

Are US leaders tough on China? One study points to a partisan divide.

A newly published academic paper argues that Republican lawmakers use stronger anti-China rhetoric than their Democrat counterparts.

Another study found that DEI officers in higher education are generally sympathetic to China.

Alexa Schwerha

February 28, 2022 10:01 AM

A newly published academic paper argues that Republican lawmakers use stronger anti-China rhetoric than their Democrat counterparts.

"The partisan divide in U.S. congressional communications after the China shock," penned by academic professors John Kuk, Deborah Seligsohn, and Jiakun Jack Zhang, was **published** on Jan. 11 in *Economics & Politics*.

According to the Cato Institute, "China shock" refers to the heavy **impact** that increased trade with China had on American jobs and trade dependency largely between 1999 and 2011. During this time, approximately 2.4 million U.S. jobs were outsourced due to globalized imports.

The political science professors from the University of Oklahoma, Villanova University, and the University of Kansas, respectively, use Congressional representatives' press releases to support their claim about the partisan divide.

The authors argue that recently used communication strategies link the impact of the China shock to the decrease of American manufacturing and the eventual ascent of Donald Trump to the Presidency in 2016.

"Using press release data from members of Congress, we show that, even though Chinese import competition impacted both Republican- and Democrat-held districts, Republican politicians in adversely affected districts responded by increasing their anti-China rhetoric, while there was no similar difference among Democrats," the article states.

In doing so, the authors suggest that Republican lawmakers were successful in blaming the negative impact of the exportation to voters on China during the Bush and Obama administrations while continuing to support trade liberalization.

"What differentiated Republican legislators compared to their Democrat peers is that they faced cross-cutting pressures to support trade liberalization- and oppose trade remedies- so they had to put more emphasis on China's 'bad behavior' to explain the trade shock," Zhang argued in an interview with *KU Today*.

Zhang also explained that lawmakers often stoop to "scapegoat" China rather than focus on communicating the need to rebuild American competitiveness.

The research is consistent with the increased politicized response to US-China relations in the court of public opinion. In December, the Heritage Foundation published an intensive study of how China was perceived on college campuses- specifically among Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion officers.

Of the analyzed tweets, Heritage found that 96% were critical of the Jewish state while 62% noted public approval of China.

Examples of the positive reinforcement peddled by American academics centered around modern-day social issues, praising China for its handling of COVID-19, acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community, and efforts to improve the lives of poverty-stricken citizens of Tibet.

One Center for Multicultural Affairs staff member accused anti-China rhetoric of increasing Asian hate crimes in the United States, according to the Heritage report.

"[W]hen are people going to realize that anti China [sic] propaganda [sic] directly correlates with a rise in hate crimes against Asians," the staffer tweeted.

Campus Reform reached out to the authors of the article for comment. This article will be updated accordingly.