



How East Asians View A Rising China

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China's Effort of National Image Management

- 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 policy agenda.
- Hu Jingtao in his official address told the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party that China needed to enhance “the soft power of its culture.”

China's Charm Offense

Over the last decade Chinese government has invested billions of dollars to cultivate and upgrade its soft power resources.

- Confucius Institutes around the world
- A 24-hour CCTV Cable News Channel
- The 2008 Beijing Olympics
- The 2010 Shanghai Expo
- Boao Forum for Asia

Growing Popular Awareness

- There has been growing interest among ordinary citizens throughout Asia in developments in China.
- China-related topics top Asian agendas and fill television programs and newspaper pages.
- Most Asian people were tremendously impressed by China's miraculous economic growth and amazed by the fact that China's GDP has passed Japan in 2010 and now ranks the second largest economy in the world.
- 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.

How China Is Perceived By 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 China on regular basis. However, the Pew Survey has so far covered only a few East Asian countries and in its most recent survey of 2012 only Japan and China
- A recent BBC Global Scan poll on how the world views China's influence is viewed by other countries also 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 thirteen 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	Period	Sample Size
1	Taiwan	January-February 2010	1592
2	Philippines	March 2010	1200
3	Mongolia	April -May 2010	1210
4	Singapore	April-August 2010	1000
5	Vietnam	September-October 2010	1191
6	Thailand	August-December 2010	1512
7	Korea	May 2011	1207
8	Indonesia	May 2011	1550
9	Mainland China	July-October 2011	3473
10	Malaysia	October-November 2011	1214
11	Japan	December 2011	1880
12	Cambodia	February-March 2012	1200
13	Hong Kong	September 2012	1103

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

Country	China	United States
Vietnam	69%	16%
Taiwan	67%	21%
Mongolia	66%	13%
Japan	61%	29%
Singapore	60%	28%
Korea	56%	32%
China	44%	25%
Thailand	42%	44%
Malaysia	36%	44%
Cambodia	26%	58%
Indonesia	23%	41%
Philippines	17%	66%
Southeast Asia's Average	39%	42%
East Asia's Average	47%	35%
Data source: ABS Wave III (2010-2012)		

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

Country	China	United States
Korea	83%	9%
Taiwan	82%	10%
Singapore	73%	13%
Mongolia	71%	9%
Vietnam	70%	16%
Japan	65%	13%
China	59%	11%
Thailand	56%	31%
Malaysia	44%	26%
Cambodia	43%	34%
Indonesia	31%	33%
Philippines	17%	65%
Southeast Asia's Average	48%	31%
East Asia's Average	58%	22%

Figure 1: Divergence in Perception

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

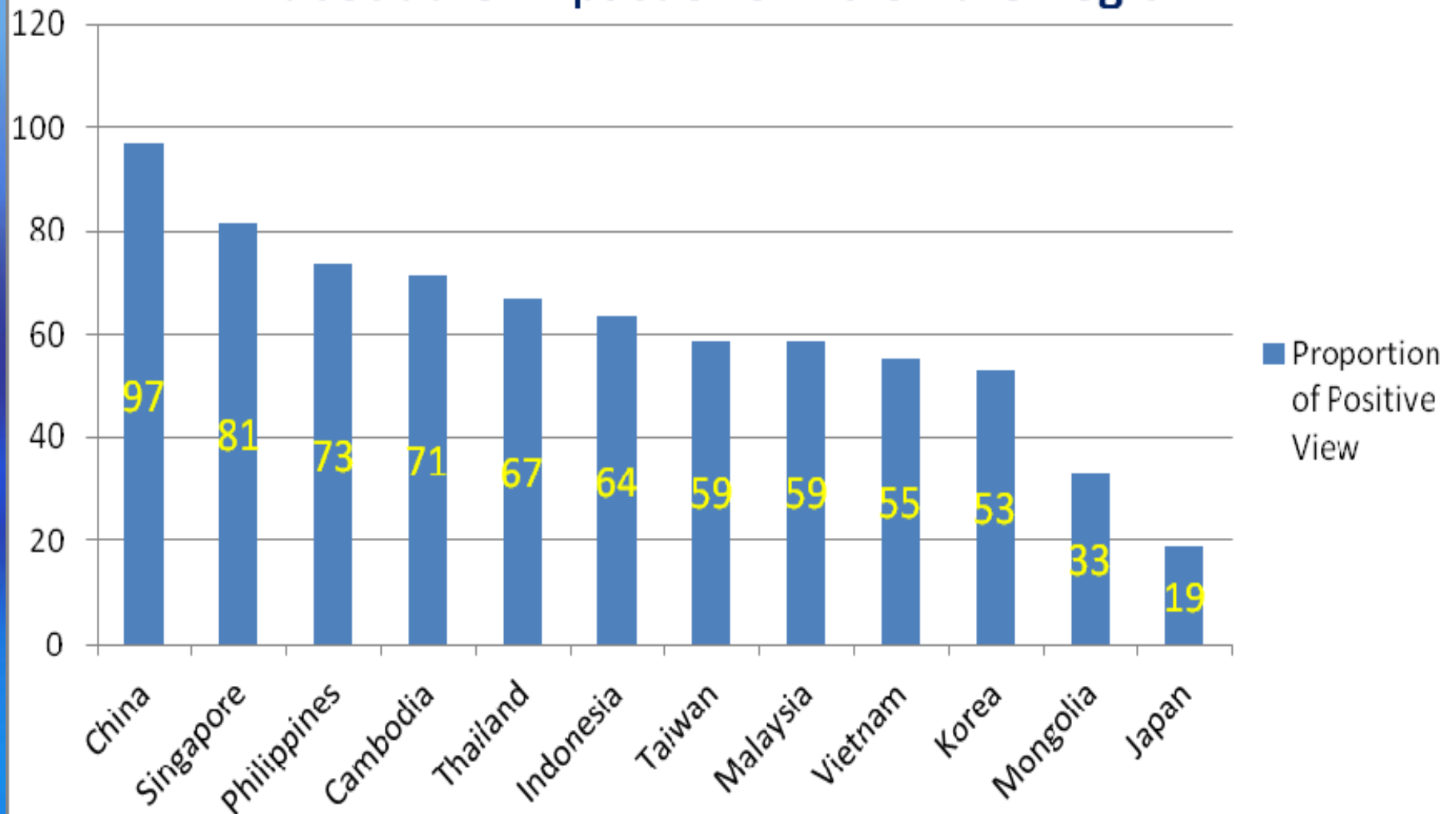


Figure 2. East Asians' Perception of China's Influence on Their Own Country

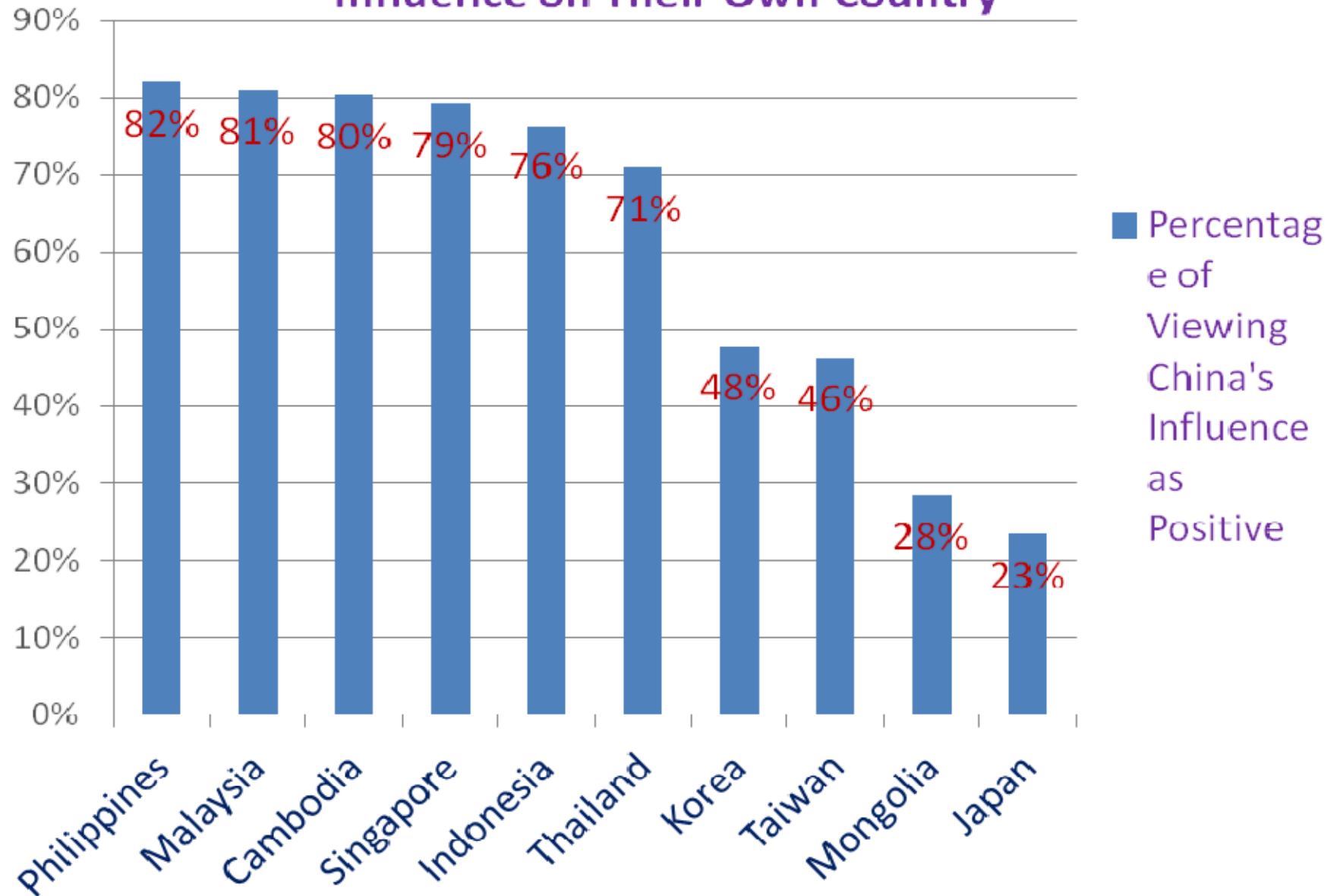
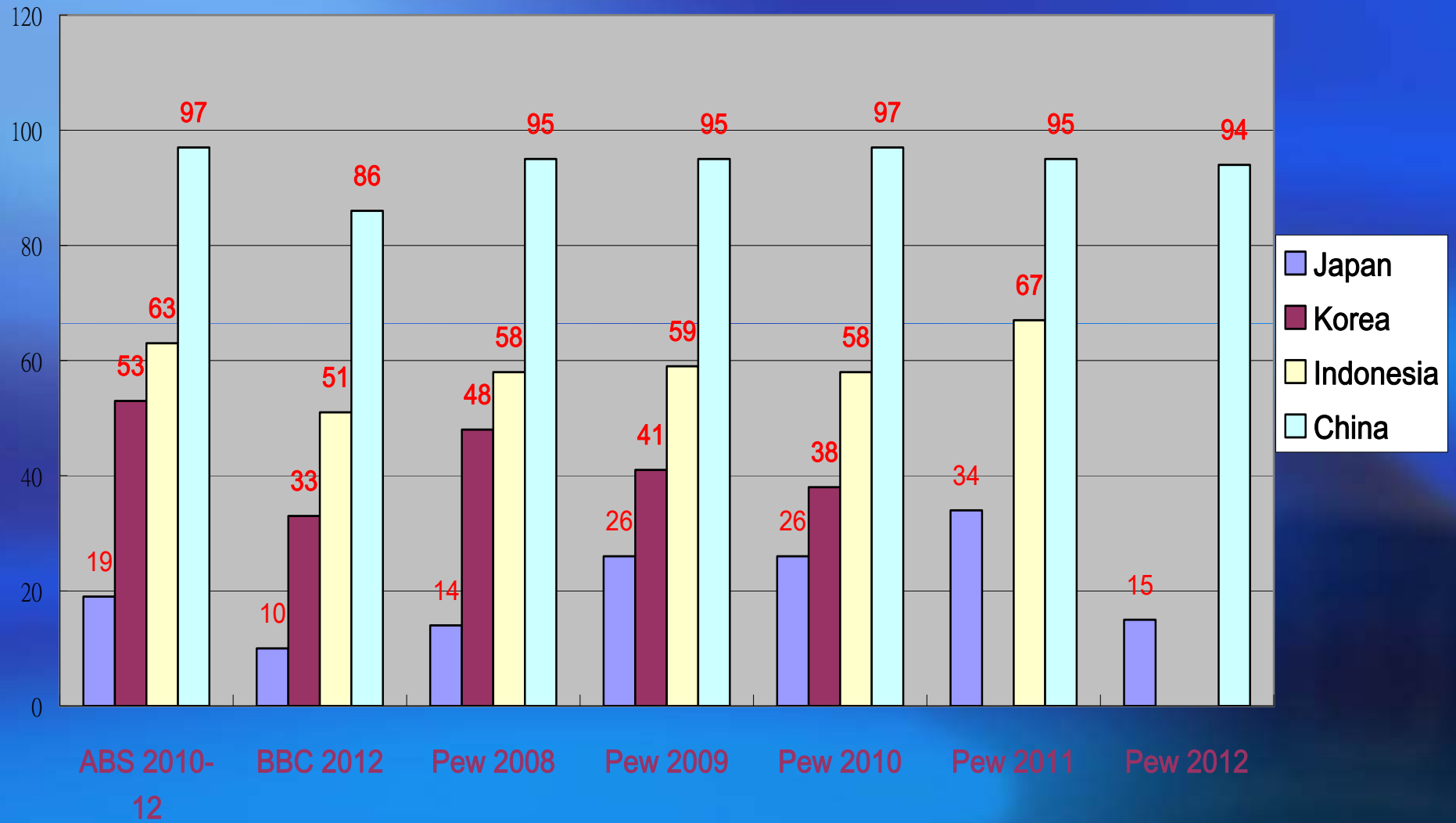


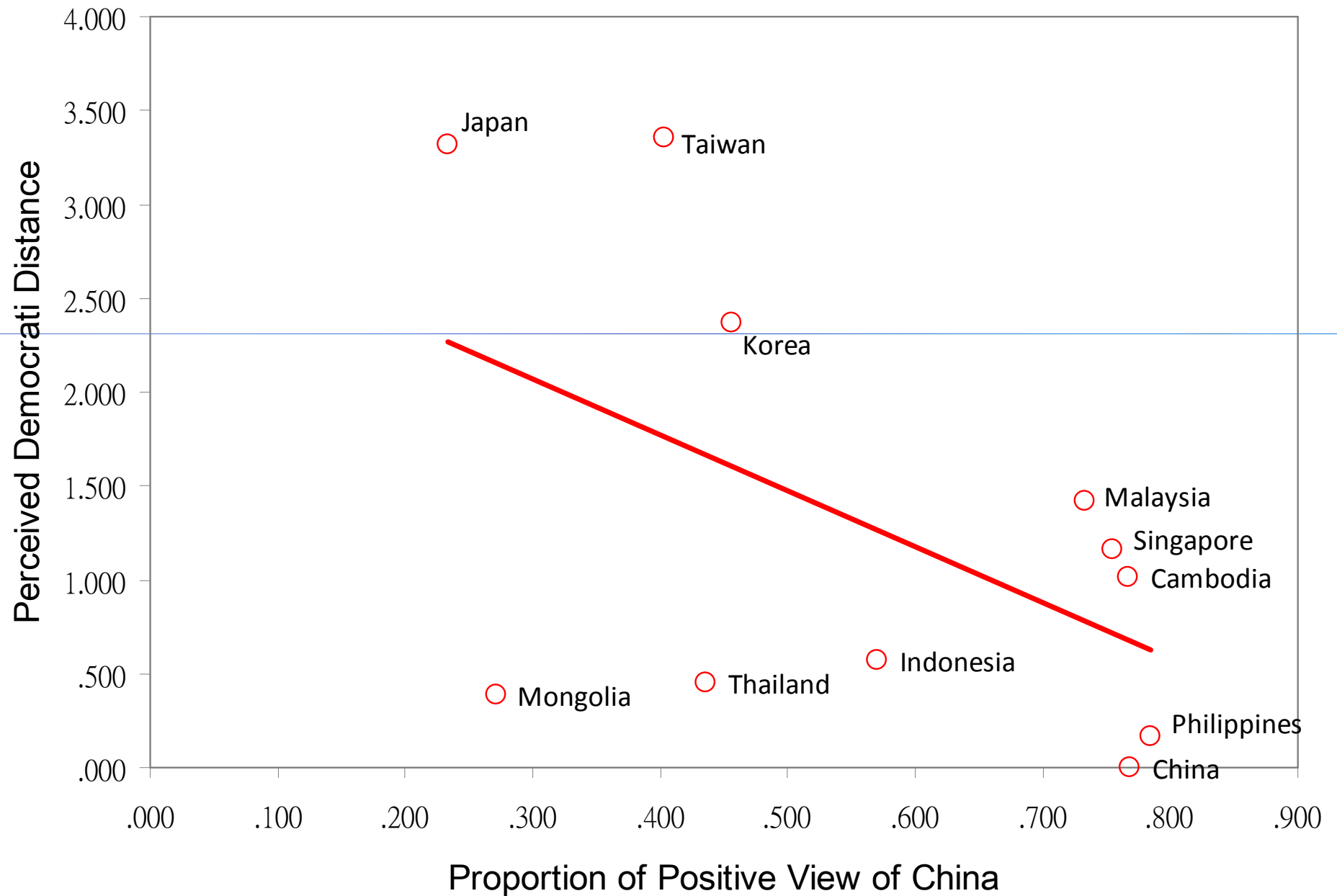
Figure 3: Positive Imange of China: Comparing Different Surveys



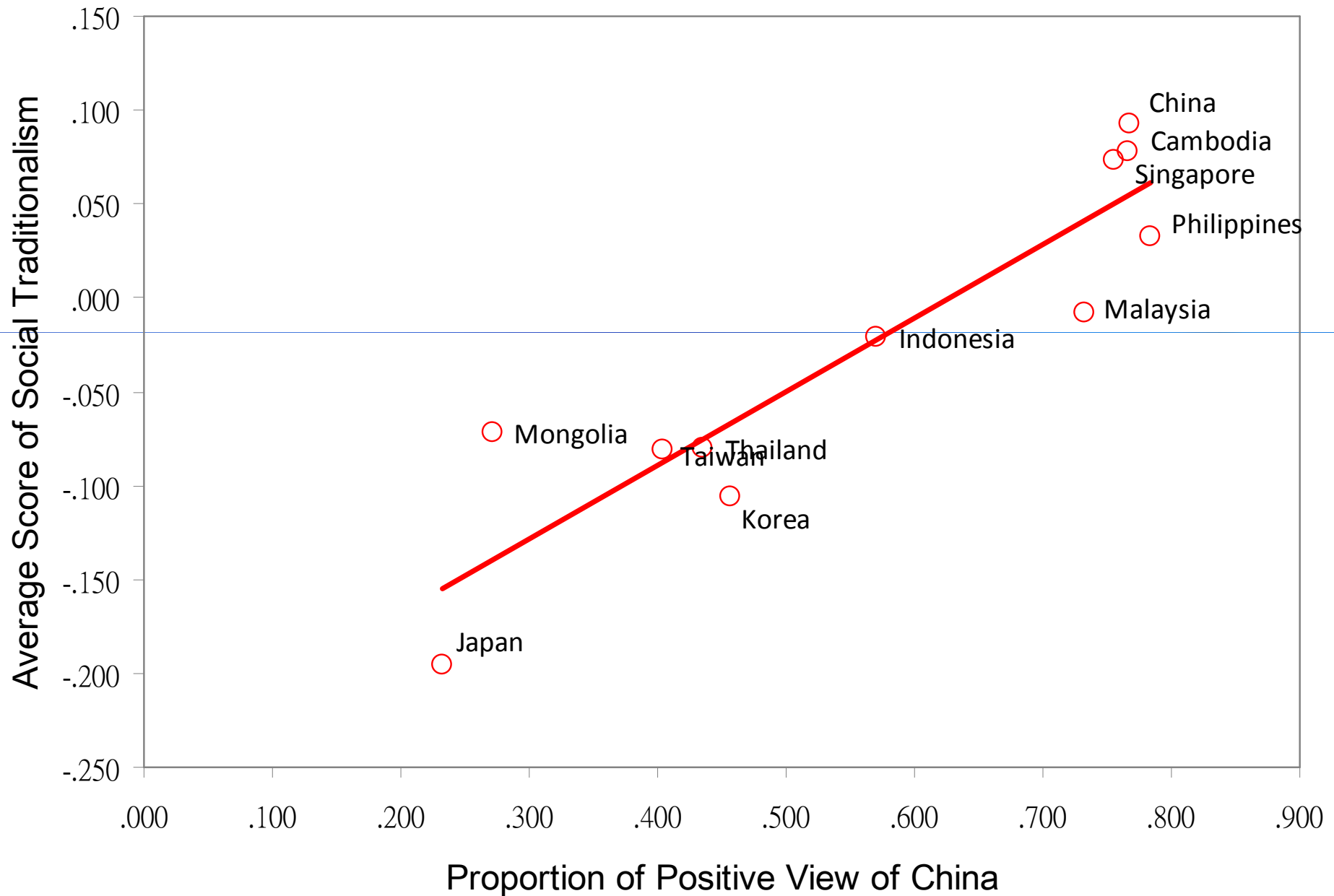
Three Competing Explanations

- Geopolitical and Security Consideration
 - Military threat
 - Territorial dispute
 - Competition over scarce resources
- Economic Consideration:
 - Opportunity vs. Challenge
 - Compatible vs. Competitive
 - Interdependence vs. Dependency
- Ideological and Cultural Consideration
 - Convergence vs. divergence over core values
 - Cultural affinity vs. cultural distance

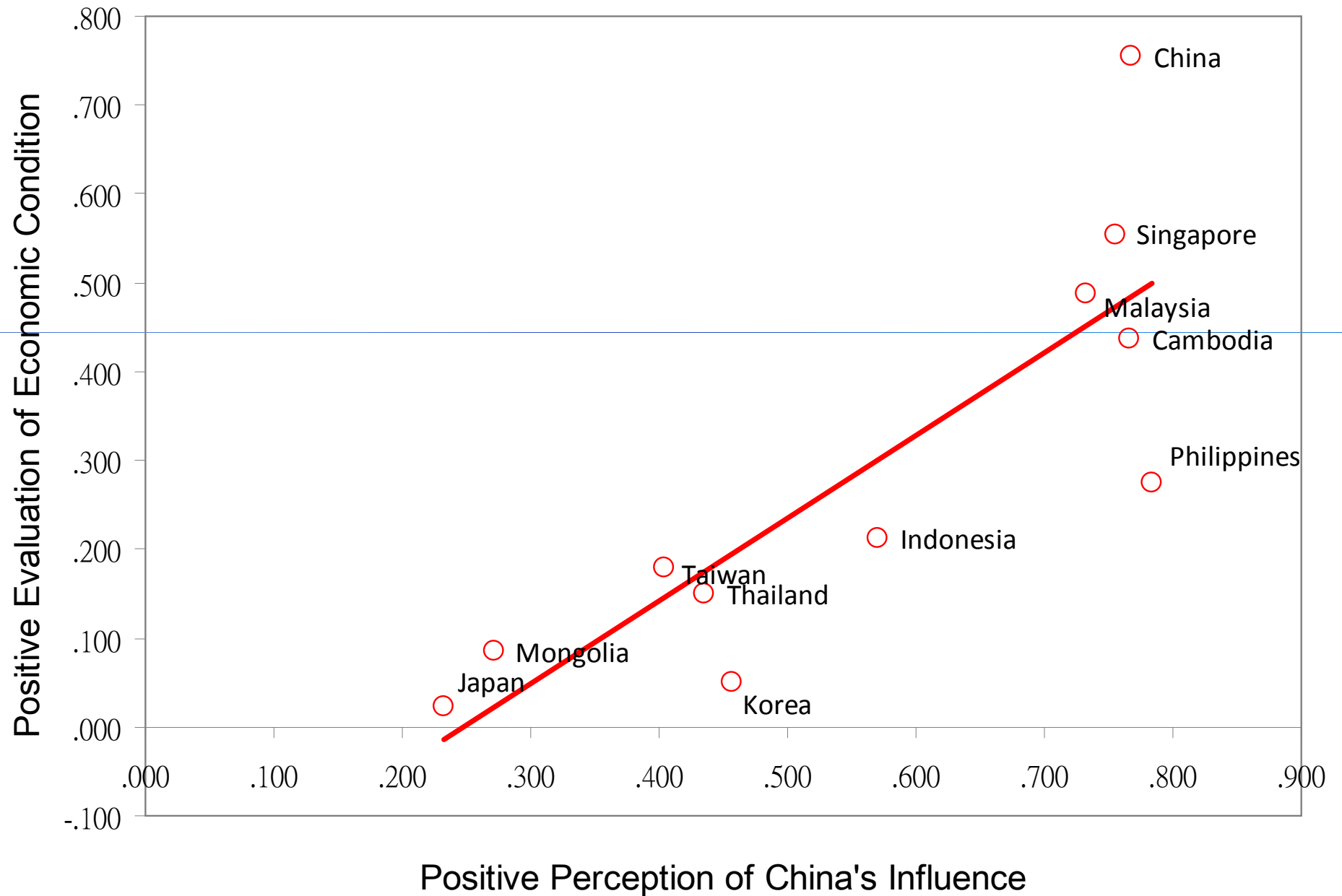
Democratic Distance



Cultural Distance



Economic Evaluation



Support for Economic Openness

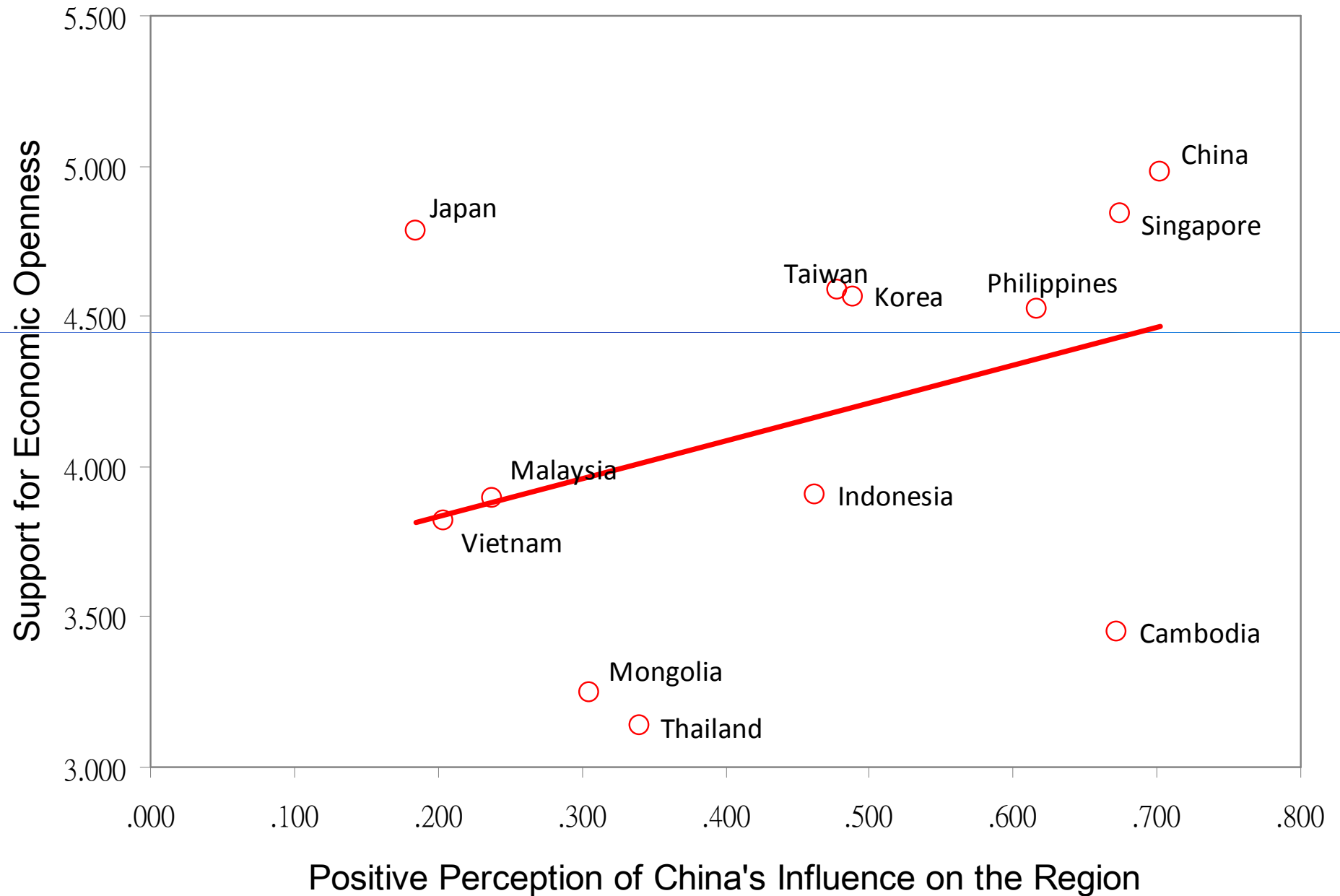


Table 3: Correlation Analysis

	Viewing China's Impact on the Region as Positive	Viewing China's Influence on Our Country as Positive
Rubric of Cultural Explanation		
1. Perceived Democratic Distance	-.149**	-.180**
2. Social Traditionalism	.137**	.177**
3. Liberal Democratic Values	-.106**	-.184**
4. Support for Democracy	.029**	.028**
Rubric of Economic Explanation		
1. Support for Economic Openness	.087**	.049**
2. Evaluating Country's Economic Condition	.238**	.305**
3. Subjective Household Income	.075**	.066**
4. Currently Employed	.048**	.043**
Social Background		
1. Age	-.021*	-.020*
2. Education	-.055**	-.117**

Economic Explanation

- At the individual level, the most important variable predicating a respondent's view on the rise of China is his/her assessment of the overall economic condition.
- People who give an upbeat assessment of the overall economy are more likely to view China as a benign superpower and consider its influence as largely positive.
- People who are unhappy with the overall economy tend to view China's rise in a negative way. In a sense, people tend to blame China for their country's economic malaise.

Political Values Matter As Well

- East Asians' view on China's rise is also driven by one's political perception and beliefs.
- 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.

Conclusion: 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.
- At the same time, there is the phenomenon of “too close for comfort”.

Southeast Asians are more susceptible to China's charm offense.

- Southeast Asians generally speaking hold a more sanguine view about the rise of China as their attitudes toward China are driven more by economic consideration and less by security concern or ideological distance.
- In a sense, At the same time, the risk and benefit brought about by expanding economic ties with China has distributed very unevenly in many East Asian countries and thus created polarized views over the nature of China's impact especially in the Northeast Asia countries where laborers, farmers and office workers feel the economic squeeze more strongly.

Policy Implications

- The empirical findings we presented above are largely compatible with the long-running policy pursued by a great majority of East Asian countries.
- Contrary to the theoretical prediction of the neorealists, most of them avoid pursuing either a balancing or bandwagoning 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.