



A Comparative Survey of
DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

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Uncle Sam in the Eyes of the Chinese Citizens
Evidence from the Asian Barometer Survey in China

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Uncle Sam in the Eyes of the Chinese Citizens – Evidence from the Asian Barometer Survey in China

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines China's citizens' evaluation of the US influence with a focus on the two crucial, but contradictory forces that shape citizens' perception of foreign countries: nationalism and generalized trust. We argue that generalized trust ameliorates the derogative effect of nationalism on the perception of foreign countries by readjusting psychological hierarchy. Specifically, the notion of equality in generalized trust shrinks the perceived supremacy induced by nationalism to improve unfavorable perception of foreign countries. We hypothesize that nationalism drives citizens to negatively evaluate foreign countries, whereas generalized trust propels them to have a positive image towards foreign countries. Given that the two opposite forces work in tandem and simultaneously shape citizens' perceptions, we further categorize the Chinese into four types: *suspicious nationalist*, *trusting nationalist*, *suspicious non-nationalist*, and *trusting non-nationalist*. We further test how Chinese citizens' perceptions of the US present across the four types. Based on a nationally representative sample in China provided by the 4th wave of Asian Barometer Survey, the empirical evidence shows that nationalism makes Chinese citizens view the US influence more negatively while generalized trust results in a more positive evaluation. As *trusting non-nationalist* has the most favorable opinion of the US, *suspicious nationalist* is least likely to view the US influence in positive light whereas the rest of the two types sit in the middle of the two extremes. Additionally, generalized trust shows a moderating effect on how nationalism influences the perception of foreign countries. The findings shed light on how social forces can check on the political aggression in the case of Chinese' perception of the US.

Keyword: public opinion in China, the US influence in East Asia, US-China relations, Asian Barometer Survey

Introduction

China's perception of the US influence on its surrounding external environment will undoubtedly affect the trajectories of China's rise and the future of Sino-American relations (Christensen 2015; Kang 2007). Despite the fact that China is an autocratic regime, there is increasing empirical evidence that citizens actually exert an important influence on Chinese foreign policy decision-making (Gries, Steiger, and Wang 2015; He 2007; Zhao 2013).¹ How Chinese citizens perceive the US influence can thus be seen as a crucial factor that determines the theme of interaction between the US and China. Consequently, understanding the origins and configurations of China's citizens' attitudes towards the US and their evaluation of the US influence is thus of theoretical and policy importance.

What does the US look like in the eyes of Chinese citizens? How do Chinese citizens assess the US influence in Asia and on China? What makes an individual more likely to view the US influence in a more favorable or derogatory way? Drawing on existing literature, we highlight two crucial, but contradictory forces that shape citizens' perception of foreign countries: nationalism and generalized trust. Specifically, we hypothesize that great nationalism drives citizens to negatively evaluate foreign countries with a condescending mindset (Druckman 1994; Gries et al. 2011), whereas high generalized trust propels them to have a positive image towards foreign countries based on a rosy view of the nature of social interaction (Rathbun 2011; Rathbun 2012). While nationalism pushes for a negative evaluation of foreign countries, generalized trust pulls for a positive one.

We further advance the literature by showing how two opposite forces, i.e., nationalism and generalized trust, work in tandem and simultaneously shape citizens' perceptions of foreign countries. The general theoretical expectation is that nationalism fills Chinese citizens with a sense of supremacy in being a Chinese to regard the US influence as negative, whereas the generalized trust gives them confidence in having positive feedback in face of the US

¹ See Weiss (2014) for a counterargument.

influence. By crossing nationalism and generalized trust, we generate four types of Chinese citizens' attitudes towards the US, including *suspicious nationalist* (high nationalism and low generalized trust), *suspicious non-nationalist* (low nationalism and low generalized trust), *trusting nationalist* (high nationalism and high generalized trust), and *trusting non-nationalist* (low nationalism and high generalized trust). We argue that nationalism and generalized trust enhance or diminish the effect of each other across four types of Chinese citizens' perception of the US influence. Among the four types, the *suspicious nationalist* is expected to be least likely to have a positive view of the US influence while *trusting non-nationalist* is most likely to do so. The evaluation of the US influence for other two types is expected to be between the two extremes as the two opposite determinants of equivalent force somewhat cancel each other out.

We use the dataset of the 4th wave of Asian Barometer Survey (ABS4) in China to empirically verify our argument. The niche of ABS4 is that the sample is nationally representative, which is quite rare in the study of Chinese politics and foreign policy. It allows us to possibly get a more precise estimation of Chinese citizens' perceptions. The empirical results reveal, in line with our proposed hypotheses, that the ameliorating effect of generalized trust is proportionately higher for a greater sense of nationalism for the Chinese citizen to see the US in a negative light.

Our research carries both theoretical and policy implications. Theoretically, we explicitly identify the causal mechanisms regarding how nationalism and generalized trust lead to different tendencies of assessment of the US influence. Moreover, we demonstrate that the synthesis of nationalism and generalized trust offers us a powerful tool to make sense of different tendencies of perceiving the US influence among Chinese citizens. The model we develop in this paper has the potential to be generalized to other countries or studies with more broad questions, such as how individuals perceive the external environment.

Some recent studies arouse concerns for the possibility of war between the US and

China, possibly due to the rise of nationalism in China (Allison 2017).² While we do find that heightened nationalism is more likely to lead to a negative assessment of the US influence, our findings also contain a silver lining. Specifically, our findings suggest that a great degree of generalized trust in China is proven to alleviate the sense of confrontation towards the US perceived by Chinese citizens. About 61.7 percent of Chinese citizens have a decent level of generalized trust. Therefore, the US-China relation is actually not as gloomy as the rising nationalism thesis has painted.

The remainder of this article is divided into four sections. In the next section, we investigate the literature of nationalism and generalized on individuals' perception of the outside world in general and foreign countries in particular, and then three hypotheses are proposed. The second section discusses the empirical strategy we adopt to test the hypotheses. We present the empirical results in the third section. The final section concludes.

Nationalism, Generalized Trust, and Assessment of the US Influence

Nationalism is one of the most cited variables when it comes to the topic of citizens' national identity conceptions and how they view their nation-state in relation to the outside world. The definition of nationalism is the subject of debate notwithstanding, scholars generally agree that it is a relational concept that involves two fundamental elements: love of the nation and the belief that one's country is superior to other countries (Blank and Schmidt 2003; Gries et al. 2011; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989).³ In short, nationalism is a feeling of

² See Johnston (2017) for an excellent rebuttal to the rise of Chinese nationalism meme.

³ Some scholars claim that naïve or uncritical support of the home country's actions is the third integral element of nationalism (Blank and Schmidt 2003; Johnston 2017). But some scholars argue that uncritical support of one's nation-state is more related to the notion of blind patriotism (Gries et al. 2011). In this paper, we do not include this dimension of uncritical support of one's nation-state to the definition. The reason is that uncritical support of one's nation-state does not involve a comparison in terms of status between one's nation-state and other countries. In a sense, the existence of other countries as a reference point is the necessary condition of the emergence of perceived national superiority, whereas naïve support of one's home country is probably not. We will, however, accommodate the

national superiority rooted in love of the nation-state. While nationalism is highly related to patriotism in the sense that both include the love of or pride in the nation, these two concepts are not synonymous. Patriotism does not lead to out-group denigration or in-group supremacism, but nationalism usually does.⁴

Numerous studies have reported that patriotism and nationalism are analytically distinguishable and identified the robust correlation between perceived national superiority and readiness to derogate out-groups (Blank and Schmidt 2003; Druckman 1994; Kosterman and Feshbach 1989; Mummendey, Klink, and Brown 2001). Scholars have highlighted nationalism as an important driver that shapes citizens' political attitudes. Individuals with a high level of nationalism are therefore more likely to detract or hold less favorable views toward out-groups. To them, out-groups are not their nation-state's equal and will never measure up (Blank and Schmidt 2003). People who are highly nationalistic tend to have an extremely high level of perceived group efficacy, which leads to their firm belief that the world can only get better if other countries are more like their nation-state. Hence, individuals are unlikely to hold positive opinions regarding the influence other countries exerted on their nation-state or the surrounding environment if they view other countries in an unfavorable way due to contemptuousness. In the realm of foreign policy, Sinkkonen (2013) finds that nationalistic individuals are more likely to prefer protectionist policies over cooperative policies. In sum, the sentiments of nationalism are proven to shape the image of other countries.

With regard to nationalism in China, scholars have pointed out how the stigma of foreign invasions and colonization in the late Qing dynasty gives rise to the Chinese

three-dimensional definition of nationalism as a robustness check in the next version of the paper.

⁴ It should be noted the literature on social psychology has repeatedly shown that mere differentiation between in-group and out-groups or in-group favoritism does not lead to out-group derogation or hatred.

nationalism since the late 19th century (Gries 2003; Hughes 2006; Tang and Darr 2012a; S. Zhao 2004; Zheng 1999). Later, owing to the contestations between communist totalitarianism and capitalist democracies during the Cold War, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been dedicated to incorporating the Chinese nationalism into its ruling legitimacy by the indoctrination of nationalism in various levels of education and media exposure. After the Cold War, the CCP still regards nationalism as an important base for its authoritarian rule and seek to feed it by hosting international events, such as the 2008 Olympic Games (Xu 2006; Zhao 2004). Since the US invaded China during the “century of humiliation“ and dedicated to cracking the communist rule during the Cold War, and sold democratic values to China after the Cold War, the CCP has a legacy in derogating the US as the American imperialist (meidi, 美帝) to instigate the Chinese nationalism in the interest of enhancing the CCP ruling legitimacy. With decades of efforts in feeding the Chinese nationalism, the CCP shields itself from democratization and thus sustain its authoritarian rule as the US has been the leading seller of democracy to China. Therefore, it is significant to explore the US image in the eyes of the Chinese citizens because the US image matters to the Chinese people’s resistance or acceptance of the democratic values and Chinese government’s foreign policy with the US.

In China, Pan and Xu (forthcoming) demonstrate that nationalism is one crucial dimension of China’s public opinion. Scholars have highlighted nationalism as an important driver that shapes citizens’ political attitudes. For example, Tang and Darr (2012) find that Chinese nationalism is highly associated with the Chinese people’s political attitudes towards anti-democratic, pro-authoritarian, and anti-capitalist. With a direct empirical evidence, Gries et al. (2011) identify a clear association between nationalism and a threatening image the US.⁵ Additionally, Han, Chen, and Fang (2013) report that nationalism greatly influences

⁵ Li, Wang, and Chen (2016), however, report that nationalism does not substantially affect international trust.

how scholars and students residing in the US view the US. Despite the sample these works relied on is not nationally representative, all of them highlighted the critical role of nationalism in shaping Chinese citizens' negative perceptions of the US. We, therefore, propose the following hypothesis on nationalism and Chinese citizens' assessment of the US influence.

H1: *Ceteris paribus, nationalism associates negatively with Chinese citizens' positive assessment of the US influence.*

Nevertheless, nationalism is hardly the only important factor in affecting how individuals perceive of the external world and evaluate a foreign country's influence. Drawing on social psychology, scholars have emphasized the role of generalized trust in civic life and international relations. Broadly defining generalized trust as the belief that others are largely trustworthy, Brewer and coauthors posit that generalized trust in social surroundings carries spillover effect to perceptions of foreign countries and even international communities (Brewer 2004; Brewer et al. 2004).

While generalized trust started as a specific form of social orientation inferred from an individual's faith in human nature or the nature of social relations, several studies have shown that generalized trust can actually travel to the domain of foreign policy. Empirical studies show that generalized trust positively drives one's political orientation in internationalism, approval for military spending, liberal foreign policy stance (Brewer et al. 2004; Brewer and Steenbergen 2002), disagreement with torture policy on terrorist suspects (Binning 2007), and free trade (Kaltenthaler and Miller 2013). A recent study also meticulously demonstrates how personal core values give rise to foreign-policy orientations (Rathbun et al. 2016). Thus, generalized trust has been shown to be the bedrock of crafting communities as well as facilitating international cooperation (Rathbun 2009, 2012; Uslander 2002).

When individuals lack generalized trust, they will be concerned about the possibility of

being exploited. They can only to be reassured by specific information indicating that not hurting them is the dominant or at least optimal strategy for other countries (Fearon 1997). This kind of trust is situation-specific and will easily fall apart once the environment parameters vary (Hardin 2002). In a word, individuals who do not possess generalized trust view the world with a suspicious look. They have doubts about other countries' honesty and integrity.

In the presence of generalized trust, trusting individuals do not think that other countries will try to exploit their nation-state. As Rathbun (2012:3) succinctly puts it, "Generalized trusters more optimistic that others will live up to their agreements and that they do not wish them harm." The fear of opportunism is absent or at least not prevalent among generalized trusters. People with high level of generalized trust largely believe that other countries have no malign intentions and their nation-state's interests will not be harmed even if their nation-state's fate is in the hands of other countries (Rathbun 2011:5). Generalized trusters will stop being trusting only if informative signals emerge and suggest that it is prudent to do so (Rathbun 2012, 24; Mercer 2005, 95). In sum, generalized trust affects individuals' assessment of the trustworthiness of other countries.

Thus, we argue that generalized trust is influential to one's evaluation of other countries' influence on their home country. Based on our argument, we expect that people with generalized trust should be more likely to see other countries' influence on their nation and surrounding environment in a more positive light than their untrusting counterparts. Accordingly, we derive the following hypothesis on the relationship between generalized trust and Chinese citizens' assessment of the US influence.

H2: Ceteris paribus, generalized trust associates positively with Chinese citizens' positive assessment of the US influence.

Thus far, we have discussed the effects of nationalism and generalized trust exert on Chinese citizens regarding their assessment of the US influence. To recap, we argue that

people who are more nationalistic are less likely to view of the US influence positively, largely due to the effects of out-group derogation and supremacism. We also hypothesize that high level of generalized trust would be more likely to give rise to the positive assessment of the US influence. Trusting people do not question the integrity and honesty of other countries, whereas untrusting people sure are always suspicious. Nationalism and generalized trust can be seen as two important drivers working in tandem to determine individuals' assessment of other countries' influence, albeit in conflicting directions. Nationalism renders a positive evaluation less likely, whereas generalized trust make a positive assessment more likely. We would thus expect that the coefficients of nationalism and generalized trust variables to have opposite signs in our empirical analysis.

By synergizing the two lines of literature, we argue that generalized trust ameliorates the derogative effect of nationalism on the perception of foreign countries by readjusting psychological hierarchy. To be specific, the notion of equality in generalized trust shrinks the perceived supremacy induced by nationalism to improve unfavorable perception of foreign countries. Given that nationalism instills a sense of supremacy, nationalists believe that there exists a gap between their own country and others. Such perceived gap is proportionate to the level of nationalism, which breeds a condescending and foul view of other countries. While nationalism widens the perceived gap, generalized trust does differently. When one is in an equal status with another, it is easier for one to build up greater generalized trust because perceived equality minimizes the return for the dominant strategy of exploiting other countries as Fearon points out (1997). Consequently, the perceived chance of being exploited is minimized. When generalized trust travels across the border, a notion of equality embedded in generalized trust somewhat closes up the gap widen by nationalism and thus produces a benign look at other countries. With the moderating effect of generalized trust on nationalism, nationalists are drawn closer to mild rather than extreme evaluation of other countries. For the Chinese citizens, nationalism exaggerates the perceived gap between China and the US

and produces a sense of superiority for China, generalized trust makes Chinese more likely to treat the US more or less of an equal to China and thus shrinks the gap between China and the US. In short, generalized trust stops nationalists from having extreme opinions of the US by readjusting the psychological difference between the US and China when it is involved in a psychological tug of war with nationalism.

Given that the two opposite forces work in tandem and simultaneously shape citizens' perceptions, we bring the two crucial dimensions together and identify four ideal-types regarding Chinese citizens' attitudes towards the US: suspicious nationalist, suspicious non-nationalist, trusting nationalist, and trusting non-nationalists. Table 1 shows how these four ideal types stand in relation to each other.

<Table 1 about here>

Each of the four ideal-typical attitudes towards the US produces distinct psychological effects, which in turn induce different tendencies on the assessment of the US influence. These tendencies can be inferred from our discussion on the effects of nationalism and generalized trust on citizens' foreign policy perceptions. We refer suspicious nationalists as individuals who are nationalistic and untrusting. They believe that their nation-state is superior to other countries. Besides, they generally would not assume that other countries have benign intentions. In other words, two forces are working in the same direction toward the negative assessment of the US influence. Given this, suspicious nationalists are extremely unlikely to view the US influence on their nation-state and the surrounding environment in a positive fashion.

Trusting non-nationalists are defined as individuals who are not nationalistic and have generalized trust. These trusting individuals neither believe that other countries will never measure up vis-à-vis their nation-state nor embrace the notion of supremacism. Since they do not believe China is superior to the US and generally assume that the intention of the US is not malign, the two forces working altogether towards the direction of facilitating a positive

assessment of the US influence. Trusting non-nationalists are thus the ones with the highest propensity to view the US influence in a positive manner.

Suspicious non-nationalists are individuals who are not nationalistic and untrusting. Their predominant tendency is not to assume the benignity of other countries and yet they are not believers of the notion of supremacism. The lack of sense of supremacism can somewhat weaken the effect of suspicion on the assessment of foreign countries. Trusting nationalists are referred as individuals who are nationalistic and possess generalized trust. They hold the belief that their nation-state is superior to all other countries and yet they also have faith in other countries' honesty and integrity. Here, the presence of generalized trust is expected to attenuate the effect of sense of supremacism on the evaluation of foreign countries. Given that the causal effects of nationalism and generalized trust work against each other in these two groups (i.e., suspicious non-nationalist and trusting nationalist), our theoretical expectation is that the probability of having a positive assessment of the US influence for these two groups should be higher than suspicious nationalists but lower than trusting non-nationalists. Considering that we have no good theoretical reasons to adjudicate the relative salience of these two drivers, we are agnostic with regard to whether suspicious non-nationalists are more likely to have a positive assessment of the US influence than their trusting-nationalist counterparts. The discussion here leads to our final hypothesis.

H3: Ceteris paribus, the likelihood of having a positive assessment of the US influence among Chinese citizens is highest for trusting non-nationalists, moderate for suspicious non-nationalists and trusting nationalists, and lowest for suspicious nationalists.

Research Design

To test our hypotheses, we utilize the 4th wave of Asian Barometer Survey (henceforth ABS4). Based on national sampling, the ABS4 conducts face-to-face interviews inquiring citizens' political attitudes, values and experiences across 14 Asian countries and territories.

In China, the ABS4 conducted successful interviews with 4068 respondents above 18-year-old in 26 provincial-level administrative divisions during December 2014 and June 2016.

Dependent Variable: The US influence

The ABS4 asked the following question to measure citizens' perception on the US influences in their countries: "General speaking, the influence the United States has on our country is?" The response items are measured on a metric of 1 to 6: 1: Very negative; 2: Negative; 3: Somewhat negative; 4: Somewhat positive; 5: Positive; 6: Very positive. Table 2 reports the distribution of answers given by the Chinese respondents. Specifically, Chinese citizens seem to be polarized in terms of evaluating the US influences on China: 34.86% of the Chinese respondents believe that the influence to be negative whereas 30.32% of them hold a favorable view. Nevertheless, it should be noted that about 35.2% of the respondents answered "Do not understand the question" (DU), "Do not know" (DK), or "Declined to answer" (DA). In our subsequent analysis, we use a dummy variable to code respondents' answers. Those positive answers are coded as 1 and others as 0. While it might be to arbitrary to include those answers of DU, DK, and DA with those negative answers, our additional analysis indicates that our main findings remain unchanged if we treat the answers of DU, DK, and DA as missing values.

<Table 2 about here>

Explanatory Variables: Nationalism and Generalized Trust

The key explanatory variables in the paper are nationalism and generalized trust. To measure nationalism, most studies are empirically grounded on the supremacism in being a national of their own country or in their own country (Tang and Darr, 2012; Sinkkonen 2013; Gries et al, 2011; Han, Chen and Fang, 2013; Pan and Xu, forthcoming). Except for the standard dimensions in measuring nationalism, we propose to incorporate an important dimension,

which has been overlooked in the existing literature in the context of China. Chinese nationals can be so confident about China to the degree that they believe that China should post as a role model to all other countries in order to make the world a better place. This form of nationalism is assertive in its intention of exporting their way of living to other countries.

Specifically, we rely on the following four questions asked by the ABS4 to construct our measurement of nationalism. (1) “A citizen should always remain loyal only to his country, no matter how imperfect it is or what wrong it has done” (2) “Even if I could choose to be a citizen of any country in the world, I would rather be a Chinese citizen.”, (3) “In general, China is better than most countries in the world.”, and (4) “If people in other countries should be more like Chinese, the world would be a better place.” The ratings for the four questions from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).⁶ Table 3 reports the distributions of answers given by the Chinese respondents in the ABS4. Based on respondents’ answers to these four questions, we rely on item response theory to construct a measure of nationalism for the Chinese respondents.

<Table 3 about here>

In addition, we rely on respondents’ answers to the following two questions to construct the other explanatory variable, *Generalized Trust*. The first question is a standard question on generalized trust: “General Speaking, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that “most people are trustworthy?” As shown in Table 4, a majority of respondents either agree (70.23%) or strongly agree (10.13%) on this statement. Thus, we use another question on fair treatment to filter out those who have higher trust. In particular, the ABS4 asks respondents “Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair.” We use a dummy variable to differentiate those who think “most people are trustworthy”

⁶ The Cronbach's alpha of is 0.7, suggesting that these three questions are internally consistent.

and “try to be fair” at the same time as individuals with generalized trust (1) from those who have other thoughts on both questions.

<Table 4 about here>

Figure 1 offers some preliminary evidence to support our hypothesis. We plot a bar chart for the percentages of respondents giving a favorable evaluation of the US influence on China against the typology we proposed in the previous section. In Figure 1, trusting non-nationalists are most likely to regard the US influence as positive, whereas suspicious nationalists are least likely to do so. This contrast indicates that respondents with generalized trust or a lower level of nationalist sentiment tend to regard the US influence as positive. In the following section, we will conduct regression analysis to further examine this issue.

<Figure 1 about here>

Control Variables

We include other variables in our empirical analysis to control their confounding effects on the dependent variable. First, we include standard democratic variables, such as age (in years), gender, education, and subjective social status. Given the propaganda of anti-Western nationalism (Zhao 2002), older generations of Chinese are expected to be more likely to possess more anti-US sentiments because they have experienced more Sino-US confrontations than the youth. Meanwhile, we expect male respondents to be more unfavorable to the US because they tend to be more belligerent in foreign affairs than female respondents (Conover and Sapiro 1993).

Secondly, we consider the effects of being a member of the CCP. As the CCP membership is attached with patronages and privileges not available for non-CCP members (Chen and Lu 2011), CCP members may be more aligned with the party’s foreign policy orientations to other countries. Although one can argue that the CCP members may be more hostile to the US, Han, Chen, and Fang (2013) report that the CCP members have more favorable attitudes toward the US. Thus, we are theoretically agnostic to the sign of this

variable.

Thirdly, we control for respondents' interests in politics and foreign affairs. People following foreign events are more cosmopolitan than those paying less attention. Thus, we expect respondents have more interests in politics or foreign affairs to be have favorable perspective on the US.

Fourth, we control respondents' choices of most influential country in Asia. The ABS4 asks respondent to evaluate which country is the most influential one in Asia. We collapse their answers into three categories: China, the US, and others. With the US as reference category, we expect that respondents who choose China as the most influential countries tend to give a negative evaluation regarding the US influence on China.

Empirical Results

We conduct logit models to test our hypotheses. Table 5 reports the estimation results. As we can see in Models 1, the coefficients of *Nationalism* and *Generalized Trust* are statically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level in the expected directions. For *Nationalism*, a Chinese citizen with a higher level of nationalist sentiment is more likely to regard the US influence on China as negative than her counterparts who does not feel that way. Meanwhile, Chinese citizens with *Generalized Trust* assign a more positive evaluation to the US influence on China than those without generalized trust. These results support Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

As another focus of this paper is the moderating effects of generalized trust on the effects of nationalism, we include an interaction term between *Generalized Trust* and *Nationalism* in Model 2. While *Nationalism* is still statistically significant, *Generalized Trust* and its interaction with *Nationalism* are not. As we are estimating a non-linear model, the coefficient of the interaction may be misleading. Thus, we calculate the marginal effects of *Generalized Trust* on the dependent variable across different values of *Nationalism*. We

illustrate the marginal effects of generalized trust in Figure 2. In particular, people with generalized trust are more likely to assign a positive evaluation to the US influence on China than those without generalized trust, especially when they have a higher level of nationalism.

<Figure 2 about here>

Because most Chinese respondents in our sample have a high level of nationalism, we breakdown them into two groups with the median as the cutting point. We then categorize the respondents into four groups based on the typology proposed in the previous section: suspicious non-nationalists, suspicious nationalist, trusting non-nationalists, and trusting non-nationalist. We create four dummies variables for each types and estimate Model 3 (as trusting non-nationalist as the reference category). As indicated in Model 3, the coefficients of *Suspicious Non-Nationalist*, *Suspicious Nationalist*, and *Trusting Nationalist* are all negative and statistically significant at the $p < 0.1$ level, indicating that trusting non-nationalists have the most positive evaluation of the US influence on China. Meanwhile, the results of t-tests indicate that the coefficient of *Suspicious Nationalist* is significantly different from the coefficients of *Suspicious Non-Nationalist* and *Trusting Nationalist* ($p = 0.04$ & 0.02 , respectively). In other words, *Trusting Non-Nationalists* have the most positive evaluation of the US influence on China whereas *Suspicious Nationalists* have the most negative evaluation. This contrast of results supports our argument.

The dependent variable in Model 1 to Model 3 is binary variable that combined those who give negative evaluation on the US influence with those who give answers of DU, DK and DA. In Model 4, we create a new dependent variable that regards answers of DU, DK and DA as missing values. Our main finding remains unchanged.

The results of some control variables are worth of discussion. Respondents' age and gender are critical to the likelihood of positive perception of the US influence. As expected, older and male respondents are less likely to deem the US influence on China positive. In addition, respondent are more likely to regard the US influence on China is negative if they

think China is the most influential country in Asia than those who think the US is the most influential country in Asia. By contrast, respondent with more interest in foreign affair or holding a college degree are more likely to give positive rating to the US influence on China. Nevertheless, neither *Subjective Status* nor *CCP Membership* is statistically significant.

<Table 5 about here>

Conclusion

In this paper, we advance two arguments. First, nationalism and generalized trust both affect how Chinese citizens view the US influence and yet their causal effects work in conflicting directions. Second, the fusion of high nationalism and the lack of generalized trust create the strongest tendency to assess the US influence unfavorably. The fusion of low nationalism and the presence of generalized trust generate the strongest tendency give a positive evaluation of the US influence.

The empirical results support our propositions. Our variables of interest, i.e., nationalism and generalized trust, stay statistically significant with the expected signs across models. And the predicted probabilities of having a positive assessment of the US influence among the four ideal-typical groups are also in line with our theoretical expectation. Given the demographic and CCP membership variables under control, the empirical evidence corroborates with previous findings that nationalism and generalized trust are indeed two influential factors in determining citizens' perception of foreign countries.

Our study furthers the understanding of the how Chinese citizens perceive the US in several regards. First of all, we add an important layer of measuring nationalism along with the existing layers. Specifically, most scholarly studies only ask two type of questions. The first concerns the individual level, and a typical question is to ask whether being a national of one's own country is better than that of another country. The second concerns the state level, scholars usually ask respondents whether they agree one's own country is better than another country or other countries. However, an assertive form of nationalism is often overlooked in

the previous literature. Namely, people might have the intention of making *all other countries* like their own country to make the world a better place. This is an omitted and yet important dimension of nationalism, which is loaded with the intention of assimilating others into their own terms, an indispensable part to be incorporated into the battery of questions for measuring nationalism. We solve this drawback of the literature by including a question to measure individuals' intention of a supremacism-centered assimilation. We are thus able to more comprehensively capture the full sentiments of nationalism.

The findings of the driving forces for the Chinese citizens' perception of the US influence shed lights in the field of political psychology and international relations. Previous literature suggests that nationalism corrodes the positive perception of foreign countries, and generalized trust fortifies it. However, there exists a gap in how the contradictory forces of push (nationalism) and pull (generalized trust) simultaneously shape the perception of foreign countries. With rich variances in both nationalism and generalized trust in China, our study on the Chinese' perception of the US proves to be an excellent case to revisit the two line of literature. The finding indicates that the approval attitude toward the US is weakest for the nationalist and distrusting Chinese citizens and is strongest for the non-nationalist and trusting ones. We can be cautiously optimistic about the prospect of the US-China relations as long as generalized trust embedded in the Chinese society can somewhat ameliorate the popular resentments against the US.

Our research also points out some possibilities for future inquiries. While we have demonstrated the effects of nationalism and generalized trust on citizen's assessment of foreign countries' influence, two related questions remain unsolved. First, we have very limited knowledge in terms of the origins of nationalism and generalized trust in China. What breeds variations in nationalism and generalized trust for Chinese citizens? Tackling this question might help us understand why many Chinese citizens have reservations to accept the liberal democratic values. Second, public opinion is crucial to the foreign policy making for

authoritarian regimes. Take noticeable instances, Chinese citizens have mobilized several large-scaled and violent demonstrations for the United States bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999, and for the approval of a Japanese history textbook in 2005 and the proposal of Japan holding a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2012. Regardless of these demonstrations conducted by voluntary protestors or orchestrated by the government, the public sentiments have proven to incur great costs for both the governments and people of any country dealing with China. Yet, we still lack sufficient inquiries and research in how the change and continuity of public perceptions of other countries invoked by either history or event translate into policy making.

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Figures and Tables

Table 1: Four Ideal-typical Chinese Citizens' Attitudes towards the US

		Nationalism	
		Low	High
Generalized trust	Low	Suspicious non-nationalist	Suspicious nationalist
	High	Trusting non-nationalist	Trusting nationalist

Table 2: The Chinese citizens' perception of the US influence on China

Question: General speaking, the influence the United States has on our country is?

Very negative	Negative	Somewhat negative	Somewhat positive	Positive	Very positive	DU	DK	DA
292	579	547	558	574	93	605	671	149
(7.18)	(14.23)	(13.45)	(13.72)	(14.11)	(2.29)	(14.87)	(16.49)	(3.66)

Note: The sample size is 4,068. Percentages are reported in parentheses. DU: Don't understand the question; DK: don't know; DA: Declined to answer.

Table 3: Chinese Citizens' Nationalist Sentiments

Q: A citizen should always remain loyal only to his country, no matter how imperfect it is or what wrong it has done.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DU	DK	DA
41	368	2523	750	124	133	65
(1.01)	(9.05)	(62.02)	(18.44)	(3.96)	(4.45)	(1.08)

Q: Even if I could choose to be a citizen of any country in the world, I would rather be a Chinese citizen

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DU	DK	DA
31	250	2,242	1,223	124	133	65
(0.76)	(6.15)	(55.11)	(30.06)	(3.05)	(3.27)	(1.60)

Q: In general, China is better than most countries in the world.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DU	DK	DA
117	859	1,857	539	222	393	81
(2.88)	(21.12)	(45.65)	(13.25)	(5.46)	(9.66)	(1.99)

Q: If people in other countries should be more like Chinese, the world would be a better place.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DU	DK	DA
28	384	2,346	929	80	232	69
(0.69)	(9.44)	(57.67)	(22.84)	(1.97)	(5.70)	(1.70)

Note: The sample size is 4,068. Percentages are reported in parentheses. DU: Don't understand the question; DK: don't know; DA: Declined to answer.

Table 4: Chinese Citizens' Generalized Trust

Q: General Speaking, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that "most people are trustworthy"?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	DU	DK	DA
46	622	2,857	412	46	52	33
(1.13)	(15.29)	(70.23)	(10.13)	(1.13)	(1.28)	(0.81)

Q: Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?

Take Advantage	To be Fair	Depends	DK	DA
1,038	2,584	256	166	24
(25.52)	(63.52)	(6.29)	(4.08)	(0.59)

Note: The sample size is 4,068. Percentages are reported in parentheses. DU: Don't understand the question; DK: don't know; DA: Declined to answer.

Table 5: Explaining Chinese citizens' evaluation of the US influence on China

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Age</i>	-0.027*** [0.003]	-0.027*** [0.003]	-0.027*** [0.004]	-0.023*** [0.004]
<i>Male</i>	-0.272*** [0.097]	-0.272*** [0.097]	-0.269*** [0.097]	-0.375*** [0.112]
<i>Subjective Status</i>	0.034** [0.017]	0.034** [0.017]	0.031* [0.017]	0.020 [0.017]
<i>College</i>	0.344*** [0.121]	0.344*** [0.121]	0.381*** [0.113]	0.409*** [0.126]
<i>CCP Member</i>	0.123 [0.122]	0.123 [0.122]	0.115 [0.119]	0.159 [0.132]
<i>Interest in Foreign Affairs</i>	0.125*** [0.037]	0.125*** [0.038]	0.133*** [0.039]	0.028 [0.031]
<i>Political Interest</i>	-0.022 [0.070]	-0.022 [0.071]	-0.025 [0.071]	-0.027 [0.071]
<i>Most Influential Country (China)</i>	-0.271* [0.142]	-0.271* [0.142]	-0.301** [0.140]	-0.312** [0.149]
<i>Most Influential Country (Others)</i>	-0.508*** [0.166]	-0.508*** [0.166]	-0.526*** [0.164]	-0.093 [0.167]
<i>Nationalism</i>	-1.380*** [0.441]	-1.327*** [0.464]		
<i>With Generalized Trust</i>	0.259*** [0.078]	0.363 [0.959]		
<i>With Generalized Trust # Nationalism</i>		-0.111 [1.038]		
<i>Suspicious Non-Nationalist</i>			-0.306*** [0.106]	-0.271** [0.124]
<i>Suspicious Nationalist</i>			-0.390*** [0.122]	-0.568*** [0.134]
<i>Trusting Nationalist</i>			-0.202* [0.119]	-0.302** [0.130]
Constant	2.602*** [0.401]	2.553*** [0.376]	1.798*** [0.199]	1.817*** [0.195]
Log Likelihood	-1754.805	-1754.794	-1758.840	-1485.316
N	2871	2871	2871	2318

Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the provincial level are reported in brackets.

Province dummies are not shown. * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01.

Figure 1: Generalized Trust, Nationalism, and Perceived Influence of the US on China

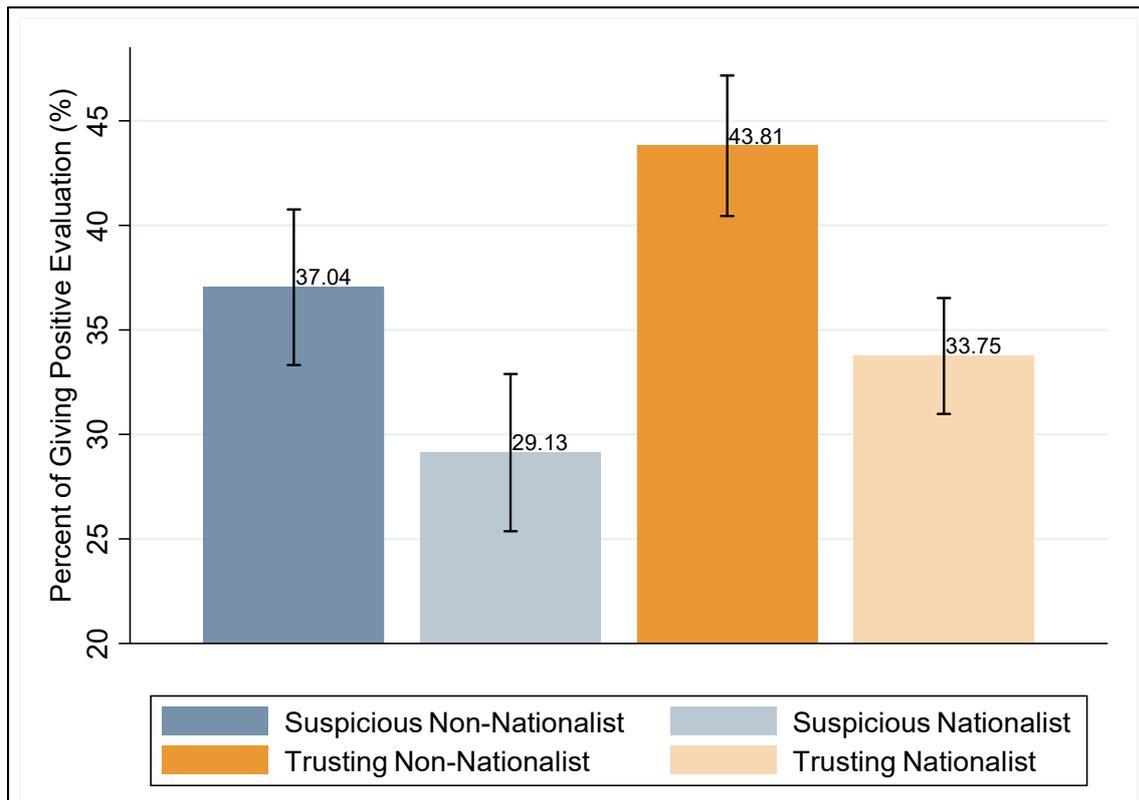
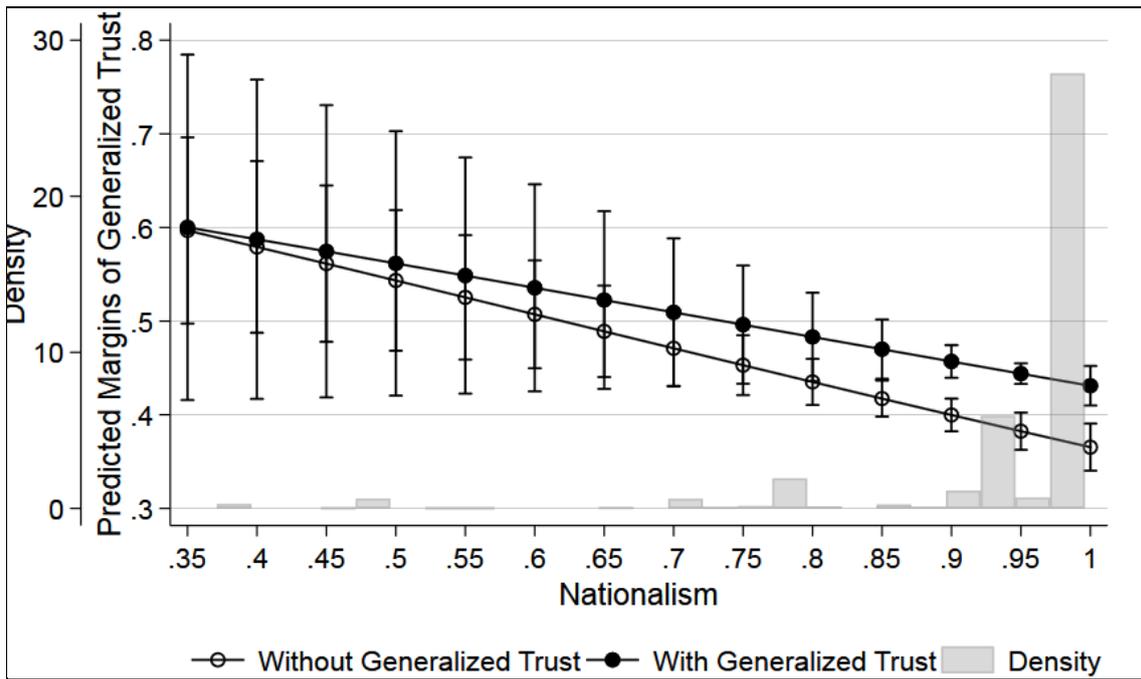


Figure 2: Marginal Effects of Generalized Trust on the Perceived US Influence on China



Appendices

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>US Influence on China</i>	3,447	0.354	0.478	0	1
<i>Age</i>	4,008	48.156	16.255	18	94
<i>Male</i>	4,032	0.491	0.500	0	1
<i>Subjective Status</i>	3,631	5.105	2.063	1	10
<i>CCP Member</i>	3,983	0.101	0.301	0	1
<i>College</i>	4,015	0.115	0.319	0	1
<i>Interest in Foreign Affairs</i>	3,831	3.037	1.285	1	5
<i>Political Interest</i>	3,931	2.179	0.882	1	4
<i>Most Influential Country (China)</i>	4,032	0.411	0.492	0	1
<i>Most Influential Country (Others)</i>	4,032	0.388	0.487	0	1
<i>Nationalism</i>	4,032	0.949	0.100	0.371	0.993
<i>Generalized Trust</i>	3,636	0.617	0.486	0	1
<i>Suspicious Non-Nationalist</i>	3,636	0.208	0.406	0	1
<i>Suspicious Nationalist</i>	3,636	0.175	0.380	0	1
<i>Trusting Non-Nationalist</i>	3,636	0.271	0.444	0	1
<i>Trusting Nationalist</i>	3,636	0.346	0.476	0	1

Table A.2: Operationalization of Variables

Variables	Coding
The US influence on China (Dependent Variable)	“General speaking, the influence the United States has on our country is?” 1: Very negative; 2: Negative; 3: Somewhat negative; 4: Somewhat positive; 5: Positive; 6: Very positive. In binary logit models, 1, 2, 3 are coded as 0 and 4, 5 & 6 as 1.
Age	Age in years.
Male	Coded as 1 if respondents are male, and 0 if female.
Subjective Status	1 to 10. “Imagine a ladder with 10 steps. At step one stand the lowest status and step 10 stand the highest. Where would you place your family on the following scale?”
College	Coded as 1 if the respondent has a college degree, and 0 if otherwise.
Political Interest	“How interested would you say you are in politics?” 1: Not at all interested; 2: Not very interested; 3: Somewhat interested; 4: Very interested.
Interests in Foreign Affairs	“How closely do you follow major events in foreign countries and the world?” 1: Not at All; 2: Very little; 3: Not too closely; 4: Somewhat closely; 5: Very closely.
CCP Member	Coded as 1 if respondents are members of the Chinese Communist Party, and 0 if otherwise.
Most Influential Country	“Which country has the most influence in Asia?”
Nationalism	Index of nationalism, calculated from item response theory to the following four questions: (1) “A citizen should always remain loyal only to his country, no matter how imperfect it is or what wrong it has done.” (2) “Even if I could choose to be a citizen of any country in the world, I would rather be a Chinese citizen.”, (3) “In general, China is better than most countries in the world.”, and (4) “If people in other countries should be more like Chinese, the world would be a better place.”
Generalized Trust	Coded 1 if strongly agree or agree with the statement “most people are trustworthy” and believed in the statement “Most people would try to be fair;” otherwise coded as 0.