

The Domestic Political Consequences of Global Economic Expansion in Rising Powers: Evidence from Survey Experiments in China

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China's Global Economic Rise

- Historically, rising/great powers seek a greater role in the international economy
- China is no exception
 - Flagship Belt and Road Initiative
 - Broad support for Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
 - Greatly expanded foreign financial assistance – including vaccine aid during pandemic

Research Question

How does China's rising global economic presence affect mass public support for the Chinese Communist Party?

Main Hypotheses

- *H1*: Information suggesting that the country has successfully expanded its influence in the global economy increases public support for the central government.
- *H2*: Information suggesting that the country has failed in its efforts to expand its influence in the global economy reduces public support for the central government.

Causal Mechanisms

Two potential causal pathways:

- *Economic channel*: Global economic expansion → citizen optimism about future economic prospects → government support
- *Identity/status channel*: Global economic expansion → national pride → government support

Research Design

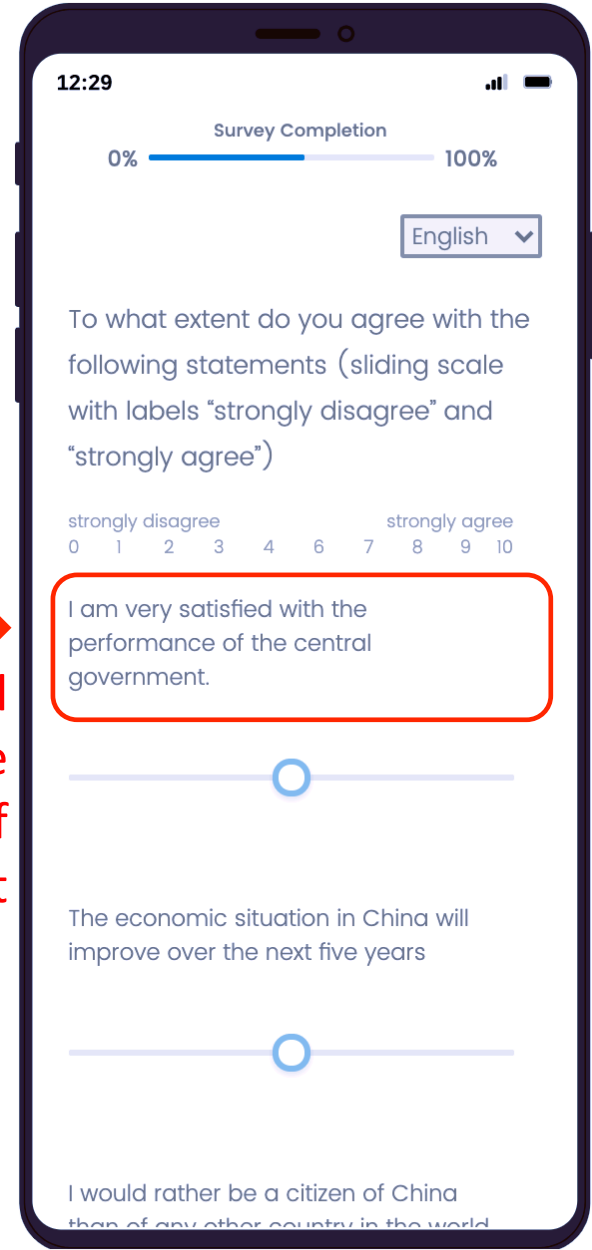
- Three survey experiments in China from 2019-2021
 - Belt and Road initiative (BRI)
 - Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
 - Vaccine aid
- Similar design in each experiment
 - Successful expansion treatment
 - Failed expansion treatment
 - Should government continue expansion in this issue area? (Distractor question)
 - Next page of survey: Satisfaction with the central government (Real outcome of interest)

Research Design



←
Distractor
Question

→
Real
Outcome
of
Interest



Research Design

	Control Group	Successful Expansion	Failed Expansion
BRI (Apr. 2019)	In 2013, the Chinese government launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Do you agree that the government should continue to support BRI?		

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Research Design

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BRI (Apr. 2019)	<p>In 2013, the Chinese government launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Do you agree that the government should continue to support BRI?</p>	<p>In 2013, the Chinese government launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since its launch, it has attracted global attention and 152 countries have joined. BRI projects have led to the successful building of dams, ports, and railways in these countries and increased connectivity among participants. Do you agree that the government should continue to support BRI?</p>	<p>In 2013, the Chinese government launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to build dams, ports, and railways in participating countries. Some prominent countries have decided to stay out of the BRI while others that initially joined subsequently decided to cancel their BRI projects. Do you agree that the government should continue to support BRI?</p>

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AIB (Jul. 2019)	<p>In 2014, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which supports the building of infrastructure throughout Asia. Do you agree that the government should continue to support the AIB?</p>		

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AIB (Jul. 2019)	<p>In 2014, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which supports the building of infrastructure throughout Asia. Do you agree that the government should continue to support the AIB?</p>	<p>In 2014, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which supports the building of infrastructure throughout Asia. The AIB has attracted global praise and over 70 countries have joined it. The number of projects financed by AIB has grown rapidly, with more than 40 financed in over a dozen countries. Do you agree that the government should continue to support the AIB?</p>	

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AIB (Jul. 2019)	<p>In 2014, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which supports the building of infrastructure throughout Asia. Do you agree that the government should continue to support the AIB?</p>	<p>In 2014, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which supports the building of infrastructure throughout Asia. The AIB has attracted global praise and over 70 countries have joined it. The number of projects financed by AIB has grown rapidly, with more than 40 financed in over a dozen countries. Do you agree that the government should continue to support the AIB?</p>	<p>In 2014, the Chinese government launched the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank, which supports the building of infrastructure throughout Asia. The AIB has drawn international criticism and several influential foreign countries have declined to join it. The number of projects financed by the AIB is far below what was initially expected. Do you agree that the government should continue to support the AIB?</p>

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Vaccine Aid (Apr. 2021)	The Chinese government has been offering Chinese-made vaccines as aid to other countries. Do you agree that China should continue providing vaccine aid to other countries?		

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Vaccine Aid (Apr. 2021)	The Chinese government has been offering Chinese-made vaccines as aid to other countries. Do you agree that China should continue providing vaccine aid to other countries?	The Chinese government has been offering Chinese-made vaccines as aid to other countries. China's vaccine trials have met international standards and have efficacy levels that meet the World Health Organization's effectiveness criteria. The vaccines are in high demand and so far 53 developing countries are receiving vaccine aid. Do you agree that China should continue providing vaccine aid to other countries?	

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Vaccine Aid (Apr. 2021)	<p>The Chinese government has been offering Chinese-made vaccines as aid to other countries. Do you agree that China should continue providing vaccine aid to other countries?</p>	<p>The Chinese government has been offering Chinese-made vaccines as aid to other countries. China's vaccine trials have met international standards and have efficacy levels that meet the World Health Organization's effectiveness criteria. The vaccines are in high demand and so far 53 developing countries are receiving vaccine aid. Do you agree that China should continue providing vaccine aid to other countries?</p>	<p>The Chinese government has been offering Chinese-made vaccines as aid to other countries. However, detailed information about the vaccine trials has been lacking. Surveys show that this has reduced confidence in recipient countries that these vaccines are effective. Do you agree that China should continue providing vaccine aid to other countries?</p>

Results (I): Support for Global Economic Expansion

	BRI		AIIB		Vaccine Aid	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Successful Expansion	0.22*** [0.08]	0.11 [0.09]	-0.04 [0.09]	-0.06 [0.09]	0.18* [0.09]	0.19** [0.09]
Failed Expansion	-0.67*** [0.08]	-0.68*** [0.09]	-0.68*** [0.09]	-0.70*** [0.09]	-0.71*** [0.09]	-0.72*** [0.09]
Constant	8.64*** [0.06]	7.94*** [0.22]	7.26*** [0.06]	7.78*** [0.21]	7.61*** [0.07]	7.08*** [0.22]
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
N	2,774	2,148	3,144	3,144	2,706	2,683

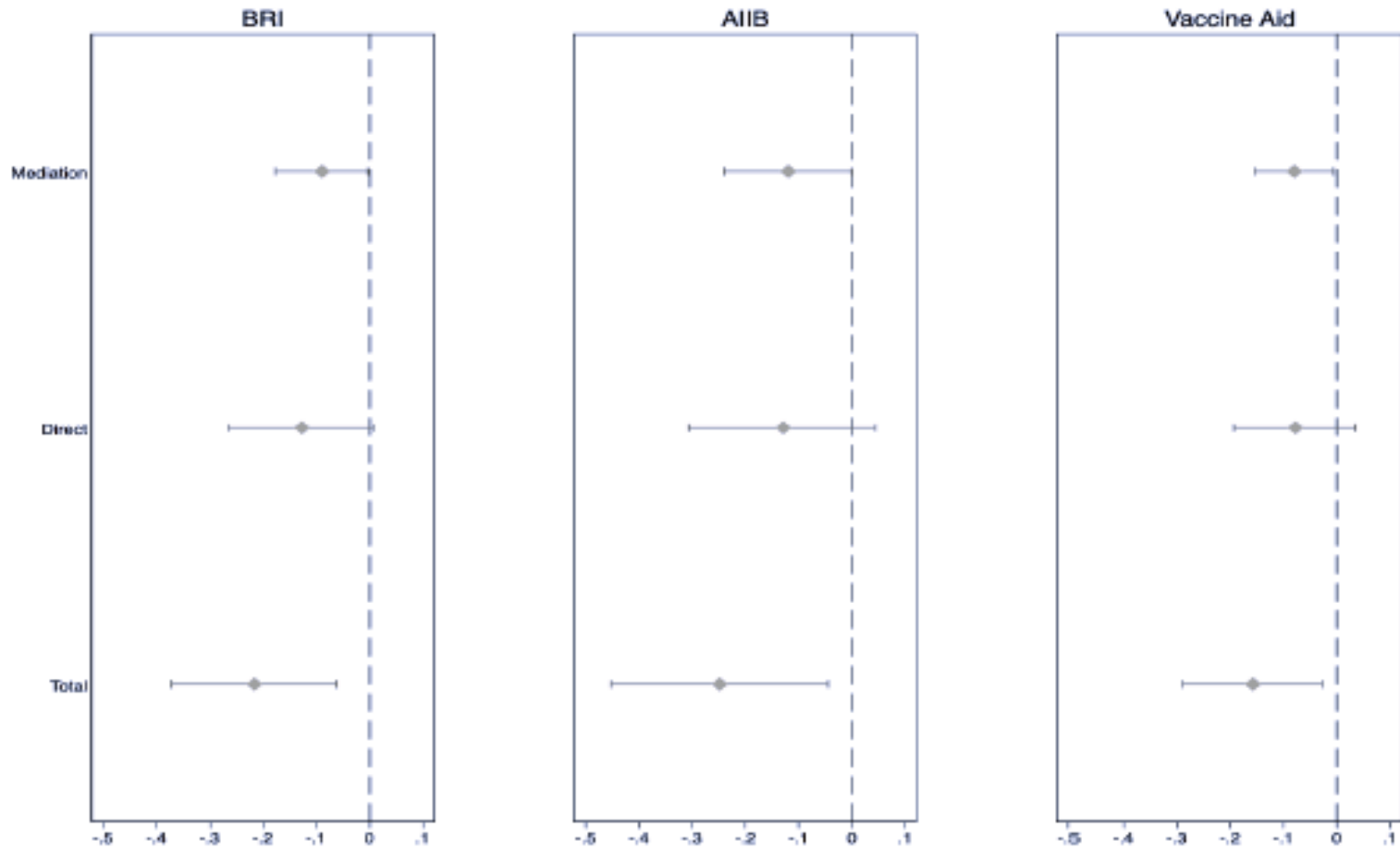
Note: Cell entries are OLS estimates of average treatment effects, with standard errors in brackets.
 * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Controls are age, education, income, CCP membership, hukou status, and gender.

Results (II): Support for Central Government

	BRI		AIIB		Vaccine Aid	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Successful Expansion	0.02 [0.08]	-0.08 [0.09]	-0.08 [0.09]	-0.11 [0.09]	-0.12 [0.08]	-0.11 [0.08]
Failed Expansion	-0.24*** [0.08]	-0.22** [0.09]	-0.16* [0.09]	-0.17* [0.09]	-0.16** [0.08]	-0.16** [0.08]
Constant	8.05*** [0.06]	8.33*** [0.22]	7.69*** [0.06]	7.76*** [0.20]	8.50*** [0.06]	8.49*** [0.18]
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
N	2,773	2,148	3,138	3,138	2,920	2,899

Note: Cell entries are OLS estimates of average treatment effects, with standard errors in brackets.
 * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Controls are age, education, income, CCP membership, hukou status, and gender.

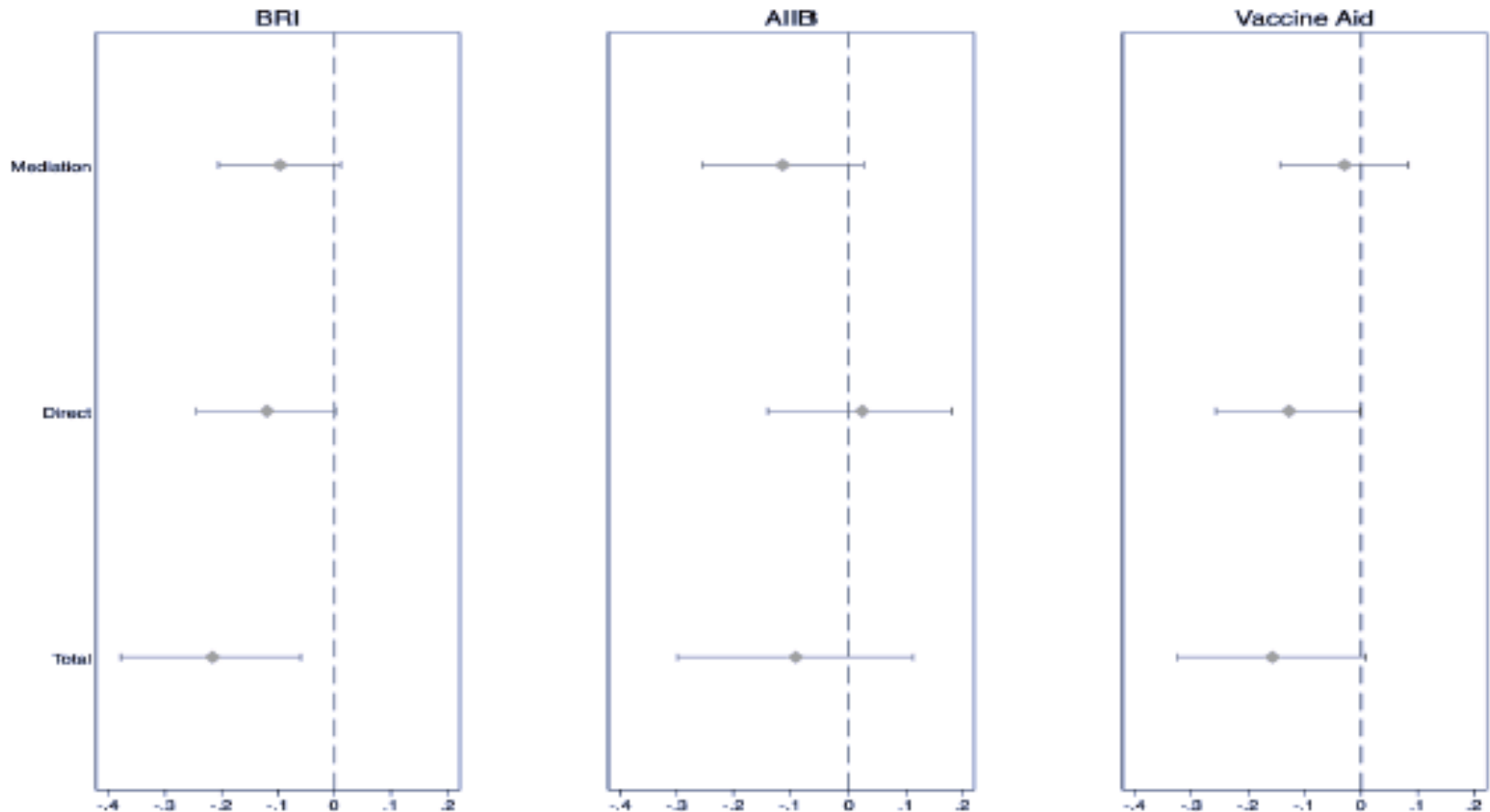
Results (III): National Identity Mechanism



Note: Figure displays the point estimates of the average causal mediation effect of national pride together with the direct and total effects for the failed expansion treatment, with 95% confidence intervals.

Estimation is based on Hicks and Tingley (2011).

Results (IV): Economic Evaluation Mechanism



Note: Figure displays the point estimates of the average causal mediation effect of personal economic evaluations together with the direct and total effects for the failed expansion treatment, with 95% confidence intervals. Estimation is based on Hicks and Tingley (2011).

Summary of Findings

- Evidence that external economic initiatives influence domestic political support
 - Failed attempts at expansion can erode citizen support for the central government
- Evidence for national identity channel linking global economic expansion and gov't support
- Consistent results across experiments in three issue areas, fielded at different times

Contributions

- Domestic effects of Chinese economic statecraft: failure risks a decline in popularity
- Chinese “performance legitimacy” extends beyond border to external economic initiatives
- International economic outcomes influence support for incumbent parties in authoritarian regimes