How Do Americans View the Rising China?

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Theoretical and Empirical Salience

• Public opinion and foreign policy in the US
  – American citizens’ coherent views on foreign policies
  – Public opinion on international affairs matters
  – Politicians shape public opinion on international affairs

• Salience of the China issue and Sino-US relations
  – Economic influence of China on the US
  – Presidential candidates’ campaigns on the China issue
  – China’s PR campaigns in the world
  – China’s upgraded media campaign in the world
Key Questions

• Recognition of China’s rise
  – Is it true that most American voters do not truly understand the significance of China as a rising and rivalrous power of the US?
  – Do they effectively perceive the rise of China?

• Multi-dimensional views of the rising China
  – What are their views of the socioeconomic, political, cultural performance of China, as well as China’s influence and behavior in the international community?
  – What is their general feeling toward China and its development? How is it related to their views of China’s performance in various aspects?
  – Does their exposure to China-related information in American media affect this general feeling?
Empirical Strategy and Innovations

• Empirical strategy
  – Public opinion surveys
  – 2010 American Attitudes toward China Survey

• Innovations
  – Directly measure the perceived importance of the rising China (the cognitive foundation for further analysis)
  – Multiple aspects (beyond general measures) of China’s image (relative salience of different aspects in shaping the general feeling)
  – Americans’ acquisition of China-related information from different sources, as well as its influence
Perceived Significance of the Rising China (I)

A: Which country loans more to the other?

- China loans more (60%)
- About the same (0%)
- America loans more (20%)

B: Whose economy will be harmed more?

- Chinese economy (40%)
- American economy (60%)

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
Perceived Significance of the Rising China (II)

C: Influential in world politics
- Does describe China (4/5)
- Neutral
- Does not describe China (1/2)

D: Influence in the world in ten years
- Increase
- Stay about the same
- Decrease
Different Aspects of China (I)

A: Internationally competitive economy

- Does describe China (4/5)
- Neutral (3)
- Does not describe China (1/2)

B: A political system serving its people's needs

- Does describe China (4/5)
- Neutral (3)
- Does not describe China (1/2)
Different Aspects of China (II)

C: Appealing popular culture

- Does describe China (4/5)
- Neutral (3)
- Does not describe China (1/2)

D: Rich cultural heritage

- Does describe China (4/5)
- Neutral (3)
- Does not describe China (1/2)
Different Aspects of China (III)

E: Dodging responsibility in the world

- Does describe China (4/5)
- Neutral (3)
- Does not describe China (1/2)

F: Democracy in ten years

- Increase
- Stay about the same
- Decrease
General Feeling toward China

Feeling thermometer toward foreign countries

- China
- Russia
- India
- Japan
Different Aspects and General Feeling (I)

A: Feeling toward China by recognition of China's internationally competitive economy

Yes
Neutral
No

B: Feeling toward China by recognition of China's effective political system serving its people

Yes
Neutral
No
Different Aspects and General Feeling (II)

C: Feeling toward China by recognition of China's appealing popular culture

Yes
Neutral
No

D: Feeling toward China by recognition of China's rich cultural heritage

Yes
Neutral
No
Different Aspects and General Feeling (III)

E: Feeling toward China by recognition of China's influence in world politics

- Yes
- Neutral
- No

F: Feeling toward China by recognition of China's dodging responsibility in the world

- Yes
- Neutral
- No
Prospective Evaluation and General Feeling

A: Feeling toward China by democracy evaluation

- Increase
- Stay about the same
- Decrease

B: Feeling toward China by influence evaluation

- Increase
- Stay about the same
- Decrease
Information and General Feeling (I)

A: Feeling toward China by interest in China news

- Very
- Somewhat
- Hardly

B: Feeling toward China by visiting China

- Yes
- No
Information and General Feeling (II)

C: Feeling toward China by reading China news in newspapers

- Yes
- No

F: Feeling toward China by reading China news on news websites

- Yes
- No
Information and General Feeling (III)

D: Feeling toward China by hearing China news on radio stations

E: Feeling toward China by watching China news on TV

Source: AACS 2010 (N = 810).
Party ID, Political Ideology and General Feeling

A: Feeling toward China by party ID

- Democrat
- Independent
- Republican

B: Feeling toward China by ideology

- Liberal
- Moderate
- Conservative
### Demographic features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.716 (0.293)**</td>
<td>-0.598 (0.267)**</td>
<td>-0.494 (0.267)*</td>
<td>-0.519 (0.268)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age square</td>
<td>0.005 (0.003)**</td>
<td>0.004 (0.002)*</td>
<td>0.003 (0.002)</td>
<td>0.004 (0.002)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.841 (1.691)</td>
<td>-0.624 (1.590)</td>
<td>-0.127 (1.597)</td>
<td>-0.021 (1.603)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5.055 (1.112)***</td>
<td>4.091 (1.107)***</td>
<td>3.085 (1.136)***</td>
<td>3.674 (1.081)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.839 (0.614)</td>
<td>-0.877 (0.567)</td>
<td>-0.712 (0.586)</td>
<td>-0.964 (0.581)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessment of China's varying aspects

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<th>M4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive economy</td>
<td>4.001 (1.165)***</td>
<td>3.669 (1.162)***</td>
<td>3.947 (1.166)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective political system</td>
<td>-1.131 (1.068)</td>
<td>-1.213 (1.065)</td>
<td>-1.496 (1.082)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing popular culture</td>
<td>8.305 (1.68)***</td>
<td>7.449 (1.261)***</td>
<td>7.360 (1.242)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich cultural heritage</td>
<td>-3.119 (1.041)***</td>
<td>-3.134 (1.043)***</td>
<td>-3.675 (1.050)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential in world politics</td>
<td>1.534 (1.206)</td>
<td>0.944 (1.174)</td>
<td>1.042 (1.211)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodging responsibility in the world</td>
<td>0.039 (1.178)</td>
<td>0.264 (1.196)</td>
<td>0.006 (1.158)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Prospective evaluation

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democracy in ten years</td>
<td>8.781 (1.383)***</td>
<td>7.692 (1.439)***</td>
<td>8.307 (1.385)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence in the word in ten years</td>
<td>1.269 (1.484)</td>
<td>0.851 (1.494)</td>
<td>1.125 (1.495)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Information access

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio stations</td>
<td>-4.3.6 (2.385)*</td>
<td>-4.084 (2.384)*</td>
<td>-3.718 (2.002)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV news</td>
<td>-3.559 (2.011)*</td>
<td>-3.718 (2.002)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet news websites</td>
<td>-0.109 (2.533)</td>
<td>0.180 (2.457)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting mainland China</td>
<td>9.693 (2.818)***</td>
<td>10.03 (2.875)***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Ideology

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>-3.814 (1.767)**</td>
<td>4.765 (2.327)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td></td>
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### Party ID

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.902 (2.013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.671 (1.921)***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>58.11 (8.360)***</td>
<td>59.18 (7.570)***</td>
<td>60.25 (7.544)***</td>
<td>56.36 (7.612)***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Model information

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>(5, 734) = 5.81***</td>
<td>(13, 702) = 14.89***</td>
<td>(20, 672) = 12.57***</td>
<td>(20, 680) = 12.92***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.0390</td>
<td>0.2028</td>
<td>0.2433</td>
<td>0.2515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AACS 2010 (N = 810).
Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.
* p < 0.1   ** p < 0.05   *** p < 0.01.
Summary of Findings

- The majority of Americans can effectively understand the significance of the rising China.
- The American public’s views of China are multi-dimensional with embedded tensions (i.e., a mix of positive and negative evaluations).
- Salient influence of the American public’s assessments of China’s democracy and cultural performance.
- A significant number of Americans are interested in China-related information and acquire such information from the mass media.
- Salience and positive influence of life experiences in China
- Varying media effects
Implications

• **Significant improvement is unlikely**
  – Salience of ideologies, values, and cultural factors
  – Significant role of American media
  – Primarily negative coverage of China on the salience issues

• **Sufficient leeway for manipulation**
  – Salience of ideologies, values, and cultural factors
  – Wide recognition of China’s superior economic and political performance
  – Lower hurdles for presenting China as a constant violator of human rights, an authoritarian abuser of violence, etc.