

**An Asian Barometer Survey Conference on
How East Asians View the Rise of China**

**Panel II What Shapes the Popular Perception of China's
Rise?**

[Paper 4]

**How Do Contextual Factors Explain the Perception of China's Rise:
The Sway of Geo-politics, Economic Interdependence and Cultural
Identity**

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How Do Contextual Factors Explain the Perception of China's Rise: The Sway of Geo-politics, Economic Interdependence and Cultural Identity

Introduction

Over the recent decade, Chinese policy elite has increasingly recognized that for a rising power like China soft power and national image management are essential aspects of its foreign agenda. On May 28 of 2004, during a carefully orchestrated collective learning session, the concept of “soft power” — ability to produce outcomes through persuasion and attraction rather than coercion or payment — and its relationship to the development the country’s social sciences and philosophy was for the first time introduced and elaborated in front of all members of the CCP’s Politburo.¹ In 2007, Hu Jintao in his official address told the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party that China needed to enhance “the soft power of its culture.”²

Since then Chinese government has invested billions of dollars to cultivate and upgrade its soft power resources. It has created several hundred Confucius Institutes around the world to teach its language and culture. Beijing also invested billions in external publicity work, including a 24-hour Xinhua cable news channel designed to imitate Al Jazeera, and in transforming national media giants into global players that rival Times Warner, Bloomberg and Viacom. The elaborately staged 2008 Beijing Olympics, the 2010 Shanghai Expo and the annual event of Boao Forum are all aimed at enhancing China’s image and reputation.³

There is also a growing awareness among China’s foreign policy circle that soft power can help make China’s rise palatable to the world. In order to help China to win friends and allies, the country has to create and enhance understanding, respect and ultimately support for its political model and foreign policy agenda. Projecting soft power has been put firmly on China’s foreign policy agenda, especially its agenda for East Asia. In 2007, Zhao Qizheng, the former head of China’s State Council Information Office and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), formally introduced public diplomacy to China.⁴ Since then an official public diplomacy website along with a CPPCC-sponsored journal on public diplomacy were launched.

Some China watchers have dubbed China’s recent effort to prop up its public diplomacy and enhance its soft power as “charm offensives”. But they oftentimes raised doubt about to what extent China’s diplomatic efforts and publicity programs have been effective.⁵ China’s effort to upgrade its image in East Asia has been in part qualified by the perennial territorial disputes in the South China Sea as well as East China Sea and weakened by negative reaction of its Southeast Asian neighbors to

¹ <http://big5.china.com.cn/chinese/2004/Jun/585277.htm>

² http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/15/content_6883748.htm

³ Ingrid d’Hooghe, “The Limits of China’s Soft Power in Europe,” in Jan Melissen and Sook Jong Lee eds, *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy, 2009)

⁴ http://www.china.org.cn/china/NPC_CPPCC_2012/2012-03/05/content_24811109.htm

⁵ For example, Ian Storey, “China’s ‘Charm Offensive’ Loses Momentum in Southeast Asia,” China Brief, Volume 10 Issue No. 9.

Chinese dam-building activities along the upper stretches of the Mekong River and worries of its northeast Asian neighbors to its complacency toward North Korea and Burma. Most Asian neighbors also raised their concern over the rapid build-up the PLA's arsenal and its power-projecting capability. While Chinese leaders always try to reassure Asian governments that Beijing's intentions are benign, East Asians neighbors do not necessarily take these reassurances at face value.

There is little about, however, there has been growing interest among ordinary citizens throughout the region in developments in China. China-related topics top Asian agendas and fill television programs and newspaper pages. Government officials, business leaders, scholars and journalists are discussing the challenges and opportunities that their countries face with a rising China. An increasing number of Asians are learning Chinese in school and Chinese cultural festivals and trade shows are attracting large number of visitors. The official launch of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) in 2010 further heightened the role of China as the rising principal architect of Asian regionalism. Even before the arrival of ACFTA, China had emerged as the most important trading partner for virtually all East Asian countries and the spending power of China's tourists surpassed that of Japan by a wide margin. There's also an investment boom of sorts in progress. Data shows accumulative bilateral investment between China and ASEAN reached 74 billion U.S. dollars by the end of 2010, with China's direct investment in ASEAN exceeding 10 billion U.S. dollars. In particular, China suddenly emerged as the buyer of the last resort after the 2008-09 sub-prime loans crisis and the ensuing global financial crisis.

It comes no surprise that in all East Asian countries, most people, even those who are less well-educated and not always attentive to foreign affairs, have certain opinions about China. These opinions are oftentimes ambivalent and sometimes negative when it comes to the political and economic implications of China's rise. This means China's growing economic influence and international stature might not be readily translated into greater soft power. While Asian people have increasingly been reckoned with the China's political and economic might, they are not necessarily persuaded by its stated foreign policy objectives and strategic intention, and much less attracted by its political system, culture, and way of life, ultimate sources of soft power according to Joseph Nye.⁶

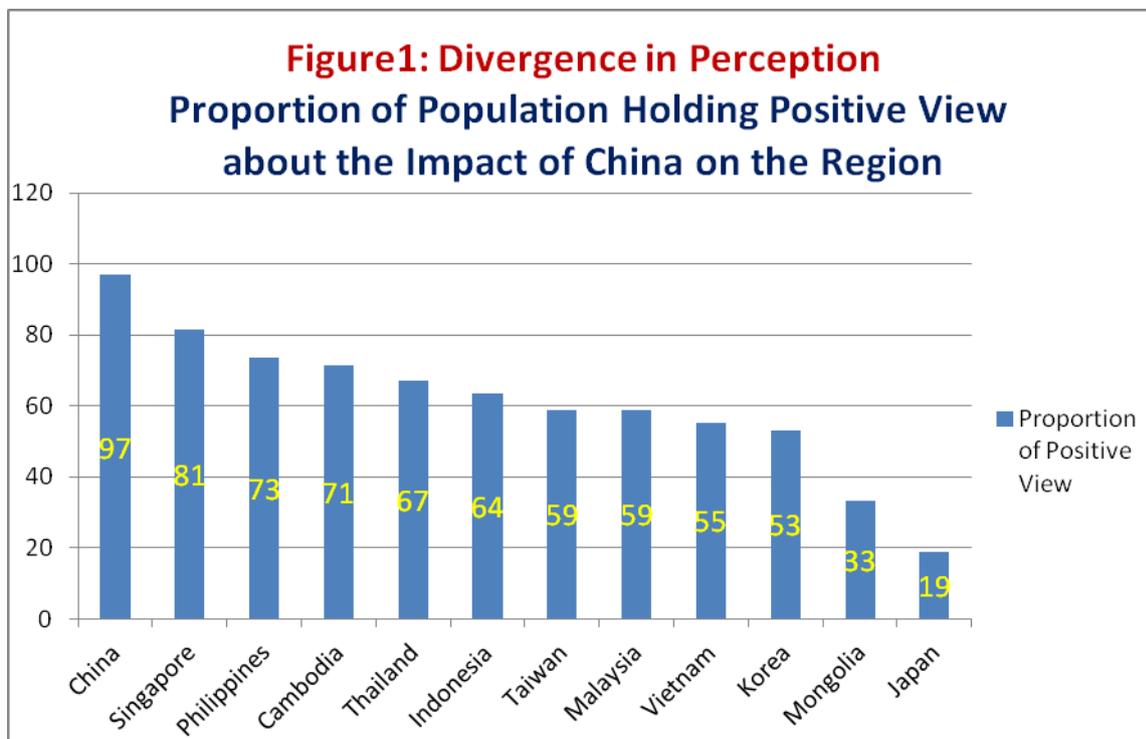
This paper, as part of a collective effort to identify the explanatory sources of Asians' perception about China's rise, looks at the story at the receivers' side as Nye correctly pointed out that soft power depends on willing interpreters and receivers.⁷ It is designed to decipher the relative importance of individual-level explanatory variables such as socio-economic background, cognitive sophistication, and ideology and political values vis-à-vis that of the country-level structural variables such as security relationship, geographic and cultural proximity, and economic interdependence. The latter is to be shown as important as the former in explaining variation in popular perceptions especially across countries. These structural factors do not shape people's perception directly in a strict causal sense. However they constrain and shape the interpretive frameworks that are routinely utilized and employed by national political elite, opinion leaders and mass media, i.e., the interpreters, to socialize and mobilize the local people.

⁶ Joseph Nye Jr., "Why China Is Weak on Soft Power," *New York Times*, January 17, 2012

⁷ Joseph Nye Jr. *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politic*, (PublicAffairs, 2005): page 120.

Why Do Contextual Factors Matter to Divergence in Perception of China?

The Asian Barometer Survey Wave III provides us with a simple index of proportion of the population holding positive view about the impact of China on the region. We asked all respondents a set of question that taps into respondent's evaluation about the impact of China on the region, regardless of whether they think China as the most influential country in the region or not. In Figure 1 we report the proportion of the population in each of the twelve countries that hold a positive view about the impact of China on the region. The most glaring finding is the magnitude of divergence across countries. The proportion is the smallest in Japan and the highest among the Chinese themselves. Leaving China aside, the highest proportion is observed in Singapore with 81% of the population holding positive view. This proportion is more than four times as many as that of Japan. So the most obvious question is what explains this great divergence across countries. There must be some country-level attributes that foster an overwhelmingly positive perception among Singaporeans on the one hand and a predominantly negative perception among Japanese on the other.



International relation theories provide many usual suspects of what these country-level attributes might be. The realist paradigm which does not give public opinion much a role in its theoretical formulation would nevertheless suggest that the public opinion toward a foreign country is the epiphenomena of the prevailing bilateral security relationship as dictated by the structure of a given international system as well as a given country's position in that system. The liberal paradigm which is more society-centered than state-centered and anchor its analysis more on materialist interests than non-materialist interests would place its emphasis on the intensity of bilateral trade and investment and other mechanisms of economic exchange and cooperation that over the long run have the effect on reducing animosity

and fostering amity between two countries. Neo-liberal institutionalism would identify the socializing effect of mutual engagement and involvement in bilateral and multilateral cooperative mechanism and institution-building. Countries that are enmeshed in a web of bilateral engagements and overlapping membership in multilateral institutions are more likely to view each other as friends and partners. Last but not the least, by claiming that significant aspects of international relations are historically and socially contingent, rather than inevitable consequences of human nature or other essential characteristics of world politics, the social constructivist paradigm would call our attention to the importance of culture and identity. Countries that share the same cultural legacy and core values are more likely to perceive each other as friends rather than foes.

From a methodological point-of-view, however, it is intrinsically difficult to establish the causal relationship between those plausible country-level explanatory variables on the one hand and divergence in perception among countries on the other because we are condemned with the Small N dilemma. We simply have too many plausible explanatory variables than number of country cases. What we intend to do in this paper is a modest exploratory exercise trying to combine some plausible country-level attributes with individual-level explanatory variables, such as subjective economic satisfaction, attitudes toward economic openness, evaluation of China's democratic status, and authoritarian values, in a hierarchical model. These country-level contextual variables include trade dependence, volume of tourism, membership of ASEAN plus One FTA, frequency of higher-level mutual visit, Confucian culture, and level of democratic development. The first two variables correspond to the expectation of the liberal paradigm, the third and fourth the neo-liberal institutionalist paradigm and the last two the social constructivist paradigm. Now we turn to more details on model specification.

Research Design

This paper intends to explain how contextual factors explain the perception of China's rise. The dependent variable, perception of China's rise, comprises three different aspects: whether China has risen now, how people evaluate China's rise if they do think so, and how people think of China's image regardless of whether China as risen or not. In Asian Barometer wave three, the questions corresponding to three aspects includes Q156 "which country has the most influence in Asia," Q157 "does (answer in Q156) do more good or harm to the region," and Q157a "does China do more good or harm to the region" for those whose answer in Q156 is not China. These three questions are part of the China's Image battery jointly-designed by Asian Barometer Survey and the team of the National Image Project in the Institute of Arts and Humanities at the Shanghai Jiao-Tong University. The National Project was a joint project of Shanghai Jiao-Tong University and Duke University initiated by Liu Kang, Tianjiang Shi, and John Aldrich in 2009. By conducting cross-national surveys, the National Image Project in the first stage provides 37 probabilistic country samples to evaluate how people perceive and understand the rise of China. In collaboration with Asian Barometer, Afrobarometer, and Americas Barometer (Vanderbilt), the National Image Project is capable to employ a battery of seven related questions (Q156 to Q161) for large-scale surveys. Until October 2012, the National Image Project has finished 12 Asian country surveys, including Japan, Korea, China, Mongolia, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia,

and Malaysia. More samples will be completed in 2013-2014 in African and Latin American countries.

We recode each of the three dependent variables into a binary choice. For the first item, the answer after being recoded can be viewed as whether the respondent thinks that China has the most influence in Asia. The second item can be understood as whether China will do more good or harm to the region if you do think China has the most influence. The third item combine the answer from the second item and can be understood as regardless whether you think China has the most influence, do you think China will do more good or harm to the region.

Regarding the individual-level independent variables, we include four major explanatory variables: subjective economic satisfaction, attitudes toward economic openness, evaluation of China's democratic status, and authoritarian values, and three demographic control variables: education, gender, and age. The former two major variables are associated with the economic aspect of China's rise because the U.S. domestic discourse clearly blame for China's unfair trade that hurts American economy. The latter two are political related variables that tap into the undemocratic feature of China's political system and the value system of Chinese people. Two economic items are measured with a four-point Likert scale. Evaluation of Chinese development status is measure with a ten-point Likert scale. Authoritarian values are measured by the average of the responses to the eleven value questions, and each is also measured with a four-point Likert scale. Table A1 in the appendix presents the variable information.

For the macro-level analysis, we include ten explanatory variables: trade, tourism, higher visit, Confucian culture, membership of ASEAN plus One FTA, democraticness, and the means of four individual-level explanatory variables. These first six macro variables tap into economic, social, diplomatic, cultural, alliance, and institutional aspect of international politics. Regarding the operationization, trade is measured by the percentage of bilateral imports and exports with China to the overall amount of international trade for each country. Tourism is measured the percentage of the tourist numbers (outbound and inbound combined) to the overall population of each country. Higher visit is measured by frequency of the official meetings with Chinese top leaders. Considering that such a meeting is more frequent if there is government turnover, we divide the number of the meetings by the number of government turnover. Confucian culture and ACFTA members are both group dummy varies. The former includes Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, Singapore, and Vietnam,⁸ and the latter includes Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Malaysia. The democraticness is measure by the polity score of the POLITY IV project. The means of the four variables are included to see how these individual-level variables could possibly shape a context that influences the dependent variable via cross-level mechanisms. Interested reader can consult Table A2 in the appendix for further information.

We apply logistic regression and Hierarchical Nonlinear Modeling for the individual-level and country-level analysis. In the individual analysis, we separate the overall sample into China and others, and adding country dummies to the regression model for the others sample. Instead of presenting an intercept coefficient, we transform the coefficients of the intercept and country dummies into a probability measure by fixing the data to a baseline profile: 40 years-old male respondent with the

⁸ Only 11 countries are included in the macro-level analysis since all the macro variables are bilateral to China in nature, so China is excluded.

college education who thinks his income covers the needs all right without much difficulty, disagrees with the statement that foreign goods should be restricted or foreign goods are hurting the local economy, evaluates Chinese political status as 6 in a one-to-ten scale, and on average agrees with the authoritarian values. In order to compare the relative explanatory, we present standardized coefficients for the explanatory as well as demographic control variables.

For hierarchical nonlinear modeling, we fix the individual-level model at the same baseline profile and apply a macro-level variable each time. For presentation of the result, we first present the individual-level coefficients by the ANOVA specification, which is a random coefficient model without adding any macro-level predictor. Then we report the lowest and higher probability measure by converting the regression coefficients of the macro-level variables. If the difference of the probability measures is positive, then the macro-level has a positive contextual effect. The contextual effect is negative if the difference is negative. With regard to the crossover effect that influences an individual-level coefficient, we present the lowest and largest value of the individual-level coefficient when the macro variable ranges from the lowest to highest values. We can tell whether the effect is positive or negative by the sign of the difference.

Empirical Findings

We first discuss the empirical findings from three logistic regressions without specifying macro-level variables. To distinguishing from the different rule of policy sender and receiver, we separate China and the rest of the others without specifying macro-level variables. The results are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, Model I explains why people recognize the rise of China, the findings in China suggest that people who feel economically satisfied, evaluate China more positively in democratic status, possess less authoritarian values, and have a higher level of education are more likely to recognize China's rise. For the subsample of others, we found that attitude of economic openness rather than evaluation of democratic status is positively associated with the recognition of China's rise. In both cases, the strongest predictor is education, followed by the authoritarian values, which suggests the rise of China is a question of factual basis than arbitrary perception since most people can recognize this phenomenon, if their education level is higher or their eyesight is much wider. The non-significance of openness attitude in China could be explained by the fact that China has really been hurt by foreign product in its domestic market. Similarly, the democratic status of China is never a question in the world since rarely people think China as a democracy by any standard. The most remarkable finding, however, is the probability measure of the recognition of China's rise based on country dummies. Among the twelve countries in analysis, we can clearly see the country estimate of probability in the following order: six East Asian countries (average 65.3%, including Vietnam and Singapore), China (46.9%), and five Southeast Asian countries (36.1%). This finding indicates that domestic understanding of China's rise is rather modest and does not like what western and Japanese media describe that self-content and aggressive. On the other hand, the wide margin of probability estimates in six East Asian and five Southeast Asian countries shows at least three possible macro factors: territorial adjacency, cultural contexts, and geopolitical alliance. We will revisit these possible causes later.

Model II investigates how people perceive China's rise if they do recognize it, and we see much divergent result from Model. In the China subsample, only two factors can explain the positive evaluation of China's rise: economic satisfaction and

lower authoritarian values. While they are also significant, these two factors are much weaker in the others subsample. Rather, higher evaluation of China's democratic status and higher openness attitudes are the prime reasons behind the positive thinking of China's rise.

The country estimates of the probability measures also display an ostensible difference. Instead of showing the modest recognition, Chinese people show the overwhelming positive attitude toward their rise (84.1%). Southeast Asians also share the level of positive thinking, the five-country estimate average 82.7%. Regarding Eats Asians, we see some divergent among three groups: (1) Japan 33.5%, (2) Mongolia 60.2% and Vietnam 63.1%, and (3) Korea 75.4%, Taiwan 78.7% and Singapore 86.6%. Apparently, Japanese show very negative view about China's rise. Mongolians and Vietnamese do have positive evaluation, but not as high as others. Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore show a similar level of positive evaluation as China and the five Southeast Asian countries. Again, this macro-level finding deserves further investigation.

Table 1 Logistic Regression of Perception of China's Rise

Covariates	I. Recognize China's Rise		II.Chin's Rise is More Good		III.Overall Positive Image	
	China	Others	China	Others	China	Others
Economic Satisfaction	.062	.028	.134	.048	.073	.049
Openness Attitude	-.004	.024	-.038	.103	-.114	.104
Democratic Evaluation of China	.052	-.009	.061	.153	.280	.159
Authoritarian Values	-.093	-.073	-.152	.078	-.200	.067
Education	.103	.105	.037	.037	.093	.036
Age	.089	.079	-.034	.022	.156	.030
Male	.053	.067	.016	.039	-.231	.033
China	46.9%		84.1%		91.8%	
Japan		58.2%		33.5%		33.8%
Korea		56.9%		75.4%		71.2%
Mongolia		72.9%		60.2%		57.1%
Taiwan		67.9%		78.7%		75.7%
Singapore		62.4%		86.6%		87.4%
Vietnam		73.3%		63.1%		67.8%
Philippines		22.0%		92.0%		84.6%
Thailand		50.8%		68.7%		81.8%
Indonesia		29.6%		79.5%		79.2%
Cambodia		36.1%		89.6%		85.7%
Malaysia		42.2%		83.9%		74.2%
Pseudo R-Squared	.033	.166	0.054	.262	.175	.230
N	2544	11006	1229	5472	2110	10169

Note: Bold-type figures indicate statistical significance.
Program: Mplus 6

Model III combines the answers from those who think China or others as the most influence country in Asia regarding their evaluation about China. The measure is equivalent to an overall assessment of China's image. We applied the same set of covariates in the regression analysis and found somewhat different results, too. As can be seen in Table 1, the strongest predictor in China as well as other countries is better democratic evaluation of China. This suggests, for those who think that China is

democratic enough, regardless where these persons are situated, they will have a better image perception toward China. The second strongest factor, however, is different for China and other countries. In China, authoritarian values are inversely related to perception of China's image, but this factor's influence is weak, and mostly importantly, it is positive associated in the others subsample. Instead, the second largest predictor in other eleven countries is the openness attitude, which suggests that people who agree with free trade and economic openness tend to view China positively. This finding is more consistent to the wide belief that the rapid growth of Chinese economy significantly changes how people view China in the world: for those who believe the fundamental principle of trade liberation, the economic growth of China presents chances of economic development rather than threat. Such positive perception represents that economic thinking is also equally salient to the security concern regarding the rise of China. As to the country probability measures, the result is very similar to what we found in Model II, except the 3.1% drop of Mongolia's measure that makes it further away from Vietnam's number, which goes up by 4.7% and moves toward the level of other East Asian countries.

We report the results of hierarchical nonlinear modeling by distinguishing individual-level, contextual, and crossover effects. As Table 2 shows, our ANOVA analysis indicate that people who have higher of education and lower authoritarian values tends to recognize China's rise. This result matches our previous individual-level analysis, despite the non-significance of other variables (due to the single-digit degree of freedom in multilevel analysis). We do find a contextual effect, which states that people in the countries territorially adjacent or culturally close to China are more likely to recognize the rise of China. For the person with the baseline profile, the probability measure can vary from 33.0% (not belong to the group) to 64.9% (belong to the group). The margin can be as large as nearly 35%. Regarding the crossover effect, we found that democraticness and ASEAN membership have negative effects on democratic evaluation of China and education, respectively. We can interpret the two crossover findings as follow: when the context varies from less democratic to more democratic, the positive relationship between democratic evaluation of China and recognition of China's rise will be reduced to non-significant level; comparing to ASEAN countries, the positive relationship between Education and recognition of China's rise will be stronger. These three factors all contribute to the explanation why Southeast Asian countries have much lower probability measure toward the recognition of China's rise in Model I. First, the contextual effects directly demonstrate this result. Second, some Southeast Asian countries have lower democraticness measures and that will obscure the positive relationship of democratic evaluation and nullify the effect from the relative higher measure of democratic evaluation of China in these countries. Third, similarly, the positive effect of education will be greatly reduced into a non-significant level and thus, unlike in East Asian countries, those who have higher education in these countries are not more likely to recognize China's rise.

Individual-level findings in Model V show that people with more openness attitude, higher democratic evaluation of China, and greater authoritarian values tend to give positive response toward China's rise. Here we do not see any significant contextual effect but a couple crossover effects. As to the non-significant coefficient of economic satisfaction, people in a context where the number of outbound tourists to China is higher tend to give positive evaluation regarding China's rise. This effect makes a lot of sense, particularly for Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, where the tourist numbers are significantly higher than others. Japan, on the other hand, has relatively

fewer outbound tourists in percentage of overall numbers. For the positive coefficient of democratic evaluation of China, we see two crossover effects on this individual variable. Both amplify the original significant relationship when their values are very low. In a context where people generally think China very undemocratic or where authoritarian values are generally very low, such as East Asian countries, people who give lower ratings of China's democratic status tend to give more negative evaluation toward China's rise. Japan is the typical example, in which both contextual variables are the lowest among the eleven countries. We also found that Confucian culture has a cross over effect on education: higher educated people in a Confucian country tend to give positive evaluation of China's rise, but higher educated people in non-Confucian country are prone to give negative evaluation. The democraticness of the context has a crossover effect on age, too: older people in a very democratic country tend to think China's rise positively, but this tendency becomes negative when the contextual varies to a very autocratic environment. While both effects might have some explanatory power, but they are less relevant to what we try to explain about Model II, particularly the outlier case of Japan.

Table 2 Hierarchical Nonlinear Models of Perception of China's Rise

Covariates	IV. Recognition of China's Rise	V. Evaluation of China's Rise	VI. National Image of China
<i>Individual-level effects</i>			
<i>(Crossover effects)</i>			
Economic Satisfaction	.061	.078	.071
Tourists to China		(-.057, .403)	
Openness Attitude	.078	.222	.247
Democratic Evaluation of China	.019	.080	.086
Polity IV	(.119, -.024)		
Mean of Democratic Evaluation of China		(.192, -.005)	
Mean of Authoritarian Values		(.229, .021)	(.189, .043)
Authoritarian Values	-.221	.294	.254
Education	.062	.028	.041
Confucian/Adjacent countries		(-.043, .082)	
ASEAN	(.122, .036)		
Age	.007	.003	.005
Tourists to China			(-.002, .024)
Polity IV		(-.336, .336)	
Male	.207	.131	.122
<i>Contextual Effects</i>			
Baseline Probability			
No contextual factors	50.0%	74.3%	73.8%
Confucian/Adjacent countries	(33.0%, 64.9%)		
N	11006	5472	10169

Note: Bold-type figures indicate statistical significance. Only significant results are presented for contextual and crossover effects.

Program: HLM 6.08

We turn to the explanation of China's national image. In terms of individual-level relationship, we found the same findings as Model V shows for the explanatory variable. Those who have more openness attitude, higher democratic evaluation of China, and greater authoritarian values tend to give better evaluation of China's image.

No contextual effect can be found, but two crossover effects are significant. The first crossover effect also appears in Model V: people in a country where the level of authoritarian views is very low tend to view China very negatively if they do think China very undemocratic. Again, this finding greatly explains why China's image is so negative in Japan since the averaged authoritarian measure is extremely low in Japan, and it is even much lower than the measure of Korea and Taiwan. In addition, the positive crossover effect of tourism on age can be interpreted: in a country where the number of outbound tourists to China is higher, we can find that older people tend to have more positive evaluation of China's image. This finding makes sense easily since a large portion of tourist population is in fact the elder group. But this finding is less relevant to our concern here.

How Contextual Factors Influence the Perception of China's Rise?

What can we learn from the previous analysis on different perceptions of China's rise? We conclude that both micro-level and macro-level explanations are equally important to explain the current perception status for Asian countries. Particularly, most of the effects from variables of both levels are interactive, and thus, a complete explanation requires a clear insight to tease out how contextual factors matter to individual-level relationships in shaping different perceptions of China's rise.

In terms of varying levels of recognition of China's rise, the major difference can be concluded by geographical proximity or cultural similarity. As the result of Model IV clearly shows, the contextual effect along the East Asian and Southeast Asian countries in terms of territorial adjacency or Confucian influence has already the sharp distinction about whether people recognize the rise of China. We believe that the psychological distance is much shorter for those under the contexts which have geographical proximity and cultural affinity. In this sense, East Asian could be more sensitive about the rapid change of the Chinese economic and military development than Southeast Asians. Nevertheless, there might be other reasons for the relative underrating of China's rise in Southeast Asian countries. One of the plausible factors is associated with the competition between U.S. and China to win over the ASEAN country. ASEAN countries on the one hand become more dependent on China economically. On the other hand, they rely on the presence of the United States as a hedging against a rising China. Together with the perception of China's friendly efforts in strengthening economic and political relationships, non-Confucian ASEAN countries could perceive China in a more benign way thus underrate China's achievement in global politics.

The explanation to the different evaluations of China's rise is more complicated. Our finding shows that at least three contextual factors matter. The first is associated the number of outbound tourists to China, by which the mutual understanding can be greatly strengthened. As a matter of fact, we see this factor is associated with the level of economic interdependence. For the countries that fully integrated into the global production chain based on China, such as Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, the tourist numbers also greatly surges for the past several years. When people actually visit China and see what exactly China has achieved, their understanding and perception would be more accurate and closer to the reality. In this regard, despite the fact that the risk of security threat still exists, Koreans and Taiwanese are now more comfortable with their economic interdependence with China since they do not feel antagonistic intention, and more importantly, they benefit from this economic partnership. The second factor is the societal understanding of China's democratic status. When people in a society where most people regard China as very autocratic,

the greater chance is that most people have very negative perception of the Chinese regime, and therefore, that leads to the negative view of China's rise. This explanation could overlap with what the third contextual factor suggests: if the liberal democratic principle is more consolidated in the society, people will have very low authoritarian values and they would view China as highly autocratic, and hence, people are more likely to raise questions about China's intention regarding the rise of national capability. As Table A.2 shows, the extremely low level of China's democratic status and societal autocratic values for the Japanese case perfectly show how these two contextual factors could lead to extremely negative attitudes toward China's rise.

Similarly, the above explanation can be applied to perception of China's national image, too. But this time only the contextual factor of authoritarian values is significant. This result has two theoretical implications. First, the explanation based on the crossover effect of authoritarian values on the individual-level factor of democratic evaluation of China is more robust because of its double appearance. Second, this might explain why Koreans and Taiwanese might have been swayed into a more positive thinking of China's rise since people might have more optimistic view about China's political development as well as the economic benefit China's rise will bring in the future. In this sense, Southeast Asian countries also share the similar view since China has spent great efforts to placate its neighboring countries.

By Way of Conclusion

Most of the country fieldworks of the Asian Barometer Wave III were carried out between late 2010 and early 2012. It helps establish the base line for future reference. We don't think one can extract too much out of a one-shot cross-sectional survey. We need to accumulate more data points and over longer time span to unravel the dynamics of the social construction of China's image from both the sender's and receivers' end.

We have strong reason to believe that some recent events have seriously poisoned the political atmosphere in China's surrounding countries and jeopardized its effort to win over understanding, respect and support for its foreign agenda. For instance, the DPJ government's decision on nationalization of Diaoyu Islands has sparked a series of retaliatory measures from China. The spiral of escalating military posturing and saber-rattling naval exercise between PLA and US-Japan joint forces has overnight dramatically heightened the danger of military tension and the underlying strategic rivalry.

In this instance, domestic politics dictates the dynamics of diplomatic showdown as both China and Japan are entering a sensitive period of power transition. The Chinese leaders are preoccupied by the power reshuffling around the 18th Party Congress. The untested new leaders cannot afford being perceived as soft or indecisive over Diaoyu Islands. It is not just about the strategic value or the potential oil reserve of the islands, but everything to do with all the humiliating and bitter memory of the Japanese invasion. In Japan Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda is facing the formidable challenge in the upcoming parliamentary election. He probably felt compelled to adopt some bold and radical measures over Diaoyu Islands to boost DPJ's support and intended to outplay the hardliner image of his opponents, such as Shintaro Ishihara and Toru Hashimoto. At the same time, the former Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, paid homage at Yasukuni Shrine after he was reelected to the new LDP president. He publically expressed his regret for not visiting Yasukuni Shrine while in office. His words suggest that if LDP wins the upcoming election, he will defy Korea's and China's

opposition and makes pilgrimages to the Yasukuni Shrine.

A very similar political drama is unfolding in the United States as the November general election comes near. The Republican-led U.S. House Intelligence Committee played up the issue of cyberspying by issuing a report that urges U.S. government to ban two Chinese IT company, Huawei and ZTE, in the American market for the reason of national security. Another incident happened in the second debate of 2012 American presidential campaign. President Obama and Governor Romney both criticized each other's China policy too dovish, and thus, neither can effectively defend American's interest against China, particularly in the fair trade and currency issues. Simply put, Obama and Romney are racing to show their toughness on China, while suggesting the other not determined to protect American interests. Both candidates convey a clear message: China is the one to be blamed for U.S. stagnant economy and only being tough on China can save American interest.

The recent developments suggest that there are serious limits to China's effort to project its soft power. Intensification of economic and cultural exchange alone can do little to win over trust and understanding of your trading partner when all other weighty structural factors – historical memory, commercial competition, protracted economic stagnation, strategic rivalry, and most importantly divergence over values and cultural identity -- are pulling the public opinion in the opposite direction.

Appendix

The appendix section includes two tables that explain the detail of variable information for the individual-level and country-level variables.

Table A1 Information for Micro-Level Variables

Variable	Operationalization	Range
Recognition of China's Rise	Whether the respondent thinks China has the most influence. (q156)	0~1
Evaluation of China's Rise	Whether the respondent thinks China do more good than harm, if they agree China has the most influence. (q157)	0~1
National Image of China	Whether the respondent thinks China do more good than harm, regardless their answers in q156. (q157 and q157a)	0~1
Subjective Economic Satisfaction (<i>Ecosat</i>)	Whether the total income of your household allow you to satisfactorily cover your needs. (se13a)	1~4
Economic Openness (<i>Openness</i>)	The average of the answers to whether you agree with "we should protect our farmers and workers by limiting the import of foreign goods" (q152) and "foreign goods are hurting the local community". (q153)	1~4
Democratic Evaluation of China (<i>EvaCh</i>)	Where would you place China today on this scale? (q120)	1~10
Authoritarian Values (<i>AutoVal</i>)	The average of the eleven questions of authoritarian values (q138-q148)	1~4
Education	Education level (se5)	1~10
Age	Years old (se3a)	17~94
Gender	Male (1), Female (0)	0~1

Table 2 Information for Macro Variables

	Trade ^a	Tourism ^b	Higher Visit ^c	Confucian	ASEAN Plus One	Polity IV	Mean <i>Ecosat</i>	ofMean of <i>Openness</i>	Mean <i>EvaCh</i>	ofMean <i>AutoVal</i>	of
Japan	20.61	2.93	6.25	1	0	10.00	3.10	2.39	2.64	1.95	
Korea	20.57	8.34	20	1	0	8.00	2.51	2.29	4.05	2.15	
Mongolia	56.66	24.98	1.5	1	0	10.00	2.08	1.62	4.72	2.40	
Philippines	17.62	0.80	2	0	1	8.00	2.41	2.23	5.58	2.51	
Taiwan	21.50	10.43	0	1	0	10.00	3.14	2.33	3.24	2.21	
Thailand	12.64	0.95	4.5	0	1	4.00	2.98	1.61	5.73	2.39	
Indonesia	12.88	0.23	7	0	1	8.00	2.76	1.94	6.05	2.52	
Singapore	10.40	18.75	8	1	1	-2.00	3.11	2.43	5.63	2.51	
Vietnam	16.57	0.91	2	1	1	-7.00	2.71	2.03	7.06	2.60	
Cambodia	14.04	0.95	10	0	1	2.00	2.70	1.72	5.62	2.61	
Malaysia	16.05	4.27	2.5	0	1	6.00	2.86	1.95	5.53	2.56	

^avalue of bilateral/value of the overall trade, CIA World factbook (est. 2011)

^btourist outbound to China/overall population, China National Tourist Office (tourist, est. 2010) and CIA World factbook (population, est. 2012). Taiwan's figure is from Tourism Bureau, M.O.T.C. Rep. of China, 2010.

^cnumber of higher visits/number of governments. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China. The data is compiled by the author by a content analysis of the website information