Anti-Americanism in Asia? Factors shaping international perceptions of American influence

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of 9/11 and the Bush administration's subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, many have argued that international perceptions of the United States are growing more negative and that 'anti-Americanism' is going to be a problem for American foreign policy in the decades to come. We examine the debate over anti-Americanism by using survey data collected in more than 26 countries that span East, Southeast, South, and Central Asia, with a focus on two empirical questions. First, to what extent do citizens in Asia believe that the United States has a negative (or positive) influence on their country? Second, what factors, at both the individual and national level, shape the perceptions of American influence? Although we uncover little evidence of pervasive anti-Americanism, the results of our multilevel model generally confirm the theoretical importance of three explanations for international perceptions of the United States—interest theories, cultural and political similarities, and increased information and contacts.

1 Introduction

In November of 2006, President George W. Bush, fresh off of American mid-term elections in which his Republican Party lost majorities in both the

House and the Senate, paid a five-day visit to Southeast Asia. Bush used this tour to press the Asian continent on issues such as the threat posed by North Korea and Iran and to pledge long-term American engagement in Asia 'because our interests depend on the expansion of freedom and opportunity in this vital part of the world'.[1]

Bush's visit and agenda, however, were by no means met with unanimous support. Many Asian leaders were openly more concerned with trade liberalization, global health, and other issues than with Bush's terrorism- and security-laden agenda.[2] And thousands of protesters in Indonesia and elsewhere greeted Bush with strongly anti-American signs and demonstrations.[3]

The questions of how widespread this type of anti-American sentiment is and what might cause anti-Americanism in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere have been key concerns for policymakers and scholars, particularly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the Bush administration's subsequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Many have argued that negative opinions of the United States are on the rise and that, particularly as the international system continues to democratize, popular anti-Americanism is going to be a problem for American foreign policy in the decades to come (e.g. Mearsheimer, 2002; Naim, 2003; Joffe, 2006).

Identifying and defining anti-Americanism, though, involves much more than examining the flurry of protests that generally accompany a state visit by President Bush. Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane (2007, p. 2), for instance, define anti-Americanism as a prejudicial view of the United States and have argued in an edited volume on the subject that it is considerably more complicated than it may initially appear. As both countries and individuals are often inconsistent in their views of the United States, a distinction must be drawn, among other things, between attitudes regarding what America *is* and attitudes regarding what America *does*.

This article is particularly concerned with the latter and with the perceptions people have of the American presence and role in Asia. Building on the definition of anti-Americanism as prejudicial and as a view that encourages individuals to see American policies in a negative light, this article examines whether in fact individual attitudes toward the United States are on the whole positive or negative. This is one method for making sense of whether the term anti-Americanism is politically significant for the Asia region as a whole. Secondly, we investigate possible causes of individual response patterns by

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1   President's Radio Address, 18 November 2006; http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/11/20061118.html (accessed on 10 March 2008).

2   Sanger, D.E. (2006) 'Asia's agenda: this time, terrorism takes a back seat to trade issues', *New York Times*, 22 November 2006.

3   Sawer, P. (2006) 'Angry crowds call for Bush to die on tour of Indonesia', *The Evening Standard*, 20 November 2006.

examining a variety of factors, at both the individual and national level, believed to shape perceptions of American influence.

To address these related questions, the paper uses data collected from the AsiaBarometer Survey (ABS). This multi-national survey, conducted between 2005 and 2007, is based on face-to-face interviews with randomly selected citizens in more than 26 Asian societies. The data from this survey lead us to conclude that anti-Americanism is a minority view in Asia as a whole and that the key factors driving individual views on American influence include religion, military and economic aid, and personal overseas contacts.

This article is organized in five parts. The first section offers a brief literature review. After that, ABS will be discussed and its basic results will be analyzed to determine what Asian perceptions of American influence are and whether or not there is a strong anti-American sentiment in the region-at-large. The third section looks at possible theoretical explanations for the positive and negative public views of the United States and will be followed by a multilevel test formally analyzing these citizen perceptions at both the country and individual level. The final, fifth section explains the key findings and discusses some of the implications for how America is perceived in the Asian region.

2 Prior studies

Although much of the scholarly literature on anti-Americanism or foreign public opinion more generally is relatively recent, this literature builds on a broader tradition regarding the basic role of public opinion in foreign policy behavior. The earliest of this work goes back to Kant's (1795) assertion that a democratic system of government is critical to perpetual peace internationally and that democratic populations are going to be more likely to hold their states back from warlike behavior.

Since Kant, there has been a lot of work on how domestic public opinion can affect a state's foreign policy, including but not limited to the vast literature that builds off of Kant's notion of a democratic peace.[4] There is also a substantial subset of literature reversing the causal arrow and asking how it is that domestic public opinion is affected by foreign policy decisions. For instance, there has been a vigorous debate recently over the precise role of casualties in American support for the war in Iraq (e.g. Mueller, 2005; Gelpi and Mueller, 2006). How much do these casualty numbers (as opposed to agreement with the war's stated purpose or other factors) drive opposition to the war itself?

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4   On the democratic peace, see Russett (2001) and Owen (1994).

Building off of this work on the role of domestic public opinion is the growing concern for foreign public opinion and the alleged rise in anti-Americanism in Asia and other parts of the world. The potential for anti-Americanism has been a frequent concern for political commentators on the left and the right and even for the Bush administration itself. In 2005, for instance, President Bush named Karen Hughes, one of his close personal advisers, as under secretary of state for public diplomacy. Her job was to manage the United States' international image and to try to 'portray the facts in the best light for our country'.[5] The specter of anti-Americanism is clearly more than just a scholarly concern.

Despite its relevance, however, systematic empirical work on the issue remains relatively thin. One key exception is the edited volume by Katzenstein and Keohane mentioned in this article's introduction. The volume's contributors work to disentangle what anti-Americanism means and how support or opposition to American policies is related to support or opposition to American culture and American political ideals. Of particular relevance are two chapters by Pierangelo Isernia and Giacomo Chiozza that focus on anti-Americanism and attitude surveys. Both base some of their work on the Pew Research Center's (2002) survey of 42 countries across the international system, a survey which found anti-Americanism to be a minority view in much of the world.

Another relevant piece of empirical work is Goldsmith *et al.*'s study (2005) on global public opinion of American foreign policy during and immediately after the 2001 American invasion of Afghanistan. The authors found diverse global opinion and significant influence by several factors, including the percentage of Muslims in a state's population and a state's recent direct experience with terrorism.

The debate over anti-Americanism has also surfaced in scholarly writings on Asia. For example, a recently edited collection concerning international perceptions of the United States includes chapters on both Indonesia and China (Farber, 2007). In the case of Indonesia, Budianta (2007, p. 30) focuses on the American war with Iraq and the failure of US policies to differentiate fundamentalism from terrorism as being key reasons as to why 'a great majority of Indonesians view the US government as an aggressive, militaristic danger to the world'. In the case of China, Hao and Su (2007, p. 90) find that most of the respondents they talked view America as a two-faceted: *Cultural America* (America at home) and *Super America* (America in the world). The former image is largely positive, whereas the latter is distinctively negative. Other studies include a book-length investigation into Korean attitudes toward the United States (Steinberg, 2005) as well as a section on East Asia in a broader study of anti-Americanism (Ross and Ross, 2004).

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5   Cohen, R. (2006) 'As U.S. image free-falls, spin wobbles into ditch', *New York Times*, 17 May 2006.

The previous literature has helped generate new insights and tools in conceptualizing and studying anti-Americanism in its various forms. However, it suffers from a few notable weaknesses. First, few studies examine anti-Americanism in broader comparative perspective. Consequently, we have relatively little information about the manifestation and causes of anti-Americanism across and within specific societies. Second, previous research is quite limited in its knowledge about what everyday citizens in other countries think about the United States, which is arguably one of the most important questions in the study of anti-Americanism. Finally, many of the studies on Asia are limited to a single country, which makes it difficult to extract common factors. Overall, anti-Americanism and concern for foreign public opinion is a significant but underdeveloped area of scholarly attention. This article helps to fill that gap by looking specifically at perceptions of American influence using public opinion data collected across Asia.

3 The AsiaBarometer Survey

To study citizen views of American influence and look for the presence of anti-Americanism, this paper uses a merged data set that combines the 2005, 2006, and 2007 ABS. This survey allows us to analyze a total of 26 societies within and across four subregions in Asia: East Asia (Japan, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mongolia); Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Laos, and Vietnam); South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka); and Central Asia or Central Eurasia (Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). ABS is based largely on face-to-face interviews with randomly selected citizens. The total sample size of the merged survey comes to 26,523 respondents. Within each country, the representative sample includes at least 800 adults, aged 20 years and over, with an average sample size of 980 respondents.

The key question in ABS regarding Asian perceptions of the United States involves views of American influence. Specifically, the ABS asked respondents whether the United States has a good or bad influence on their country. Respondents could select from one of five possible choices: (1) good influence; (2) rather good influence; (3) neither good nor bad influence; (4) rather bad influence; and (5) bad influence. Although existing research does suggest that the specific context of a survey question can lead to different consequences for how respondents evaluate the United States,[6] it has also been shown that these different types of questions still produce relatively similar results.[7] Therefore,

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6 For example, respondents are more likely to respond more critically to the government rather than the American people when it comes to evaluating specific policies (Isernia, 2007, p. 61).

7 See, e.g., Isernia (2007, p. 63) and Smith and Wertman (1992, p. 94).

Table 1 Views of American influence

Country	Good influence (%)	Bad influence (%)
Philippines	88.3	2.8
Cambodia	87.0	3.3
Afghanistan	86.9	7.1
Nepal	73.1	11.9
Mongolia	71.3	5.1
Singapore	70.6	7.3
Taiwan	68.9	9.0
India	68.8	7.9
Bhutan	65.1	6.0
Thailand	63.3	11.1
Tajikistan	58.6	15.9
Maldives	57.5	28.0
Laos	52.1	23.1
Sri Lanka	48.0	27.1
Bangladesh	47.9	32.2
Korea	47.2	28.1
Japan	45.6	22.9
Vietnam	42.9	18.9
Hong Kong	40.6	20.9
Kyrgyzstan	37.7	31.9
Uzbekistan	35.9	41.4
Pakistan	31.3	42.3
Malaysia	28.7	52.2
Kazakhstan	25.4	44.6
Indonesia	21.8	48.3
China	20.6	40.3
Total	53.3	22.7

'Don't know' responses are excluded.
Source: ABS 2005–07.

we use the results from this single question regarding American influence as an estimate of a particular type of anti-Americanism.

A first-cut analysis of the responses to this question is presented in Table 1. The table shows the results from each surveyed country, with the first column indicating the percentage of that state's respondents who said that the United States had a 'good influence' or a 'rather good influence' and the second column representing those who said that the United States had a 'bad influence' or a 'rather bad influence'.

As indicated in the table, Asia as a whole has a relatively positive view of American influence in the region, with over 50% of the respondents indicating that the United States has a good or rather good influence and only 22.7% suggesting that American influence is bad or rather bad. Furthermore, although there is considerable variance among the surveyed states (ranging from a high of 88.3% positive in the Philippines to only 20.6% positive in China), in only 6 out of the 26 surveyed states (China, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan) is the negative evaluation higher than the positive evaluation. In the other 20 countries, more citizens have a positive view of American influence than have a negative view of this influence. In fact, in half of the surveyed countries, twice as many respondents see American influence in more positive than negative terms.

The first-cut analysis therefore indicates that by no means is there an overwhelming sentiment of anti-Americanism across the Asian continent. There is certainly a lot of variation and there are undoubtedly pockets of resentment, but in general more people have a positive assessment than have a negative assessment.

It should be noted that this finding roughly approximates that of the broader 2002 Pew Global Attitudes survey. This poll, conducted in 44 countries across the world, found that approximately 64% of those surveyed had a 'very favorable' or 'somewhat favorable' opinion of the United States (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2002).[8] As with ABS, anti-Americanism was a minority view.

The situation gets more complicated and interesting, however, when we extend beyond the first-cut analysis and compare surveyed states' opinions of American influence with their opinion of the influence of other states both inside and outside Asia. The ABS asked respondents about their views regarding 13 additional countries besides the United States,[9] and these responses allow us to compare perceptions of American influence against a much broader sample of countries. The results are listed in Table 2.

The table shows that Japan had the highest 'good' and 'rather good' ranking, with 65.6% of those surveyed across Asia putting it in that category. Pakistan, on the other hand had both the lowest positive ranking and the highest negative ranking (with 24.8% of the respondents in all surveyed countries indicating that Pakistan has a 'bad' or 'rather bad' influence on their country).

What is most interesting for purposes of this article, however, is that the United States ranks highly in both categories. Only two states (Japan and

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8 Approximately 83.3% of the surveyed countries (35 of 42) had majorities that held positive views of the United States. In the more recent survey of 2007, this percentage declines to 53.2% (25 of 47), with the favorability ratings falling in 26 of the 33 countries where trend data are available (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2007).

9 We exclude a total of eight countries that were asked about in only one of the survey years given their much narrower coverage.

Table 2 Views of countries by good and bad influence

Good influence (%)		Bad influence (%)	
Japan	65.6	Pakistan	24.8
China	58.4	*United States*	*22.7*
United States	*53.3*	Iran	21.8
Australia	49.0	North Korea	20.8
Russia	47.8	China	16.5
United Kingdom	44.3	United Kingdom	13.2
South Korea	43.2	Indonesia	12.7
India	41.5	Russia	12.0
Indonesia	31.0	India	11.5
Turkey	30.9	Turkey	10.8
North Korea	30.3	Kazakhstan	10.8
Iran	27.6	Japan	10.3
Kazakhstan	26.1	South Korea	9.9
Pakistan	22.4	Australia	7.2

'Don't know' responses are excluded.
Source: ABS 2005–07.

China) have a higher positive ranking, and only one state (Pakistan) has a higher negative ranking. Significantly, a higher proportion of people across Asia see the United States as having a negative influence on their country than either North Korea or Iran.

These findings certainly complicate the picture regarding the presence of anti-Americanism in Asia. It is clear that, compared with other countries, feelings about American influence are strong, with only a relatively small percentage of surveyed respondents suggesting that American influence is 'neither good nor bad'. Positive or negative, most people do have an opinion regarding American influence. And although, as indicated above, more people overall view American influence in positive than in negative terms, America's negative scores are still high relative to those of other countries. Therefore, even though anti-Americanism tends to be a minority view in the surveyed countries, it is by no mean absent in the Asian region, and the question of what it is that influences opinions about American influence, positive or negative, remains a vital one.

4 Explaining international perceptions about the United States

External perceptions of the United States are undoubtedly shaped by a combination of many different factors, some of which operate at the level of the individual and some of which operate at the national or societal level. In explaining

the perceptions of the United States in Asia, we have opted here to focus on three major theoretical strands of individual and societal explanation, each of which is derived from previous literature on the subject. The first strand involves the role of *interest*, which we conceptualize in terms of economic dimensions at the national level. The second strand focuses on perceptions of shared *cultural and political similarities*, such as the practice of democracy and religion. This strand can be conceptualized at either the societal or the individual level. The final strand, *information and contacts*, is conceptualized solely at the individual level.

The first strand suggests that individual perceptions of American influence are shaped by economic interest at the national level. This theory follows Goldsmith *et al.* (2005, p. 410), who argue that domestic public opinion is malleable and that national economic interest can thus feed down to the individual actor through the influence of political elites or the national media. Therefore, states that trade heavily with the United States have a national interest in that relationship and are presumably more likely to have a favorable aggregate impression of American influence on their country and region. Heavy trade produces national-level dependence and economic interest, which influences individual perceptions either directly in some cases or indirectly through the influence of elites and the media.[10] It is certainly possible that economic dependence and a strong trade relationship could produce negative opinions in some cases and in some segments of a state's population, but, following the previous literature on the subject, we hypothesize here that the relationship will be positive.

An additional element of this economic interest involves not trade dependence but aid dependence, particularly in a post-9/11 environment. For instance, in the wake of the tsunami disaster that struck Asia in 2005, the US government committed $350 million in emergency relief assistance, with a supplemental request for $950 million, and dispatched former presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton to tsunami-affected areas in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Maldives. The goodwill tour of these former presidents aimed to improve perceptions of the United States by offering America's 'sustained compassion', 'generosity', and 'assurance' to citizens in South and Southeast Asia.[11]

Besides the tsunami aid relief, the US government is also heavily involved in the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. The total

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10 There is also some anecdotal evidence that strong economic ties can lead to interstate friction, which may have happened in the case of Japan in the 1990s. However, one study that examined this question suggests that the cumulative weight of the evidence sees the two countries as committed allies (Ladd and Bowman, 1996, pp. 50–58).

11 'President asks Bush and Clinton to help raise funds for tsunami relief', White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 3 January 2005.

reconstruction assistance spent since 2001 has amounted to $4.2 billion, including $2.2 billion in 2004 alone.[12] Following the strand of economic interest, these American aid policies in Afghanistan and elsewhere are expected to have a strong effect on individual perceptions of the United States, presumably in a positive direction.

The second theoretical strand emphasizes the importance of perceived cultural and political similarities. The basic idea here is that individuals will tend to trust the intentions of those states that are culturally or politically similar to them and distrust those states that are significantly dissimilar. The political side of this explanation is supported by the theory of the democratic peace, which suggests that democracies are less likely to fight other democracies owing to the existence of democratic norms and institutional constraints (Owen, 1994; Russett, 2001). Perceptions of shared political and cultural norms are consequently expected to affect perceptions of the United States in a positive fashion. Essentially, all else being equal, citizens in a democracy are more likely to view American influence favorably.

The same is true of cultural and religious differences and similarities. Much of the current literature on anti-Americanism, for instance, focuses on the negative opinions of the United States in the Muslim world in particular. In an analysis of 42 countries surveyed in the Pew 2002 Global Attitudes Survey, Chiozza (2007, p. 97) discovered that the single most important country-level predictor of anti-American sentiment is the presence of large Muslim populations. Following this work and Samuel Huntington's (1993, 1996) famous 'clash of the civilizations' thesis, we expect that Muslims and those individuals living in predominantly Islamic societies will be more likely to have developed negative opinions of American influence on their countries.

The last theoretical strand that we consider is what Chiozza (2007, p. 112) has labeled the 'information-and-contacts' hypothesis, which suggests that people who have better information and contacts about the United States will be more likely to venture positive evaluations of it. Gardner (1997, quoted in Budianta, 2007, p. 43) captured the premise of this strand when writing about the long-term nature of the relationship between the US and Indonesia, which he suggests will be shaped less by issues of the moment '…than by gradual change in popular attitudes created by increased contact and shared experiences through trade, educational exchanges, and increased communications'. We conceptualize this strand at the level of individual respondents.

The three strands we have identified from the literature are used to examine international perceptions of the United States using survey data from Asia. As

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12 'Afghanistan Reconstruction Assistance', US Agency for International Development Fact Sheet, Washington, DC, 11 April 2002.

many of the strands can be conceptualized at either the societal or individual levels, we discuss measurement issues in the subsequent section. And as there are many additional theories that we do not test, we deem this a preliminary effort to explain the sources of anti-American perceptions in Asia with the hope that future research can build upon our results.

5 Dependent and independent variables

The dependent variable in this article is the individual perception of American influence in Asia, measured through the ABS question discussed earlier. The question used a five-point scale and asked respondents whether the United States has a good or bad influence on their country. These answers have been recoded so that a higher value represents a more positive assessment of the country. 'Don't know' responses, which amounted to 7.6% of respondents, were coded as missing data and excluded from the analysis.

The remainder of this section explains the operationalization and measurement of the independent variables that have been added to the analysis. The section also discusses the country-level and individual-level control variables that are a part of the model.

5.1 First-strand variables: aid and trade

Aid and trade are country-level measures that, following the theoretical strand involving the role of economic interest, are hypothesized to correlate positively with our dependent variable. Following Goldsmith *et al.* (2005), trade is measured as the logged sum of exports and imports between the surveyed country and the United States divided by the surveyed country's GDP for a three-year period prior to the survey.[13] Aid, which includes both economic and military aid, is likewise divided by GDP and averaged over a three-year period.[14]

In our data set of ABS countries, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Singapore have the highest trade dependence with the United States, whereas Laos, Bhutan, and Myanmar stand as the least dependent. States such as China, India, Japan, and South Korea are in the middle of this list. Each of these states trades heavily with the United States, but this trade represents a relatively low proportion of their high total GDP. For aid, Afghanistan is the largest recipient followed by Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The countries that receive the smallest amount of aid include Hong Kong, China, and Malaysia.

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13 Trade data are in US constant dollars. Source: United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database; http://comtrade.un.org/ (accessed on 10 March 2008).

14 Aid data are taken from OECD.Stat; http://stats.oecd.org/WBOS/ (accessed on 10 March 2008).

5.2 Second-strand variables: democracy and religion

To measure democracy, which we expect to be positively associated with per-
ceptions of American influence, we use the political rights and civil liberties
scores from the Freedom House organization. The scores are based on a set of
25 political rights and civil liberties questions. The political rights questions
cover areas such as the electoral process and political pluralism and partici-
pation, whereas the civil liberties questions deal with areas such as freedom of
expression and belief and the rule of law. We use a combined score for both
political rights and civil liberties that ranges from 0 to 100, where higher
scores indicate more freedom.[15] To correct for some of the underlying political
instabilities that have affected the democracy scores for a handful of the sur-
veyed countries, we average the scores for a three year-period prior to the date
of the survey as done with our measures of trade and aid.[16]

Our measurement of the percentage of Muslims in a country, which we
expect to be negatively associated with our dependent variable, is taken
directly from the website Islamicweb.com. The percentage of Muslims in the
society is less than 1% in 7 of the countries in our data set (South Korea,
Laos, Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong, and Japan), and there are 4
states where the percentage is at least 95% (Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan,
and Maldives).[17] As discussed in what follows, we use a second model to test
for the influence of Muslim religious denomination at the individual level.

5.3 Third-strand variable: contact with foreign countries

To measure the information and contacts hypothesis, we make use of a ques-
tion in ABS that asks respondents whether any of the following statements
apply to them: (1) a member of my family or relative lives in another country;
(2) I have traveled abroad at least three times in the past three years; (3) I have
friends from other countries; (4) I often watch foreign-produced programs on
TV; (5) I often communicate with people in other countries via the Internet or
email; and (6) my job involves contact with organizations or people in other
countries. We count the number of positive responses for each respondent,
which creates a score ranging from 1 to 6.

Although the measure for contact is at the level of the individual and will be
tested at the level of the individual, we can report here the aggregate society-
level scores for the countries surveyed in ABS. The three lowest averages,

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15 In the sample of countries, the Freedom House scores range from a low of 11.7 in Uzbekistan to
    a high of 88.3 in Japan, with a mean score of 45.5 and a standard deviation of 25.2.

16 Thailand, for example, was considerably downgraded by Freedom House after the 2006 military
    coup that saw the ousting of its democratically elected prime minister. Freedom House scores for
    the Philippines, Nepal, and Kyrgyzstan were also subject to considerable fluctuation.

17 Countries not listed on the website are assumed to have no significant Muslim population.

ranging from 1 to 1.1, are Indonesia, China, and Thailand. The highest averages, ranging from 2 to 2.8, herald from Bhutan, Maldives, and Singapore, which are also the three countries with the largest standard deviation (1.2–1.6). Overall, the mean score of the contact index came to 1.43, with a standard deviation of 0.89. To the extent that more information and contacts generate more positive evaluations of American influence, we anticipate a positive and statistically significant relationship with our main dependent variable.

5.4 Country-level controls

Our model includes two controls measured at the country level. The first is necessary to capture economic conditions. Studies of global public opinion typically include a control for economic development (as measured by per capita GDP) given the expectation that its level will have important indirect effects on mass political attitudes (e.g. Welzel *et al.*, 2003). We follow past approaches by including a measure of per capita GDP in US dollars, which is taken in the year prior to the survey.[18]

The second country-level control takes into account whether salient alliances exist between the surveyed countries and the United States. Specifically, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines have been identified because they were in military alliances with the United States at the time of the survey.[19] On the one hand, these formal alliances indicate closer security ties with the United States and may foster more positive evaluations toward the United States. On the other hand, the alliances have also become a source for public discontent and unrest. In 1991, the Philippine Senate ruled that US bases were infringements of Philippine sovereignty, which had long been viewed as a legacy of colonialism (Bacho, 1988). Likewise, anti-base protests have frequently surfaced in Okinawa and in South Korea (Moon, 2005). The presence of these military alliances is an important control in our model, but we are unsure whether its effect will be positive or negative.

5.5 Individual-level controls

In addition to the controls at the country level, the model includes five controls measured at the level of the individual respondents. The first is the level of education. In the literature on anti-Americanism, education is hypothesized to affect perceptions toward the United States, although the relationship is not entirely clear and empirical results have been mixed. Chiozza (2007, pp. 117–118) finds that the more educated class was less likely to offer overall

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18 Figures for per capita GDP are converted using a linear log and come from the United Nations' Monthly Bulletin of Statistics. Data for Taiwan are from the CIA World Factbook.

19 We used the Correlates of War Formal Interstate Alliance Data Set to help code these cases; available at http://www.correlatesofwar.org/COW2%20Data/Alliances/alliance.htm.

positive evaluations of the United States in advanced industrial democracies but more likely to do so in South Asia. In a study of residents from Beijing, Johnston and Stockmann (2007) discover that higher levels of education are associated with greater amity toward the United States. The impact of education on anti-Americanism thus seems uncertain, particularly as global opinion polls on this topic are still in their infancy.

To measure the level of education, the ABS asks respondents about the highest level of education they have completed on a scale of 1–6, where a '1' refers to primary school or below and a '6' indicates graduate school or above. Because education systems can differ considerably within Asian societies, we opted to recode education level on a 1–3 scale, where '1' represents low education and '3' represents high. As the effect of education might be hypothesized to have either a positive or a negative effect depending on factors such as the country or region, we simply anticipate that it will have a statistically significant effect.

Perceptions about the United States and foreign countries may also be related to respondents' standard of living. Respondents who enjoy a high standard of living are likely to hail from the most privileged classes of their society. They may attain a higher than average income and have more education and the ability to travel. Alternatively, a higher standard of living may have little direct bearing on perceptions of foreign countries' influence. In a study examining the links between education, poverty, and terrorism, Krueger and Malečková (2003) demonstrate that those who support terrorism are just as likely to come from a high income bracket and to have acquired education as they are to be economically disadvantaged and possess few or no educational opportunities.

Our measure of standard of living taps citizens' subjective perceptions using a question from ABS. Specifically, respondents are asked to describe their standard of living on a 1-to-5 scale, where '1' indicates high and '5' equals low. We have reversed the original scale so that higher values indicate higher self-placement for the standard of living question. Although we do not have strong expectations for a positive or negative relationship, we expect a significant relationship between this measure and our dependent variable.

The models also control for the age and gender of respondents. Perceptions of American influence are likely to differ in terms of age and gender within and across Asian societies. Younger and older as well as male and female respondents are likely to hold different opinions as an indirect consequence of socio-economic change and political history. As the effects of age and gender are not likely to be uniform across the diverse set of Asian societies, it is not certain whether the overall effect will be positive or negative although we anticipate a statistically significant effect. To measure gender, all female respondents are coded with a value of '1', and males with '0'. The age of

Table 3 Multilevel analysis of perceptions of American influence

Predictors	Model 1		Model 2	
Constant	4.205***	(0.547)	3.855***	(0.575)
Aid	11.213***	(3.048)	8.498***	(3.151)
Trade	0.042	(0.065)	0.044	(0.071)
Democracy	0.005	(0.004)	0.006	(0.004)
Muslim population	−0.008***	(0.002)		
GDP per capita	−0.119*	(0.060)	−0.103	(0.065)
Alliance	0.103	(0.261)	0.154	(0.285)
Contact index	0.029**	(0.009)	0.023**	(0.009)
Muslim respondent			−0.289***	(0.028)
Standard of living	0.063***	(0.010)	0.066***	(0.010)
Education	−0.023*	(0.010)	−0.026**	(0.010)
Gender	0.029*	(0.014)	0.029*	(0.014)
Age	−0.027***	(0.006)	−0.029***	(0.006)
Country level	0.120***	(0.034)	0.145***	(0.040)
Individual level	1.068***	(0.010)	1.063***	(0.010)
N	23,393		23,310	
−2 log likelihood	68,040.050		67,709.190	

Maximum likelihood estimates using MLwiN 2.02; standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

respondents is recoded on a scale of 1–5, where the youngest group (20–29 years old) is coded a '1', and the oldest group (60–69 years old) a '5'.

6 Multilevel analysis of perceptions of US influence

As our research design has hierarchically nested data – individuals situated within countries – we use a statistical method called multilevel analysis using MLwiN software, version 2.02 (Rabash *et al.*, 2004). This analysis allows us to assume the variation in our dependent variables is a function of both lower level and higher level factors. From an econometric standpoint, the regression coefficients in the micro-level models are allowed to vary across these factors rather than being fixed (Jones and Steenbergen, 1997).

Table 3 presents the results for the dependent variable of our analysis: individual views regarding whether the United States has a good or bad influence on their country. Model 1 tests the cultural similarities strand using the percentage of Muslim respondents in a country, whereas Model 2 codes Muslim affiliation at the level of the individual. In each, the effects of the country-level measures are listed at the top of the table.

In both models, the effect of the aid variable is statistically significant and positively associated with perceptions of US influence, which suggests that perceptions improve with an increase in the level of aid. However, we also note that these results may be strongly influenced by the high levels of US aid granted for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Indeed, when Afghanistan is excluded from the model, the aid variable is no longer statistically significant. The hypothesized relationship between aid and perceptions of US influence is therefore only partially supported.

The results for trade and democracy were not statistically significant in the model. The flow of goods between the surveyed countries and the United States does not appear to impact how citizens rate American influence on their country. The level of democracy in the country, as measured by Freedom House, also appears to be inconsequential on public evaluations. Neither of these hypotheses can be confirmed.

Our measure of the percentage of the Muslim population in a country is statistically significant and negatively associated with evaluations of the United States. Citizens from countries with large populations of Muslims are slightly more likely to venture negative evaluations of America's influence on their country.[20] This result confirms previous studies based on the Pew survey and supports the hypothesis that societies with large populations of Muslims are likely to demonstrate more critical attitudes toward the United States.

For the country-level controls of economic development and military alliances, only the former proved to be statistically significant (Model 1 only). Societies with lower levels of economic development offered more negative assessments concerning the influence of the United States. Military alliances with Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines did not have any effect on mass opinions.

At the individual level, contact with foreign countries is positively related to evaluations of American influence, meaning the more the contact, the more likely respondents rate American influence in favorable terms. This result is consistent with the hypothesized relationship and parallels results in other studies. We also checked whether there are any salient interaction effects between contact and our country-level measures. We uncovered a statistically significant and positive relationship between contact and aid, although this result is subject to the same caveat concerning Afghanistan.

All of the individual-level controls demonstrate statistically significant effects. The measure for standard of living is positively correlated with

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20 We also compared Muslim respondents with other religious affiliations at the individual level. In general, Muslim respondents were more likely than other denominations to offer more critical opinions toward the United States. When Muslims are compared against other denominations in the multilevel model, the effect is statistically significant and negative.
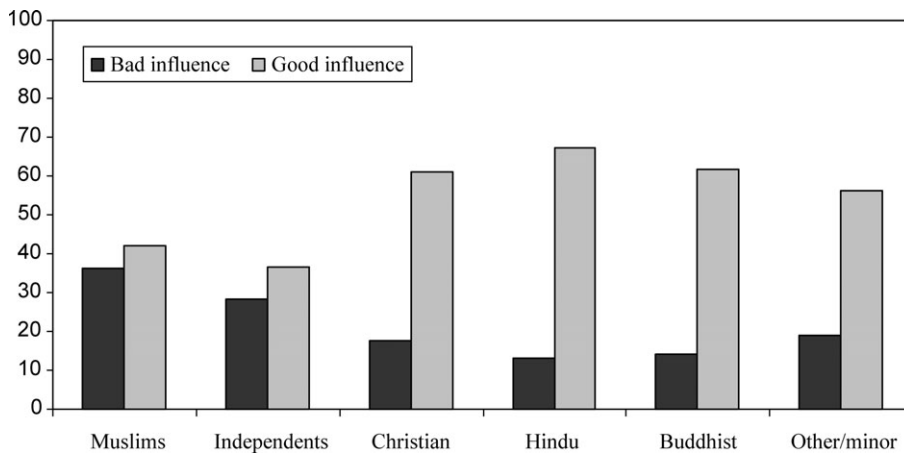
Figure 1 Views of American influence by religion. *Source*: ABS 2005–07. 'Don't know' responses are excluded.

perceptions of the United States, suggesting that respondents who rate their standard of living as high are more likely to see American influence on their country in positive terms. Education is negatively associated with perceptions, meaning that the more the education, the more critically citizens view the United States. A significant effect was hypothesized for education, although a positive or negative impact was not specified. Female respondents are more likely to hold a more positive view than male respondents. Finally, older respondents are more critical of American influence than younger respondents.

Model 2 tests the impact of religion by coding religious affiliation at the individual level. Using ABS, we coded respondents into six major groups: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Other, and Independents (no affiliation). Model 2 compares the effect of Muslim respondents against all of the other categories. In terms of perceptions of American influence, there is a strong and statistically negative effect. We also compared the effects for all affiliations against Christian respondents, which confirmed the same strong negative effect for Muslims and no statistically significant effects for the other groups. Figure 1 captures percentage of respondents from each group who thought that American influence on their country was good and bad. Approximately 36.3% of Muslims felt that America had a bad influence (which was the highest in ABS), whereas 41.9% felt that it was good. With the exception of religious independents, less than 20% of all of the other groups expressed negative opinions.

The results of our analysis capture several important determinants of opinions concerning the influence of the United States. At the country level, the significant factors are the level of aid, the percentage of the Muslim

population, and the level of economic development. At the individual level, increased contact with foreign countries as well as the remaining controls for standard of living, education, gender, and age all proved to exert some impact on assessments of American influence.

7 Conclusion

We began this article by discussing the increasing interest in and concern about anti-Americanism. This is an issue that has grown substantially in relevance in both the scholarly and political communities. The first conclusion of the article, however, is that the political significance of anti-Americanism in Asia is overstated. When the United States is compared against the averages of other countries in ABS, it ranks among the top three countries along with Japan and China that have a positive influence. At the same time, the United States is rated second to Pakistan as having the largest proportion of respondents that perceive American influence to be negative. With 53% viewing American influence as positive and only 23% as negative, the overall balance clearly favors the positive view.

Indeed, when perceptions toward American influence were examined across all 26 of the surveyed countries, there were only 6 where the proportion of negative views outnumbered the positive: Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, and China. In all cases, the percentage of negative responses ranged from a low of 41% in Uzbekistan to 52% in Malaysia. Only in Malaysia did the negatives barely surpass a majority of respondents. Whether this is a concern or not may also hinge on perspective. The former ambassador to Malaysia, for example, remarked in 1999 that 'you simply do not encounter the overt anti-Americanism in Malaysia that one would assume to be endemic from the overblown rhetoric'.[21] Or in the case of Uzbekistan, Tom Bissell, a travel writer, explained that he never really experienced much anti-Americanism at all except for the time he was asked why Ronald Reagan wanted to start World War III.[22]

Our second conclusion is that we find a rather strong consistency with prior research regarding which factors drive individual perceptions of American influence. We tested three major theoretical strands—interest, cultural and political similarities, and information and contacts—using a multilevel model that allowed us to consider the impact of both macro and micro-level factors. At the country level, we confirmed significant effects for one of our measures

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21 Pascoe, L. (1999) 'Malaysia and the United States: a view from the ground', speech given to the Asia Society, Washington Center, 20 October 1999; http://www.asiasociety.org/speeches/pascoe. html (accessed on 10 March 2008).

22 'Interview with Tom Bissell'; http://www.absolutewrite.com/novels/tom_bissell.htm (accessed on 10 March 2008).

of interest, aid, but no discernible impact for our second measure of trade. However, the effect of aid appeared to be strongly influenced by the inclusion of Afghanistan in our model; the effect disappears when Afghanistan is no longer included. This does not necessarily mean that *interest* does not matter but rather that its effects on public opinion may be difficult to measure or that its effects on public opinion may be much more indirect than is assumed.

In terms of cultural and political similarities, we uncovered no effect for the level of democracy, some effect for the level of economic development, and a strong impact for religious tradition (as measured by the percentage of the Muslim population). A negative association between the percentage of Muslims in a country and perceptions of American influence is confirmed in Asia, although some caution is required because the causes of anti-Americanism are not easily disentangled. In the case of Pakistan, for example, anti-American sentiment is likely bundled up with an entire host of other societal issues. As Cohen (2005, p. 4) notes, 'anti-Americanism is endemic, the economy remains problematic, and the political system is incoherent and incompletely institutionalized'.

Moreover, measures of religious denomination are not easily disentangled from the effects of specific political events, U.S. foreign policy, or the varied ways that people process ideas about America. As Bowen (2007) argues, of all of the Muslim countries studied at different time points by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, Indonesian survey responses have experienced the most dramatic shifts in attitudes toward the United States both prior to and after the U.S. invasion of Iraq as well as the 2004 tsunami and the 2005 U.S. aid effort, which suggests that anti-American Muslim sentiment in Indonesia may be quite different from the experience of other Muslim countries. By focusing on the role played by 'schema'—sets of representations that process information and guide action—he argues that the dramatic shifts suggest that anti-American Muslim sentiment is not well formed or consistently followed by the majority of citizens.

At the individual level, the results confirmed the importance of increased contact, and the controls for standard of living, education, gender, and age all proved to exert some impact on assessments of American influence. Increased contact in terms of having a family member who lives abroad, previous foreign travel, or communication with people in other countries via the Internet or email is positively correlated with perceptions of American influence. In addition, individuals from non-Islamic and aid-dependent states who have many overseas contacts are more likely to perceive American influence in a positive light. Certainly, one might argue that increased contact will improve international perceptions of the United States. But there is also the strong likelihood that increased foreign contact may improve the perceptions of other countries as well.

Overall, our analysis of ABS uncovered little evidence of anti-Americanism in Asia. As our conclusions are largely derived from a single-item survey question pertaining to American influence, it is important that future research endeavors compare these results using a variety of other questions and time periods. This will be useful to better distinguish not only between opinions of what America *is* and opinions of what America *does*, but also to determine the extent that perceptions of America are stable across time.

Acknowledgements

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