

## **COVID-19, Hong Kong, and Americans' Attitude Toward China**

### **Abstract**

Americans' views of China reached a historical low since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. To better understand the sources of change, we performed an experiment in which nationally representative adults were randomly assigned to read a balanced but positive leaning message about China's response to COVID-19 relative to the United States, a negative message about civil liberties in Hong Kong, or no message at all. Results show that priming China's response to COVID-19 has no significant impact, but priming China's suppressive policy change in Hong Kong policy led to a significantly more negative response compared to both the control group and to the same respondent's rating of China six months earlier. The Hong Kong treatment effect was more pronounced among Democrats than among Republicans and among people who previously had a positive view of China than among those who already had a negative view. The study highlights the importance of values for public opinion about international events.