

How East Asians View the Influence of United States vs. a Rising China

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Four Key Questions about Asian Popular Opinion

1. Which superpower, the US or China, is and will be more influential in the region?
2. Which superpower, the US or China, is more welcome and better appreciated in the region?
3. How Asian people's perception has changed over the critical juncture of last four to five years, i.e., the period between Obama's 1st and 2nd term and between Hu Jingtao's 2nd and Xi Jinping's 1st term.
4. Why drives Asian people's view toward a rising China?



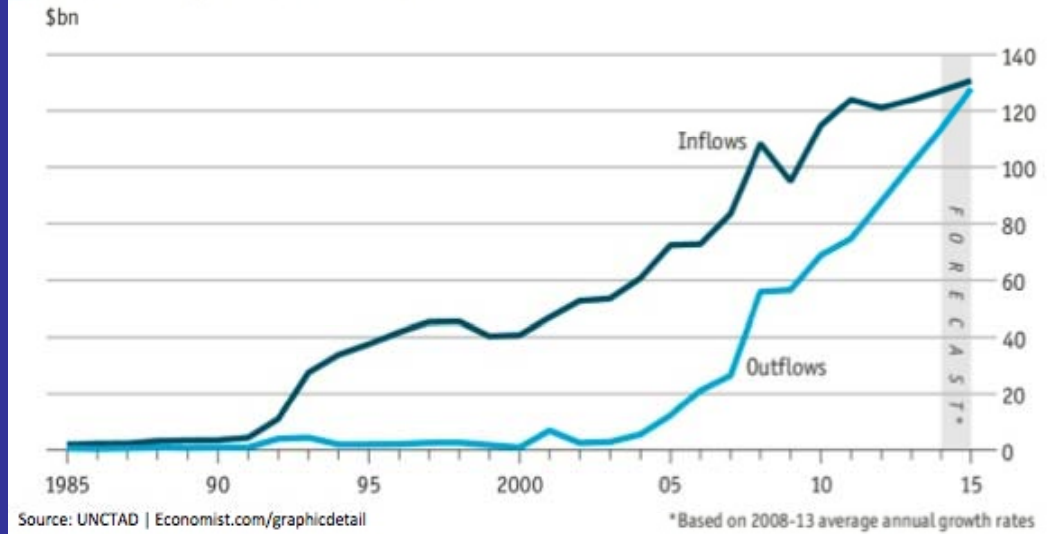
China's Global and Regional Strategy under Xi Jinping



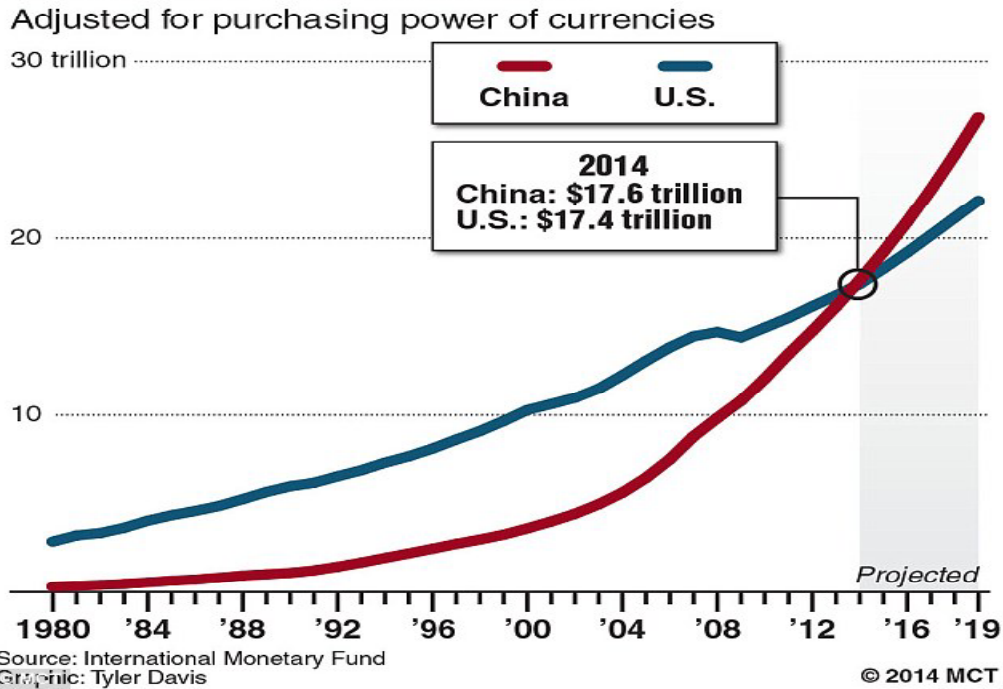
- ✓ More resourceful
- ✓ More assertive
- ✓ More ambitious
- ✓ More aggressive

A More Resourceful China under Xi

China's foreign direct investment



China vs. the U.S.: GDP



Going places



More Assertive

Respecting
China's Core
Interests:
Territorial Disputes,
Taiwan and Tibet



Setting Global and Regional Agenda

Promoting New Model of Great Power Relations



Projecting China's Cultural Soft Power



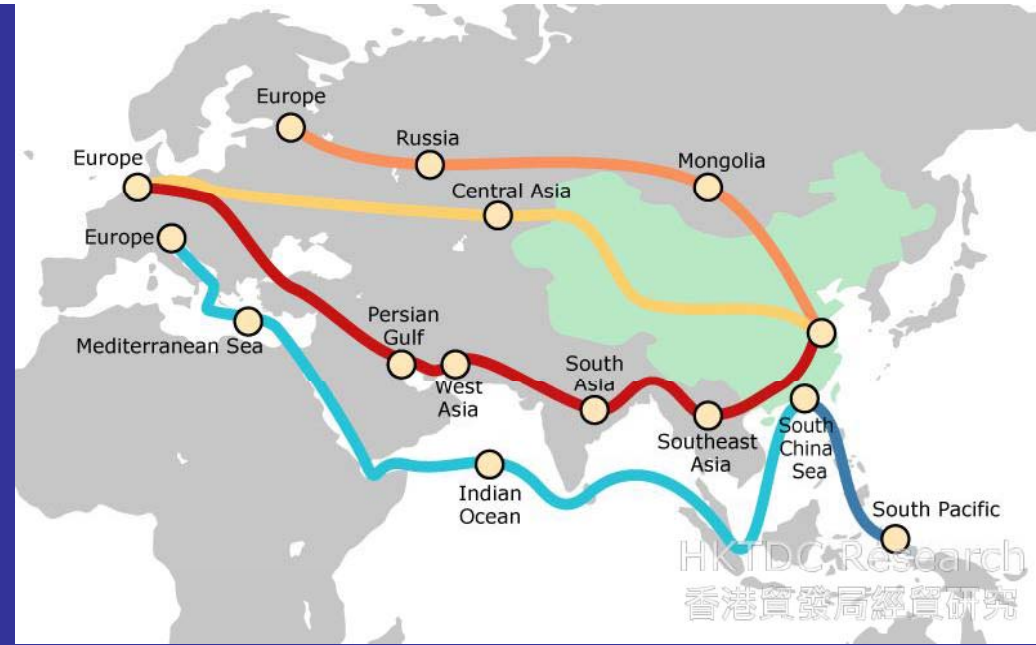
Driving G20 Agenda: "Hangzhou Consensus"



More Ambitious Agenda: China-led globalization

Launching
One Belt
One Road
Initiative

Enlargement of Shanghai
Cooperation Organization



Participants of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

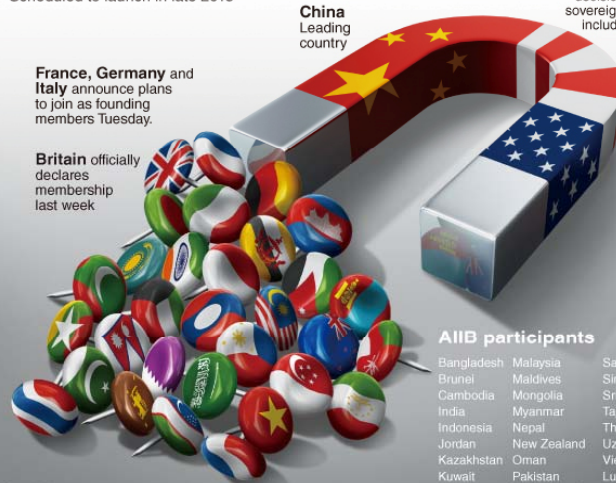
Scheduled to launch in late 2015

France, Germany and Italy announce plans to join as founding members Tuesday.

Britain officially declares membership last week

China
Leading country

U.S. says "membership depends on decisions by any sovereign country, including South Korea."



AIIB participants

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Bangladesh | Malaysia | Saudi Arabia |
| Brunei | Maldives | Singapore |
| Cambodia | Mongolia | Sri Lanka |
| India | Myanmar | Tajikistan |
| Indonesia | Nepal | Thailand |
| Jordan | New Zealand | Uzbekistan |
| Kazakhstan | Oman | Vietnam |
| Kuwait | Pakistan | Luxembourg |
| Laos | The Philippines | |

Graphic by Nam Kyung-don



BRICS BANK

More Aggressive



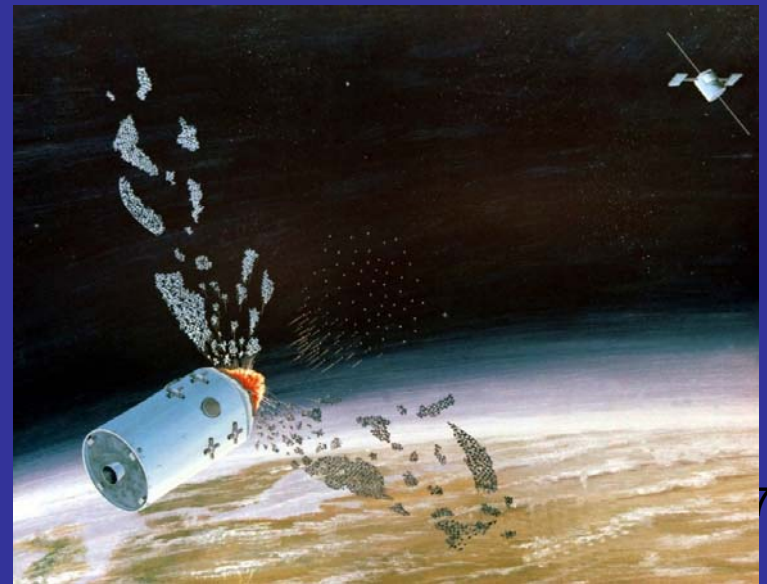
Manmade Reef in South China Sea



Aircraft Carrier Liaoning



Anti-satellite weapons



Obama's Pivot to Asia

Establish an enduring framework for engagement with Southeast Asia

- Launching US-ASEAN Summit
- Upgrading relationship with Vietnam, Myanmar and virtually every ASEAN country except Thailand



Regaining Economic Leadership

- Concluding Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiation

Containing China's military rise

- Upgrading security cooperation with Tokyo
- "Rebalance" to China: new military deployment to Australia
- Standing up to China in South China Sea

How China and US are Perceived by East Asians?

It is important to look at the story at the receivers' side as Joe Nye correctly pointed out that soft power depends on willing interpreters and receivers.



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.

Very Little Empirical Data

Pew Global Attitudes Survey is the only cross-national survey that collects public opinion data on people's image about United States vs. China on regular basis. However, the Pew Survey has covered only a few East Asian countries but not the same group each time. Only Japan and South Korea have been covered consistently.

Not on a regularly basis, BBC Global Scan poll on how the China's influence in the world is viewed by other countries only covered China, Japan, South Korea and Indonesia.

Asian Barometer Survey

The Asian Barometer Survey fills up an important void in our understanding of the phenomenon of China's rise and its implications for policy makers.

- It was administered in fourteen East Asian countries and territories on the basis of country-wide probability sampling and face-to-face interview.
- It can answer to what extent China's growing economic influence and international stature might have been translated into greater soft power.



www.asianbarometer.org

Asian Barometer Third Wave Survey Schedule

	Country	Wave 3		Wave 4	
		Period	Sample Size	Period	Sample Size
1	Taiwan	2010.1-2	1592	2014.6-10	1657
2	Philippines	2010.3	1200	2014.7	1200
3	Mongolia	2010.4-5	1210	2014.6-9	1228
4	Singapore	2010.4-8	1000	2014.10-12	1039
5	Vietnam	2010.9-10	1191	2015.9-10	1200
6	Thailand	2010.8-12	1512	2014.8-10	1200
7	Korea	2011.5	1207	2015.10-12	1200
8	Indonesia	2011.5	1550	2016.1.20-26	1550
9	Mainland China	2011.7-10	3473	2015.7-2016.2	4217
10	Malaysia	2011.10-11	1214	2014.9-11	1207
11	Japan	2011.12	1880	2015.1-2	1000
12	Cambodia	2012.2-3	1200	2015.10-11	1200
13	Hong Kong	2012.9	1207	2016.2-3	1000
14	Myanmar			2015.1-3	1620

Figure 1. Which country has the most influence in Asia now?

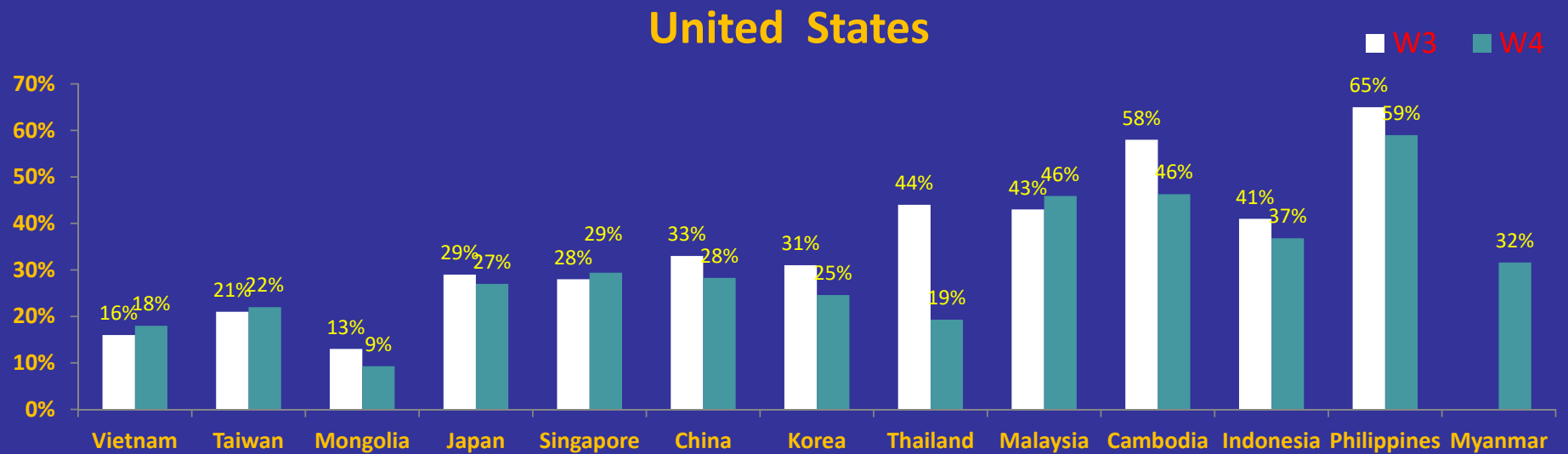
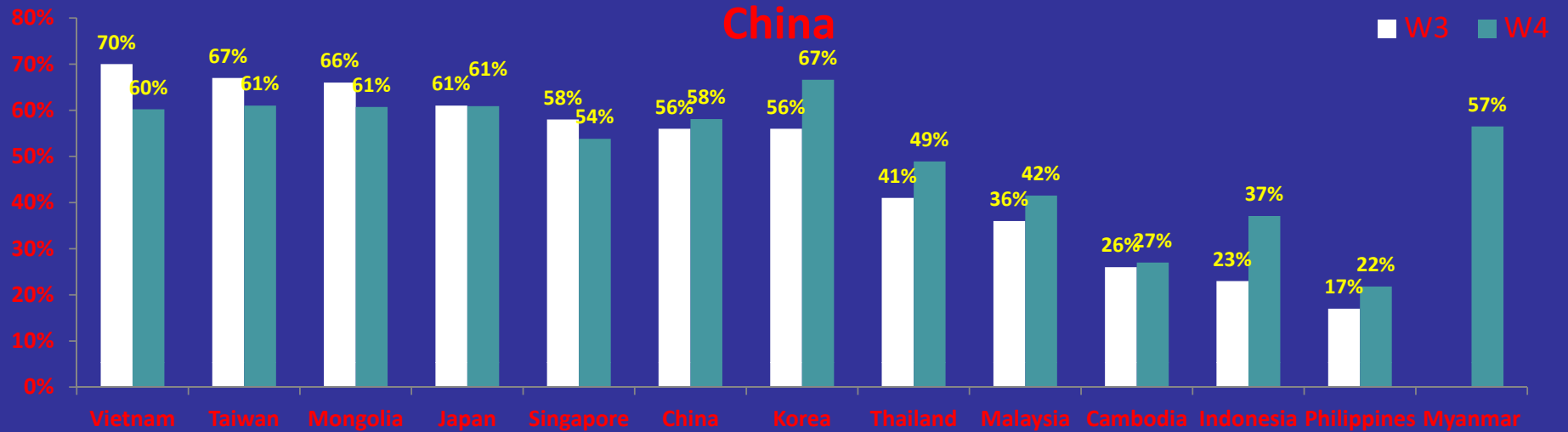
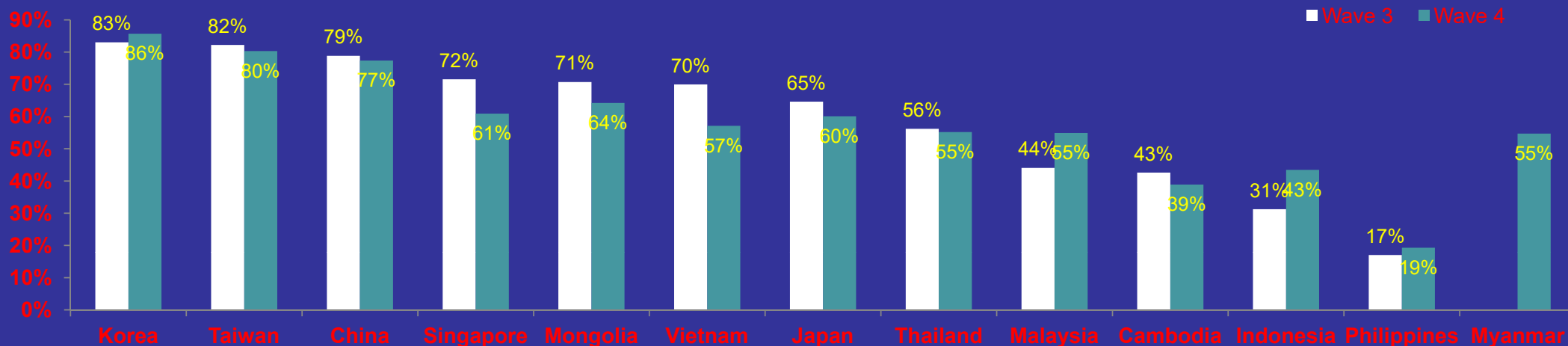


Figure 2. Which country will have the most influence in ten years?

China



United States

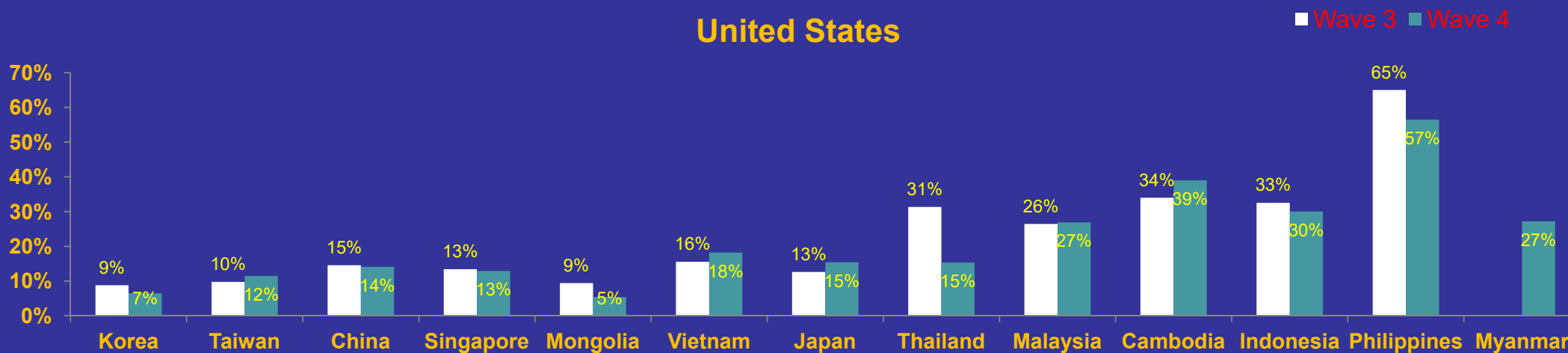


Figure 3: Divergence in Perception

Proportion of Population Holding Positive View About the Impacts of China and the U.S. on the Region (Wave 4)

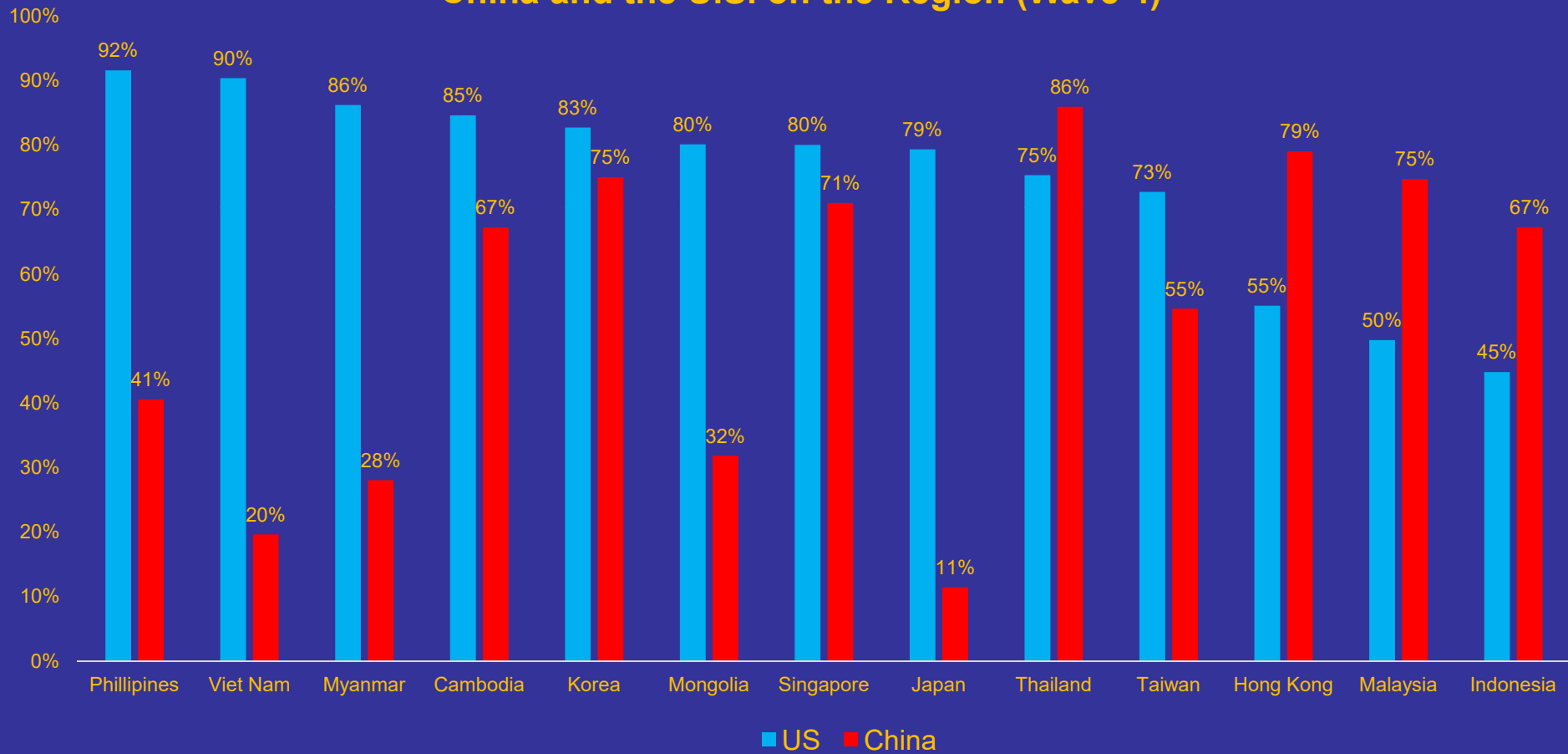


Figure 4: East Asians' Positive Perception of China's and the U.S.' Influence on Their Own Country (wave 4)

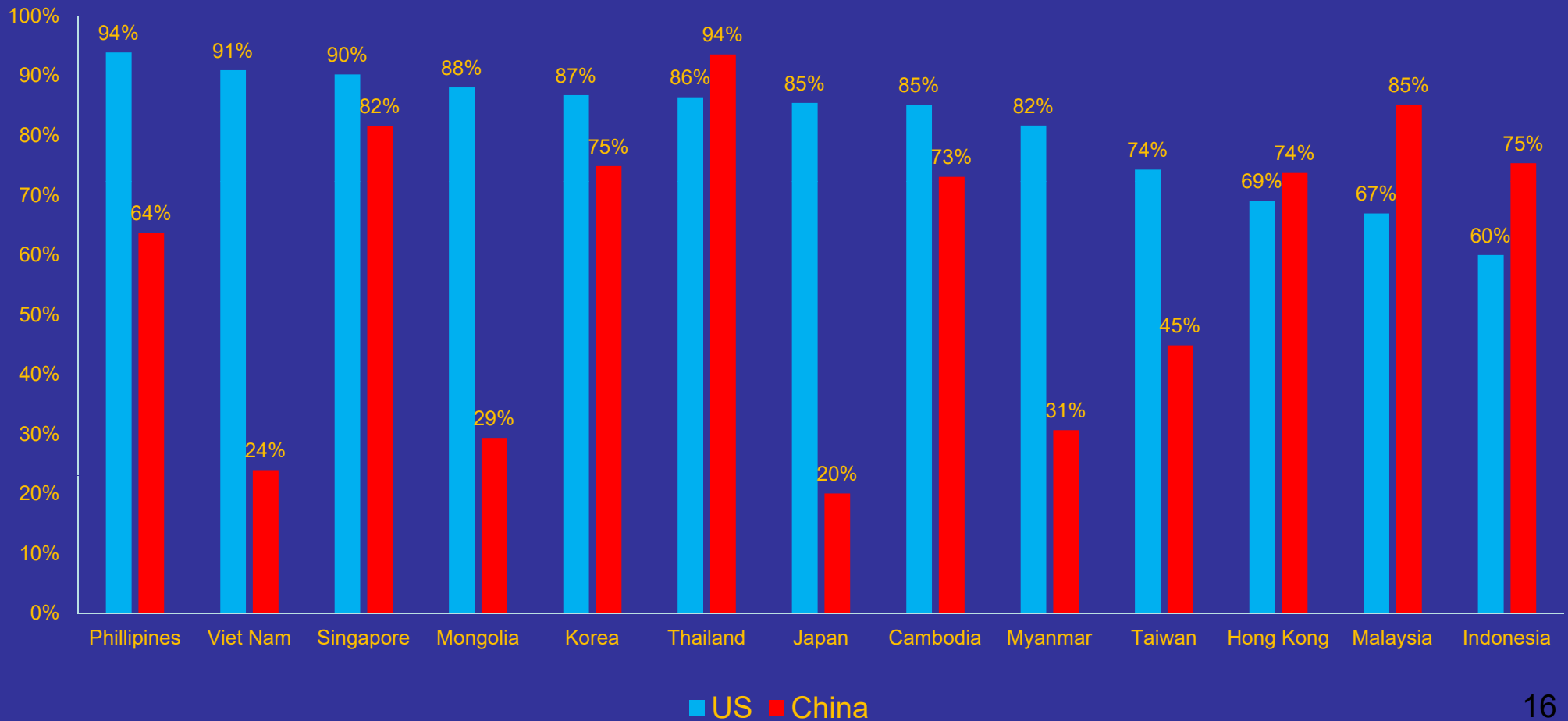


Figure 5: Divergence in Perception

Proportion of Population Holding Positive View about the Impact of China on the Region

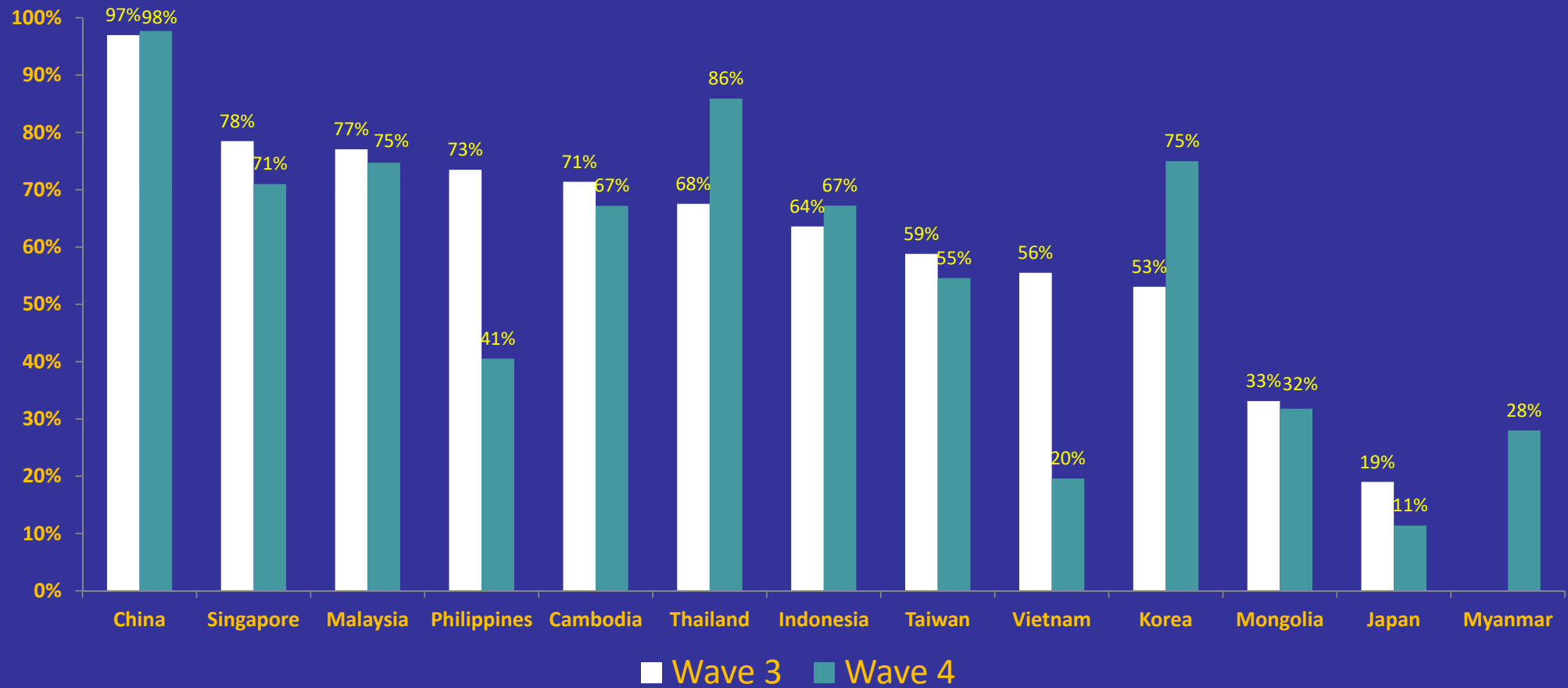
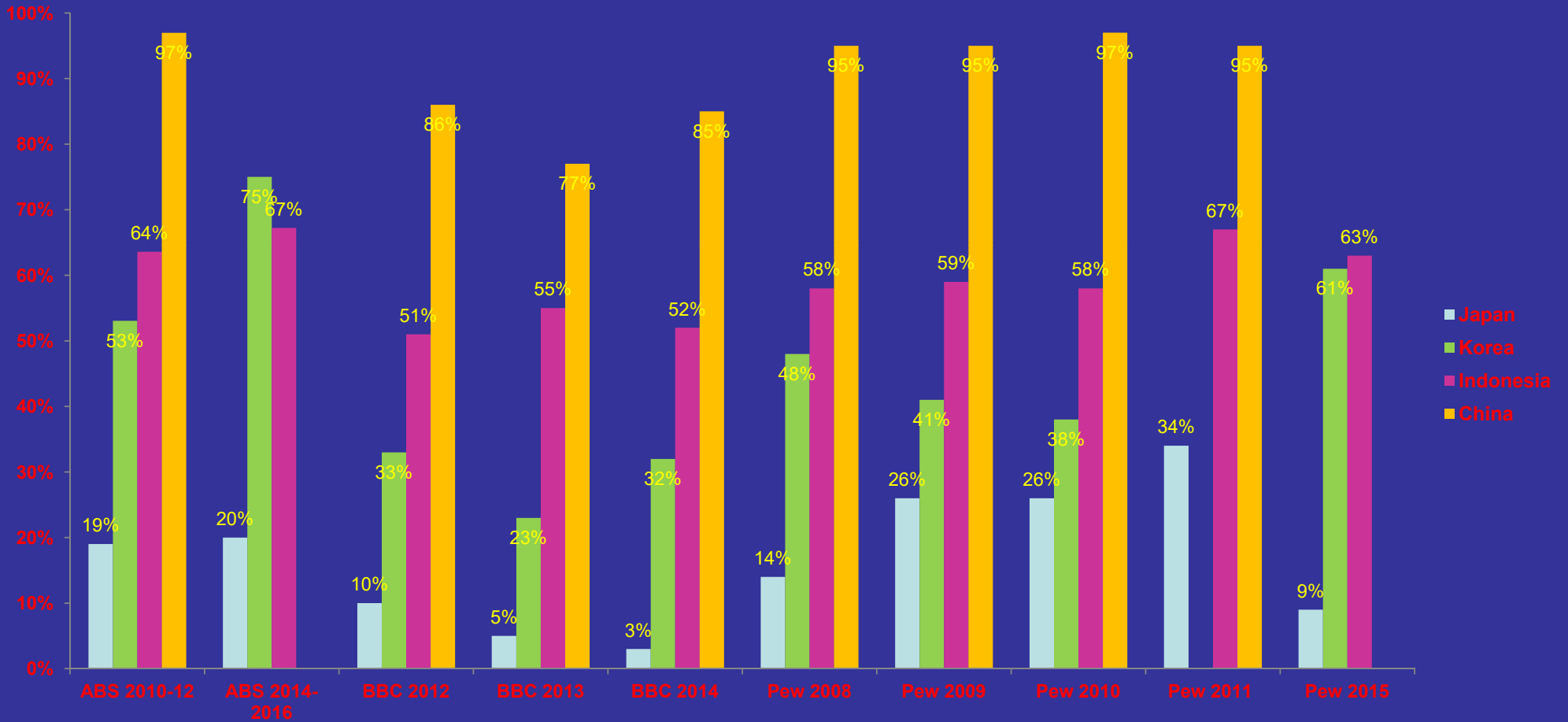


Figure 5: Comparing Different Surveys

Positive Image of China



Widespread Recognition of China's Rise

- The rise of China has been recognized by the great majority of East Asians.
- Its growing influence in the region is more intensively felt by countries that are geographically or culturally proximate to China.
- The risk and benefit brought about by expanding economic ties with China has distributed very unevenly.
- As a result, popular views over the nature of China's impact have become polarized especially in the Northeast Asia countries where laborers, farmers and office workers feel the economic squeeze more strongly.

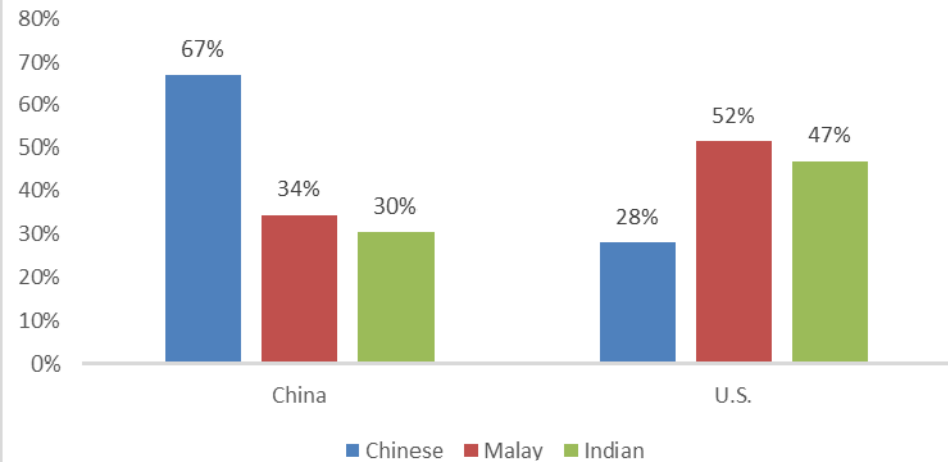
Gains and Losses under Xi

- The perception of the declining influence of the United States has become more widespread in Thailand and Malaysia.
- China's more assertive approach toward the dispute over the South China Sea has evidently eroded China's image in the Philippines and Vietnam.

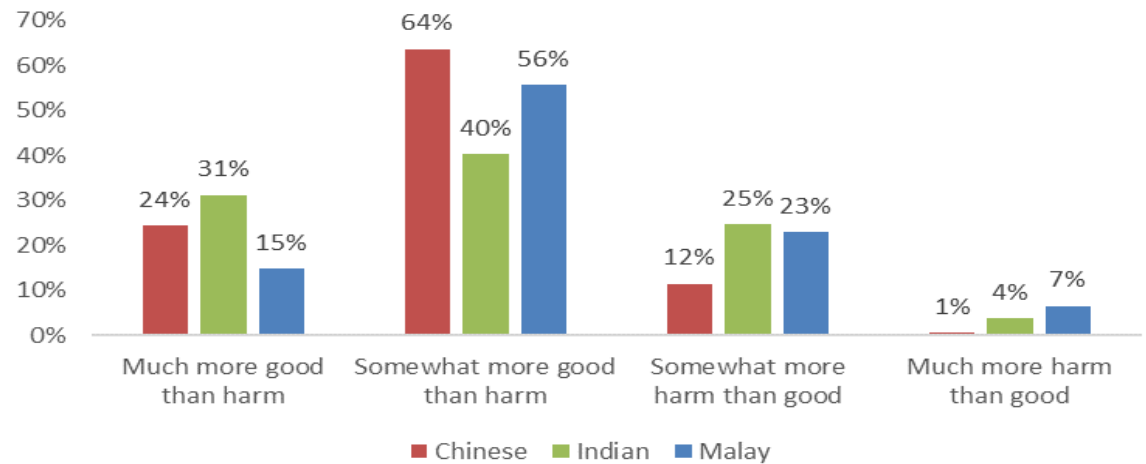


In Malaysia, the Malay hold the least favorable view about the US impact on the region

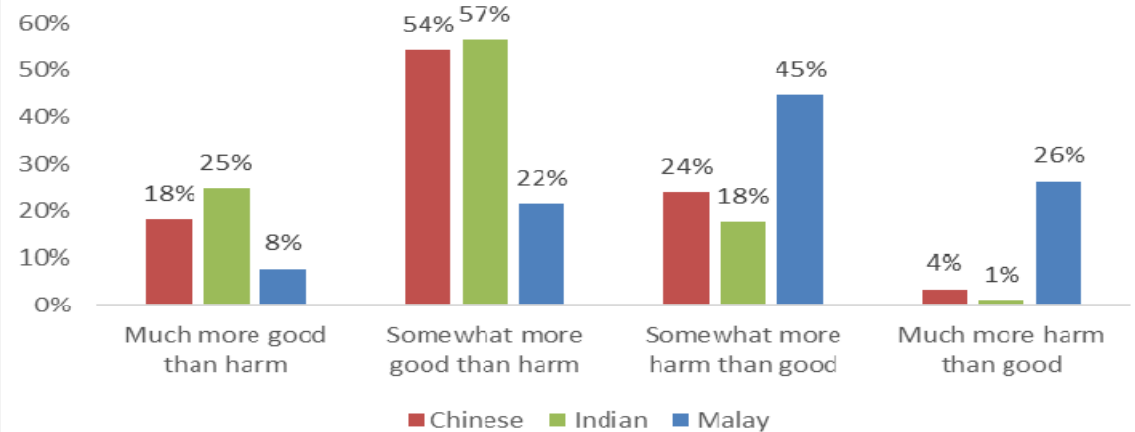
Malaysia: Most Influential Country
Comparison of Ethnic Groups



Malaysia: China's Impact on the Region
Comparison of Ethnic Groups



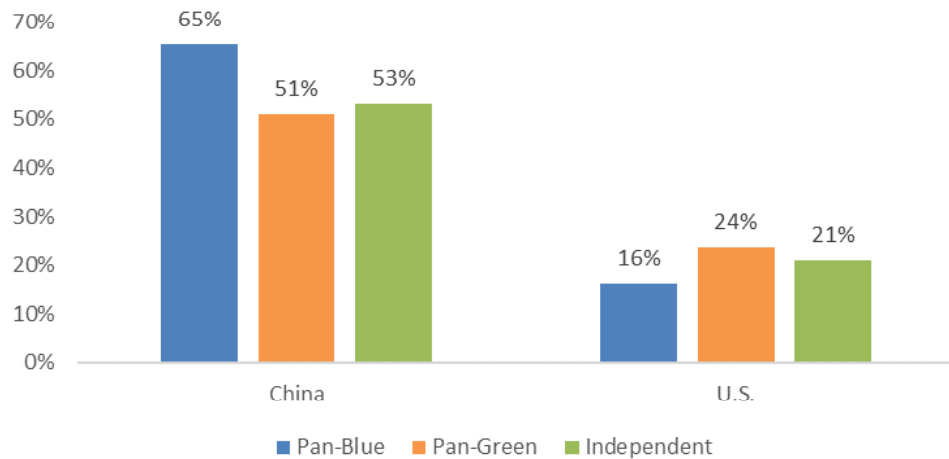
Malaysia: US' Impact on the Region
Comparison of Ethnic Groups



Source: Asian Barometer Wave 4

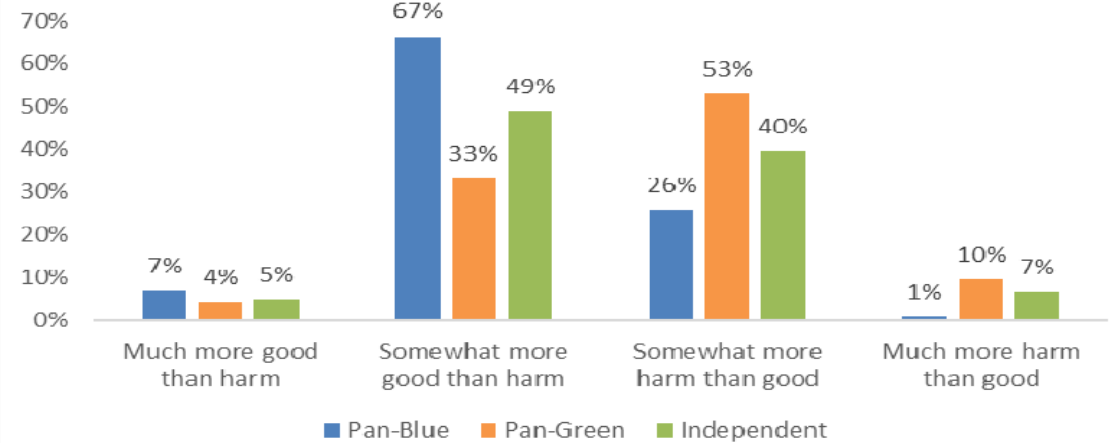
Perception of China is entangled with Taiwan's domestic cleavage

Taiwan: Most Influential Country
Comparison of Party Identity

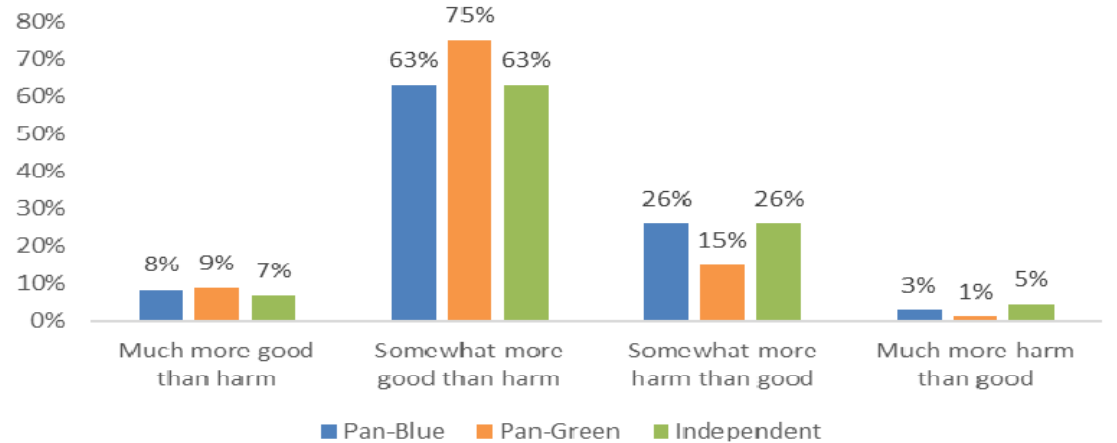


Source: ABS Wave 4

Taiwan: China's Impact on the Region
Comparison of Party Identity



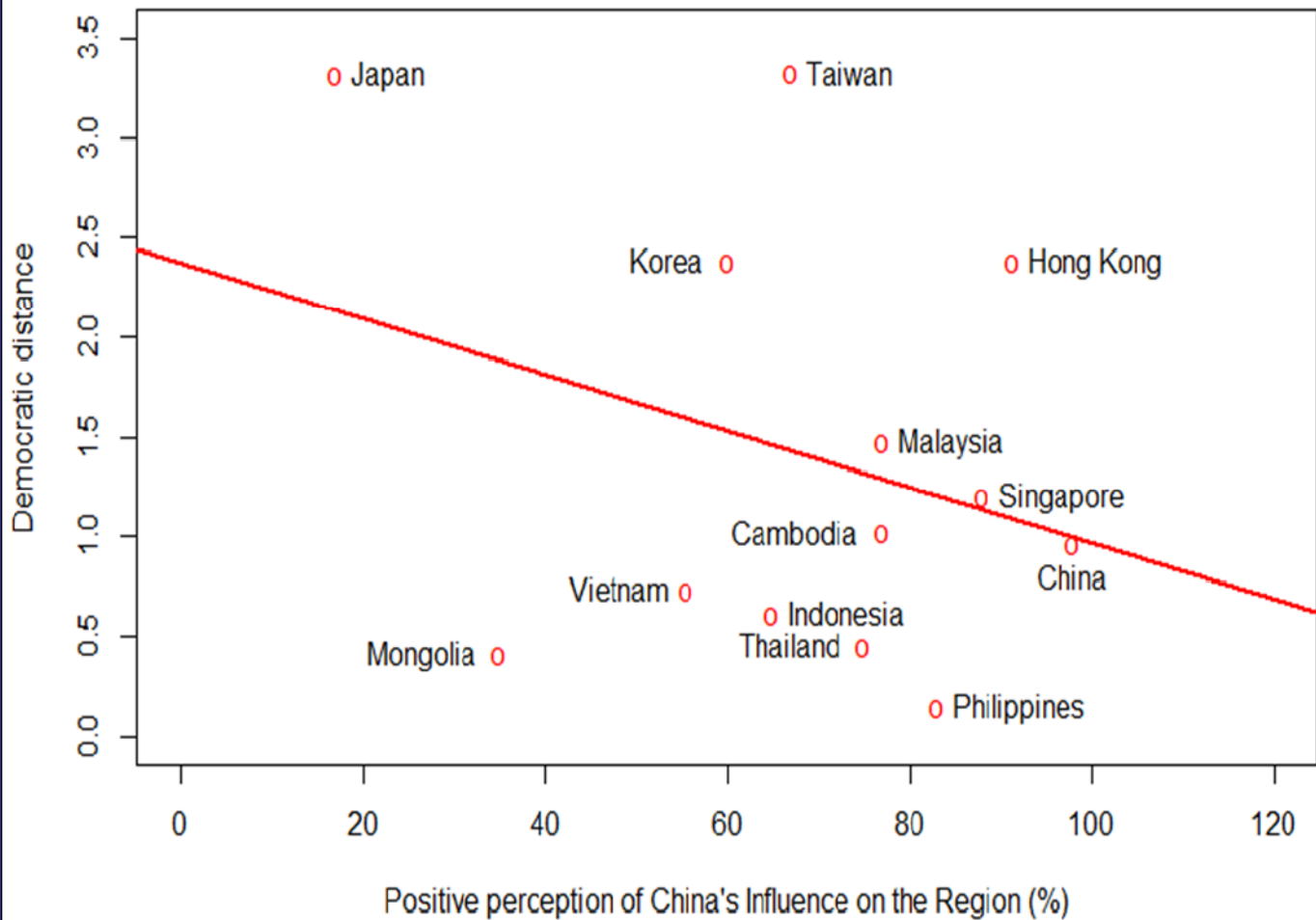
Taiwan: US' Impact on the Region
Comparison of Party Identity



What Drives Asian View toward a Rising China

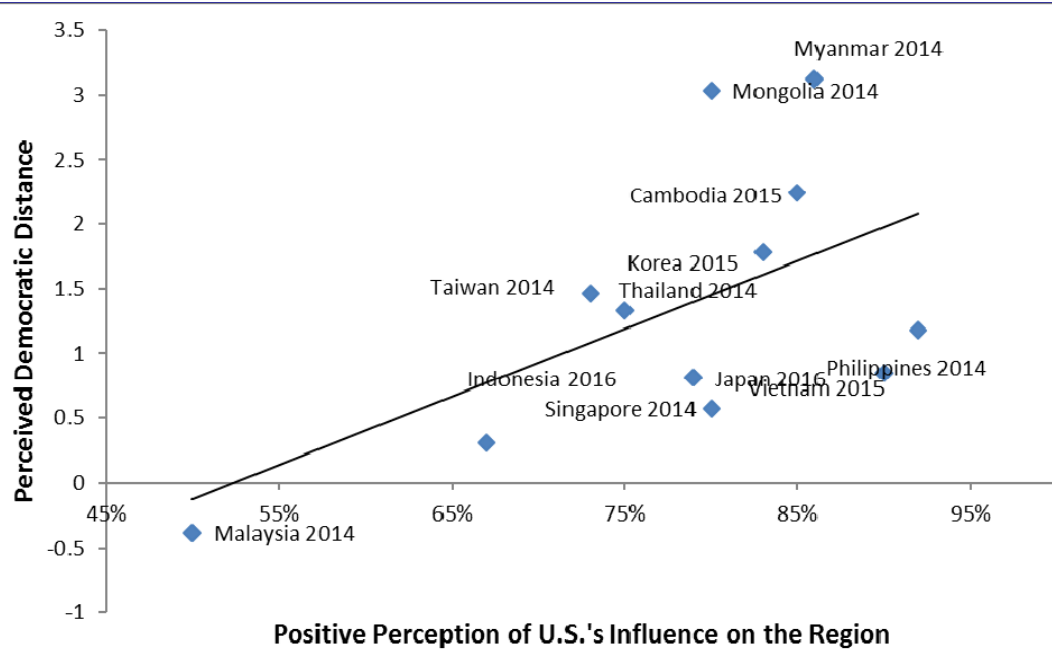
Three Competing Explanations

- Geopolitical and Security Consideration
 - History of war or military conflict (past)
 - Territorial dispute (present)
 - Security threat (future)
- Economic Consideration:
 - Economic gains for loss
 - Openness vs. protectionism
 - Economic dependency
- Ideological and Cultural Consideration
 - Political values
 - Perceived political convergence vs. divergence
 - Cultural affinity vs. cultural distance



Five years ago, the wider the perceived democratic distance between China and one's own country, the less favorable view about China's influence.

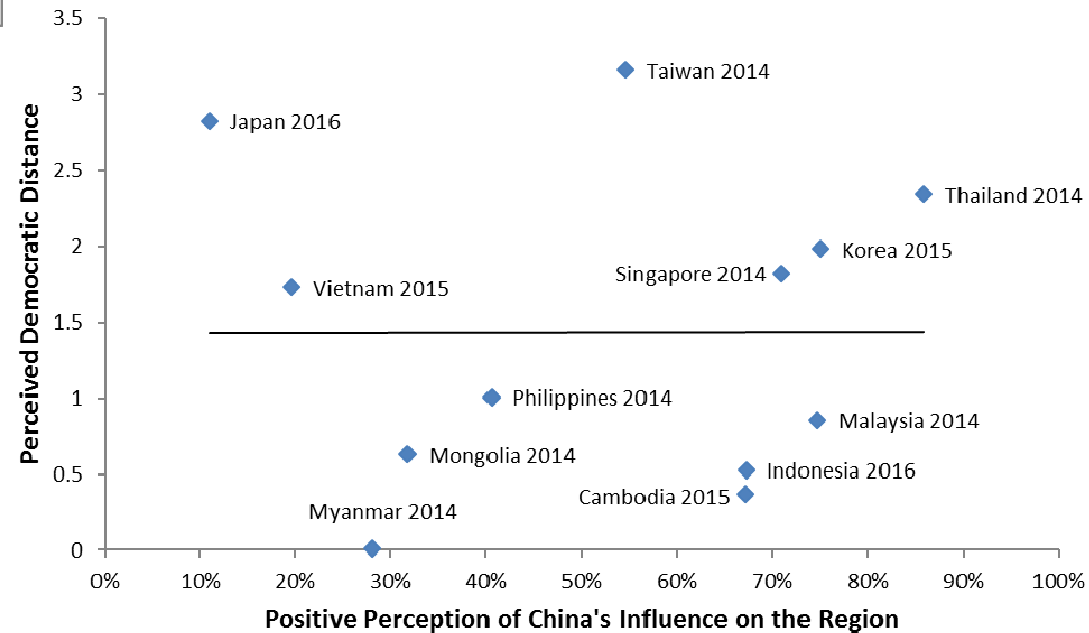
Based on 10-point scale of democratic rating. ABS Wave 3

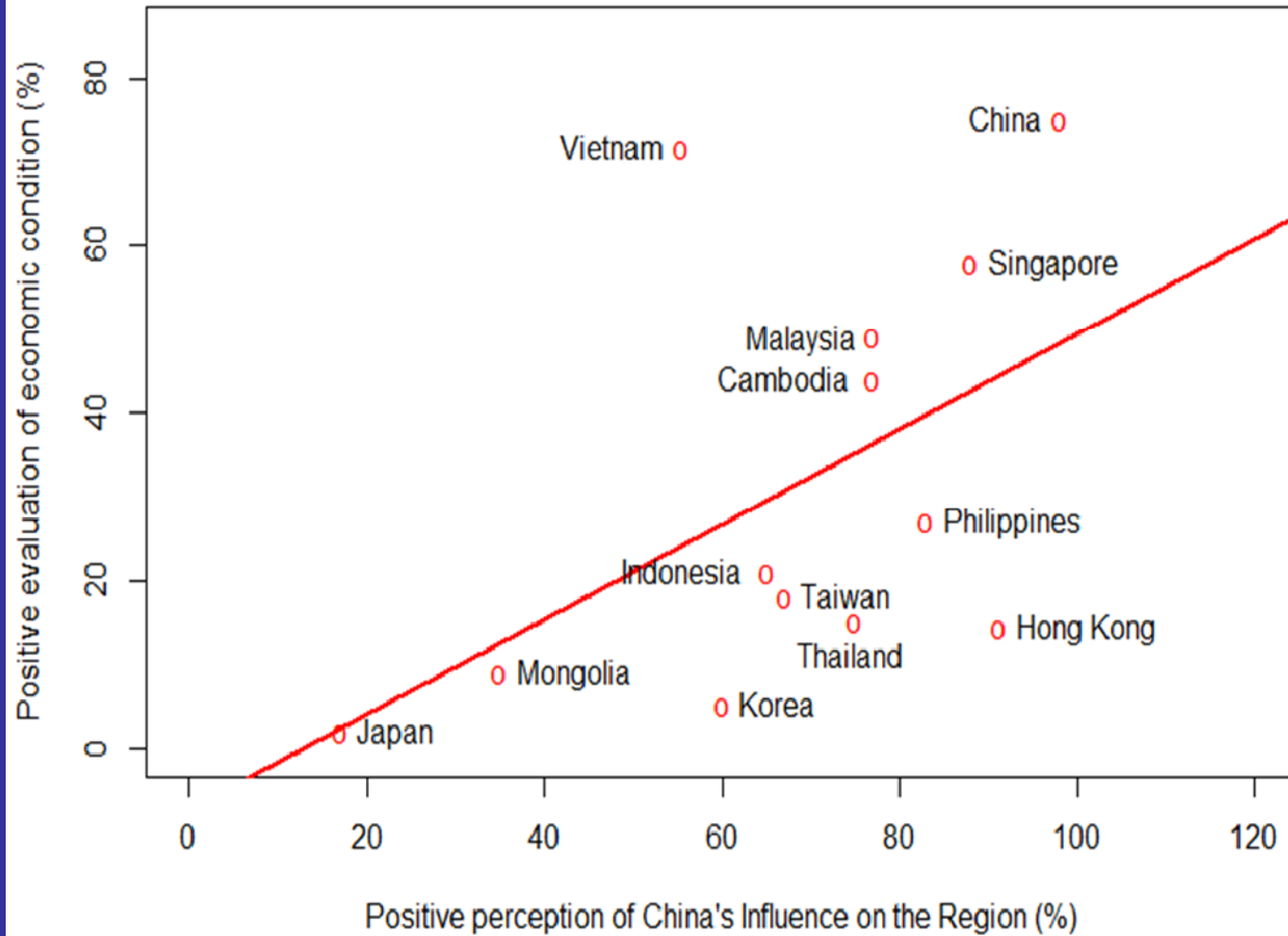


Countries that perceive the U.S. more democratic than own countries tend to have a higher percentage of positive view of the U.S.

However the importance of the perceived democratic distance between China and one's own country has become weakened in recent years

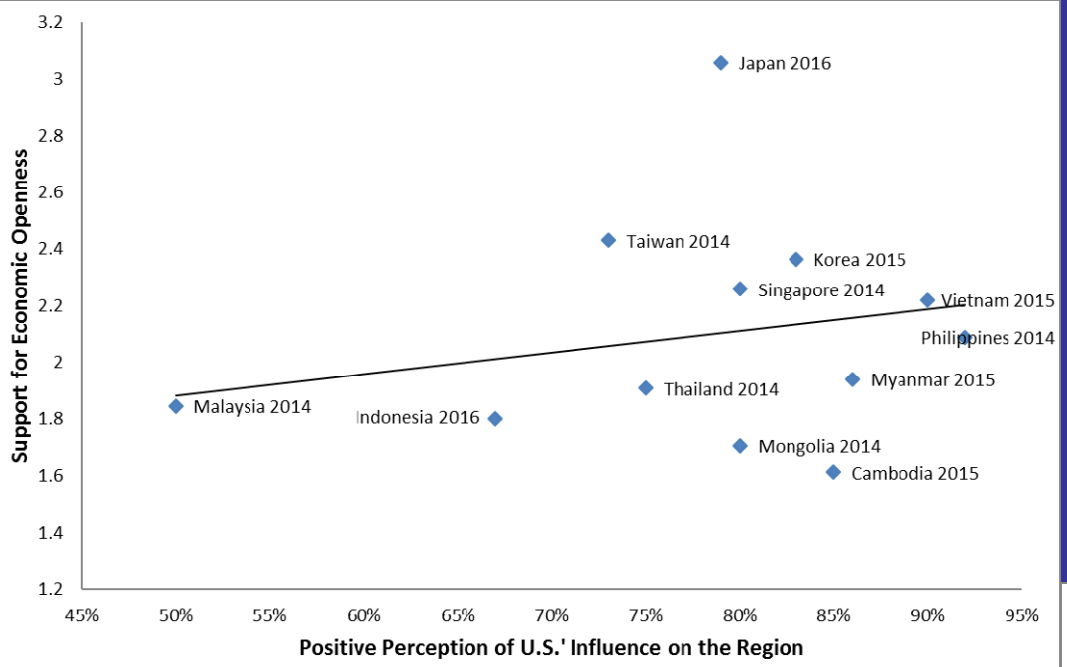
Source: ABS Wave 4





The more people offering a upbeat assessment of the country's economic condition, the more people holding favorable view about China's influence.

ABS Wave 3

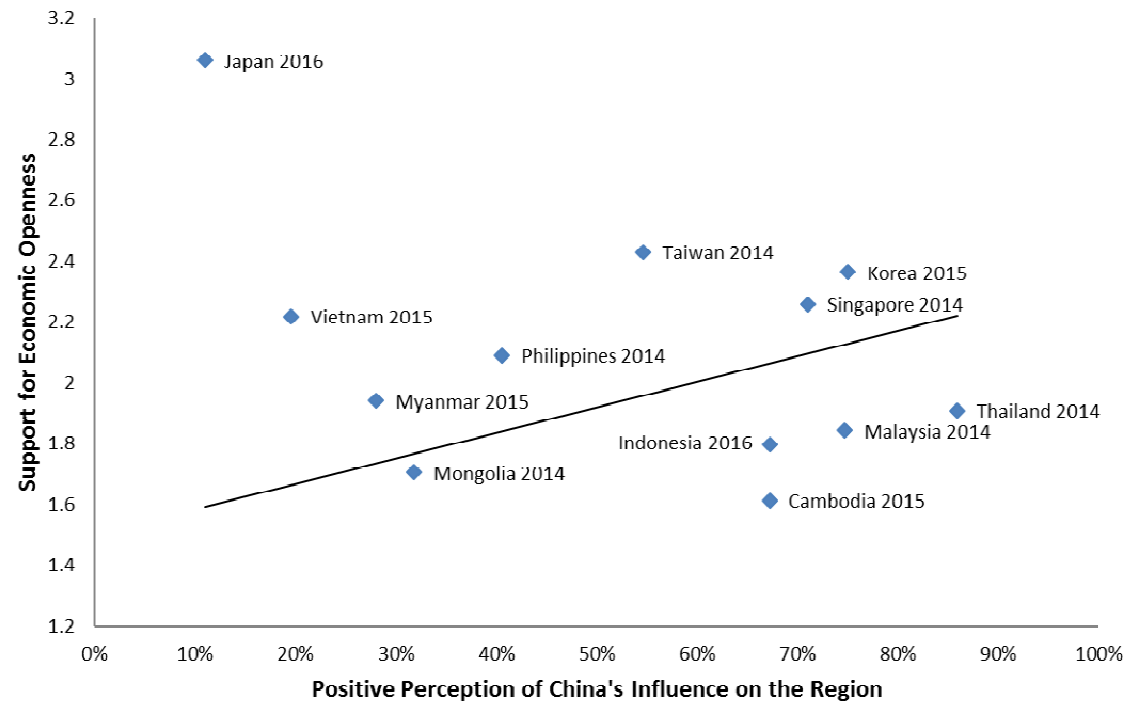


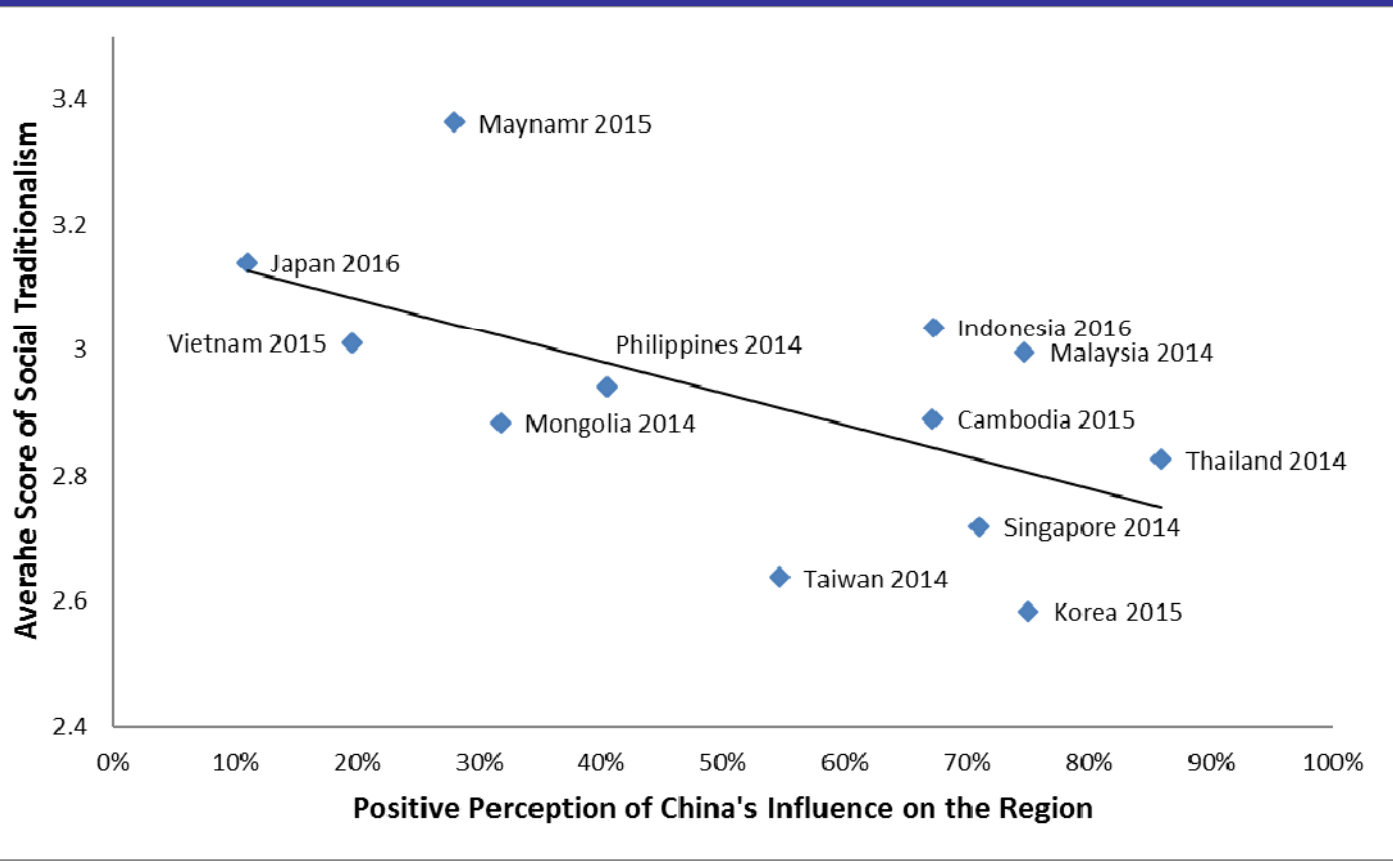
Support for economic protectionism contributes to a negative perception of both China and the United States.

Source: ABS Wave 4

China: Source of competitive pressure

US: Architect of liberal economic order and globalization





Societies with more people embracing traditional Asian values are more likely to view China's influence more positively

Source: ABS Wave 4

Correlation Analysis: ABS Wave 3

Rubric of Cultural Explanation

	Viewing China's Impact on the Region as Positive	Viewing China's Influence on Our Country as Positive
1. Perceived Democratic Distance	-.144 **	-.166 **
2. Social Traditionalism	.067 **	.131 **
3. Liberal Democratic Values	-.167 **	-.235 **
4. Support for Democracy	.020 *	.032 **

Rubric of Economic Explanation

1. Support for Economic Openness	.123 **	.085 **
2. Evaluating Country's Economic Condition	.323 **	.364 **
3. Subjective Household Income	.100**	.079 **
4. Currently Employed	.047 **	.049 **

Correlation Analysis: ABS Wave 4

Rubric of Cultural Explanation

	Viewing China's Impact on the Region as Positive	Viewing China's Influence on Our Country as Positive
1. Perceived Democratic Distance	-.035 **	-.405 **
2. Social Traditionalism	-2.07 **	.058 **
3. Liberal Democratic Values	.327**	.115 **
4. Support for Democracy	.313 **	-.058 **

Rubric of Economic Explanation

1. Support for Economic Openness	.266 **	- .227**
2. Evaluating Country's Economic Condition	.164 **	- .186 **
3. Subjective Household Income	.026 **	.031 **
4. Currently Employed	.023 **	- .063 **

Many Asian People Are Not Prepared to Take Side In US-China Strategic Competition

Country	Correlation
Mongolia	.174**
Malaysia	.320**
Philippines	0.053
Singapore	.395**
Thailand	.495**
Taiwan	.458**

Many Asian people either take a benign view about both U.S. and China or a skeptical view toward both.

Correlation coefficients between respondents' view of the nature US influence and that of China, ABS IV

Summarize Major Findings So Far

Political Values Matter

- The most important variables predicating a respondent's view on the rise of China are one's democratic rating and political values.
- People who think that their country's level of democratic level is significantly more advanced than that of China tend to view China's rise in a negative way.
- People who are less conscious of the difference in political system between China and their own country are more likely to consider China as a benign superpower and evaluate China's influence in a positive way.

Economic Explanation

- A respondent's view on the rise of China is also driven by his/her assessment of the country's overall economic condition and/or his/her attitude toward economic openness.
- People who give an upbeat assessment of the overall economy are more likely to view China as a benign superpower.
- People who oppose economic openness tend to view China as a threat, rather than opportunity. They also tend to blame China for their country's economic troubles.

Structural Variables Are More Powerful

- The explanatory power of structural variables are more powerful.
 - Geopolitical tension
 - Trade dependence
 - Cultural distance (albeit its influence has declined)
- Contrary to the liberal view, anxiety toward a rising China tend to go up when a country becomes highly dependent on trade with China.
- The explanatory power of political ideology in terms of liberal value orientation and perceived democratic distance at individual level remains robust.
- The explanatory power of economic consideration is still strong at individual level (especially for ABS Wave 4).

Challenge and Opportunity for the next President of the United States

Challenge

- To exert its leadership role in the region, the U.S. is facing the headwind of a widespread perception of the declining influence of the U.S. vs. the rising power of China. This expectation will make the US policy commitment less persuasive.
- The Obama's "Pivot" to Asia has thwarted the trend in the perception of American declining influence, but it did not reverse it in a significant way.

Opportunity

- The US role is far more welcome and appreciated in great majority of Asian countries with the exception of Thailand and the Muslim countries.
- With the growing apprehension of China's strategic intent, the US role will be viewed as indispensable. In some cases, China has pushed its neighbors into the arms of the United States.

Further Policy Implications

- Our overall empirical findings are compatible with the long-running policy pursued by a great majority of East Asian countries.
- Contrary to the theoretical prediction of the neo-realists, most of East Asian countries would avoid pursuing either a clear-cut balancing or bandwagon strategy.
- In the face of the intensified strategic competition between China and the United States, most of them avoid having to choose one side at the obvious expense of the other.
- Whenever possible they opt for maximizing benefits from deepening economic ties with China while maintaining a close security relation with the United States for hedging potential risks.