Investigating the Chinese Public's Variegated Perceptions of the US and its Effects on the Public-Foreign Policy Linkage

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Abstract

US-China relations today seem to be increasingly dominated by animosity and deep-seated grievances on both sides. However, most existing literature that studies Chinese public opinion focuses exclusively on China's deteriorating political perceptions of the US, while omitting the cultural dimension of this variable. What's more, few scholars have offered a robust analysis of how Beijing's foreign policy responds to trends in public sentiment. This paper seeks to quantify both the cultural and political facets of the Chinese public's opinion towards the US, and to correlate fluctuations in perceptions with foreign policy posture.

I envision that this paper will explore its core research question by constructing quantitative proxy variables for both the political and cultural dimensions of public perceptions, as well as the CCP's diplomatic stance vis-à-vis the US. Public perceptions, which is the independent variable, can be approximated by a large sample of Weibo posts within the past three years that mention the US. This corpus of texts, moreover, will be bifurcated into cultural and political buckets. My research will subsequently perform sentiment analysis on each post to construct two rolling average "scores" for public perception.

A proxy for the dependent variable, or foreign policy outcomes, can be developed with a similar method. Specifically, by obtaining the average sentiment score of *People's Daily* and government publications mentioning the US over time, it is possible to construct a quantitative time series for the CCP's foreign policy posture vis-à-vis the US. A granger causality model can then be applied to analyze the predictive power of political and cultural perceptions when it comes to official government rhetoric.

The US in Chinese popular imagination is often a great paradox—admired for its enduring cultural resonance and criticized for its hostile politics. By studying the variegated

nature of public perceptions, my research can give preliminary insights into whether the understudied, cultural dimensions of this concept can produce visible effects on foreign policy.

I. Introduction

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic gathered steam, and as the US ramped up its scrutiny of China's botched response to the public health crisis, the Chinese public struck back at their "archnemesis" across the Pacific with unrelenting fury. The buzzword "American imperialists" (美帝) flooded social media, while accusations that the virus was linked with the US's sinister attempts at biowarfare transformed from a fringe conspiracy to a mainstream narrative.

Chinese popular sentiment towards the US has hit a low ebb. From the *xiaofenhong*, or "little pinks" (young, jingoistic Chinese netizens), to *wumaos*, or "fifty cents" (who flush social media with ultranationalist rhetoric and get paid fifty cents per post), to vitriol-spitting Wolf Warriors, it seems as if large swaths of the Chinese populace are eager to pounce on the US with their deep-seated grievance, and anoint this great power rival as China's public enemy #1.

But just a year ago, *Avengers: Endgame*, the Hollywood sensation where Captain American and his allies rescued the galaxy, took Chinese box office by storm and became one of the highest grossing motion pictures of all time in the country. In 2021, moreover, Apple smartphones secured the largest market share in China, and this American brand made its way into the pockets of at least a fifth of China's tech-savvy consumers. What's more, despite draconian travel restrictions, more than 300,000 Chinese students opted to receive an American education between 2020 and 2021.

Despite the high-profile feud between Beijing and Washington that has propelled anti-American sentiment in China to its zenith, American culture remains enduringly popular among the Chinese people. What becomes evident here is the fact that Chinese popular opinion of its superpower counterpart is often undergirded by a fascinating, yet potentially understudied, paradox. On one hand, people throughout China love to denounce American politics and its "imperialist" global presence, but on the other, they are eager subscribers to American culture. In a curious sense, the literal translation of the derogatory label 美帝 (or American imperialists) is "beautiful imperialists," an oxymoron encapsulating the polarizing image that the US inspires in Chinese popular imagination.

This paper seeks to explore the ways in which these two juxtaposing strains of public sentiment can animate Beijing's diplomatic posturing towards the US. In other words, can the trends and fluctuations in how the Chinese public views the US *culturally* and *politically* explain changes in foreign policy rhetoric of the government?

The hypothesized relationships (as well as potential alternative explanations and confounding variables) between the independent variables, political and cultural perceptions, and my dependent variable, foreign policy posturing, can be illustrated as follows. Note that the processes outlined in blue conform to this paper's initial hypotheses; the section of the diagram highlighted in red demonstrates reverse causality, whereas the gray arrows indicate confounding and/or moderating variables that potentially sit outside the scope of my research.

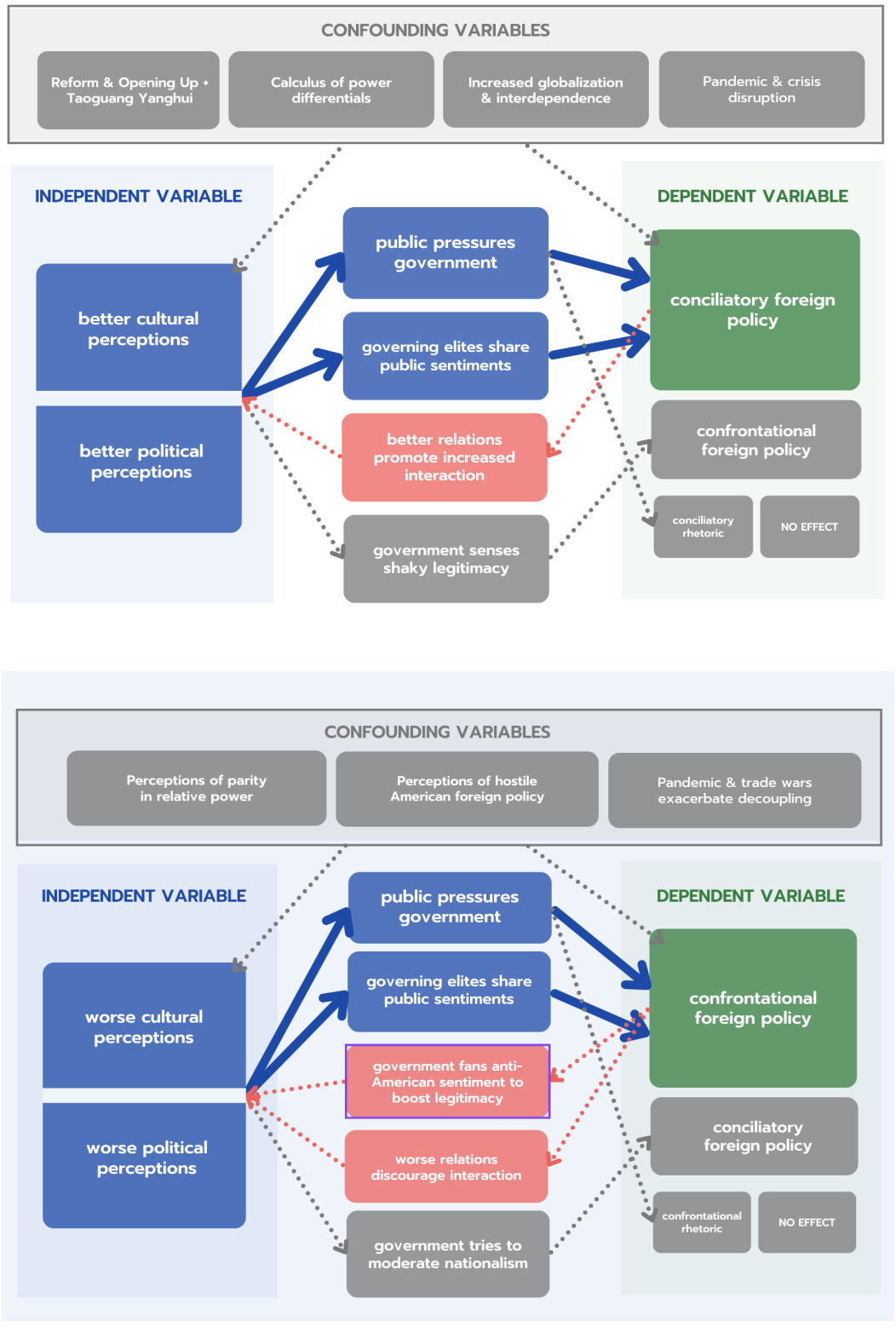


Figure 1: Initial Hypotheses Diagrams

II. Literature Review

1) Does Public Opinion Matter in an Authoritarian Country?

Although scholarly consensus affirms the fact that public opinion can often put pressure on foreign policy-making, this linkage is sometimes contested when it is applied to autocracies like China. Nevertheless, a whole host of studies have pointed out that in the case of the CCP, nationalism (often accompanied by anti-Western sentiment) emanating from the bottom up legitimates its governance and motivates its assertive posturing abroad. As a case in point, Peter Gries and Tao Wang (2022) contend that the linkage between the public and policy can hold strong even without an "electoral connection." In fact, their study makes the claim that because the CCP heavily relies on broad-based nationalism as a source of legitimacy, the government's foreign policy calculus may be even more beholden to the ebb and flow of popular sentiment.

Established scholars within the field of Chinese foreign policy, such as Allen Whiting and Sam Zhao, have also corroborated this point of view, claiming that "the [Chinese] government is increasingly responsive" to a virulent brand of nationalism emanating from the ground up, particularly after 2008. Studies conducted by Gries, Steiger, and Wang (2018), as well as Cairns and Carlson (2022), both traced how the CCP hardened its Japan policy after the 2012 Senkaku/Diaoyu islands showdown, and concluded that its hawkish posturing was a function of increasingly bitter public opinion.

My own research as part of the Raines Fellowship could take these arguments a step further. In fact, the CCP's "wolf warrior" diplomacy may even imitate fiery public discourse that has taken the grassroots by storm. Specifically, while looking at the interplay between social media rhetoric and MFA press statements during the COVID-19 pandemic, I noted that MFA spokespersons often plucked talking points right out of tall tales regarding COVID's American

origins that are blowing up across Weibo. In turn, they would turn these sensational accounts into official narratives that backs up virulent finger-pointing targeting the US.

However, considerable dissent also exists vis-à-vis the perennial question of whether the public-elite linkage is important in non-democratic China. Perhaps the most prominent voice in the negative camp is Jessica Chen Weiss, who contends that China's popular, fiery nationalism is often meticulously engineered from the top-down. By delving into the 1999 Belgrade Embassy bombing and the 2003 Hainan EP-3 spy plane incident as salient case studies, Weiss demonstrates that the CCP can either give a "green light" to nationalist agitators at home to signal steely resolve (which occurred in the former event), or "nip protests in the bud" to strike a more conciliatory posture (as in the latter case).

Weiss's scholarship indicates that the public opinion-foreign policy linkage does not flow one way; rather, these two entities are mutually constitutive. Nevertheless, this piece of added nuance does not entirely detract from the idea that it is entirely plausible for public opinion to sway the foreign policy calculus of the government, even in a closed autocracy like China.

2) Existing Measures of Public Opinion

Whereas empirical data on how Americans perceive China is quite commonplace and mature, quantifiable measures of how Chinese people see the US is much more scant. This is primarily because opinion polls disseminated to the Chinese populace are not always generalizable or reliable. This is primarily because it is particularly difficult for a survey to penetrate a large sample of respondents across a vast geographical expanse under the watchful eye of the government.

Nevertheless, the Pew Research Center's annual Global Attitudes Survey manages to secure over 3000 face-to-face interviews with the Chinese public, which allows us to quantify

American favorability from a Chinese perspective. In fact, Pew's state-of-the-art data suggests that in 2016, popular opinion in China has already singled out the US as Beijing's top threat. RCCC's 2012 survey, disseminated to both mass and elite samples, asked a similar question about which state "poses the greatest danger to China." A whopping 63% of respondents identified the US.

Morning Consult's US-China relations barometer has also made impressive strides in quantifying Chinese public sentiment. Its data series, constructed from moving averages of daily surveys conducted among 670 to 3400 Chinese adults, tracks how US favorability fluctuates on a biweekly basis. Morning Consult's empirical evidence shows that among the Chinese public, American unfavorability oscillates around a dismal 70% between September 2020 and July 2022. RIWI's US-China Perception monitor corroborates these data and puts American unfavorability at around 65% in 2021.

It is important to note that despite their rigorous methodology and prolific reach, however, opinion polls may not give the full picture of Chinese public sentiment because they often lack granularity or longitudinal depth. For instance, Pew's data on American favorability among Chinese people is only available by year, glossing over any consequential fluctuations in public sentiments within a specific month, or week. Morning Consult's US-China barometer, despite being carried out daily, only began recording results in late 2020. As a result, it is difficult to rely exclusively on survey data that is only accessible within a constrained time frame to perform rigorous, data-driven analyses on Chinese public opinion. This means that in order to capture a more holistic picture of how China's popular image of the US has evolved, more innovative methodologies may need to be devised.

A good alternative to carrying out tedious and expensive surveys is collecting passive data, such as social media posts. Unlike surveys, new ideas and opinions are constantly flooding the digital landscape and can remain on social media platforms for many years, which allows researchers to construct datasets with great granularity that also cover a generous time frame. An additional upside of using social media is the incredible flexibility and scope of its content. Whereas polls constrict a researcher's findings to the questions they ask, the colorful and polarizing content populating the internet is a much more holistic representation of public discourse. This breadth is ideal when we want to parse the distinct political and cultural nuances of public perceptions.

In fact, analyzing discourse on social media to gauge public perceptions has become the latest scholarly trend. Zhang et al (2018) analyzed 6000 "tweets" on Weibo (China's Twitter equivalent) and argued that hawkish outbursts on Chinese social media are often complemented by pro-democracy views. By analyzing more than 4000 Weibo posts with semantic network analysis (SNA), Wang and Tao (2021) opined that expressions of Chinese nationalism ranged from a "Suppression of Ambivalent Attitudes" to a "Feeling of National Superiority." Additionally, while studying Zhihu posts centered around UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's hospitalization, Altman Peng et al. (2020) investigated China's "gaze" at Western democratic systems. Specifically, the scholars noted that while the pandemic is running its course throughout the globe, China's perceptions towards British management of the public health crisis—as well as towards Western democratic politics in general—have become decidedly more negative.

3) Pitfalls of the Conventional Narrative

Thus far, existing literature seems to lean heavily towards one particular narrative. Specifically, Chinese popular perceptions of the US are deteriorating, and in some cases the

public's nationalist clamors may reach the ears of CCP decision-makers holed up in Zhongnanhai, who in turn adjust their foreign policy posturing accordingly.

The problem here is that much of past and ongoing scholarly discussions are built around the assumption that only the *political* sentiments of the masses are salient in foreign policy. Public opinion in this sense is monolithic, and it is always measured along the lines of how people view economic showdowns, military build-ups, or fomenting geopolitical crises.

Similarly, when Pew, Morning Consult, or RIWI interviews the public, they attempt to understand how their respondents evaluate the US as a coherent, monotone whole. But very often, Chinese popular imagination of the US is defined by a set of highly variegated—or even paradoxical—perspectives. The bombastic, jingoistic outbursts that trend on social media or headline news pieces are often undergirded by a profound fascination for American culture as something to be understood, admired, or even imitated.

A few scholars have picked up on this nuance. Guan et al. (2020), for example, studied Chinese public opinion on Weibo and concluded that the people's "overwhelmingly negative views" of US political presence abroad are often juxtaposed by an "overwhelmingly positive" view of "US domestic characteristics." Biwu Zhang's book, *Chinese Perceptions of the US*, developed a rigorous typology for how the public may construct "images" of foreign states based on both each state's perceived capability and cultural attractiveness. Similarly, Zhou He et al. (2012) examined Chinese media frames and noted that China often dissects its perceptions of the US into "cultural" and "political" images. By conducting interviews with university students in Beijing, moreover, Yang Gao (2016) further corroborated the idea that Chinese public opinion of the US isn't dominated by unrelenting hatred. Rather, the capital city's worldly urban youths are

often enamored with the "authenticity" of American media that is so elusive among domestic artistic expression.

Chris Buckley's *New York Times* article in 2015 and Eric Fish's *Foreign Policy* op-ed in 2017 also point out that Chinese popular sentiments towards American culture and politics are worlds apart.

The problem at this point, however, is that there is no more literature investigating the effects of cultural perceptions on foreign policy. While a whole host of scholarly publications have been devoted to how the masses can think about politics and in turn alter the elite policy-making agenda, the question of how the cultural attractiveness of an "other" can tweak a government's decision-making calculus has either been ignored or dismissed. Indeed, modern Chinese society came of age when it opened its doors to the boundless energy and dynamism of American cultural innovation, yet we often do not carefully consider the geopolitical ramifications of this profound dissonance between China's cultural admiration and political distrust towards the US. This paper seeks to address this shortcoming in established literature by separating public perceptions of the American "other" into cultural and political trends, while weighing the relative impacts of both.

III. Methodology

1) Defining Public Opinion

As mentioned in the literature review, "public opinion" comes packaged with a set of highly variegated—and sometimes contradictory—set of attributes. In other words, it is impossible for both researchers and their subjects to articulate what it really means to harbor "favorable" views of a multifaceted and immense entity like the US. A Chinese survey on the

same issue, carried out by *Global Times* and Data100, parses "favorability" into more interpretable attributes as follows:

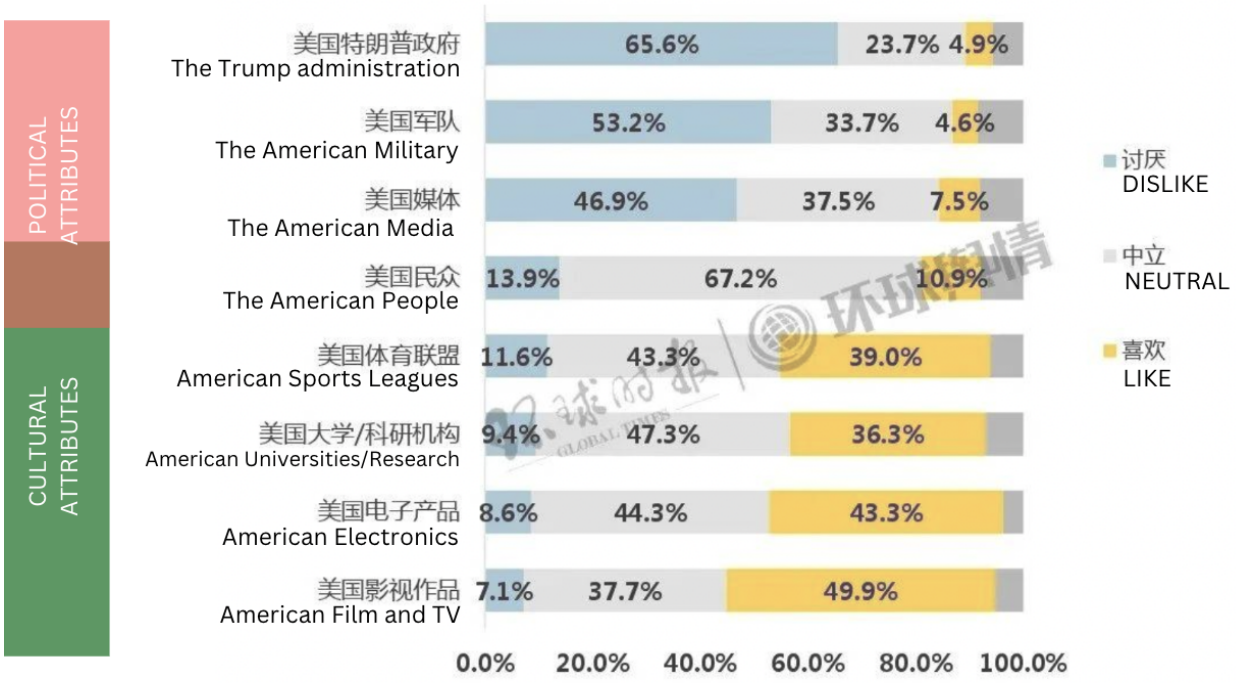


Figure 2: Results of a Global Times/Data100 Survey on Chinese Public Perceptions of the US

Note that favorability ratings soar when respondents are asked about America's cultural attributes. As such, the distinction between cultural perception and political perception (which encompasses the country's political figures, its government, and its foreign policy) motivates much of this paper's research inquiry. The figure above can be supplemented with Biwu Zhang's dissection of the "national image" (shown below) to produce a much more comprehensive definition of public opinion:

Table 2.1 Components of National Images

Images	*Character of Foreign Policy toward One's Own Nation*	*Capability Compared to One's Own Nation*	*Cultural Level Compared to One's Own Nation*
Imperialist	Threatening	Superior	Superior
Barbarian	Threatening	Superior	Inferior
Enemy	Threatening	Comparable	Comparable
Rogue	Presenting an opportunity for exploitation	Inferior	Inferior
Degenerate	Presenting an opportunity for exploitation	Comparable but declining	Comparable but declining
Hegemon	Presenting both a threat and an opportunity	Superior	Superior
Neutral (complex)	Presenting both a threat and an opportunity	Comparable	Comparable
Child (colony)	Presenting an opportunity for exploitation	Inferior	Inferior
Patron	Presenting mainly an opportunity for mutual gains	Superior	Superior
Ally	Presenting an opportunity for mutual gains	Comparable	Comparable
Protégé (dependent ally)	Presenting mainly an opportunity for mutual gains	Inferior	Inferior

Zhang supplements cultural perceptions with comparative capability to round out his understanding of a "national image." In fact, perceived capabilities of a foreign state figures prominently in established public opinion polls in the form of questions pertaining to threat (i.e. "What do you see as a major threat to China?"). By fusing political cultural attributes of favorability with comparative capability, it is possible to arrive at a much more potent definition of Chinese public opinion vis-à-vis the US:

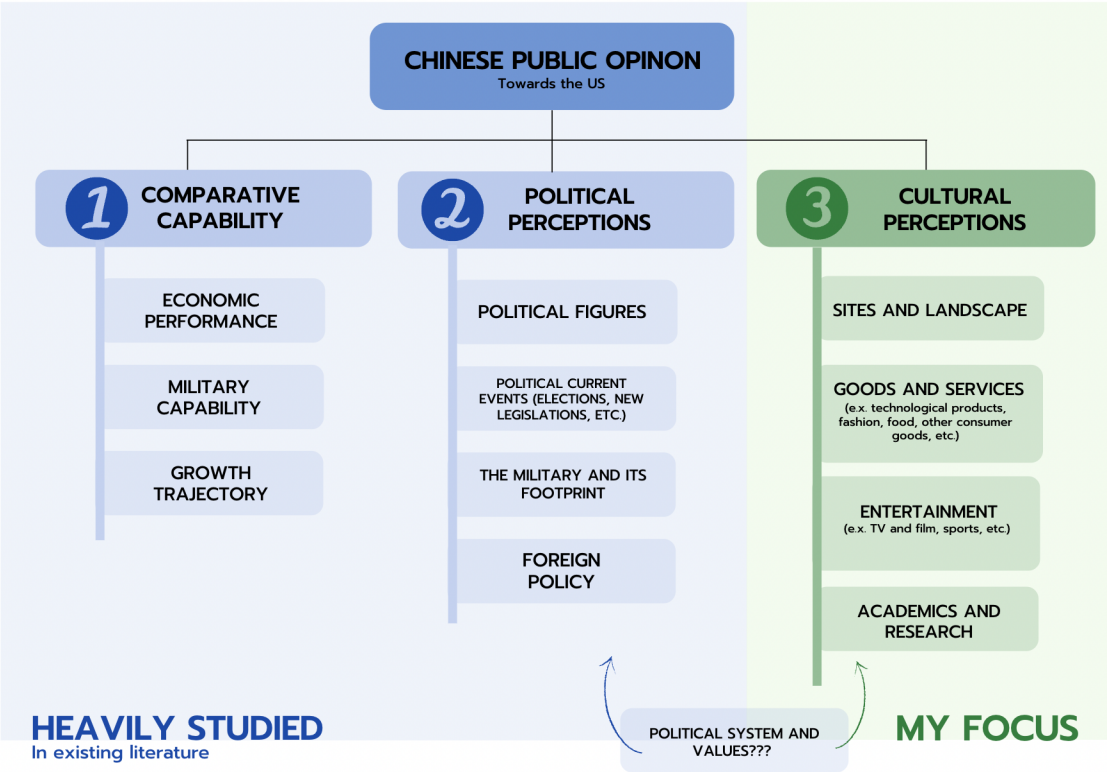


Figure 3: A Refined Definition of Chinese Public Opinion Towards the US

To narrow this paper down to a feasible scope, my research will eschew quantitative analysis of comparative capabilities, and instead focus solely on political and cultural perceptions. Once a working definition for public perceptions has solidified, it is possible to curate a dataset that approximates the two dimensions of public opinion selected for in-depth analysis.

2) Data Selection

a) Social Media Data

For the independent variable (i.e. public perceptions), this paper will turn towards China's two largest social media platforms, Weibo and WeChat. The former is China's Twitter-equivalent, and the latter is an omni-functional app that fuses messaging, social media, blogging, news distribution, and fintech capabilities/features.

Weibo will constitute the primary source of data, because like Twitter, it is teeming with polarizing political discourse that are succinct, straightforward, sometimes toxic and explosive, and perfect for natural language processing (NLP) by a computer program.

Any data collection on Weibo is encumbered by a few technical obstacles, however. First, the platform's application programming interface (API) is rather restrictive and limits the number of posts from a keyword search to around 50 pages, or approximately 1000 posts.

A tentative way around the API restrictions and the authorization roadblocks is to scrape posts by user instead of by keywords. This is actually the approach taken by Hu et. al. (2020), who put together an impressive dataset of more than 20 million COVID-related Weibo posts during the early pandemic (their dataset has since been cited and used by hundreds of researchers). As such, by using the open-source Python Weibo scraper–which very helpfully bypasses any authorization checkpoints–on a vast pool of users, I will be able to assemble a dataset that is not limited by any of Weibo's mechanisms designed to restrict their data access.

The challenge at this point is curating the user pool, which presumably should be representative of the internet-faring Chinese public, and constitute a large enough sample size so that the dataset can achieve a sufficient degree of data granularity. By accessing Hu et. al.'s user pool, which contains about 20 million accounts as of their latest update, it becomes much more straightforward to capture a vast and representative sample of the average Chinese netizen.

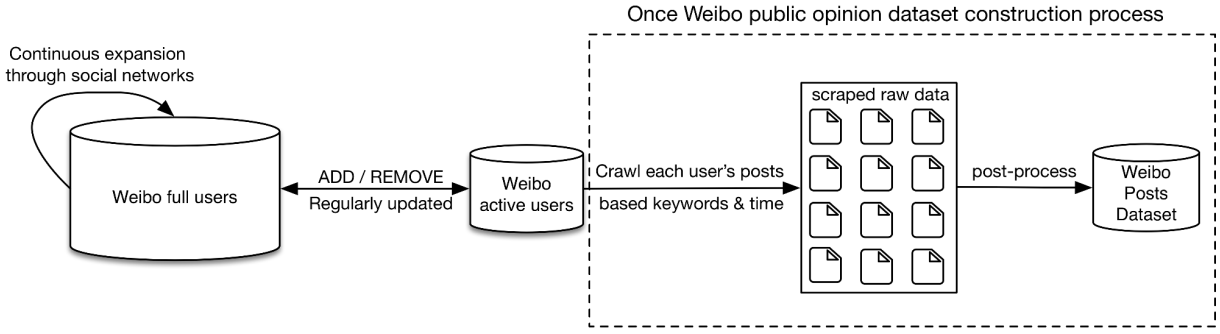


Figure 4: The Hu et al. (2020) method for creating a Weibo user pool

Armed with this state-of-the-art user pool and a powerful Weibo scraper, it is possible to filter every post by each of these users stretching 3-4 years back by the word "US" or "America" to construct a preliminary dataset. This dataset can in turn be complemented by Zhao (2018)'s comprehensive dataset that contains every WeChat article mentioning 19 countries from 2016 to 2017, including the US.

The two pitfalls of my research design are 1) censorship, and 2) distinguishing elite and public discourse. Presumably, social media posts deemed socially harmful or unpatriotic will be quickly wiped from the Internet under vigilant CCP surveillance. However, the censorship effect may not necessarily skew the trends in public opinion, as the omnipresent "Great Firewall" presumably filters out undesirable content in a consistent manner across time.

What's more, government agencies and state-run media outlets run their own social media channels, which are chorused by millions of bots and users commissioned by the government. Sometimes these accounts may masquerade as ordinary users and are thus hard to filter out. Nevertheless, it is still possible to parse official and grassroots discourse by eliminating verified accounts from the dataset.

Following the public perception typology outlined above, this preliminary dataset will be bifurcated into documents representative of political perceptions and those more in line with cultural perceptions by an extensive set of keywords, which are outlined as follows and will be constantly updated based on in-depth reviews of the social media dataset:

Cultural Perceptions Keywords	Political Perceptions Keywords
<u>Goods and Services:</u> ● Brand names (e.x. Nike 耐克, Starbucks 星巴克, Apple 苹果) ● Shopping 购物 ● Merchandise 商品 <u>Entertainment:</u> ● Hollywood 好莱坞 ● Movies 电影 ○ Movie and actor names ● TV Show 电视剧 ○ TV show names ● Singer 歌手 ○ Musical artist names ● Concerts 演唱会 ● Cuisine 美食/餐饮 ○ Names of popular food items <u>Academics and Research:</u> ● Study abroad 留学 ● University education 大学教育 ● Getting a masters 读研究生 ● Getting a PhD 读博士 ● Ivy Leagues 常青藤/藤校 <u>Sites and Landscape:</u> ● Travel 旅游 ● Tourist destinations 旅游景点/胜地 ○ Names of famous parks, monuments, museums, tourist attractions, etc.	<u>Foreign Policy:</u> ● Diplomacy 外交 ● Negotiations 谈判 ● State Department OR Ministry of Foreign Affairs 外交部 ● Secretary of State 国务卿 ● Trade War 贸易战 ● Taiwan 台湾 ● South China Sea 南海 ● Names of global institutions/diplomatic summits ● Other hot topics in US-China diplomacy <u>Political Figures:</u> ● Names of prominent figures in the US (e.x. Trump 特朗普, Biden 拜登, Pelosi 佩洛西, Blinken 布林肯) <u>Political Current Events:</u> ● Elections 选举/大选 ● Policy 政策 ● Names of political parties ● Branches and departments of the American government <u>Military and Its Footprint:</u> ● Military 军队 ○ Branches of the military ● Aircraft Carrier 航母 ● Military base 军事基地 ● Department of Defense 国防部

Figure 5: Keywords criteria for distinguishing documents related to cultural and political perceptions

b) <u>Government Data</u>

To gather government data, this project will enlist Oriprobe's Archives of the Chinese Government and *People's Daily* Archives, both of which are readily available through Georgetown's Lauinger Library.

It would be easy to then filter their entire collections by the keyword "US" (美国), and scrape the complete search result outputs. For the former archive, there are approximately 8444 relevant documents consisting of MFA press releases, white papers, and miscellaneous national government reports ranging from the past week to 1957.

Within the latter archive, I will quickly filter the data with an identical criteria and gather all the outputs, which total 261,565 *People's Daily* articles ranging from today to 1946. Notably, there are 1337 relevant documents from the past year alone.

The colossal task of sifting through these hundreds of thousands of articles will be shouldered by a computer program. More specifically, by harnessing a popular Python library called Selenium, which syncs programming code with a web browser, the winding process of navigating between links, articles, and webpages, and storing all relevant texts into a dataset can be automated.

Evidently, I will truncate the dataset by time, as only the more recent documents can be correlated with social media discourse.

c) Sentiment Analysis

To quantify the mounds of textual data, it is possible to run each document through a sentiment analysis algorithm. This process can be facilitated by applying the algorithm supported by the Python library SnowNLP, which is configured to deal with Chinese language texts.

The most common sentiment analysis models are built upon the foundations of a Naive Bayes classifier, which essentially acts like a primitive machine learning model that learns a

sample corpus of documents labeled as exhibiting positive or negative sentiments (i.e. the prior probability of which sentiment category any document would fall in), and subsequently compares the words of a new document to its existing knowledge in order to reach a posterior probability regarding the sentiment category of said document.

Specifically, the machine learning model will import training data from the SentiWeibo project, which contains 407,058 documents with positive sentiments and 263,995 documents with negative sentiments.

Of course, it is important to note that Bayesian algorithms are only a rather primitive (although widely accepted) way to go about the process of sentiment analysis. A large variety of relevant libraries for sentiment analysis exist in the world of NLP, many of which harness more convoluted methodologies, such as BERT. Perhaps a more robust approach to quantifying sentiment would be to experiment with each of these libraries and weigh their respective outputs.

Once every document in the dataset has passed through the sentiment analysis model, they will be separated into cultural, political, and foreign policy categories, and ordered chronologically. Then, it would be simple to run through each dataset and take either weekly or monthly rolling averages of the documents' sentiment scores, which produces three time series that could serve as proxies for the independent and dependent variables:

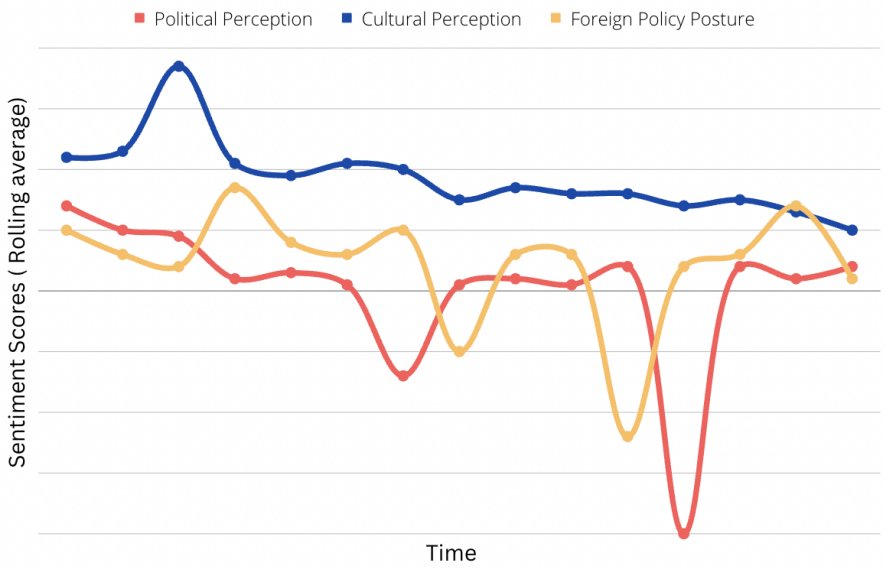


Figure 6: A hypothetical illustration of the independent and dependent variable time series

3) Granger Causality

To conduct a rigorous analysis on how political perceptions and cultural perceptions trends can help predict the behavior of the foreign policy posture time series, this paper turns to a specific technique within the field of vector autoregression (VAR) models called granger causality tests. Essentially, these tests help determine whether one time series help forecast another in a manner that is statistically significant, as illustrated below.

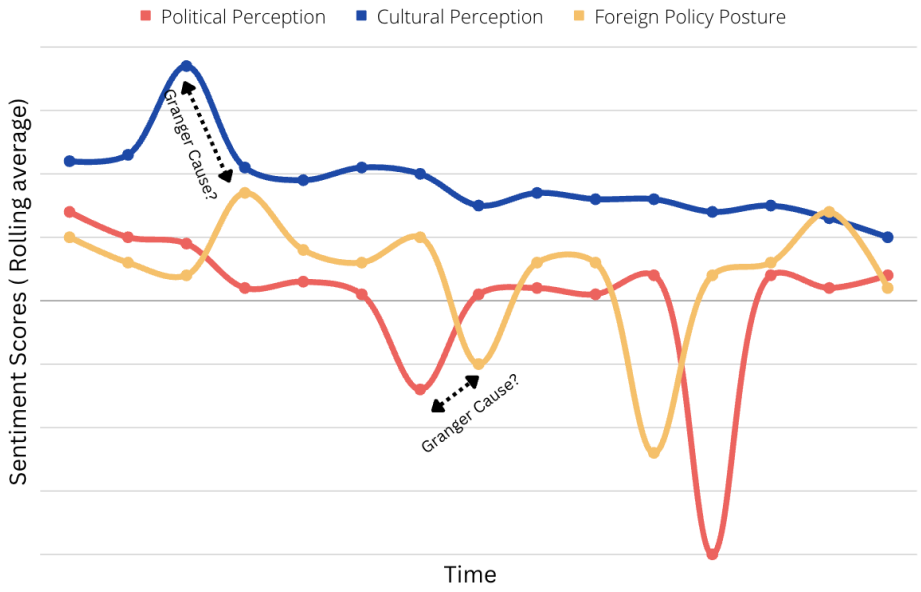


Figure 7: Granger causality

For example, if we can construct a "baseline model" for each observation along the foreign policy posture time series as follows:

$$Foreign\ Policy_t = \sum_{n=1}^{k} a_n \times Foreign\ Policy_{t-n} + e_t$$

Where the $Foreign\ Policy_t$ subscript denotes the sentiment score of the foreign policy posture at time t, and k is a parameter of how many previous data points the model would use to estimate $Foreign\ Policy_t$. a_n are constant coefficients. The variable e_t, moreover, is the error in the model.

And then, we can construct a more "advanced" model by taking into account observations in the cultural (or political) perception time series:

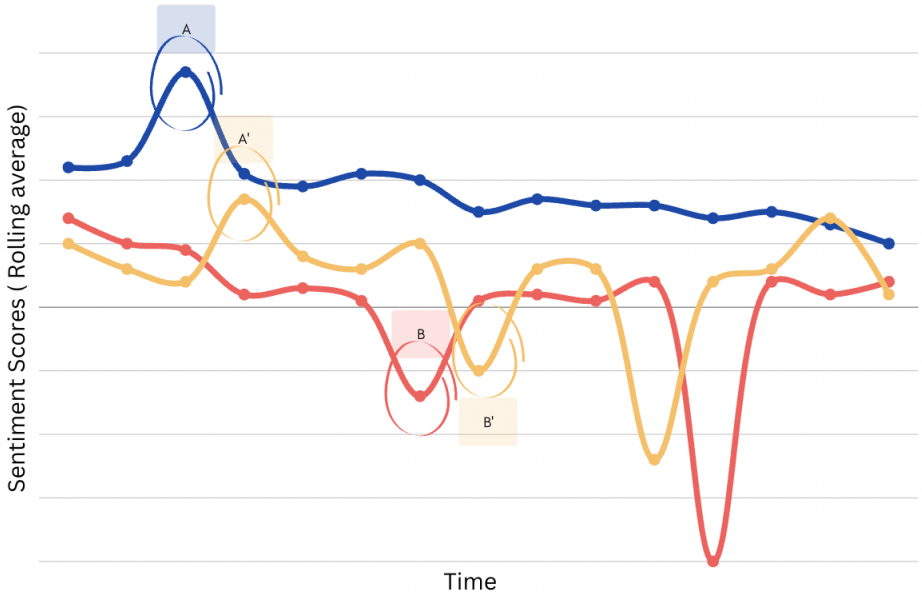
$$Foreign\ Policy_t = \sum_{n=1}^{k} a_n \times Foreign\ Policy_{t-n} + \sum_{n=1}^{k} b_n \times Cultural\ Perception_{t-n} + \epsilon_t$$

Similar to the baseline model, $Cultural\ Perception_{t-n}$ denotes values along the cultural perception time series that helps forecast $Foreign\ Policy_t$, and ϵ_t represents the updated (and reduced) error.

Then, by taking $log(\frac{var(e_t)}{var(\epsilon_t)})$, where $var(e_t)$ and $var(\epsilon_t)$ denote the variances in the residuals in the baseline and updated models, respectively, it is possible to quantify the predictive power of cultural (or political) perception vis-à-vis foreign policy posture.

Of course, the great caveat here is that just because one variable "granger causes" another, there is still not sufficient indication that the two variables are actually causally linked. To establish this causal linkage, it is important to turn towards some qualitative process tracing.

Specifically, any spikes or dips in the political or cultural perceptions time series will merit close attention, as well as qualitative scrutiny of whether the foreign policy time series exhibit any similar dramatic behaviors.



For instance, as illustrated above, it would be necessary to pay particular attention to the social media posts at point A, as well as the government publications at A' (the same goes for points B and B'). Subsequently, a comparison between the texts that culminate in these peaks and troughs can demonstrate if grassroot talking points have indeed been replicated in the upper echelons of governance. If A and A' talk about similar topics and use language that parallel one another (this can also be corroborated by computer-assisted text analysis, specifically methods like topic modeling), then we have much better reason to believe that a causal relationship between the two variables are in fact plausible.

IV. Findings and Discussions

TO BE CONTINUED…

Annotated Bibliography

Baum, Matthew, and Philip Potter. "The Relationship Between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (June 6, 2008). https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060406.214132.

This piece was recommended by Professor Bennett, and it really pushed me to consider how information asymmetry between the public and elites can tilt the landscape of policy-making towards one group. Whereas the policymaking elites can access the latest geopolitical developments in real-time, there may be a lag in when the public can get their hands on similarly reliable information. Such a discrepancy may put the two groups in different playing fields with varying potential to influence foreign policy outcomes. The media, in turn, becomes a useful intermediary in a "marketplace" for information.

Chu, Jonathan A., and Stefano Recchia. "Does Public Opinion Affect the Preferences of Foreign Policy Leaders? Experimental Evidence from the UK Parliament." *The Journal of Politics* 84, no. 3 (July 2022): 1874–77. https://doi.org/10.1086/719007.

A good piece about how British MPs who receive public opinion polling data tend to modify their foreign policy stances.

Efimova, Anna, and Denis Strebkov. "Linking Public Opinion and Foreign Policy in Russia." *The International Spectator* 55, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 93–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2019.1700040.

This is one of the pieces which helps me demonstrate that public opinion still matters beyond the "electoral connection."

Finn, Helena K. “The Case for Cultural Diplomacy: Engaging Foreign Audiences.” *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2003): 15. https://doi.org/10.2307/20033753.

I haven’t quite incorporated this piece (which is more of an op-ed) into my literature review. However, it could infuse my “implications” or “why” section with some ethos, as the author essentially argues that there are elements beyond awesome military force and harsh economic sanctions in America’s foreign policy toolkit.

Foyle, Douglas C. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Elite Beliefs as a Mediating Variable.” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1997): 141–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00036.

This piece is a relatively older piece of literature that talks about how elite perception of public opinion is an important mediating variable in the public opinion-foreign policy linkage. Like many other pieces in this bibliography, it pushes me to think more critically about how the interaction between what the public thinks and the ways governments react really plays out in real life.

Goldsmith, Benjamin E., and Yusaku Horiuchi. “In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for US Foreign Policy?” *World Politics* 64, no. 3 (July 2012): 555–85. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887112000123.

According to the author, the answer is yes. However, I noted that the authors only zeroed in on the impacts of one particular facet of “soft power,” i.e. how foreign audiences scrutinize American foreign policy and its political reputation abroad. What particularly puzzles me is the fact that the authors outright dismiss the impact of cultural perceptions in the beginning of the article, even when they don’t provide any solid empirical backing

while doing so (at least based on my preliminary reading). As such, I still have to figure out how this piece fits into my literature review.

Gries, Peter, and Tao Wang. *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Beyond the Electoral Connection*. *Handbook on Politics and Public Opinion*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022. https://www.elgaronline.com/view/book/9781800379619/book-part-9781800379619-46.xml.

This is (probably) a crucial piece that demonstrates how public opinion can exert pressure on elite decision-making processes even when the electoral connection is severed. In fact, the authors argue that this link is even stronger in China given that the authoritarian government's legitimacy is derived from broad-based nationalism.

Holsti, Ole R. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates." *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (December 1992): 439. https://doi.org/10.2307/2600734.

This is probably one of the most helpful pieces in my entire literature review, as it introduced me to how the great pendulum of scholarly consensus moved from dismissing the public-elite linkage to affirming its importance. Holsti essentially does a fairly comprehensive survey of all the literature that worked together to challenge the Almond-Lippmann Consensus, which reigned over the scholarly community until the Vietnam War. One interesting consideration with regards to this piece is how literature preoccupied with American diplomacy can be applied to other countries, even those without a democratic process.

Knecht, Thomas, and M. Stephen Weatherford. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Stages of Presidential Decision Making.” *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 705–27. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2006.00421.x.

This piece adds nuance to the public-elite linkage by raising the question of how issue salience and public attentiveness can determine how much power the public can exert over the executive decision-making process.

Nye Jr., Joseph S. “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy.” *Political Science Quarterly (Academy of Political Science)* 119, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 255–70. https://doi.org/10.2307/20202345.

Soft power, once again, is definitely relevant to my research’s implications. However, I’m not sure if it is helpful to integrate this piece into my literature review.

Powlick, Philip J., and Andrew Z. Katz. “Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus.” *Mershon International Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (1998): 29–61. https://doi.org/10.2307/254443.

Based on my literature review, this piece appears to be a classic that first proposed looking at the role of the media in “activating” public opinion on foreign policy.

Shambaugh, David. *China and the World*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020.

This was actually a “textbook” for my Chinese Foreign Policy class. In one of the chapters on nationalism, the towering sinophile David Shambaugh provides an excellent survey of literature scrutinizing the public-elite linkage in foreign policy. Shambaugh has proved to be immensely helpful and has led me to other sources like Jessica Chen Weiss, as well as Gries, Steiger, and Wang.

Soroka, Stuart N. “Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy.” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 27–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X02238783.

Like the Powlik & Katz piece, as well as the Baum & Potter piece, this article looks at the powerful role media plays in setting the agenda for the public-elite dialogue on foreign policy. The discussion about how media serves as an intermediary and an independent actor with considerable sway in and of itself could complicate my research. This is because I am thinking about scraping media coverage data as a proxy for elite foreign policy agenda and posturing. However, this proxy may not really be appropriate given Soroka, Powlik & Katz, as well as Baum & Potter. Although admittedly, the media is far from independent in China and most often serves as a mouthpiece for policy-makers.