Americans' Attitudes toward the US–China Trade War

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Americans' Attitudes toward the US–China Trade War

Abstract

The United States and China have been locked in a trade war since 2018. This study reports results of original research based on a nationwide online survey of US adults that contained a number of questions measuring Americans' attitudes toward China, including the trade war. The analysis shows that the American public is sharply divided over the trade war, despite reporting high support for international trade with China (76%). Based on responses to survey questions on US–China trade and the trade war, a typology that classifies the general public in the US into four distinct groups is proposed. The largest group, at more than 40%, supports trade with China but opposes the trade war. A slightly smaller share has a more economically militant view of trade with China, supporting trade and the trade war. This study finds that while political identity is strongly associated with attitudes toward the trade war, it only has a weak effect on attitudes toward trade with China; meanwhile, perceptions about China and its government, people, and culture are highly correlated with views on trade with China, but are unrelated to views on the trade war.

Introduction

The United States and China, two of the world's largest countries by area, population, and gross domestic product, have been engaged in a trade war since 2018. By imposing tariffs, introducing technology export restrictions, fighting several cases at the World Trade Organization, and so forth, the two countries have been embroiled in several rounds of back-and-forth, and often escalating, conflict. The large-scale trade war between China and the US has drawn the attention of both academia and industry, with much focus on understanding the reasons why the US initiated the trade war, its effects on communities and economies in both countries, and also its effects on the world order. The general consensus is that the trade war is a key component of a larger US global strategy to strengthen its position in the world, reduce the existing trade deficit with China, gain leverage to negotiate new trade policies and practices, address domestic problems (e.g., deindustrialization and rural poverty), and constrain China's rise from a regional to a global power (Zhang 2018).[1]

While it is governments that determine trade policies, including the initiation of trade wars, it is a country's citizens, communities, and businesses that feel the effects, either positive or negative, of these policies. Some observers have suggested that a protracted trade war would eventually jeopardize the interests of the general

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[1] Yuhan Zhang, "The US–China Trade War," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs* 31, nos. 1–2 (2018): 53–74.

publics in the US, China, and other countries.[2] This raises several important questions. First, does the American public view the US–China trade war as a legitimate policy position? That is, to what extend does the general public in the US support the trade war with China? Second, what motivates ordinary Americans to support or oppose the trade war? And third, how do Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war differ from their attitudes toward the more fundamental issue of trade between the two countries? By comparing attitudes toward trade and attitudes toward the trade war between the two countries, this study aims to further understand the mechanisms that shape the public's attitudes toward the US–China trade war.

Although the role of public opinion in foreign policy decisions such as those that produced the trade war is unclear, public opinion is important in its own right,[3] and in the crafting of public policy generally.[4] The relationship between public opinion and foreign policy is not well understood, owing to its general remoteness from the daily lives of the general public and the complicated nature of the subject matter (e.g., military asset distribution, bilateral and multilateral trade deals). Nevertheless, the sheer size of the economic output flowing from the US and China, coupled with the extensive economic ties between the two countries, suggests that the US–China trade war may have especially pronounced effects on the daily lives of ordinary people in both countries. The future of the US–China relationship will have substantial consequences for the world order, considering the demographic, economic, and political impact of these two countries. With the trade war ratcheting up tensions between the US and China, it is important that policy makers, researchers, and governments understand the nature of public opinion concerning the US–China relationship and how public opinion varies across subpopulations in the US. Investigation of US public opinion concerning the trade war also stands to produce novel insights into the future of the US–China relationship. Will the relationship continue to trend toward greater hostility and open competition, or will the two countries change course and become more cooperative? And what role will public opinion play in these developments?

According to recent social surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center, Americans' views of China have turned sharply negative amid recent trade tensions, with 60%, 66%, and 73% of respondents reporting unfavorable opinions of China in

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[2] Douglas A. Irwin, "The False Promise of Protectionism: Why Trump's Trade Policy Could Backfire," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2017), p. 45; Chunding Li, Chuantian He, and Chuangwei Lin, "Economic Impacts of the Possible China–US Trade War," *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade* 54, no. 7 (2018): 1557–1577.

[3] Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy," *The American Political Science Review*, no. 77 (1983): 175–190.

[4] Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Richard Sobel, *Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy since Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Wang Xiuli and Pamela J. Shoemaker, "What Shapes Americans' Opinion of China? Country Characteristics, Public Relations and Mass Media," *Chinese Journal of Communication*, no. 4 (2011): 1–20.

Spring 2019, March 2020, and June 2020, respectively: the highest negative rating in the past 15 years.[5] Likewise, negative views of the US among Chinese citizens are also high and rising. According to the authors' own survey, conducted in China in late 2019 and early 2020, 68% of Chinese respondents expressed an unfavorable opinion of the US.[6] Not surprisingly, these changes in attitudes among Chinese citizens have coincided with the more confrontational policy of the Trump administration, suggesting a causal relationship between US policy and public opinions. The implications of a protracted trade war would reach far beyond the economies and polities in the US and China, indeed impacting the current world order.

Using data collected through a nationwide online survey in the US, this study investigates ordinary Americans' attitudes toward the current US–China trade war. The study is among the first to quantitatively assess attitudes toward US–China trade among the US electorate. This research offers new insights into the ideological mechanisms by which public opinions of the US–China trade war are shaped in the US context. It also provides baseline benchmarks by which to enable future investigations to assess whether and how attitudes have changed during the course of the trade war, and also by COVID-19 and other events that appear to be escalating tensions in US–China relations.

Literature and Theory

Despite limited research on the factors that affect attitudes toward trade wars, a large number of studies on public opinions and US–China bilateral relations provide us with the theoretical foundations to hypothesize what factors may influence Americans' attitudes toward the trade war with China. Prior research suggests that Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war are intertwined with their more general attitudes toward trade, and also with their attitudes toward China. Specifically, this study proposes that ordinary Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war are affected by the perceived economic benefits associated with the trade war, their political ideology, and their general impressions about China.

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[5] Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, "U.S. Views of China Turn Sharply Negative Amid Trade Tensions," Pew Research Center, August 13, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/08/13/u-s-views-of-china-turn-sharply-negative-amid-trade-tensions/, accessed August 20, 2020; Kat Devlin, Laura Silver, and Christine Huang, "U.S. Views of China Increasingly Negative Amid Coronavirus Outbreak," Pew Research Center, April 21, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/04/21/u-s-views-of-china-increasingly-negative-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/, accessed August 20, 2020; Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, "Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19," Pew Research Center, July 30, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/07/30/americans-fault-china-for-its-role-in-the-spread-of-covid-19/, accessed August 20, 2020.

[6] The authors fielded a survey on public attitudes in December 2019 and April 2020 in five provinces in China: Hubei, Shaanxi, Gansu, Liaoning, and Guangdong.

Economic Explanations

According to public accounts and prior research, one of the primary reasons why the US initiated the trade war was China's persistently large trade surplus, which was widely believed to have a dampening effecting on the US economy.[7] A stated goal of the Trump administration was to use the trade war to gain political leverage in pursuit of a rebalancing of bilateral trade and to end long-standing Chinese trade practices viewed as unfair to the US. Further stated goals were to revive domestic manufacturing and create jobs in the manufacturing sector, especially in rural areas. Given the overt economic goals of the trade war, it is hypothesized that a large share of US citizens will support the trade war, especially groups that have historically thrived when domestic manufacturing was strong (e.g., white, male, working class people). As noted by economists, individuals with lower socioeconomic status tend to benefit the most from the trade war in comparison with workers in the service and knowledge sectors of the US economy. It thus can be predicted that respondents with lower socioeconomic status (SES) will be supportive of the US–China trade war, while respondents with higher SES will be opposed to it (Hypothesis 1). Individual attributes such as education, household income, and employment status are used to measure SES.

Public opinion is fluid and as such can be influenced by subjective reaction to contextual conditions.[8] Prior research has shown that people's views of the macroeconomic context influence their attitudes toward important social issues such as immigration and foreign affairs.[9] For example, Europeans who feel confident about their country's economy are likely to regard European integration in a positive light, while those who are pessimistic about the country's economy will lean toward skepticism[10]. A study of Japanese attitudes toward the US and China also revealed that a pessimistic perception of Japan's economy was associated with an increase in Japanese respondents' negative attitudes toward China and the US.[11] In this regard, Americans' positive evaluation of their economic situation may lead them to oppose the trade war with China (Hypothesis 2a). But from another perspective, people who hold positive opinions of the US economy may also indicate their satisfaction with the

[7] Liu Tao and Wing Thye Woo, "Understanding the US–China Trade War," *China Economic Journal*, no. 11 (2018): 319–340.

[8] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration?," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, no. 37 (2004): 415–420; Shun Gong and Kikuko Nagayoshi, "Japanese Attitudes toward China and the United States: A Sociological Analysis," *Chinese Sociological Review*, no. 51 (2019): 251–270.

[9] Lauren M. McLaren, "Anti-Immigrant Prejudice in Europe: Contact, Threat Perception, and Preferences for the Exclusion of Migrants," *Social Forces*, no. 81 (2003): 909–936; Benjamin O. Fordham and Katja B. Kleinberg, "International Trade and US Relations with China," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, no. 7 (2011): 217–236

[10] Hooghe and Marks, "Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration?."

[11] Gong and Nagayoshi, "Japanese Attitudes toward China and the United States."

current US policies, which likely increases their support for the trade war (Hypothesis 2b). If the latter is true, satisfaction with democracy in the US may also be positively associated with an individual's support for the trade war (Hypothesis 2c).

Political Orientation

An individual's attitudes toward economic issues such as international trade are also responsive to their membership in political groups, their political identity, and the values and norms that define who the person is politically.[12] Humans have a well-developed capacity for intense in-group loyalty (bonding social capital), and such loyalties can be extremely powerful in shaping not just political views and behaviors, but also economic ones.[13] The discussion on the role of political identity in shaping people's political behaviors dates back to the study of voting behaviors in the 1960s.[14] Most American voters identify with a political party, and these party identifications can have profound effects on their choices at the polls.[15] Because political parties are the most salient groups in democratic politics, group theory also helps us understand the central role of party affiliation in contemporary democracies.[16]

Accumulated survey evidence indicates that political orientation and party affiliation also influence sociopolitical attitudes among the American electorate.[17] Previous studies have shown that self-described conservatives and those who identify with the Republican party are significantly more likely to espouse hardline positions in international affairs than are ideological liberals and Democratic party affiliates.[18] Partisan cleavages have grown over recent years, and this extends beyond domestic social issues to a broad range of foreign policy topics,[19] including attitudes and

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[12] Hooghe and Marks, "Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration."

[13] Jack Citrin, Beth Reingold, and Donald P. Green, "American Identity and the Politics of Ethnic Change," *The Journal of Politics*, no. 52 (1990): 1124–1154; Douglas Massey, "Presidential Address: A Brief History of Human Society: The Origin and Role of Emotion in Social Life," *American Sociological Review*, no. 67 (2002): 1–29.

[14] Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 295.

[15] Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, p. 120.

[16] Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[17] Peter Hays Gries, "Does Ideology Matter?," *Social Science Quarterly*, no. 98 (2017): 132–143.

[18] Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, "The Structure of Foreign Policy Attitudes among American Leaders," *The Journal of Politics*, no. 52 (1990): 116.

[19] Robert Y. Shapiro and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, "Political Polarization and the Rational Public," paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, Montreal, Canada, 2006; Peter Hays Gries and H. Michael Crowson, "Political Orientation, Party Affiliation, and American Attitudes Towards China," *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, no. 15 (2010): 219–244.

policy preferences toward China,[20] Israel,[21] Latin America,[22] multilateralism,[23] and a broader view of US foreign policy.[24] Studies show that liberals and conservatives are remarkably divided in their views of China and East Asia.[25] Conservatives are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward all Asian countries, a position that traces to past prejudices against Asians (e.g., the "Yellow Peril" discourse). There is a tradition of strong aversion to communism in the US, and evidence suggests that perceptions of Chinese governance continue to negatively influence attitudes toward China.[26] Prior research also finds that Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives are divided on opinions of China and China-related affairs.[27] While most Americans have little personal experience with China and limited knowledge about contemporary China, political ideology appears to fill in some of the blanks, allowing Americans to form consistent in-group attitudes toward China. Conservatives advocating a tough China policy have focused on containment because they view China's rise as a threat to the US's economic, political, and cultural standing.[28] These findings lead to another hypothesis, that political ideology and party affiliation impact Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war (Hypothesis 3).

Perceptions of China

Given that attitudes toward the trade war with China are intertwined with more general attitudes toward trade, economic warfare, and China in general, this study argues that perceptions of China influence attitudes toward the US–China trade war. Since its emergence as a world superpower and central actor in the world system following World War II, the US has pursued an international policy that explicitly

[20] Peter Hays Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2014).

[21] Peter Hays Gries, "How Ideology Divides American Liberals and Conservatives over Israel," *Political Science Quarterly*, no. 130 (2015): 51–78.

[22] Peter Hays Gries, "Liberals, Conservatives, and Latin America: How Ideology Divides Americans over Immigration and Foreign Aid," *Latin American Research Review*, no. 51 (2016): 23-46.

[23] Brian C. Rathbun, "From Vicious to Virtuous Circle: Moralistic Trust, Diffuse Reciprocity, and the American Security Commitment to Europe," *European Journal of International Relations*, no. 18 (2012): 323–344.

[24] Peter Hays Gries, "'Red China' and the 'Yellow Peril': How Ideology Divides Americans over China," *Journal of East Asian Studies*, no. 14 (2014): 317–346.

[25] Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy*.

[26] Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy*.

[27] Chu Yun-han, Kang Liu, and Huang Min-hua, "How East Asians View the Rise of China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 93 (2015): 398–420.

[28] John T. Jost, "The End of the End of Ideology," *American Psychologist*, no. 61 (2006): 651; Peter Hays Gries, H. Michael Crowson, and Cai Huajian, "God, Guns, and . . . China? How Ideology Impacts American Attitudes and Policy Preferences toward China," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, no. 12 (2012): 1–40.

promotes democracy abroad (known as "liberal internationalism"),[29] and these efforts have been successful in further embedding the values of democracy, freedom, and human rights in publics around the world. This can lead to the following hypothesis: Americans who perceive China to be a functioning democracy will hold more favorable opinions toward China and will be less supportive of a trade war with China than Americans who associate China with authoritarian policies and communist governance (Hypothesis 4a).

Prior research suggests that Americans feel threatened by China's growing economic strength and this appears to be driving some of the trend toward a more negative view of China. According to the Pew Research Center Spring 2014 Global Attitudes Survey, 42% of Americans viewed China's economic growth as a bad thing for their own country and 49% said China would replace/had replaced the US as a superpower.[30] However, Americans have traditionally been strong proponents of the free market economy and consider economic development a positive advance for society. When asked about their attitudes toward China (as opposed to its impact on the US), ordinary Americans tend to espouse fairly positive opinions of China's economic development, consistent with a developmentalist worldview that favors economic, political, and social development as universally good and attainable outcomes.[31] This leads to the following hypothesis: Americans' perceptions of China's economic development are associated with their attitudes toward the US–China trade war (Hypothesis 4b).

Americans also differ in their affinity for the Chinese people and Chinese culture. While the elite class tends to value Chinese culture,[32] a meaningful share of those with less education, lower occupational prestige, and lower income tend to espouse more prejudicial opinions about China and Chinese culture.[33] For this reason, it is expected that people who hold more negative views of China, the Chinese people, and Chinese culture will be more supportive of the US–China trade war (Hypothesis 4c).

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[29] Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy, Expanded Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[30] Pew Research Center, "Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America's Image," July 14, 2014, https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/, accessed August 20, 2020.

[31] Arland Thornton, "The Developmental Paradigm, Reading History Sideways, and Family Change," *Demography*, no. 38 (2001): 449–465; Arland Thornton, Shawn Dorius, Jeffrey Swindle, Linda Young-DeMarco, and Mansoor Moaddel, "Middle Eastern Beliefs About the Causal Linkages of Development to Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights," *Sociology of Development*, no. 3 (2017): 70–94.

[32] Junming Huang, Gavin Cook, and Yu Xie, "Does Mass Media Shape Public Opinion toward China? Deeping-Learning Results of New York Times Articles." Unpublished manuscript, 2020. https://arxiv.org/abs/2012.07575.

[33] Gries, *The Politics of American Foreign Policy*.

Attitudes toward Trade and Attitudes toward the Trade War between China and the US

As previously mentioned, it is expected that ordinary Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war are influenced by their attitudes toward US–China trade. To test this hypothesis, attitudes toward the US–China trade war were decomposed into two components: attitudes toward US–China *trade* and attitudes toward the US–China *trade war*. In doing so, a novel typology is developed that helps researchers to understand within-country variation in US attitudes toward US–China trade and the trade war.

Prior studies on Americans' views concerning international affairs revealed the existence of three quite distinct ways of thinking about foreign affairs:[34] Cold War internationalists, who are more likely to support the use of force to cope with international confrontations; post-Cold War internationalists, who diagnose an international issue in non-confrontational terms and prefer patience, negotiation, and accommodation; and semi-isolationists, who are critical of international assistance programs and involvement of American military personnel abroad and prefer more attention to domestic issues.

This three-category typology has been revised to form two dimensions that classify the public as either cooperative or militant internationalists.[35] Based on belief disposition along these two dimensions, Wittkopf identified four groups that he labeled as accommodationists, hardliners, internationalists, and isolationists. Accommodationists are those who support cooperative internationalism and oppose militant internationalism; hardliners support militant internationalism and oppose cooperative internationalism; internationalists support both cooperative and militant internationalism; and isolationists oppose both cooperative and militant internationalism.

Following the same logic in prior studies, this study conceptualizes a new typology along two dimensions: attitudes toward US–China trade (good vs. bad) and attitudes toward the trade war (support vs. opposition). This study combines these two dimensions into a 2 × 2 table consisting of four distinct groups: the ***Cooperative*** group, which includes people who do not support the US–China trade war but support US–China trade; the ***Militant*** group, which includes those who support the US–China trade war *and* US–China trade; the ***Isolationist*** group, or those who support US–China trade war but oppose trade between the US and China; and the ***Indifferent***

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[34] Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, *American Leadership in World Affairs: Vietnam and the Breakdown of Consensus* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 1984), pp. 108–139; Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, "Consensus Lost. Consensus Regained? Foreign Policy Beliefs of American Leaders, 1976–1980," *International Studies Quarterly*, no. 30 (1986): 375–409; Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, "The Foreign Policy Beliefs of American Leaders: Some Further Thoughts on Theory and Method," *International Studies Quarterly*, no. 30 (1986): 473–484.

[35] Eugene R. Wittkopf, "On the Foreign Policy Beliefs of the American People: A Critique and Some Evidence," *International Studies Quarterly*, no. 30 (1986): 425–445.

group, which includes respondents supporting neither the trade war *nor trade with China*.

Data and Methods

Sampling and Data

Data for this study were collected by Ipsos, using its KnowledgePanel, a large, probability-based web panel designed to be representative of the US non-incarcerated adult population. Since 2009, Ipsos has used an address-based sampling recruitment methodology via the US Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File to recruit hard-to-reach individuals, such as young adults and minorities, who do not rely on traditional land-line phones. Known for the representativeness of its samples, the KnowledgePanel has been widely used in academia for research on public opinions, attitudes, and behaviors.

The survey, which was fielded in June 2019, was used to collect information about people's attitudes toward China and a number of personal characteristics of respondents. The targeted population was adults (18+) residing in the US at the time of the survey. In total, 3,508 individuals were randomly selected from the KnowledgePanel, of which 2,075 completed the survey (completion rate: 59%), with 2,053 (99%) of respondents evaluated as valid upon completion of the survey. Dropping 112 cases with missing data on variables used in the analysis resulted in a final sample of 1,941.

Dependent and Independent Variables

Two primary dependent variables for this study are questions that measure attitudes toward (a) US–China trade and (b) the US–China trade war, which were collected using four-point Likert scales.[36]

These scales were further collapsed into two binary variables that first classified responses as supportive of or opposed to trade with China and then classified responses as supportive of or opposed to the trade war. To do this, the responses "very bad" and "somewhat bad" to the question on US–China trade were combined into one category of respondents whose overall opinion is that US–China trade is "a bad thing"; and the responses that it is "somewhat good" and "very good" were similarly combined into the category of respondents whose overall response was that US–China is "a good thing." On the trade war question, the responses "strongly don't support" and "somewhat don't support" were similarly collapsed into "don't support," and "somewhat support" and "strongly support" into "support." The following four groups

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[36] Q1: Overall, do you think trade and business ties between the US and China are a very good thing, somewhat good thing, somewhat bad thing, or very bad thing for the US? A: 1. "Very bad thing"; 2. "Somewhat bad thing"; 3. "Somewhat good thing"; 4. "Very good thing." Q2: Do you support the United States' trade war with China? A: 1. "Strongly don't support"; 2. "Somewhat don't support"; 3. "Somewhat support"; 4. "Strongly support."

as the third dependent variable were formed based on the following two derived variables: respondents who believe US–China trade is good but also support the US–China trade war (***Militants***); respondents who believe US–China trade is good but do not support the US–China trade war (***Cooperatives***); respondents who believe US–China trade is a bad thing and support the US–China trade war (***Isolationists***); and respondents who believe US–China trade is bad and do not support the US–China trade war (***Indifferents***).

In the results reported below, four sets of covariates were included as independent variables. The first set of independent variables measure respondent's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, including age, gender, marital status, household size, race, education, household income, and employment status. The second set of independent variables measure respondents' political ideology (liberal or conservative) and party affiliation (Republican or Democrat). The third set of independent variables measure respondents' opinions about the current economic and political context in the US. Considering that the respondents' views on China's influence on the US are related to the current US contexts, the model includes China's influence here. Respondents were asked to report their satisfaction with the economic situation and the practice of democracy in the US on a four-point Likert scale and to report their evaluation of China's influence on the US on a seven-point scale, from very negative to very positive. The last set of independent variables measure respondents' general perceptions about China, reflecting the respondents' impressions and favorability of China. This includes perceptions of China's level of democracy (0 = completely undemocratic, 10 = completely democratic), ratings of China's economic development (0 = completely undeveloped, 10 = completely developed), general favorability toward China and Chinese culture (1 = very favorable, 4 = very unfavorable). Descriptive statistics and how each of the independent variables were measured are presented in Table 1.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Analytic Strategy

Here, model-free statistics are first reported to show Americans' attitudes toward US–China trade and the US–China trade war prior to conditioning variables. Then, a stepwise linear regression approach is used to independently assess the predictive power of each set of independent variables. Model 1 includes only measures of individual demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, Model 2 includes measures of political ideology and party affiliation, Model 3 includes opinions about the current US context, and general perceptions of China are measured in Model 4 (see Table 2).

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

To empirically disentangle the mechanisms that influence attitudes toward US–China trade and attitudes toward the US–China trade war and to see how covariates differ across dependent variables, a set of seemingly uncorrelated

regressions (SUR) were estimated that allowed us to statistically compare the coefficients of two parallel models. The SUR model, which enables regression of two different dependent variables on the same set of independent variables, enabled the comparison of effect sizes of the same predictor variables across the two different models. This modelling strategy provided empirical results that help to answer two questions. First, are the factors that impact attitudes toward the trade war different from those that impact attitudes toward trade? And, second, do Americans support the trade war with China because they oppose trade with China?

To further explore what characteristics are associated with Americans' attitudes toward trade and trade war, a series of multinomial regressions were estimated to predict respondents' likelihood of being assigned to one of the four groups (***Militant***, ***Cooperative***, ***Isolationist***, and ***Indifferent***). The final section presents predicted probabilities from the preferred model.

Results

Descriptive Results

Figure 1 visualizes the distributions of the responses to the two primary questions about US–China trade and the trade war. The left panel of Figure 1 shows that 75.6% of respondents regard US–China trade as either a "very good thing" or a "somewhat good thing," indicating that a solid majority of Americans support US–China trade. Just 3.5% of respondents think trade with China is a very bad thing. In contrast, Americans are evenly split on the trade war, with roughly half of respondents saying they "strongly support" or "somewhat support" the US–China trade war (50.1%), with a nearly equal proportion opposing the US–China trade war (see panel b of Figure 1).

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

American's attitudes toward US–China trade are associated with their views on the US–China trade war (see Table 3). Respondents who believe US–China trade is a bad thing are more likely to support the US–China trade war. Among those who believe that trade between the US and China is a good thing, 45.4% support the US–China trade war. In comparison, among those who believe trade between the US and China is bad, 64.6% say they support the US–China trade war. These data suggest that underlying attitudes toward trade with China influence attitudes toward the trade war, with those who favor trade being less supportive of the trade war than those who oppose trade with China.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

US–China Trade: Model Fit and Coefficients

This section reports results of the correlates of attitudes toward US–China trade, following the stepwise modeling strategy described above. Overall model fit is first considered, and then variable specific coefficients are reported. As shown in Figure 2, explanatory power of the demographic and socioeconomic variables on attitudes toward trade was relatively weak, with an R^2 value of just 0.036. The model fit improved slightly ($R^2 = 0.065$) when the political ideology and party affiliation covariates were added (see Model 2). The R^2 was substantially improved to 0.231 when measures of respondent's opinions about the current US context were included (Model 3). After including Americans' perceptions of China (Model 4), the R^2 value increased by an additional five percentage points ($R^2 = 0.283$).[37] By observing the change in R^2 across stepwise regressions, it can be seen that opinions about conditions in the US and perceptions of China hold the most explanatory power for the variation of Americans' attitudes toward US–China trade. Conversely, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and political identity have relatively weaker association with attitudes toward bilateral trade between the two countries.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Next, coefficients that express the relationship between each independent variable and attitudes toward trade between the US and China are reported. The size, sign, and statistical significance of the coefficients were plotted for Model 4, which includes all covariates (see Figure 3).

Model results show that self-described political moderates and conservatives are more likely to regard US–China trade as a bad thing. Analysis also found that a respondent's party affiliation is unrelated to their attitudes toward US–China trade. Respondents who report being satisfied with the state of the US economy tended to also believe that US–China trade is a good thing. Respondents with a more favorable opinion of China, the Chinese people, and Chinese culture, as well as those who rated China's economic development as being high, were more likely to view US–China trade as a good thing.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The US–China Trade War: Model Fit and Coefficients

Similar stepwise regressions were conducted to explore the correlates of attitudes toward the US–China trade war. Adding, in a stepwise manner, (a) demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, (b) political ideology and party affiliation, (c) opinions about the current US context, and (d) perceptions of China, the R^2 value increased from 0.083 to 0.356, 0.412, and 0.416, respectively. By again observing the improvement of the R^2 value in the stepwise regressions, this study is able to understand which factors are most influential in shaping Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war. Political orientation is strongly associated with Americans'

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[37] Detailed regression results for Models 1, 2, and 3 are available upon request.

attitudes toward the trade war. Political moderates and conservatives are more likely to support the trade war, and Republicans are more likely to support the trade war than are Democrats. Thus, the third hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) is supported. Respondents who are more satisfied with the current state of the US economy and democratic practices in the US are also more likely to support the US–China trade war. Thus, the second set of hypotheses (Hypotheses 2b and 2c) are supported. And those who consider China's influence on the US to be negative are more likely to support the US–China trade war. However, perceptions about China are statistically uncorrelated with ordinary Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war (Figure 4). The fourth set of hypotheses (H4a, H4b, and H4c) are not supported, therefore.

This study also finds that an individual's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics have very limited predictive power for either attitudes toward US–China trade or attitudes toward the US–China trade war. One exception is education: respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher have a higher probability of opposition to the trade war than those without a high school diploma. Generally speaking, this study failed to find support for the first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1).

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Trade versus Trade War: Comparison of Coefficients

Seemingly unrelated regression models were used to test for statistical differences between the coefficients of each predictor of attitudes toward US–China trade and for the US–China trade war. Model results (Table 4) indicate that political ideology and party affiliation are strongly associated with attitudes toward the US–China trade war but are unrelated to attitudes toward US–China trade. This is a significant finding because it illustrates an important nuance in how the American public views matters related to China, and also demonstrates the power of political identity in shaping public opinion. The trade war was a signature element of the Trump administration's foreign policy and it appears that his supporters were generally aligned with the US president on this issue, albeit while also holding more stable and supportive positions on trade with China in general. This study also finds that perceptions of China are positively associated with attitudes toward US–China trade but are unrelated to attitudes toward the US–China trade war. Future studies are needed to understand if the observed relationships here will change after the Trump presidency.

In sum, Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war appear to be strongly related to political identity, while Americans' attitudes toward US–China trade are much more strongly influenced by their perceptions of China, its people, culture, and government.

Trade versus Trade War: Typology Analyses

Based on an individual's attitudes toward US–China trade and the US–China trade war, four clusters of respondents were identified in the data, with the following

distributions: *Militant*, 34.3%; *Cooperatives*, 41.3%; *Isolationist*, 15.8%; and *Indifferents*, 8.7%. The determinants of an individual's location in one of these categories are further explored in this typology. To do this, a series of multinomial regression models were estimated, from which the predicted probability that an individual would fall into each type, based on the full set of covariates, was computed.

Inspection of these probabilities shows that political ideology and party affiliation are strongly associated with a person's classification in the typology. Based on the analysis, the probability of political liberals falling into the *Cooperative* and *Militant* categories are 0.57 and 0.31, respectively (see Figure 5). Conversely, a conservative has a 0.46 probability of being a *Militant* and a 0.28 probability of being a *Cooperative*. The probability of being an *Indifferent* does not appreciably vary by political ideology. Relative to political liberals, conservatives are more likely to be *Isolationists*.

Party affiliation is an even stronger predictor of position in the typology. Democrats and Republicans are strikingly divided on attitudes toward US–China trade and the US–China trade war. For instance, a strong Democrat has a 0.60 probability of being a *Cooperative* while a strong Republican has a 0.62 probability of being a *Militant*. Moreover, self-described Democrats are more likely be classified as *Indifferent* and less likely to be classified as an *Isolationist* than are self-reported Republicans.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 6 shows that satisfaction with the current economic situation in the US is associated with a higher probability of being a *Militant* but a lower probability of being a *Cooperative* or an *Indifferent*. However, the probability of being an *Isolationist* does not appreciably vary by a respondent's level of satisfaction with the current economic situation in the US. For example, if an individual believes that the current economy in the US is very bad, he/she has a 0.20 probability of being a *Militant* and 0.53 probability of being a *Cooperative*. However, if an individual views the current economy in the US as being very good, his/her probability of being a *Militant* is 0.54 and his/her probability of being a *Cooperative* is 0.32 (Figure 6). A similar pattern is also observed in the respondents' assessment of democracy in the US. These findings suggest that the militant view arises from a position of perceived strength: when the economy is viewed as strong, Americans are more likely to espouse a militant worldview.

[FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

As to perceptions of China's influence, people who view China's influence as negative are more likely to be categorized as an *Isolationist* or an *Indifferent* and less likely to be categorized as a *Militant* or a *Cooperative*. For example, among people who hold a very negative view of China's influence on the US, the probability of being an *Isolationist* is 0.45 and the probability of being an *Indifferent* is 0.17, both

of which are substantially higher than the corresponding values 0.16 and 0.09, respectively, among all the respondents. For a person holding a very positive view of China's influence on the US, the probability of being an *Isolationist* or an *Indifferent* are nearly zero (0.01). Conversely, respondents are more likely to fall into the *Militant* and *Cooperative* groups when they evaluate China's influence in a more positive light.

[FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE]

General attitudes toward China also evince strong predictive power over assignment to one of the four typologies. As illustrated by Figure 8, the probability of being either a *Militant* or a *Cooperative* is higher among respondents who hold a favorable opinion of China, while the probabilities of being categorized as an *Indifferent* or an *Isolationist* are higher among respondents who hold more unfavorable opinions of China. This pattern is also observed for the two measures of opinion concerning the Chinese people and Chinese culture.

[FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE]

In sum, *Militants* and *Cooperatives* are the two dominant groups among the surveyed respondents. Republicans, conservatives, and individuals who are relatively satisfied with the current state of the US economy and with democracy in the US are more likely to be classified as *Militants*; Democrats, liberals, and individuals who are relatively unsatisfied with the current US economy and American democracy are more likely to be categorized as *Cooperatives*. Individuals who hold very negative views toward China's influence have a high probability of being *Isolationists*, suggesting the important role of perceptions of China in determining one's attitudes toward US–China trade and the US–China trade war.

Conclusion and Discussion

The world's two largest economies—the US and China—have been engaged in a trade war since 2018. Despite its important implications for international trade, economic development, and stability of the world system, only a limited number of studies have investigated public opinions about the US–China trade war. Although ordinary Americans had no direct say in the initiation of the trade war, their lives are affected by it, sometimes directly and other times indirectly. This has important implications for political stability in democratic countries such as the US, where policies are believed to reflect the will of the people, and this extends beyond domestic policy to also include foreign policy. It is noteworthy that the maintenance of a coherent foreign policy is more difficult in a domestic environment characterized by internal disagreements.[38]

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[38] Wittkopf, "On the Foreign Policy Beliefs of the American People."

This article has sought to better understand the determinants of Americans' attitudes toward the US–China trade war, with special attention to how specific attitudes about the trade war are related to people's attitudes about trade with China more generally. Using data from an online survey of nearly 2,000 US adults, this study was able to measure the level of association between a set of covariates and trade with China and the trade war. The analysis showed that Americans are deeply divided over the trade war with China and that support for the trade war with China is distinct from support for trade with China. A large proportion of the surveyed respondents think bilateral trade between the US and China is good but also support the US–China trade war. The analysis showed that the factors that impact attitudes toward trade with China differ in some important ways from those that impact attitudes toward the trade war. On the surface, one might expect individuals' opinions to align with their interests, in that a trade war inflicts economic costs on American consumers and businesses by way of higher purchase prices and disruptions to supply chains. From this view, it is expected, for example, that US farmers will strongly oppose the US–China trade war, given that the US ships more than US$20 billion of agricultural products to China each year. However, the results refute the expectation that the US electorate has an economically rational (self-interested) response to foreign trade policy, at least concerning China. The results are consistent with the finding that despite the negative economic impacts of the trade war on farmers, about 60% are still somewhat (38%) or strongly supportive (22%) of tariffs on Chinese products.[39]

The analysis suggests that perceptions of the trade war are more closely aligned with political identities/ideologies than with economic factors. Political ideology and party affiliation showed strong correlation with attitudes toward the US–China trade war, where Republicans and conservatives are much more likely to support the trade war with China than Democrats and self-described liberals. However, political orientation is only weakly related to attitudes toward trade with China. The primary determinants of attitudes toward trade with China are social, i.e., opinions of China, its people, and its culture. In contrast, this study shows that these variables have essentially no relationship with attitudes toward the trade war. This is a somewhat counterintuitive but important finding, as one would expect people who hold negative views of China's people, country, culture, and government to be more supportive of a trade war with China, precisely because they hold China in low regard. It was also found that respondent's socio-economic and demographic characteristics had a rather limited effect on either their attitudes toward US–China trade or their attitudes toward the US–China trade war.

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[39] Qu Shuyang, Zhang Wendong, Li Minghao, Lulu Rodriguez, Han Guang, Erin Cork, and James M. Gbeda, "Midwest Crop Farmers' Perceptions of the US–China Trade War," CARD Reports and Working Papers Series, no. 19-PB 26, October 2019, https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=card_policybriefs, accessed February 18, 2021.

An innovative typology was developed along two dimensions: attitudes toward US–China trade and attitudes toward the US–China trade war, which were used to identify four categories: ***Cooperative***, ***Militant***, ***Indifferent***, and ***Isolationist***. A large portion of Americans favor a cooperative approach to China, but only a slightly smaller share espouses a more militant approach. Should the ***Militants*** increase in number (and they may already have done so, as the data were collected in June 2019), one can expect increasing electoral pressure on future administrations to continue with the more militant approach of the Trump administration. Where these trends go is an open question, as the conservative base in America, along with a growing share of liberals, appear to support a more isolationist approach to foreign policy (e.g., no more "endless wars"). These are not trivial matters. When the two largest economies in the world are locked in a protracted trade dispute, the entire world system shudders. Given the current levels of social and economic integration brought on by globalization, the trade war has ripple effects through the global system.

Because the survey data were cross-sectional and observational, this study was unable to ascertain causes of these attitudes. Despite these limitations, this research sheds new light on several factors associated with opinions on trade and the trade war. Results of this study suggest that one reason why people either support or oppose the trade war is related to their attitudes toward US–China trade. Some people support the trade war because they are against trade with China (***Isolationists***). A more complicated group are the ***Indifferents***: people who oppose trade with China but also oppose the trade war. While this group is small in number, they appear to be against internationalism and globalization (opposing international trade), while simultaneously opposing economic conflict (e.g., trade war). In unreported analysis, it was found that ***Indifferents*** skewed toward female respondents, those with lower education and income levels, and those who were unemployed at the time of the survey.

One factor that likely weighed significantly on the results reported here was attitudes toward President Trump, owing to the highly polarizing effect he had on the American electorate. It is possible that those in the ***Militants*** expressed support for the US–China trade war because they shared the Trump administration's views that China was engaged in unfair trade practices, used illegal and unfair methods to acquire US technology, sought to weaken US national security and standing in the international system,[40] and failed to meet its commitments to the World Trade Organization.[41] Alternatively, this group may have supported the trade war simply because President Trump initiated it.

China's Made in China 2025 program has also raised concerns among some in the US and in other rich, developed countries that the next generation of high-technology could be appropriated by Chinese firms, possibly through unfair means.[42]

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[40] Tao and Woo, "Understanding the US–China Trade War."

[41] Neil C. Hughes, "A Trade War with China?," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2005), pp. 94–106.

[42] Tao and Woo, "Understanding the US-China Trade War."

It can be speculated that people falling into the ***Militant*** category support the trade war because they genuinely believe it will lead to a reversal of the trade imbalance and because they believe it just to support a boycott of economic practices they perceive to be unfair. ***Isolationists*** appear to support the trade war because they espouse a negative view of trade with China, suggesting they hold to an anti-globalist, nationalistic, and/or protectionist worldview. Whether this worldview becomes more firmly entrenched in the US electorate remains to be seen, but the consequences for the world system are significant.

The overarching finding of this study is that political ideology, rather than economic interests, influences Americans' foreign policy beliefs about the trade war with China. These beliefs are probably derivative of their general political worldview, which in turn is affected by their political identity. Hence, attitudes toward the US–China trade war may only be as stable as political identities and the party in control of the White House. Unfortunately, this study is not able to test these propositions due to data limitations. The authors welcome future research to examine these questions.

Acknowledgements

Tables and Figures

Table 1.   Descriptive statistics for variables used in the analysis

Variables	Mean/%(SD)	Measurement range (continuous variable)
Individual demographic/socioeconomic characteristics		
Age	52.51(16.72)	[18, 91]
Gender		
Male	50.49%	
Female	49.51%	
Marital status		
Married	60.95%	
Widowed	5.26%	
Divorced or separated	11.75%	
Never married	16.59%	
Living with partner	5.46%	
Household size	2.62(1.49)	[1, 10]
Race		
White	71.30%	
Black (non-Hispanic)	8.91%	
Other (non-Hispanic)	8.29%	
Hispanic	11.49%	
Education		
Less than high school	6.49%	
High school	26.69%	
Some college	28.65%	
Bachelor's degree or higher	38.18%	
Household income		
Less than $40,000	23.85%	
$40,000–$74,999	22.82%	
$75,000–$124,999	26.07%	
$125,000+	27.25%	
Employed		
No	37.82%	
Yes	62.18%	
Region		
Northeast	19.63%	
Midwest	21.84%	
South	36.27%	
West	22.26%	
Political orientation		
Political ideology		
Liberal	21.17%	

Slightly liberal	8.55%	
Moderate/middle-of-the-road	33.85%	
Slightly conservative	11.23%	
Conservative	25.19%	
Party affiliation		
Strong Republican	17.26%	
Weak Republican	11.03%	
Lean Republican/Democrat	38.18%	
Weak Democrat	11.80%	
Strong Democrat	21.74%	

Opinions of the current US context

Evaluation of the economic situation in US	2.81(0.78)	1. Very bad; 2. Somewhat bad; 3. Somewhat good; 4. Very good
Satisfaction about democracy of the US	2.42(0.91)	1. Very unsatisfied; 2. Somewhat unsatisfied; 3. Somewhat satisfied; 4. Very satisfied
China's impact on the US	3.19(0.90)	1. Very negative; 2. Negative; 3. Somewhat negative; 4. Somewhat positive; 5. Positive; 6. Very positive

Perceptions of China

Rating of China's democracy	2.61(2.14)	[0, 10]
Rating of China's economy	6.43(2.01)	[0, 10]
Favorability toward China	2.29(0.69)	1. Very unfavorable; 2. Somewhat unfavorable; 3. Somewhat favorable; 4. Very favorable
Favorability toward Chinese	3.01(0.64)	
Favorability toward Chinese culture	2.99(0.66)	

Table 2. Stepwise linear regressions

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics	Age	Age	Age	Age
	Gender	Gender	Gender	Gender
	Marital status	Marital status	Marital status	Marital status
	Household size	Household size	Household size	Household size
	Ethnicity	Ethnicity	Ethnicity	Ethnicity
	Education	Education	Education	Education
	Household income	Household income	Household income	Household income
	Employment status	Employment status	Employment status	Employment status
Political orientation		Political ideology	Political ideology	Political beliefs
		Party affiliation	Party affiliation	Partisanship
Opinions about the current US context			Domestic economy	Domestic economy
			Domestic democracy	Domestic democracy
			China's influence on US	China's influence on US
Perceptions of China				China's democracy
				China's economy
				Favor China
				Favor Chinese
				Favor Chinese culture

Table 3. Attitudes toward US–China trade war by attitudes toward trade with China

	Don't support trade war	Support trade war	Total
Trade is bad	168	306	471
	35.4%	*64.6%*	*100%*
Trade is good	801	666	1,467
	54.6%	*45.4%*	*100%*
Total	969	972	1,941
	49.9%	*50.1%*	*100%*

Table 4. Regression results on attitudes toward US–China trade and trade war

	Support for trade		Support for trade war		Dif.
	Coefficients	S.E.	Coefficients	S.E.	
Individual demographic/socioeconomic characteristics					
Age	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.002	
Male	0.094**	0.029	0.047	0.038	
Marital status (Ref: Married)					
Widowed	0.075	0.068	0.119	0.088	
Divorced or separated	0.003	0.047	0.059	0.061	
Never married	-0.073	0.047	-0.038	0.06	
Living with partner	-0.081	0.068	-0.034	0.087	
Household size	-0.002	0.011	0.007	0.014	
Race (Ref: White, Non-Hispanic)					
Black, non-Hispanic	-0.045	0.054	0.087	0.069	
Other, non-Hispanic	-0.051	0.054	0.218**	0.069	
Hispanic	0.079	0.047	-0.011	0.061	
Education (Ref: Less than high school)					
High school	0.003	0.063	0.006	0.081	
Some college	0.022	0.064	-0.052	0.082	
Bachelor's degree or higher	0.101	0.066	-0.194*	0.084	
Household income (Ref: Less than $40,000)					
$40,000–$74,999	-0.012	0.043	0.031	0.055	
$75,000–$124,999	0.050	0.044	-0.042	0.056	
$125,000+	0.059	0.047	-0.051	0.061	
Employed (Ref: No)					
Yes	0.010	0.034	0.017	0.044	
Political orientation					
Political ideology (Ref: Liberal)					
Slightly liberal	0.004	0.06	0.084	0.077	
Moderate	-0.105*	0.047	0.321***	0.06	***
Slightly conservative	-0.115	0.062	0.583***	0.079	***
Conservative	-0.160**	0.059	0.640***	0.076	***
Party affiliation (Ref: Strong Republican)					
Weak Republican	-0.056	0.058	-0.270***	0.074	*
Lean Republican/Democrat	-0.017	0.049	-0.419***	0.064	***
Weak Democrat	-0.013	0.065	-0.623***	0.083	***
Strong Democrat	0.064	0.063	-0.700***	0.082	***
Opinions of the current US context					
Evaluation of the economic situation in US	0.094***	0.022	0.166***	0.029	
Satisfaction about democracy of the US	-0.027	0.019	0.196***	0.024	***
China's influence on the US	0.247***	0.02	-0.095***	0.025	***
Perceptions of China					
Ratings of China's democracy	-0.015	0.008	0.007	0.01	**
Ratings of China's economy	0.025***	0.007	-0.016	0.01	

Favorability toward China	0.134***	0.026	-0.048	0.034	***
Favorability toward Chinese	0.085**	0.028	-0.057	0.036	*
Favorability toward Chinese culture	0.127***	0.029	0.016	0.037	**
Constant	0.837***	0.157	2.216***	0.202	
R-squared	0.283		0.416		

Notes: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05. (N=1941); region (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West) is controlled in the model; Ref. = reference category; S.E. = Standard Error. Columns denoted by "dif." specify the results of the significance tests for the differences in coefficients of variables "Political orientation," "Opinions of the current US context," and "Perceptions of China" between models "Support for trade" and "Support for trade war."

Figure 1. Americans' attitudes toward US–China trade and trade war

a) Support for trade between the US and China

b) Support for US-China trade war
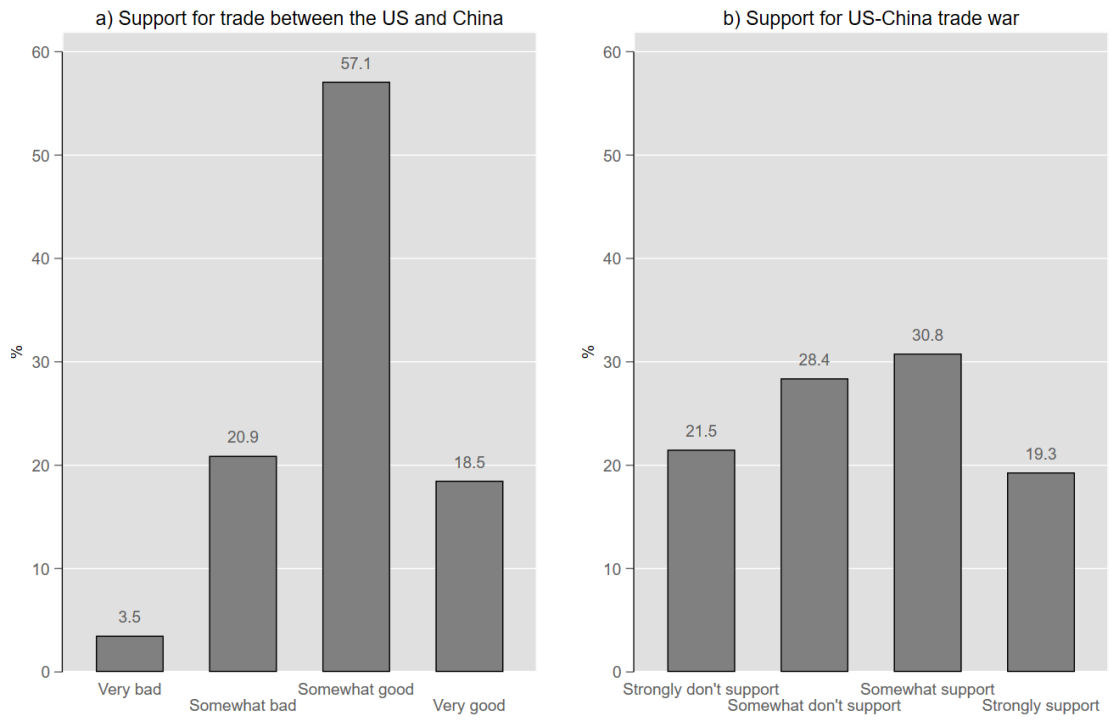
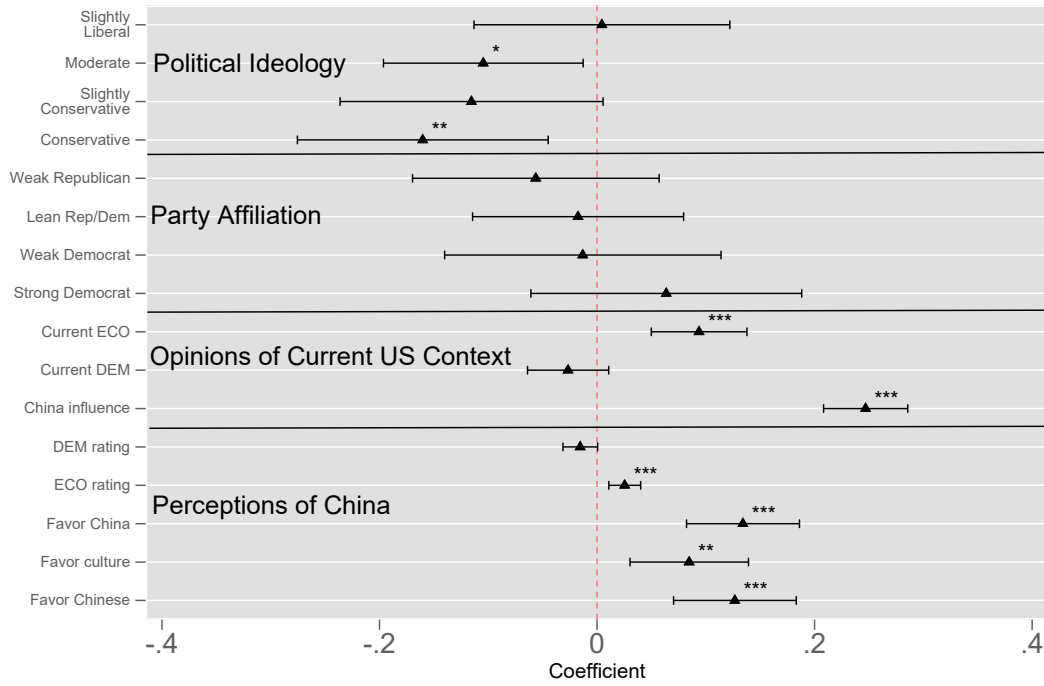Figure 2. Assessing explanatory power of predictor variables using model R-square
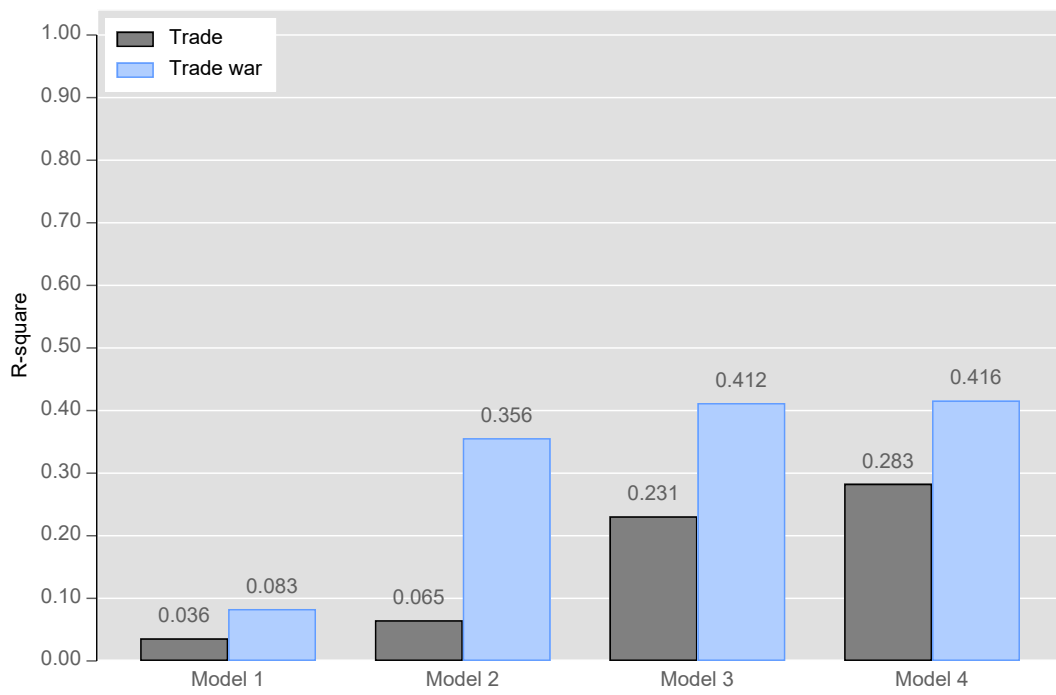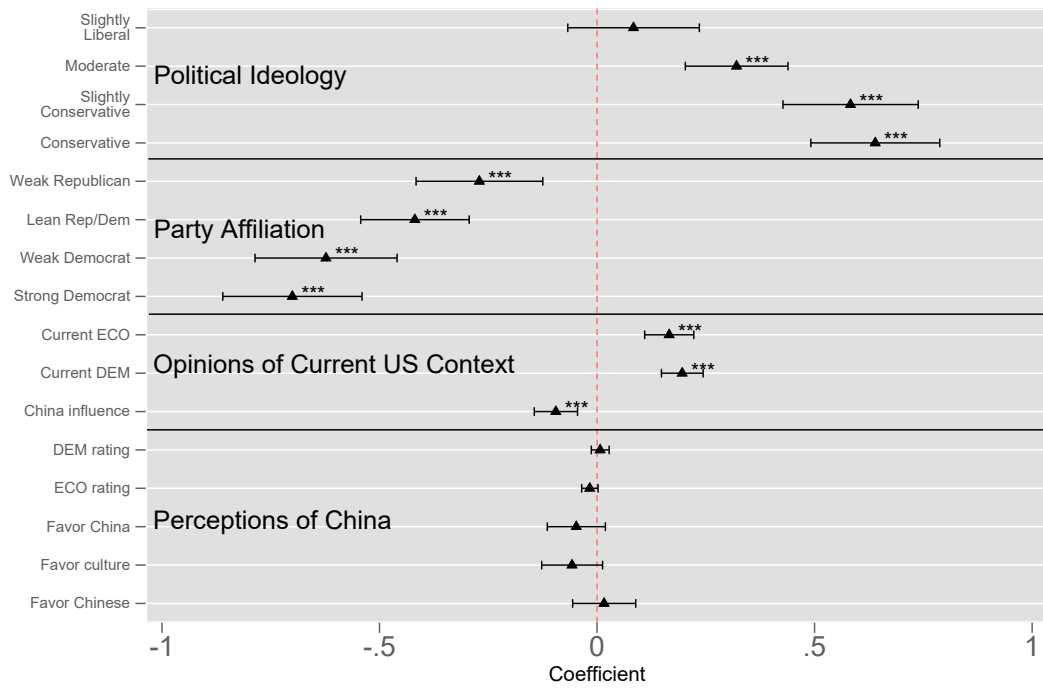
Figure 3. Coefficients representing the effect of each variable on attitude toward US–China trade

Figure 4. Coefficients representing the effect of each variable on attitude toward US–China trade war

Note: Coefficients are from the regression Table 4. Rep/Dem = Republican/Democrat, ECO = economy, DEM = democracy.

Figure 5. Predicted probabilities of four groups by political orientation
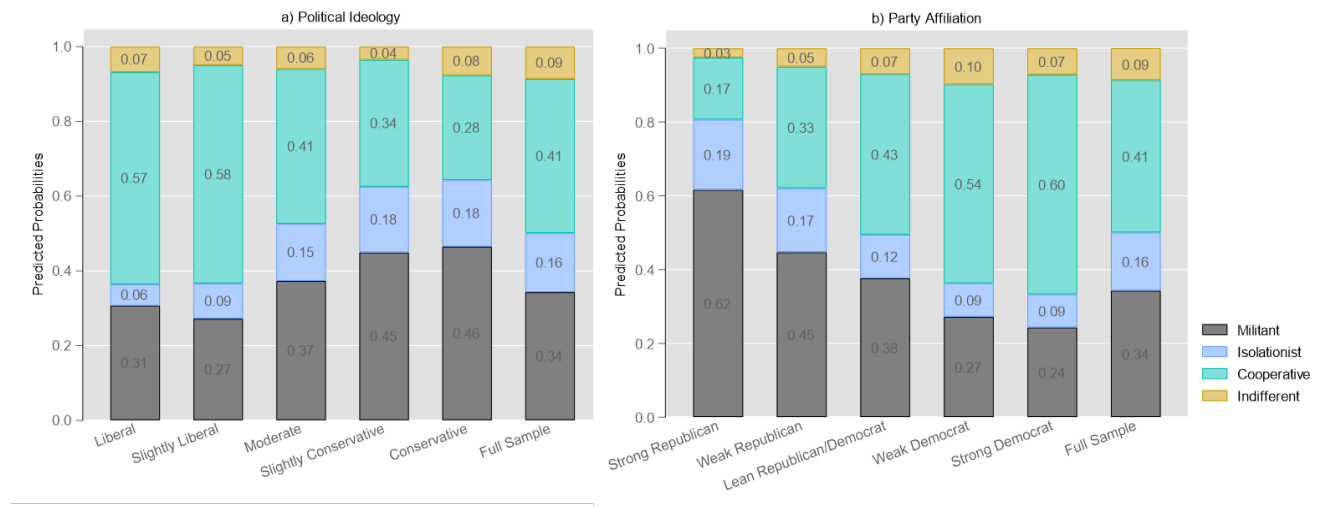
Note: the probabilities of the full sample are the model-free distribution of the four groups among all respondents.

Figure 6. Predicted probabilities of four groups by opinions of US economic situation
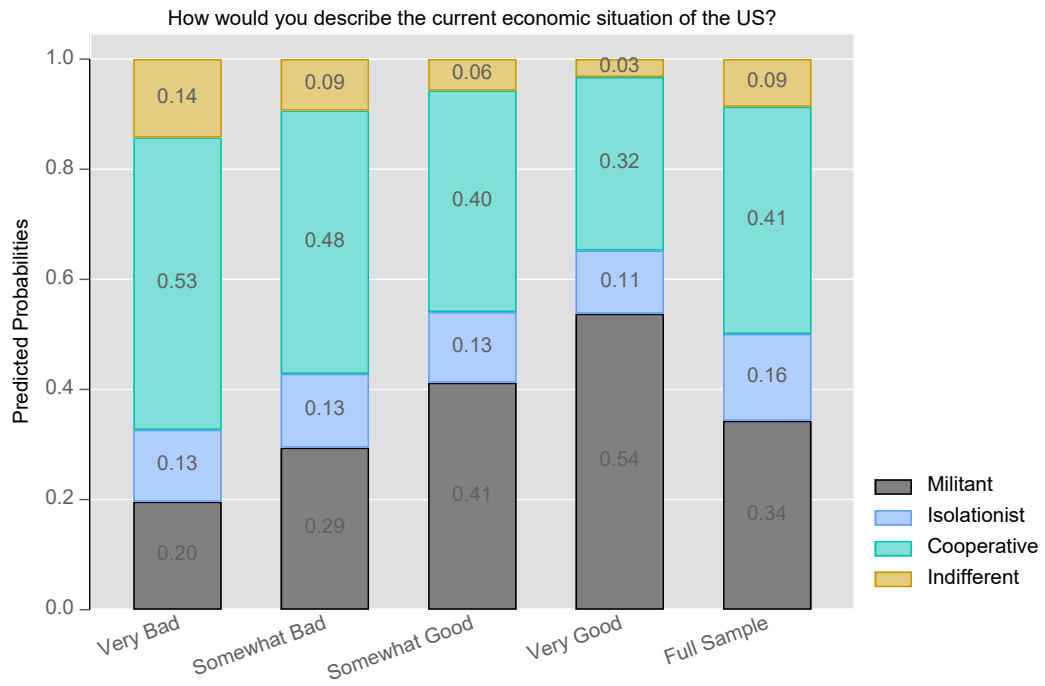
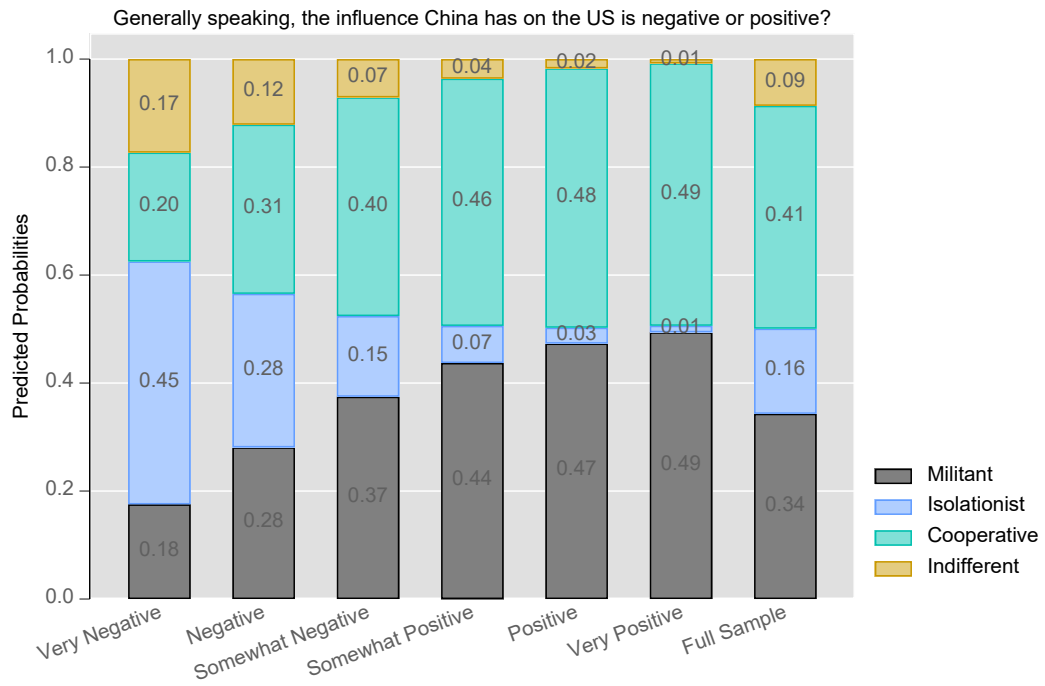Figure 7. Predicted probabilities of four groups by views of China's influence

Figure 8. Predicted probabilities of four groups by favorable attitudes toward China

What is your opinion about China?