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Article in *Journal of Chinese Political Science* · September 2010

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Political Orientation, Party Affiliation, and American Attitudes Towards China

Peter Hays Gries · H. Michael Crowson

Published online: 3 June 2010

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Abstract Little is known about how the political orientations and party affiliations of ordinary Americans impact their perceptions of China. Based on our surveys, we find that partisanship does indeed impact American views of China. Self-reported “conservatives” perceive significantly greater threat in China’s rise, hold more negative views of the Chinese government, exhibit more prejudice towards the Chinese people, and advocate a much tougher U.S. China policy than self-reported “liberals” do. Republicans perceive significantly greater threat from China and advocate tougher China policies than Democrats do, but party affiliation has a lesser impact on prejudice scores. Regression analyses reveals that education, gender, and age each has an impact on American views of China, but that impact is negligible compared to partisanship.

Keywords Party Affiliation · Political Orientation · Conservatism · Prejudice · U.S. China Policy

Introduction

Do political orientation and party affiliation impact American attitudes towards the Chinese people, the Chinese government, and preferred U.S. China policies?

The partisan inside-the-Beltway story is well known. It is nonetheless complex, with both the Democratic and Republican Parties internally divided on China. On the left, some Democrats argue for a pro-China policy of engagement to better integrate

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China into the global economic, political, and security orders. Other Democrats, concerned about Chinese human rights abuses, advocate a tougher China policy. For instance, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi issued a press release on March 12, 2008 condemning the Chinese crackdown on Buddhist monks in Tibet: “The plight of the people of Tibet is a challenge to the conscience of the world and the United States must be prepared to confront the Chinese government when they violate the human rights of their people” [27]. Yet other Democrats, many from heavily blue collar districts, join Big Labor in condemning unfair Chinese trade practices and advocating tougher U.S. trade policies towards China.

On the right, Republicans in Washington are equally divided on China policy. Business conservatives advocate a friendly China policy conducive to increased trade, investment, and profits. The U.S.-China Business Council, which lobbies on behalf of U.S. companies doing business with China, works closely with many Republicans on the Hill to promote pro-China and block anti-China legislation. Military hawks and Christian conservatives, however, argue for much tougher China policies. At a regional security conference in Singapore on June 4, 2005, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld [29] asked, “Since no nation threatens China, one must wonder: Why these continuing large and expanding arms purchases?” New Jersey Congressman Christopher Smith, who has held dozens of hearings on Capital Hill to deplore China’s lack of religious freedoms, has also advocated a tougher U.S. China policy, but for very different reasons. “China’s continued repression of religion is among the most despotic in the world,” Smith [32], a Christian conservative, argues. “Today, numerous underground Roman Catholic priests and bishops and Protestant pastors languish in the infamous concentration camps of China for simply proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

The elite level story is thus complex, but it is relatively transparent, played out publicly in op-eds and debates on Capital Hill. But what do we know about Main Street partisanship and attitudes towards China? How do rank and file Democrats and Republicans feel about China and China policy?

While there are several fine qualitative studies of American views of China [20, 22, 24], there is surprisingly little quantitative research on the relationship between political orientation and attitudes towards China. To our knowledge, sources of quality data are few and far between. Letters to the editor and op-eds, especially in small regional papers, can serve as a window into mass American opinion on China. But such evidence of China attitudes rarely touches directly on issues of political orientation, and has not to our knowledge been systematically sampled or studied.

National polls are a more promising source of information, as they usually include questions about both political orientation and party affiliation. However, scholarship based on national polling data is divided on the impact of partisanship on attitudes towards the broader topic of foreign policy. Shapiro and Bloch-Elkon [30] argue that partisan cleavages have grown over the years, not just on social and economic issues, but on foreign policy issues as well. Using mostly the same Chicago Council data, however, Page and Bouton ([26]: 95-96) disagree, arguing that party affiliation and liberalism/conservatism have a “limited effect” on foreign policy attitudes.

This secondary literature on the national polling data, furthermore, does not include much analysis of the relationship between political orientation and attitudes towards China in particular. We therefore analyzed the extant polling data ourselves, using the

two most recent polls that include the most questions about China—the Chicago Council’s 2006 Global Views survey and the 2007 Zogby survey commissioned by the Committee of 100 (C-100), a national organization of prominent Chinese-Americans.

The Chicago Council’s 2006 Global Views survey [6] included a four response category question assessing how much respondents trust China to keep its commitments, and a 100 degree feeling thermometer towards China’s “country and its people.” They also asked questions with dichotomous response categories about whether China is a U.S. rival or partner and whether the U.S. should engage or contain China. We ran simple correlations between their six point liberal-conservative scale and these four China questions and found statistically significant relationships. Greater levels of conservatism were associated with less positive feelings about China and its people ($r=-.114$), lower levels of trust ($r=-.142$), less endorsement of the “partners” designation ($r=-.062$), and greater support for containment ($r=.163$). However, the magnitude of these correlations was quite small, and the meanings of the questions and their response categories were often unclear. For instance, the object of the feeling thermometer was both China as a “country” and China’s “people,” two very different concepts. Conflating the two makes it impossible to determine whether the variation in Americans’ responses to the Chicago Council’s feeling thermometer is best attributed to their attitudes towards the Chinese government, the Chinese people, or both. Furthermore, forcing respondents to choose between the polar opposites of China as a partner vs. a rival and engaging vs. containing China does not allow respondents to express more ambivalent attitudes about China.

Analysis of the 2007 C-100 national poll, moreover, revealed no significant effect of partisanship on their single item measure of perceived Chinese military threat. C-100 reported that a slightly higher percentage of Democrats (23.7%) than Republicans (22.3%) agreed that China represented a “serious threat” to the United States militarily. However, when we tested the difference in overall levels of perceived threat between Democrats and Republicans in their sample using a Mann-Whitney test, we found no statistically significant difference in their mean ranks on the dependent measure ($p=.861$).¹ One possible explanation for why no difference was found in the C-100 poll is that their four response categories were insufficiently sensitive in their measurement of perceived threat. Their response options, “serious threat,” “potential threat,” “no threat,” and “ally,” do not appear to be mutually exclusive categories. For instance, a respondent might view China as a current “ally” but also as a “potential threat,” calling into question the meaning behind the responses they choose. A second possible explanation is that the C-100 threat variable was operationalized using only a single item which raises questions about its reliability as an indicator of threat perception. Measurement theorists have demonstrated that the reliability of psychological and attitudinal measures (like threat perception) tends to be lower when there are fewer items utilized to measure a construct [25]. Low measurement reliability, furthermore, typically attenuates the observed relationships between variables.

¹ The authors would like to thank the Committee of 100 for sharing their polling data to allow us to conduct this statistical test.

The extant national polling data is thus suggestive but inconclusive. The Chicago Council's data suggested some impact of political orientation, while the C-100 data revealed no impact. We believe that the reason for this inconsistency is that national polls are designed to uncover temporal changes in substantive opinions about discrete policy issues; they are not designed to tap deeper, enduring attitudes like prejudice. They therefore use single item questions that lack the internal reliability needed to effectively capture deeper and more enduring attitudes. Single item questions with restricted response categories significantly limit our ability to analyze the nuances of respondents' attitudes toward China generally, and the interrelations between political orientation and China attitudes and policy preferences in particular.

To better understand the links between political orientation and China policy preferences among the American public, we conducted three surveys of our own with a total of 1,561 adult Americans in February and August of 2008. The surveys included two single item measures of political orientation: 1) liberal-conservative (on a 1–7 scale), and 2) party preference (Democrat and Republican; “Independent” was not included in our analysis as it is not clear whether self-reported “Independents” stood between the two major parties, or outside of them). More importantly, in each of the first two surveys we asked 36 questions about China, which were aggregated into five separate China scales, tapping 1) the perceived symbolic threat that China poses to American values, 2) the perceived material threat that China poses to U.S. military or economic dominance, 3) prejudice, or negative attitudes towards the Chinese people, 4) negative attitudes towards the Chinese government, and 5) preferences regarding U.S. China policies. With multiple multi-item measures of attitudes towards China, our surveys provide new leverage on the question of how political orientation impacts American attitudes towards China and preferred U.S. China policies.

Why is this important? Do popular American attitudes towards China matter for understanding U.S. China policy? First, elite U.S. foreign policy decision makers are not simply computers responding rationally to policy inputs. They are Americans too.² Therefore, understanding how political orientation impacts American attitudes

² A 2005 Zogby survey [3] commissioned by C-100 would at first glance appear to contradict this argument. It found that a sample of elite congressional staffers (54%) were much more likely than the general public (24%) and business leaders (30%) to view China as an “economic threat.” Similarly, they found that congressional staffers (36%) were much more likely than the general public (15%) and business leaders (16%) to view China as a “serious military threat.” C-100 was so alarmed by this discrepancy that they highlighted it in the title of their 6 April 2005 press release, “Survey Finds General Public and Business Leader Views Aligned on China, but Congressional Staff at Variance with Prevailing Views.” However, a closer look at their survey reveals that while the general public was surveyed in December 2004, the Congressional staffers were polled in March 2005, immediately after China's National People's Congress (NPC) passed its “Anti-Secession Law,” heightening military tensions across the Taiwan Strait. It is thus likely that a period effect heightened threat perception among the Congressional staffers sample beyond what they would ordinarily have been. This intuition is supported by the results of a more recent C-100 survey, which polled both the general public and Congressional staffers at approximately the same time over the end of August and early September 2007. In the 2007 survey [5], elite and public responses to questions about Chinese military and economic power were much more comparable, with 19% and 22% viewing China as a serious military threat respectively, and 32% and 25% viewing China as a serious economic threat respectively. Rather than viewing these results as a dramatic decline in threat perception among Congressional staffers as the C-100 report suggests, we would view the earlier 2005 figures as an aberration due to the timing of the 2005 survey. Congressional staffers may be an elite, but they are Americans too.

toward China more generally should help us understand the ways that elite U.S. decision makers perceive China, framing and constraining the policy options that they pursue. Second, while popular opinion is certainly not the only factor influencing the making of foreign policy, it is an important one [21]. Indeed, Ole Holsti [18] argues that the impact of public opinion on foreign policy making is only likely to increase in the future. Most top American foreign policy decision makers are either elected into office or appointed by elected officials. In democracies, elected officials are concerned about being reelected, so are attuned to public opinion, and seek to curry its favor. Few unpopular laws pass in the U.S. Congress. Therefore, an understanding of the impact of political orientation on the American electorate's attitudes towards China can help us better understand and perhaps even predict the policies that U.S. politicians may pursue once in office.

Method

Procedures and Participants

We used a combination of national Internet and local hardcopy surveys, as well as large and very large surveys. Although we did not use random sampling techniques, the cross-validation of three completely independent and diverse samples allows us to feel quite confident about the external validity of our findings. Replication is a fundamental principle of the scientific method. Furthermore, our primary interest is *not* in the absolute numbers revealed in our survey (e.g. absolute levels of anti-Chinese prejudice), but in the internal relationships among our variables (e.g. Democratic vs. Republican perceptions of a China threat, or how self-reported "conservatism" is related to support for a containment policy).

Unlike the national telephone polls regularly conducted by the Pew Research Center, the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, Gallup, and other news associations, by using Internet and paper based surveys we are able to ask numerous, rather than scattered, questions about China. For instance, instead of a single question about a China threat in our national Internet and community samples, we asked 12. Instead of one question about U.S. China policy, we asked 10. This affords us greater internal reliability on each of our China measures. That is to say, our eight item "attitudes towards the Chinese government" scale, with Cronbach's alphas or internal reliabilities of .911 & .903 for the national and community samples respectively, is a much more reliable indicator of the respondents' actual attitudes towards the Chinese government than their answer to any single question could be.³

Furthermore, unlike national telephone polls that usually allow for just two to four response categories, our Internet and hardcopy surveys use 1–7 Likert scales. This provides a more sensitive approach to measuring where people fall along attitudinal continua, thereby allowing us to come up with more precise estimates of the relationship between political orientation and our China measures.

³ Internal reliability estimates range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 reflecting greater reliability of a set of items comprising a scale.

Current research [14, 16] suggests that paper-based and Internet-based questionnaires achieve comparable results. To gain greater confidence in the external validity of our results, however, we conducted our first two parallel surveys using different methods on different target populations. This allows us to cross-validate our results. The first was a national Internet survey. Undergraduate students enrolled in a Chinese foreign policy course at a large public university in the United States each used e-mail to recruit ten participants from around the country to take an online survey. The second was a hardcopy survey. Graduate students enrolled in a statistical methods course at a large public university in the United States recruited participants for a local community survey. Both surveys were conducted in February 2008, so there should be no temporal effects. They were restricted to U.S. citizens over the age of 18 and included no more than one member of any nuclear family, to avoid data interdependence. Both began with consent forms that explained to participants the nature of the survey, its voluntary nature, and the anonymity of the data collected. The ethical standards of the American Political Science and American Psychological Associations (APSA and APA) were strictly followed during data collection and analysis.

Although participants for the national Internet survey ($N=158$) came from 20 states, well over half came from two states ($N=95$ & $N=16$). There were also more men ($N=92$) than women ($N=66$), and more Republicans ($N=80$) than Democrats ($N=38$). Participants in the national sample ranged in age from 18 to 64 ($Mean=33.08$, $SD=14.16$). The local community sample ($N=276$) contained more women ($N=143$) than men ($N=133$), had a better balance of Democrats ($N=95$) and Republicans ($N=109$), and were slightly older ($Mean=35.48$, $SD=12.72$), with participants ranging in age from 18 to 70. The demographic characteristics of our large N Internet sample will be presented later.

China Measures

The questions that composed the following five measures were all on seven-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). They were largely balanced in terms of positively and negatively worded items. We averaged the items in each scale to create mean scores to index each construct.

Symbolic Threat (SYMTHR) Scale This six item scale seeks to capture the symbolic threat that China is perceived to pose to American political and religious values. It includes items like “Chinese political leaders are atheists who do not respect the freedom of religion that Americans hold dear” and “Chinese values and beliefs are quite similar to those of Christian Americans” (reverse coded). Higher values indicate a greater perceived symbolic or value threat that China presents to America. The full scale is in the [Appendix](#).

Material Threat (MATTHR) Scale A six item scale that taps the perception that China’s rise threatens U.S. military and economic dominance. Items include “The recent increase in Chinese defense spending undermines U.S. security” and “China’s rise will help stabilize East Asia and promote world peace” (reverse coded). Higher

values reveal greater perceived material threat that China poses for U.S. dominance. The full material threat scale is in the [Appendix](#).

Prejudice (PREJUDICE) Scale A scale composed of eight “The Chinese people are...” statements. Four are positive (“friendly,” “trustworthy,” “peaceful,” and “honorable”) and reverse coded, and four are negative (“uncooperative,” “devious,” “aggressive,” and “dishonest”). Higher values indicate greater prejudice or negative views of the Chinese people.

Negative Attitudes Towards the Chinese Government (NEGGOV) scale A scale composed of eight “The Chinese government is...” items, using the same eight adjectives used in the prejudice scale. Higher values reveal more negative attitudes towards the Chinese government.

Containment Policies Towards China (CONTAIN) Scale This ten item scale seeks to tap respondents’ preferred U.S. China policy, and included items such as “The best way to deal with China is to maintain our military dominance and seek ways to contain its influence in the world,” and “Our government should adopt a friendlier foreign policy towards China” (reverse coded). Higher values indicate a preference for tougher U.S. policies to contain China. The full scale is in the [Appendix](#).

These five dependent China measures tap three distinct cognitive processes. First, “symbolic threat” and “material threat” tap perception, how respondents “see” China’s rise. These two scales, in other words, tap causal *beliefs* about what China “is” and what it will become. Second, “prejudice” and “NegGov” tap *attitudes* towards the Chinese people and the Chinese government respectively. Attitudes are beliefs with an additional normative or value component [28]. They tap how respondents feel about the Chinese people and the Chinese government. Third and finally, “Contain” taps action tendencies or *behaviors*, what respondents say that the U.S. government should do in terms of actual China policy.

Results and Discussion

As Table 1 reveals, the scales we created to tap our five dependent measures about China all had fair (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.729, .750$) to very good (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.888, .862, .862, .815$ and $.837$), to excellent (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.911, .903, .908$) internal reliabilities. This greatly reduces measurement error and should allow for the full extent of any correlations with our independent measures to be clearly revealed.

The means listed in Table 1 also reveal that participants in both samples perceived a greater material ($m=4.54$ & 4.46) than symbolic ($m=3.76$ & 3.82) threat from China. A paired samples t-test on the Internet sample reveals that the difference between the two means was statistically significant, $t(157)=-10.79, p<.001$. On a seven point scale, this neutral-to-leaning-towards-threat result is consistent with the findings of the C-100 ([4]: 29-30) and other recent surveys that suggest that the American people mostly view China as a “potential threat,” but with larger minorities viewing China as a “serious threat” than as “no threat.”

Table 1 Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations, alphas, and Ns for five China scales (national Internet & community hardcopy samples)

Variable	Description	Mean	SD	α	N
SYMTHR	Symbolic threat (China poses to American values)	3.76/3.82	1.03/.95	.729/.750	6
MATTHR	Material threat (China poses to U.S. milit/econ dominance)	4.54/4.46	1.17/1.02	.888/.862	6
PREJUDICE	Prejudice (negative attitudes towards the Chinese people)	3.03/3.31	1.01/1.04	.862/.908	8
NEGGOV	Negative attitudes towards the Chinese government	4.61/4.23	1.17/1.02	.911/.903	8
CONTAIN	Containment policies towards China	3.38/3.54	1.03/.93	.837/.815	8

Participants' attitudes towards the Chinese people and government were even more polarized, with lower levels of prejudice ($m=3.03$ & 3.31) towards the Chinese people, and significantly higher levels of antipathy towards the Chinese government ($m=4.61$ & 4.23). A paired samples t-test on the Internet sample reveals that the difference between these two means was statistically significant and large, $t(157)=-16.844$, $p<.001$. Given that these two eight item scales used the exact same adjectives ("friendly," "trustworthy," "peaceful," "honorable," "uncooperative," "devious," "aggressive," and "dishonest"), only differing in their referent (the "Chinese people" vs. the "Chinese government"), this finding provides a rigorous confirmation of the frequent claim that the American people as a whole have more positive views of the Chinese people than of their government. It also calls into question the meaning of the Chicago Council's "feeling thermometer," which conflates the "country" and "people" of various countries. Finally, the means on containment were below the scale midpoint of four, suggesting that, on average, our participants favored a friendlier foreign policy towards China.

What impact did political orientation have on our respondents' views of China? We start with liberal-conservative ideology before examining party affiliation, and conclude by controlling for variables that could provide alternative explanations for our findings.

Liberal-Conservative Ideology

A single question "How do you identify yourself politically?" with answers from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative), forms our "conservatism" measure, with higher numbers indicating greater conservatism. Overall, both of our samples ($m=4.37$, $SD=1.55$ & $m=4.17$, $SD=1.40$), were very slightly more conservative than liberal (i.e. greater than our scale midpoint of 4). There was no gender difference on liberalism-conservatism for either sample.

The first row of Table 2 displays the correlations between this conservatism measure and our five China scales for the national Internet sample ($N=158$). All the correlations were statistically significant at $p<.001$, so our attention will focus on the relative sizes of the correlations. The two threat perception scales ($r=.586$ and $r=.564$) and the containment policy scale ($r=.608$) correlated the highest with

Table 2 Correlations between political ideology (liberal-conservative) and China measures

National Internet sample						
Variable	CONSERV	SYMTHR	MATTHR	PREJUDICE	NEGGOV	CONTAIN
CONSERV	-	.586**	.564**	.281**	.434**	.608**
SYMTHR	.432**	-	.665**	.497**	.582**	.656**
MATTHR	.390**	.665**	-	.353**	.645**	.651**
PREJUDICE	.130*	.443**	.305**	-	.425**	.410**
NEGGOV	.128*	.513**	.588**	.416**	-	.429**
CONTAIN	.502**	.658**	.666**	.332**	.389**	-

Community hardcopy sample

Note. Correlations for the national Internet sample are above the diagonal; correlations for the local community hardcopy sample are below the diagonal.

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

conservatism. That is, the more “conservative” participants viewed themselves, the greater the symbolic and material threat they perceived in China’s rise, and the more forcefully they advocated a tough China policy of containment. Conversely, the more “liberal” participants saw themselves, the less likely they were to perceive China’s rise as a threat and the more likely they were to advocate a friendlier China policy. Each of these correlations was very strong.

The two attitudes items, Prejudice ($r=.281$) and NegGov ($r=.434$), were also positively correlated with conservatism, but to a lesser extent. It is noteworthy (and somewhat heartwarming) that the correlation for our prejudice item was the lowest of our five China measures: attitudes towards the Chinese people (prejudice) were not as impacted by political orientation as the other views of China.

The first column in Table 2 reveals a largely similar pattern of correlations in our local community sample ($N=276$). Conservatism again correlated the highest with containment policies, followed by the two threat perception measures. And prejudice was again relatively weakly linked to political orientation. In the community data, however, the correlation between conservatism and negative attitudes towards the Chinese government scale also dropped down to a $p=.05$ level of statistical significance.

Party Affiliation

Self-reported “conservatism” thus has a strong negative impact on views of China. Does political party affiliation have a similar impact on the perception of China, attitudes towards the Chinese people and their government, and preferred China policies? Two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) reveal that it does, Wilks’ Lambda=.719, $F(5, 112)=8.74$, $p<.001$ for the national Internet data, and Wilks’ Lambda=.856, $F(5, 186)=6.27$, $p<.001$ for the community hardcopy sample. Furthermore, the effect sizes, $\eta_p^2=.281$ & .144, were quite large. Overall,

Table 3 Means, standard deviations (in parentheses), and Ns for five China measures by party affiliation (national Internet & community hardcopy samples)

Party	SymThr	MatThr	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain	N
Democrat	3.20 (.78)	3.97 (.99)	2.94 (.95)	4.09 (1.00)	2.82 (.87)	38
	3.70 (.93)	4.30 (1.03)	3.31 (1.02)	4.24 (.87)	3.26 (.86)	90
Republican	4.20 (1.01)	5.04 (1.10)	3.12 (1.01)	4.88 (1.22)	3.79 (.90)	80
	4.15 (.96)	4.87 (1.01)	3.40 (1.06)	4.43 (1.14)	3.94 (.90)	102

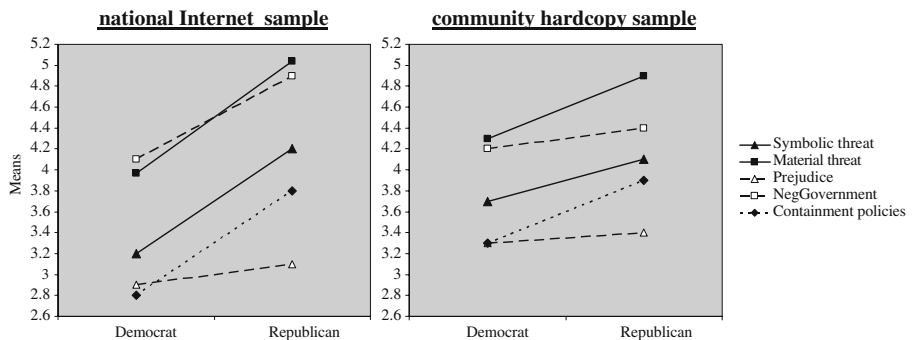
National Internet data is reported on the first line, and community hardcopy data reported on the second line

Republicans held much more negative views of China than did Democrats. (See Table 3 and Fig. 1)

Separate analyses of each of our five China measures revealed some important differences, however. First and perhaps most important is the dog that did not bark: prejudice. Although Republicans ($M=3.12$ & $M=3.40$) scored higher on prejudice than Democrats ($M=2.94$ & $M=3.31$) in both samples, the difference was not statistically significant. Two univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed no differences between Democrats and Republicans on our eight item measure of prejudice towards the Chinese people, $F(1, 116)=.847, p=.359$ and $F(1, 190)=.420, p=.518$ for the national and community samples respectively. (See Table 3 and the bottom dashed lines in Fig. 1.) This non-finding is consistent with the above analysis which found prejudice to be the least correlated with conservatism of our China measures.

Second, and also consistent with the correlations in Table 2 above, negative attitudes towards the Chinese government were greater among Republicans than Democrats, $F(1, 116)=12.23, p=.001$ in our national sample. But the effect size, $\eta_p^2=.095$, was only moderate. There was no statistically significant difference between the two parties on negative attitudes towards the Chinese government in the community sample, however.

Third, as was the case with our liberal-conservative correlations above, our symbolic and material threat measures and the containment policy measure



NOTE: With the exception of prejudice in both samples, and NEGGOV in the community sample, all $ps<.001$, and all effect sizes were large for the national sample ($\eta_p^2 = .20, .18, .10,$ and $.21$ for SYMTHR, MATTHR, NEGGOV, and CONTAIN respectively), and small to moderate for the local sample ($\eta_p^2 = .05, .08,$ and $.13,$ for SYMTHR, MATTHR, and CONTAIN respectively).

Fig. 1 Threat perception, attitudes, and China policy preferences by party affiliation

displayed the greatest differences between Republicans and Democrats, with all $ps < .001$. All three effect sizes for the national sample were very large ($\eta_p^2 = .199, .184, \text{ and } .211$ respectively); the effect sizes for the community sample were moderate ($\eta_p^2 = .053, .075, \text{ and } .130$ respectively). These effects are graphically displayed in the rising slopes in Fig. 1. In short, Republicans perceive much more threat from China and advocate tougher China policies than Democrats do.

Controlling for Education, Gender, and Age

Could there be alternative explanations for this strong, consistent pattern of findings? Perhaps it is income or education level that is actually driving our strong correlations. Or could gender or age, rather than liberal-conservative ideology or party affiliation, be the real driver of these attitudes towards China?

To address such alternative explanations, we ran a series of simultaneous multiple regressions predicting scores on our five China measures in our national and local community samples. In each analysis, gender, age, education level (dummy coded), and either self-rated political conservatism (on a one to seven scale) or party affiliation (coded 1 = “Democrat”; 2 = “Republican”) were included as predictors to control for their impact. Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 present the standardized and unstandardized regression coefficients and associated significance levels for each of our 20 regression models.

Regression Models Including “Conservatism” Table 4 reports the results of five simultaneous multiple regressions using education levels, gender, age, and conservatism to predict the five China measures with our national Internet data. Education level was coded using four dummy-coded variables: High school education or less was coded “1” (versus “0”) on EdLevDum1; “Some college” was coded “1” on EdLevDum2; “Graduated college” was coded “1” on EdLevDum3; and “Some graduate school” was coded “1” on EdLevDum4. The

Table 4 Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) Coefficients (β) and significance levels for simultaneous multiple regressions using educational level, gender, age, and conservatism to predict five China measures for the national Internet sample ($N=158$)

Variable	SymThr	MatThr	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain
Constant	1.775	1.736	2.150	2.937	1.157
EdLevDum1	.470(.101)	.707(.133)	.633(.137)	.499(-.094)	1.025**(.220)
EdLevDum2	.095(.046)	.445(.190)	.052(.026)	.179(.076)	.212(.103)
EdLevDum3	.080(.034)	.357(.134)	.172 (.074)	.117(.044)	.171(.073)
EdLevDum4	-.018(-.004)	.324(.061)	-.295(-.064)	-.087(-.016)	.434(.093)
Gender	-.065(-.031)	-.041(-.017)	-.169(-.083)	-.251(-.106)	.006(.003)
Age	.012*(.159)	.026**(.320)	-.004(-.061)	.019**(.228)	.011*(.158)
CONSERV	.369**(.557)	.378**(.502)	.188**(.287)	.304**(.402)	.373**(.564)
R^2	.37**	.39**	.12**	.25**	.43**
F value	12.570	13.825	2.810	7.150	15.844

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

reference or fifth group in the regression analyses was comprised of Ph.D. or master's degree holders. This group was coded "0" across the four dummy variables. Gender was coded "1" = male and "2" = female.

In our first two regressions on perceived symbolic threat and perceived material threat, reported in the first two columns of Table 4, the set of predictors accounted for a combined 37% [$F(7, 150)=12.570, p<.001$] and 39.2% [$F(7, 150)=13.825, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variables, respectively. In these two models, only age and political conservatism emerged as statistically significant predictors, with older persons and/or those rating themselves higher on political conservatism being more likely to perceive China as a symbolic and material threat. Of the two, conservatism had a much greater impact. In our next two regression models, the predictors accounted for 11.6% [$F(7, 150)=2.810, p=.009$] and 25% [$F(7, 150)=7.150, p<.001$] of the variance in perceived prejudice and negative attitudes toward the Chinese government, respectively. In these two analyses, self-rated political conservatism emerged as a significant predictor with participants rating themselves higher in political conservatism being more likely to report prejudiced attitudes and to view the Chinese government negatively than those scoring low on conservatism. Additionally, older participants were significantly more likely to hold negative attitudes toward China's government than younger participants. In the final regression model predicting support for containment, the predictors accounted for 42.5% [$F(7, 150)=15.844, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variable. In that model, age and self-rated conservatism once again emerged as significant predictors, with older participants and/or those rating themselves as higher in conservatism indicating a greater preference for the use of containment strategies. Conservatism again had a much greater impact than age. The first of our education dummy-coded variables was also statistically significant. Participants with higher levels of education were less willing to endorse the use of containment strategies than those falling at the lowest level of education.

Table 5 Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients (β) and significance levels for simultaneous multiple regressions using educational level, gender, age, and conservatism to predict five China measures for the local community sample ($N=276$)

Variable	SymThr	MatThr	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain
Constant	2.307	2.689	2.601	3.721	1.528
EdLevDum1	.181(.054)	.386(.104)	1.021**(.275)	.283(.076)	.369(.105)
EdLevDum2	.127(.062)	-.047(-.021)	.106(.047)	-.155(-.069)	.192(.092)
EdLevDum3	.065(.030)	-.056(-.024)	.258(.108)	-.232(-.097)	.189(.085)
EdLevDum4	-.091(-.039)	.151(.058)	.094(.036)	.016(.006)	.073(.030)
Gender	-.046(-.025)	.064(.032)	-.048(-.024)	-.025(-.012)	.219*(.118)
Age	.011**(.157)	.012**(.153)	.007(.085)	.005(.06)	.005(.063)
CONSERV	.268**(.410)	.285**(.397)	.076(.105)	.103*(.142)	.328**(.490)
R^2	.22**	.19**	.09**	.04	.28**
F value	10.294	8.542	3.645	1.571	13.961

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

To double check these results, we ran the same five regressions again using our local community data. Table 5 displays the results, which were generally consistent with the national data, but with lower coefficient sizes. In the first two regression models including self-rated political conservatism as a predictor of perceived symbolic and material threat, the set of predictors jointly accounted for 21.9% [$F(7, 257)=10.294, p<.001$] and 19% [$F(7, 255)=8.542, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variables, respectively. In these two models, age and political conservatism again emerged as statistically significant predictors, with older persons and/or those rating themselves higher on political conservatism being more likely to perceive China as a symbolic and material threat. Once again, the coefficients for conservatism were much higher than those for age. In our next two regression models, the predictors accounted for 9.1% [$F(7, 254)=3.645, p=.001$] and 4.1% [$F(7, 258)=1.571, p=.144$] in perceived prejudice and negative attitudes toward the Chinese government, respectively. In the model predicting perceived prejudice, only the first dummy-coded education variable was statistically significant, indicating that those participants who were lowest in education level within our sample were more likely to exhibit prejudiced attitudes towards the Chinese people than were those at the highest education level. In the model predicting negative attitudes toward China’s government, self-rated political conservatism was significantly and positively related to the expression of negative attitudes. In the final regression model predicting support for containment, the predictors accounted for 27.9% [$F(7, 252)=13.961, p<.001$] of the variance. In that model, self-rated conservatism once again emerged as a significant predictor, with participants rating themselves as higher in conservatism indicating a greater preference for the use of containment strategies. Females were also slightly more likely to endorse the use of containment strategies than males in our community sample.

Regression Models Including Party Affiliation Table 6 displays the results of five multiple regressions including party identification as a predictor of our five

Table 6 Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients (β) and significance levels for simultaneous multiple regressions using educational level, gender, age, and party affiliation to predict five China measures for the national Internet sample ($N=158$)

Variable	SymThr	MatThr	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain
Constant	1.951	1.928	2.738	2.982	1.144
EdLevDum1	.430(.083)	.234(.040)	.451(.092)	-.688(-.115)	.986*(.200)
EdLevDum2	-.049(-.23)	.409(.174)	.225(.114)	.088(.036)	.199(.100)
EdLevDum3	-.002(-.001)	.277(.103)	.378(.167)	-.039(-.014)	.007(.003)
EdLevDum4	.317(.066)	.672(.126)	.075(.017)	.229(.042)	.651(.144)
Gender	-.089(-.042)	-.044(-.019)	-.038(-.019)	-.287(-.118)	.063(.031)
Age	.012(.167)	.026**(.331)	-.002(-.026)	.025**(.302)	.014*(.207)
DEMREP	.973**(.434)	.975**(.390)	.132(.062)	.712**(.276)	.954**(.448)
R^2	.24**	.27**	.03	.21**	.30**
F value	5.036	5.912	.494	4.065	6.739

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

China measures using our national data. In the first two regression models of perceived symbolic threat and perceived material threat, our predictor variables accounted for a combined 24.3% [$F(7, 110)=5.036, p<.001$] and 27.3% [$F(7, 110)=5.912, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variables, respectively. In these two models, party identification emerged as a statistically significant predictor. Participants identifying themselves as Republicans were much more likely to perceive China as a symbolic and material threat than Democrats did. Moreover, older participants were significantly more likely to perceive China as a material threat than younger participants. In our next two regression models, the predictors accounted for 3.1% [$F(7, 110)=.494, p=.837$] and 20.6% [$F(7, 110)=4.065, p=.001$] in perceived prejudice and negative attitudes toward the Chinese government, respectively. No significant predictors emerged in the model predicting prejudice. However, both age and party identification were significant predictors of negative attitudes toward China's government. Participants identifying themselves as Republicans were more likely to view the Chinese government negatively than were participants who identified themselves as Democrats. Older participants viewed China's government less favorably than younger participants. In the final regression model predicting support for containment, the predictors accounted for 30% [$F(7, 110)=6.739, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variable. In that model, age and party identification emerged as significant predictors, with older participants and those identifying themselves as Republicans indicating a greater preference for the use of containment strategies than younger participants and/or those identifying themselves as Democrats. Additionally, as indicated by the statistical significance of our first dummy-coded education variable, participants falling at the highest level of education was less willing to endorse use of containment strategies than those falling at the lowest level of education.

To double check these results, we ran the same five regressions on our local community data (see Table 7). In the first two regression models including party

Table 7 Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients (β) and significance levels for simultaneous multiple regressions using educational level, gender, age, and party affiliation to predict five China measures for the local community sample ($N=276$)

Variable	SymThr	MatThr	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain
Constant	2.703	2.873	2.725	3.776	2.043
EdLevDum1	.316(.095)	.684*(.187)	.966**(.268)	.332(.094)	.518*(.157)
EdLevDum2	.233(.109)	.124(.053)	.163(.070)	.013(.006)	.281(.134)
EdLevDum3	.042(.018)	-.032(-.013)	.207(.084)	-.332(-.139)	.216(.097)
EdLevDum4	-.012(-.005)	.345(.120)	.157(.056)	.151(.056)	.193(.078)
Gender	-.177(-.094)	-.086(-.041)	-.213(-.103)	-.160(-.080)	.087(.047)
Age	.018** (.250)	.019**(.227)	.015**(.188)	.011*(.142)	.006(.083)
DEMREP	.488**(.257)	.667**(.318)	.148(.072)	.271(.136)	.672**(.362)
R^2	.14**	.16**	.10**	.07*	.16**
F value	4.620	5.097	3.176	2.051	5.003

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

identification as a predictor of perceived symbolic and material threat, the set of predictors accounted for a combined 14.2% [$F(7, 196)=4.620, p<.001$] and 15.7% [$F(7, 192)=5.097, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variables, respectively. In these two models, party identification and age again emerged as statistically significant predictors. Participants identifying themselves as Republicans were more likely to perceive China as a symbolic and material threat than Democrats. Moreover, older participants were significantly more likely to perceive China as a symbolic and material threat than younger participants. Finally, participants at the lowest level of education were significantly more likely to perceive China as a material threat than those at the highest level of education. In the next two regression models, the predictors accounted for 10.4% [$F(7, 192)=3.176, p=.003$] and 6.8% [$F(7, 196)=2.051, p=.051$] in perceived prejudice and negative attitudes toward the Chinese government, respectively. Older participants and/or those at the lowest education level were significantly more likely to hold prejudiced attitudes than younger participants and/or the highest education level. Older participants were also somewhat more likely to hold negative attitudes toward China's government than younger participants. In the final regression model predicting support for containment, the predictors accounted for 15.6% [$F(7, 190)=5.003, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variable. In that model, party identification emerged as a significant predictor, with Republicans indicating a greater preference for containment strategies than Democrats. Moreover, participants falling at the highest level of education were less willing to endorse the use of containment strategies than those falling at the lowest education level.

Together, these four tables and 20 regressions demonstrate that while gender, education, and especially age impacted our five China measures, their impact was minor compared to that of political orientation and party affiliation. Because education level is frequently considered to be an indicator of socioeconomic status, we feel reasonably confident that we successfully controlled for income as well (e.g. see computations of SES described by Green et al. [15], and Fouts et al. [13]; see Lindsey [23], for a discussion of the role of income in accessing higher education opportunities). With the partial exception of our prejudice measure, self reported "conservatism" was consistently the best predictor of our China measures. Party affiliation was also a consistently strong predictor, though not as strong as conservatism.

Large N Study

To provide further cross-validation of our findings, we analyzed data from a third study involving a much larger sample. 1,135 faculty, students and staff at a middle-America state university completed an online survey the first week of August 2008, before the Beijing Olympics began on August 8, 2008. Participants were given the option of entering a raffle to win tickets to home football games. The sample included 482 undergraduate students, 202 graduate students, 106 faculty members, and 345 members of the university staff (of whom 31 did not attend college). There were slightly more women ($N=583$) than men ($N=552$). The sample, surprisingly, was perfectly balanced in terms of political party affiliation with 429 Republicans and 429 Democrats (277 chose "Independent or none"). Ages ranged from 18 to 72,

Table 8 Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations, alphas, and Ns for large N study

Variable	Description	Mean	SD	α	N
CONSERV	Self-reported liberal-conservative ideology	3.87	1.65	n/a	n/a
PREJ	Prejudice (negative attitudes towards the Chinese people)	2.58	.96	.86	4
NEGGOV	Negative attitudes towards the Chinese Government	4.81	1.05	.84	4
THREAT	China perceived to pose to American values and security	3.67	1.21	.70	2
CONTAIN	Containment (preference for tough China policies)	2.69	.93	.64	3

with a mean age of 31.92 ($SD=13.29$). In terms of ethnicity, the sample was 83.8% white, 2.5% African-American, 3.0% non-Chinese Asian-American, 2.7% Latino/a, 5.7% Native American, and 2.3% “other.”

Table 8 reports the means, standard deviations, alphas, and Ns for the variables of interest in the third sample.⁴ The mean (3.87) on self-reported conservatism was just below the scale midpoint of 4. Added to the perfect balance of Democrats and Republicans reported above, our mean score on conservatism strongly suggests that the large N sample was well balanced in terms of political orientation. The prejudice and NegGov scales included the same “The Chinese PEOPLE are...” and “The Chinese GOVERNMENT is...” wording, utilizing the adjectives “friendly,” “dishonest,” “devious,” and “trustworthy.” Although the scale was thus only half as long as in the earlier questionnaires, the internal reliabilities ($\alpha=.86$ and $.84$) remained very good. A paired samples T-test revealed that the mean differences (NegGov=4.81; Prej=2.58) were again large, $t(1,128)=-54.41$, $p<.001$. The containment and threat scales, though dramatically reduced to just three and two items respectively, nonetheless had fair alphas of $.64$ and $.70$ (see Appendix for the specific items used). Once again the mean ($m=2.69$) on the containment scale was significantly below the scale midpoint, while the mean ($m=3.67$) on the threat scale was much closer to the scale midpoint.

Table 9 reports the correlations between conservatism and our four China scales. Once again our policy and threat perception measures correlated positively and the strongest with self-reported conservatism. Prejudice and NegGov also correlated positively with conservatism, though less so (the NegGov correlation was not statistically significant in this sample). The same pattern of positive correlations was observed between our four China measures and our DEMREP party affiliation variable, with our policy and threat measures correlating the strongest.

Table 10 and Fig. 2 reveal that Republicans scored higher than Democrats on all four China scales in the large N sample. A multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) revealed that these differences were both statistically significant and large, Wilks’ Lambda=.889, $F(4, 839)=26.29$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.111$. Overall, Republicans thus held much more negative views of China than did Democrats. Four univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) further revealed that the party

⁴ Because this data was collected as part of a larger study, we had to restrict the number of items used in each of these scales.

Table 9 Correlations between political ideology (liberal-conservative), party affiliation, and China measures for large N sample

National internet sample						
Variable	Conserv	Demrep	Prejudice	Neggov	Threat	Contain
CONSERV	–	.738*	.161*	.041	.309*	.281*
PREJUDICE			–	.077*	.275*	.343
NEGGOV				–	.371*	.175*
THREAT					–	.468*
CONTAIN						–

*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

differences on each of the measures was statistically significant, with $p=.014$ for NegGov, and $p<.001$ for the other three.

Regression Models Including “Conservatism” Table 11 reports the results of four simultaneous multiple regressions using education levels, gender, age, and conservatism to predict scores on our four China measures. Education level was coded using three dummy-coded variables: High school education or some college or less was coded “1” (versus “0)) on EdLevDum1; “College graduate” was coded “1” on EdLevDum2; “Has master’s degree” was coded “1” on EdLevDum3. The reference group in the regression analyses was comprised of Ph.D. graduates. Gender was coded “1” = male and “2” = female. DEMREP was coded “1” = Democrat and “2” = Republican.

In our first regression analysis predicting perceived threat, the set of predictors accounted for a combined 10% [$F(6, 1,120)=22.808, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variable. In this model, age and political conservatism emerged as statistically significant predictors, with older persons and/or those rating themselves higher on political conservatism being more likely to perceive China as a threat. The first of the dummy-coded education variables was also statistically significant, indicating that persons who were high school graduates or had some college were more likely to perceive China as a threat than persons who had completed their Ph. D.’s. In our next two regression models, the predictors accounted for 4.5% [$F(6, 1,127)=8.763, p<.001$] and 1.3% [$F(6, 1,120)=2.445, p=.024$] of the variance in perceived prejudice and negative attitudes toward the Chinese government, respectively. Self-rated political conservatism emerged as a significant positive predictor, while age was a significant negative predictor, of prejudiced attitudes.

Table 10 Means, standard deviations (in parentheses), and Ns for four China measures by party affiliation (large N sample)

Party	Threat	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain	N
Democrat	3.36 (1.14)	2.42 (.95)	4.73 (1.07)	2.43 (.89)	420
Republican	4.04 (1.19)	2.71 (.93)	4.91 (1.06)	2.97 (.95)	424

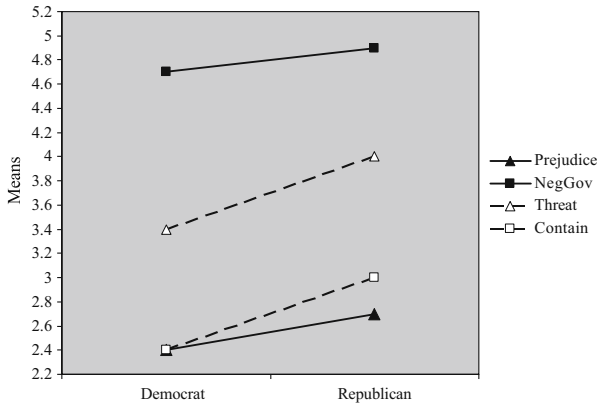


Fig. 2 Threat perception, attitudes, and China policy preferences by party affiliation for the large N sample

Conservatism failed to emerge as a statistically significant predictor of negative attitudes toward the Chinese government. In the final regression model predicting support for containment, the predictors accounted for 10% [$F(6, 1,121)=20.660, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variable. Self-rated conservatism was a significant positive predictor of support for containment. Moreover, gender was a significant predictor of containment attitudes with females indicating greater support for containment of China than males.

Regression Models Including Party Affiliation Table 12 reports the results of four simultaneous multiple regressions using education levels, gender, age, and party affiliation (coded 1=Democrat; 2=Republican) to predict scores on our China measures. In the regression predicting perceived threat, the set of predictors

Table 11 Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients (β) and significance levels for simultaneous multiple regressions using educational level, gender, age, and conservatism to predict five China measures for the large N sample ($N=1,135$)

Variable	Threat	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain
Constant	2.038	2.439	5.207	1.549
EdLevDumy1	.276*(.114)	-.021(-.011)	-.322**(-.153)	.221*(.119)
EdLevDumy2	.237(.083)	.132(.058)	-.149(-.060)	.241*(.109)
EdLevDumy3	.181(.059)	-.198(-.080)	-.142(-.053)	.064(.027)
Gender	.070*(.068)	.002(.001)	-.083(-.039)	.201**(.108)
Age	.008**(.086)	-.006* (-.080)	-.005(-.065)	.001(.015)
CONSERV	.234**(.322)	.088**(.151)	.028(.044)	.163**(.288)
R^2	.10**	.05**	.01*	.10**
F value	22.808	8.763	2.445	20.660

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 12 Unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients (β) and significance levels for simultaneous multiple regressions using educational level, gender, age, and party affiliation to predict five China measures for the large N sample ($N=1,135$)

Variable	Threat	Prejudice	Neggov	Contain
Constant	1.841	2.363	5.015	1.379
EdLevDumy1	.485**(.200)	.074(.623)	-.420**(-.196)	.284* (.148)
EdLevDumy2	.438** (.153)	.146(.065)	-.222(-.088)	.247*(.109)
EdLevDumy3	.409**(.135)	-.123(-.051)	-.178(-.067)	.111(.047)
Gender	.070(.029)	-.010(-.005)	-.025(-.012)	.139*(.073)
Age	.010**(.108)	-.006*(-.081)	-.005(-.068)	.002(.029)
DEMREP	.690**(.285)	.242**(.127)	.194*(.091)	.555**(.291)
R^2	.10**	.04**	.02**	.10**
F value	14.765	6.134	3.176	15.617

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

accounted for a combined 9.5% [$F(6, 845)=14.765, p<.001$] of the variance in the criterion variable. In this model, education level, age, and party affiliation emerged as statistically significant predictors. Notably, older persons and/or those identifying themselves as Republicans were most likely to perceive China as a threat. In our next two regression models, the predictors accounted for 4.1% [$F(6, 851)=6.134, p<.001$] and 2.2% [$F(6, 846)=3.176, p=.004$] of the variance in perceived prejudice and negative attitudes toward the Chinese government, respectively. Party affiliation emerged as a significant positive predictor, while age was a significant negative predictor, of prejudiced attitudes. Party affiliation was also a significant positive predictor of negative attitudes toward the Chinese government. In the final regression model, the predictors accounted for 10% [$F(6, 847)=15.617, p<.001$] of the variance in support for containment. Party affiliation, gender, and education level emerged as significant predictors. Females were more likely to endorse containment than males. Even so, Republican Party affiliation was the strongest predictor of preferences for containment.

Conclusions

The statistical analyses conducted and discussed above reveal that, on average, self-reported “conservatives” are much more likely than self-reported “liberals” to view China’s rise as a threat to the U.S., and to advocate a U.S. China policy of containment. To a lesser degree, they were also more likely to hold negative views of the Chinese government and, to an even lesser but still significant extent, to have more prejudiced attitudes towards the Chinese people. This pattern was largely repeated when it came to party affiliation, with Republicans perceiving greater China threat and advocating tougher China policies than Democrats did. However, party affiliation had no significant impact on prejudice,

with Democrats and Republicans having comparably positive attitudes towards the Chinese people.

We do *not* argue that *all* Republicans or conservatives hold more negative attitudes towards China and its people than *all* Democrats or liberals. Political orientation is just one potential factor in explaining variation in attitudes and policy preferences toward China. Other factors clearly impact peoples' attitudes as well. For instance, a conservative who does significant business with China may come to hold more positive attitudes towards China as a result of his or her business dealings. Or, to take the example of Nancy Pelosi discussed above, electoral politics or human rights considerations may have a larger impact on her attitudes toward China than her liberal ideology. Nevertheless, we maintain that—*holding all other factors constant*—political orientation has a clear overall impact on American attitudes toward China.

Why the inconsistent results on prejudice? Self-reported “conservatives” were more likely to exhibit prejudicial attitudes towards the Chinese people than self-reported “liberals.” The correlation was the smallest of our five correlations between conservatism and our five China measures, but was still moderate in size (see Table 2). However, we found no statistically significant difference between Democrats and Republicans on prejudice in our first two samples. What explains this discrepancy? It is possible that when asked to identify themselves on a 1–7 “liberal-conservative” scale, respondents think primarily about their sociocultural attitudes, such that social conservatives will score higher on this “conservatism” scale than, say, business conservatives. If social or cultural conservatives are more likely than business conservatives to exhibit prejudice, that might partially explain the discrepancy. Similarly, blue collar Democrats might identify themselves as more “conservative” than other Democrats due to more conservative social and cultural attitudes. This would narrow the distance between the means of the Democratic and Republican groups, perhaps helping explain why no difference in prejudice was found at the party affiliation level.

The strong associations between political orientation and our China scales survived a series of regressions that controlled for gender, age, and education levels. While each had some impact on our China measures, none appreciably lessened the impact of political orientation or rivaled political orientation in the magnitude of their correlations. Of the three, age had the greatest impact, with older Americans more likely than younger Americans to perceive China as a threat, to hold negative attitudes towards the Chinese government, and, to a lesser extent, to support containment policies. This may reflect personal experience of the Cold War and the anti-communist propaganda of the time. Participants at the lowest education level, who at most graduated from high school, exhibited significantly more prejudice towards the Chinese people, and a greater desire to contain China than did those at higher education levels. Like Holsti and Rosenau [19], but unlike Conover and Sapiro [8], we did not find significant gender differences in our data, with the one minor exception mentioned above. Overall, our three China surveys align with Holsti and Rosenau's ([19]: 116) broader argument, based on their Foreign Policy Leadership Project (FPLP) data from the late 1970s and early 1980s, that “party, ideology, and occupation are strongly and consistently associated with foreign policy attitudes, whereas gender, age, education, and military service are less so...”

Specifically, conservatives [and] Republicans... are significantly more likely to be hardliners... [than] liberals [and] Democrats.”⁵

The relative size of the correlations between political orientation and our China measures is also worth discussion. Containment was always the highest correlation, suggesting that self-reported “conservatives” of all stripes, whether business or sociocultural, can agree on the efficacy of forceful foreign policies. This is consistent with the literature on party, ideology, and military spending. Based on data from the 1972 to 1990 American National Election Surveys (ANES), Fordham [11] reports that Republicans have been more likely than Democrats to support increased military spending.⁶ Using the 1992 ANES data, Bartels [2] similarly reports that conservatives favored greater military spending than liberals. Both of our threat perception measures were also highly correlated with political orientation, with conservatives and Republicans perceiving greater China threats than liberals and Democrats. Finally, prejudice was consistently the lowest of our correlations. In addition to the explanations advanced above, this may reflect a limitation in our operationalization of conservatism, with a single item that does not distinguish between business and sociocultural conservatives. This distinction will be explored in future studies.

While the pattern of correlations among our variables was overwhelmingly consistent between our three independent samples, there was one notable difference: the correlations between political orientation and our China measures tended to be weaker in the university and community samples than in the national sample. We believe that this has to do with range restriction in the local samples. Specifically, the university and community samples were better educated, and greater range restriction in education level may have accounted for the lower correlation values.

All survey methodologies have their strengths and weaknesses. Because national opinion polls are primarily interested in the absolute levels of substantive opinions at particular points in time, they generally sacrifice internal for external validity. Rather than seeking to better understand the absolute levels of substantive opinion as the national polls do, our interest lied instead in understanding relationships among various individual difference factors and attitudes towards China. To provide more effective tests of such relationships, we opted to greatly increase the number of questions about China, sacrificing a small degree of external validity for internal validity. To overcome the problem of external validity, however, we adopted the strategy of using three independent samples to cross-validate our findings. Moreover, we utilized quite different methods and pools for each sample. The first sample utilized traditional hardcopy surveys with a broad community pool. The second sample utilized Internet surveying to obtain a national sample. The third sample was also obtained through Internet surveying to obtain a considerably larger

⁵ We cannot, of course, speak to occupation and military service.

⁶ Fordham [10–12] tends, however, to depict party and ideology as mere mediators of economic interests, which he views as primary. Our national internet survey included one yes/no question, “Do you or your family members engage in business activities with any connection to China?” A MANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference between those who reported family business connections with China ($N=24$) and those who did not ($N=134$) on our five China measures, Wilks’ Lambda=.954, $F(5,152)=1.45$, $p=.209$.

sample than the previous two—although it was the most limited in its sample composition. Presumably, if similar results appear across such diverse and independent samples this would suggest that the findings obtained in the samples are reliable and are at least reasonably likely to reappear in future studies.

As noted above, as the samples became more homogeneous, the relationships among our variables lessened. This type of occurrence is typical in those cases where researchers sample from a restricted portion of the population. For example, our large N study was restricted to faculty, students, and staff at a major American university. The restricted variation on key demographic or other variables may have contributed to lower correlations among our variables. Nonetheless, the pattern of correlations we observed among our variables was consistent across all three samples. For instance, the relationships between conservatism and the perception of threat or support for containment policies were always larger than the relationships between conservatism and prejudice and attitudes toward the Chinese government. To repeat, we make no claims that our findings offer generalizable statements about the *absolute levels* of particular attitudes, only about how individual difference and attitudinal variables *relate to one another*.

We also note that our first two surveys were designed to provide deeper and more robust measures of our constructs. This involved the use of multiple items per construct, as opposed to the single item measures that are typically used with national opinion polls. This increased the internal validity of our study. Furthermore, by rating these constructs on seven point scales, rather than the shorter two to four response categories typical of national telephone surveys, we were able to increase the variation within our measures, allowing the full relationships between our individual differences and attitudinal variables to become more apparent in the data.

Putting political orientation aside, Table 1 reveals that for both samples our American subjects as a whole reported perceiving greater material than symbolic threat from China, and much more negative attitudes towards the Chinese government than the Chinese people (towards whom they held largely favorable attitudes). And although they were on balance slightly negative towards the Chinese government, they did not on balance favor a containment policy towards China. The *absolute levels* of these mean scores are vulnerable to temporal effects (although the first two surveys were conducted in February 2008, *prior* to the downturn in attitudes towards China that accompanied the suppression of Tibetan protests and the rise of Chinese nationalism accompanying the Olympic torch protests in March and April 2008; and early August 2008, prior to the Beijing Olympics). However, we feel confident that the *relative levels* of these mean scores are likely to prove stable over time. Given that the negative attitudes towards the Chinese people (prejudice) and Chinese government (NegGov) scales were identically worded with the exception of the referent (“The Chinese people are...” vs. “The Chinese government is...”), it is particularly noteworthy that our respondents turned out to be largely positive about the Chinese people ($M=3.03, 3.31, \text{ and } 2.58$ for the national, community, and university samples respectively) but slightly negative towards the Chinese government ($M=4.61, 4.23, \text{ and } 4.81$). As noted above, paired samples t-tests revealed that the differences between these means

were extremely large. It is also noteworthy that the slightly negative American attitudes towards the Chinese government did not translate into a forceful advocacy of containment policies towards China. To the contrary, respondents tended to favor friendlier policies towards China. This is consistent with the Chicago Council's July 2008 report [7], "Aware of China's Rise, Worried Americans Still Prefer to Engage".

As noted in the introduction, both Democrats and Republicans on Capital Hill are sharply divided in their views of China and U.S. China policy, making for some strange bedfellows in our China policy advocacy. For instance, liberals like Charles Schumer (D-NY) and conservatives like Sam Brownback (R-KS) serve together on the Senate Taiwan Caucus, advocating for Taiwan's interests in U.S. cross-Straits policy. It now seems more tenable, however, to make some cautious generalizations about "left" and "right," "liberal" and "conservative," and even "Democratic" and "Republican" views of China. While some on the left may decry Chinese human rights abuses and unfair trade practices, liberals and Democrats *as a whole* tend to have more favorable views of China and advocate a policy of engaging China through active diplomacy. Conversely, while some business conservatives on the right may push for pro-China policies, conservatives and Republicans *for the most part* hold a dimmer view of China's rise and advocate a tougher China policies.

Although this study has empirically demonstrated correlations between political orientation and attitudes towards China, it has not explained *why* the relationships exist. We would like to conclude, therefore, with a few thoughts on why conservatism may be related to more negative attitudes towards China. Two of many possible factors include right wing authoritarianism (RWA), and social dominance orientation (SDO). RWA refers to a preference for convention, submission to authority, and aggression towards social outgroups (Altemeyer [1]). SDO refers to a preference for social hierarchy and a desire to dominate outgroups [31]. Previous research has linked RWA and SDO to outgroup prejudice and a preference for aggressive foreign policies [17]. It is thus plausible that conservatives high in RWA may view China as a challenge to conventional social norms and therefore adopt negative views and policy preferences vis-à-vis China. It is similarly plausible that conservatives high on SDO may view China as a challenge to the dominant U.S. position in the international hierarchy, and therefore endorse aggressive foreign policies towards China [9]. Future research is needed to explore such hypotheses and to uncover other potential explanations for the association between conservatism and negative attitudes towards China.

Appendix: China Threat and China Policy Scales

Symbolic threat (SymThr) scale. Reverse code items in *italics*:

1. Chinese values and beliefs are a threat to the American way of life.
2. *Chinese culture has enriched American society.*
3. China's system of government is a threat to American democracy.
4. *The Chinese political system is becoming more democratic all the time.*

5. Chinese political leaders are atheists who do not respect the freedom of religion that Americans hold dear.
6. *Chinese values and beliefs are quite similar to those of Christian Americans.*

Material threat (MatThr) scale. Reverse code items in *italics*:

1. China's rise to power endangers U.S. security.
2. *China's rise will help stabilize East Asia and promote world peace.*
3. Chinese economic growth undermines U.S. economic prosperity.
4. *A growing Chinese economy is good for the working American.*
5. The recent increase in Chinese defense spending undermines U.S. security.
6. *The Chinese military is a reliable U.S. partner in combating urgent security issues such as international terrorism.*

Containment policies towards China (Contain) scale. Reverse code items in *italics*:

1. *Our government should adopt a friendlier foreign policy towards China.*
2. *The U.S. government should engage China through an active diplomacy that seeks to improve the relationship between our two countries.*
3. The U.S. government should adopt tougher foreign policies towards China.
4. The best way to deal with China is to maintain our military dominance and seek ways to contain its influence in the world.
5. The U.S. government should strengthen its alliances with Japan, South Korea, and India to contain Chinese power.
6. *Our government should encourage China to play an active role in international organizations.*
7. If China provides military assistance to U.S. enemies like Iran and North Korea, the U.S. government should retaliate by bombing China.
8. If China threatens the U.S., we should use military force against them.

Threat items for third study.

1. The recent increase in Chinese defense spending undermines US security.
2. China's system of government is a threat to the American way of life.

Contain items for third study. Reverse code items in *italics*:

1. The best way to deal with China is to build up our military to counter Chinese power.
2. *The US government should engage China through an active diplomacy that seeks to improve the relationship between our two countries.*
3. *Our government should adopt a friendlier foreign policy towards China.*

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