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China's Foreign Policies and Attitudes toward Chinese Diaspora: A Direct Link?

Nathanael Gratias Sumaktoyo[1], and **Burhanuddin Muhtadi[2]**

[1]National University of Singapore, Singapore
[2]Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Indonesia

All correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Nathanael Gratias Sumaktoyo, PhD, National University of Singapore, Singapore. E-mail:
nathanael.sumaktoyo@nus.edu.sg

Abstract

Do China's foreign policies and actions as a state directly influence public opinion toward Chinese diaspora? Notwithstanding the multitude of studies and commentaries on the rise of China and its consequences on the regional and global orders, evidence, and insights on the topic have been lacking. We answer this question through two original, nationally representative survey experiments in Indonesia and by leveraging both contemporary dynamics related to China's growing influence in Southeast Asia and historical discrimination against ethnic Chinese minorities in the country. We examine whether information about a positive (negative) international issue related to China as a state leads to more positive (negative) attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians. Our findings, consistently replicated in the two surveys, show that information about positive or negative international issues concerning China has only little impacts on attitudes toward ethnic Chinese. To the extent that these issues matter, they mostly affect perceptions toward China itself, not toward ethnic Chinese.

Do China's foreign policies directly influence public opinion toward Chinese diaspora? Observers often suggest a direct connection between China's actions as a state and attitudes toward ethnic Chinese individuals in countries where they are a minority. China's policies that benefit a country are thought to have positive consequences on attitudes toward ethnic Chinese groups in the country whereas unfavorable policies are believed to have deleterious effects on such attitudes.

For example, the May 2014 deadly riots in Vietnam targeting Chinese-owned business were thought to be linked to the growing resentment caused by China's aggressive behavior in the South China Sea in which a Chinese vessel sank a Vietnamese fishing boat (Bangkok Post, 2014). Observers have pointed to how China's assertiveness in the South China Sea disputes might exacerbate anti-Chinese sentiments in the region (Laksmana, 2011) or how China's growing economic influence often stokes anti-Chinese sentiments among other ethnic groups (Armony & Velásquez, 2015). Outside geopolitical and economic issues, China's discriminative treatments of the Uighur Muslims are believed to ignite anti-Chinese resentment among Muslims in Muslim-majority countries (Coca, 2020; Pantucci, 2021). These examples illustrate an assumed link between what China as a state does and how the non-Chinese public views Chinese diaspora.

Such direct associations between China's actions as a state and attitudes toward ethnic Chinese communities, if true, would carry normative and practical consequences. Given the positions of Chinese diaspora as minority groups in their respective countries and given that China likely will only become more influential and assertive within the foreseeable future, such associations would mean that ethnic Chinese minorities would be collateral damage for a rising powerhouse's policies beyond their control. If people made a direct association between ethnic Chinese minorities and China, and blamed the former for what the latter does, it might not matter much what domestic efforts are dedicated to override decades of negative sentiments against ethnic Chinese minorities. The ethnic group always would be guilty by association.

Yet, notwithstanding this importance and contemporary relevance, empirical evidence on the matter is scant. Scholars have studied China and its growing influence (Allison, 2017; Liao & McDowell, 2016) and how such a rise influences Chinese diaspora's identity and ties to their homeland (Wong & Tan, 2017). But, little is known about how or if China's foreign policies and actions directly shape attitudes toward ethnic Chinese individuals in countries where they are in the minority.

We fill this gap in the literature by specifically examining if and how China's actions as a state shape public attitudes toward ethnic Chinese minorities. We fielded two nationally representative survey experiments in Indonesia, interviewing more than 4,000 respondents. We presented respondents with information about China's foreign policy that is either positive or negative to Indonesia's interests and examined how this information shaped the respondents' attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians.

By presenting the respondent with information about a specific issue, we focused their attention to China's foreign policy of interest, separate from the domestic political rhetoric that politicians might deliver as a response to the policy. This allowed us to answer the question: "What does learning about or being aware of China's actions as a state do to

individuals' attitudes toward ethnic Chinese?" If there is a direct connection between the two as scholars and observers often argue, then we should see information about a positive action lead to more positive attitudes toward ethnic Chinese and information about a negative action to more negative attitudes.

Our findings throughout the two survey experiments are remarkably consistent. Positive and negative issues concerning China's foreign policies have only minimal effects on the respondents' attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians. To the extent that these issues matter, they affect only the respondents' perceptions toward China itself. These minimal effects are robust and evident both among respondents who had a positive feeling toward ethnic Chinese and among those who had a negative feeling toward the group.

These findings should allay concerns that Chinese diaspora would automatically and inevitably become a collateral damage to China's foreign policies perceived as aggressive or inimical by other countries. At the same time, the findings also indirectly point to the critical role of domestic politicization. Links between China's foreign policies and resentments against ethnic Chinese minorities are likely driven by domestic politicization of the policies, not the policies themselves. This gives some hope for the mitigation of prejudice against ethnic Chinese. As domestic actors are more sensitive to local pressures and incentives than the Chinese government, efforts to reduce discrimination against ethnic Chinese minorities can, in turn, be done regardless of China's actions as a state.

From Foreign Policy to Intergroup Attitudes

How might international issues shape domestic intergroup relations? Or, specifically, what are the theoretical grounds to expect China's foreign policies to directly shape attitudes toward ethnic Chinese minorities outside China? A number of studies have highlighted the importance of foreign policy issues in shaping intergroup relations in a country. These studies find that, beyond individual predispositions and domestic politics, intergroup relations in a country can also be shaped by international issues, especially ones concerning territorial disputes (Hong & Kim, 2019; Hutchison & Gibler, 2007; Justwan & Fisher, 2021; Tir & Singh, 2015).

Countries that face threats from another country tend to have more negative intergroup relations. External threats lead citizens of the threatened country to develop a stronger national identification (Gibler, Hutchison, & Miller, 2012; Lambert, Schott, & Scherer, 2011). While a stronger national identity can lead to more positive intergroup relations by placing the nation as a superordinate identity that unites different subgroup identities (Transue, 2007), threat-induced national identification is particularly strong in shaping negative attitudes toward unpopular groups not normally regarded as parts of the nation (Hutchison & Gibler, 2007).

In times of threat, individuals cling more strongly to the prevailing social norms and become less tolerant of dissenting views as an effort to establish order and ensure group survival (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2015). In the context of domestic politics, this desire for order can manifest itself as a higher willingness to obey the authority and forego civil liberties (Davis & Silver, 2004; Hetherington & Suhay, 2011).

In addition, while territorial threats are an exceptionally potent issue (Hutchison & Gibler, 2007), real-world examples suggest that other types of issues can also matter. For example, the COVID-19 outbreak, first identified in China, has led to increased discrimination against and negative attitudes toward Chinese diaspora worldwide (Mandalaywala, Gonzalez, & Tropp, 2021; Reny & Barreto, 2022; Tan, Lee, & Ruppanner, 2021). Bouman, van Zomeren, and Otten (2014) find that the Dutch public perceives the idea of Turkey joining the European Union as threatening due to cultural differences between Turkey and the existing EU members, which then leads to negative attitudes toward Moroccan-Dutch who are predominantly Muslim and thus associated with Turkey.

All these studies demonstrate how foreign policy issues, whether related to territorial or more abstract forms of threats, can shape intergroup relations in a country by lowering tolerance and acceptance of minority groups. In the context of the present study, these studies provide the theoretical justifications to expect international issues concerning China to also shape attitudes toward ethnic Chinese minorities. Our hypothesis, then, is straightforward:

> H1: Receiving information about a positive (negative) international issue related to China leads to more positive (negative) attitudes toward ethnic Chinese.

China, Indonesia, and Chinese Indonesians

As mentioned, we aim to answer how China's foreign policies and actions as a state directly influence perceptions toward ethnic Chinese individuals in countries that directly experience China's growing influence. Nowhere is this influence more closely felt than in Southeast Asia. China has invested heavily in the region and is involved in disputes regarding the South China Sea. At the same time, Southeast Asian countries are also home to ethnic Chinese individuals who constitute a significant minority in their respective countries. Out of 10 countries with the largest number of overseas Chinese, seven are in Southeast Asia (Statista, 2012).

We focus on Indonesia as our case of interest for three reasons. First, the country has a dynamic relationship with China, which involves adversarial and cooperative episodes. Indonesia first established diplomatic relations with China in 1950 and the two enjoyed relatively warm relations for about one decade. During this period, China occupied an important part in the collective imagination of the Indonesian public and elites. It became an alternative model of modernity, if not a model nation, that the Indonesian elites from Sukarno, Hatta, to the communist icon Aidit were eager to emulate (Liu, 2011).

China also supported Indonesia's effort to found a bloc of emerging countries as an alternative to the United States-led bloc and the Soviet Union-led bloc. The Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai attended the first Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955 and China helped fund the construction of a new building complex in Indonesia's capital Jakarta intended to host a conference of the New Emerging Forces (NEFO). The conference never took place and the complex is now used to host the national parliament.

The ties hit a rough patch following a failed coup in 1965. The coup, allegedly committed by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and its sympathizers in the armed forces, took the lives of six army generals and led to Suharto's assuming power and eventually replacing Sukarno as president. The close ties the PKI had with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led to a widespread belief, both among the military and the general

public, that the CCP blessed the coup plan. Following waves of anti-China protests, the Indonesian government eventually froze diplomatic relations with Beijing in October 1967.

The relations were not normalized for 22 years. Only in 1989 did Jakarta and Beijing agreed to resume diplomatic relations. The years that followed saw both countries striving to forge ever closer relations while still advancing their own interests. In his visit to Beijing in 1999, then-Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid stated that he was delighted to have "a Confucian brother" (Liu, 2011, p. 272). China's Belt and Road Initiatives accelerated both countries' economic ties. By 2018, China is already Indonesia's third largest source of foreign direct investment after Singapore and Japan (Anwar, 2019). Beijing is also Jakarta's top export destination. The Indonesian Bureau of Statistics recorded that the value of Indonesia's exports to China in 2021 reached USD 54 billion or about 23% of total exports.

Yet, this aspiration of strengthening economic ties has not always run smoothly as it still has to navigate the geopolitical realities. China's nine-dash line overlaps with Indonesia's exclusive economic zone around the Natuna Islands. In mid-2016, the Indonesian navy ship KRI Imam Bonjol shot at a Chinese ship that fished in the area without permit, prompting protests from Chinese officials. The Indonesian president Joko Widodo took a defiant response by personally visiting the warship and held a cabinet meeting on it. The tension was also high in the late 2019 when China's insistence to send its coast guard ships and fishing vessels to the area prompted Jakarta to dispatch warships and fighter jets as a show of force. These cooperative and adversarial episodes mean that there are issues that portray China as a friend of Indonesia and there are issues that put it as an adversary. This gives us a solid repertoire of issues to leverage in our study.

The second reason why Indonesia offers a solid case to answer our research question relates to the significance of Chinese Indonesians in the country's history and contemporary politics. At least 1.2% of the Indonesian population self-identified as ethnic Chinese. This makes Chinese Indonesians the 15th largest ethnic group, out of the country's more than 600 ethnic groups (Arifin, Hasbullah, & Pramono, 2017). Yet, more than due to its size, the group is significant also because of the history of stereotypes and prejudice against them.

Negative feelings toward ethnic Chinese in Indonesia can be traced back at least to the Dutch colonial era (Purdey, 2006). The preference the Dutch granted to ethnic Chinese in trade and commerce cultivated resentment and sparked tensions with the locals. For example, a 19th century arrangement where the Dutch gave mostly ethnic Chinese vendors exclusive rights to sell opium brought massive wealth to the vendors but exacerbated poverty and addiction among the indigenous population (Kuipers, 2022). The Sarekat Dagang Islam (the Islamic Trade Union), one of the first mass organizations in then-Dutch Indies (now Indonesia), was founded exactly to counter this ethnic Chinese dominance in the economy (Azra, 1994).

These economic resentments and negative views of ethnic Chinese spilled over to the post-independence era. While ethnic Chinese organizations and individuals contributed to Indonesia's struggle for independence, for example, through nationalist press (Suryadinata, 2010), perceptions of ethnic Chinese's economic dominance continued to work against improving the group's standing in the society. One of the

more significant policies that reflected this sentiment was the Government Regulation Number 10 issued in 1959. The regulation prohibited foreign nationals to engage in retail business outside of the city centers. It did not explicitly target the ethnic Chinese but the group was most significantly affected as the vast majority of retail shops at that time were owned by ethnic Chinese individuals (Zhou, 2019).

The collapse of Sukarno's Old Regime and the rise of Suharto's New Regime added another dimension to the tension. The 1965 coup brought the existing anti-communist sentiments to the forefront of the political discourse. The belief that China supported the coup meant that the sentiments were now also targeted to the ethnic Chinese. "The Chinese were easy targets because they were presumed to be not only rich capitalists but also accomplices of the PKI and the PRC in their joint attempt to turn Indonesia into a Communist country." (Zhou, 2019, p. 153).

Suharto rode on these renewed anti-Chinese sentiments by issuing a series of regulations targeting Chinese cultures and ethnic Chinese citizenship, adding to the economic restrictions already imposed by Sukarno. Displays of Chinese culture and the use of Mandarin were banned. Chinese Indonesians were required to assume an "Indonesian name." Ethnic Chinese were also required to carry a letter confirming their citizenship and their identity cards carried a special code denoting their ethnic origin. A particularly telling example concerned the ethnic Chinese badminton players Susi Susanti and Alan Budikusuma. Despite giving Indonesia its first golds in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the two had difficulties getting married as the civil registry office insisted that they had to provide a proof of citizenship.

The collapse of Suharto's authoritarian rule in 1998 was marked by a series of ethnic riots. In Jakarta alone, from the 13th to the 15th of May, thousands of ethnic Chinese-owned businesses were looted or burned, more than 1,000 ethnic Chinese individuals were killed, and at least 168 ethnic Chinese women were raped (Wibowo, 2001). The post-Suharto presidents gradually attempted to rectify the state-sponsored discrimination instituted by Suharto. The most significant efforts were undertaken by the fourth president who was also a progressive cleric Abdurrahman Wahid. He voided the bans on Chinese cultural celebrations, recognized Confucianism as Indonesia's sixth official religion, and declared Chinese New Year a national holiday.

Yet, without belittling the progress achieved, despite these efforts, stereotypes, prejudice, and negative sentiments against ethnic Chinese persisted. Anti-Chinese sentiments continued to color the Indonesian public and political spheres. Setijadi (2017) finds in a national survey that about 60% of non-Chinese respondents believed that ethnic Chinese were more likely to be wealthy than the *pribumi* (the non-Chinese locals). About 48% of respondents also regarded ethnic Chinese as only caring about their own kind, compared to only 28% who disagreed with such a notion. The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election offered a more concrete example. The campaigning period witnessed anti-Chinese sentiments being mobilized against the Christian, ethnic Chinese incumbent Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Sumaktoyo, 2021).

How sentiments against Chinese Indonesians played out in these various eras illustrates the complexity of the group's place in the society. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the group is *always* hated and always vilified. Ethnic Chinese are by far not the most disliked group in Indonesia.

A 2016 survey finds 0.8% of respondents identified Chinese Indonesians as their most disliked group, far fewer than those who disliked Christians (2.3%), communists (11.8%), or gays (16.6%) (Katadata, 2016).

A 2018 survey by Mietzner and Muhtadi (2019) fielded the same questions as Setijadi (2017) and finds that sentiments against ethnic Chinese actually declined after the heated 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. For example, only 36% of respondents in 2018 thought that the ethnic Chinese only care about their own kind, compared to 48% in 2017, or that only 30% thought in 2018 that the ethnic Chinese are too greedy and ambitious, compared to 46% in the 2017. Our own surveys also find that the majority of respondents felt "neutral" toward Chinese Indonesians, as will be presented in the analysis.

In that sense, it would be more appropriate to see the resentments as something latent, ready to be inflamed by events or at least made more salient by them. Various events in the Indonesian history, from the 1965 coup to the 2017 Jakarta election brought these resentments to the forefront of political discourse. As these were all domestic events, the purpose of the study, then, is to examine whether international events, by themselves, directly have the capacity to reignite the negative sentiments on the individual level. The logic of case selection suggests that Indonesia is a *crucial case* to examine this relationship (Gerring, 2008). The latent, long-standing resentments against ethnic Chinese and the prominence of China in Indonesia's foreign policy mean that the relationship between what China does and attitudes toward ethnic Chinese, if any, should be particularly strong in the country.

Lastly, the third reason why Indonesia offers an ideal setting for our study relates to the fact that it is a democracy with a vibrant and relatively free public life. On the constitutional level, Chinese Indonesians enjoy equal legal protections as other ethnic groups. State-sponsored institutional discrimination of ethnic Chinese has been dismantled and the Law Number 40 in 2008 bars discrimination on the ground of race and ethnicity. This means that stereotypes and prejudice against Chinese Indonesians are more societal than institutional. Societal discrimination, in turn, should be more responsive to contemporary dynamics such as international issues.

Data and Design

We fielded two nationally representative surveys in Indonesia. The first survey involved face-to-face interviews and was fielded between January 20 and January 28, 2020. We employed a multistage random sampling to obtain a sample of 2,020 voting-age adults who were proportionally allocated across Indonesia's 34 provinces. Our primary sampling units were *desa* (rural villages) or *kelurahan* (urban villages), from each of which we drew 10 respondents. This means that in total we sampled 202 *desa/kelurahan*. From each *desa/kelurahan* we randomly sampled five *Rukun Tetangga* (RT—the smallest neighborhood unit). From each RT we randomly selected two households, and from each household a respondent. Our response rate was 88.8%

The December survey was done between November 30 and December 3, 2020. The survey's original sample size of 2,000 respondents was supplemented with an oversample of 400 respondents from the capital Jakarta and 200 respondents aged 19–25 years old. The final sample size of the survey is thus 2,519 respondents. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we relied on phone calls to reach out to the respondents. We sampled 206,983 individuals who were in our database of past survey respondents and owned a phone. About 70% of these respondents had a phone number. We prepared a sample of 13,001 potential respondents distributed across Indonesian provinces proportional to the provinces' population sizes. Of these potential respondents, we interviewed 2,519 of them (response rate 19.81%).

We present in Supplementary Material a comparison of the two samples (both weighted and unweighted) and the Indonesian population on key characteristics. This exercise demonstrates that the demographic characteristics of our samples indeed closely match that of the population. As one of our treatments is concerned with solidarity with the Uighur Muslims (see below), we restricted our analysis to the 1,840 (January 2020) and 2,298 (December 2020) Muslim respondents. A full analysis with all respondents yields identical findings and is available in Supplementary Material. Our power analysis suggested that these sample sizes are sufficient to achieve 85% power in detecting a small effect (Cohen's d = 0.20) at $\alpha = 0.05$.

When examining the effects of an international issue on domestic attitudes, one is faced with three possible research designs aimed at answering different angles of the question. First, one could look at how the international issue itself directly affects public attitudes. The focus is on understanding how the public responds to facts, news, or information about international events. Gartner (2008), for example, examines how information about war casualty shapes Americans' support for overseas wars.

Second, one could look at how domestic politicization of an international issue—that is, rhetoric, statements, or positions of local politicians in response to the issue—affects domestic attitudes. Here, the focus shifts from the issue itself to how the issue is packed and delivered to the domestic audiences by political elites. Examples of this approach include Hong and Kim's (2019) work that emphasizes the importance of leaders' ideologies and exclusionary framings of external threats in shaping intergroup attitudes or Myrick's (2021) study that examines how partisan discourse dampens the effects of information about external threats.

Lastly, a third empirical strategy examines the combined effect of both the international issue and the domestic politicization. The researcher is not concerned with understanding which component contributes more to the effect, only that the effect is there. Examples of work that employ such an approach include Asadzade and Izadi's (2022) study on how the Russian invasion of Ukraine affects people's views of Russia, its government, and its people and Igarashi's (2018) study on how visits by Chinese and South Korean officials to islands disputed with Japan affect Japanese's attitudes toward the countries. Both studies took advantage of international events that occurred in the middle of their survey periods. By comparing attitudes of respondents who participated in the survey before the event with those who participated after the event, the researchers were then able to examine if the event led to changes in public attitudes.

As the purpose of this study is to examine if China's foreign policies directly affect Indonesians' views of Chinese Indonesians, the first empirical approach is most appropriate. Consequently, we employed an experimental design that provided respondents with information about China's foreign

policies and then examined whether this information shapes their attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians.

This empirical strategy enables us to answer specifically whether China's foreign policies have direct effects on attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians. At the same time, it also delineates a boundary condition of our study. We are unable to assess the extent to which domestic politicization of the policies or the foreign policies and their domestic politicization combined significantly shape the attitudes (i.e., the second and the third angles described above). We have to defer these questions for future research.

Our experiments leveraged the same three China-related issues. The first issue relates to China's repeated violations of Indonesia's EEZ around the Natuna Islands. This negative issue taps into territorial threats that scholars argue are particularly potent. The second issue concerns China's discriminative treatment of the Uighur Muslims. This negative issue taps into solidarity with fellow Muslims and is relevant given Indonesia's status as the world's most populous Muslim-majority country. The third issue examines the effect of a positive issue and takes advantage of China's investment in Indonesia's first high-speed rail project.

Tables 1 and 2 present our experimental designs, each consisting of a control group and three treatment groups corresponding to the three issues. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of these groups. In the January survey (Table 1), respondents in the treatment groups were first read a statement that provided information about the respective issue followed by a question about how many benefits they think Indonesia receives from a close tie with China.

This benefits question served as a filler that separated the treatment and the attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians that are our primary dependent variable, reducing the likelihood that respondents inferred a connection between the two and altered their responses accordingly. At the same time, the

question also served as a secondary dependent variable that enables us to examine whether the issues affect perceptions toward China itself as a state. Respondents in the control group were not read any statement and went straight to the perceived benefits question.

Afterward, respondents indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with five statements regarding Chinese Indonesians adapted from Setijadi (2017). This scale has a high reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$) and a unidimensional structure with the first dimension explaining 83% of the variance. Lastly, respondents were asked whether they were comfortable with an ethnic Chinese serving as public official and having political power.

The December survey (Table 2) followed the same design except for three differences. First, the experiment was now disguised as a test of factual knowledge about whether or not an event concerning China happened. This enabled us to alter the control group from receiving no information at all (as in the January survey) to receiving a neutral piece of information. This should enhance comparability between the groups. Whether or not the respondent guessed correctly should not matter much because in the end all of them were informed that the event in question was indeed factual and read again a statement about the event.

The second difference is that we now switched the order of the perceived benefits question and the questions on attitudes toward ethnic Chinese. This is to minimize the possibility of a question order effect (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Lastly, we asked respondents whether they considered the event a positive event, a negative event, or neither. This manipulation check enabled us to ascertain that respondents indeed regarded our issues as either positive or negative. In this December survey, the battery on attitudes toward ethnic Chinese also has a strong reliability $\alpha=0.76$ and a unidimensional structure with the first factor explaining 92.19% of the variance.

Table 1 *The January 2020 Experimental Design*

Control (N_{Muslim} = 464)	Territorial (N_{Muslim} = 461)	Uighurs (N_{Muslim} = 455)	Investment (N_{Muslim} = 460)
Please now allow us to talk about the People's Republic of China.			
	Recently China's coast guard ships entered Indonesia's territory in the Natuna area without permission.	Recently there were demonstrations in Indonesia protesting China's discriminatory treatment of the Muslim Uighurs.	Recently China and Indonesia entered an investment agreement to build a high-speed rail between Jakarta and Bandung.
In your opinion, how much benefits does Indonesia receive from a close tie with China?	In your opinion, how much benefits does Indonesia receive from a close tie with China?	In your opinion, how much benefits does Indonesia receive from a close tie with China?	In your opinion, how much benefits does Indonesia receive from a close tie with China?
(1)No benefits at all (2)Little benefits (3)Quite a few benefits (4)A lot of benefits	(1)No benefits at all (2)Little benefits (3)Quite a few benefits (4)A lot of benefits	(1)No benefits at all (2)Little benefits (3)Quite a few benefits (4)A lot of benefits	(1)No benefits at all (2)Little benefits (3)Quite a few benefits (4)A lot of benefits

- 5-Item scale on stereotypes toward ethnic Chinese (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree)
  1. Ethnic Chinese's loyalty to the country must be questioned.
  2. Ethnic Chinese only care about their own kind.
  3. Ethnic Chinese have their own culture that does not fit the Indonesian values.
  4. Ethnic Chinese are too greedy and ambitious.
  5. Ethnic Chinese have a disproportionate influence on Indonesia's economy.

- Discomfort with ethnic Chinese in position of political power (1 = very comfortable; 4 = not at all comfortable)
  How comfortable are you with Chinese Indonesians becoming a public leader, such as becoming a mayor or regent in the region where you live, governor in your province, or a minister in the central government?

Table 2 *The December 2020 Experimental Design*

| Control (N_{Muslim} = 595)	Territorial (N_{Muslim} = 596)	Uighurs (N_{Muslim} = 536)	Investment (N_{Muslim} = 571)
In the next few questions, you will be asked about the People's Republic of China and people of Chinese descents in Indonesia. I will start with the People's Republic of China (PRC). I will read an event related to the PRC. You will need to guess whether the event is a true event or a hoax.			
Recently the U.S. Ambassador to China resigned from his position.	Recently China's coast guard ships entered Indonesia's territory in the Natuna area without permission.	Recently China implemented discriminative policies against the Muslim-majority Uighur people.	Recently China and Indonesia entered an investment agreement to build a high-speed rail between Jakarta and Bandung.
In your opinion, is the event true or a hoax? (1) A true event (2) A hoax			
Thank you for your answer. The event is a true event.	Thank you for your answer. The event is a true event.	Thank you for your answer. The event is a true event.	Thank you for your answer. The event is a true event.
The U.S. Ambassador to China indeed resigned from his position.	China's coast guard ships indeed entered Indonesia's territory in the Natuna area without permission.	China indeed implemented discriminative policies against the Muslim-majority Uighur people.	China and Indonesia indeed entered an investment agreement to build a high-speed rail between Jakarta and Bandung.

• 5-Item scale on stereotypes toward ethnic Chinese (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree)
  1. Ethnic Chinese's loyalty to the country must be questioned.
  2. Ethnic Chinese only care about their own kind.
  3. Ethnic Chinese have their own culture that does not fit the Indonesian values.
  4. Ethnic Chinese are too greedy and ambitious.
  5. Ethnic Chinese have a disproportionate influence on Indonesia's economy.
• Perceived benefits of a close tie with China (1 = no benefits at all; 4 = a lot of benefits)
• In your opinion, how much benefits does Indonesia receive from a close tie with China?
• Perceived valence of the issue (recoded to: 1 = negative; 2 = neither positive nor negative; 3 = positive)			

As I mentioned earlier, "Recently the U.S. Ambassador to China resigned from his position."	As I mentioned earlier, "Recently China's coast guard ships entered Indonesia's territory in the Natuna area without permission.	As I mentioned earlier, "Recently China implemented discriminative policies against the Muslim-majority Uighur people.	As I mentioned earlier, "Recently China and Indonesia entered an investment agreement to build a high-speed rail between Jakarta and Bandung.
In your opinion, is this event something negative, positive, or neither?	In your opinion, is this event something negative, positive, or neither?	In your opinion, is this event something negative, positive, or neither?	In your opinion, is this event something negative, positive, or neither?

Results

We employed OLS models, regressing the dependent variables on three dummy variables representing the treatment groups while taking into account the sampling weight. Figure 1 presents marginal effects of the treatments (i.e., the means difference between each of the treatment groups and the control group) from both surveys along with their 90% and 95% confidence intervals.

We find from the January data that the treatments significantly shaped respondents' perceived benefits of a close tie with China. Compared to the control group, respondents in the Territorial Violation and the Uighurs Discrimination groups perceived lower benefits for Indonesia from a close tie with China. To the contrary, respondents in the Investment group perceived higher benefits from such a tie. We find no significant effects when it comes to stereotypes toward ethnic Chinese and discomfort with ethnic Chinese leadership. Information about China's violation of Indonesia's EEZ, discriminative treatment of the Uighur Muslims, or investment in Indonesia's first high-speed rail project had only little effects on attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians.

The analysis of the December data reveals three findings. First, it replicates the null treatment effects on stereotypes toward ethnic Chinese. Second, it shows that the Uighurs and the Investment treatments no longer had an effect on the perceived benefits of having a close tie with China. The Territorial Violation treatment, on the other hand, maintained its negative effect on the perceived benefits question. This continued significance of the Territorial Violation treatment, while the other treatments lost theirs, affirms existing arguments on the potency of territorial issues (Hutchison & Gibler, 2007). Lastly, it shows that respondents regarded the Uighurs and the territorial violation issues as negative and the investment issue as positive.

While our experiments are well-powered, that our treatments largely have null effects on respondents' attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians poses a question of robustness. Are these findings largely invariant or are they conditioned by some individual characteristics? We answer this question by examining whether feeling toward ethnic Chinese conditions the treatment effects. Focusing on the existing feeling toward ethnic Chinese is a plausible starting point considering that

Marginal Effects of the Treatments (January 2020 Survey)
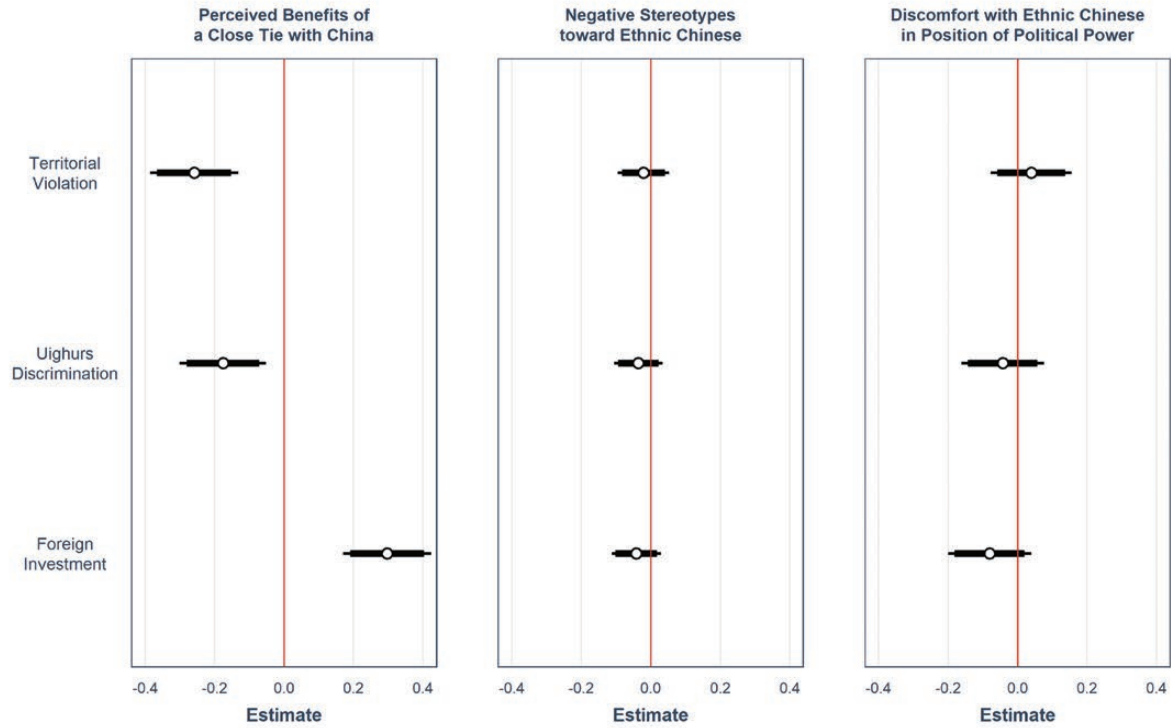
Marginal Effects of the Treatments (December 2020 Survey)
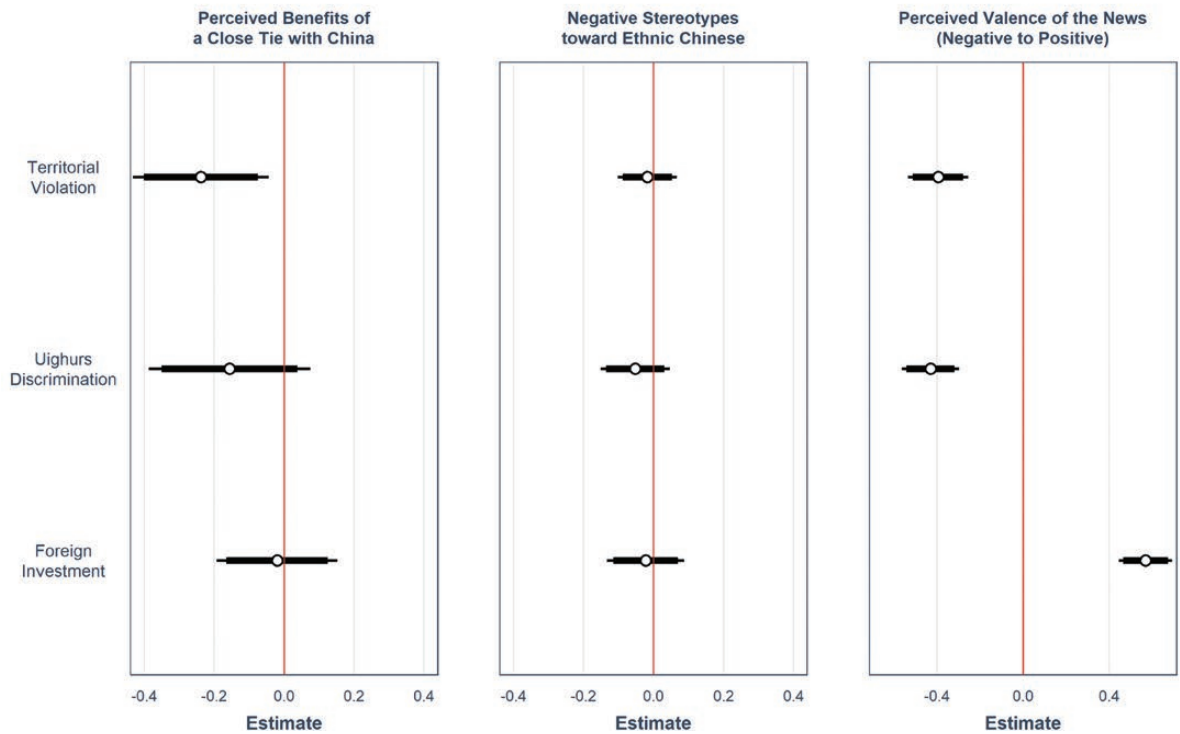

Figure 1. Marginal effects of the treatments.

negative emotions are generally related to higher attention to issue-relevant information (Valentino, Hutchings, Banks, & Davis, 2008). If that is the case, there is a possibility that the treatment effects would be stronger among individuals with existing negative feelings toward ethnic Chinese.

Figure 2 presents the distributions of respondents' answers to the question *"What is your feeling toward individuals of Chinese descent? Do you strongly dislike, dislike, neutral, like, or strongly like them?"* In both the January and the December surveys most respondents chose the neutral option. However,
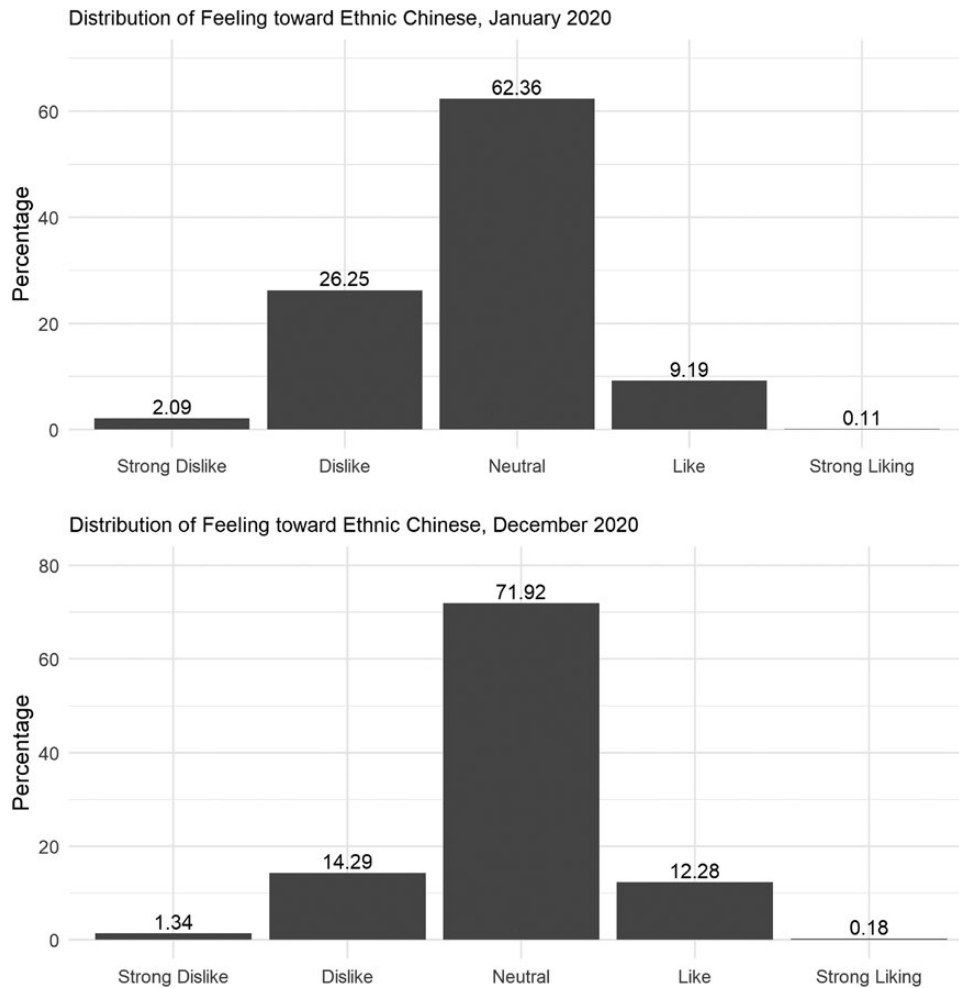
Figure 2. Distributions of feeling toward ethnic Chinese.

there were still significant percentages who stated that they disliked ethnic Chinese (28% in the January survey and 15% in the December survey) and, overall, in both surveys, there were more respondents who disliked ethnic Chinese than those who liked them.

To account for the small sizes of the two extreme categories and the possibility of non-linear relationships, we collapse the 5-level feeling thermometer question into a 3-level categorical variable which includes "negative," "neutral," and "positive" responses. The "negative" category is a combination of the "strongly dislike" and "dislike" categories on the original scale whereas the "positive" category is a combination of the "strong liking" and the "like" categories. We treat the "neutral" category as the baseline level.

Figure 3 presents marginal effects of the treatments by feeling toward ethnic Chinese constructed from regression models that include the interaction terms between the 3-level feeling thermometer and the treatment dummies. The critical question about the figure concerns the existence of significantly different patterns of marginal effects between the three feeling groups.

We fail to observe such different patterns across the six models. In virtually all of the models, the confidence intervals of each feeling group cover the point estimates of the other groups. The absence of moderating effects is further affirmed by the regression models (see Supplementary Material). None

of the interactions between feeling thermometer and the treatment dummies are statistically significant. In short, there is no evidence that respondents' feelings toward ethnic Chinese condition the treatment effects.

Discussion

We examine whether China's foreign policies and actions directly affect attitudes toward Chinese diaspora. Using Indonesians' views of Chinese Indonesians as a case, our two well-powered, nationally representative survey experiments find no evidence for the conventional wisdom that China's policies and actions that are negatively (positively) perceived by the public of a country would directly lead to negative (positive) attitudes toward ethnic Chinese minorities in the country.

Two concerns may be raised about our designs that might also explain the null effects. The first concern points to the issues. Justwan and Fisher (2021) show in the context of territorial threats that individuals have to be attached to the disputed regions for threats to influence intergroup attitudes. One could, then, suspect that our issues were simply non-issues and that the respondents attached no importance to them. We do not believe this explains the null effects.

The Natuna disputes had been present in public discourse for at least four years preceding the surveys, when Chinese

Marginal Effects by Feeling toward Ethnic Chinese, January 2020
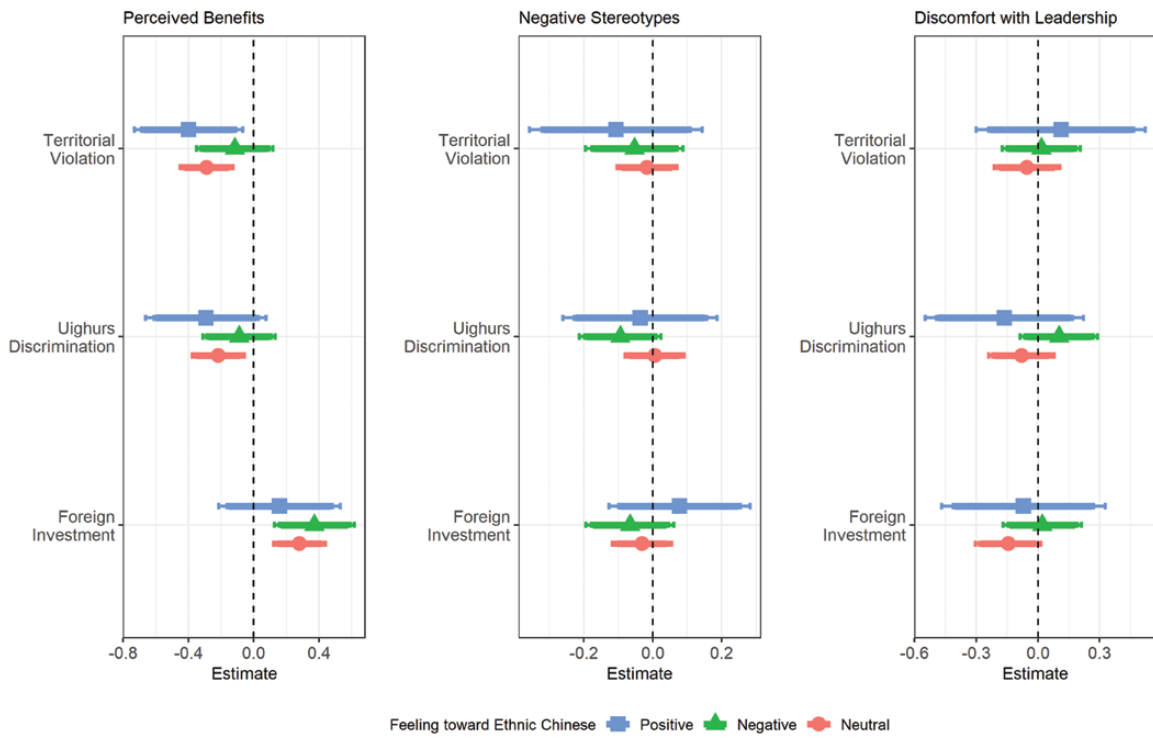
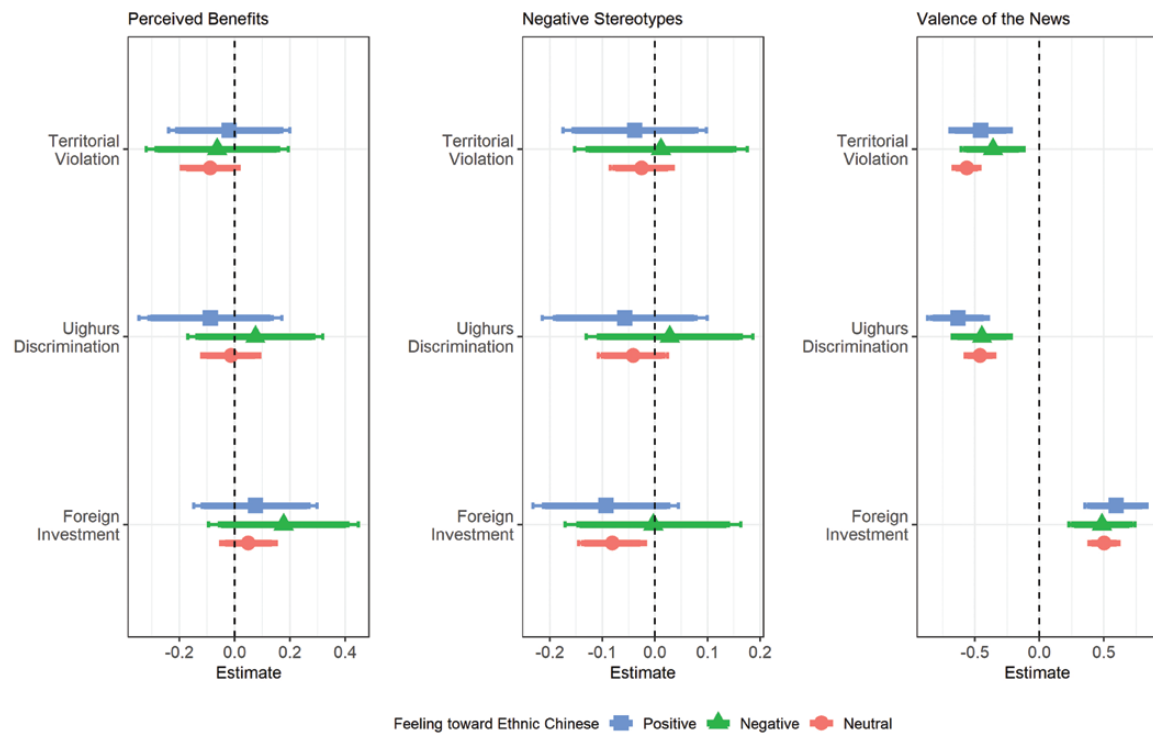Marginal Effects by Feeling toward Ethnic Chinese, December 2020

Figure 3. Marginal effects of the treatments by feeling toward ethnic Chinese.

vessels started to enter Indonesia's EEZ. China's discrimination of the Uighurs Muslims also had its fair share of attention, evidenced for example by anti-China rallies held by Islamic organizations protesting the discrimination. The

high-speed rail project was also a significant issue as it would be Indonesia's first.

Empirically, our analysis has shown that the respondents had strong views about the issues. The Natuna incursion and

the Uighurs issues were regarded as negative issues whereas the high-speed rail project was regarded as a positive issue. Furthermore, we also have shown that the territorial incursion treatment led to lower perceived benefits from cultivating a strong tie with China. These findings suggest that the issues were at least important enough for the respondents to be able to regard them as either positive or negative.

The second concern focuses on our case of Indonesia and Chinese Indonesians. One could suggest that the impacts of China's foreign policies would be less consequential and felt less in Indonesia than in other Southeast countries due to the country's lack of proximity to China. Contrary to this concern, we argue that Indonesia actually serves as a crucial case for establishing a link between China's actions as a state and attitudes toward Chinese diaspora (Gerring, 2008).

As described in the literature review, the country has a long anti-Chinese history. That Indonesia is relatively distant geographically from China compared to other Southeast Asian countries actually provides more room for these tensions to manifest. Tanaka (2016) shows that citizens living further away from conflict or disputed territories can afford to be more hawkish and less compromising than citizens who live closer to such territories.

In our study's context, this means that if aggressive China's foreign policies indeed led to more negative attitudes toward Chinese diaspora, this relationship should be particularly strong in Indonesia where anti-Chinese sentiments are alive and the lack of geographical proximity allows citizens to mobilize anti-Chinese sentiments as a response to China's aggressiveness. That we did not find evidence for such a relationship even in a case as crucial as Indonesia suggests that the relationship might not be as straightforward as conventional wisdom and observers suggest.

Rather, what we believe explains our null effects is the crucial distinction between *information* about international issues and *politicization* of international issues. Our findings highlight an overlooked, but important, boundary condition in the existing studies on the effects of international issues on domestic intergroup relations (Bak, Chávez, & Rider, 2020; Hutchison & Gibler, 2007; Tir & Singh, 2015). Negative international issues, while important, are not a sufficient condition for the worsening of intergroup relations in a country. These issues would need to be translated into domestic discourses by local political entrepreneurs (Hong & Kim, 2019).

Foreign policy issues, no matter how threatening, are largely beyond the purview of ordinary citizens (Converse, 1964). This makes domestic politicization essential for such issues to matter on the national level (Bak, Chávez, & Rider, 2020; Myrick, 2021). In the context of our study, both of our surveys were fielded in 2020, one year after the 2019 presidential election that was won by incumbent Joko Widodo.

Following the victory, Widodo invited his opponent Prabowo Subianto to join the cabinet as a minister, which Subianto promptly accepted. As some of the attacks against Widodo in the election involved nationalist, anti-China and anti-Chinese messages, Prabowo's joining Jokowi's administration practically left no credible opposition to keep the issues of China and ethnic Chinese salient in public discourse. This, together with the fact that our experiments were designed to focus on the information aspect and leave the politicization part out of the equation, in turn, could explain why we find no treatment effects on attitudes toward Chinese Indonesians.

That international issues do not, by themselves, shape intergroup relations is encouraging in the context of discrimination against ethnic Chinese in countries where they are a minority. Our findings allay concerns about the rise of China automatically exacerbating this discrimination and redirect the attention back to local elites and their abilities to politicize otherwise distant international issues. While it would be extremely difficult (if not impossible) to nudge China to behave in a certain way so as not to invite discrimination against ethnic Chinese abroad, local politicians are likely more responsive to local incentives such as votes, donation, and career advancement. This, in turn, means that efforts to reduce discrimination against ethnic Chinese minority can be done regardless of China's actions as a state.

Notes on Contributors

Nathanael Gratias Sumaktoyo is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore. His research interests include voting behavior, politics and religion, social networks, and causal inference.

Burhanuddin Muhtadi is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta. He is also an executive director of the Indonesian Political Indicator (Indikator Politik Indonesia) and the Director of Public Affairs at the Indonesian Survey Institute (Lembaga Survei Indonesia, LSI). His research interests include political Islam, democracy, voting behavior, clientelism, and social movement.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at International Journal of Public Opinion Research online.

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