Bifurcated Images of the U.S. in Urban China and the Impact of Media Environment

Tianjian Shi [a], Jie Lu [b] & John Aldrich [a]

[a] Department of Political Science , Duke University

[b] Department of Government , American University
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TIANJIAN SHI, JIE LU, and JOHN ALDRICH

The Chinese public's prevailing admiration and respect for the United States was widely observed in the 1980s when reforms first began. However, since the early 1990s significant anti-American sentiments have started to emerge in China. Such a dramatic shift in Chinese people's attitudes toward the U.S. has significant implications for both U.S. domestic politics and foreign policies. Many politicians, journalists, and scholars have identified the increasing reliance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on nationalism for mobilizing political support, as well as its still firm control over the domestic mass media for propaganda campaigns, as critical factors driving this dramatic public opinion shift. Nevertheless, without systematic and appropriate empirical evidence, it is extremely difficult to adjudicate the validity of speculations on why such a change occurred. Taking advantage of a 2005 two-city survey in China with pertinent survey instruments, we (a) explored Chinese urban residents' usage of different media sources, (b) examined the dimensionality of their evaluations of the U.S., and (c) scrutinized the impacts of Chinese urbanites' usage of diversified media sources on their perceptions of the U.S. The findings show that people's attitudes toward U.S. foreign policies can be clearly distinguished from their evaluations of American political institutions and socioeconomic achievements. Most importantly, our analyses also reveal that, embedded as they are in China's partially transformed and partially diversified media environment, Chinese urban residents do not become pro-American (or vice versa) from the usage of alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control.

Keywords public opinion, China media sources, views of America

In the summer of 1989, student protestors erected a Goddess of Democracy (a statue closely resembling the Statue of Liberty) in Tiananmen Square to symbolize their aspirations for liberal democracy in China. At that time, for many Chinese citizens, the U.S. not only represented advanced science and technology, wealth, and a quality education system, but also possessed the most advanced political institution in the world. For ordinary Chinese people, the freedom and democracy enjoyed by the American people seemed to provide the solution to various problems in China. Ten years later, college students assembled outside of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing to demand an apology from the American government for bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, an attack that killed three and injured more than 20. Demonstrators cursed the U.S., threw bricks and ink bottles at the embassy, and once again constructed a "Statue of Liberty"—except this time, with a skull for the head.[1]

Tianjian Shi was Associate Professor of Political Science at Duke University. Jie Lu is Assistant Professor of Government at American University. John Aldrich is Pfizer-Pratt University Professor of Political Science at Duke University.

Address correspondence to John Aldrich, Department of Political Science, Duke University, 326 Perkins Library, Box 90204, Durham, NC 27708, USA. E-mail: aldrich@duke.edu

Similarly emotional anti-American outbursts occurred in China after the EP-3 incident in 2001, as well as when CNN news reports on the violence in Tibet and the torch rally protests were released in 2008.[2] The increasing popularity of hawkish newspapers like *Global Times* (*Huanqiu Shibao*) and online forums like Qiangguo BBS, where serious critiques of the U.S. have been repeatedly circulated, posted, and discussed, further signals this significant emotional change since the early 1990s, as confirmed by the research of some China scholars (Johnston, 2003, 2006; Johnston & Stockmann, 2007; Yu, Chen, & Zhu, 2001; M. Zhao, 2001).[3]

Many scholars and China observers have been puzzled by the dramatic turnaround in Chinese popular sentiment toward the U.S.. How could an American visa holder—or an aspiring visa holder—join protest demonstrations in front of the American Embassy? If these Chinese individuals dislike the U.S., why do they apply for visas to continue graduate studies in the U.S.? Could people who love American culture, especially McDonald's, KFC, and pop music, also be *anti*-America? These apparent contradictions have led many observers to believe that the anti-Americanism in China is primarily created and stoked by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (e.g., Christensen, 1996; Ma, 2002; Shirk, 2007; Whiting, 1995). The logic of this argument is deceptively simple: Given that communist ideology has lost the capacity to sustain its legitimacy, the CCP has chosen to capitalize upon China's history of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers so as to mobilize political support. To accomplish such a goal, the regime intensively uses mass media to implicitly or explicitly cultivate nationalism and anti-Americanism, an easy process for the CCP due to its tight control over its domestic media. Thus, the dramatic change in Chinese people's attitudes toward America is the consequence of the sustained and intentional propaganda campaigns launched by China's authoritarian regime, primarily carried out through its domestic mass media.

Though seemingly plausible and persuasive, unfortunately, nothing but anecdotal evidence is available to buttress this speculation. Considering the ongoing marketization and commercialization in Chinese mass media, as well as the penetration of new information technology, the effectiveness of propaganda campaigns through controlled domestic media indicated by the aforementioned argument should only be considered after rigorous empirical testing. Moreover, this regime-staged anti-Americanism is just one among several other equally plausible speculations that could explain the emerging anti-Americanism in China.

One key competing theory is that the observed anti-Americanism over the past decades could reflect a reorientation in people's more complex evaluations of the U.S. It is not a coincidence that almost all anti-American movements happened when an American foreign policy decision or behavior in the international arena, particularly those related to China, was under the spotlight (Johnston, 2003, 2006). It is very likely that in the early days of Chinese reforms, Chinese citizens' perceptions of the U.S. were primarily based on the U.S.'s socioeconomic and political accomplishments that Chinese citizens craved, given the Cultural Revolution's catastrophic damage to their socioeconomic and political lives. As China's economic resources, military strength, and influence increased in the early 1990s, the nature of Sino-U.S. relations changed accordingly. Especially given incidents like the U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Chinese people's evaluations of the U.S. might have shifted to concentrate on American policies toward China on issues like Taiwan and Tibet, as well as U.S. behavior in the international community and policies toward other developing countries. If this theory is true, then the significant change in Chinese people's attitudes toward the U.S. might be more than just the result of the CCP's propaganda campaigns, but also the consequence of Chinese people's reorientation in their evaluations of the U.S., in light of the transformed Sino-U.S. relations.

To fully understand the sources of this anti-Americanism in China, three critical questions need to be answered. First, how diversified is the media environment in China?[4] Basically, how many Chinese people use alternative media sources despite the CCP's control over media access? Second, how multidimensional are people's attitudes about the U.S.? Just as people may love some attributes and hate other attributes of the same person, can a well-informed Chinese citizen love and hate the U.S. at the same time—but for different reasons? And third, what are the impacts of CCP-controlled Chinese domestic media on people's attitudes toward the U.S.? Can we simply assume that Chinese domestic media faithfully conveys the CCP's propaganda campaigns and that this in turn effectively helps stage anti-Americanism? Using a two-city representative sampling survey in China implemented in 2005, this article provides some preliminary evidence for the aforementioned issues, clarifies some misunderstandings, and identifies promising avenues for future research on related topics.

Research Design and Data

Given the ongoing commercialization and marketization in Chinese mass media, as well as increasing access to new information technology for information, it is critical that our research design can capture some key features of the media environment in which Chinese citizens are embedded. Then we can systematically explore whether and how such characteristics of the Chinese media environment have or have not contributed to the dramatic shift in Chinese popular sentiment toward the U.S. over the past decades.

For many observers, the increased commercialization of Chinese media since the early 1990s has not changed its nature (Esarey, 2005; Li, 2000; Lynch, 1999; Su, 1994; Winfield & Peng, 2005; Y. Zhao, 1998). In their view, the semicommercialized media is still effectively and skillfully regulated by the CCP. The regime successfully stages public opinion to the benefit of its domestic and foreign policies, thus contributing to political stability in China (Stockmann, 2007, 2010; Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011). Some other scholars argue that the decentralization and commercialization of China's media industry, combined with the penetration of advanced information technology (e.g., satellite TV and the Internet), are gradually transforming the very nature of the media in China, weakening the political leadership's capability to exert monopolistic power over its content. The spread of new technology, the diverging interests of local governments, and the increasing media savvy of the Chinese public all work together to allow audiences in China greater usage of alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control, despite the central government's attempts to ban them (Akhavan-Majid, 2004; Baum, 2008; Lee, 1994; Su, 1994).

Given these unresolved debates on the nature of the media environment in China and the lack of systematic data for evaluating such debates before our fieldwork, it should be safer for us to maximize the chance to include as many Chinese citizens who use media sources beyond the CCP's control as possible, even without considering access to new information technology.[5]

Despite the fact that the Chinese regime has been employing substantial political resources to control citizens' access to alternative media sources, there has always been some consistent degree of "leakage." Even before the revolution of information technology, as represented by the enthusiastic adoption of satellite TV, the Internet, text messaging, and microblogging, people residing in some coastal cities, like Xia'men in Fujian Province, could easily pick up radio and TV signals from Taiwan with simple antennas. As a result, people in Xia'men have had convenient access to media sources beyond the CCP's control that are inaccessible in other parts of China. In many cases, the information through such

channels is framed differently from the official accounts that dominate China's domestic mass media on both domestic and international issues. This is particularly the case when it comes to news coverage on the U.S., given the interesting dynamics among Taiwan, mainland China, and the U.S. We therefore expect that residents of Xia'men have a much greater chance of encountering views on America that differ from the official ones disseminated in other parts of China, even without using new information technology.

Although increasing access to new information technology might have weakened Xia'men residents' geographic advantage, including Xia'men in our survey should definitely help maximize the chance of capturing those accessing media sources beyond the CCP's control. To facilitate the comparison and increase the possible contrast, another interior city, Chengdu in Sichuan Province, was selected for an identical survey. The survey was conducted in both cities by the Research Center for Contemporary China at Peking University in 2005, using GPS-based probability sampling. The sample was designed to be representative of the whole adult population (18 years or older) at the time of our survey in both Xia'men and Chengdu.[6]

The Media Environment in Urban China

A variety of Western journalists and scholars attribute negative attitudes toward the U.S. in China primarily to the CCP's propaganda campaigns through its controlled mass media. Basically, they claim, in order to boost its legitimacy and/or to serve factional politics, the regime's propaganda machines deliberately deprive people of "uncontaminated" information about the U.S. (Barme, 1995; French, 2007; Li, 2000; Su, 1994; Whiting, 1995; Xu, 1998). Unfortunately, most of the evidence used by those scholars is qualitative, even anecdotal, in nature. Moreover, to say that the regime *tries* to shape people's attitudes toward the U.S. for its own purposes is entirely different from being able to conclude that the regime actually *achieves* it,[7] particularly given the possibility that people might access alternative media sources through various channels. Before examining the effects of China's controlled mass media on popular sentiment toward the U.S., it is critical to be sure of how diversified the media environment is for different people in Chinese society. Specifically, how many people in China in fact have accessed media sources beyond the CCP's control?

In the survey, we asked respondents (a) "Which newspapers, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you read last week?" (b) "Which news Web sites, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you browse last week?" (c) "Which radio stations, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you listen to last week?" and (d) "Which TV channels, including domestic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and foreign ones, did you watch last week?" Interviewers were instructed to probe several times and record up to six different answers for each of these open-ended questions. Then we coded each respondent's answer to see if he or she did read newspapers, browse Web sites, listen to radio stations, or watch TV channels beyond the control of the CCP, including those from foreign countries as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan.[8] The results are presented in Table 1.

As clearly shown in Table 1, some people in both Chengdu and Xia'men do access media sources beyond the control of the CCP, particularly through satellite TV programs and the Internet. Residents who watched foreign, Hong Kong, or Taiwan TV programs constituted around 9.5% of the respondents in Chengdu and 6.8% in Xia'men. The Internet also enabled around 5% of Chengdu's respondents and 6.5% of Xia'men's respondents to access information beyond the CCP's control. Many fewer respondents read newspapers

Table 1

Access to free media in Chengdu and Xia'men

	Newspapers	Radio programs	TV programs	Internet	Total
Chengdu	0.11	0.00***	9.51	5.13	13.68
Xia'men	0.23	1.49	6.80	6.49	13.90

Note. Entries are weighted mean percentages. Source: China Two-City Survey, 2005 ($N = 1{,}606$).

***Significant differences in means between the two cities, with $p < .01$.

or listened to radio programs for similar purposes. Altogether, around 14% of the residents of Chengdu and Xia'men access media sources beyond the CCP's control through various information channels. While this figure is assuredly not negligible, it is still far from suggesting a prevailing phenomenon. However, the fact that people in Chengdu do access free media sources roughly to the same degree as those in Xia'men clearly reveals that the CCP can no longer wholly control Chinese citizens' usage of alternative media sources for information. New information technology has begun to penetrate into Chinese society and is assisting people to break the barriers created by the authoritarian regime.

When we compare Xia'men and Chengdu, the only statistically significant difference in their residents' usage of alternative media sources lies in listening to foreign radio programs, including those from Taiwan and Hong Kong. No respondents mentioned following any such radio programs in Chengdu, but around 1.5% of respondents in Xia'men mentioned a number of Taiwanese radio programs, primarily from Kinmen. This is fully understandable given the physical features of radio waves and Xia'men's geographical advantage in receiving such signals. When other information channels, like TV programs, newspapers, and the Internet, were limited or unavailable such as the situation in the 1970s and 1980s, this geographical advantage could play a significant role in diversifying Xia'men residents' media environment. However, when new information technology capable of circumventing geographic constraints in delivering information arrived, such as satellite TV and the Internet, residents of Xia'men no longer enjoyed the sole advantage of a diversified media environment. In terms of information diversity, with the help of information technology, the playground has been leveled off (Baum, 2008; Lee, 1994; Su, 1994; Winfield & Peng, 2005). Under this new situation, people's usage of alternative media sources is very likely to be strongly self-motivated—a minimum level of initiative is required for using new information technology to access alternative media sources. To verify this self-selection process, we run logit models with people's usage of media sources beyond the CCP's control as the dependent variable.

As displayed in Table 2, Model 2 shows that younger people with a higher level of education are more likely to use media sources outside the CCP's control.[9] Given that a large majority of netizens in China are young and well educated, this finding is not surprising. Males and those affiliated with the CCP are also more likely to use these alternative media sources. The latter might come as a surprise. One basis for this finding is that politically active citizens are better aware of the CCP's propaganda campaigns through controlled media. As politically sophisticated actors, they have a stronger incentive to use alternative media sources for information to evaluate the true situation of the regime with which they are affiliated.[10]

In sum, our survey in Chengdu and Xia'men clearly shows that Chinese urban residents' media environment has to some extent been diversified. This finding contradicts

Table 2
Self-selection in exposure to free media

	Model 1	Model 2
Age	−0.016 (0.039)	−0.013 (0.007)*
Age squared	0.000 (0.000)	
Education	0.169 (0.042)***	0.169 (0.042)***
Male	0.284 (0.164)*	0.283 (0.164)*
College	0.182 (0.286)	0.182 (0.286)
CCP affiliation	0.390 (0.188)**	0.395 (0.183)**
Xia'men	0.026 (0.166)	0.026 (0.164)
Constant	−3.947 (0.861)***	−3.999 (0.518)***

Note. Estimates were made via CLARIFY; missing data imputed via Amelia ($m = 5$). Source: China Two City Survey, 2005 ($N = 1,606$).
*$p < .10$; **$p < .05$; ***$p < .01$.

the claim that the CCP has wholly effective control of Chinese people's media access. People in both coastal Xia'men and inland Chengdu are found to have used media sources in foreign countries, along with those in Taiwan and Hong Kong, through various means. Moreover, new information technology does contribute to the possible dissemination of "uncontaminated" information in China, overcoming geographical constraints and leveling of people's usage of alternative media sources.[11] Nevertheless, the moderate percentage of people accessing alternative media sources revealed in our survey, around 14%, also casts doubt on the overly optimistic view that new information technology has radically transformed the nature of the media environment in today's China. Before analyzing the possible effects of this partially transformed and diversified media environment on people's attitudes toward the U.S., we need to be better informed of some cognitive properties of this popular sentiment.

## Bifurcated Popular Sentiment Toward the U.S.

It is not rare to find the coexistence of love and hatred in people's emotions toward others. We believe the same complexity may exist in people's attitudes toward a country. Given the same emotional change (e.g., from affection to dislike) in a multidimensional cognitive response, it is critical to differentiate between two essentially different processes with similar outcomes: (a) external shocks that affect all distinct dimensions in a similarly negative way and change the final response and (b) external shocks that reshape the salience of distinct dimensions and change the final response. The former is an overhaul change with evenly negative reflections in all dimensions; the latter resembles a reweighting process, assigning heavier weights to more negative dimensions based on informational cues in the surrounding media environment, without essential changes in any dimensions. Unfortunately, this critical difference cannot be captured by conventional survey instruments that ask for people's general impression of a country, such as the feeling thermometer adopted in contemporary research (Johnston, 2003, 2006; Johnston & Stockmann, 2007; Yu et al., 2001). Moreover, this potentially multidimensional property of popular sentiment toward the U.S. in China should not be confused with the distinctions between Chinese citizens' attitudes toward American government and those toward

ordinary American citizens (Johnston & Stockmann, 2007), which involve two objects rather than distinct facets of the same object.

It is actually nothing new to argue that popular sentiment toward the U.S. in China may have multiple facets (e.g., Johnston & Stockmann, 2007; Lampton, 2008; Tang, 2005; M. Zhao, 2001). However, except for some indirect and/or tentative evidence based on survey data or anecdotal stories, pertinent literature does not have systematic evidence with sound psychometric properties. Learning from the emerging literature on anti-Americanism (e.g., Chiozza, 2009; Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007a; Kopstein, 2009), as well as our own experience in fieldwork, in this article we specifically differentiate between people's evaluations of America's domestic political and socioeconomic systems and their evaluations of American foreign policies. Theoretically, a Chinese citizen may love the American political system and cherish its liberty, democracy, and advanced technology, but at the same time dislike American policies toward China and other developing countries.

In the two-city survey, respondents were asked to evaluate various aspects of American culture, society, and domestic and foreign politics, including America's science and technology, freedom and democracy, movies and TV programs, industrial products, education, policies on the Taiwan issue, policies toward China, and policies toward other developing countries.[12] The (weighted) mean values for these questions are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 demonstrates that the respondents clearly distinguished between American domestic achievements and its foreign policies in their evaluations. On a 5-point scale, they responded very positively to American science and technology (4.52), education (4.15), products (4.11), democracy and freedom (4.02), and movies and TV programs (4.01). This finding is compatible with the well-documented and unrelenting enthusiasm among Chinese youth for American popular culture, music, movies, TV programs, and cuisine, as well as the high percentage of graduates from Chinese universities applying for further education in the U.S. Moreover, the freedom and democracy embodied in the American political system were also highly regarded by the respondents. However, respondents who
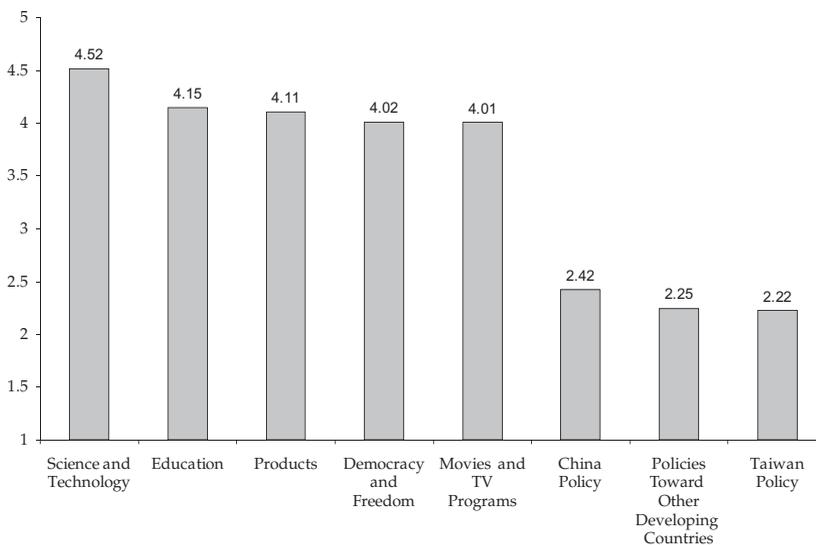
Figure 1. Evaluations of the U.S. on different aspects. Source: China Two-City Survey, 2005 ($N = 1,606$)

Table 3
Two-dimension confirmatory factor analysis

	Standardized loading
Non-foreign-policy dimension	
Science and technology	0.515***
Democracy and freedom	0.472***
Movies and TV programs	0.601***
Products	0.667***
Education	0.601***
Foreign policy dimension	
Taiwan policy	0.624***
China policy	0.810***
Policies toward other developing countries	0.804***
Covariance	0.110***
Goodness of model fit ($N = 1,506$)	
CFI	0.987
TLI	0.971
RMSEA	0.039[a]

Note. Estimates were made with Mplus 4.21. Missing data were addressed with ML estimation under MAR. Source: China Two-City Survey, 2005 ($N = 1,606$).
[a]90% CI $= 0.026, 0.052$.
***$p < .01$.

publicly revealed their fondness for American products and its political system did not hide their discontent with American policies toward China and other developing countries, as well as its Taiwan policy. As displayed in Figure 1, the average ratings for American foreign policies are lower than the other ratings, consistently below the midpoint of the 5-point scale. To rigorously test the conjecture that people's attitudes toward the U.S. are multidimensional, we choose confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine if ordinary Chinese citizens can systematically distinguish American foreign policies from its achievements in other areas. The results are reported in Table 3.

Before interpreting the CFA results, it is very important to make sure that the specified two-dimension measurement model fits the empirical evidence. In other words, how effective is the two-dimension CFA model in uncovering the latent structure of the respondents' attitudes toward the U.S.? Three model fit indices, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA, are examined: As expected, both CFI and TLI are larger than the conventional threshold of 0.9, and RMSEA is much less than the conventional threshold of 0.08 (Bentler, 1990; Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Basically, the respondents' attitudes toward the U.S. did consist of two distinct latent factors rather than being unidimensional. People's evaluations of American science and technology, democracy and freedom, movies and TV programs, products, and education collectively tap one dimension. And their perceptions of American policies on the Taiwan issue, toward China, and toward other developing countries collectively tap the other dimension. Furthermore, while these two latent factors are significantly correlated, the correlation is substantively small (.11). In other words, Chinese urbanites with positive evaluations of American domestic achievements are somewhat more likely to view American foreign policies favorably, but the spillover effect is quite weak.[13]

Basically the survey data show that many Chinese perceive the U.S. positively, as the richest, most powerful, and most technologically advanced country in the world. They also perceive the U.S. as a symbol of liberty and democracy. At the same time, however, U.S. foreign policies, especially those on the Taiwan issue and toward China, are widely considered an infringement upon Chinese sovereignty and a continuing source of humiliation. Therefore, it is quite reasonable that Chinese citizens might like America's political institutions, as well as the way American society works, but may well oppose its foreign policies and behavior in the international community. This finding is compatible with the bourgeoning research on anti-Americanism concluding that the policies and actions of the American government play an important role in generating negative sentiment among the Chinese (Johnston, 2006; Johnston & Stockmann, 2007), Europeans (Isernia, 2007; Kopstein, 2009), and Middle Easterners (Chiozza, 2007, 2009).

Not only are the two clusters of aspects evaluated differently, but they are also distinct dimensions that are largely, if not completely, independent of each other. These two interrelated but essentially distinct dimensions, together with the semidiversified media environment in which Chinese urbanites are embedded, provide us with some analytical advantages in scrutinizing the possible impacts of China's controlled domestic mass media on its popular sentiment toward the U.S.

The CCP's Intentional Mobilization?

Given the long-term and structural contentions between the U.S. and China in the arena of international politics, it is reasonable to argue that the CCP's intentional mobilization of its popular sentiment toward the U.S. is more likely to be focused on the latter's foreign policies, particularly those related to China, like the issues of Taiwan and Tibet. Thus, Chinese urban citizens' evaluations of American foreign policies offer a most likely scenario for examining the effectiveness of the CCP's propaganda campaigns through its controlled media in shaping people's pertinent attitudes. However, if we cannot find systematic evidence for such impacts on people's evaluations of the U.S. regarding its foreign policies, then some red flags should be raised regarding the validity of the arguments about the CCP's propaganda campaigns through controlled media.

Nevertheless, positive results in a most likely scenario are neither very valuable nor very helpful for increasing our confidence in the validity of any arguments, as emphasized by methodologists (e.g., Eckstein, 1975; Gerring, 2004). For the purpose of reassurance, least likely cases should be used for theory testing. Theoretically speaking, Chinese urban residents' attitudes toward the U.S. in terms of its domestic, socioeconomic, and political systems and achievements are much less likely to be the target of the CCP's propaganda campaigns through its controlled media. This makes their evaluations of American science and technology, education, products, democracy and liberty, and movies and TV programs much less likely to be the targets of any possible mobilization from the CCP, qualifying them as the least likely scenario for empirical examination. If we do find systematic evidence for the impact of the CCP's propaganda campaigns through controlled media in the non-foreign-policy dimension of popular sentiment, then our confidence in the validity of the CCP's propaganda campaigns through controlled media could be significantly boosted.

Methodologically, conventional single-equation regression analysis is neither appropriate nor efficient, for two reasons. First, as shown in Table 2, people who access media sources beyond the CCP's control are essentially different from those who do not. Therefore, without simultaneously modeling this self-selection process, any estimation of its impact on popular sentiment toward the U.S. can be biased (e.g., Achen, 1986; Angrist,

Imbens, & Rubin, 1996; Barnow, Cain, & Goldberger, 1980; Berk, 1983; Heckman, 1979; Winship, 1992). Second, we have multiple ordinal indicators for people's evaluations of the U.S. on both foreign policy and non-foreign-policy dimensions. To minimize the possible biases introduced by measurement errors, latent factor scores extracted through measurement models are much more efficient than simple summary indices (e.g., Achen, 1983; Bollen & Lennox, 1991; Fabrigar, Krosnick, & MacDougall, 2005). Given the aforementioned concerns, an integrated structural equation model (SEM) with both a measurement model and a simultaneous equation system is the most appropriate statistical tool for analysis.

Some critical controls, as identified in pertinent literature, are also included in the model. In addition to collecting information through different media sources, Chinese people may also learn about the U.S. through direct or indirect interaction with Americans. Although opportunities to interact with Americans may be rare for many citizens in rural areas, it is no longer that uncommon for residents in metropolitan areas like Chengdu and Xia'men. Thus, respondents were asked if (a) they had been to the U.S., (b) their families or friends had been to the U.S., and (c) they had had any personal interactions with any Americans. Based on these three questions, we create a new binary variable: personal interaction with Americans. If respondents gave negative answers to all three questions, this was coded as 0; otherwise, it was coded as 1.

To control for the possible impact of material interests on respondents' attitudes toward the U.S., respondents were asked whether their corporations, enterprises, or work units had any American investment. This was a binary variable, with 1 indicating the existence of American investment and 0 indicating otherwise. In addition, macropolitical and economic characteristics that could have systematically differentiated Chengdu from Xia'men were controlled with an indicator of whether the respondent was a resident of Xia'men.[14]

As the literature on Chinese nationalism (Barme, 1995; Seckington, 2005; Shirk, 2007; Whiting, 1995; Xu, 1998) and anti-Americanism (Chiozza, 2007; Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007b) suggests, nationalism could have dragged people's attitudes toward America in a negative direction.[15] To control for this possible impact of nationalism (or "patriotism" as it is called in China), respondents were asked if they completely agreed, agreed, disagreed, or completely disagreed with the following statement: "Regardless of the flaws or deficiencies our country might have, we should still be loyal to our country."[16] Respondents' political interest was measured by their answers to the question "How interested are you in political issues?"[17]

We intentionally contrast the examination of respondents' evaluations of American non-foreign-policy issues against that of their perceptions of American foreign policies by specifying two comparable SEMs. These two SEMs share the same simultaneous equation system but have their own measurement models for non-foreign-policy and foreign policy issues. In subsequent statistical analyses, any uncovered similarities and/or differences in the shared simultaneous equation system can indicate whether there are commonly shared or distinct underlying mechanisms that drive people's attitudes toward the U.S. regarding its foreign policies versus other political and socioeconomic achievements. All missing values in the data are appropriately addressed with the multiple imputation method using Amelia (King, Honaker, Joseph, & Scheve, 2001). Statistical inferences are made using results averaged over five full data sets following Rubin's rule (Rubin, 1987). Estimation results are reported in Table 4, and the full SEMs are also presented visually in Figure 2. In path diagrams, solid lines denote statistically significant coefficients, with dotted lines indicating insignificant coefficients.

Table 4

SEM results for evaluations of the U.S.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Images of the U.S. on non-foreign-policy dimension	Accessing foreign media	Images of the U.S. on foreign policy dimension	Accessing foreign media
Measurement model				
Science and technology	1.000[a]			
Democracy	1.195***			
Movies and TV programs	1.595***			
Products	1.447***			
Education	1.393***			
Taiwan policy			1.000[a]	
China policy			1.048***	
Policy toward developing countries			0.981***	
Structural model				
Age	−0.003 (0.001)*	−0.008 (0.004)**	−0.002 (0.003)	−0.008 (0.004)**
Education	0.027 (0.012)**	0.089 (0.016)***	−0.038 (0.027)	0.089 (0.016)***
Male	−0.014 (0.027)	0.141 (0.093)	−0.060 (0.063)	0.141 (0.093)
Political interest	0.013 (0.018)	0.073 (0.064)	0.026 (0.039)	0.073 (0.064)
Accessing foreign media	−0.115 (0.121)		0.254 (0.262)	
Personal interaction with Americans	0.069 (0.025)***		0.028 (0.054)	
American investment in enterprises	0.027 (0.074)		−0.020 (0.172)	
Xia'men	0.055 (0.021)***		0.171 (0.039)***	
Patriotism	0.063 (0.021)***		−0.140 (0.041)***	

(*Continued*)

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Table 4
(Continued)

|	Model 1		Model 2	
	Images of the U.S. on non-foreign-policy dimension	Accessing foreign media	Images of the U.S. on foreign policy dimension	Accessing foreign media
CCP affiliation	0.146 (0.123)	0.201 (0.097)**	−0.298 (0.263)	0.201 (0.097)**
Error term covariance: Access to foreign media				
Goodness of model fit (N = 1,606)				
CFI (mean)	0.904 (SD = 0.009, MI = 5)		0.947 (SD = 0.007, MI = 5)	
TLI (mean)	0.904 (SD = 0.008, MI = 5)		0.930 (SD = 0.008, MI = 5)	
RMSEA (mean)	0.046 (SD = 0.001, MI = 5)		0.034 (SD = 0.003, MI = 5)	

Note. Values are averaged coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Estimates were made with M-plus 4.21, with five data sets imputed through Amelia. Source: China Two-City Survey, 2005 (N = 1,606).

[a]For identification purposes, this parameter has been fixed to 1.

$*p < .10$; $**p < .05$; $***p < .01$.

(a) Non-Foreign-Policy Dimension
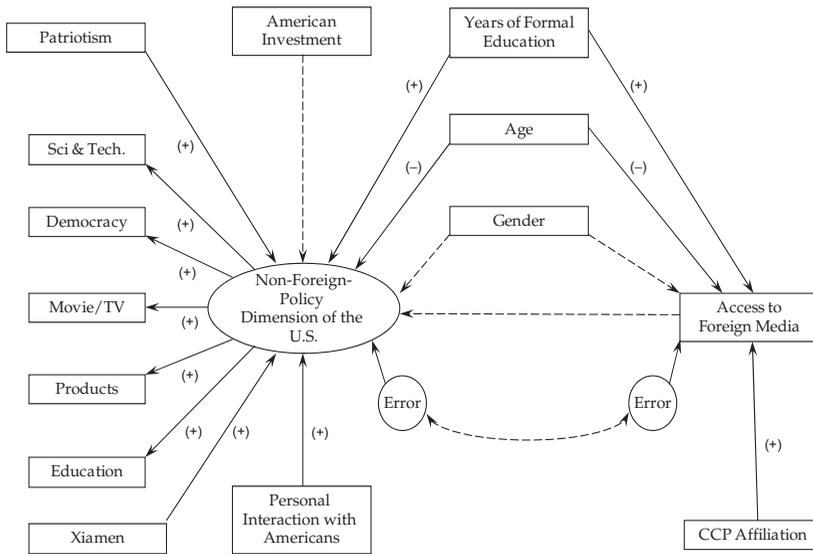
(b) Foreign Policy Dimension
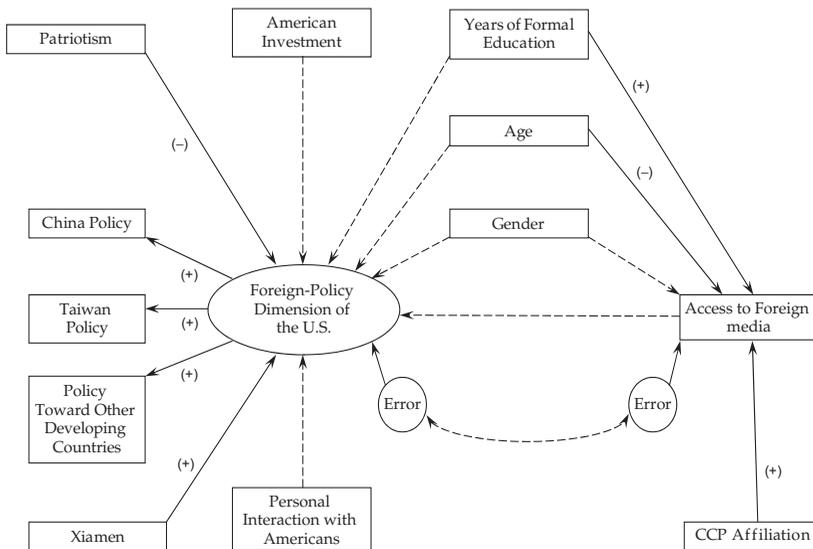
Figure 2. Path diagrams for evaluations of the U.S.

Similar to the evaluation of the CFA results in Table 3, we need to make sure that the whole SEM specification is satisfactory, given the empirical data. Therefore, we examine model-fit indices before making any statistical and substantive inferences. Basically, as displayed at the bottom of Table 4, all comparative fit indices suggest that the specified models fit the data well: CFIs and TLIs are larger than 0.9 and RMSEAs are less than 0.08.[18] Now we move on to the interpretations of path coefficients, both statistically and substantively.

First of all, the most important message is that *after* modeling the self-selecting process in respondents' usage of alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control, it has *no* significant effect on respondents' attitudes toward the U.S., regardless of which dimension is concerned. Compared with those only acquiring information from Chinese domestic media, people with possible extra information from alternative media sources, *ceteris paribus*, are no different in terms of their evaluations of American foreign policies or the U.S.'s domestic, socioeconomic, and political systems and achievements. Little empirical evidence can be found, at least in these two cities, for the arguments that Chinese people's negative evaluations of the U.S. should be primarily attributed to the CCP's intentional propaganda campaigns through its controlled media, given the lack of significant findings in both the most likely and least likely scenarios.[19] Thus, the validity of such arguments, as well as associated assumptions, should be questioned and merits further examination with better data and more refined measures.

Second, the underlying mechanisms that drive respondents' attitudes toward the U.S. on non-foreign-policy versus foreign policy issues are different. Younger people with a higher level of education tend to give higher appraisals of science and technology, freedom and democracy, movies and TV programs, products, and education in the U.S. Personal interaction with Americans leads to more favorable attitudes on these issues among the respondents. What appears surprising, however, is that nationalistic Chinese urbanites are *not* more likely to denounce the freedom and democracy in America. In other words, nationalism, or at least affirmative nationalism in Whiting's (1995) phrasing, does not negatively bias the attitudes of Chinese urban residents toward the U.S. on non-foreign-policy issues and prevent them from appreciating American advanced technology, democratic systems, or popular culture.[20] This is critically important for our understanding of both the development in China and the social psychology of its citizens.

Things are different for evaluations of American foreign policies. The most important factor is people's nationalistic orientation: Those who are nationalistically oriented are more likely to develop negative evaluations of American policies toward China and other developing countries. When sovereignty or national pride is involved, we find no differences in terms of age, gender, or educational attainment. Personal interaction with Americans and economic connection with the U.S. play *no* role in shaping people's attitudes toward American foreign policies either. The conventional wisdom on the close relationship between nationalism and anti-Americanism is again confirmed with the systematic data from urban China. It is critical to remember, however, that anti-Americanism is targeted *only* at American foreign policies. Chinese urban residents' evaluations of American political freedom and democracy are loaded on the other, nearly independent factor, and are shaped by a different matrix of variables. Moreover, nationalistically oriented Chinese citizens tend to be more appreciative of America's achievements in such aspects.

Finally, people who reside in Xia'men, on average, tend to give higher appraisals to the U.S. on both foreign policy and non-foreign-policy issues. This finding seems to suggest that different social environments and historical traditions might have some impact on people's attitudes toward the U.S., which, unfortunately, cannot be systematically examined here due to the limits of our data.[21]

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

How should we interpret the significant changes in popular sentiment toward the U.S. in China between the late 1980s and the early 2000s? This is not just a challenge for journalists and China scholars, but also possesses critical consequences for Sino-U.S. relations.

With the help of a unique survey data set collected in two Chinese cities in 2005, we find some clues on how to appropriately interpret such changes and provide some prefatory but systematic evidence to evaluate alternative explanations. At the same time, we are able to do some preliminary analysis of the impact of the CCP's propaganda campaigns through its controlled media on people's attitudes toward the U.S. in both most likely and least likely scenarios.

First, due to the impact of semicommercialization and marketization in Chinese mass media, and more importantly the penetration of new information technology, the media environment facing ordinary Chinese citizens has been diversified to some extent. In both coastal and interior cities (i.e., Xia'men and Chengdu, respectively), around 14% of residents have used alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control through a variety of means. Most importantly, increasingly easy access to satellite TV and the Internet has dramatically weakened the impacts of geographical constraints on accessing alternative media sources and facilitated the diversification of the media environment in China. However, at the same time, the percentage of Chinese urban residents accessing free media is still relatively small. Basically, the situation of free media usage in urban China is not as optimistic as some researchers have suggested, despite the undeniable impacts of new information technology on Chinese society.

Second, urban Chinese citizens' attitudes toward the U.S. are multidimensional, rather than monolithic, as confirmed by our survey instruments with sound psychometric properties. The general impression of the U.S. among the residents of Chengdu and Xia'men is rather positive. However, when we focus on people's evaluations of the non-foreign-policy aspects of the U.S., we find that the average ratings are even more favorable than what others have established using the general feeling thermometer. For most people in these two cities, America is perceived as a society with abundant wealth, advanced technology, a vibrant democratic system, and quality education. Nevertheless, when the same people are asked about their perceptions of American policies on the Taiwan issue and toward China and other developing countries, ratings plummet. This finding demonstrates that the conventional feeling thermometer measure of people's general impression combines too much and even contrasting information into a single index, a process that hides rather than helps us understand people's true feelings toward the U.S. CFA further attests to the necessity of differentiating people's evaluations of American foreign polices from other issues. Since these two dimensions are clearly separated and move nearly independently, examining them separately could enrich our understanding of how the Chinese perceive the U.S. and other foreign countries, like Japan and France, and help us understand the formation and possible direction of changes in such popular sentiment.

Third, conventional wisdom may have overestimated the efficacy of the CCP's media control and propaganda efforts or oversimplified the CCP's strategies in mobilizing domestic support for its foreign policy concerns, specifically when it comes to shaping popular sentiment toward the U.S. The results of the statistical analysis do not directly challenge the existence of the CCP's attempt at controlling its domestic media or its efforts in launching propaganda campaigns through this controlled media. Even though our measure of media usage is imperfect, we find that the ability of the CCP to shape Chinese citizens' attitudes toward the U.S. through consistent control the media[22] is much less effective than ordinarily believed. We do, however, find that such efforts are most effective in shaping opinions about U.S. foreign policy. We find that these effects are more nuanced in ways that have kept them from being noticed in most conventional analyses. While our data do not allow us to reach further conclusions in this regard, they point towards a fascinating mixture of temporal, strategic, or issue-specific dynamics that future research will be needed to

untangle. To further test the first interpretation, we recommend more refined measures of people's usage of alternative media sources, with the help of content analysis. To further explore the second interpretation, appropriately crafted original measures and new research designs, like panel surveys or even field experiments, are indispensable.

Last but not least, nationalism matters. Nevertheless, nationalism's impact on anti-Americanism is much more nuanced and complicated than conventionally assumed. When it comes to popular sentiment toward American foreign policies, more nationalistic Chinese urban residents are indeed more critical and inclined to hold more negative views toward the U.S. By contrast, when it comes to other aspects of the U.S., the same group of people, despite heightened nationalism, are actually *more* likely to appreciate the U.S.'s advantages with respect to science and technology, education, political systems, and other socioeconomic achievements. This is compatible with what Johnston and his colleague have found with the help of survey data in Beijing: The increasing anti-Americanism in China should not be simply and exclusively attributed to the CCP's mobilization and propaganda campaigns. America's behavior in the international community and policies toward China might also be held responsible, at least to some extent (Johnston, 2003, 2006; Johnston & Stockmann, 2007).

Notes

1. Gries talked to some university students who had just gotten their F-1 visas but still marched together with others outside of the U.S. embassy. These students did worry that their visas might be canceled if they were found to be among the marchers. Even so, they donned masks and joined the demonstration (Gries, 2001).

2. See Barme (1995), Johnston (2004), Johnston and Stockmann (2007), Ma (2002), and Xu (1998).

3. According to Johnston's research, which has the best available time-series data on Chinese citizens' attitudes toward the U.S. in the Beijing area, "the trend line in amity toward the United States suggests a decline between 1998 and 2004" (Johnston, 2006, p. 364), and the slope is steepening.

4. Here "diversity" refers to people's usage of a variety of media sources under and beyond the CCP's control.

5. With the help of new information technology, more Chinese citizens should be able to access information beyond the CCP's control. Therefore, our design takes a conservative approach to make sure that we have enough variance in people's access to alternative media sources.

6. Xia'men and Chengdu are the only two strata. The PSUs are square grids of half degrees of longitude by half degrees of latitude. In Chengdu, there are 768 grids covering 3,564,100 people. In Xia'men, there are 177 grids covering 1,176,376 people. A total of 30 PSUs were selected for Chengdu and 20 PSUs for Xia'men. Some of the selected grids fell on water or rice fields and thus have no residents. After excluding them, we have 27 PSUs for Chengdu and 18 PSUs for Xia'men. The secondary sampling units (SSUs) are smaller square grids of 90 meters by 90 meters within each selected PSU. We collected all addresses within each SSU. The Fifth Census data collected in 2000 were used to define primary and secondary square grids and to calculate the population density of each PSU for subsequent stages of sampling. The end result is that 1,141 households in Chengdu and 1,197 households in Xia'men were randomly selected for interviewing. For more information on GPS sampling, see Landry and Shen (2004).

7. Some Chinese citizens are actually aware that the coverage of America in China's media might be contaminated: 42.3% of respondents in the Zhejiang-Valparaiso survey believed that Chinese media coverage of the United States was not correct (Yu et al., 2001). Some scholars further notice that in order to avoid backlash, the Chinese regime also tries to hide critical information that may generate anti-Americanism (e.g., Shirk, 2007).

8. The list of newspapers, radio programs, Internet Web sites, and TV programs identified by our respondents as beyond the control of the CCP is available upon request. We do realize that

this measure of people's usage of pertinent information from alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control is rough. However, three pieces of information increase our confidence in the face and construct validity of this measure in capturing respondents' possible usage of free and pertinent information. First, according to the answers provided by respondents, those who did use alternative media sources watched TV channels like CNN, Sky News, as well as China Television and ETTV News in Taiwan, and browsed Web sites like MSN News, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. The CCP has little influence over the content of the news coverage in these media sources. Second, in the following analysis on who does use alternative media sources beyond the CCP's control, respondents' official affiliation with the CCP is a statistically significant predictor, after controlling for their socioeconomic status. These people are politically sensitive and motivated, and they are expected to pay attention to information more than just entertainment or commercial news in alternative media sources. Third, in a different analysis on the impacts of accessing alternative media sources on people's trust in the central government, this measure of using alternative media sources substantively and statistically significantly weakens people's trust in the Chinese central government after controlling for a variety of possible confounding variables.

9. Age is a continuous variable recording respondents' real age. Education is measured with years of formal education. College is a binary variable indicating whether respondents have a college education. CCP affiliation is a binary variable indicating whether respondents are members of the CCP, members of the Communist Youth League, or have filed applications for CCP membership.

10. An interesting phenomenon one author observed in the summer of 1989 was that many local political leaders and socioeconomic elites (who were usually affiliated with the CCP) listened to the Voice of America for information on what really happened in Beijing, while most average citizens just watched CCTV for related information.

11. Without doing a content analysis and having pertinent information on respondents' news consumption behavior, it is difficult to argue conclusively that this usage of alternative media sources does disseminate "uncontaminated" information, since people may avoid politically relevant information. However, this critique also applies to the story of the CCP's effective control of its domestic media, since Chinese people have choices over their news consumption and may also avoid politically relevant information in domestic media. Here we simply argue that those who do use alternative media sources are more likely to encounter politically relevant information that differs from the official discourse imposed by the CCP in its domestic media.

12. For all of the 5-point scales, 1 refers to *very bad* and 5 refers to *very good*.

13. We also asked for respondents' general evaluations of the U.S. using the standard feeling thermometer with a 5-point scale. The weighted mean value of this general evaluation is 3.29. It is interesting to note that the average across these eight items is similar to the average for the single general impression scale, suggesting that our eight measures cover the range of opinions about all aspects of America reasonably well.

14. Since both cities are economically successful and have relatively well-educated citizens, we are inclined to interpret this fixed effect as a proxy for the variety of different social, historical, and cultural factors associated with Xia'men and Chengdu.

15. Nationalism is a double-edged sword for the CCP. While nationalist sentiments may boost the regime's legitimacy, such attitudes may also significantly constrain its diplomatic maneuverability. As detailed by some scholars, documents issued by the Central Propaganda Department—which is responsible for media control in China—require journalists and editors to avoid overmobilization of nationalist sentiment in the society (Johnston & Stockmann 2007; Stockmann, 2009; Brady, 2006; Shirk, 2007; Seckington, 2005).

16. We do recognize that nationalism is a multidimensional concept with varying implications from distinct dimensions (e.g., Johnston, 2003; Rosen, 2004; Smith, 2001). Therefore, more systematic work on the influence of nationalism, with much more refined measures, should be done in this regard. Due to the space of the survey, we cannot accommodate more survey instruments to measure this multidimensional concept. What we have in the survey is closer to what Whiting (1995) calls "affirmative nationalism" (p. 298).

17. There are four response categories for this question: "very interested," "interested," "not very interested," and "not interested at all."

18. We also estimate an identical SEM for respondents' general impression of the U.S., which is measured on a 5-point scale with larger values indicating a better general impression. Nevertheless, the model fit, suggested by a TLI slightly lower than 0.9, is not satisfying, and except for personal contact with Americans, neither structural nor psychological variables have any effect on respondents' general impression of the U.S. These findings further suggest that the "general impression" measure, widely used by students of Chinese politics to gauge people's attitudes toward the U.S., could have hidden more nuanced and interesting underlying dynamics. The results of this SEM are available upon request.

19. Again, we do recognize that our measure of people's usage of free media should be further refined, with more information on the content of respondents' accessed media. Unfortunately, content analysis is beyond the capacity of this article.

20. This resonates with the reality in China. An interesting and related phenomenon happened in 2008 during the Olympic torch rally in France: A large group of "nationalistic" Chinese citizens launched protests and boycotts against the supermarkets of the Carrefour Group, a French corporation, because of the nasty interruptions during the Olympic torch rally in France. Meanwhile, there was an enthusiastic and optimistic discussion on the Internet over the possibility that a Chinese company from Gansu might spend 2 million euros to buy 81% of the stocks of a French company specializing in advanced numerically controlled machine tools. The nationalistic emotion could be easily observed during the discussion, due to the significant implications of this advanced technique for China's military modernization and the possible construction of an aircraft carrier. For information on this, see Song, Wang, Huang, Song, and Liu (2009, pp. 16–17).

21. This significant geographical difference might be related to different local histories and traditions. Residents of Xia'men have a much richer tradition of international immigration. A significant portion of these immigrants have been legally or illegally channeled into the U.S. This tradition and various connections with their overseas relatives and families may have played some role here. Again, all of these conjectures need to be tested against more appropriate empirical evidence in future studies.

22. Cai's work on the news coverage of the U.S. in China's newspapers, using content analysis, also challenges this assumption of the CCP's effective, persistent, and constant media control in mobilizing anti-Americanism: Basically, news coverage about the U.S. has been quite varied on a wide range of topics in today's China (Cai, 2002).

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