they were aware that they were subject to the oppression to the freedom of speech and freedom of thoughts and et cetera, they become socialized to that more international ideals of what a human being should be.

But when you ask them about what do we do when they go back to China, they were almost unanimously just tell you, we will zip up our mouth and shut up and not say anything about it. They know that the world has changed. They know that they are subjected to certain oppression of rights that they're supposed to enjoy. But do not going to rise up against the regime simply

because they know. And that is a very peculiar situation that a lot of those Chinese found themselves in.

Peter Clarke: You're listening to Ear To Asia, a podcast from Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne. I'm Peter Clarke, with political scientists, Dr. Delia Lin and Dr. Sow Keat Tok. We're discussing the role of nationalism in China. In this discussion on nationalism, Delia, could we just focus on ethnicity for a moment. We've acknowledged the Han Chinese domination, we've all heard of the tussles with the Uygher people in the west of China. And Islam is involved in that as well.

When I was visiting a place not far from Kunming, called Lijiang, which is an old ancient canal city. It has one minority there for example, that's very matriarchal. I'm seeing a lot of this nationalistic narrative is very patriarchal, and there are other minority groups there as well. How does that incipient or barely emerging pluralism play into our discussion do you believe? The minorities within China?

Delia Lin: Good question. China has so many minority groups, and so many ethnic groups. Some of them have got their own languages, they have certainly got their own cultural background, their own belief systems. But you can look at different stages of what China has done in terms of dealing with this complexity, because very much in nationalism is this homogeneous historical account. There was only one story, there was one history, we're all one nation.

So, for very long time in the '50s and '60s, definitely, there was a very strong assimilation projects. The government decides how many ethnic groups they are. So that story again, is set by the government, 56 ethnic groups. That's of course, it's open to discussion and debate. Are they only 56? But then any discussion, or any skepticism over this number cannot be discussed. So, this is a fixed, there were 56 ethnic groups.

Peter Clarke: Those 56 would have been demonstrated, for example at the Olympics.

Delia Lin: Yeah, that's right, exactly. So, acknowledging that plurality on the one hand and assimilation on other. Assimilation through language policies, through rebuilding Chinese schools in those minority groups, and making people feel that their children and grandchildren would be better off by studying or by learning Mandarin. Also, to monitor or to censor what they do for their religion.

Sow Keat Tok: I'll just add that most countries in the world actually do similar social re-engineering process. You look at a lot of the multicultural modern nation states, Malaysia, I was from Singapore. So, Singapore did the same, Indonesia. They all try to put different ethnic groups into very neat categorizations in order to administer resources. That is a common practice. But what I think in the more recent years that China was trying to do is to actually enhance that "Han-ness" in that nationalism.

I think if you look at Xi Jinping talks about identity, the Chinese identity today, one of it is the recognition of that Han culture and identity. That somehow is different from other nation states where they've tried to create a more inclusive idea of the nation. Because in China's case, I think since Xi Jinping came to power, was really to enhance that "Han-ness" in the identity.

Peter Clarke: It's intriguing isn't it Delia, to think about the other great superpower which is the United States, a very fragmented mix order of young country, that uses a kind of superheated patriotism. Despite their Civil War, and despite what we're seeing, huge splits in the nation now, but they patriotism is used as both a weapon and a glue if you like. Compare that to China, which has a Han domination, what would happen ... Let's do a thought experiment. What would happen if the Chinese Communist Party let go a little. Allow pluralism to flourish a little more? Is that a threat to them do you believe?

Delia Lin: I don't. I think actually, China needs to do that perhaps. If China needs to establish itself as an inclusive, a confident party, it's very important to acknowledge differences, and acknowledge plurality, and embrace these differences. And not seeing those differences as a threat. Because the more that you control, the actual less confident you are. I think the outside world then also, or a lot of people inside are seeing that whether or not people inside the country can say that aloud, that's a different story.

But if we do this thought experiment, as if [the]CCP opened the door, and allowed a lot plural discourses to be created within the society, what are the implications of that? Of course, it's very difficult to imagine this is a way to do that. Because that really means the change of the entire way of governing. I just can't see where it ends. It's basically a river of no return.

Peter Clarke: I'd like to hear your views on that too Sow Keat.

Sow Keat Tok: I think it is a situation where, to use an analogy, the Chinese Communist Party is riding a tiger. It gets on the tiger in order to build the nation, but it cannot get off the tiger right now. Because getting off the tiger would mean disastrous consequences for itself. Looking from the leadership's perspective, the dangers of them acknowledging such differences is far too great, the political consequences is far too great.

Peter Clarke: Could you be more specific just name a couple of those real threats?

Sow Keat Tok: Well, a good example, the early 2000, there was this new revisionist ideas of how Japan has changed the historical fabric of China. When you talk about the anti-Japanese war, World War II where Japan's rules might not be entirely that brutal to the Chinese nation. There are certain positive things that Japanese-

Peter Clarke: Down-playing that.

Sow Keat Tok:

Yes. But then the regime really quickly just come in and squeeze down all this narrative. Why? Because if this narrative were allowed to grow, it will directly challenge the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. That kind of plurality is not allowed. In the case of ethnicity, ethnicity has been the very core of Chinese nation all throughout history. Delia mentioned something about Sun Yat Sen. In Sun Yat Sen's time, when he first thought of using the idea of nationalism, he excluded the Manchus and the so called Barbarians and said, "China is Han Chinese." But he found that there were not many audience through that narrative, and he started to include other ethnic groups into that narrative.

You can say, is out of historical contingencies, and occurrences that came together, and it became a success. The nationalist revolution became a success. Succeeding regimes all control the narrative of who belongs to the Chinese nation, and CCP is no different in that case. So, as far as possible, they're trying to allow plurality within the confines of what they draw, but not beyond it. Because anything beyond it is going to undermine the very narrative. They have to reconstruct the entire narrative to accommodate the new differences, which is a huge undertaking for any regime.

Peter Clarke:

From outside China. We tend to think of the population in being homogenous in terms of their being captive to the propaganda. Now, I guess we've all had conversations late at night over a few drinks with Chinese citizens where there's a really strong subtext, jokes references, and of course that's what human beings are like.

What I'm getting to is that nationalism, the sort of nationalism we've been describing has a very strong emotional aspect to it. An emotion that's potent and can get out of control. Is this emotional side of nationalism, also part of the threat to the Chinese Communist Party? You mentioned riding the tiger and I'm thinking of you can pump up nationalism, but of course it can get out of control.

Sow Keat Tok:

Definitely. I think we have a few cases where things got out of control. I just want to mention one which is the Wen Chuan earthquake. The Wen Chuan earthquake was back in 2008. After the earthquake, Japan wanted to send relief supplies to China. Most of the time, when you send relief supplies, they will be through military planes, or military means. Indeed, Japan wanted to use its military aircraft to send those supplies.

Initially, the Chinese Communist Party agreed, but suddenly realized that there was a backlash, a furor within the social media. It was the first time since World War II that Japan has a military presence in China. That kind of like triggered certain ultra-nationalists within China. In the end, what happened is that the Chinese government had to step out and say, "No, we're not going to accept any Japanese supplies. The Japanese planes are not going to land in China, we can deal with these problems or own." And that is just a case where that tiger is actually biting on the hands that is feeding them.

As much as they would like the Chinese people to support the regime, the regime is also apprehensive about what uncontrolled nationalism can do to its self, and what it can do to its policy behavior.

Peter Clarke: Final question to both of you, stepping back from the content of what we've heard from both of you today and looking at the quality of the research and what you're able to actually research within a very complex, large and totalitarian state, how do you effectively and authentically bring to us quality research out of China? How difficult is that Sow Keat?

Sow Keat Tok: Well, in the first place, if I do fieldwork in China, I cannot be telling people that I'm doing research on nationalism. Because that is not something that can be debated or questioned.

Peter Clarke: You have to pretend it's something else?

Sow Keat Tok: Yeah, I'd have to say that is something else. But something connected about identity. I look at historical narrative and then relations with nationalism.

Peter Clarke: You use proxies?

Sow Keat Tok: I use proxies. I will ask questions. For example, when I do my field work in Nanjing Massacre, I will ask questions about how the museum was built? What are the different phases the museum was built? Did a narratives change? And I would document the narratives. I would interview people based on their recount of the Nanjing Massacre history. I'll look at videotapes of what has been produced by the state, and compare them with others. So, in the more comparative way without really touching on the topic of nationalism, even though I am working on nationalism.

So it's about how you introduce your topic really. A lot of time, our research will bring us to pathways that we didn't anticipate in the first place. Just to share with you why I started on this project is a very interesting story. I lived in Beijing after the Olympics in 2008, 2009. Out of curiosity, I one day I took a bus out to this far flung suburb in Beijing, the Luguo Qiao is the Marco Polo bridge, which is where the Japanese invasion officially first started. Is not just commemorating the bridge, but also they built a museum.

Basically, it's a woman moral for the anti-Japanese war. If you walk through the entire exhibition. I went through with a very neutral attitude. Going in thinking that it's something nice to see how they remember it. Then after I went through the entire exhibit, I came out of the museum feeling I want to kill some Japanese.

Delia Lin: It's that powerful.

Sow Keat Tok: It's very powerful. The kind of things that they pile on you. I still remember back in 2009 they still have this at the very last exhibit, was this panel which talks about how many Japanese soldiers were killed by the Chinese over time. It's not about how many people died in the war, but really how many Japanese soldiers we have the killed.

Delia Lin: The enemies.

Sow Keat Tok: The enemies.

Peter Clarke: That partly answers the question on how effective all this propaganda and nationalism is.

Delia Lin: Absolutely.

Peter Clarke: Talking about research though, as professional researchers, Delia. Does it worry you that there's still an enormous amount? We're pretty much focused on the externals if you like and what comes out of the regime, and little bits and pieces. But the subtext if you like, the more subterranean sociality that's going on, the resistances that truly going on I guess for human beings by human beings. That's the hard part of research isn't it?

Delia Lin: Very hard because especially when it comes to resistance then you perhaps have to rely on a lot of the social media because we can record all the WeChat messages. But then you have to hide the identity of the people, have some of my informants take pictures and have to hide the identities. So, we took the pictures, because you do want to protect the identity. You don't want them to get into trouble. And hide your motivation. Absolutely agree with Sow Keat that you have to hide your motivation while you're studying this. Because especially when you know that you're going to interview people who are very outspoken, especially after a few drinks. But there are also people who are afraid and people who have internalized this whole emotion or affective attitudes are a big part of whole nationalistic campaigns, the frame of reference, and how they interpret stories, and how they interpret incidence, and how they craft the stories themselves through internal because that's all they know.

So, there are people like that as well. If they know that you hold a different view they immediately would shut down, they wouldn't want to talk to you at all. Because the whole nationalism, education or propaganda is not just about top down. To study nationalism in China, you do need to study lived experience. You do need to study what people really think. To make people feel safe to say what they really think too, to recount their own emotional responses to things, then you don't want to put out your purpose very clearly. Because then that will definitely affect the way that people respond to your questions.

Peter Clarke: Well, a fascinating topic and not an academic one. This is crucial to all of us. It's alive, it's dynamic, and it's happening to us right now in the world. Thank you to you both Sow Keat, Delia for being with us today on Ear To Asia.

Delia Lin: Thank you Peter. It's a pleasure.

Sow Keat Tok: Thank you to Peter.

Peter Clarke: Our guest this time on Ear To Asia, political scientists from Asia Institute here at the University of Melbourne, Dr. Sow Keat Tok and Dr. Delia Lin. Ear To Asia is brought to you by Asia Institute of the University of Melbourne, Australia. You can find more information about this and all our other episodes at the Asia Institute website.

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I'm Peter Clarke. Thanks for your company.