

**An Asian Barometer Survey Conference on
How East Asians View the Rise of China**

**Panel I: Are East Asians Anticipating and Welcoming the
Rise of China?**

[Paper 2]

How Do Americans View the Rise of China?

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Introduction

The rise of China is one of the most striking phenomena in international relations today.¹ Yet, there remains an equally striking lack of consensus about the implications of China's rise.² One of the debates dwells on different perceptions of whether China will seek to challenge the United States and dominate Asian regional politics.³ Some argue that China has no intention to become a hegemonic power in either Asia or the world, and rather, the primary concern for China now is to maintain social stability while continue developing economy.⁴ For the past decade, Chinese leaders have proclaimed and reiterated a non-revisionist policy in multiple occasions.⁵ They position China as a cooperative partner to the existing international order, and stress that China is a responsible stakeholder of the international society.⁶

Others, however, maintain that China will not be content to play "second fiddle" to the United States in Asia and will, over time, pursue a more assertive role and strive for great power status.⁷ Just as other great powers have behaved throughout history, China will aspire to exercise control over its own "sphere of influence", and will not hesitate using coercive means if necessary.⁸ Prominent American scholar John Mearsheimer has pointed out: "A wealthy China would not be a status quo power but an aggressive state determined to achieve regional hegemony"⁹ This viewpoint is widely shared in the United States and many Americans distrust the Chinese official promulgation regarding China's peaceful rise.¹⁰ Serious doubts have

¹ Charles Glaser. (2011). Will China's Rise Lead to War - Why Realism does Not Mean Pessimism. *Foreign Affairs* 90, pp. 80-84; M. Taylor Fravel. (2010). International Relations Theory and China's Rise: Assessing China's Potential for Territorial Expansion. *International Studies Review*, p. 505; C. Fred Bergsten. (2008). *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities*. United Book Press; Shaun Breslin. (2009). Understanding China's Regional Rise: Interpretations, Identities and Implications. *International Affairs* 85(4), pp.817-818; Jeffrey W. Legro. (2005). *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order*. NY: Cornell University Press.

² John J. Mearsheimer. (2006). China's Unpeaceful Rise. *Current History* 105(690), pp. 160-2; Charles Krauthammer. (1995). Why We Must Contain China. *Time*; Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro. (1997). *The Coming Conflict with China*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

³ Steven W. Mosher. (2000). *Hegemon: China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World*. San Francisco: Encounter Books.

⁴ Wen Jiabao. Report on the Work of the Government. The Fifth Session of the Eleventh National People's Congress on March 5, 2012. Premier of the State Council. pp. 1-8; Aaron L. Friedberg. (2005). The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable? *International Security* 30(2), pp. 7-8.

⁵ The White Book of China's Peaceful Development Road, Information Office of the State Council. Dec. 22, 2005. http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2005-12/22/content_3954937.htm, accessed September 26, 2012.

⁶ Yang Jiechi. Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs. November 30, 2009. <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/news/2009/11-30/1991193.shtml>, accessed September 28, 2012.

⁷ Elizabeth C. Economy. (2010). The Game Changer: Coping with China's Foreign Policy Revolution. *Foreign Affairs* 89(6), p. 142.

⁸ Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt; Andrew Small. (2008). China's New Dictatorship Diplomacy-Is Beijing Parting with Pariahs, *Foreign Affairs* 87(1), pp. 38-40.

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton. p.402.

¹⁰ Yong Deng. (2009). China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations. *Asia Policy* 8(1), p. 174.

been cast on whether China's non-revisionist pronouncement is only designed to camouflage the true revisionist ambition, and whether China can be trusted as a responsible great power given the non-democratic political system.¹¹

In addition to the above debate, there is a popular belief that China's national capability, up to now, lags behind the United States so much and that prevents China from becoming an effective competitor.¹² The U.S. government needs not concerning about China's intention so long as the U.S. military supremacy is assured.¹³ To bear out this viewpoint, we have to make two assumptions. First, China does not rise yet, and whether it will rise remains a big question.¹⁴ Second, the United States can always resort to its military advantage and make it fungible to other dimensions, such as economic, political, or cultural areas.¹⁵ Both are highly contentious, and to what extent Americans agree with these assumptions is still unknown.

The above discussion has delineated three different perspectives about how Americans perceive and understand the rise of China. Three focal points can be summarized to distinguish one from the others. The first issue has to do with whether Americans recognize the rise of China now. The second issue touches upon how Americans perceive China's intention if they agree that China has risen or will rise soon. The third issue concerns about whether Americans think that the military power can be fungible to other dimensions in international politics. In this paper, we are going to unravel these cognitive questions regarding China's rise through analysis of public opinion data. We will offer comprehensive explanations of how American view China's rise, as well as theoretical implications to the theory of great power politics.

What's at Stake in Cognitive Factors?

In western democracies, public opinion greatly influences the government's decision making.¹⁶ Particularly for foreign policy, major decisions are always related to the matters of war and peace, and therefore, serious concerns will be paid to the rationale and consequence of these decisions.¹⁷ In this scenario, all the citizens are stakeholders and their willingness to support is vital to the success of foreign policy.

11 J. Wuthnow, X. Li, et al. (2012). Diverse Multilateralism: Four Strategies in China's Multilateral Diplomacy. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, p. 270.

12 S Lijun. (1999). China and the United States: Asymmetrical Strategic Partners. *The Washington Quarterly* 22(3), p.155.

13 I. Eland. (2003). *Is Chinese Military Modernization a Threat to the United States?*. Cato Institute.

14 J. Yue. (2008). Peaceful Rise of China: Myth or Reality? *International Politics* 45(4), p. 439.

15 R. K. Betts. (1993). Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War. *International Security*, p. 43.

16 S. B. Hobolt and R. Klemmensen. (2005). Responsive Government? Public Opinion and Government Policy Preferences in Britain and Denmark. *Political Studies* 53(2), p. 379; L. R. Jacobs. (1992). The Recoil Effect: Public Opinion and Policymaking in the US and Britain. *Comparative Politics*, p.199.

17 P. J. Powlick and A. Z. Katz. (1998). Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus. *Mershon International Studies Review* 42(1), p. 29.

For example, audience cost theory states that decision makers in democracies, in order to achieve their political interests, would take highly of public opinion and make necessary adjustment.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the general public will also base on their interests to influence foreign policy.¹⁹ Public opinion thus plays a critical factor for the government to evaluate pros and cons from the perspective of national interests as well as political calculations. It is critical to understand how Americans perceive and understand the rise of China's since these opinions shape U.S. grand strategy toward China and the world.

Current literature has provided plenty of discussions on how cognitive factors affect strategic interaction in international politics.²⁰ However, these works seldom propose convincing evidence to validate their cognitive assumptions. For instance, one important cognitive assumption of the neo-realist paradigm states that the incumbent power would perceive the increase of rising power's capability as definitive threat.²¹ Realists constantly apply such a working assumption to analysis of international politics across different time and place. But how come the perception would be the same for the incumbent state, given the different spatiotemporal conditions, such as scale of war, level of technology, conception of national interests, and credibility of multilateral mechanisms? As a matter of fact, the rise of neo-liberalism in 1970s has already disclosed this problem by proposing that economic interests under certain circumstances might be the focal point of great power politics.²² This means, economic issues could overshadow security concerns and become the spotlight.²³ It is possible that minor powers can use issue-linkage to gain significant strength in negotiation with major powers.²⁴ This example demonstrates that low politics (economic) could be a more pressing issue than high politics (military) and that military superiority is not always fungible to the advantage of other dimensions. We should not treat the cognitive assumptions as invariant and self-evident, but rather, they are a function of time and place, always changing and requiring to be scientifically measured through rigorous surveys.

Surprisingly, the similar problem also exists in constructivist literature, the main

¹⁸ M. A. Baum. (2004). Going Private Public Opinion, Presidential Rhetoric, and the Domestic Politics of Audience Costs in US Foreign Policy Crises. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(5), p. 604.

¹⁹ T. Risse-Kappen. (1991). Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies. *World Politics* 43(4), p. 480.

²⁰ R. Jervis. (1976). *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton University Press.

²¹ C. Pan. (2004). The "China Threat" in American Self-Imagination: the Discursive Construction of Other as Power Politics. *Alternatives*, p. 315.

²² S. G. Tarrow. (2011). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

²³ B. Hindess. (1998). Neo-liberalism and the National Economy. *Governing Australia: Studies in Contemporary Rationalities of Government*, p. 210.

²⁴ U. Lindell and S. Persson. (1986). The Paradox of Weak State Power: a Research and Literature Overview. *Cooperation and Conflict* 21(2), p. 79.

IR paradigm that emphasizes psychological and sociological explanations. Since 1980s, there have been many strains of constructivist works which apply the cognitive factor to explain international politics. Some works illustrate the cognitive factor as realists describe, but more works stress that neither major nor minor states would perceive the status quo of international order as Hobbesian anarchy. Nonetheless, no systemic efforts were made to measure state actor's perception and understanding of international events in reality. Lacking empirical support, the cognitive explanation offered by constructivists, paradoxically, suffers from the same shortcoming as neo-realist or neo-liberalist argument.

In view of this problem, we intend to make a contribution by measuring how Americans view the rise of China. With such information, we can capture the malleable cognitive factor in international politics, and objectively evaluate which IR paradigms have more convincing assumptions that match the reality. We firmly believe that a pertinent analysis of China's rise can only be proceeded with accurate cognitive information. Otherwise, logical gaps always exist between assumptions and conclusions for all three major paradigms in international relations.

Measuring How American View the Rise of China

In American politics, many studies in political communication dedicate to finding out how news media and interpersonal networks shape American public opinion. These works are mostly oriented to domestic issues, but few pioneering works have been discovered that national images of foreign countries are greatly influenced by media agenda setting.²⁵ Similar studies also appeared in management science, and these works investigated how foreign nation's images are shaped or varied through analyzing consumer's attitude toward imported goods.²⁶

Previous surveys about China's image in America have been done by many academic or non-academic institutes, including Committee of 100,²⁷ PEW,²⁸ PIPA,²⁹

²⁵ J. B. Manheim and R. B. Albritton. (1984). Changing National Images: International Public Relations and Media Agenda Setting. *American Political Science Review* 78(3), pp. 641-657.

²⁶ J. P. Bannister and J. A. Saunders. (1978). UK Consumers' Attitudes Towards Imports: The Measurement of National Stereotype Image. *European Journal of Marketing* 12(8), pp. 562-570; Akira Nagashima. (1970). A Comparison of U.S. and Japanese Attitudes Toward Foreign Products. *Journal of Marketing* 34(1), pp. 68-74.

²⁷ The Committee of 100 is an international, non-profit, non-partisan membership organization that brings a Chinese American perspective to issues concerning Asian Americans and U.S.-China relations. Our organization draws upon the collective experience, knowledge and resources of our members - Chinese Americans who have achieved prominence in a variety of fields and work in partnership towards our mission.

²⁸ The Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It does not take positions on policy issues. Its work is carried out by these seven projects.

²⁹ The Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) studies public opinion on international issues. PIPA is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) and the Center for International and

Gallop, and CNN. However, these surveys only contain one or two questions that tap into the thermometer measure. Lacking other information, scholars are not able to utilize these surveys to investigate other related topics, such as the rise of China. Analysis of these surveys always stays at the descriptive level and not much explanatory work can be done.

To achieve the analytical purpose regarding the rise of China, Institute of Arts and Humanities in Shanghai Jiao-tong University collaborated with the China Center in Duke University to conduct “Americans’ Attitudes toward China Survey” (AACCS) in 2010. This is one of the few national PPS (probability proportional to size) surveys initiated by Chinese academic unit in the United States. The questionnaire design invited U.S. and Chinese experts of political science, communication, and public opinion to participate. The survey comprises 84 questions in three sections: perception of China, media perception, and demographics, and it was executed by the Center for Survey Research (CSR), Indiana University, between June 23, 2010 and August 29, 2010. The average interview length was 24.2 minutes. Data were collected by telephone using the University of California Computer-Assisted Survey Methods software (CASES 5.4) on-site at the CSR telephone interviewing facilities.

National Landline RDD sample was used in the study. The telephone numbers were randomly generated using the Genesys list-assisted method. This method allows for unpublished numbers and new listings to be included in the sample. After selecting a random sample of telephone numbers, the numbers were matched to a database of business and non-working numbers. All matches were subsequently purged from the original sample. The sample encompassed the continental United States, excluding Alaska and Hawaii. At each residential telephone number we randomly selected a respondent from all household members age 18 or older.

All cases confirmed to be eligible were called up to 24 times, except in cases of respondent refusal or insufficient time before the end of the study. Cases with unknown eligibility (persistent no answers or answering devices unknown to belong to residences) were called a minimum of 8 times, with calls made during the morning, afternoon, evening, and weekend. Interviewers attempted to convert each refusal at least twice, once at the first instance of refusal and again a few days later.

The final sample (N=810) includes 402 men and 404 women, their ages range from 18 to 97, and their average age is 56.88. In terms of education level, 18 are less than high school, 182 are high School, 238 are some college or associated degree, and 365 are bachelor degree and post-graduate degree. White or Caucasian is accounted for 84.4%, Black or African-Americans 5.8%, American Indian or Alaska Native 2.8%, and Asians 2.4%. 27.9% of them are Democrats, 31.5% Republicans, and

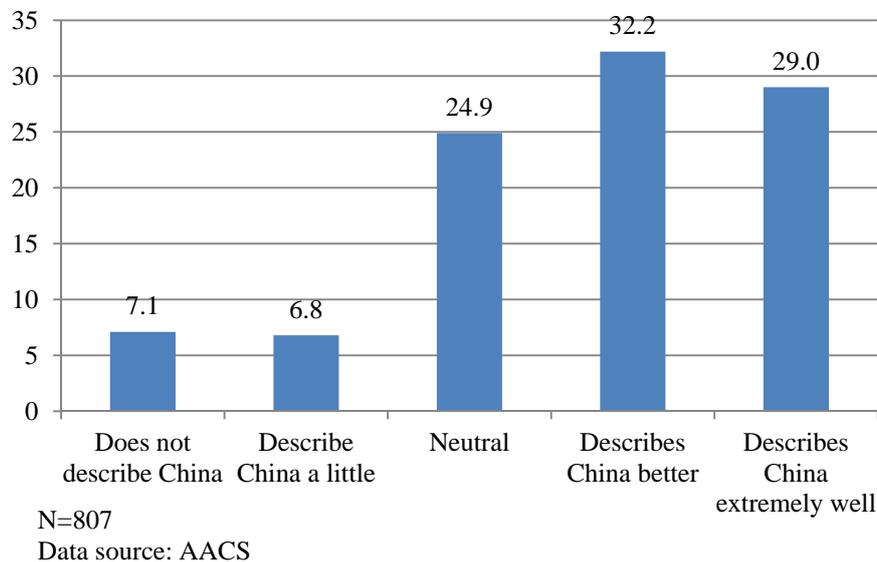
32.1% non-party.

In the following sections, we present the main findings of how American view the rise of China through analysis of the AACCS survey, including whether American recognize China’s rise, economic and political factors in Sino-American relationship, historical and strategic factors in Sino-American relationship, China as a political model, social interaction and image of China, and whether American anticipate and welcome the rise of China.

Do American People Recognize the Rise of China Now?

There is no doubt that China has successfully elevated its national capability for the past two decades. But whether Americans regard China’s development enough to threaten U.S. is unknown. Since this perception reflects the current mindset of the American public and it might determine how U.S. interacts with China, we first investigate whether Americans recognize the rise of China now and whether they think China’s rise in positive or negative terms. The exact wording of the first question is “China has been influential in world politics” and a five-point likert scale is applied.

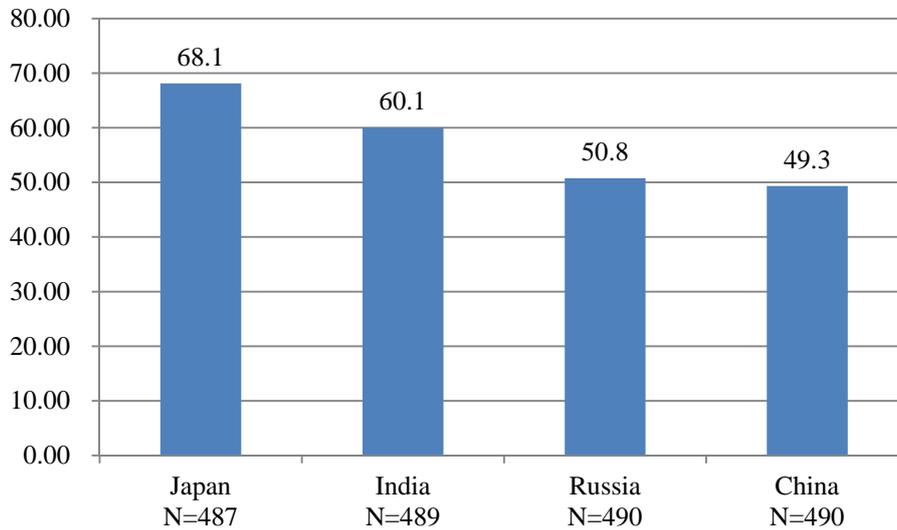
Figure 1 China Has Been Influential in World Politics



As Figure 1 presents, 61.2% of American agree with the statement that “China has been influential in world politics”, 24.9% show a neutral attitude, and 13.9% do not think China very influential. Apparently the majority of Americans do recognize the rise of China in world politics. But whether they perceive it positively or negatively? We explore this issue by comparing a set of feeling-thermometer questions toward regional powers including Japan, India, Russia, and China. The scale

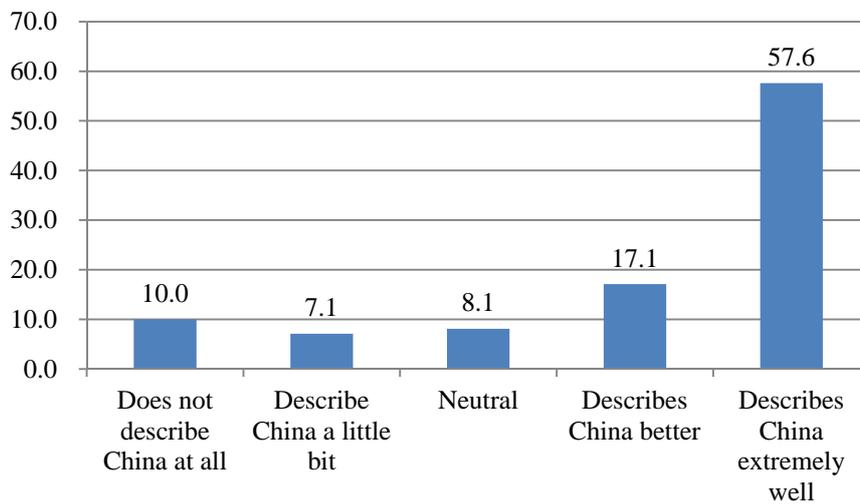
of the feeling thermometer ranges from 0 to 100 degree, and the dividing line for positive or negative response set to 50.

Figure 2 Thermometer Measure of Asian Major Powers Among Those Who Recognize China’s Rise



Data source: AACS

Figure 3 Whether the statement “China has been dodging responsibility in the world” describe China well?



N=491

Data source: AACS

As Figure 2 shows, among those Americans who recognize the rise of China, they show the lowest feeling evaluation toward China (49.33) compared with Japan (68.14), India (60.05), and Russia (50.79), and we have ruled out the order effect by randomizing the sequence of the questions for the four countries. This finding

indicates that Americans do not like the rise of China very much.³⁰ The same result also appears in another related question: “do you think the following statement describing China well--China has been dodging responsibility in the world”. The finding is reported in Figure 3, and it shows that 57.6% Americans strongly agree that China is dodging responsibility in the world, and the number of “agree” and “strongly agree” combined increases to 74.7%. This reinforces our conclusion that Americans generally do not view the rise of China in a positive way.

A clear conclusion can be summarized from the above findings. Americans do recognize the fact that China is rising, but they do not welcome it, nor do they think China as a responsible rising power. While China’s thermometer measure is just slightly below 50 degree and it is very close to the neutral evaluation, the lowest ranking signals an alarm that Americans might even dislike China more than Russia, a long-term rivalry since World War II.

Economic and Political Factors on China’s Image

From neorealist and neo-liberalist perspectives, the political and economic relationship between China and U.S. is more competitive than collaborative in nature. Specifically in great power politics, China’s leapfrogging development in economic and political spheres implies the relative loss of U.S. advantage in international politics. In contrast, the constructivist viewpoint might believe that China and U.S. could be strong allies regardless of who benefits more from each other. For the possible influence of economic factors on American’s attitude towards China, we explore by two questions as follows: “to the best of your knowledge, do you think the U.S. loans more money to China or that China loans more money to the U.S.?” and “whose economy do you think would be harmed more if the US completely broke off trade relations with China, the Chinese economy, or the US economy?”

As shown in the Table 1, only 25.7% Americans think “U.S. loans more to China”, and 74.3% think “China loans more or equal to U.S”. Furthermore, we asked respondents to evaluate the relative impact if the US completely broke off trade relations with China. As Table1 makes evident, 39.3% Americans think “Chinese economy hurts more”, and 60.7% of American think “US economy hurts more”. The two findings suggest that Americans not only recognize the importance of China to their economy, but also realize that U.S. now depends more on China instead of vice versa.

Does this cognitive understanding affect American’s attitude to China? We conduct an ANOVA test and find those who believe US hurts more in economy tend

³⁰ If all the samples is included regardless whether the respondent recognizes China’s rise, the result remain the same that Americans like Japan first, India the second, and then Russia and China.

to have higher thermometer measure toward China (50.1 vs. 44.0) than those who believe China hurts more. This means that economic factor does affect how Americans view China. Specifically, those who believe U.S. is more vulnerable tend to have a higher thermometer measure. So when Americans believe that their economic interest is at stake, they would adjust their perception of China in a more positive direction because of economic dependency.

TABLE 1 Economic Factors on China’s Image in America

Item label	China Depends on U.S.	U.S. Depends on China
loans (N=781)	U.S. loans more money to China 25.7% (48.8)	China loans more money to U.S. 74.3% (47.6)
harm (N=791)	Chinese economy hurts more 39.3% (44.0*)	U.S. economy hurts more 60.7% (50.1*)

Entry is the percentage of Americans that believe China depends more on U.S. economically or vice versa. The numbers in the parentheses are China’s thermometer measure for Americans. An asterisk will be marked if the difference is significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Data source: AACS

For the possible influence of political factors on American’s attitude towards China, we explore by American’s attitude on procedural or substantive democracy. Past studies show that American are more leaning to the idea of procedural democracy, but East Asians, on the other hand, possess a strong tradition of substantive democracy. Here we concern if Americans hold more positive attitude toward substantive democracy, would this ideational commonality generate warmer feeling on China?

Table 2 shows only 26.2% American approved “a competent government that takes people’s interests into consideration, regardless of how it came into power”, and 73.8% American approved “fair, public, regular and competitive elections to choose government leaders”. Similarly, Table 2 also shows 37.4% American approved “selecting political leaders based on their experience, competence, and virtue, rather than popular vote”, and 62.6% American approved “selecting political leaders through competitive elections”. It confirms that most Americans are prone to procedural democracy. Furthermore, by ANOVA, we find no significant difference on China’s thermometer measure irrespective of how they understand democracy.

TABLE 2 Political Factors on China’s Image in America

Item label	Substantive Democracy	Procedural Democracy
gov1	A competent government that takes people’s interests into	Fair, public, regular and competitive elections to choose

	consideration	government leaders
(N=810)	26.2% (45.9)	73.8% (48.7)
gov5	Selecting political leaders based on their experience, competence, and virtue	Selecting political leaders through competitive elections
(N=802)	37.4% (47.5)	62.6% (48.4)

Entry is the percentage of Americans that understand democracy in substantive or procedural terms. The numbers in the parentheses are China's thermometer measure for Americans. An asterisk will be marked if the difference is significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Data source: AACS

In sum, we found that economic factors might be more relevant to China's image in America. Our finding discovers that China's image might vary in accord with how much U.S. depends on China economically. The higher the U.S. economic dependency on China, the better the China's image in the eyes of Americans.

Historical and Strategic Factors on China's Image

Historical factors in Sino-American relationship can be traced back to World War II and the subsequent U.S. involvement in Chinese civil war between Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party. As more than sixty years has passed, U.S. now has normalized its relationship with China but two sensitive issues still remain, which are the sovereignty disputes of Taiwan and Tibet. Despite no formal recognition, the U.S. government tends to regard both political entities as independent states and gives them special political status when interacting with them. Such historical factors might influence how Americans perceive China's image. For those who think Taiwan and Tibet as independent states, they might have more negative view on China since China firmly rejects the sovereignty of Taiwan and Tibet. In the AACS survey, the two questions about Taiwan and Tibet are worded as "in your opinion, is Taiwan an independent country or part of China?" and "in your opinion, is Tibet an independent country or part of China?"

As Table 3 reports, 77.0% Americans regard Taiwan as an independent state and the number is 60.2% for the Tibetan case. This shows that Americans do have different historical views regarding the sovereignty issues of Taiwan and Tibet. Nevertheless, a further ANOVA test indicates that the difference of such historical view does not affect American's perception of China in terms of thermometer measures.

TABLE 3 Historical Factors on China's Image in America

Item label	Agree with China	Differ from China
taiwc	Taiwan is a part of China	Taiwan is an independent state

(N=786)	23.0% (48.3)	77.0% (47.9)
tibc	Tibet is a part of China	Tibet is an independent state
(N=778)	39.8% (48.7)	60.2% (48.2)

Entry is the percentage of Americans that regard Taiwan or Tibet as a part of China or an independent state. The numbers in the parentheses are China's thermometer measure for Americans. An asterisk will be marked if the difference is significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Data source: AACS

We turn to the strategic dimension that includes military and economic spheres. These factors are associated with U.S. national interests, such as military alliance or economic partnership. We want to know whether these factors would affect how Americans think of China's image. In the military sphere, the greatest choice for Americans is whether they view China as an enemy or ally. In the AACS survey, this question is worded as "do you consider China an enemy of the United States, a weak enemy of the United States, neutral, a weak ally, or a strong ally of the United States?" Surprisingly, as Table 4 shows, American people do not really think of China as their enemy since 42.6% regard China as an ally and only 27.6% regard China as an enemy. Most Americans view China as a weak ally (37.1%) or a neutral state (29.9%). However, for those who think China as an enemy, their thermometer measure for China is extremely low (31.5 and 39.5) comparing to those who think China as a neutral state (53.4) or an ally (52.8 and 52.9). This demonstrates how dominant the strategic factor in military sphere affects American's view about China. In a nutshell, two-thirds of Americans do not view China as an enemy, but once they do think so, their view will become extremely negative.

TABLE 4 Strategic Factor in Military Sphere on China's Image in America

	Percentage	Thermometer Measure
Strong enemy	5.5%	31.5
Weak enemy	37.1%	39.5
Neutral	29.9%	53.4
Weak Ally	11.0%	52.8
Strong Ally	16.6%	52.9

Entry is the percentage of Americans that believe China is an enemy or an ally to U.S. The unit of thermometer measure ranges from 0 to 100 degree.

Data source: AACS

The trade problem has become an important strategic issue in international politics today. Given the destructive nature of large-scale war, the chance of applying military measures to achieve national interests has greatly reduced. Particularly in the

globalization era, the importance of international trade has become the issue of national security and many domestic crises around the world are associated with the trade problems. Therefore, we apply the following two questions regarding the trade issue to investigate how economic strategic factors affect American’s view about China’s national image:

“In deciding U.S. policies toward China, how much priority should be given to each of the following?

<prior1> Increase the trade between the U.S. and China.

<prior2> Promote fair trade between the U.S. and China.

Should this be given extremely high priority, high priority, moderate priority, low priority, or no priority at all?”

TABLE 5 Strategic Factor in Economic Sphere on China’s Image in America

Item label	Low Importance of China	High Importance of China
priori1 (N=806)	Increasing the trade between U.S. and China has moderate (41.1%), low, or no priority 70.6% (50.6*)	Increasing the trade between U.S. and China has high or extremely high priority 29.4% (46.9*)
priori2 (N=806)	Promoting fair trade between U.S. and China has moderate, low, or no priority 43.4% (49.1*)	Promoting fair trade between U.S. and China has high or extremely high priority 56.6% (46.6*)

Entry is the percentage of Americans that regard China in different levels of strategic importance in economic sphere. The numbers in the parentheses are China’s thermometer measure for Americans. An asterisk will be marked if the difference is significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Data source: AACS

To simplify the discussion, we combine the answers of “extremely high priority” and “high priority” to signify the high strategic importance of China in respondent’s view, and we combine the rest answers to indicate low strategic importance. We report the result in Table 5. Generally speaking, American people do not think that the increase of trade between U.S. and China needs to be prioritized (most people are neutral). Rather, they think the priority should be put on the promotion of fair trade, and this might be related to the huge U.S.-China trade deficit. So the focal point for American public is not the volume of the trade, but whether U.S. can maintain a balanced trade with China. However, we do find that those who believe high importance of China strategically, they tend to have lower thermometer measures (46.9 vs. 50.6, 46.6 vs. 49.1). This result is similar to the previous finding that

Americans tend to dislike China if they are aware that U.S. has great interest conflict with China, in military as well as economic sphere.

China's Political Particularism

China's official position toward democracy is that China is very unique and western liberal democracy does not fit the Chinese society, and rather, China will pursue a particular democratic system under the guidance of socialism with Chinese characteristics. While most western scholars view this claim as official propaganda instead of something meaningful, the rapid development of Chinese economy has brought some interest about whether China's experience can provide an effective model for other developing countries.³¹ This brings out two different perspectives regarding Chinese future political development. The first argues that there is nothing particular about China. Just as what other emerging democracies have gone through, China's rapid modernization eventually will trigger the democratization process. The second perspective adopts a more pessimistic view that China does have its own peculiarity, and therefore, there is little chance that its political system will go through the democratization process as the modernization theory predicts in the foreseeable future.

To see which perspective is popular in the American society, we apply the question "how well the statement that China has a political system that serves the needs of its people describe China?" As Table 6 shows, 56.0% Americans do agree with Chinese particularism, and only 44.0% believe that China does not differ from other developing countries in its democratic prospect. Among those who think China is unique, their thermometer measure is 46.3, significantly lower than those who do not concur with Chinese particularism (50.0). This indicates that China's image would be better if Americans simply view China one of developing countries in the modernization process, but if they think China as unique and no previous example is applicable, the perception of China's image would be more negative.

Another question that taps into the similar issue is asking respondents whether China will become more democratic and responsive to its people in the next ten years. As Table 6 shows, 72.2% Americans think that China will remain the same or will not become more democratic and responsive to its people, and only 27.8% have an optimistic evaluation. Given the fact that the trend of modernization is hardly reversible, the pessimistic evaluation reflects the belief that China is capable to prevent democratization while pursue modernization. This is another way to say Chinese particularism. Furthermore, we found that those who believe China will not

³¹ Zheng Yongnian. (2010). *China Model: Experience and Difficulties*. Zhejiang: Zhejiang People's Publishing House.

become more democratic and responsive have even lower thermometer measures (44.6), 12 degree lower than those who give a positive evaluation to the prospect of China’s democratization (56.6).

TABLE 6 Chinese Particularism and China’s Image in America

Item label	China does not differ from others	Chinese Particularism
cdes5 (N=795)	China does not have a political system that serves the needs of its people. 44.0% (50.0*)	China has a political system that serves the needs of its people. 56.0% (46.3*)
10dem (N=799)	China will become more democratic and responsive to its people 27.8% (56.6*)	China will stay the same (59.6%) or will not become more democratic and responsive to its people 72.2% (44.6*)

Entry is the percentage of Americans that believe or not believe China is unique and have a particular political system exclusively serving their own needs. The numbers in the parentheses are China’s thermometer measure for Americans. An asterisk will be marked if the difference is significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Data source: AACS

Overall, more Americans have a pessimistic view about Chinese democracy in the future, and China’s image in their eyes tends to be more negative. However, once they are willing to regard China as a regular developing state, their perception of China becomes much more positive.

Can Social Interaction Promote the Image of China?

Social capital is an important theoretical concept in sociology and political science to explain how democratic citizenship can be built and developed. One of the key components of social capital is networking, since people develop interpersonal trust, common belief and values, and sense of belonging through frequent social interaction. There are many forms of social interaction. Face to face contact and acquiring information through media are two common ways. The former interaction is more intense if such a contact requires heavy cost, such as traveling to China from the U.S. continent, and the latter is easier but less intense, such as online surfing for news about China. The conventional wisdom believes that social interaction would bring understanding and compassion, and therefore, it can increase trust and tolerance. Applying this viewpoint, we can test whether China’s national image is higher for those who have frequent social interaction with China in America.

In the AACS survey, there are two questions specifically designed to measure social interaction with China. One is asking respondents “have you ever visited mainland China?”, and the other is asking respondents “how interested are you in

news about China?” Since the latter is much easier, we dichotomize the latter answer with a tougher cutoff point by hardly interested vs. somewhat/very interested. As Table 7 shows, only 7.9% American have visited China, but their thermometer measure is much higher than those have not visited China (61.1 vs. 46.9). A Similar finding can also be found in another question: 77.3% American said that they are very interested or somewhat interested in news about China, and their perception of China is much better than those who have little interest in news about China (49.6 vs. 42.6). This finding indicates, if Americans have frequent social interaction with China, they will have a better image of China. Particularly, visiting China physically is very effective way to change American’s perception of China in a positively direction.

TABLE 7 Social Interaction and China’s Image in America

Item label	More Contact	Less Contact
visitc (N=806)	Have visited mainland China 7.9% (61.1*)	Have not visited mainland China 92.1% (46.9*)
newintc (N=806)	Very interested or somewhat interested in news about China 77.3% (49.6*)	Hardly interested in news about China 22.7% (42.6*)

Entry is the percentage of Americans that have more social interaction with China. The numbers in the parentheses are China’s thermometer measure for Americans. An asterisk will be marked if the difference is significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Data source: AACCS

Explaining China’s National Image in America

Our earlier findings show how American view the rise of China is associated with economic, strategic, particularistic, and social interaction factors. However, previous discussions do not put these factors altogether in a multivariate context and we have no idea whether these factors are still significant and which are more powerful. To achieve this analytical purpose, we include all these factors with demographic variables, such education, age, male, income, and partisan id, in a multiple regression. The dependent variable is China’s thermometer measure in America, and we recode all the covariates in accord to their variable labels.

As Table 8 reports, American’s image of China is more positive if the respondent gives higher priority to increase bilateral trade, believes that China will become more democratic, or has been visited China before. Among the three positive factors, standardized beta shows that the optimistic evaluation of China’s democratic prospect has the greatest explanatory power (0.16), and then follows by the recognition of high priority of trade (0.13) and personal visiting experiences (0.11). On the other hand,

American's image of China is more negative if the respondent regards China as an enemy, and the magnitude of standardized beta (-0.25) indicates that this is the most powerful predictor to explain China's thermometer measure. As to demographic variables, we discover that education and partisan id also significantly associate with the image of China. Americans who have higher education, younger age, or identify themselves as Democrats have better image of China, and the explanatory power of the three variables is about the same level as the three positive covariates, which all between 0.09 and 0.16 in terms of absolute values of standardized beta coefficient.

What does the result of ANONA and multiple regression tell us about China's image in America? First of all, Americans do recognize the rise of China now, but their perception of China's rise is very negative. In terms of economic and political factors, Americans are aware that U.S. depends more on China and they differs in the understanding of democracy from what China defines. Americans also have different opinions from China regarding the historical problem of the sovereignty issue in Taiwan and Tibet. But none of the above explains why American view China's rise negatively. Rather, our empirical findings suggest that the more relevant factors are strategic interest in military and economic spheres, conception of Chinese particularism, and frequency and intensity of social interaction. Strategically, Americans tend to view China as an enemy, and they care about the balance of trade instead of volume of trade. The perception that China is deemed the prime competitor and opponent of Americans contributes to the negative thinking of China's image. Such a negative image is also associated with Chinese particularism, the belief that China is so unique that the democratization process will not be able to starts despite the rapid overall modernization. More importantly, lack of understanding and interaction to the Chinese people and society further strengthens the fear or dislike of the rising power since most Americans know very little about China and some are not even interested in China at all.

What can China do to better its image to Americans? Strategically, China needs to clear the doubt that its economic and military development is geared to the pursuit of great power status. Instead, China should emphasize that a stable political reform requires China to continue its economic development, and the rise of national capability is a benign consequence. What China intends to achieve, similar to what western countries expect, is to push a steady and overall reform throughout the modernization process. The primary goal of China's rise is to fulfill domestic national goals, and the rapid increase of national capability gives China a chance to assimilate itself into the international society as a responsible member. To make such political discourses more convincing, China should be more open to the world and makes more efforts to the construction of its national image. Meanwhile, China should emphasize

its developing country status and explain the importance of incremental political reform for the future democratic prospect. If the above discourses can convince the American public and increase the optimistic view about China's democratic prospect, we believe that the image of China will be greatly improved and more Americans will view China as a sincere ally rather than an enemy in disguise.

TABLE 8 Multiple Regression of China's Image in America

Covariate	beta	s.e.	p-value	standardized beta	variable range
Economic factor					
US economy hurts more	1.46	1.65	0.38	0.03	dummy
Strategic factor					
Prioritize increasing trade	3.03	0.93	0.00	0.13	1-5
Prioritize promoting fair trade	-0.23	0.95	0.81	-0.01	1-5
China is enemy	-4.94	0.72	0.00	-0.25	1-5
Particularistic factor					
China has its own political system	-1.00	0.56	0.08	-0.06	1-5
China will be more democratic	5.91	1.37	0.00	0.16	1-3
Social interaction factor					
Have visited China	9.26	3.00	0.00	0.11	dummy
Interested in news about China	2.09	1.34	0.12	0.06	1-3
Demographic factor					
Education	3.34	1.04	0.00	0.12	1-4
Age group	-2.45	0.91	0.01	-0.09	1-4
Male	-1.42	1.67	0.40	-0.03	dummy
Income	-0.81	0.59	0.17	-0.05	1-6
Republican	-5.23	2.06	0.01	-0.10	group dummy
Independent voter	-6.65	1.92	0.00	-0.14	group dummy
Constant (Democrat)	43.75	6.72	0.00	—	—
R-squared				0.235	
N				696	

Dependent Variable: China's thermometer measure in U.S. (degree)

Data source: AACS

Conclusions

Our empirical findings has shown, among the three perspectives of China's rise mentioned in the beginning, American has already perceive the rise of China but they

worry about China's revisionist ambition and meanwhile suspect China's willingness to be a responsible great power. Also, Americans do recognize their economic vulnerability to China, and the great concern for the fair trade issue indicates that the military advantage is not easily fungible to solving economic disadvantage. The current state of American public opinion towards the rise of China cannot be accurately described by three IR paradigms per se. A more complete picture is therefore the mixture of partial theoretical claims. Neo-realists are correct in terms of American's fear about China's revisionist ambition, but this fear can be largely reduced if people possess an optimistic view about China's democratization. Neo-liberalists are correct about the salience of economic issues and the importance of trade, but they are too naïve to think that Americans would view the economic issues in terms of absolute gain rather than relative gain. Constructivists are correct about the effect of social interaction in reducing fear and mutual distrust, but they underestimate how popular the realist mindset in the American society.

What is the theoretical implication for the three IR paradigms given the fact that the cognitive reality does not resemble Hobbesian, Lockean, nor Kantian culture per se? As matter of fact, the overall picture of the findings presents a synthetic hybrid that is hard to define in current international relations theories. But relatively speaking, the major part of American's perception toward China's rise is still driven by realist's thought of great power politics, and the significant level of distrust and suspicion in China has already illuminated this point. We do see some evidence of neo-liberalist's accounts, especially how important the economic issue affect China's image. However, these impacts mostly follow the logic of relative gain, and to a great extent, the neo-liberalist explanation can be reduced to the neo-realist's account and lose its essential feature.

For constructivist's perspective, we do discover two encouraging findings that might strengthen constructivist rationale. First, perception of Chinese democratic future greatly influences whether American view the rise of China positively or negatively. This provides an explanation to why Americans tend to apply Hobbesian worldview to understand China, because the direction of Chinese political development determines how American's perception is shaped. If most Americans believe that China is on the way to achieve a certain form of democracy, this might fundamentally change the current perception. But this requires more work in the Chinese side to show what exactly the Chinese government plans in terms of political reforms and to what extent the concept of Chinese democracy can accommodate key elements of western democracy. Second, social interaction does promote positive thinking for the American public about China's rise. Particularly, exchange of visitors can bring significant improvement of how people think each other. For those

Americans who have been travelled to China, the reason of their more positive thinking is likely to associate with their first-hand experiences about the changing of China. Instead of imaging China as a never-changing autocracy, these people understand that China is evolving and there are many possibilities for China's future political development. From this point of view, the current Hobbesian perception in America public might only reflect the fact that most Americans do not really understand what is happening in China, and their fear about China's rise could be easily alleviated once they have chance to stay China and feel the vibrant of the changing society.

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