

Are the Rising Anti-China Sentiments Across the Globe Populist? Assessing an Established Case—Hong Kong Localism

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Abstract

Anti-China sentiments have been sharply rising across the globe in the past decade. Although concepts such as the “Thucydides Trap” and “China threat” are often used to interpret them, “anti-China populism” becomes an increasingly adopted interpretation. Nonetheless, current discussions of anti-China populism are cursory; they have not empirically substantiated that anti-China sentiments are populist. They also pay little attention to formal theoretical definitions of populism. This study helps fill the research gap by evaluating whether populism is an empirically tenable interpretation of anti-China sentiments. This evaluation is operationalized based on current populism theories and studies on “measuring populism.” This study’s empirical case is one of the earliest instances of anti-China sentiments: Hong Kong localism. The main dataset is composed of multiple rounds of in-depth interviews with 23 main informants. The supplementary dataset contains a variety of documentary sources that reflect the political stance of Hong Kong localists.

This study’s objective is to empirically evaluate an emerging interpretation of anti-China sentiments across the globe: “anti-China populism.” More specifically, it seeks to find out whether populism is an empirically tenable interpretation of anti-China sentiments. It carries out this

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