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Opposite Effects of RWA and SDO on War Support: Chinese Public Opinion Toward Russia's War in Ukraine

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Abstract:

Previous research has identified the combined effects of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) on individuals' militant attitudes. Much of the existing studies have been conducted in the U.S. and Europe, where political cleavage is drawn between liberalism and conservatism and where RWA and SDO are aligned with and magnified by conservatism. In this article, we argue that in a different ideological backdrop where RWA and SDO are not bounded by conservative ideology, their influence on war support varies. We use the case study of China, in which socialist ideology upholds authoritarianism but opposes social dominance. We hypothesize that in a war in which the state acquiesces, regime loyalists high on RWA and low on SDO tend to back the war, while regime critics low on RWA and high on SDO are less supportive. Using longitudinal data with a nationwide online sample (Time 1: $N = 1000$, Time 2: $N = 500$) collected during the war in Ukraine, we confirmed the opposite effects of RWA (measured by the traditionalism subscale) and SDO (measured by the dominance subscale) on war support. The findings extend our understanding of the impacts of authoritarianism and social dominance in a context beyond the U.S. and Europe.

Keywords: China, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, Socialist Regime, War Support.

Opposite Effects of RWA and SDO on War Support: Chinese Public Opinion Toward Russia's War in Ukraine

Existing literature in political psychology has demonstrated consistent effects of psychological traits on individuals' militant attitudes toward outgroups, including war support (Altemeyer, 1998; McFarland, 2005). Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) stand out as *the lethal union* (Altemeyer, 1998, p. 88) in fueling support for war. Studies have shown that the authoritarian personality led German students to back NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia (Cohrs & Moschner, 2002), SDO increased American war support in the 1991 Gulf War (Pratto et al., 1994), and both RWA and SDO strengthened American support for the 2003 Iraq War (McFarland, 2005).

Are the effects of authoritarianism and social dominance on individuals' war support generalizable? Almost all the previous studies have been conducted in North American and Western European countries (with a notable exception of McFarland et al.'s (1992) work on the former Soviet Union). It is worth noting that the origins of their effects lie in not only fundamental psychological needs, such as feeling threatened and striving for superiority (Jost et al., 2003) but also in the local political context (Duckitt et al., 2002; Duriez et al. 2005; Jost et al., 2009). Historically, tougher foreign policy and militant attitudes have been at the heart of conservatism and conservative party identification (Scanlon, 2013; Sulfaro, 1996). Central to conservative ideology are authoritarianism and social dominance. While authoritarianism and social dominance are the lethal union conducive to popular war support, it is the conservative ideology

that marries the two and magnifies their effects.

In this paper, we argue that the influence of authoritarianism and social dominance on war support varies depending on the local political context. While moving to a different ideological landscape in which authoritarianism and social dominance are not bounded together by conservative ideology, their impacts on support for war also differ. We use China as a case study to demonstrate how authoritarianism and social dominance affect war support differently beyond the context of North America and Europe. Being a socialist regime means that the Chinese state endorses submission to the authority of the party-state and eliminating inequality, both of which are central to its ideology of *Socialism with Chinese characteristics*. The top-down process (Jost et al., 2009) of socialist ideology leads to the fact that the authoritarian personality is often linked with conservative party loyalists, whereas the social dominance orientation features regime critics, also known as liberals in the Chinese context (Beattie et al., 2022). As a result, when it comes to a war backed by the Chinese state, those regime loyalists who are high in authoritarianism but low in social dominance are inclined to support the war. By contrast, the regime critics low in authoritarianism and high in social dominance tend to show less war support. The impacts of the authoritarian personality and the social dominance orientation on war support thus diverge—authoritarianism increases support for war, while social dominance decreases it. Using a nationwide online survey of Chinese public opinion on the war in Ukraine, we show the divergent impacts of authoritarianism and social dominance on Chinese support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The case study of China serves to remind political

psychologists that *the lethal union* that binds the authoritarian personality and the social dominance orientation (Altemeyer, 1998, p. 88) may break out in a different political context.

The Psychological Sources of War Support

Studies of war support and ideology have their origin in social psychology. During and after World War II, psychologists were puzzled by why the German public submitted to the Nazis and supported their military aggression. Pioneering the concept of the authoritarian personality, Theodor W. Adorno and his colleagues (1950/1982) constructed the F-Scale to measure a person's authoritarianism, where authoritarian individuals show high attitudinal consistency across multiple social domains. The F-Scale later demonstrated great predictive power on militant attitudes in the Vietnam War (Izzett, 1971). In the 1990s, built upon the recent development of psychometrics, Altemeyer (1996) reconstructed the F-scale into the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale. The new scale measures an individual's authoritarian tendency, covering three key psychological constructs: conventionalism, authoritarian submission, and authoritarian aggression. A person's authoritarian tendency is often motivated by the fear of threat (Jost et al., 2003) and is based on a worldview of Dangerous World Belief (Duckitt, 2001). To survive in a threatening world, they tend to associate closely with their nation and see the government as a protector, leading them to demonstrate strong nationalism and patriotism (Kemmelmeier & Winter, 2008). Thus, unsurprisingly, when their own government wages war, they rally behind the authority, considering the war

as a means to protect their ingroup members (Jackson & Gaertner, 2010). Since Altemeyer (1996) built the measure, the RWA scale has been widely used and tested to predict militant and prejudiced attitudes (Smith, 1997; Jost et al., 2003). The scale has consistently predicted Russian support for the 1991 military intervention in the Baltic States (McFarland et al., 1992), American support for the Gulf War during the 1990s (Doty et al., 1997), and German support for NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 (Cohrs & Moschner, 2002).

Along with the authoritarian personality, the social dominance orientation (SDO) is another important psychological trait to explain popular war support, although its predictive power is less stable. Pratto and her collaborators (1994, p. 741) defined social dominance as "one's degree of preference for inequality among social groups" to ensure social conformity. SDO is grounded upon a world view of the Competitive Jungle—the stronger, the better (Duckitt, 2001). When it comes to a jungle-like competition between nations, individuals high in social dominance orientation tend to prioritize their own nation's interests, expressing more nationalist sentiment (Pratto et al., 1994; Pratto et al., 1998). They are also more inclined to regard war as a way to seek their own nation's superiority (McFarland, 2005).

More than personality traits (Altemeyer, 1998), RWA and SDO are widely viewed as two ideological beliefs underlining individuals' conservative tendencies (see the review in Duckitt, 2001, p. 45). For example, Duckitt and Sibley's (2016) Dual Process Model (DPM) treats RWA and SDO as the two attitudinal and ideological dimensions of political conservatism. In DPM, RWA stands for social-cultural conservatism, while

SDO represents anti-egalitarianism and economic conservatism. Similarly, the motivated social cognition theory of conservatism (Jost et al., 2003) considers RWA and SDO as two aspects of conservatism, arguing that the conservative ideology is characterized by opposition to change (RWA) and maintaining inequality (SDO). As two important psychological aspects of conservatism (Satherley et al., 2021), RWA and SDO can predict individuals' conservative position on various issues (Jost et al., 2003; Koleva et al., 2012), including the support for war (see the meta-analysis in Van Hiel et al., 2020; also see McFarland, 2005; Jackson & Gaertner, 2010).

Support for war and military intervention is at the core of the construct of political conservatism. Existing psychological scales that measure individuals' conservative ideology—for instance, Eysenck's *Public Opinion Inventory* and Sidanius' *Conservative Scale*—include items specifically on war and militant attitudes (Knight, 1999). Given that RWA, SDO, and war support are endogenous in the conservative ideology, the puzzle is that short of the conservative tradition, can RWA and SDO still have a similar combined effect on war support?

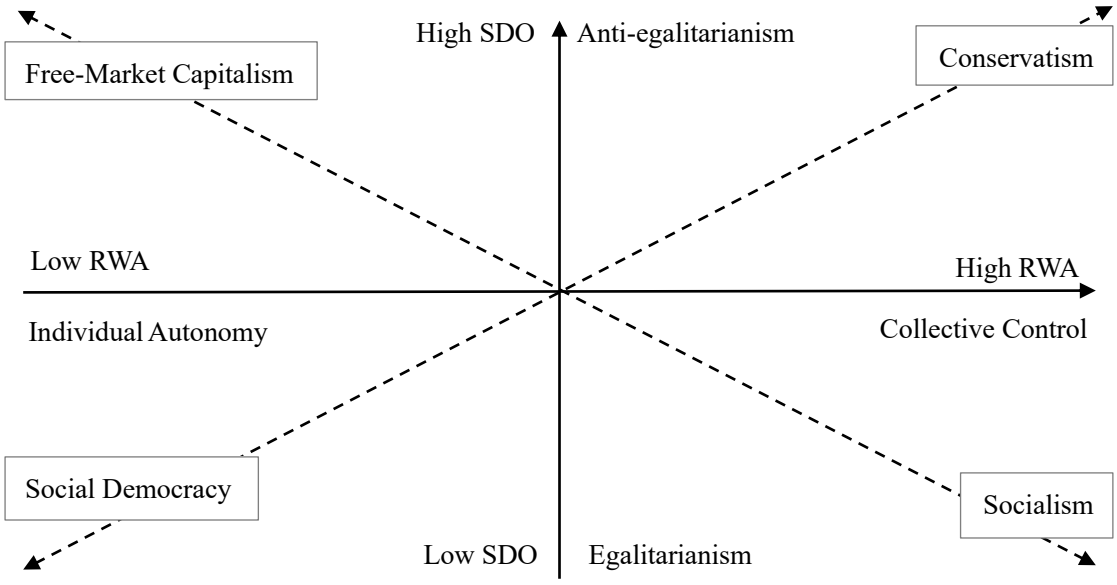
The case of China: a different ideological tradition

According to Jost and colleagues' (2009) *Elective Affinities* theory, individuals' ideological beliefs are shaped by both top-down and bottom-up processes. With regard to the *top-down process*, the macro superstructure of political processes, mainly constructed by political elites, can influence ordinary people's political attitudes. Meanwhile, there is also a *bottom-up process* in which individuals' psychological

dispositions (such as RWA and SDO) can affect their acceptance of various political discourses (p. 314). As an example of the top-down process, the discourse of political elites in liberal democracies, both left and right, is found to shape individuals' micro-level ideological beliefs including RWA and SDO (Duriez et al., 2005). Similarly, there is no doubt that the dominant political discourse of the Communist Party of China (CPC) can have far-reaching implications on the ideological beliefs of ordinary Chinese.

Specifically, the relationship between RWA and SDO varies across political contexts where the macro-level superstructure differs (Duckitt, 2001; Jost et al., 2009). Duckitt (2001) offered an ideal-type analysis that helps to analyze RWA and SDO's relationship and functions from a comparative perspective, connecting the micro-level ideological beliefs (RWA and SDO) with the macro-level political ideologies in different contexts. In his framework, the threat-control vs. security-autonomy motivation (high vs. low in RWA) and competitive dominance vs. cooperative altruistic motivation (high vs. low in SDO) form a two-by-two typology of psychological foundations underlying different macro-level political ideologies. High-RWA combined with high-SDO tends to be prevalent in Fascism, the extreme version of the conservative ideology; low-RWA together with low-SDO prevails in the ideology of Social Democracy; high-RWA and low-SDO are the defining characteristics of the socialist ideology; and finally, low-RWA and high-SDO feature Free-Market Capitalism (shown in Figure 1).

Figure 1. The relationships between micro-level and macro-level ideologies.



Note. The figure is based on Duckitt's Table XIV (2001, p.84) and modified by the authors.

While existing work on the micro-level ideological beliefs (RWA and SDO) and war support has been primarily conducted in North America and Western Europe, China provides a unique case to test the effects of RWA and SDO in a drastically different ideological landscape. The difference discussed here is presented by the two diagonal lines in Figure 1. In North America and Western Europe, political parties and their supporters are often divided into camps between social democracy (left) and conservatism (right), corresponding to the diagonal from the bottom left to the top right. In China, by contrast, the ideological chasm opens up along the diagonal from the bottom right to the top left, with the socialist ideology (as a variant of communism) and free-market capitalism at two extremes.

At one end of the spectrum, the Chinese state holds an official stand of *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, which claims to promote equality (corresponding to low SDO) under the leadership of the CPC (corresponding to high RWA). At the operational

level, China has had a series of economic policies mixing a state-controlled economy with a free market since the *Reform and Opening* in the 1970s, resulting in increasing income inequality (Xie & Zhou, 2014; Zhou & Song, 2016). However, the ruling CPC has never abandoned its socialist agenda. Symbolically, it has repeatedly used political slogans with egalitarian connotations, such as *Common Prosperity* (Dunford, 2022). Practically, as opposed to laissez-faire capitalism, the CPC's management of the Chinese economy is often known as "state capitalism" (Kurlantzick, 2016). The authority has tight control over the economy through regular intervention and state monopoly.

The symbols endorsing equality and submission to authority attract conservative party loyalists. As the *Elective Affinities* theory (Jost et al., 2009) suggests, when political elites actively organize ideological bundles to influence mass opinion (by propaganda, for example), ordinary people with certain psychological dispositions tend to be appealed by the ideological stand of the state. China is no exception in this sense. Pan and Xu (2018, pp. 255-256) found that there is a "conservative" camp in China who are more likely to be nationalist, traditionalist, opposing market-oriented reform, and support the CPC's rule. Their ideological beliefs mix criticism towards inequality as a result of the market economy (low SDO) on the one hand, with support for the existing political system (high RWA) on the other. Similarly, Beattie et al. (2022) found that regime supporters, known as *conservative left*[1], have a psychological profile of

[1] The ideological *Left* in China represents regime supporters and thus Beattie et al. (2022) called them "conservative left," who share similar psychological traits with *Right*-wing authoritarians in the West. In this article, we follow the convention and use the term right-wing authoritarianism. However, people high on RWA in China generally identified themselves as *Left*.

high authoritarianism and low social dominance orientation. It is also found that anecdotally, many self-identified conservative intellectuals opposed market reforming and cherished the egalitarian elements of Mao's era (Wu, 2022).

At the other end of the spectrum lies regime critics, mainly characterized by low authoritarianism (low RWA) and tolerance of inequalities as a result of the free market (high SDO). Ma and his co-authors (Ma & Wang, 2015; Ma & Lewis, 2020) found that the Chinese "rightist" is more likely to support limited government power, favor modern and post-modern lifestyles, oppose the state's intervention in the economy, and care about equality of opportunity (as opposed to equality of outcome). Pan and Xu (2018) similarly identified a "liberal" camp in China. They found that the pro-market preference with a greater tolerance of inequalities is often associated with anti-authoritarianism (see their appendix, pp. a4-a5). Beattie and his colleagues (2022) demonstrated that liberals in China scored higher on SDO and lower on authoritarianism, favoring both free market and competitive elections. Besides research about the general public, Lin (2022) qualitatively analyzed the beliefs of Chinese liberal intellectuals, showing that they doubted both authoritarianism and egalitarianism and held an overly rosy view of the United States as a model of laissez-faire capitalism. It is worth noting that the finding about the association between SDO and capitalism is not unusual. Belief in a free market is often correlated with a higher tolerance of inequality out of market competition, where individuals are inclined to score high on SDO (Sidanius & Pratto, 1993; Pratto et al., 1997; Azevedo et al., 2019).

Theories and Hypotheses

China presents a drastically different ideological landscape. While the tradition of conservativism unites authoritarianism and social dominance in most North American and Western European countries, we argue the socialist ideology in China may break the union. In this study, we selected the case of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 to explore the functions of the ideological beliefs (RWA and SDO) of ordinary Chinese in predicting war support, investigating whether their effects differ from their counterparts in Western societies.

There are several approaches to measuring ideology at the individual level. The direct self-identified items of liberal/conservative (or left/right) are commonly used in political science (Knight, 1999), often known as *symbolic ideology* about the self-identification process (see Jost et al., 2009; Federico et al., 2012). The method has been criticized for presupposing a collectively shared understanding of the terms (Ellis and Stimson, 2012). The issue is particularly salient in China, short of competition between liberal and conservative parties and their corresponding discourses. For example, Wu (2023) found that the self-labelled item in China carried inconsistent meanings in predicting attitudes.

Beyond direct self-identified items, RWA and SDO are employed as indirect measurements of ideology (Satherley et al., 2021). Using the multi-item psychometric method, RWA and SDO can index two fundamental aspects of ideology, resistance to change and endorsement of inequality (Jost et al., 2003), without the assumption of participants' preexisting understanding of ideological labels. Following Duckitt's

(2001), we treat RWA and SDO as ideological beliefs in a psychological sense.

The scales of RWA and SDO have already been translated into Chinese. Their Chinese versions have been widely used, although their factor structures vary depending on samples. For example, Huang (2007) constructed the Chinese version of RWA from Altemeyer (1996) and SDO from Sidanius & Pratto's (1999) sixth version (SDO_6). Her Chinese RWA consists of 16 items with one pro-trait factor (named *traditionalism*) and two con-trait factors (named *openness* and *autonomy*), and her Chinese SDO includes eight selected items with a single-factor structure. By contrast, Li and colleagues (2006) found a three-dimensional structure of the SDO scale in China (*opposition to equality*, *support for group-based dominance*, and *support for exclusionism*). Other research observes a four-factor structure of SDO (Xu et al., 2012) and one dimension of RWA (Li, Yang, & Li, 2012). Considering the one-dimension assumption in the original literature (Alteyemer, 1996; Pratto et al., 1994), in this study, we assume RWA and SDO as one-factor measurements. Based on this assumption as well as to keep the questionnaire short, we thus selected four pro-trait items for each scale from the Chinese version in Huang (2007).

To explore the functions of RWA and SDO in shaping specific social attitudes in China, we investigate Chinese public opinion on the war in Ukraine in 2022. Starting from day one, Russia's invasion of Ukraine went viral in Chinese social media, where many netizens expressed their support for Russia (Repnikova & Zhou, 2022; Peng, 2022). As an international crisis, the war provides a unique opportunity to examine how the micro-level ideologies (e.g., RWA and SDO) of the Chinese public affect their issue

position (also known as operational ideology) (Jost et al., 2009; Federico et al., 2012).

Specifically, we expect that RWA and SDO affect popular war support in China through the sentiment towards the U.S. Views of the U.S. play a mediational role for two reasons. For one, like other post-colonialist nations, the Chinese state has long built its legitimacy to rule upon a narrative that the communist party led Chinese people to fight for their independence against Japanese and Western imperialism (Gries, 2004). While old enemies had been expelled, new ones emerged. The state has increasingly portrayed the U.S. as a new adversary (Sinkkonen & Elovainio, 2020), and the Chinese public has considered the U.S. as a significant threat (Gong, 2020; Hu & Huang, 2021). Moreover, in the context of the Ukraine war, qualitative evidence shows that Chinese propagandists frame the conflict using a U.S.-centered rhetoric (Greitens, 2022; Repnikova, 2022). The narrative extends the Kremlin's propaganda: it was the U.S. that provoked the war in Ukraine, and Russia had no choice but to attack Ukraine as a response to the expansion of NATO. The state portrayed the war as a righteous response to the U.S. hegemony, as well as an opportunity to weaken the U.S. influence. This narrative has gone uncontested in the Chinese media, with both implicit and explicit backing from government officials (Cheung, 2022; Wang et al., 2022; also see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2022). In line with the state's position, we expect regime loyalists high on RWA but low on SDO to hold more negative attitudes toward the U.S. In turn, the anti-American sentiment is translated to greater support for Russia. On the contrary, regime critics tend to cast doubt on the official narrative, taking an opposite position in the war.

We thus proposed six hypotheses. H1 to H4 are about main effects, and H5 and H6 are about mediation effects:

H1: RWA negatively predicts attitudes toward the U.S.

H2: SDO positively predicts attitudes toward the U.S.

H3: RWA positively predicts war support.

H4: SDO negatively predicts war support.

H5: Attitudes toward the U.S. mediate RWA's effect on war support.

H6: Attitudes toward the U.S. mediate SDO's effect on war support.

In the remainder of the article, we examine these hypotheses both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. We conduct the longitudinal test specifically for the purpose of disentangling causal directions. While most research treats RWA and SDO as predictors of war support (e.g., McFarland, 2005), war support can influence individuals' ideological beliefs as the conflict continues. To examine the causal direction, we employ a follow-up survey to test our hypotheses using longitudinal analyses.

Method

Participants and Procedure

We conducted a two-wave longitudinal online survey on a reputable crowdsourcing platform named Credamo. The first-wave data was collected in the third week of the war, between March 10th and 16th (T1), including 1000 participants (excluding 34 invalid responses using an attention check item). The second wave survey was conducted eight months later, between November 20th and 26th (T2), including 500

participants who had already completed the T1 survey. It took about 15 minutes to finish the questionnaire. Participants gave their informed consent at the beginning of the study and were allowed to quit anytime for any reason. Respondents providing effective and complete responses received 3 CNY rewards at T1 and 5 CNY at T2. The payments were processed by the survey platform based on the desensitization of data that protects personally identifiable information. Data collection was approved by the review board at the first author's affiliation. Although this research is not pre-registered, the dataset can be accessed at [link].

Even though the samples were not representative, they were nationwide, with a great variation in age, gender, educational background, etc. Participants were composed of women (T1: 50.9%; T2: 52.4%) and men (T1: 49.1%; T2: 47.6%), CCP members (T1: 20.4%; T2: 18.4%) and non-CCP members (T1: 79.6%; T2: 81.6%), ethnic majority of Han (T1: 97.7%; T2: 98.0%) and ethnic minorities (T1: 2.3%; T2: 2.0%), such as Manchu, Tuchia, Hui, Bourau, Mongol, Hmong, Boyei, She, and Yao. Participants' educational levels vary, including primary school (T1: 0.1%; T2: 0.0%), middle school (T1: 0.7%; T2: 0.4%), high school (T1: 7.8%; T2: 6.4%), 3-Year college (T1: 13.7%; T2: 13.8%), 4-Year college (T1: 65.1%; T2: 64.4%), graduate school for master's degree (T1: 10.5%; T2: 13.0%), and Ph.D. level education (T1: 2.1%; T2: 2.0%). Average ages were 30.68 years (SD = 7.65) at T1 and 31.52 years (SD = 7.25) at T2.

Measures

Right-Wing Authoritarianism

From Huang's (2007) Chinese version of the RWA scale, we selected four pro-trait items (T1: $\alpha = .61$, $\omega^2 = 0.64$; T2: $\alpha = .68$, $\omega = 0.69$) with the largest factor loadings. In Huang (2007), all the pro-trait items constitute the *traditionalism* dimension, thus our selected items also represent the sub-scale of *traditionalism*. A sample item is "What our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity," on a Likert 5-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Social Dominance Orientation

Also following Huang (2007), we chose four pro-trait items of SDO (T1: $\alpha = .76$, $\omega = 0.77$; T2: $\alpha = .80$, $\omega = 0.80$) with the largest loadings. Since Huang's Chinese version is based upon the SDO_6 scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), all the pro-trait items we used correspond to what recent research has identified as the *group-based dominance* dimension of SDO (Ho et al., 2015). Our selected items thereby represent SDO's dominance sub-scale. A sample item is "It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others," on a Likert 5-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Attitudes toward the U.S.

We designed one question to measure participants' attitudes toward the U.S.:

[2] The McDonald's ω coefficients were calculated by Andrew Hayes' OMEGA macro in SPSS by its EFA-ML estimation method with standardized results, see Hayes and Coutts (2020).

"Generally speaking, what impression do you have towards the U.S.?" on a Likert 5-point scale from 0 (very bad) to 4 (very good).

War Support

We designed two questions to measure individual war support. Participants were asked to rate how much they supported Russia and Ukraine in this war. Responses are measured by Likert 5-point scales from 0 (not support at all) to 4 (completely support).

Demographic Variables

Demographic items were included at the end of the questionnaires. Most were coded as 0-1 dichotomous variables, such as gender (0 for woman, 1 for man) and ethnicity (0 for Han, 1 for ethnic minorities). Education was coded from 1 to 7 (1 for primary school, 2 for middle school, 3 for high school, 4 for 3-year college, 5 for 4-year college, 6 for master's degree, and 7 for Ph.D. level). A Likert 5-point scale was used to measure self-reported social classes, with 1 for lower, 2 for lower-middle, 3 for middle, 4 for upper-middle, and 5 for upper.

Results

Descriptive Results

As the study asks to what extent respondents supported Russia and Ukraine respectively, during the war, we cross-tabled the two items in Table 1. Support for Russia and Ukraine are negatively correlated (T1: $r = -.47$, $p < .01$; T2: $r = -.60$, $p < .01$).

Most of the participants stood on the Russian side (T1: 80.3%; T2: 80.6%), including pro-Russia while anti-Ukraine, pro-Russia while neutral-Ukraine, and neutral-Russia while anti-Ukraine, as shown by the blue cells in the table. Some participants remained neutral (T1: 13.5%; T2: 11.4%). Only a small proportion of participants (T1: 3.9%; T2: 5.4%) stood on the Ukrainian side, including pro-Ukraine while anti-Russia, pro-Ukraine while neutral-Russia, and neutral-Ukraine while anti-Russia, as indicated by the yellow cells in the table. Besides, a minority of participants showed an attitude of supporting both sides (T1: 1.6%; T2: 1.2%) and criticizing both sides (T1: 0.7%; T2: 1.4%). Compared to the middle point 2 which is labelled as neutral, participants demonstrated support for Russia (T1: $M = 3.07$, $t_{M-2} = 40.40$, $p < .01$; T2: $M = 3.02$, $t_{M-2} = 26.09$, $p < .01$) and opposition to Ukraine (T1: $M = 1.26$, $t_{M-2} = -28.31$, $p < .01$; T2: $M = 1.25$, $t_{M-2} = -19.86$, $p < .01$).

Table 1. Frequency of attitudes for and against Russia and Ukraine

N (%)	time	anti-Ukraine (< 2)	neutral (Ukraine, = 2)	pro-Ukraine (> 2)
pro-Russia (< 2)	T1	568 (56.8%)	200 (20.0%)	16 (1.6%)
	T2	309 (61.8%)	83 (16.6%)	6 (1.2%)
neutral (Russia, = 2)	T1	35 (3.5%)	135 (13.5%)	12 (1.2%)
	T2	11 (2.2%)	57 (11.4%)	4 (0.8%)
anti-Russia (> 2)	T1	7 (0.7%)	8 (0.8%)	19 (1.9%)
	T2	7 (1.4%)	5 (1.0%)	18 (3.6%)

Note. T1: time 1. T2: time 2.

To gauge one's *War Support* level, we calculated the mean of support for Russia and reversed support for Ukraine. War Support ranges from 0 to 4. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations of RWA, SDO, Attitudes toward the U.S.,

and War Support at T1 and T2.

Table 2. Means, *SD*s, and correlations of RWA, SDO, attitudes toward the U.S., and war support at T1 ($N = 1000$) and T2 ($N = 500$).

	M (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 T1 RWA	2.75 (0.69)							
2 T1 SDO	1.79 (0.94)	.24**						
3 T1 Attitudes toward the U.S.	0.84 (0.94)	-.13**	.15**					
4 T1 War Support	2.90 (0.71)	.17**	-.02	-.31**				
5 T2 RWA	2.66 (0.77)	.56**	.14**	-.14**	.14**			
6 T2 SDO	1.53 (0.93)	.13**	.56**	.15**	.04	.11*		
7 T2 Attitudes toward the U.S.	0.89 (1.01)	-.13**	.16**	.56**	-.29**	-.13**	.22**	
8 T2 War Support	2.89 (0.77)	.19**	-.02	-.27**	.61**	.29**	.01	-.36**

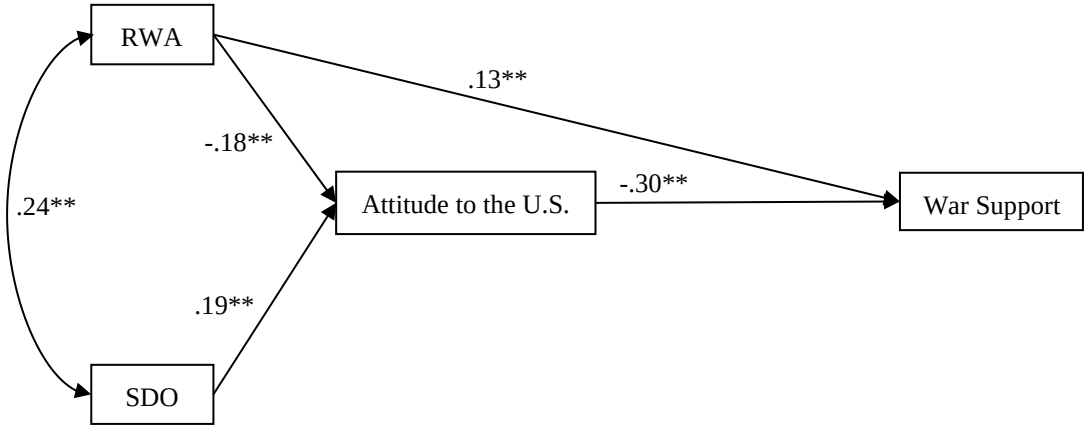
Note. T1: time 1. T2: time 2. RWA: Right-Wing Authoritarianism. SDO: Social Dominance Orientation. The range of measurements is from 0 to 4.
** $p < .01$. * $.01 < p < .05$. (two-tailed).

All the measurements show stability over time (*r*s from .56 to .61). Within each sample set, RWA and SDO show significant but low correlation (T1: $r = .24$, $p < .01$; T2: $r = .11$, $p = .01$). War Support is positively correlated with RWA (T1: $r = .17$, $p < .01$; T2: $r = .29$, $p < .01$), negatively associated with Attitudes toward the U.S. (T1: $r = -.31$, $p < .01$; T2: $r = -.36$, $p < .01$), but not significantly correlated with SDO (T1: $r = -.02$, $p = .60$; T2: $r = .01$, $p = .89$). In the next section, we examined their effects by cross-sectional and cross-lagged path analyses.

Cross-Sectional Path Analysis: Indirect Effects of RWA and SDO

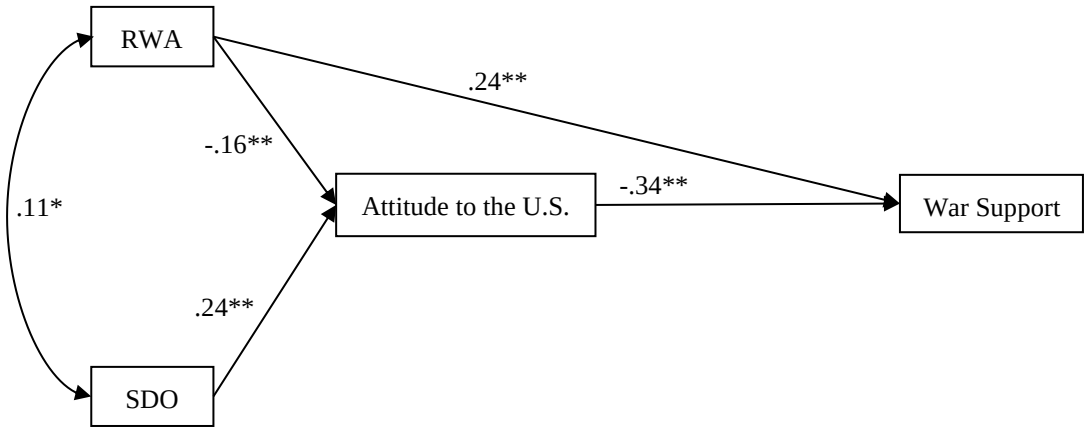
To test the path model among RWA, SDO, Attitudes toward the US, and war support, we conducted two Path Analyses (see Figure 2, Figure 3, and Table 3) by Mplus (version 8.3, Muthén & Muthén, 2019). Since war support was negatively skewed (T1: skewness = -0.56, kurtosis = 0.61; T2: skewness = -0.97, kurtosis = 1.76) in favor of support for Russia, we used Robust Maximum Likelihood (MLR in Mplus) for estimation. All coefficients were standardized.

Figure 2. Cross-Sectional Path Model of War Support at Time 1.



Note. Abbreviations are the same as in Table 2. All coefficients were standardized. Variances of residuals and non-significant paths at the .05 level are not shown. The model is saturated.
** $p < .01$. * $.01 < p < .05$. (two-tailed).

Figure 3. Cross-Sectional Path Model of War Support at Time 2.



Note. Abbreviations are the same as in Table 2. All coefficients were standardized. Variances of residuals and non-significant paths at .05 level are not shown. The model is saturated.
** $p < .01$. * $.01 < p < .05$. (two-tailed).

Table 3. Indirect effects of Path Models of War Support.

Dataset	Indirect Paths	Indirect Effects
T1	RWA → Attitudes toward the U.S. → War Support	.05**
	SDO → Attitudes toward the U.S. → War Support	-.06**
T2	RWA → Attitudes toward the U.S. → War Support	.06**
	SDO → Attitudes toward the U.S. → War Support	-.08**

Note. Abbreviations are the same as in Table 1. All effects were standardized.
** $p < .01$. * $.01 < p < .05$. (two-tailed).

It is worth noting that the effects of RWA and SDO are opposite, and the pattern is consistent at both T1 and T2. In predicting Attitudes toward the U.S., RWA's effects are negative (T1: $\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$; T2: $\beta = -.16$, $p < .01$), while those of SDO are positive (T1: $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$; T2: $\beta = .24$, $p < .01$). H1 and H2 are supported.

Moreover, RWA positively predicts war support by both direct effects (T1: $\beta = .13$, $p < .01$; T2: $\beta = .24$, $p < .01$) and indirect effects through Attitudes toward the U.S. (T1: $\beta = .05$, $p < .01$; T2: $\beta = .06$, $p < .01$). H3 and H5 are supported.

By contrast, SDO negatively predicts War Support by indirect effects alone (T1: $\beta = -.06$, $p < .01$; T2: $\beta = -.08$, $p < .01$), and its direct effects are not significant at .05 level (T1: $\beta < .01$, $p = .94$; T2: $\beta = .06$, $p = .21$). The total effects of SDO in predicting War

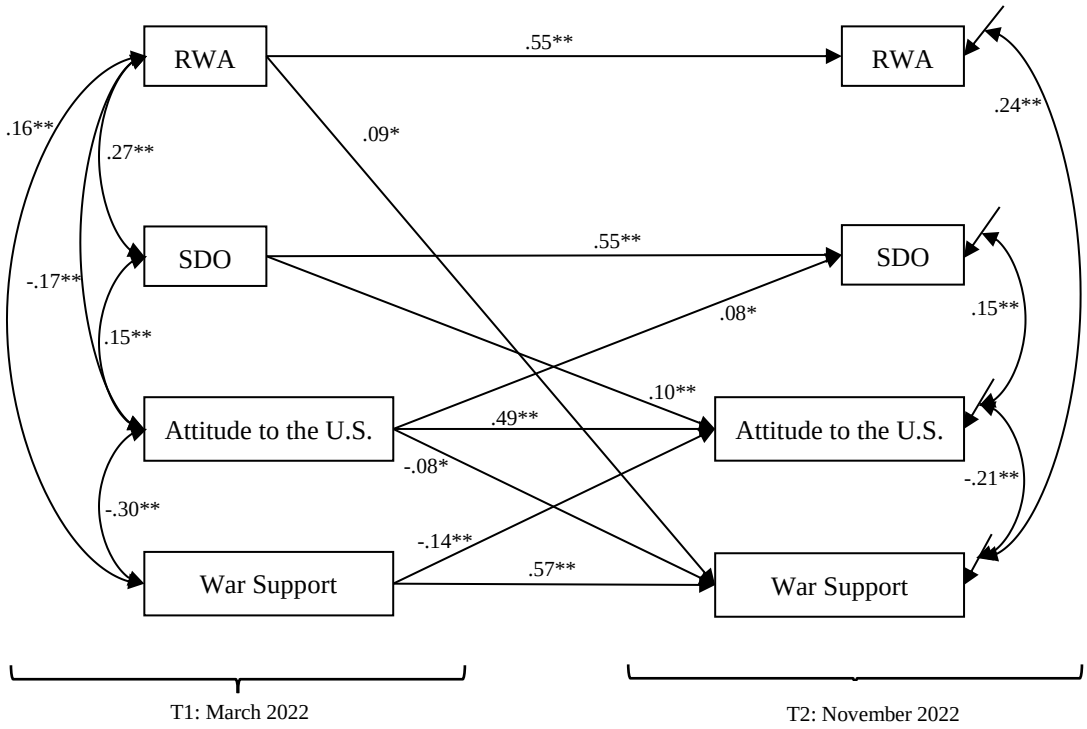
support are not significant, either (T1: β = -.06, p = .06; T2: β = -.03, p = .53). H6 is supported, but H4 is not.

To sum up, RWA and SDO play drastically different roles in predicting Chinese respondents' war support. Individuals high on RWA were more likely to hold an unfavorable view of the U.S., which increased their support for Russia's war both directly and indirectly. By contrast, high-SDO individuals viewed the U.S. more favorably, indirectly decreasing their support for Russia.

Cross-Lagged Path Analysis

In addition to the cross-sectional analyses, we constructed a cross-lagged model to test the effects of RWA and SDO on Attitudes toward the U.S. and War Support, and vice-versa, using the longitudinal data. As shown in Figure 4, the model includes autoregressive paths within each measurement (horizontal paths), cross-lagged paths (slant paths), the concurrent association at T1, and the residual association at T2. The model was also calculated by Mplus with the MLR estimation method.

Figure 4. Cross Lagged Path Model of RWA, SDO, attitudes toward the U.S., and war support.



Note. Abbreviations are the same as in Table 2. All coefficients were standardized. Variances of residuals and non-significant paths at .05 level are not shown. The model is saturated.
** $p < .01$. * $.01 < p < .05$. (two-tailed).

Similar to the cross-sectional results, the longitudinal effects of RWA and SDO are opposite. RWA at T1 increases War Support at T2 (β = .09, p = .01), although its cross-lagged effect on Attitudes toward the U.S. is non-significant (β = -.05, p = .15). On the other hand, SDO at T1 increases Attitudes toward the U.S. at T2 (β = .09, p = .01), and the Attitudes toward the U.S. at T1 decreases War Support at T2 (β = -.08, p = .04). H2 and H3 are supported longitudinally, while H1 and H4 are not.

The paths indicate that SDO influences war support through Attitudes toward the U.S. longitudinally. A caveat is that with our two waves of data, we only used a half-

longitudinal design, where the mediation effects (H5 and H6) are not directly tested.

In addition, Attitudes toward the U.S. at T1 increases SDO at T2 ($\beta = .08$, $p = .04$), and War Support at T1 decreases Attitudes toward the U.S. at T2 ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$), indicating reciprocal effects.

To sum up, the cross-lagged effects of RWA and SDO are also opposite, with one increasing War Support and the other decreasing it. Causal directions are more complicated. The direction is stable from RWA to War Support. Yet, relationships among SDO, Attitudes toward the U.S., and War Support, are reciprocal.

Profile Analysis: Ideological Groups in China

In addition to the path analyses, we grouped the participants with different RWA/SDO combinations to identify different groups of psychological-ideological dispositions in China. We described their demographic, psychological, and attitudinal dispositions. We used the middle point of 2 in the Likert scales as the cutting point to determine the low (≤2) or high (>2) RWA/SDO scores[3]. The four groups were named right authoritarians (high RWA & SDO), left authoritarians (high RWA & low SDO), right liberals (low RWA & high SDO), and left liberals (low RWA & SDO). Samples of T1 and T2 were grouped separately. The demographic, psychological, and attitudinal profiles of these four groups are shown in Table 4.

[3] There are participants with a neutral 2-point score on RWA (T1: $N = 55$; T2: $N = 41$) and SDO (T1: $N = 113$; T2: $N = 40$). Thus, we also grouped these participants into the high-score parts as an alternative strategy. The results did not differ from our main analysis here.

Table 4. Profiles of four ideological groups at Time 1 and Time 2.

Time 1	Left liberals $N = 124$	Right liberals $N = 32$	Left authoritarians $N = 497$	Right authoritarians $N = 347$
Gender = male (%)	42.7%	56.3%	48.5%	51.6%
CCP member (%)	18.5%	21.9%	21.3%	19.6%
Ethnic minorities (%)	4.0%	0.0%	1.8%	9.0%
Age (*M*(*SD*))	29.56 (7.43)	29.50 (9.21)	31.22 (7.67)	30.41 (7.50)
Education (*M*(*SD*))	4.82 (0.81)	4.53 (1.14)	4.82 (0.76)	4.87 (0.90)
Social class (*M*(*SD*))	2.81 (0.63)	2.84 (0.77)	2.85 (0.70)	2.76 (0.73)
RWA (*M*(*SD*))	1.52 (0.53)	1.61 (0.47)	2.92 (0.45)	3.04 (0.45)
SDO (*M*(*SD*))	1.02 (0.58)	2.59 (0.38)	1.24 (0.60)	2.79 (0.44)
corr RWA-SDO (*r*)	.39**	-.14	-.19**	.41**
Attitudes toward the U.S. (*M*(*SD*))	0.94 (1.02)	1.50 (1.05)	0.73 (0.89)	0.90 (0.96)
War support (*M*(*SD*))	2.78 (0.76)	2.59 (0.68)	2.93 (0.69)	2.93 (0.72)
Time 2	Left liberals $N = 86$	Right liberals $N = 19$	Left authoritarians $N = 280$	Right authoritarians $N = 115$
Gender = male (%)	50.0%	57.9%	44.3%	52.2%
CCP member (%)	14.0%	26.3%	19.3%	18.3%
Ethnic minorities (%)	2.3%	10.5%	1.8%	0.9%
Age (*M*(*SD*))	31.03 (7.22)	31.84 (10.90)	31.77 (7.10)	31.24 (6.99)
Education (*M*(*SD*))	5.01 (0.76)	5.11 (0.66)	4.89 (0.78)	4.77 (0.87)
Social class (*M*(*SD*))	2.83 (0.62)	3.26 (0.65)	2.77 (0.68)	2.81 (0.75)
RWA-T2 (*M*(*SD*))	1.45 (0.57)	1.63 (0.50)	2.97 (0.45)	2.97 (0.45)
SDO-T2 (*M*(*SD*))	1.00 (0.63)	2.90 (0.43)	1.10 (0.57)	2.76 (0.41)
corr RWA-SDO -T2 (*r*)	.31**	-.10	-.13**	.21**
Attitudes toward the U.S. -T2 (*M*(*SD*))	0.99 (1.16)	1.47 (1.35)	0.72 (0.90)	1.16 (0.99)
War support-T2 (*M*(*SD*))	2.54 (0.93)	2.34 (0.92)	2.99 (0.70)	2.97 (0.65)

Note. Right authoritarians: high RWA & SDO. Left authoritarians: high RWA & low SDO. Right liberals: low RWA & high SDO. Left liberals: low RWA & SDO. Variable range: education (1-7); social class (1-5); RWA, SDO, attitudes toward the U.S., war support (0-4). **: $p < .01$.

About half of the participants (T1: 49.7%; T2: 56.0%) held a left authoritarian position with high RWA and low SDO scores, in line with the state's official ideology. A minority group was right liberals (T1: 3.2%; T2: 3.8%), demonstrating low RWA and

high SDO. Besides, there were also left liberals (T1: 12.4%; T2: 17.2%) and right authoritarians (T1: 34.7%; T2: 23.0%), two close cousins of liberals and conservatives in North America and Western Europe.

The results help explain why RWA and SDO are positively correlated but function differently in our sample. In the largest sub-group, left authoritarians, RWA and SDO are negatively associated, but the correlation is weak (T1: r = -.19, p < .01; T2: r = -.13, p < .01); in the second largest sub-group, right authoritarians, they are positively correlated to a moderate extent (T1: r = .41, p < .01; T2: r = .21, p < .01). Combining all the four groups results into a positive correlation between RWA and SDO (T1: r = .24, p < .01; T2: r = .11, p = .01).

Moreover, left authoritarians held a set of attitudes close to the state ideology, which helps explain the SDO's reversed effects on war support. The four groups differed in attitudes toward the U.S. (T1: $F_{(3, 996)}$ = 8.37, p < .01; T2: $F_{(3, 496)}$ = 8.09, p < .01) and War Support (T1: $F_{(3, 996)}$ = 3.82, p < .01; T2: $F_{(3, 496)}$ = 12.04, p < .01). In the post-hoc LSD analysis, left authoritarians had the strongest anti-U.S. attitudes at T1 and T2 (ps < .05). Left authoritarians and right authoritarians scored highest on War Support, compared to two liberal groups (ps < .05) at T1 and T2.

In contrast, right liberals held the most favorable view of the U.S. among the four groups (ps < .05), although the score was still below the neutral point of 2 (M = 1.50) at T1. At T2, right liberals' mean score on attitudes toward the U.S. was also the highest numerically (M = 1.47) but statistically did not differ from right authoritarians or left liberals. Besides, left liberals and right liberals did not differ significantly on war

support at both T1 and T2.

The profile analysis provides exploratory findings about the ideological landscape in China. While the official socialist ideology divides ordinary Chinese into left authoritarians and right liberals, right authoritarians and left liberals also exist in China along the same chasm in the U.S. and Europe. Although profile analysis is not as accurate as linear regressions and path analyses because of the loss of information by artificially separating groups using continuous variables (especially the within-group variances of RWA and SDO), it offers additional evidence to our findings.

Discussion

Past research in psychology has demonstrated positive effects of RWA and SDO on hostile attitudes toward outgroups, including the use of military force. Van Hiel's (2020) meta-analyses, for instance, indicate that both RWA and SDO have similarly positive effects on aggressive tendencies. Even when there are differences between RWA and SDO in their relationships with war support (McFarland, 2005) and prosocial versus antisocial tendencies (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Ludeke et al., 2016), they differ only in causal mechanisms and effect sizes, rather than in their directions—the impacts of RWA and SDO on social attitudes are similarly *positive*. However, most of these studies were conducted in the U.S. and Europe, with little work outside the West (Gries & Yam, 2020). In the case of China with a different political context, our study presents the opposite effects of RWA and SDO. Through two-wave online surveys, we showed that RWA and SDO exert opposite effects in China in predicting militant attitudes.

While the influence of RWA is consistent with what the literature finds in the U.S. and Europe, the effect of SDO differs, suggesting that a *lethal union* of RWA and SDO does not hold up in a different context (Alteyemer, 1998). We argue that socialist ideology in China tends to tear the union apart.

One caveat is that along with their opposite functions, the correlation coefficients between RWA and SDO were still positive in this study, just as in previous research (e.g., .21 in Tan et al., 2016; .47 to .55 in Zhai et al., 2021; and .17 to .32 in our previous research). One explanation is that there can be two coexistent mechanisms behind the RWA-SDO alignment. The first mechanism is the underlying psychological motivations that unify RWA and SDO. The mechanism has been found across different countries, leading to a positive association between RWA and SDO (Jost et al., 2003). The second mechanism, in contrast, is context-dependent and driven by macro-level political ideologies. In the U.S. and Western Europe, the competition between liberal and conservative parties unifies RWA and SDO. In China, however, the CPC's socialist ideology emphasizing authoritarianism and egalitarianism drives RWA and SDO apart. Thus, the two coexistent mechanisms complicate the relationship between RWA and SDO in China, potentially working in opposite directions. This can also explain why social attitudes are less "constrained" to a one-dimensional ideological spectrum in China compared to North America and Europe (Pan & Xu, 2018; Wu, 2023). Nevertheless, whether there can be two opposite mechanisms is a question that needs to be validated in future studies.

Furthermore, we found that the effect of SDO on war support is reciprocal in cross-

lagged analysis. Although RWA and SDO have been regarded as personality dispositions stable across time in the early literature (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998), recent research suggests that RWA and SDO are both ideological-attitudinal dimensions subject to change and influenced by priming methods and situational conditions (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). In an empirical study, for example, Sibley and Liu (2010) found that while SDO influenced attitudes toward social inequality in New Zealand, the causal effects were reciprocal. Our results show a similar pattern.[4]

These findings expand our understanding of Duckitt's (2001) Dual Process Model and his fourfold typology of ideologies. Duckitt analyzed the relationships between different combinations of RWA/SDO and macro-level ideologies. However, much of the empirical research on DPM have only examined the tension between liberalism and conservatism, which constitutes merely half of the typology situated in the context of liberal democracies (see the review, Duckitt & Sibley, 2016). Complementing previous works, our results provide additional evidence of Duckitt's fourfold typology, with a focus on the tension between socialism (high RWA/low SDO) and libertarianism (low RWA/high SDO). Our case study of China helps contribute to a complete picture about the relationships between macro-level and micro-level ideologies.

Our findings have the potential to be generalized beyond China. Anecdotal evidence suggests that our results represent the case of communist and post-communist societies. When a society is or was dominated by an authoritarian party whose

[4] Yet, whether the Chinese respondents' attitudes toward the U.S. are based on social inequality or out-group attitudes is still debatable. Qualitative evidence suggests that Chinese liberal intellectuals see the U.S. as a model of free-market capitalism, which increases their tolerance of inequality (Lin, 2022). Future research should examine what the attitudes toward the U.S. are really about and their relationships with social inequality.

legitimacy relies upon a symbolic egalitarian brand—which has been common among communist and post-communist regimes, one can reasonably assume that their public is likely to be divided between regime loyalists with high RWA and low SDO, and regime critics with low RWA and high SDO. Previous empirical research indirectly supports this possibility: in post-communist societies such as Russia (McFarland, 1992), Poland (Duriez et al., 2005; Van Hiel & Kossowska, 2003), and Ukraine (Van Hiel & Kossowska, 2003), the authoritarian personality (high RWA) is correlated with support for state intervention in the economy (low SDO). On the contrary, authoritarianism in the U.S. and Europe is characteristic of those against state intervention (Azevedo et al., 2019). To generalize our findings beyond China, further cross-national research is needed to understand the functions of RWA and SDO in communist and post-communist societies.

This study has several limitations. First, we did not use a direct measure of self-identified ideology. However, the decision is made deliberately. Specifically in the context of China, the conventional self-identified measurement of ideology has been criticized for the lack of a collectively shared understanding of the left-right labels (Ma & Lewis, 2020; Wu, 2023). By trial and error, we included an item of self-identified ideology in our survey, whose results are shown in Appendix. It shows that although self-identified ideology was significantly correlated with war support, it predicted war support with low effects (see Appendix, Table A1, A2). In contrast, the measurement of RWA and SDO theoretically capture the two key components of ideology (Satherley et al., 2021) and empirically show good predictive power toward war support.

Second, although we proposed the role of macro-level ideologies in China in shaping micro-level ideologies such as RWA and SDO, we did not have direct measurements of free-market belief. Future studies should investigate the mechanism among SDO, views of the U.S. and those of free-market capitalism.

Third, the measurements of RWA and SDO only include some items selected from Huang's (2007) Chinese version, potentially limiting the generalizability of our findings. Following earlier literatures, it assumes that RWA and SDO are one-dimensional (Alteyemer, 1996; Pratto et al., 1994). However, recent research has suggested that there can be sub-dimensions underlying RWA and SDO. RWA has been shown to have a triad structure with traditionalism, openness, and autonomy (Huang, 2007), or another triad one with authoritarianism, conservatism, and traditionalism (Duckitt and Bizumic, 2013). In this study, we included only the pro-trait items, with a focus on RWA's traditionalism dimension. Besides, the internal consistency of the selected RWA items was relatively lower than the conventional threshold (T1: $\alpha = .61$, $\omega = 0.64$; T2: $\alpha = .68$, $\omega = 0.69$). Future studies should employ the full RWA scale (or other authoritarianism measurements) to replicate our results.

Recent works have also suggested that SDO is dual-dimensional (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Ho et al., 2015; Wollast et al., 2023). For example, Ho and colleagues constructed the new SDO_7 scale, consisting of two theoretically grounded sub-scales, group-based dominance (SDO-D) and group-based inequality (SDO-E). Our pro-trait items, drawn from Huang (2007) and adapted from SDO_6, should correspond to the dominance dimension of SDO_7. Although having not fully tested it yet, we speculate that

theoretically both dominance and inequality dimensions of SDO_7 are likely to be the antitheses of socialist ideology. Future studies should use the newly developed scales to examine the relationship between sub-dimensions of SDO and militant attitudes in China.

Fourth, our study is situated in the specific context of a foreign war, which can limit the generalizability of our findings. The results can be different from those in previous literature focusing on a war involving one's own nation (e.g., McFarland, 2005). The distance of war can influence participants' attitudes as well as the effects of psychological variables, which has not been examined in this article. Besides, whether one's own nation is involved (or likely to be involved) can also affect an individual's perception and support for the conflict based on the cost-benefit analysis. Future studies should explore and rule out the potentially confounding effect of the distance of war.

Fifth, we employed an online survey method, of which highly educated respondents overrepresented the sample. Future studies are needed to examine if our findings can still hold among the less educated.

Conclusion

Past theories in political psychology have demonstrated that RWA and SDO are two psychological components of political conservatism, both of which positively affect out-group hostility. In contrast, the current research shows the opposite effects of these two ideological beliefs. In China, the state holds authoritarian and egalitarian ethos simultaneously, which leads to a different landscape of ideological beliefs. Our two-

wave online surveys show that although RWA (measured by the traditionalism subscale) and SDO (measured by the dominance subscale) were positively correlated, they exerted opposite effects when predicting support for Russia's war in Ukraine in 2022. While RWA predicted war support positively, SDO did so negatively. Our results indicate that the alliance between RWA and SDO is likely premised upon the political context of liberal democracies in Western Europe and North America. The context of China with its dominant socialist ideology can tear the *lethal union* apart.

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