

The Attitudes of Urban Chinese Towards Globalization: A Survey Study of Media Influence

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Introduction

Since Deng Xiaoping's southern tour in 1992 to reenergize the marketization drive in China, the Chinese government's policy towards "globalization" has been one of active engagement. His successor Jiang Zemin, and current President Hu Jintao, with their respective proclamations of "Three Represents" and "Harmonious World,"¹ have continued the push to embrace global capitalism. Opening the country to global capital is seen by Chinese national leaders as a way to further the country's market reform. At the same time, China has also been eager to participate in the international community in various manners to strengthen its international standing and portray itself as a peaceful rising power. Prompting nationalist sentiments in the global context is a way to restore the Communist regime from the brink of legitimacy crisis caused by the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.²

Notably, the shift of policy by China since the early 1990s also coincided with Washington's abandonment of the containment policy and shift towards attempting to integrate China into the global community.³ Meanwhile, the most important symbols of China's coming of age are its long-awaited accession to WTO in 2001 and its hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games. The idea of active engagement with globalization also underlies various domestic

¹ Chinese politics must be legitimated by appealing to a set of "correct" and selective interpretations of communist theory. Former president Jiang Zemin promulgated the concept of "Three Represents," arguing that the Party must represent the most advanced productive forces, the most advanced culture, and the interest of wide segments of the population. This concept paved the way for capitalists, the former class enemy, to join the Party. His successor, Hu Jintao, promotes the concept of "a harmonious society," emphasizing social stability as a prerequisite for further economic development. Critics say that Hu uses this concept to muffle public discontent about rampant official corruption and the increasing rich-poor gap.

² Chin-Chuan Lee, "The Global and the National of the Chinese Media: Discourses, Market, Technology, and Ideology," in Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-31.

³ Chin-Chuan Lee, "Established Pluralism: U.S. Elite Media Discourses on China Policy," in Chin-Chuan Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 76-96.

and foreign policies, including the country's increasingly active participation in multinational treaties and cooperative initiatives,⁴ setting up special economic zones to facilitate and control the inflow of global capital,⁵ changing migration policies,⁶ and initiatives in creating media conglomerates to compete with foreign media giants.⁷

Quite expectedly, such an important policy direction was accompanied by a rhetoric carefully constructed to justify it.⁸ The rhetoric was propagated by the national leaders through their speeches and promoted by the state-controlled national media.⁹ It highlighted the benefits that China presumably stands to gain from engaging in "globalization," understood primarily in economic terms. It redefined the place of China in the world community, resolved or hid the contradictions between past and present policies, and undermined or dismissed the potential dangers of such a policy direction. In short, the rhetoric articulated why active engagement with globalization is consistent with China's national interests.

The actual desirability of globalization, certainly, is highly contested. It is questionable whether economic globalization can indeed deliver prosperity, political globalization can deliver peace, and cultural globalization can deliver pleasure. Even optimistic proponents of globalization cannot deny that it has its fair share of potential problems. There will be winners and losers in the process. To the extent that the Chinese government's rhetoric undermines and/or dismisses the problems of globalization, the rhetoric can be regarded as strongly ideological, in the sense of being "meanings in service of power."¹⁰ It follows that the Chinese media are playing more or less their conventional propaganda role when they promote the rhetoric of the state.

⁴ Rosemary Foot, "Chinese Strategies in a US-hegemonic Global Order: Accommodating and Hedging," *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1 (January 2006), pp. 77-94.

⁵ Shaun Breslin, "Decentralisation, Globalisation and China's Partial Re-engagement with the Global Economy," *New Political Economy*, vol. 5, no. 2 (July 2000), pp. 205-226.

⁶ Vladimir Portyakov, "Russian Vector in the Global Chinese Migration," *Far Eastern Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 47-61.

⁷ Chin-chuan Lee, Zhou He and Yu Huang, "'Chinese Party Publicity Inc.' Conglomerated: The Case of the Shenzhen Press Group," *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 28, no. 5 (October 2006), pp. 581-602; Yuezhi Zhao, "From Commercialization to Conglomeration: The Transformation of the Chinese Press within the Orbit of the Party State," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 50, no. 2 (June 2000), pp. 3-26.

⁸ George T. Crane, "Imagining the Economic Nation: Globalisation in China," *New Political Economy*, vol. 4, no. 2 (July 1999), pp. 215-232; Nick Knight, "Imagining Globalisation: The World and Nation in Chinese Communist Party Ideology," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol. 33, no. 3 (August 2003), pp. 318-337.

⁹ Chin-chuan Lee, "'Bound to Rise': Chinese Media Discourses on the New Global Order," in Michael Curtin and Hermant Shah, eds., *Rethinking Global Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, forthcoming); Yuezhi Zhao, "'Enter the World': Neo-liberal Globalization, the Dream for a Strong Nation, and Chinese Press Discourses on the WTO," in Chin-chuan Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Context* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 32-56.

¹⁰ John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

Against the above background, this article empirically examines urban Chinese residents' attitudes towards globalization. To what extent do urban Chinese regard "globalization" as beneficial to China? How do their nationalistic sentiments relate to their attitudes towards globalization? To what extent do urban Chinese recognize that "globalization" can have both a positive and negative impact? As the national media have largely toed the government's line in discussing globalization, does national news media consumption shape people's attitudes towards globalization?

Tackling such questions can give us insights into the amount of social resistance the Chinese government is likely to encounter as it continues to move along its current direction. Even without being a democracy, embarking on unpopular policies has non-negligible social costs and may damage the regime's legitimacy.¹¹ The above-mentioned official rhetoric was exactly aiming at shaping people's opinions to reduce social resistance. In this sense, examining media effects on people's attitudes towards globalization can also inform us about the capability of the Chinese state, with the help of a media system still largely under its control, to promote a worldview justifying its rule and policies. Hence, besides addressing the topic of globalization, another major aim of this study is to help us better understand the relationship among official rhetoric, media discourses, and public opinion in contemporary China. It should be noted that, despite the presence of a large body of conceptual discussions and research about globalization and/or media reform in the Chinese context, there is still a general lack of survey-based empirical evidence regarding public opinion towards globalization and the presence or absence of media effects on public opinion. This article should contribute to rectifying this limitation of the existing literature.

Moreover, although the empirical analysis of this study does not involve an explicitly comparative element, several issues addressed by the analysis, such as the relationships among nationalistic sentiments, media use and attitudes towards globalization, are pertinent to many countries in the Asia Pacific region. Hence this article should also provide findings and materials which can be compared to the cases of other Asian countries.

This article begins by giving a brief account of the Chinese official rhetoric and media discourses related to globalization. We then explicate the arguments based upon which we expect media effects on public opinion to exist. The conceptual discussions lead to four research hypotheses. Data derived from a four-city survey are then analyzed. The concluding discussions highlight the implications of the findings and put some of the findings into comparative perspectives.

¹¹ For a discussion of the significance of studying public opinion in China, see Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 22-31.

Official Rhetoric and Media Discourses on Globalization

It is widely noted that the term “globalization” entered the official discourses of the Chinese government only in the year 1997.¹² It was also the year of the Asian financial crisis, an event clearly demonstrating the perils facing developing countries which want to engage in global capitalism. Together with the range of economic and social problems already existing in the early 1990s as a consequence of China’s economic reform, let alone the history of semi-colonial status in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Chinese leaders were certainly aware of the potential challenges and problems that further engagement with global capitalism could bring about. As scholar of Chinese politics Nick Knight stated, there were debates within the Communist Party about, among other issues, whether China and other developing countries in general are to gain or lose in the process of globalization, and whether China should hold a positive or negative attitude towards it.¹³

Despite the internal debates, national leaders from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao have “in the main been positive, and in some cases extremely enthusiastic” when talking about globalization.¹⁴ At the same time, a number of inter-related themes and rhetorical means were used to handle the problematic aspects of globalization. For example, Knight noted that the speeches by national leaders portrayed globalization as a process which can be brought under control by the state. The belief was that the harm possibly caused by globalization can be reduced, if not eliminated, as long as the state remains in charge. Second, when discussing the potential negative impact of globalization, the leaders focused primarily on the political impact on national sovereignty instead of the impact on issues such as income inequality or cultural autonomy. This not only directed people’s attention from some issues to others, but also reinforced the notion that the crucial issue is whether the state can remain autonomous and in control.¹⁵ Meanwhile, political scientists Yong Deng and Thomas Moore pointed out that the Chinese leaders maintained a distinction between “globalization” and the “international economic system.” Problems “associated elsewhere in the world with globalization ... were attributed to defects in the international economic system rather than to globalization per se.”¹⁶

Moreover, Chinese leaders reconceptualized the relationship between the nation and global capital. As political scientist George Crane explained, integration into the world economy “requires a retelling of the national story so that the embrace of capitalist practices ... will seem consistent with the

¹² Knight, “Imagining Globalisation”; Lee, “Bound to Rise.”

¹³ Knight, “Imagining Globalisation.”

¹⁴ Knight, “Imagining Globalisation,” p. 319.

¹⁵ Knight, “Imagining Globalisation,” p. 319.

¹⁶ Yong Deng and Thomas G. Moore, “China Views globalization: Toward a New Great-power Politics?” *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004), p. 120.

historical unfolding of the nation.”¹⁷ In the Mao era, global capital was considered as the perpetrator of imperialism and the cause of historical humiliation and sufferings of the Chinese. But into the late 1990s, past victimization was attributed to “traitors” and disasters such as the cultural revolution as much as to imperialism, whereas the fact of China being underdeveloped became the reason why market reform is needed.¹⁸

The leaders’ rhetoric not only professed a belief that the advantages of engaging with globalization, defined primarily but not exclusively in economic terms, would outweigh the disadvantages and risks; it posited engaging with globalization as the way to realize the century-old dream of a strong, modernized nation.¹⁹ In this sense, the official rhetoric surrounding globalization was built upon the “state-led pragmatic nationalism” which the Chinese government has promoted since the early 1990s to fill up the ideological vacuum left by the decline of communist worldviews.²⁰ In other words, in China’s official discourses, globalization is not the antithesis of nationalism. “Entering the world” and “strengthening the nation” were portrayed as two sides of the same coin.

The official rhetoric was more or less faithfully reported by the national news media. Media reform in China since the 1980s has led to the proliferation of media outlets, a more diverse press structure, the media’s increasing reliance on advertising revenues, emergence of innovative practices and media types ranging from the tabloid press to investigative journalism programmes, and in the past decade the process of state-led conglomeration.²¹ Yet ideologically the media are still under the heavy-handed control of the state. The media may no longer attempt to be a brainwashing propaganda machine. Nowadays they work more like publicity agents for the state, or what communication scholar Zhou He and his associates called the “Party Publicity Inc.”²²

¹⁷ Crane, “Imagining the Economic Nation,” p. 228.

¹⁸ Crane, “Imagining the Economic Nation,” p. 228.

¹⁹ See Jonathan Unger, ed., *Chinese Nationalism* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1996); Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). More precisely, the idea of “modernization through Westernization” was a major theme among Chinese intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. In that discourse, “Westernization” referred mainly to the appropriation of Western technologies and sciences for practical purposes, whereas Chinese cultural values should remain the basis for social cohesion. The contemporary Chinese official rhetoric on globalization has a similar selective appropriation of “the West.”

²⁰ Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-state by Construction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

²¹ See discussions in Chin-chuan Lee, ed., *Power, Money, and Media* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000); Chin-chuan Lee, ed., *Chinese Media, Global Context* (London: Routledge, 2003).

²² Zhou He, “Chinese Communist Party Press in a Tug-of-War: A Political Economy Analysis of the Shenzhen Special Zone Daily,” in Chin-chuan Lee, ed., *Power, Money, and Media* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2000), pp. 112-151; Lee, He and Huang, “‘Chinese Party Publicity Inc.’ Conglomerated.”

The media thus cannot be expected to provide a truly diverse range of viewpoints on important policy matters. For example, media scholar Yuezhi Zhao's detailed examination of how 11 newspapers in China covered the US-China bilateral WTO negotiations in 1999 found that all newspapers fervently supported China's entrance into the WTO.²³ The Chinese media treated WTO membership as "not just about China's right to participate in the making of global trade rules [but also] concerns China's place, China's face, China's inspirations, and China's identity in the world."²⁴ The media portrayed WTO membership as beneficial to "common people," with the latter referring mainly to investors and consumers. The voices of business leaders and selected experts were employed to give authority and credibility to the messages, whereas the voices of the farmers and the labourers, who were the likely losers, were systematically excluded.

Media scholar Chin-chuan Lee made a similar observation in his study of the *Global Times*, China's official English newspaper. Analyzing the discourses of foreign policy advisors and interpreters published from 2000 to 2005, Lee found that most writers were supportive of China's active participation in the international division of labour as a way for the country to climb up the economic ladder, and most narratives "were mindful of the opportunities and challenges but came to conclude that gains would be greater than costs."²⁵ Moreover, the *Global Times* directly repeated the official emphasis on China's peaceful rise in the world order. Lee argued that the Chinese media treated globalization as reducible to economic and geopolitical opportunities for China to rise as a great power. At the same time, Beijing-defined national interest was emphasized, whereas other "local" perspectives were suppressed.²⁶

Zhao and Lee thus provided two case studies highlighting the similarities between China's official rhetoric and media discourses on issues related to globalization. While more content-based studies are probably needed, given what we know about the state-media relationship in China, we have reason to believe that the findings are representative of the major characteristics of media discourses surrounding globalization in at least the national media in China (which also tend to be the most tightly controlled by the state). They are the background against which we set up hypotheses regarding media effects on urban Chinese people's attitudes towards globalization.

Research Hypotheses on Media Effects

To recapitulate, this study attempts to examine Chinese people's attitudes towards globalization under the context of a public discourse environment

²³ Zhao, "Enter the World."

²⁴ Zhao, "Enter the World," p. 37.

²⁵ Lee, "Bound to Rise."

²⁶ Lee, "Bound to Rise."

largely unified in its support for China's active engagement with the global political and economic order. Hence we are interested in whether citizens' opinions are consistent with the views promoted by the state, and whether national media consumption would bring citizens' opinions further in line with official ideologies.

Two issues need to be discussed before stating the hypotheses. First, we need to select aspects of the discourses surrounding globalization to focus on. China's official rhetoric on the matter involves a number of themes, tropes and rhetorical moves articulated into a holistic narrative. It is hardly possible to do justice to the complexities of the discourses in a survey context. Moreover, it is unrealistic to expect media effects to be so all-encompassing that even the nuances of the discourses are taken up by the audience. Instead, media effects are more likely to exist when we focus on certain general themes. Therefore, we focus on two themes in the analysis: 1) the advantages for China to engage with globalization outweigh the disadvantages, and 2) national development and globalization are compatible goals.

Second, even after narrowing the focus to two general aspects of the discourses, it remains questionable whether one should expect the media to have a persuasive effect on people's opinions. For more than half a century, the general consensus among media researchers is that media messages have an effect on people's attitudes only under specific conditions. Various research traditions have also explored audience members as active creators of meanings who interpret media messages according to their own cultural and social background. Specific to contemporary China, phenomena such as political jokes circulating through mobile messaging services and the oral culture of *shunkouliu*,²⁷ the contents of which often include parodies of official discourses and actions, illustrate a distinction between the private and public discourse universes in the country. This distinction, in turn, highlights Chinese people's resistance towards official discourses.

In fact, empirical research has provided mixed results regarding the "political mobilization" power of the Chinese media. Political scientist Wenfang Tang, analyzing a six-city survey conducted in 1999, found that media consumption was positively related to support for regime, nationalism and holding of official ideology in China.²⁸ Yet political scientists Xueyi Chen and Tianjian Shi found the opposite in their study using survey data in the early 1990s: those who consumed media more frequently were more alienated

²⁷ *Shunkouliu* refers to popular sayings which are particularly memorable because of their rhyme and rhythm. These popular sayings are often created by citizens themselves and then widely circulated in society. For the social and political significance of *Shunkouliu*, see Perry Link and Kate Zhou, "Shunkouliu: Popular Satirical Sayings and Popular Thought," in Perry Link, Richard P. Madsen and Paul G. Pickowicz, eds., *Popular China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp. 89-110.

²⁸ Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change*, pp. 79-100.

from the present regime.²⁹ The difference in findings may be due to the different political atmosphere in the early and the late 1990s. This illustrates exactly the point that the existence or absence of a media effect can be the result of differences in contextual conditions.

Therefore, our expectations regarding the existence of a media effect is premised on the argument that two conditions for media effects do apply in the case under study. The first condition is *monopoly* of media messages,³⁰ i.e., media messages are consistently propagating one single view, rather than providing competing views on the matter concerned. In the present case, the Chinese national media, as discussed above, have not given much serious attention to the negative consequences of globalization. In other words, while the media promoted the “dominant reading” of globalization as preferred by the state, they provided little resources for the construction of alternative understandings. This makes audience acceptance of the dominant message more likely.

Certainly, as long as the Chinese national media are heavily state-controlled, the condition of monopoly would usually apply when major policy matters are concerned. What is distinctive in the case of official rhetoric and media discourses about globalization, therefore, is the condition of *canalization*.³¹ The concept refers to the argument that “propaganda is most successful when it channels pre-existing attitudes and values, and is far less likely to create [new behavior] or bring about radical conversions” of people’s attitudes.³² In the current context, it means that the Chinese official-cum-media discourses on globalization are likely to be persuasive if people are already predisposed to believe that active engagement with globalization is beneficial to China. In fact, as discussed in the previous section, the Chinese government’s rhetoric surrounding globalization was not all novel and alien ideas. It was built upon the nationalistic discourses the state began to promote in the early 1990s, whilst ideas of “modernization through Westernization” have a history in China dating back at least to the late nineteenth century. On the whole, positing global engagement as a means to realize the national dream of modernization should resonate with Chinese people’s rising nationalistic sentiments.

²⁹ Xueyi Chen and Tianjian Shi, “Media Effects on Political Confidence and Trust in the People’s Republic of China in the Post-Tiananmen Period,” *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, vol. 19 no. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 84-118.

³⁰ Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton, “Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action,” in Lyman Bryson, ed., *The Communication of Ideas* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1964), pp. 113-114.

³¹ Lazarsfeld and Merton, “Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action,” pp. 113-114.

³² Peter Simonson and Gabriel Weimann, “Critical Research at Columbia: Lazarsfeld’s and Merton’s ‘Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action,’” in Elihu Katz, John D. Peters, Tamar Liebes and Avril Orloff, eds., *Canonic Texts in Media Research* (London: Polity, 2003), p. 25.

Hence, while we retain the terminology of a “media effect” in accordance with our survey and statistical methods, we do not intend to imply the media’s ability to inject ideological meanings into a passive audience. What appears as a media effect can be the result of an active audience taking up the messages which they find agreeable.

Based upon the above discussions, we posit the following four hypotheses:

H1: Urban Chinese residents tend to believe more in the advantages of globalization than in the disadvantages of globalization.

H2: Nationalistic sentiments relate positively to beliefs in the benefits of globalization.

H3: National media consumption relates positively to beliefs in the benefits of globalization.

H4: National media consumption strengthens the relationship between national sentiments and beliefs in the benefits of globalization.

H1 and H2 are about the extent to which the opinions of urban Chinese individuals are consistent with the views promoted by the state. The hypothesized consistency is based on our argument about the likely resonance the state’s discourses would strike among the urban population in China. If H1 and H2 are supported, the condition of canalization could be regarded as existent. It provides part of the explanation of why the media can affect people, if the effects hypothesized in H3 and H4 are indeed found.

Urban Chinese Attitudes Towards Globalization

Data analyzed in the following section were gathered through a representative survey conducted in Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Xian between December 2006 and January 2007 by a commercial research corporation. There are both practical and substantive reasons for the survey to focus only on urban cities. Practically, the infrastructure for conducting survey research with representative sampling is much better developed in urban cities. Substantively, when compared to rural areas, urban cities are more directly engaged in the processes of globalization. Questions regarding the benefits and dangers of “globalization” should be more pertinent to urban residents. Nonetheless, we will return to the rural-urban divide in the discussion section.

Target respondents were Chinese-speaking residents of the four cities between the ages of 18 and 65.³³ Multi-stage probability sampling was employed.³⁴ The sample size is 500 in each city and thus 2,000 in total. The

³³ People over 65 were excluded because the questionnaire is lengthy and interviews with elderly citizens would be difficult to complete.

³⁴ The commercial corporation first delimited the geographical areas under study, which are largely those near the city centre (i.e., the outer districts and areas further away from the city centres were not included). It then randomly selected residential committees within each administrative district in each city. Trained interviewers were instructed to follow a systematic sampling procedure

maximum response rates ranged from 30.3 to 36.9 percent in the four cities and the minimum response rates ranged from 24.8 to 28.9 percent.³⁵

The survey questionnaire included a set of 32 items asking respondents whether they regarded “globalization” as having different types of impact on the Chinese society and on themselves. Nevertheless, we could not assume that all respondents were going to understand the term globalization (*quan qiu hua*). Hence we prefaced the set of items by stating:

In recent years we often heard of discussions about “globalization.” Some people think that the world market is overcoming national boundaries. There are more and more cultural exchanges between nations. Countries around the world are increasingly interdependent on political, environmental, and safety issues. But there are also people who disagree with such views. I am going to read out a number of views, please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with the views.

This preface defines globalization in terms of increasing global interconnectedness.³⁶ The definition should be uncontroversial and easy for the respondents to grasp. The preface also highlights the fact that globalization has numerous dimensions. As typical in survey questionnaire design, the preface stresses the existence of people who disagree so as to minimize acquiescence effects in survey response.

The 32 specific items were then read out one by one. The items were designed with three distinctions in mind: 1) the distinction between positive and negative impact; 2) the distinction between political, economic, cultural

to select households from residential committees. Finally, the most recent birthday rule was used to select a respondent from a household. This sampling procedure means that all people living in a housing unit under a residential committee would be included in the sampling frame, regardless of whether they were born in the city or were part of the mobile population. More details are available from the authors upon request.

³⁵ The maximum and minimum response rates were calculated by following the formulae of the American Association of Public Opinion Research. The response rates of the present survey are certainly not optimal. But it should be noted that the research firm has already put in place a stringent procedure for “re-visits,” so the low response rates were not the results of inadequate design. Recent discussions of survey research in China have pointed to the trend of increasing non-responses, particularly in urban cities. See Yu Li and Dahai Hao, “Yangben queren de san ge huanjie ji wucha fenxi” [Three Steps in Sampling and Error Analysis], in Yanjie Bian, Lulu Li and He Cai, eds., *Shehui diaocha shijian: Zhongguo jingyan ji fenxi* [Social Survey Research in Practice: Chinese Experience and Analysis] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 85-110.

In any case, the samples in all four cities do not differ hugely from the populations in terms of income and education. But there are some sample-population discrepancies in age and sex, as females and young people were over-represented. The data set was therefore weighed according to the age-sex distributions of each of the four cities.

³⁶ Similar to other popular keywords in the social sciences, divergent definitions of globalization abound in the academic literature. The preface included in the questionnaire is based on the relatively general definitions offered by theorists such as Anthony Giddens and John Tomlinson. See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

and environmental impact; and 3) the distinction between impact at the national, city and individual level. For example, the statement “globalization will enhance the transparency of the Chinese government” refers to a positive political impact at the national level, whereas “globalization will lead this city to lose its own cultural tradition” refers to a negative cultural impact at the city level.

Due to space and efficiency concerns, we created indices for the following analysis. Based on the conceptual contents of the statements and the results of factor and reliability analyses, we combined the 32 items into eight indices representing the perceived positive or negative impact of globalization on politics, economics, culture and the environment.³⁷ We then further combined the four perceived positive impact indices into an index of perceived overall positive impact of globalization.³⁸ An index of perceived overall negative impact was created likewise.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the indices. The figures allow us to tackle H1, which states that urban Chinese are likely to perceive the advantages of globalization to outweigh the disadvantages. Indeed, all five perceived positive impact indices have mean scores substantially higher than the mid-point of the scale (i.e., 3). It shows that the average respondent expected globalization to have various types of positive impact on China. In

Table 1
Chinese citizens’ perceptions of the impact of globalization

		Mean	S.D.
Positive impact	Political	3.48	.56
	Economic	3.59 _a	.52
	Cultural	3.59 _a	.60
	Environmental	3.51	.59
	Overall	3.54	.45
Negative impact	Political	2.97	.60
	Economic	2.90 _b	.59
	Cultural	2.87 _c	.64
	Environmental	2.85 _c	.70
	Overall	2.90 _b	.50

Note: The indices range from 1 to 5. All mean scores differ significantly from the mid-point of the scale in one-sample t-tests ($p < .05$). Mean scores sharing the same subscript (i.e., the subscript a, b and c in the above table) do not differ from each other in paired-samples t-tests. Otherwise, they differ from each other at $p < .05$. N = 1999.

³⁷ The reliability coefficients of the indices range from .45 to .65. One point which can be clarified here is that the notion of “culture” as employed in the questionnaire does not explicitly involve political values such as democracy and human rights. In any case, the full list of the items, from which readers can discern the concrete operationalizations of the variables, is available from the authors.

³⁸ The reliability coefficients of the two overall impact indices are both .80.

what do notes "a", "b", and "c" mean?

Table 2
Correlations among the perceived impact of globalization indices

Perceived impact	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Positive									
1. political	.51**	.41**	.47**	.75**	.15**	.04	.07**	.14**	.13**
2. economic		.53**	.52**	.79**	.08**	.05	.01	.02	.05
3. cultural			.60**	.81**	-.01	.03	.02	.06*	.03
4. environmental				.83**	.06*	.01	.09**	.16**	.11**
5. overall					.09**	.04	.06*	.12**	.10**
Negative									
6. political						.51**	.51**	.52**	.79**
7. economic							.51**	.51**	.78**
8. cultural								.50**	.80**
9. environmental									.81**
10. overall									

Note: Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients. N = 1999. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

contrast, the mean scores of the perceived negative impact indices are all significantly, though only slightly, below the mid-point of the scale. That is, the average respondent neither strongly agreed nor disagreed with the possibility of globalization having a negative impact on China. Comparing the indices of perceived positive and negative impact, H1 is strongly supported. People's perceptions of the likely impact of globalization are in line with the official rhetoric: the impact is perceived to be more positive than negative.

There are only limited differences between the mean scores of the five positive impact indices and the five negative impact indices. It suggests that the respondents did not make sharp distinctions between political, economic, cultural and environmental impact. Table 2 also points to this lack of differentiation: the five positive impact indices are highly correlated among themselves, and so are the five negative impact indices.

More interestingly, table 2 shows that there are some significantly positive correlations between the negative and positive impact indices. For example, the correlation between perceived overall positive impact and perceived overall negative impact of globalization is .10 ($p < .01$). It means that people who considered globalization to have a positive impact on China also tended, albeit only slightly, to believe that globalization would have a negative impact on China. We contend that this data can be read as a sign of many urban Chinese people's recognition of the paradoxical impact of globalization. People's attitudes towards globalization can be ambivalent.³⁹

³⁹ One might question if this finding indicates that many respondents were mindlessly agreeing (or disagreeing) with the interviewers. We checked this possibility by analyzing other parts of the

Predictors of Perceived Impact of Globalization

We can now examine how perceptions of the positive and negative impact of globalization are related to other factors. Since tables 1 and 2 show that the specific positive or negative impact indices are highly correlated, they are not likely to perform very differently in statistical analysis. Therefore, for simplicity, we focus only on the overall positive and overall negative impact indices.

H2 states that nationalistic sentiments should relate positively to attitudes towards globalization. An item in the survey asked the respondents to rate, with a five-point Likert scale, whether they see “strong nation” as an important value. Not surprisingly, most respondents regarded it as “highly important,” as the mean score of the variable is 4.72 (highly important = 5). We use this item to represent people’s nationalistic sentiments. The expectation is that this variable should relate positively to perceived positive impact of globalization and negatively to perceived negative impact of globalization.

Similarly, H3 expects national media consumption to relate positively to perceived positive impact of globalization and negatively to perceived negative impact of globalization. Media use was measured by a set of questions asking the respondents to report the number of times they used a specific type of media belonging to a specific geographical region in the week previous to the interview. There were six types of media and seven geographical regions involved.⁴⁰ Hence there were 42 items in total. We added up the six national media items to represent national media use, added up the six local media items to represent local media use, and added up 24 foreign media items to represent foreign media use.⁴¹

Table 3 shows the bivariate relationships between perceived impact of globalization and other variables, including nationalistic sentiments, media use and demographics. The findings support H2. Nationalistic sentiments relate significantly, and in the predicted directions, to both perceived positive and perceived negative impact of globalization. Urban Chinese people with stronger nationalistic sentiments hold more positive attitudes towards globalization. At the same time, there is also some evidence supporting H3. National media consumption is significantly and negatively related to perceived overall negative impact of globalization. The correlation coefficient

survey which used a similar matrix question format, and we did find certain conceptually meaningful negative correlations among people’s agreement with different statements. Therefore, we believe that the problem of response set is not the main factor behind the correlations between the perceived positive and negative impact indices.

⁴⁰ The six types of media are newspapers, radio, television, films, websites and informational books, whereas the seven geographical regions are “national,” “local,” “Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan,” “Japan and Korea,” “US and Canada,” Europe and the Middle East.

⁴¹ The items regarding consumption of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan media were not used. The media use indices variables are highly skewed, as most of the values cluster to the lower end of the scale. The variables were square-rooted to eliminate the skewness.

Table 3
Correlations between perceived impact of globalization and other variables

	Overall impact	
	Positive	Negative
Sex (F = 2)	-.05	-.01
Age	-.05	-.02
Education	.10**	-.09**
Family income	.04	.00
Shanghai	-.02	-.05
Chengdu	-.04	-.03
Xian	.13**	-.03
Nationalistic sentiments	.12**	-.11**
Media consumption:		
National	.04	-.13**
Local	-.07*	-.10**
Foreign	.01	-.10**

Note: Entries are Pearson correlation coefficients. N = 1999. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

is also positive in the case of perceived overall positive impact, though it does not attain statistical significance.

Another notable finding from table 3 is that education relates positively to perceived overall positive impact and negatively to perceived overall negative impact of globalization. It shows that the more educated urban Chinese people are more positive towards globalization. This finding is consistent with studies of people's opinions towards economic globalization or trade liberalization in other countries.⁴² The usual explanation is that better-educated people are better positioned to capture the benefits of economic globalization, while some other researchers have suggested that the economic knowledge people gain through education can also contribute to the relationship.

Moreover, we see that local media consumption relates significantly and negatively to both perceived impact variables, whereas foreign media consumption relates significantly and negatively to the perceived overall negative impact of globalization. We have not posited hypotheses regarding how consumption of these two types of media may relate to attitudes towards globalization. This is because we believe the contents of these two types of media should be relatively more diverse and less tightly controlled by the government. Yet the findings in table 3 show that they are far from being irrelevant.

⁴² Jens Hainmueller and Michael J. Hiscox, "Learning to Love Globalization: Education and Individual Attitudes toward International Trade," *International Organization*, vol. 60, no. 2 (April 2006), pp. 469-498; Karl C. Kaltenthaler, Ronald D. Gelleny and Stephen J. Ceccoli, "Explaining Citizen Support for Trade Liberalization," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 4 (December 2004), pp. 829-851.

Meanwhile, we have yet to address H4, which states that national media consumption would strengthen the relationship between nationalistic sentiments and beliefs in the benefits of globalization. In other words, the positive relationship between nationalistic sentiments and perceived positive impact of globalization should become even stronger when people consume national media frequently. Technically, testing H4 would require us to examine the interaction effect between national media consumption and nationalistic sentiments on perceived impact of globalization in a multiple regression analysis. When perceived positive impact is the dependent variable, the interaction variable (i.e., national media consumption X nationalistic sentiments) should have a significant positive coefficient. By the same token, the coefficient of the interaction variable should be negative when perceived negative impact of globalization is the dependent variable.

Certainly, besides testing H4, multivariate analysis would also be useful for us to examine if the bivariate relationships shown in table 3 would remain when other variables are kept constant. Table 4 thus reports the results of the multiple regression analysis conducted. The independent variables include those in table 3, with the addition of an interaction variable between nationalistic sentiment and national media consumption.⁴³

Table 4
Regression on perceived impact of globalization

	Overall impact	
	Positive	Negative
Sex (F = 2)	-.04*	-.02
Age	-.02	-.06*
Education	.09**	-.10***
Family income	.04	.03
Shanghai	.07*	-.13***
Chengdu	.08**	-.14***
Xian	.17***	-.09**
Nationalistic sentiments	.14***	-.09**
Media consumption:		
National	.10**	-.13**
Local	-.14**	-.01
Foreign	-.06*	-.07**
Nationalistic sentiments × National media consumption	-.02	-.05*
Adjusted R ²	5.6%**	5.0%**
N	1993	1993

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

⁴³ The construction of the interaction term followed the centring method to avoid multicollinearity.

Interestingly, the number of significant relationships increases rather than decreases. For example, in table 3 only Xian people were found to have more positive evaluations of the potential positive impact of globalization. In table 4, however, all three “city” variables obtain a statistically significant and positive coefficient. It means that our respondents in Beijing, the city used as the reference category, were significantly less likely to perceive globalization as having much positive impact when compared to respondents in the other three cities. Besides, the city variables also obtain significant negative coefficients in the second column of table 4; people in Shanghai, Chengdu and Xian were less likely to perceive globalization as having negative impact. In short, our Beijing respondents emerged as the most critical towards globalization.

The relationships between nationalistic sentiments and the perceived impact indices remain unchanged. The same applies to education. We have strong evidence showing that educated and more nationalistic people are more positive towards globalization. Meanwhile, the positive relationship between national media consumption and perceived positive impact of globalization became statistically significant when other variables were controlled. In other words, support for H3 becomes stronger in the multivariate analysis.

Last but not least, table 4 shows that there is a significant interaction effect between nationalistic sentiments and national media consumption on perceived overall negative impact of globalization. Consistent with our expectation, the negative coefficient suggests that the negative relationship between nationalistic sentiments and perceived negative impact of globalization became even stronger when people pay more attention to national media. However, the interaction term fails to attain a positive and significant coefficient in the first column of table 4. Therefore, H4 is only partly supported.

Discussion

In sum, our analysis finds that the attitudes of urban Chinese people towards globalization are largely consistent with the views propagated by the state and the media, at least when certain key themes are concerned. They tend to believe that globalization has more of a positive than negative impact on China, and concerns with national strength were positively related to positive attitudes towards globalization. Our earlier argument is that such a consistency should not be surprising because the state’s discourses about globalization were inflections of the century-old theme of modernization through Westernization, and they were also built upon the rise of nationalistic sentiments since the early 1990s.

Admittedly, the survey data do not directly confirm these latter arguments. Longitudinal data, which unfortunately could hardly be found, would be

required to examine how the consistency between state discourses and public opinion actually came about. But as long as the consistency existed, it means that active engagement with globalization is a policy direction unlikely to encounter substantial social resistance in contemporary urban China.

Whether this is considered to be a desirable situation depends on one's own perspective on globalization. Proponents of globalization may see this as an opportunity for the engagement policy to go forward. Critical scholars, however, may lament this as an ominous and hegemonic situation in which it would be even more difficult for the voices of the already marginalized would-be losers in the process to be heard and taken seriously.

Debates about the impact of global capitalism on China continue, and empirical studies of key questions such as the actual impact of China's entrance into WTO have just begun to appear.⁴⁴ But regardless of one's overall belief, as pointed out at the beginning of the article, even the most optimistic believers and national leaders cannot deny that globalization does have its fair share of potential problems. Our survey shows that urban Chinese residents on average tended to disagree rather than to agree with statements about various potential negative consequences of globalization. There is a case for the argument that, even though Chinese people are not completely naive, higher levels of awareness about the challenges of globalization are probably needed.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that, when put in a comparative perspective, the urban Chinese are not exceptional in their positive view towards globalization. For example, a ten-country cross-national survey conducted in 2005 shows that the average citizen in countries ranging from the US to India and the Philippines all regarded the WTO as bringing more benefits than harm to both the developing and the developed countries, though relatively speaking citizens in developing countries such as India, Mexico and Congo were less positive.⁴⁵

However, we would also contend that, if citizens around the world are nowadays mostly positive towards globalization, the development and causes of such positive views would need to be understood within the social and historical contexts of each country. In this sense, one contribution of the present article is that it analyzes survey data showing urban Chinese people's positive views towards globalization while putting such public opinion findings within the socio-political context of China.

In addition, the relationship between nationalism and attitudes towards globalization in China can also be compared to the situation in other

⁴⁴ See Hung-gay Fung, Changhong Pei and Kevin Zhang, eds., *China and the challenge of economic globalization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006).

⁴⁵ The survey was conducted by different university institutions or research companies in the respective countries. The findings cited here were derived from the Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong, which was in charge of the Hong Kong survey.

countries. We may take South Korea as an example. Some scholars argued that national pride has been a major “anti-globalization force” in the country.⁴⁶ Yet others argued that nationalism and its relationship with globalization has been transformed and rearticulated to become less antagonistic since the Asian financial crisis.⁴⁷ In other words, articulating the complementarity between national development and economic globalization seems to be a task many Asian governments have taken up. It is possible that a positive relationship between nationalism and attitudes towards globalization can also be found in other Asian contexts.

Besides public opinion towards globalization, the other major concern of the present study is the question of media effects. Our analysis shows that national media consumption was indeed related to more positive views about globalization. There is also partial support for the hypothesis that national media consumption would strengthen the linkage between nationalistic sentiments and positive views towards globalization.

Hence this study demonstrates the capability of the contemporary Chinese state to propagate its views through the media and mobilize citizens to support its policies. This is consistent with the findings of Wenfang Tang about media impact in China on regime legitimacy.⁴⁸ As discussed earlier, however, this study is also premised on the argument that studies of media effects in China should move beyond the question of whether there are political mobilization effects in general to focus on effects in specific cases under different sets of conditions. There is no reason to expect the media to have a persuasive effect all the time. This is why we emphasize the conditions of monopoly and canalization in this article. While the condition of monopoly is usually applicable in China as long as the media remain tightly controlled by the state, canalization—the consistency of media messages and audience predisposition—may not exist all the time. Our interpretation of the findings in this study, therefore, is that the “media effects”⁴⁹ discovered should be understood as reinforcement of existing beliefs rather than as a radical change of opinion.

Here, it is also possible to put the question of media effects on public opinion towards globalization in comparative perspective. Although, to the authors’ knowledge, there has not been much research about this specific

⁴⁶ Wan-soon Kim and You-il Lee, “Korea’s FDI-led economic liberalism: A critical view,” *Asian Perspective*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Spring 2008), pp. 165-192.

⁴⁷ Younghun Cho, “The National Crisis and De/reconstructing Nationalism in South Korea During the IMF Intervention,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 9 no. 1 (March 2008), pp. 82-96.

⁴⁸ Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change*.

⁴⁹ An additional qualification is that, employing a cross-sectional survey, the data cannot convincingly demonstrate the direction of causality. However, given the context of globalization discourses in China and the nature of globalization as a relatively abstract issue, it is conceptually much more plausible to treat media use as the cause.

topic,⁵⁰ it can be noted that similar media effects on public opinion towards globalization can be seen in liberal democracies. Critical scholars have pointed out that the mainstream media in many democratic countries, while not under formal state control, are nonetheless deeply embedded in the political and economic structure of the society.⁵¹ The degree of “agreeability” between the media and the power centre can be particularly substantial when foreign affairs are concerned.⁵² Therefore, it is plausible that media in other countries would also play a role in generating citizens’ positive views towards globalization when engagement with globalization is the prevailing state policy. However, same as the point made above regarding the generalizability of the attitudes of urban Chinese towards globalization, if similar media effects on public opinions towards globalization exist in different countries, the media effects should still be understood as the products of different configurations of contextual conditions and media-power relations.

Going back to the Chinese context, it should be acknowledged that, as a single article, the present study cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of Chinese people’s attitudes towards globalization. There are many issues which need further examination. First of all, the present survey covers only four urban cities. As explained earlier, our focus on urban cities is based on both practical and substantive reasons. Yet it has to be acknowledged that rural residents may see globalization in a different light. On one hand, when compared to the urban residents, the rural residents’ living experiences are presumably further away from the various phenomena of globalization (e.g., the presence of tourists and foreign media). But at the same time, their livelihood is by no means less influenced by the processes of economic and political globalization (just consider how certain WTO agreements might influence the livelihood of local farmers). Therefore, a more comprehensive analysis of Chinese people’s attitudes towards globalization should not ignore the rural population.

Second, individual differences in Chinese people’s attitudes towards globalization can be further examined. Especially important would be how an individual’s attitudes are related to his or her location within the social structure, which has a significant implication on whether he or she stands

⁵⁰ Certainly, there has been much research about other issues concerning media, politics and public opinions in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, see Hyung Gu Lynn, “Vicarious Traumas: Television and Public Opinion in Japan’s North Korea Policy,” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 3 (Fall 2006), pp. 483-508; Gary Rawnsley and Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley, “Public Television and Empowerment in Taiwan,” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 23-38; Caroline Hughes, “Introduction: Democratization and Communication in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 9-22. However, tying the findings and analysis of the present study to the discussions in these studies, which address somewhat different topics, is probably out of the scope of this article.

⁵¹ See Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Robert McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

⁵² Daniel Hallin, *The Uncensored War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Chin-chuan Lee, Joseph M. Chan, Zhongdang Pan and Clement Y.K. So, *The Global Media Spectacle* (New York: SUNY, 2002).

to gain or lose as China engages more deeply with global capitalism. For example, our analysis shows that education levels relate significantly to the perceived impact of globalization. At the same time, some of the other unexamined demographic variables, such as whether people belong to the mobile population or whether they work for a state enterprise, may also structure people's attitudes and beliefs.

Third, beyond the effects of national media, our analysis shows that consumption of local and foreign media also have some relationships with perceived impact of globalization. As explained earlier, we did not set up research hypotheses regarding the effects of local and foreign media use because the messages carried by these media are believed to be more diverse. Hence we believe that national media are what we should focus on if we attempt to locate the effects of official-cum-media discourses. This judgment is vindicated by the findings of the effects of national media consumption. In fact, heavy consumers of local or foreign media were neither more positive nor more negative towards globalization in the overall sense. Rather, they acknowledged both the positive and negative impact of globalization to lesser extents.

Future studies can theorize and explain such differential effects of national, local and foreign media. The existence of such differences means that researchers should pay attention to possible differences among media types in the increasingly diverse Chinese media system. With the proliferation of channels throughout two decades of media reform, treating "media" as a singular entity in today's China could be either misleading or simply unhelpful in the search for media influence.

Last but not least, our analysis shows that Beijing residents were particularly critical towards globalization. Is it possible that being residents of the national capital also means that people are particularly used to "deconstructing" official ideologies? While it is out of the scope of this article to speculate too much on this topic, we can note one thing with certainty: when designing the survey, the four cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Xian and Chengdu were selected based on the generally acknowledged argument that globalization is an uneven process affecting various parts of China differently. Coastal cities are drawn more deeply into globalization, with Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou arguably being developed into what Saskia Sassen calls "global cities."⁵³ However, our findings suggest that the inland-coastal distinction is not particularly useful for demarcating public opinion towards globalization. It also implies that, when explicating differences between the cities, researchers would need to take more factors into account, such as the cities' histories, stages and paths of economic development or their locations in the national political system.

City University of Hong Kong and Chinese University of Hong Kong, October 2008

⁵³ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).