

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

**Panel III Why the Impact of China's Rise is Felt Differently  
among East Asians?**

**[Paper 5]**

**The Impact of China's Rise on East Asian Countries: A  
Popular Assessment**

Saiful Mujani  
Department of Political Science, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah

R. William Liddle  
Department of Political Science, Ohio State University

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## **Introduction**

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is now believed to have become the most influential state in Asia. Its success is due mainly to its rapid and continuous rate of economic growth in the past thirty years (cf. Keller and Rawski 2007). Some studies project China, together with a few other developing countries, to be even more powerful globally in 2030. This will transform the global pattern of international relations so that a new balance of power will emerge, making international security more complicated than previously (Phillips 2008).

The question addressed by this paper is whether the successful economic development that makes China currently the most influential country in the region is a threat to neighboring states. Or, alternatively, whether China's proclaimed strategy of promoting itself as a "peacefully rising nation" economically and politically will be accepted by others (Noble 2008). Perceptions by others of the level of threat posed by a nation are believed to play a significant role in shaping international relations (...). By perception is meant not only the views of the elite but also of the ordinary people, the citizens of a country (...). From this perspective, it is crucial to observe, first, the extent to which local peoples feel that China is the most influential country in the region and, second, whether that influence is perceived to be positive or negative. Is there any significant difference in how citizens in different countries view the rise of China? If so, what factors contribute to the difference?

We believe that variation across countries in popular perceptions of China's rise, positive or negative, is rooted deeply in the histories of those countries (Yee

and Storey 2002). Further, a society's perception of China's rise, positive or negative, may be shaped by nationalism, that is, pride in being a citizen of one's country (...). A citizen who feels proud may have a sense of his or her country's superiority over other countries, including China, and therefore is not likely to perceive China as the most influential state in the region. Once he or she feels that China is the most influential state, a negative perception of that influence is likely to follow.

People's assessment of China's rise, positive or negative, is likely to be shaped by democratic values as well. A person who is oriented towards democratic values is likely to have a negative perception of China's influence to his or her own country, since that regime is not a democracy. Moreover, the non-democracy influence may be perceived as a threat to democracy in the region.

It is also quite possible that perceptions are shaped by what is often claimed to be Asian political culture, that is, a preference for traditional values. These include beliefs that the state is like a family with the government at the head, implying that the people are children who should follow their father, that harmony is a higher value than conflict, and so on. A person who prefers this culture is likely to have a more positive perception of China as Chinese culture is believed to be the source and principal exemplar of these ideas.

Associated with regime preference is generational difference. The generation in the region born before China's reformation is likely to have a more negative perception of China; the country at that time was not open economically and appeared still to be committed to spreading communism as both a political and

an economic ideology. The post 1978 generation, to the contrary, is likely to have a more positive perception of China because it does not experience China as politically threatening. What the current generation experiences is that China is open and engaged in global affairs. (...)

Perceptions of China's rise may also be affected by global connectivity or engagement. A person who is more engaged in international events or news is likely to be more open to other countries including China. He or she is likely to have a more positive perception of the country.

Associated with global connectivity, a person who has a better socio-economic status, especially a higher educational level, is more likely to be engaged in global affairs as he or she has better access to more modern information technology, including the internet. This engagement is likely to make him or her more open to the outside world including China.

China and its neighbors in the region are a natural laboratory to test the popular clash of civilization thesis. Samuel Huntington, the originator of the thesis, argued that international relations are produced by civilizations (Huntington 1993). Two or more states will clash because of their different civilizations. Muslims, in East Asia mostly from Indonesia and Malaysia, and Catholics, mostly from the Philippines, may have a negative perception of China's rise because China's civilizational base, Confucianism or Buddhism, is different from theirs. Similarly, Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Mongolians, Singaporeans, and Cambodians are likely to have a positive perception of China's rise because their

civilizational origins are the same as that of the Chinese, that is Confucianism or Buddhism.

This paper first describes variations in East Asian peoples' perceptions how much influence China has on their countries, and the extent to which the influence is positive or negative. However, we are more concerned with the second question, and this work is to explore the issue.

#### Measures of the impact of China's rise

q160. How much influence does China have on our country? A great deal of influence, some influence, not much influence, no influence at all

q161. Generally speaking, what is the influence of China on our country? Very positive, positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, negative, or very negative?

### **Patterns of Perception**

East Asians, excluding the Chinese themselves, mostly believe that China either has a great deal or some influence over their countries (78.8%). (Table 1) This is apart from significant differences in perceiving what is the most influential country in Asia today and in the next ten years, and in the popular assessment of whether China does more good or harm to the region. This opinion is especially popular in Japan (94%), Taiwan (92.3%), Singapore (90.8%), Korea (90.5%), the Philippines (88.4%), and Mongolia (85%). It is less strong in Thailand and Indonesia, though still held by a majority.

Table 1 around here

Whether the influence is perceived to be positive or negative is a more critical issue. Popular assessment of the extent to which China has influence over a society in fact varies a great deal from country to country. The largest percentage of negative attitudes toward China's influence is in Japan. A strong majority of Japanese feel that the influence on their country is negative (76.6%). Almost as strongly as the Japanese, most Mongolians also have a negative opinion (68.4%). (Table 2)

One might think that almost all Taiwanese would have a negative assessment of China's influence on their country because of the special case of the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China. Our findings show a different reality, however. Although still a large number, compared to the Japanese, the proportion of Taiwanese who negatively assess China's influence on their country is smaller (46.5%). This proportion is very similar to that of Koreans on this issue (48.5%). (Table 2)

The citizens of the other countries covered in this study have a more positive opinion of China's influence on their own countries. The largest positive view is found among Filipinos (79%), followed by Cambodians (76.7%), Singaporeans (72.5%), Malaysians (72.3%) and Indonesians (57.5%). Although not a majority, a plurality of Thais expressed a positive assessment of the influence.

We found an interesting pattern of opinion across our cases concerning China's rise and influence in Asia. Most East Asian peoples have a positive

assessment of China's rise and its influence on their own countries. A negative perception of influence on one's own country constitutes a majority only in Japan and Mongolia.

Table 2 around here

Cross-national variation in popular assessment of China's positive or negative influence on the region is huge. (Table 3) Why do more Japanese and Mongolians assess negatively Chinese influence on their own countries compared to Koreans and Taiwanese? Why do more Filipinos, Cambodians, Singaporeans, Malaysians and Indonesians have a more positive perception of China's influence on their countries?

Table 3 around here

### **Clash of Civilizations?**

As described in the introduction, the countries studied here may be treated as a natural laboratory to test the clash of civilization thesis (Huntington 1993). According to this thesis, international conflicts occur as a result of clashes between two or more countries that differ in fundamental cultural characteristics. Conversely, peaceful relations between two states are more likely if the countries involved share the same culture.



In order to test the hypothesis at the individual level, we hypothesize that two individuals will tend to engage in conflictual relations if they come from different civilizations. Conversely, they will be at peace with each other if they come from the same culture. These individual attitudes and behavior may collectively form a national identity, so that their respective states will be more likely to clash with one another if they come from different cultures.

The cases under study represent at least three different civilizations: Confucianism or Buddhism and its variants (China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Mongolia, Cambodia and Thailand), Catholicism (the Philippines), and Islam (Indonesia and Malaysia). From the clash of civilizations perspective, a Confucian will be more likely to associate comfortably with another Confucian than with a Muslim or with a Catholic, and vice versa. If individual attitudes can be said to collectively constitute national identity, China is more likely to associate with Taiwan, Japan, or other Confucian nations, rather than with Islamic civilization-based countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, or with a Catholic nation such as the Philippines.

The clash of civilization thesis is in fact not persuasive. In our descriptive statistics, we find that many presumed Confucians, including in Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan, and in Koreans, have a more negative perception of China, the heart and soul of Confucian culture, than do many Muslims (in Indonesia and Malaysia) and Catholics (in the Philippines). Other Confucians, however, including those in Cambodia and Singapore, do have a more positive assessment of China's influence. (Table 3)

In our multivariate analysis, Buddhism apparently does not make East Asian citizens evaluate China's influence positively. To the contrary, Buddhism in general has a negative impact on perceptions of Chinese influence. We need to investigate further why this pattern occurs. Maybe it is because communist governments in general are known for their hostility toward religion, including Buddhism. The effect is that a Buddhist tends to evaluate negatively the influence of China on his or her own country.

When the context of the state is taken into account, however, the effect of religion becomes insignificant. It is not significant in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore or even Mongolia. The possibility that the lack of importance of the religion factor is caused by religious variation, that is, Buddhism versus other religions, is small.

In Japan, for example, what is significant is Buddhism and other Japanese religions versus the category of no religion. That category in fact originates historically in Buddhism. Accordingly, the lack of difference between the two means that we can not see the impact on perceptions of Chinese influence.

This is also the case in Taiwan, where most people claim to be Buddhist or no religion. The difference is therefore not strong. It is also the case in Mongolia, Cambodia and Korea, although in the latter case there is a significant presence of Protestants and Catholics. Protestants and Catholics in Korea represent a new phenomenon, however. They have not yet become a civilization with deep historic roots as is understood by the concept of the clash of civilizations.

Buddhism is the religion of almost all Cambodians, so there is no variation that would make statistical analysis possible. Singaporeans are mostly Buddhists, though the number of Muslims and Christians is substantial. Religion has no effect there.

The number of Buddhists in the Indonesian sample is very small (less than one percent), therefore not significant as an Indonesian religious group. In the Philippine sample there are no Buddhists.

Malaysia is a case that is more relevant for testing the clash of civilizations hypothesis. As has already been explained, even though Muslims represent a majority of the population there are many Buddhists as well. Variations in religious identity are for that reason important and have a significant effect on perceptions of Chinese influence on Malaysia. Buddhists in Malaysia, compared to adherents of other religions, tend to have a positive perception of the influence of China on Malaysia. This significance is quite independent from the influence of other factors as is shown in the multivariate analysis below (Table 4). The clash of civilizations thesis does in fact work in the case of Malaysia!

Malaysia is a country that has a balance of religious and ethnic groups, that is Islam versus Buddhism, or ethnic Malays versus Chinese. Malayness is almost identical with Islam, and Chineseness is almost identical with Confucianism or Buddhism. There is a near balance of power between these two groups or religions, even though the Malays, according to the 2010 census, represent the majority (60.3%). The Chinese are only about 22.9% of the population. The ethnic and

religious proportions vary slightly. There are a few more Muslims (64.4%) and fewer Buddhists, at 17.8% (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia 2011).

However, this difference is relatively small compared to the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims in China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, and other countries in our sample. The number of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia has declined significantly compared to fifty years ago, when the Chinese were 45% of the total population. This change occurred because of the discrepancy in birth rates between Malays and Chinese over the last half century (Demographic Statistics Division, Malaysia 2010). The Malay birth rate is now 2.8%, while the Chinese is 1.8%.

Historically, the two ethnic and religious groups sharply divided the polity. In 1969 Malaysia experienced terrible racial violence. Malaysia's fledgling democracy halted abruptly and the country began to be governed by a racially-based authoritarian regime. Today, tension between the groups remains strongly felt and continues to shape Malaysian politics.

Racial and religious conflict between Buddhists or Chinese and Muslims or Malays has never characterized any of the other East Asian states. Conflict between Buddhists in the north and Muslims in the south of Thailand still occurs but has no possibility of changing the state political structure because the Muslim Malay minority is concentrated in the south and is much smaller (4.6%) than the Buddhist or Thai majority (94.6%).

Racial conflict has been abundant in Indonesian history, and until today tension between the ethnic Chinese and the indigenous population (*pribumi*) is still

felt, although to a much less extent than before the 1998 democratization. The percentage of Chinese in Indonesia is very small (about 4%), not to mention the percentage of Buddhists (under 1%), tiny compared to the 88% Muslim majority. For that reason, even though some tension remains, the difference between the groups is too big for the Chinese to ever balance the Muslims. Moreover, many Chinese in Indonesia are no longer adherents to Confucianism or Buddhism. The younger generation is increasingly Protestant and Catholic, not Buddhist or Confucian. For that reason, their opinion about China doesn't differ significantly from other citizens who are Muslim.

Religion has a more significant impact on perceptions of China's influence than does its sister concept, the clash of civilizations argument, when it is defined as religiosity, that is, in terms of a self-claim of the extent to which a person is or is not religious.<sup>1</sup>

In general, citizens who are secular or not religious tend to evaluate negatively the influence of China on their country. Conversely, citizens who are religious tend to evaluate China's influence more positively. It is worth pointing out, however, that this positive effect of religiosity only applies to Buddhists, not to any other religious group in the region (Table 5). This indicates perhaps that Buddhists see China as part of their culture even though they live in another country.

The influence of religiosity tends to disappear when analysis is conducted by country. In Japan, religiosity does not have a significant impact on perceptions

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<sup>1</sup> Responses to the religiosity are very religious (1), moderately religious (2), slightly religious (3), and not religious at all (4).

of the influence of China. The same is true for Taiwan, Korea, Mongolia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. Only in Thailand and Singapore is the impact of religiosity significant after weighing various factors that we expected to be important in shaping those perceptions.

Citizens who are religious in Thailand and Singapore tend to evaluate positively the influence of China on their country apart from various other factors (Table 4). This indicates that devout believers in the two countries see China as a part of their great civilization, Buddhist or Confucian, and for that reason they tend to evaluate positively the influence of China on their country. Moreover, these two countries are remote enough from China so that they are less likely to see China as a direct threat, unlike say Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, or Mongolians. The primordial solidarities of Singaporeans or Thais are not threatened enough by China's rise to affect their sense of security as a nation.

Historically, Singaporean Chinese are different from the Chinese on Taiwan. Singaporean Chinese, like Malaysian Chinese, came to Southeast Asia as traders or as port and plantation workers brought by the British. They were not at all like the mainland Chinese who left their country for political reasons and settled in Taiwan after the Second World War. For that reason they did not have a nationalism complex or a national security problem in their relationship with China. So nationalism was not important for Malaysians and Singaporeans in forming their perceptions concerning China's rise (Table 4). For that reason, Buddhism and Buddhist religiosity were not disturbed by nationalism or the problem of national security.

It may have even been the case that the Singapore Chinese felt a necessity to maintain a primordial relationship with their ancestral brothers, the mainland Chinese, in order to feel more secure in a world where they are surrounded by non-Chinese, especially in neighboring Indonesia and Malaysia. This possibility can also be seen in the importance of traditionalism among Singaporeans in forming their perceptions concerning the influence of China.

### **Traditional values**

The clash of civilizations hypothesis is perhaps too crude if it is only understood as an opposition of religious identities. It may be better understood as a contest between traditional and liberal values. Perhaps the more plausible argument is that Chinese culture is the heartland of traditional Asian values and, for that reason, that people who support those values are more positive in their evaluations of China's influence on their country.

Conversely, those who do not associate themselves with traditional values are more likely to regard negatively China's influence toward their country. In this study, these values vary between one state and another. This variation may have a significant influence in those states.

In general all of the East Asian citizens in the countries studied tend to be more oriented toward traditional values as those values are defined here.<sup>2</sup> Whatever their country and religion, East Asians tend to have a positive attitude toward traditional social and political values (mean score is 2.8 on a scale of 1-4).

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<sup>2</sup> Responses to the 14 traditionalism items were recoded: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree. A 1-4 point scale index of traditional values is constructed from the items. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's alpha) is .742.

Nonetheless, this traditionalist orientation varies significantly from country to country.

How far does this orientation shape attitudes toward the influence of China on their respective countries?

The effect of traditionalism is expected to be positive. A citizen who is more oriented toward traditional socio-political values will more likely form a positive perception of the influence of China because China represents the heartland or central location of those values. They are the same as the Chinese of mainland China who have long lived with those values.

Multivariate analysis demonstrates that traditional Asian values do indeed significantly impact positive perceptions of China (Table 4). Nonetheless, this positive effect is only visible in a significant way among Singaporeans, Indonesians, Thais, Mongolians, and Filipinos. It is not significant for the citizens of other countries in our sample. It is not important among Japanese, Taiwanese, Koreans, Malaysians and Cambodians after weighing various other factors that might have an impact. This pattern is fascinating because those countries closer to mainland China do not show any greater significance of the importance of traditional values in shaping their perceptions, after weighing other factors, especially democratic values that do indeed correlate negatively.

In a bivariate analysis, the strongest correlation between traditionalism and perception of China's influence is for Singapore citizens even though the people are socio-economically very modern ( $r = .355$ ). The reason this theme has been promoted continuously by the political leadership of Singapore, led from the



earliest days in the post World War II period by Lee Kwan Yew. Former Prime Minister Lee emphasizes the importance of Asian values, by which he means traditional political culture, to hold back the rise of democracy in Asia, and especially Southeast Asia and Singapore itself.

### **Democratic Values**

Compared to the positive direction of the influence of traditionalism, the impact of democratic values is expected to be negative. A citizen of any of our countries who holds democratic values is expected to evaluate negatively the influence of China. The reason is simple: China is not a democracy.

If China has influence on those countries, for a democrat that influence may mean affirmation of the autocratic regime that now exists in China, and affirming that autocracy's influence in their country which is a democracy (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Thailand) or which aspires to be a democracy (Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia).

For the older democratic generation, at least for those who were born before the Chinese reforms of 1978, the influence of Chinese communism can be seen as a threat toward the democracy that is beginning to emerge in their respective countries. A number of countries in Asia were beset by local communist parties that seemed connected to the expansion of the influence of China more generally. For that reason a democrat who is anti-communist is more likely to evaluate negatively the influence of China on his or her country.

The impact of democratic values is very significant and also the most consistent.<sup>3</sup> (Table 4) It has a negative effect on perceptions of Chinese influence among Taiwanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Indonesians, Malaysians, and Singaporeans. Its effect is less strong among Japanese, and it is not significant among Cambodians and Mongolians after weighing other factors.

In general we find that democratic values reflect a very important factor shaping perceptions of Chinese influence. Democrats in the region see China as having a negative influence on their country. As explained above, this pattern has emerged because China is a communist country, not a democracy. Its political institutions and practices are in conflict with the democratic principles that the others avow, and for that reason the influence of the Chinese polity is negative. However attenuated, China remains the center of communism in Asia, and once was a country that exported and supported communist movements. Older people feel that past more deeply, while the younger generation has been exposed to democratic values that conflict with the authoritarian values of present-day China.

This pattern of the effect of democratic values is also expected to be visible in the way in which global connectivity shapes perceptions toward the influence of China, but it is also expected that the direction of the influence will be more varied, because globalization can be regarded as a positive but also as a negative force. It will also be very dependent on the broader context.

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<sup>3</sup> Democratic values is a 1-4 point index constructed from 11 democratic value items. Cronbach's alpha is .733.

## Global Connectivity

To be connected globally may have a positive impact on the perception of China's influence. We argue that people who are more engaged in global events, news or programs, and willing to go to other countries, are more likely to have a positive perception of other countries. They are likely to be more inclusive, to be more open to foreign countries. On the contrary, a person who never watches, listens to, or reads about international issues, news, or programs, and is not interested in visiting other countries is likely to have a more negative perception of those countries.

This possibility is also relevant to observing and evaluating the influence of China. Citizens who are more globally connected will also tend to evaluate more positively the influence of China on their country. Because of global connectivity, they have a broad knowledge concerning other countries, and can see more objectively and proportionally that a certain country does not threaten them because there is no factual base for the view that there is a threat. They construct their image of other countries based on knowledge, not prejudice.

Conversely, people without global connectivity will most likely be negative in their view of China's influence because they depend more on memory and old history, when China had a hostile relationship with their country. This is especially true regarding their experience of the Cold War when China represented demonic communism that it was preparing to spread in the region.

As expected, global connectivity in general generates positive perceptions of the influence of China, even though the influence is not very strong ( $P \leq 05$ ).<sup>4</sup>

(Table 4) When observations are made for each country, we can see that global

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<sup>4</sup> Global connectivity is a 1-4 point index constructed from three items. Cronbach's alpha is .375.

connectivity has a significant impact on Taiwanese and Singaporeans, and a moderately significant one for Indonesians. However, this influence is perceived differently. Taiwanese and Indonesians who are more engaged with globalization tend to see the influence of China as positive. Singaporeans who are more connected globally tend to evaluate negatively the influence of China on their country.

The direction of the effect of global connectivity among Indonesians and Taiwanese fits our expectation that connectivity pushes an individual to be more open to the outside world. He or she has information or knowledge with which to evaluate other countries. For that reason the case of the Singaporeans who show the reverse relationship needs to be explored further.

### **Nationalism**

The positive or negative perception of an East Asian citizen concerning the influence of China on his or her country may also be shaped by nationalism or nationalist sentiment. Examples include: individuals who are strongly attached to their national interest in the form of support for protection of domestic goods against the international free market, or feel proud to be a citizen, or feel that they must be loyal to their country right or wrong. These attitudes are likely to influence their perception of the influence of China as well.

If someone's nationalist feeling is strong, he or she is likely to negatively evaluate the influence of China. China's rise and its influence in other countries is

perceived to be a threat to their own countries. This feeling arises together with strong nationalist sentiment.

In the Asian Barometer Survey, nationalism at the individual level can be detected from a number of items. These include: a feeling of pride in being a citizen; a feeling that one must always support one's country no matter what; a feeling that one must defend the national way of life and not copy other countries; a belief that imported goods threaten the domestic market; and a belief that the government must protect domestic farmers in their competition with foreign farmers.<sup>5</sup>

In our multivariate analysis, nationalism, or national interest, as predicted, has a very significant effect on negative perceptions of the influence of China.<sup>6</sup> (Table 4). An East Asian citizen, outside China, with strong national feeling, tends to judge more negatively the influence of China on his or her country. The reverse also holds.

This negative effect of nationalism is especially significant among Mongolians, Taiwanese, Thais, Indonesians and Japanese. Among Cambodians, however, the effect is positive. In other words, those Cambodians with stronger nationalist feelings tend to view the strong influence of China as positive for them. This is also a case that needs further investigation.

Together with Mongolia, Cambodia is one of the two once-communist states in this study, that is, it was a part of the communist bloc during the Cold War. But perhaps more importantly for our Cambodian respondents, China was an ally of

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<sup>5</sup> For a more exact wording of the items see the appendix.

<sup>6</sup> Nationalism is a 1-4 point index constructed from 5 items. Cronbach's alpha is .676.

Cambodia, supporting Cambodian sovereignty against Vietnam in the late 1970s (Storey 2006). This experience created an enduring bond.

Mongolia, although also a part of the communist bloc, did not have a similar experience with China. Communist Mongolia was allied with the communist Soviet Union against the communist People's Republic of China. This competition between two communist giants, with Mongolia on the Soviet side, has apparently contributed to a negative perception of the influence of China. More deeply, China and Mongolia have a centuries-long history of conflict and war. The Great Wall was built to protect China from attacks from the north, including Mongolia.

A long history of conflictual relations up to and including the Cold War has shaped the negative memories of Mongolians concerning China. It is this past that explains the correlation between Mongolian nationalist feelings and their perception of Chinese influence in their country.

For Koreans, nationalism does not have a significant impact on views of the influence of China, after weighing a number of other factors connected to their nationalist feelings, especially democratic values and education.

### **Generational Difference**

Perception of China's influence may also be shaped by generational difference. Its impact may be direct. Older generations, before the Chinese reforms starting in 1978, will probably view China as a threat to several states in East Asia. They have experience in the way that Chinese communism threatened their domestic politics.

The generation after reform, on the other hand, has not experienced China as a threat. Like other East Asian countries, China has concentrated more in recent decades on economic development, at which it has been a great success. China, or at least China's economy, has become open to the world. For that reason, China's political posture is probably not seen as threatening today. What is more visible is that China has now become a giant in the world economy.

This development can be evaluated positively by the new generation. It can also be seen as a threat, however, at least potentially, as a consequence of the rapid economic development success. As observed at the outset of this paper, the rapid economic development of China over the past thirty years has changed the face of the global economy. In its turn China's emergence will also change the face of the global polity as China increasingly plays a role in constructing a new balance of power after the end of the Cold War. In consequence, the new generation in East Asia also sees China as a threat toward the security stability that their members now enjoy because of the continuing presence of the United States as the world's hegemonic power, particularly in Asia.

Because China has now developed its economy, perhaps the threat from China is never-ending. If for the old generation that threat was generated by China as a demonic communist force, for the present generation China is perhaps feared as a challenge to the security stability that they currently enjoy. Accordingly, the difference in generations will likely become insignificant in its impact on perceptions toward Chinese influence. Both generations fear China even though the reasons for their fear differ.

After weighing various factors, the post-reform generation across countries is more positive in its view of the influence of China. (Table 4). Nevertheless, country-specific factors are also important in shaping those perceptions. In all the cases studied, only Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia demonstrate a significant effect from the generational difference on perceptions of the influence of China. That effect is negative (Table 4).

Members of the Taiwan reform generation, compared to the pre-reform generation, evaluate more negatively the impact of China's rise on their country. A similar pattern is seen for Singaporeans and Malaysians.

After the end of the Cold War, the threat of communism was dismissed as no longer important. For that reason the anxiety of the pre-reform generation in Taiwan has probably already faded, and they, compared with the post-reform generation, may be less engaged in the latest developments involving China. Accordingly, the post-reform generation is probably more engaged with developments in China and its growing global position. They may see that development as a new threat to regional security. They may feel more anxious as they perceive a new balance of power emerging in Asia. An uncertain security situation may be one of their greatest concerns.

Possible attitudes such as these may also explain why the post-reform generation in Malaysia and Singapore evaluates negatively the influence of China's rise. Singapore and Taiwan are very dependent on America for their national security interests. The emergence of a new balance of power in the region, China versus America, provokes a new uncertainty about security. In addition, Singapore



and Malaysia have less experience with the threat of Chinese communism compared to Japan, Korea and Taiwan. That is why the post-reform generation in Malaysia and Singapore is more important in evaluating the influence of China's rise on their respective countries even though that influence is negative.

### **Socio-Economic Status (SES)**

The influence of religion or civilization, traditionalism, nationalism, democratic values, global connectivity and generational difference already discussed are probably much associated with citizen's socio-economic status (SES). However, education is expected to have a direct and significant effect on perceptions of China. A multivariate analysis indicates that education in general has that effect. (Table 4).

However, the difference among states is also very important. After weighing the differences among states, the effect of education on the influence of China is only significant in some countries, and that effect is positive: Korea, Cambodia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (Table 4). Citizens with higher education tend to positively evaluate China's rise in terms of its impact on their own country, apart from various other factors that might influence that relationship. We need further analysis to explain why those with higher education tend to be more positive in evaluating the influence of China.

Only in Singapore do we see a negative relationship, and it is not highly significant ( $P \leq .1$ ). In the bivariate analysis, the relationship between education

and perception of the influence of China is negative and very significant ( $P \leq .001$ ). The level of significance declines after considering various factors that apparently have a more direct relationship with those perceptions, especially traditionalism, while traditionalism correlates strongly and negatively with education and with the post-reform generation.

Table 4 around here

## **Conclusion**

China is considered by a majority of citizens in our countries as influential in each of them. Whether that influence is positive or negative has gotten highly varied responses, although the largest number consider the influence positive. Japanese and Mongolians mostly regard it negatively. Koreans and Taiwanese are divided, almost half consider it negative and half consider it positive. Most of the other countries studied regard the influence of China as positive.

To what factors can we attribute these variations in response?

In general the model that we propose is convincing. Perceptions of the positive or negative influence of China's rise are primarily influenced by nationalism, then traditionalism, orientations toward democratic values, generational difference, religiosity, some global connectivity, some civilizational or religious factors, and education. The patterns of relationships among these factors and the perception of China's influence vary.

The relationship between nationalism and the perception of Chinese influence in general is negative as predicted. People with strong nationalist feelings tend to evaluate negatively the influence of China. Nonetheless, the variation from one country to another is relatively large. The negative impact of nationalism is most apparent among Mongolians, Taiwanese, Japanese, Indonesians and Thais. This pattern can be understood in the context of a long history of difficult, if not hostile, relationships with Beijing.

The effect of nationalism on perceptions of China among Cambodians is unique. Cambodian nationalists in general have a positive attitude toward China's influence. The reason is very probably historical experience. Beijing has been a good friend to Cambodia in its troubled relationship with Vietnam.

After nationalism, orientation toward democratic values has had a negative effect on perceptions. Citizens with a strongly positive orientation toward democratic values tend to regard the influence of China as negative in their country. China as a non-democracy or communist state practices a form of politics that contrasts sharply with the political principles they hold dear. If China is influential toward their country they judge that influence to be negative. This pattern of a significant and negative attitude is visible in nearly all of the countries we have studied.

On the other hand, the effect of global connectivity is moderate and positive. Nonetheless, when examined in each country the results are mixed. In Taiwan the effect on perceptions of China's influence is positive, while in Singapore it is negative. We need to explore further why these differences exist.

The effect of generational difference—between the generation that experienced its political socialization before the 1978 reforms in China and the generation that experienced it subsequently—is in general important and positive. Nonetheless, when we examine each country more contextually, the generational effect is very strong only among Taiwanese, Singaporeans and Malaysians. That effect is negative for the post-reform generation.

In other words, people who are socialized after reform tend to evaluate negatively the influence of China on their own country. It is very possible that they see China's rise as a threat to the security stability that they have enjoyed until now under American hegemony in the region. As it happens, Taiwan and Singapore are close allies of the US, whose hegemonic power will decline as China becomes more of a balancing power in the region. This context in fact applies as well to the Philippines, Japan and Korea. But the intensity of the reaction may be greater in Taiwan and Singapore.

The clash of values, rather than of civilizations or religions, is in general also important in shaping perceptions of China's influence. At the same time the impact of the clash of religions is very limited.

A stronger orientation toward traditional values has a positive effect on perceptions of China's rise. This observation applies to many countries, especially those countries whose economies are not yet well developed, like Indonesia, the Philippines, Mongolia and Thailand. Holding traditional socio-political values makes them closer to mainland China as the heartland of those values. The effect on perceptions of the influence of China is also very strong among Singaporeans, even though Singapore is an advanced country in social and economic terms. This may be because of the persuasive power of the Singapore political elite, under the leadership of Lee Kwan Yew, who has long been a regional champion of the superiority of traditional values over modern ones.

At the same time, the effect of the clash of civilizations on perceptions is strong only among Malaysians. Buddhists compared to Muslims or other religious

adherents correlate strongly with the perception of Chinese influence. This can be understood in the context of a relative balance of power between Buddhists and Muslims, or between Chinese and Malays. This balance once triggered a vast racial conflict at the end of the 1960s, and its impact is still felt today. The ethnic and civilizational balance that characterizes Malaysia is not found in other countries in this study. For that reason its effect is not apparent elsewhere.

The effect of religion is better, however, when religion is understood as religiosity, not identity. Religiosity in general has a significant impact on positive perceptions of the influence of China's rise. Someone who is more religious is more likely to be positive in his perception of the influence of China. When examined more closely, the effect of religion is among Buddhists, not adherents to other religions. Examined even more closely, the significant effect is even more limited to Thais and Singaporeans.

Finally, we must emphasize that there are still many variations in perceptions of China's rise that we can not explain with our model, especially in the case of Japan. We need to examine further other factors that can better help us explain these differences.

**Table 1. How Much Influence does China Have on our Country? (%)**

	A great deal	Some	Not much	Not at all	DU	CC	DA
Japan	46.5	47.5	5.6	.3	.0	.0	.0
Korea	40.0	50.5	6.8	1.0	.1	.8	.7
Mongolia	40.6	44.4	10.2	1.9	.4	2.4	.1
Philippines	38.2	50.2	6.5	2.3	.3	1.7	.8
Taiwan	57.3	35.0	2.5	.8	.8	2.6	.9
Thailand	15.1	42.9	9.6	3.3	.6	27.3	1.3
Indonesia	10.8	48.9	14.6	2.1	8.5	14.0	1.2
Singapore	37.9	52.9	6.2	1.1	.0	1.6	.3
Cambodia	32.7	47.3	15.9	1.6	.0	2.3	.2
Malaysia	30.7	46.1	14.3	1.5	.7	6.2	.5

**Table 2. Generally Speaking, the Influence China Has on our Country is..? (%)**

	Very positive	Positive	Somewhat positive	Somewhat negative	Negative	Very negative	DU, CC, NA
Japan	.6	2.6	20.2	57.9	14.9	3.8	.0%
Korea	2.4	16.7	27.7	31.6	13.6	4.3	.0%
Mongolia	1.8	8.8	16.6	48.7	13.6	6.1	.0%
Philippines	12.7	30.5	35.8	9.1	6.8	1.9	.0%
Taiwan	4.4	16.1	20.6	22.8	13.2	10.6	.0%
Thailand	3.2	18.4	20.8	16.1	4.3	1.7	.0%
Indonesia	5.9	38.6	13.6	6.2	9.4	1.4	.0%
Singapore	6.0	37.0	29.5	11.4	8.6	3.2	.0%
Cambodia	13.8	44.0	18.9	13.5	3.3	1.8	.0%
Malaysia	5.0	29.7	37.6	9.9	5.8	1.4	1.5%

Table 3. Perception of China's Influence  
(1 = very negative, 6 = very positive)  
Anova Analysis

Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Japan	3.0481	1850	.81186
Korea	3.4776	1162	1.13890
Mongolia	3.1445	1156	1.04400
Philippines	4.2825	1161	1.14671
Taiwan	3.3596	1396	1.38799
Thailand	3.9237	970	1.10835
Indonesia	4.2863	1163	1.22216
Singapore	4.1129	957	1.18561
Cambodia	4.4843	1144	1.12232
Malaysia	4.1564	1087	1.02250
Total	3.7649	12046	1.23220
F score	288.687		
P values	.000		

**Table 4. Multivariate Analysis of China's Influence  
Regression Coefficient (Standard Deviation)**

Country	All	Japan	Korea	Mongolia	Philippines	Taiwan
<b>Parameters</b>						
Constant	4.917*** (.179)	3.626*** (.393)	3.755 (.607)	3.989*** (.574)	4.880*** (.496)	5.321*** (.891)
Nationalism	-.130*** (.027)	-.130* (.064)	.074 (.091)	-.423*** (.098)	-.109 (.078)	-.596*** (.140)
Traditionalism	.349*** (.037)	.102 (.086)	.214 (.112)	.259* (.101)	.188* (.096)	.376 (.198)
Democratic Values	-.431*** (.032)	-.113+ (.062)	-.473*** (.097)	-.095 (.091)	-.356*** (.090)	-.674*** (.155)
Global Connectivity	.039* (.020)	.024 (.039)	-.014 (.059)	.080 (.062)	.004 (.059)	.207** (.086)
Buddhism	-.167*** (.026)	-.031 (.052)	-.082 (.086)	-.030 (.114)	- -	-.071 (.116)
Secularism	-.222*** (.015)	-.012 (.030)	-.035 (.040)	-.043 (.053)	-.060 (.052)	.122 (.066)
Reform Generation	.110*** (.026)	.024 (.053)	-.139 (.084)	.060 (.075)	.033 (.077)	-.286** (.110)
Education	-.023*** (.006)	-.024 (.016)	.088*** (.023)	-.001 (.014)	.035* (.018)	.010 (.032)
Female	.097*** (.025)	.031 (.048)	-.087 (.076)	.112 (.073)	.037 (.075)	.041 (.101)
N	8517	1226	904	843	911	748
R <sup>2</sup>	.111	.009	.061	.024	.024	.076

a Dependent Variable: China's influence to the countries (1 = very negative, 4 = very positive).  
Regions: China's direct neighbors: Mongolia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam = 1, otherwise = 0.  
Traditionalism: a 1-4 point index (1 = not traditional at all, 4 = very traditional); Nationalism = a 1-4 point index (1 = not nationalist at all, 4 = very nationalist); Democratic values: a 1-4 point index (1 = not democratic at all, 4 = very democratic); Global connectivity: a 1-4 point index (1 = globally not connected at all, 4 = globally very connected); Buddhism: Buddhism = 1, otherwise = 0; Secularism: a 1-4 point scale (1 = very religious, 4 = not religious at all); Reform generation: A Generation born after 1968 = 1, and otherwise = 0; Education: a 1-11 level of education; and gender: Female = 1, otherwise = 0.

\*\*\*P ≤ .001, \*\*P ≤ .01, \*P ≤ .05, +P ≤ .1



**Table 12. Multivariate Analysis ... continued**

Country	Thailand	Cambodia	Indonesia	Singapore	Malaysia
Parameters					
Constant	5.573*** (.651)	2.942*** (.524)	4.558*** (.646)	5.681*** (.909)	4.138*** (.490)
Nationalism	-.382*** (.121)	.295*** (.093)	-.278* (.126)	-.239 (.132)	.026 (.083)
Traditionalism	.440*** (.122)	.109 (.108)	.437*** (.127)	.622*** (.153)	.100 (.098)
Democratic Values	-.333*** (.098)	.081 (.088)	-.418*** (.143)	-.397* (.164)	-.223** (.088)
Global Connectivity	-.051 (.068)	-.011 (.054)	.124* (.064)	-.225** (.082)	-.002 (.059)
Buddhism	-.255 (.200)	-.169 (.190)	.116 (.691)	-.207 (.108)	.510*** (.089)
Secularism	-.177*** (.054)	.009 (.061)	-.019 (.067)	-.188* (.076)	-.094 (.060)
Reform Generation	.100 (.092)	-.088 (.078)	.109 (.087)	-.239* (.119)	-.180** (.075)
Education	.001 (.019)	.052*** (.018)	.005 (.020)	-.039+ (.024)	.049*** (.017)
Male	-.086 (.084)	.052 (.073)	.059 (.083)	.035 (.102)	.171** (.068)
N	642	1011	888	459	885
R <sup>2</sup>	.105	.020	.040	.179	.052

## Appendix

### Measures:

#### 1. Traditional values:

Strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statements:

q50. For the sake of the family, the individual should put his or her personal interests second.

q51. In a group, we should sacrifice our individual interest for the sake of the group's collective interest.

q52. For the sake of national interest, individual interest could be sacrificed.

q53. When dealing with others, developing a long-term relationship is more important than securing one's immediate interest.

q54. When dealing with others, one should not only focus on immediate interest but also plan for the future.

q55. Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask.

- q56. When a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law come into conflict, even if the mother-in-law is in the wrong, the husband should still persuade his wife to obey his mother.
- q57. Being a student, one should not question the authority of the teacher.
- q58. In a group, we should avoid open quarrel to preserve the harmony of the group
- q59. Even if there is some disagreement with others, one should avoid conflict.
- q60. A person should not insist on his own opinion if his co-workers disagree with him.
- q61. Wealth and poverty, success and failure are all determined by fate.
- q62. If one could have only one child, it is preferable to have a boy rather than a girl.
- q63. When dealing with others, one should not be preoccupied with temporary gains and losses.

## **2. Democratic Values**

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives? For each statement, would you say that you strongly approve, approve, disapprove, or strongly disapprove?

- q129. We should get rid of parliament and election
- q130. Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office.
- q131. The army (military) should come in to govern the country.
- q132. We should get rid of elections and parliaments and have experts make decisions on behalf of the people.
- q138. I have here other statements. For each statement, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? The government should consult religious authorities when interpreting the laws.
- q139. Women should not be involved in politics as much as men.
- q140. People with little or no education should have as much say in politics as highly-educated people.
- q142. The government should decide whether certain ideas should be allowed to be discussed in society.
- q143. Harmony of the community will be disrupted if people organize lots of groups.
- q144. When judges decide important cases, they should accept the view of the executive branch.
- q145. If the government is constantly checked [i.e. monitored and supervised] by the legislature, it cannot possibly accomplish great things.
- q146. If we have political leaders who are morally upright, we can let them decide everything.
- q147. If people have too many different ways of thinking, society will be chaotic.
- q148. When the country is facing a difficult situation, it is ok for the government to disregard the law in order to deal with the situation.

**Nationalism:**

q137. A citizen should always remain loyal only to his country, no matter how imperfect it is or what wrong it has done.

q151. Our country should defend our way of life instead of becoming more and more like other countries.

q152. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "We should protect our farmers and workers by limiting the importing of foreign goods."

q153. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Foreign goods are hurting the local community."

q154. How proud are you to be a citizen of ...?

**Global connectivity:**

q149. How closely do you follow major events in foreign countries/the world?

q150. How often do you watch or listen to foreign programs (television, DVDs, movies, radio)?

q155. Given the chance, how willing would you be to go and live in another country?