

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

**Panel IV: Will China Become a Model for Development in  
East Asia?**

**[Paper 6]**

**Against the Current: Understanding the Sources of Change  
in an Age of Sino-US Competition for Soft Power in East  
Asia.**

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Paper prepared for delivery at the conference "How East Asians View the Rise of China", organized by the Program for East Asia Democratic Studies, Institute for the Advanced Studies of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University, and co-sponsored by the Institute of Arts and Humanities, Shanghai Jiao Tong University.



# 1 Introduction: Looking for the Seeds of Change

This paper tries to identify the types of East Asians who are "against the current" with the data made available by the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS). By "against the current," we mean the kind of attitude that favors the development model of a certain country or approves of its influence in East Asia when the attitude holder actually predicts the other one to enjoy the most influence in the near future.

Why is it important to know who these people are? First of all, they constitute the micro-foundation of a country's real soft power. When one chooses the model of a country he or she regards as East Asia's future leader, it is difficult to know whether it is chosen for its hard or soft power. Focusing on the "against the current" attitude holders, however, allows us to separate the effects of hard and soft powers apart. Second, in the context of the hotly-debated diffusion of China's development model— often characterized by a combination of a market economy and an authoritarian government – (Ambrosio, 2010), identifying the features of these "recalcitrants" helps us understand, in addition to the more macro-level factors in geopolitics or international economy, at the individual level, who will be welcoming the Beijing consensus vis-a-vis the Washington consensus. Third, against the background of the Sino-US competition for influence in East Asia as well as other parts of the world, answering the question specified above also help us assess the state of the US soft power as opposed to China's in East Asia.

The way our research question is posed differs substantially from those broached in the literature. While China's promotion of its own soft power – e.g., the establishment of the Confucius Institutes worldwide and the harmonious world campaign – has received lots of scholarly attention, the works that are based on solid and scientific survey evidence are in fact rare. Within this small section of the literature, the reports published by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in collaboration with the East Asian Institute (EAI) in both 2008 and 2009<sup>1</sup> conclude that "China still lags the United States in Soft Power in Asia" with the survey data collected in mainland China, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the United States over the period of the first half of 2008. The problem with this research is that both reports are entirely descriptive and they do not connect their measurements of soft power of major powers in Asia with both East Asians' assessment of the current strategic situation in the region and their predictions of the potential Asian leaders in the future. Another study by Linley et al. (2012) asks a similar question "Who's afraid of the dragon?"

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<sup>1</sup>The project was conducted by Christopher B. Whitney (Project Director) and David Shambaugh (Senior Project Consultant).

in Asia and uses a more sophisticated method to test various theories<sup>2</sup> that try to explain how individuals in different nations view China's rise<sup>3</sup>.

The International Relations (IR) Section in the ABS questionnaire provides exactly the information necessary for this question to be answered. The IR section provides, first of all, the information about East Asians' perception of balance of power in East Asia nowadays. (Q 156: Which country has the most influence in Asia?) Furthermore, it also asks East Asians to predict which country will be the next Asian leader in 10 years. (Q 158: In ten years, which country will have the most influence in Asia?) This adds a dynamic dimension to the data and allows us to explore how East Asians react to China's charm offensive given their predictions about the future in this region.

More specific to soft-power-related questions, the IR section of the ABS also provides measurements of soft power. First, the survey asks East Asians their views on the intensively-debated issue on the development model: "Which country should be a model for our country's future development?" (Q 159). Moreover, it also has information about East Asians' normative assessment of China's growing influence at both regional (Q 157 and Q 157a) and country levels (Q 161 Generally speaking, the influence China on our country is?). With this rich set of questions in the ABS survey, we are able to understand the attitude of the "against the current" East Asians and their characteristics.

## 2 Data and Method of Analysis

This section introduces the survey data we retrieve from the ABS and also explains the method we use to find the characteristics of the "against the current" attitude holders. Arguably, individuals' attitudes towards China's rise and its "charm offensive" are determined by factors at both country- and individual-level. In the following subsections, we first provide some first cut analyses on country-level factors based on their descriptive statistics and then move on to explaining how our regression model is specified.

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<sup>2</sup>This paper will piggyback on Linley et al. (2012) for a basic set of covariates to be included on the right-hand side of our regression equation, and add more regressors to this set that are made available by the ABS.

<sup>3</sup>Accidentally, the survey data Linley et al. (2012) use was also called the "Asia Barometer".

## 2.1 Descriptive Statistics

### 2.1.1 Country-Level Influence: Some First-Cut Analyses

While descriptive statistics are limited in making inferences, they provide information for sniff tests on why country-level covariates are needed. To begin with, the IR section of the ABS offers two critical pieces of information about how East Asians think about both the current and the future (namely, in 10 years) leadership in Asia. If we focus exclusively on the Sino-US competition in Asia and pit China against the US, Figure 1 conveys a clear message that East Asians in different country-groups actually vary quite a bit in their assessment of which country enjoys the most influence. On the one hand, over 60% of interviewees in countries such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam think China is the most influential country nowadays. On the other hand, the shares of China fans in Cambodia and the Philippines shrink to a great degree (roughly down to less than a quarter).<sup>4</sup>

If East Asians are so different in their views about who the current leader in Asia is today, do their attitudes show any sign of convergence in their predictions of the future? According to Figure 2, while different countries still differ in their predictions, it is however quite apparent that, in most of these countries, more people recognize the rise of China and the decline in the US' influence in Asia. The interesting exception is the Philippines where 62% of the Filipino still think the US is going to dominate in the future. In a nutshell, the striking differences across nations we have found have provided a good justification for why country-level covariates are needed.

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<sup>4</sup>Except Japan, other countries are obviously ignorable owing to their tiny shares.

Figure 1: East Asians' Views on Which Country Has the Most Influence

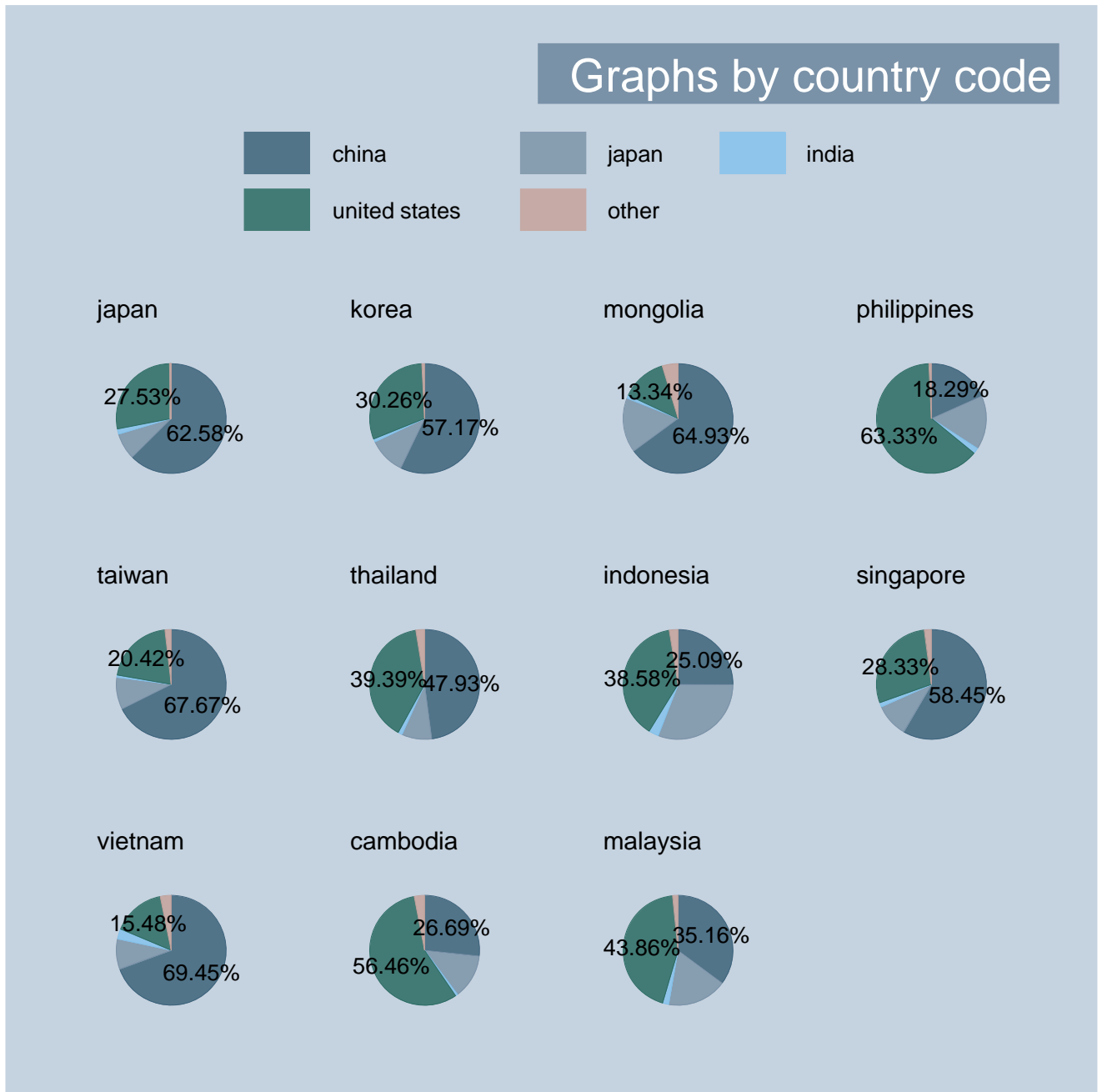
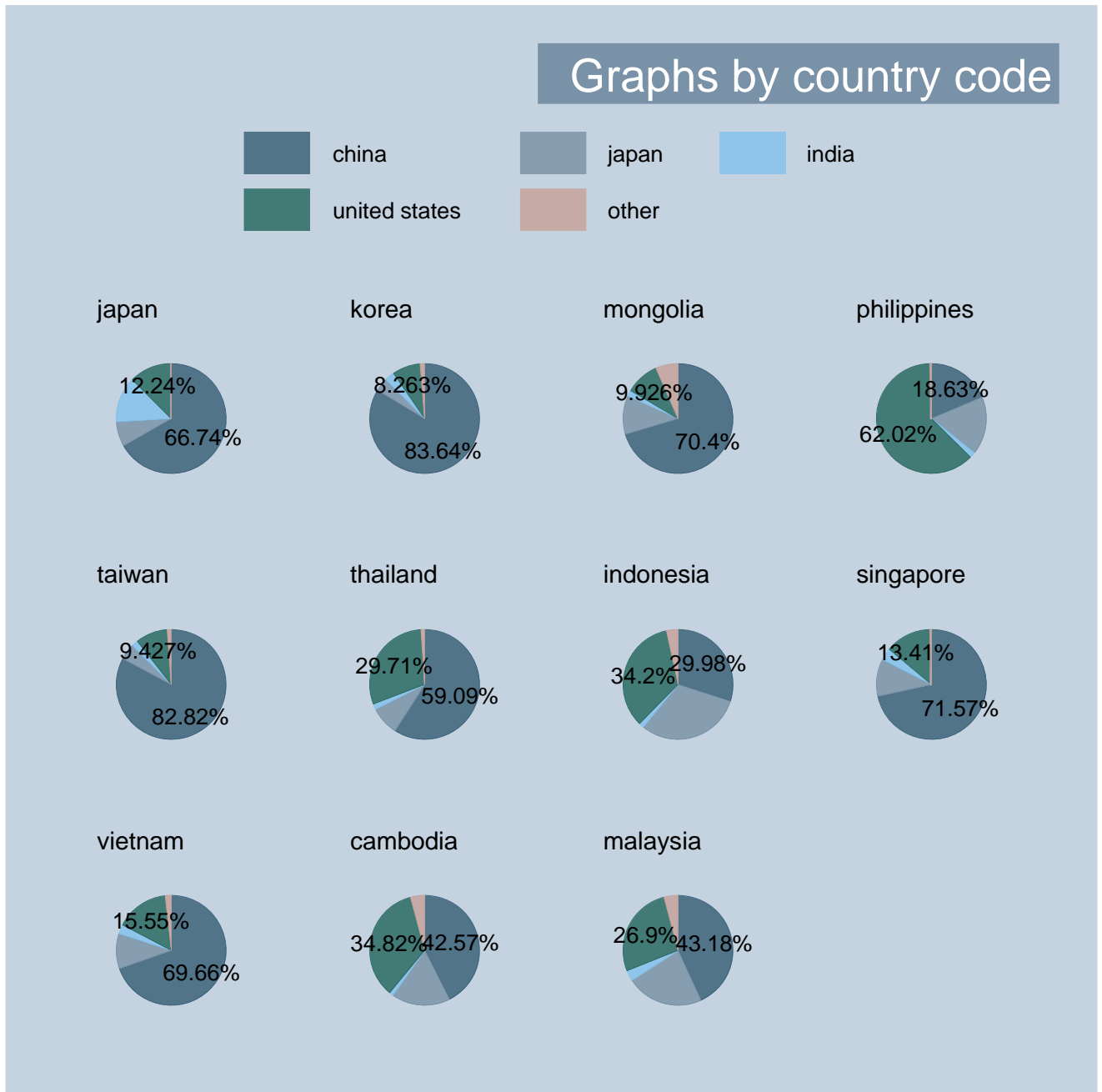


Figure 2: East Asians' View on Asia's Future Leader



As a matter of fact, national differences also exist in the soft power measurements of the data. The following tables that aggregate the measurements at the country-level provide

further evidence for this proposition. The IR section of the ABS has two questions asking East Asians to normatively evaluate China's influence on the entire region (Q 157 and Q 157a) as well as their countries (Q 161). Both of them are typical measures of soft power in the literature. For example, Linley et al. (2012) uses answers to the following question as their measure: Do you think the following countries have a good influence or a bad influence on your country?

Table 1 documents East Asians' answers to Q 157 and Q 157a. Excluding those countries with too many nonresponses, we can still find that, at the national level, East Asians differ quite a bit in their normative views about China's rise in the region. For instance, while over 60% of interviewed Cambodians show positive attitudes towards China's regional influence, the number is embarrassingly low in Japan (18.29%). In view of the long-standing and deep-seated tensions between China and Japan, this result is by no means surprising.

Alternatively, Table 2 shows East Asians' normative assessment of China's influence on their own countries with a finer measurement and it exhibits a very similar pattern (Vietnam's data are not available). Japan still has the lowest percentage of the positive response and over 70% of the interviewed Cambodians and Filipinos<sup>5</sup> approve of China's influence on their own countries. Again, both tables reveal the same pattern in the data that individual attitudes are greatly influenced by geopolitical factors at the country-level. In other words, interviewees in Japan are much more likely to have negative views on China's rise than those in countries such as Korea and Malaysia.

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<sup>5</sup>It has to be noted that the survey was taken in 2010, and, after the conflict between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea earlier this year (2012), it is highly unlikely for the Filipinos to hold the same attitudes.



Table 1: Normative Assessment of China's Regional Influence (Percentage)

Country	Much Than	More Harm	Good	Somewhat Than	More Good Than Harm	Subtotal (Good)	Somewhat Than	More Harm Good	Much Than	More Than	Harm	Subtotal (Harm)	No Answer
Cambodia	16.58			51.58		68.16	19.25		6.58			25.83	6.01
Indonesia	3.16			42.9		49.06	21.35		3.55			24.9	29.04
Japan	2.23			16.06		18.29	61.86		16.86			78.72	2.99
Korea	6.88			43.58		50.46	34.47		7.54			42.01	7.53
Malaysia	-			-		-	-		-			-	-
Mongolia	3.97			26.86		30.83	49.09		11.57			60.66	8.51
Philippines	17.33			45.08		62.41	15.67		6.83			22.5	15.09
Singapore	10.8			53.8		64.6	13.8		3.9			17.7	17.7
Taiwan	6.85			42.15		49	26.63		6.47			33.1	17.9
Thailand	4.7			29.17		33.87	17.2		3.7			20.9	45.23
Vietnam	7.64			12.85		20.49	9.49		6.97			16.46	63.05

Table 2: Normative Assessment of China's Influence on Individual Countries (Percentage)

Country	Very Positive	Positive	Somewhat Positive	Subtotal (Positive)	Somewhat Negative	Negative	Very Negative	Subtotal (Negative)	No Answer
Cambodia	13.8	44	18.9	76.7	13.5	3.25	1.83	18.58	4.72
Indonesia	5.9	38.58	13.61	58.09	6.19	9.35	1.35	16.89	25.02
Japan	0.6	2.61	19.84	23.05	57.02	14.63	3.72	75.37	1.58
Korea	2.4	16.65	27.67	46.72	31.65	13.59	4.31	49.55	3.73
Malaysia	5	29.7	37.6	72.3	9.88	5.8	1.4	17.08	10.62
Mongolia	1.82	8.76	16.61	27.19	48.68	13.55	6.12	68.35	4.46
Philippines	12.67	30.5	35.75	78.85	9.08	6.83	1.92	17.83	3.32
Singapore	6	37	29.5	72.5	11.4	8.6	3.2	23.2	4.3
Taiwan	4.4	16.08	20.6	41.08	22.8	13.19	10.62	46.61	12.31
Thailand	3.17	18.3	20.7	42.17	16	4.3	1.65	21.95	35.88
Vietnam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3: Development Model Choices (Percentage)

Country	US	China	India	Japan	Singapore	Others	Our Own	No Answer
Cambodia	41.92	19.75	1.17	20.42	6.17	5.17	3.42	2
Indonesia	19.94	11.81	1.1	25.81	9.1	1.87	6.45	23.94
Japan	18.19	1.8	5.21	-	8.99	9.26	53.35	3.19
Korea	34.96	7.54	0.99	21.71	15.41	2.07	9.36	7.95
Malaysia	7.83	12.69	0.82	29.08	10.3	0.82	31.3	7.17
Mongolia	21.65	9.59	0.74	15.7	7.2	9	28.18	7.93
Philippines	64.67	7.3	0.75	16.75	6.08	1.67	0	2.75
Singapore	23.1	12.1	2	16.2	-	5.1	36.1	5.4
Taiwan	13.57	4.21	0.38	29.02	21.86	3.45	20.41	7.73
Thailand	13.29	12.9	0.2	10.25	7.08	0.8	34.4	21.1
Vietnam	6.38	14.95	0.5	10.67	6.88	0.3	28.21	32.07

Another measure of soft power provided by the ABS IR section is the choice of development model that East Asians think their countries should adopt. Again, Table 3 documents East Asians' choices at the country level. The pattern of choice revealed here is obviously more complicated than those in the previous measurements. It is apparent that the Sino-US competition in the East Asian region cannot fully account for what is going on here. For instance, the percentage of the Taiwanese interviewees choosing China as their model has only 4.21%, but the percentage of those who pick the US is not especially high, either (13.57%). As a matter of fact, the total percentage of those choosing China and the US is even lower than the share of people choosing Japan (29.02%) or Singapore (21.86%) alone. According to Figure 2, 82.82% of the interviewed Taiwanese choose mainland China to be the country that has the most influence in 10 years, but this does not make the same percentage of people choose the China model for their future development. Taiwan's case is not particularly exceptional. 71.57% of the interviewed Singaporeans regard China as Asia's future leader, but the percentage of people in favor of the China model is only 12.1%. This shows that other factors such as the economy size could also be fairly important for a country to choose the model it wants to follow. From this perspective, it is even more interesting to investigate why some people choose China as a model taking all other non-soft-power considerations into account.

### 2.1.2 Individual-Level Sources of Influence

Linley et al. (2012) lists following sources of influence

1. Interest
2. Information and Contacts

3. Identity

4. Core Values

5. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The conversion table of the variables used in Linley et al. (2012) and those the ABS has is appended to this paper. WE add to this set of variables some others (individual-level variables) that are made available by the ABS. They include

- China's Democracy (Q 120)
- Developmentalism (Q 126)
- Protectionism (Q 152)

We also incorporate a bunch of country-level variables that capture the bilateral relationship between China and other countries in the data set.

- Dalai Lama visits around 2010
- Security alliance with the US
- Trade

## 2.2 Model Specification

As we have mentioned from the very beginning, we would like to identify who the "against the current" East Asians are and explain their behavior. To do this, we run two Probit models. To further explain how our model is specified, we provide the following two sets of histograms.

Figure 3: China Recalcitrants

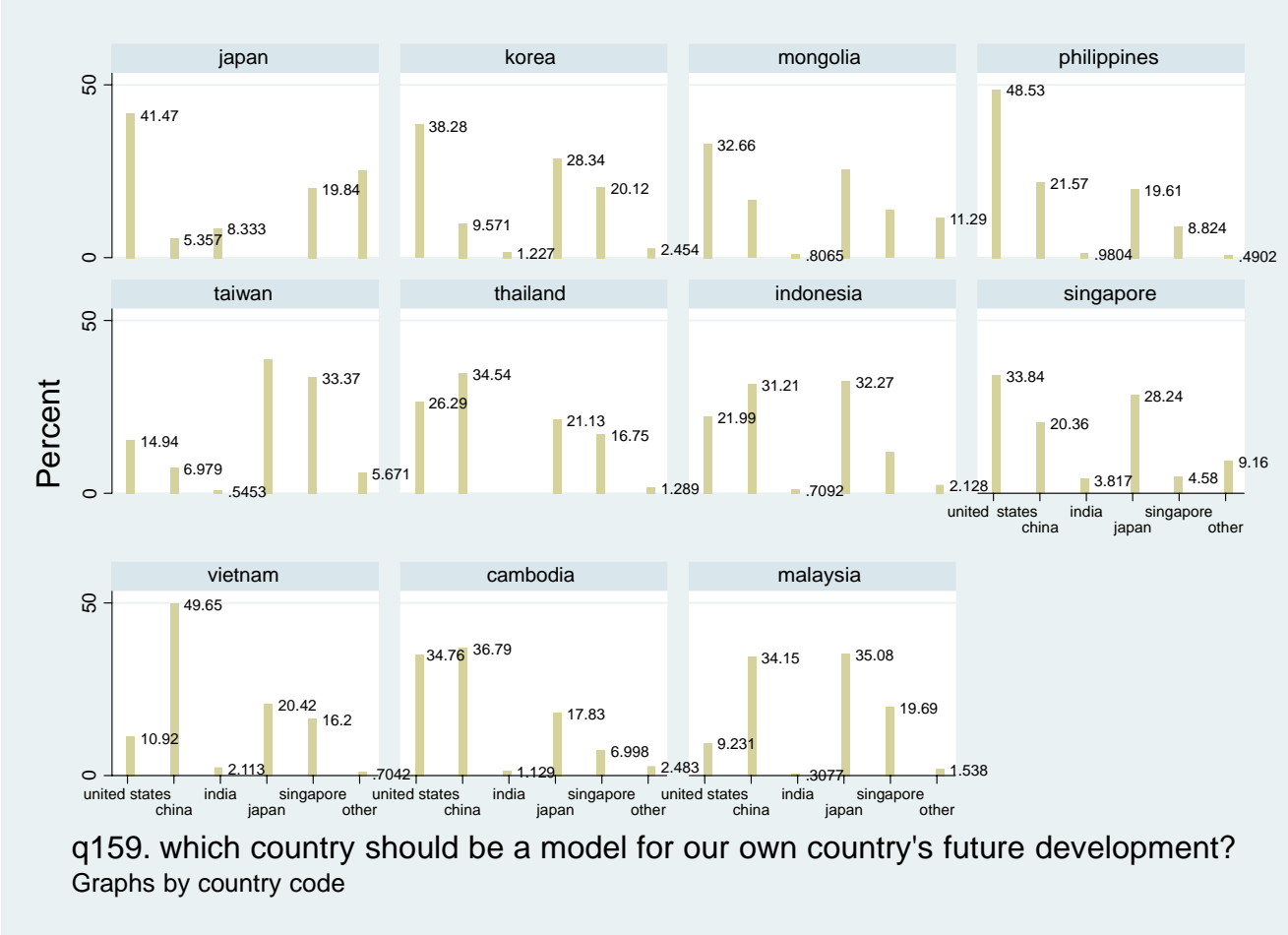


Figure 4: US Recalcitrants

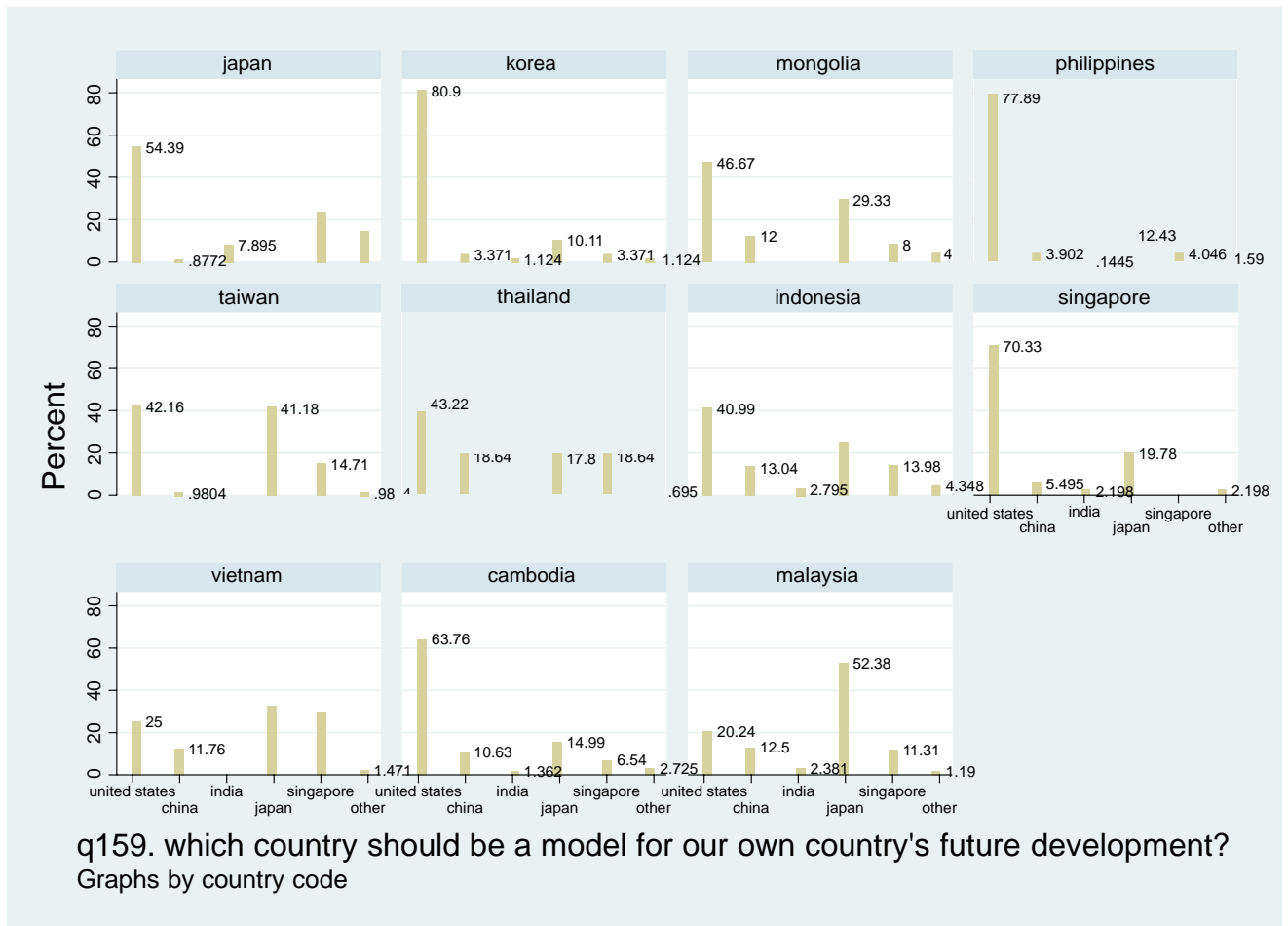


Figure 3 shows the country-specific distributions of development model choices made by those East Asians who predict China to be the most influential country in 10 years. Alternatively, Figure 4 shows the same distribution of choices made by those whose predictions are the US instead. Visually, these two sets of histogram present a clear pattern where the China recalcitrants outnumber the US recalcitrants. This preliminary finding is consistent with those in the reports published by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, but, of course, this is not quite what we would like to know. What really interests us in this paper is how both types of East Asians can be characterized. To do this, we run two separate probit regressions for both subsets of the China recalcitrants and the US recalcitrants.

### 3 Results

Table 4: Two Probit Models

Variable	China Recalcitrants	US Recalcitrants
Constant	-1.024505 (7.440757 )	-7.070493* (2.935269 )
Age	-9.07e-07 (.003767)	.0033848* (.001497)
China's Democracy	-.001684 (.022024)	-.0058954 (.0100095)
China's Regional Influence	.0732325*** (.0203996 )	-.1917982* (.0788312 )
Dalai	-.2279888 (.4659883 )	-.0365831 (.0790137 )
Developmentalism	.0265909(.0399244)	-.0107014 (.0155543 )
Education	-.0391308*** (.010222 )	-.0317308 (.0231314 )
Family Economic Prospect	.0186232 (.01741)	-.0124864 (.0401814)
Gender (female)	-.1339754 (.1051454 )	-.0160075 (.0404086)
Government Evaluation	-.0266368 (.0242665)	-.0599797 (.0589895)
National Economic Prospect	.0066533 (.034648)	.0108976 (.0160758 )
Protectionism	.0428287 (.0488623 )	-.0157112 (.0199284)
Socioeconomic Status	.1200473 (.0662238 )	-.0403713 (.0286318 )
US Security Alliance	.9793267* (.4834144 )	1.037993*** (.089316)
Total Trade with China	-6.58e-09** (2.10e-09 )	-4.21e-09*** (5.20e-10)
Foreign Media Exposure	.001494 (.0369746 )	.0237291 (.0143176)
Religiosity	-.0420062 (.0254438)	.0155353* (.0077555 )
No. of Observation	1802	5314

The regression outputs of both models are documented in Table 4. What stands out first in this table is that both models share several statistically significant country-level covariates in common. First of all, total trade with China have negative effects on individuals' choice to convert in both models. In other words, living in a country trading more with China makes this individual less recalcitrant and more willing to choose the model adopted by the most influential country. Similarly, having security alliance with the US has the same effect.

At the individual level, East Asians' normative assessment of China's regional influence, however, has opposite effects in these two models. As far as the China recalcitrants model is concerned, the more one thinks China's regional influence as harmful, the less likely this person will choose China as the development model. By contrast, in the case of US recalcitrants, negative view on China's regional influence makes it less likely for one to abandon the US model. This result is very intuitive. In addition, age as a factor has a positive effect in the US recalcitrants case. In other words, it is more likely for older people to choose the China model.

## 4 Conclusion

This paper provides some preliminary observations on the data made available by the IR section of the ABS. Instead of trying to identify very general patterns, our study differs from the current literature in our efforts to focus exclusively on the converters in East Asia and therefore allows us to take a peek into future developments in the Sino-US competition for soft power.

In general, the China model is indeed still lagging behind the US model. However, according to our models, this is not unchangeable. With more campaign for China's positive contributions to the region, the China model can still win more support in the region. Trade, however, has a stabilizing power in making people stay on their original courses. From this perspective, China's growing trade with its partners is really a mixed blessing.



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# Appendix: Conversion Table

Table 5: Individual-Level Variables: Ours versus Linley et al.

Variable	Linley et al.	Ours
<b>Interest</b>		
Government Economic Policy Evaluation	item used to measure concerns about the domestic economy asking respondents how they evaluate their government’s handling of the domestic economy, on a 4-point scale, 1=Not well, 4=Very well.	A1 (country)
Socioeconomic Status	item asking respondents to evaluate their standard of living, on a 3-point scale, 1=Low, 3=High	A4
Worry about Security Issues	item asking respondents which issues caused them great worry, coded as a dichotomous or “dummy” variable, with 0=Not mentioned, 1=National security.Socioeconomic Status	M96 (not quite close)
Immigration	item used to measure an individual’s concerns about immigration asking respondents if they think that the central government should restrict the flow of a foreign workforce to protect domestic people’s interests, with a 5-point scale, 1=Strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree.	Not Available
<b>Information and Contacts</b>		
Frequency of Watching Chinese TV and Movies	item asking respondents how often they were exposed to Chinese TV programs, movies and animation produced in the PRC, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, with a 6-point scale, 1=Never, 6=Almost every day. Since this item was included only in the 2007 and 2008 AsiaBarometers, it is excluded from the models for 2006.12	Not Available
Education	coded on a 3 point scale, with 1=Primary/lower secondary education, 3=tertiary education.	SE5
Information and Contacts Index	summed index of six information and contact items, with 0=No contact with foreign nations or people and 6=High contact with foreign nations or people.	S150
<b>Identity</b>		
Chinese	ethnic identity; a dummy variable, with 0=non-Chinese, 1=Chinese.	Not Available
Religion	religious identity, all variables listed are dummy variables.	SE6
<b>Core Values</b>		
Patriotic Education Support	item measuring individual’s level of patriotism asking respondents how much they agree with the statement that their government should emphasize patriotic education to foster patriotism, with 5-point scale	T154 (Not quite close)
Religiosity	item measuring individual’s level of religiosity asking respondents the frequency with which they pray, with 1=Never, 5=Daily.	SE7
Human Rights Concern	dummy variable, item asking respondents which issues caused them great worry, with 0=Not mentioned, 1=Human rights.	Not Available
<b>Socio-Demographic Characteristics</b>		
Gender	dummy variable, with 0=Female, 1=Male	SE2
Age	All variables listed are dummy variables with respondents in their twenties comprising the excluded category.	SE3

