The Rise of China and Varying Sentiments in Southeast Asia toward Great Powers

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For the countries in Southeast Asia, the rise of China is a mixed blessing. While they have benefitted greatly from its economic ties, they are increasingly alarmed about a more assertive China in their neighborhood. The continuing tension over territorial rights in the South China Sea is the latest dilemma. Given its potential for energy resources and unique strategic location, the South China Sea is particularly crucial in regional geopolitical dynamics. Since 2010, China has taken a more assertive approach to the issue by including it in what the Chinese call "core national interests." Responses from Southeast Asian states were varied, but regional concerns about China increased rapidly. Despite the much-improved relationship between China and Southeast Asian states over the past two decades, regional attitudes toward China quickly turned negative. This suggests lingering effects of latent fears rooted in historical experiences with China and the continuing relevance of anti-great-power sentiments in Southeast Asia.

The rise of China has not been the only "great-power problem" in the region. In fact, dealing with great powers has been an enduring foreign policy—and indeed, domestic political—concern. Southeast Asian relations with China are not developing anew due to the latter's rise. Present-day anti-Chinese views are neither unique nor "newly" emerging due to its

rise, but can be explained as part of larger historical patterns of anti-great-power sentiments—for example, vis-à-vis Japan.

In this article, we highlight the historical nature and context of anti-Chinese sentiments in Southeast Asia. Moreover, while facing similar structural realities,[1] these nations have historically shown varying degrees of antagonism toward regional great powers, such as Japan in the early twentieth century and China in the twenty-first century.[2] An in-depth analysis of the region's historical experiences with—and the nature of domestic politicization of—such great-power relations finds important but previously underexamined variations in the type of anti-great-power sentiments and the degree to which they are politically salient among Southeast Asia nations. We argue that there is greater continuity than change in existing relations with China and suggest that China's rise does not constitute a fundamental structural change from a longer historical perspective. Perhaps more importantly, our survey of Southeast Asian perceptions of the great powers in both historical and contemporary contexts indicates that despite the dominant role played by regional great powers—including colonial Japan and a reemerging China—there are significant variations in the level of antagonism toward China and Japan.

The question is: what explains the variations in anti-great-power attitudes in Southeast Asia? Why do we see more or less politicization of anti-Chinese or anti-Japanese sentiments? We find that stances both for and against Japan or China are not obvious, nor are they driven solely by current strategic and economic circumstances. They are influenced by the trajectory of historical experiences, by prior framing of the colonial period, and by the Cold War era. Examining anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese sentiment in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region in the past several decades, we show that the varying degrees of intensity in oppositional sentiments are determined by two dimensions: the nature of the great-power-dependent historical experience and the degree to which it has been politicized in the postwar period.[3]

Explaining Anti-Great-Power Sentiments in Southeast Asia

While scholars agree on the crucial role of external great powers in interstate relations in Southeast Asia, they differ markedly in their assessments of the region's attitudes and policy behavior toward the relevant

great powers.[4] Various accounts have highlighted the regional structural dimension as a key factor shaping state behavior in response to the rise of China in Southeast Asia, predicting balancing, hedging, or bandwagoning by the ASEAN states. Two accounts in particular provide useful analytical frameworks: one centered on contemporary balance-of-power dynamics and the other emphasizing historically rooted, issue-specific regional patterns of interaction.

In the first model, many scholars expect that in the face of China's growing power, Southeast Asian nations would seek an external balancer, such as the United States. John Lee's study of Malaysia shows that in a major departure from former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's anti-American rhetoric and policies, Malaysian leaders in recent years have tried to maintain close security relations with the United States amid growing suspicion of China's intentions in the region.[5] Richard Weitz similarly argues that because of a more assertive China, the United States has been able to improve military ties with the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, while enhancing security relations with Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam.[6]

It is worth noting, however, that major structural changes have not always corresponded to shifts in state behavior in the region.[7] In the 1990s, for instance, neither the demise of Cold War tensions nor China's less assertive approach toward the South China Sea caused Indonesia's Suharto regime to change its views and behavior toward China. The "New Order" government's prior domestic legitimation strategy of anti-Chinese sentiment prevented it from adopting a dramatically new course of action, even in the face of different strategic realities. Only after the fall of Suharto in 1998 did Indonesian policy toward China begin to change. In other words, a key factor in accounting for policy and perceptual shifts vis-à-vis the region's great powers is the nature of domestic politicization of anti-great-power sentiments.

Regional sentiments of China then do not predictably respond to changes in the international environment; rather, they are shaped in large part by "China's contribution to their own domestic political and economic interests."[8] For example, some leaders may find it useful to drum up anti-foreign sentiments under conditions of political weakness, while others may eschew politicizing relations with China due to historical and current sensitivities. A focus on short-term behavioral shifts also tends to overlook other important domestic political considerations

such as the widespread desire for greater foreign policy autonomy and concerns about enduring structural dependency on great powers. In a recent study of Southeast Asia's grand strategy since 1975, John Ciorciari argues that smaller states also tend to pursue a policy of limited alignment instead of formal alliance relations, partly because the latter may entail compromised autonomy and fears of dependency, abandonment, or entrapment.[9]

A second set of explanations point to Southeast Asia's historical ties to China as a factor shaping sentiments toward its rise. Using this linear projection of long-standing and familiar relationships based on cultural similarities, one would expect a policy of accommodation by these nations toward the resurgent great power. David Kang, for example, has argued that Southeast Asian nations' cultural and ethnical ties with China, "combined with a long history of stable relations," help shape their perceptions and allow a largely accommodating strategy.[10]

While paying due attention to salient region-specific historical legacies, the China bandwagon account tends to give too much analytical weight to the role of cultural or historical underpinnings of interstate relations. As a result, it may overlook the underlying conditions in which unique historical experiences can get (de)politicized under different domestic and regional contexts. In fact, while bandwagoning with China may yield more economic benefits, it can be "politically undesirable and strategically risky since it is likely to limit the smaller states' freedom of action."[11]

What existing sentiments neglect to take into account then is a complex interplay between internal and external dynamics. These opposing sentiments are shaped internally through domestic political contestation and externally by historical experiences with outside powers. The overall attitude toward the outside power is established by the nature of the historical experience and is more concrete. However, internal dynamics may be more fluid, depending upon the nature of contemporary domestic politics. Rather than assuming deep structural or contingent effects of opposing sentiments a priori, we investigate whether anti-Chinese or anti-Japanese sentiments in Southeast Asia vary on a spectrum of attitudes that may result from the combination of historical path dependence and more recent processes of domestic politicization.

Existing discussions of Southeast Asian fears of a resurgent Japanese military fail to note variations in different legacies and attitudes. One author

argues that "the region is not yet ready for Japan to play an independent security role, particularly if it invites a reaction from China."[12] But regional hierarchy and the influence of great powers was not and is not experienced the same way in Asia. There are important differences between Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia as well as variations within Southeast Asia based on different historical legacies and postwar political contexts.

We make two claims here. First, negative attitudes toward China's growing power and influence are not uniformly expressed across the region, nor are they uniquely directed against a particular type of Chinese leadership. As a region, Southeast Asia has dealt with numerous great powers and has a long history of anti-great-power sentiments and attitudes vis-à-vis former European colonial powers, Japan, and the United States.[13] Anti-Chinese sentiments as an expression of desire for autonomy are not new.

Our second claim is that the politicization of anti-great-power sentiments has varied in terms of strength and salience according to specific domestic political contexts. Negative attitudes directed against Japan and China have been politicized and contested at different periods as part of elite attempts to bolster their weak or weakening legitimacy. Thus, it is neither insignificant nor unexpected that the colonial past and wartime victimization were made into "national" rather than regional or pan-Asian experiences. As aptly argued by Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "a small state's strategy towards a rising power is driven not so much by the growth of the great power's relative capabilities per se; rather, it is motivated more by an internal process of regime legitimation in which the ruling elite evaluate—and then utilize—the opportunities and challenges of the rising power for their ultimate goal of consolidating their authority to govern at home."[14] For example, Sukarno's postcolonial political platform of economic nationalism in Indonesia translated into anti-Dutch and anti-Japanese policies. His successor, Suharto, turned to anti-China sentiments to garner political support, referencing the sizeable ethnic Chinese population in Indonesia and widespread fears of communist expansionism. Mobilization of anti-great-power sentiments has come from nongovernmental sources as well. The early 1970s witnessed the growth of anti-Japan protests and student movements in Indonesia and Thailand. When public antagonism toward China heightened in Indonesia in response to the Chinese government's criticism of "ethnic persecution" in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis,

President Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie actually sought to downplay the role of anti-Chinese sentiments.

In sum, anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese sentiments have been mobilized in response to a variety of evolving trends—not only external but also domestic—such as decolonization, the Cold War and spread (both perceived and real) of communism in the region, trade imbalances, ethnic divisions, regime change, and democratization. Throughout both Northeast and Southeast Asia, different historical legacies and trajectories have impacted each country's domestic legitimacy politics and its proclivity to use anti-Chinese or anti-Japanese sentiments. Pro- versus anti-Japanese sentiments were useful for various nationalist and anticolonial projects in Southeast Asia, but less so in the postwar period due to Cold War politics at the international level and interethnic tensions and the prioritization of economic development at the domestic level. Anti-Chinese and anti-communist sentiments were also used for nation-building during the Cold War but in different degrees and during different time periods.

Such variability in the use of anti-great-power sentiments suggests that they are not so deeply held that they constitute widespread bias. Yet they are not so malleable that they do not pose constraints for political leaders. For example, it would be difficult for Malaysian leaders to suddenly adopt anti-Japanese stances as part of their economic nationalist rhetoric. Vietnamese leaders are unlikely to bandwagon with China. Similar to other oppositional attitudes then, anti-great-power sentiments in Southeast Asia tend to lie somewhere between irreversible "prejudice" and malleable "opinion."[15]

In the following, we examine the varieties of anti-great-power sentiments and strategies for dealing with great powers, measured in terms of both the degree of domestic mobilization and perceptions of threat as indicated in domestic security debates or policy behavior. We observe different responses to structural shifts (such as decolonization, the deepening of the Cold War and the threat of communism in Asia, and the end of the Cold War and subsequent rise of China) based on existing relations with various great powers and domestic legitimacy politics.

Anti-Japanese Sentiments in Southeast Asia

Although Japan's imperial expansion into Southeast Asia left an indelible mark on nationalist struggles in the region, it is important to

note that it was not the first or only colonial occupier. In fact, Japanese occupation helped to accelerate the process of independence in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. As Mark Beeson observes, "For all the self-serving rhetoric that accompanied Japan's proposed 'Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere,' it did mark the beginnings of the sort of pan-Asianism that continues to play a part in contemporary political practices across the region."[16]

Varying Legacies of Japanese Imperialism in Postcolonial Domestic Politics

In effect, Japan's wartime rule was compared to that of other colonial powers. Some of the most negative reactions to Japanese imperialism were displayed in the Philippines, where US rule was favored over occupation by the Japanese, who were considered aggressors. The US-centric view of the Philippine elites is seen in the remarks of President Manuel Quezon in August 1941: "We owe loyalty to America, and we are bound to her by bonds of everlasting gratitude. Should the United States enter the war, the Philippines will follow her and fight by her side, placing at her disposal all our manpower and material resources to help her achieve victory, and for this reason America's fight is our own fight."[17]

There are also examples of indigenous nationalist movements that collaborated with the Japanese against Western colonial powers. For example, the Burmese elite admired Japan's successful modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the nationalist Thakin Party "hoped for Japanese military assistance in their struggle to be free of Britain and provided assistance to the Japanese Minami Group, which was directly controlled by the Japanese army." Accordingly, Burma was the first occupied country to be granted "independence" (in January 1943), and Burmese leader Ba Maw "met Japan's top leadership five times . . . between March 1943 and 15 August 1945; no other leader in the Southern Co-Prosperity Sphere had such close contact with top Japanese officials."[18] Similarly, the Indonesian nationalist leaders' involvement with the Japanese in their anti-Dutch, pro-independence struggle made anti-Japanese mobilizations less credible and less likely in the postwar period. Compared to other countries in East Asia, especially China or Korea, colonial rule under Japan was not a collective experience or memory—either at the national or regional level.

Another reason why anti-Japanese mobilizations subsided after 1945 was that resistance to Japanese rule had been led by the socialist Left and the region's communist parties, which in some cases worked with Allied militaries against Tokyo.[19] Even in the Philippines, anti-Japanese sentiments became less salient with the return of the United States and the onset of the Cold War, but also because the core of the resistance movement had been the local communists and the People's Anti-Japanese Army, the Hukbalahap, who were marginalized after World War II.[20]

It is also important to note that residual anti-Japanese sentiments were generally strongest among the ethnic Chinese populations within the region. Views of the Japanese military occupation differed considerably among the native Malays and the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, for example. "Postwar criticism of the sultans and members of the aristocracy who opted, or were forced, to cooperate with Japan came mainly from Chinese rather than the Malays." With the introduction of the Bumiputera policy in May 1969, which sought to assert Malay dominance by favoring Malays as "sons of the soil," the negative experiences and perceptions of the ethnic Chinese population were depoliticized, and the government moved toward improving relations with Japan.[21] Similarly, the role and influence of ethnic Chinese nationalists in Indonesia subsided after the aborted coup of 1965.[22]

Cold War Politics and Economic Ties with Japan

The Cold War provided important structural constraints and divided Southeast Asia into communist versus anti-communist countries. In general, maritime Southeast Asia and Thailand adopted a pro-Western/anti-communist stance in their domestic and foreign policies. Despite reservations and some protest, especially from the Philippines, the United States intervened to help Japan "reenter" the region. Kishi Nobusuke was the first Japanese prime minister to visit Southeast Asia in 1957. He proposed a "Southeast Asian Development Fund," through which a total of more than $1 billion in damages and $737 million in loans would be paid as part of a reparation settlement.[23] The first agreement was signed with Burma in 1954 (with a supplementary agreement in 1963), followed by the Philippines, Indonesia, South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia between 1956 and 1959 and agreements with Malaysia and Singapore in 1967 after their independence from Britain.[24]

While responses and receptivity to the reparations negotiations varied across the region, the Cold War environment and the urgent task of postwar/postcolonial rebuilding triumphed over lingering antagonism toward the Japanese, particularly at the elite level. For example, by 1957 "the Indonesian state had embraced a heightened economic nationalism that involved increased state intervention to restructure the economy and the takeover of a great deal of Dutch-owned property."[25] After Suharto took power in 1967, he inaugurated the "New Order" which emphasized "a very different form of nationalist expression" from the previous Sukarno era. "A romantic autarchic nationalism was set aside and replaced by a concentration on economic development through an engagement with the international capitalist economy."[26] Suharto was eager to draw in foreign investment from the United States and Japan and placed the Indonesian economy under the guidance of a group of US-trained technocrats known as the Berkeley Mafia.[27]

By the 1970s, however, a growing fear of Japan's economic domination in several Southeast Asian countries led to criticisms of Tokyo's aggressive resource diplomacy and resentment against Japanese businesses, exemplified by Thailand's boycott of Japanese goods in 1972. Chronic trade deficits and the "shallow" nature of Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) contributed to growing anti-Japanese frustrations. In early November 1972, student representatives of 10 major universities in Thailand adopted a resolution designating 10 days of that month as "Boycott Japanese Products Period" in protest of "Japanese economic imperialism in Thailand." Throughout November, the students organized demonstrations, marches, and meetings in many parts of the country. The Thai government, fearing potential damage to Thai-Japanese relations by the sudden spurt of anti-Japanese activities, demanded that the students refrain from violence. Nevertheless, students concentrated on boycott activities at various retail centers, where minor violent incidents took place.[28]

In January 1974, when Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei visited Southeast Asia, unprecedented anti-Japanese demonstrations escalated into violent riots in Bangkok and Jakarta.[29] As in Thailand, they reflected the frustrations of increasing economic dependence on Japan. It was widely believed that the reparations settlement had benefited Japan more than the recipient nations, as the bulk of the payments were commodity and service grants, allowing Japan to increase its production and develop

markets for its exports. In fact, the United States had helped Japan pursue economic interests in Southeast Asia, such as securing markets (to replace the "loss" of China) and raw materials, and allowed the Japanese to tie in the war reparations issue to postwar rebuilding.[30]

To counter widespread perceptions of arrogance as well as fast-paced economic penetration on the part of Japan, Tokyo has given sizeable official development assistance (ODA) to the region. Its policy toward Southeast Asia became more comprehensive and institutionalized with the announcement of the Fukuda Doctrine in 1977, whereby Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo promised to promote "heart-to-heart" contact with the governments and people of Southeast Asia and provide more than $1 billion in aid to ASEAN states.[31] Thus, Tokyo sought both redemption from its wartime past by renouncing the pursuit of military power and gaining the trust of ASEAN states through economic aid.[32] By the 1980s, Japan became "Southeast Asia's largest investor, largest exporter, largest foreign aid donor, largest buyer of raw materials such as oil, natural gas, and timber, and largest source of tourism."[33] Moreover, by this period, its economic expansion into the region did not face the strong anti-Japanese sentiment that had existed in the "first wave" of investments in the 1970s.[34]

Changing ASEAN Perceptions in the Post–Cold War Era?

In the post–Cold War period, Southeast Asian countries have undergone reconsiderations of Japan's political and security role. While Japan had been seen primarily as a source of financial and technical assistance toward economic development in the past, Tokyo began to pursue closer political relations with the ASEAN since the 1980s. The Japanese government was also careful to balance relations among various actors by

> keeping in step with the United States and the West while insisting on its distinctive "Asian" ties with the countries of South-East Asia; siding with ASEAN while keeping the doors open for economic relations with Vietnam; making sure that ASEAN is not neglected while pursuing a forward economic policy in China; [and] supporting the Chinese position over the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia while trying to restrain China's punitive policies against Vietnam.[35]

Faced with increasing competition from China for political influence since the mid 1990s, Japan has emphasized soft-power diplomacy in Southeast Asia, using foreign aid, economic networking, and people-to-people contact via social and cultural exchanges as its core strategies.

According to some observers, "Tokyo's economic and political contributions toward ASEAN institutionalization and integration have bettered its image among Southeast Asian nations and their people."[36] Such a development stands in contrast to the rise of nationalist expressions in the form of anti-US protests in the Philippines in the early 1990s. In fact, when the financial crisis hit Thailand and spread through other parts of Asia in 1997, Japanese leadership was expected and indeed, for the most part, welcomed.

ASEAN members have sought to manage the twin challenge of a rising China and tension-filled Sino-Japanese relations by engaging both countries into their regional framework. While the original motivation for the formation of the ASEAN was driven by the uncertainties of the Cold War, it could also be argued that the "ability of ASEAN to 'reinvent' itself and to be seen as the driver behind the ASEAN+3 process was in part due to the lack of reconciliation between Japan and China."[37] In other words, an unchanging element of Southeast Asian foreign policy appears to be the "problem of how to pursue their national interests within the constraints of the dynamics of the great powers' presence in the region."[38]

Anti-Chinese Sentiments in Southeast Asia

Prior to the arrival of European powers in the early nineteenth century, China was the undisputed regional hegemon for most of its history. Many Southeast Asian states maintained asymmetric relations with various Chinese dynasties. For instance, the tributary system centered on the Middle Kingdom affected Thailand ever since the Kingdom of Sukhothai, which later became Siam and paid tribute to the Yuan dynasty. Successive Thai kingdoms maintained that relationship into the late nineteenth century.[39] For Vietnam as well, the combined effects of a thousand years of coexistence and centuries of Chinese interference and the more recent ideological tension during the Cold War period made its leaders "[blend] pragmatism with a core of deep nationalism."[40]

Historical Linkages and Postwar Experiences with China

In the early-to-mid twentieth century, Southeast Asian relations with China became strained. Even before the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, ties between a number of nations in Southeast Asia and China

had started to deteriorate due to growing nationalism in the region. In the early 1900s, Sino-Thai relations were difficult to manage in the midst of "the rising nationalism among the Thais and Chinese, the large number of ethnic Chinese who had settled in Thailand, Thai government policies that discriminated against the ethnic Chinese, and sporadic attempts by the Chinese governments to protect their cousins in Thailand."[41]

With the emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC), regional relationships with China took a decisive turn toward antagonism. A key factor behind this dynamic was the negative effects of looming Chinese power and influence on domestic political stability and regime legitimacy. Thai prime minister Phibun Songkhram, alarmed by China's expansionist potential, adopted domestic policies aimed at leftists and ethnic Chinese and strengthened Thailand's military and economic relations with the United States by joining the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954.[42] Particularly troubling for the government in Bangkok was China's interference in Thai domestic politics by supporting the Communist Party of Thailand's insurgency in the 1960s and its sponsorship of two revolutionary movements, the Patriotic Front of Thailand and the Thailand Independent Movement.[43]

Malaysia experienced similar dynamics. In the face of China's continued support for the insurgent Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), Kuala Lumpur viewed the PRC as a "principal source in the context of a residual insurgency which drew primary support from an ethnic-Chinese constituency."[44] During this early Cold War period, anti-Chinese sentiments in the region were such that even Myanmar, which had maintained strong economic and military ties with China—commonly referred to as *paukwaw* (brotherly love)—was swamped with anti-Chinese rioting during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, a continuing source of tension even today due to a growing ethnic Chinese population in the porous northern region of Myanmar.[45]

Anti-Chinese sentiments were particularly strong in Indonesia where the *pribumi*, or indigenous people, resented ethnic Chinese and their close ties to the authoritarian Suharto regime.[46] Along with the "historical memory of the precolonial era [and] the role of the ethnic Chinese in dominating the country's economic life," China's suspected help for the failed coup against the Sukarno regime in 1965 was the final blow to already troubled relations.[47] The Indonesian government's official explanation of the abortive coup had linked its indigenous communist

party (PKI) specifically to the PRC by accusing the former of getting support from the latter. In 1967, Indonesia formally severed diplomatic ties with China.[48] The Suharto-led New Order government used the triple threat—the People's Republic of China, the domestic ethnic Chinese population, and the Indonesian communists—as the basis for bolstering its political legitimacy by portraying the regime as "the savior of the Indonesian state from a Communist takeover."[49]

The Cold War and Varying Anti-Chinese Sentiments

The regional views toward China began to vary more widely in the early 1970s. The détente between the United States and China provided Chinese leaders strategic breathing space, and China's previous strategy of spreading its ideology by helping communist insurgency in the Third World subsided. Amid this change, in May 1974, Malaysia became the first country in Southeast Asia to normalize diplomatic ties with China.[50] A year later, a new civilian government in Thailand, led by Prime Minister M. R. Kukrit Pramoj, also announced diplomatic relations with the PRC. The expansion of North Vietnamese influence over neighboring Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam and the US withdrawal from Vietnam also allowed for diplomatic opening with China.[51]

Thailand's bilateral ties with China improved substantially after Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978.[52] During the Cambodian conflict, the PRC provided various support for Vietnam's smaller neighbors, especially Thailand.[53] Overall, China's relations with Southeast Asian nations, especially in Indochina, improved markedly in the latter part of the Cold War, thereby enhancing its positive image in the region. These shifts in perception toward China in Indochina were due in large part to its contribution to domestic political stability and regime legitimacy. In an interesting turn of events, China's previous support for local insurgencies, a principal source of regime instability throughout the region, was replaced with its timely political support and military assistance during Vietnam's regional expansion.[54] As a result, anti-Chinese feelings were substantially reduced.

In the early 1990s, however, a new challenge emerged. While economic engagement with China continued to benefit regimes in the region, China's political and military involvements in Indochina decreased. Along with the resolution of the Cambodian conflict, the demise of the Cold War led to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the region and

the closing of US bases in the Philippines. The external changes rekindled "new anxieties about Chinese designs in the region," as China's rapprochement with Russia and Vietnam suggested that the political constraints on its options to use force in support of strategic objectives in maritime Southeast Asia have been somewhat lessened."[55] Long set aside during the Cambodian conflict, disputes over the Spratly Islands resurfaced,[56] creating a fissure between members of the ASEAN and China.[57]

Since the mid 1990s, Beijing began to make concerted efforts to improve ties with its southern neighbors. Its new approach was part of a larger strategy to enhance relations with countries along its border, and results were particularly effective in Southeast Asia.[58] A crucial driver behind the more positive relations between China and the ASEAN states was the economic gains that reaped political benefits for regimes across the region. China's relationship with Singapore, for instance, benefited both nations due to the island-state's role as "a key economic partner in a joint venture to create a satellite city in Suzhou, near Shanghai, modeled on its own successful experience of urban development." Similarly, Malaysia's prime minister Mahathir declared that "it is high time for us to stop seeing China through the lenses of threat and to fully view China as the enormous opportunity that it is."[59]

Over time, countries in the region showed signs of appreciating China's multifaceted contributions to their domestic political stability and regime legitimacy. Examples include China's decision not to devalue the yuan during the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, its free trade agreement with the ASEAN, "a joint declaration on a code of conduct in the South China Sea, cooperation with ASEAN to combat the SARS outbreak in early 2003, and Beijing's decision to accede to ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia."[60] At the same time, however, apprehensions about China's potential to become a main economic rival and a dominant regional force prompted Southeast Asian states to take a multilateral approach via the ASEAN in their dealings with China.[61]

Perceptions of China in Southeast Asia have varied significantly, depending on the nature of each country's historical experiences and domestic legitimacy strategies. For instance, due to its strategic cooperation with China during the Cambodian conflict, Phnom Penh "has staunchly supported Beijing's 'One China' policy, banned the Falun Gong, and blocked a visit by the Dalai Lama," while endorsing China's position on the Spratly Islands dispute.[62] Similarly, Malaysia's relations

with China flourished as their political and economic interests converged on various issues.[63] Along with the end of the Communist Party of Malaysia in 1989, "the growing salience of economic performance as a source of legitimacy for the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition" and Prime Minister Mahathir's anti-US foreign policy approach were largely congruent with China's regional vision. The combination of compatible foreign policy priorities and economic benefits enabled political leaders in Kuala Lumpur "*to downplay, if not overcome, their earlier apprehensions about the potential security ramifications* of a powerful neighbor" (emphasis in original).[64]

Thailand also maintained its positive relationship with China, playing the role of mediator between China and regional organizations. In contrast to other ASEAN states, it lacks territorial disputes with China and has "an ethnic Chinese minority thoroughly integrated into Thai society." As a result, the two countries strengthened their ties such that then Chinese prime minister Zhu Rongji called his trip to Thailand a "family visit to a relative," while Thai prime minister Thaksin Sinawatra declared that Thailand was China's "closest" and "most sincere" friend."[65] In 2005, Thailand even invited the first Chinese observer group to the Cobra Gold exercise, a multilateral military exercise involving Thai, US, and Singaporean forces.[66]

Despite similar historical and cultural ties, neighboring Singapore has shown a more cautious attitude, suggesting the differing effects of domestic legitimacy strategies involving China. Since its independence as a multiethnic state, with 76 percent of its population ethnic Chinese, the city-state has endeavored to dispel the image of the "third China," placing a "self-imposed limit" on its ties with China that has continued during the post–Cold War period.[67] Due to the importance of maritime trade in its economy and regime stability, Singapore has not only called for ensuring freedom of navigation at sea but also expressed particular anxiety over the Spratly Islands and the Taiwan Strait.[68] Consequently, it has taken a multifaceted regional strategy centered upon its reliance on the US strategic role and engagement of China through the ASEAN and other regional institutional mechanisms.[69]

Anti-Chinese Sentiments in Twenty-First-Century Southeast Asia

An interesting regional division has emerged among Southeast Asian attitudes toward China reflecting different historical experiences and

varying levels of salience of Chinese influence in domestic legitimacy politics. However, historical links and experiences have not singularly or decisively determined the nature of regional perceptions toward and relations with China. A rising China is increasingly a contested topic in domestic debates throughout the region. In the 1990s, Indochinese states turned to the ASEAN as a means to ensure political autonomy against its rising influence. Regionally isolated and weakened after the Cambodian conflict, Vietnam sought ASEAN membership for "critical resources for political and diplomatic rehabilitation, and access to regional and international markets and investment."[70] Tension between China and Indochinese states arises from China's hydropower and other projects upstream on the Mekong River which may result in "potentially serious ecological, economic and human impacts downstream," with attendant domestic political consequences for regimes in the Mekong region.[71]

In maritime Southeast Asia as well, attitudes toward China have recently undergone change according to shifts in domestic political factors. Despite decades-long antagonism during most of the Cold War period, Indonesia's anti-Chinese sentiments were substantially reduced after the demise of the authoritarian New Order government and subsequent democratization in the late 1990s. Echoing Malaysian prime minister Mahathir, Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid's efforts to work closely with China stemmed from "domestic requirements at a time that made it necessary for the government to display a degree of independence in dealing with the outside world (the West) on the one hand, and to induce a sense of dignity and pride on the other."[72]

At the same time, however, latent sources of friction with China continue. These include "resentment over the structure of trade, with Indonesia providing raw materials while Chinese companies compete with domestic Indonesian manufacturers" and Indonesia's "long history of resenting the economic role of the country's ethnic Chinese minority."[73] Despite the lingering potential for antagonism toward China, it is equally important to note that Indonesia has exercised a remarkable degree of caution. For instance, during anti-Chinese riots in 1998, President Habibie chose not to respond to China's "limited diplomatic intervention" for persecuted ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, a political decision made to calm anti-Chinese sentiments which "would almost certainly have aggravated domestic disorder and impeded the Republic's economic recovery."[74] As Indonesia's economy improves, however, political elites "will be alert to signs that China is

ignoring Southeast Asia's interests, trying to impose its will in the region, or insufficiently accommodating Indonesia's 'natural leadership' in Southeast Asia."[75]

Similar ambivalence characterizes the Philippine perception of China. On the one hand, China's booming economy and growing trade benefit the island nation's economy and political stability tremendously. Its trade surplus with China and investment from Chinese businesses serve as "lifelines" for its troubled economy. On the other hand, the military in the Philippines continues to harbor suspicion, maintaining that China's relatively moderate stance on the South China Sea since signing the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea in 1992 may be "tactical and temporary."[76] More importantly, that suspicion is shared by the general public. In most surveys, Filipinos tend to show greater affinity for the United States than any other country in the region, a trend reinforced by their historical experiences and strong cultural ties between the two Pacific states.[77] As a result, Philippine officials maintain that "the country wields a powerful card in dealing with China through its military alliance with the U.S."[78]

In sum, Southeast Asian views toward China remain ambivalent due in large part to the enduring dilemma about dependency on great powers and a yearning for regional autonomy. Although economic opportunities derived from China's rapid growth "can offset an over-dependence on the U.S. economy, ASEAN states also fear over-dependence on the Chinese economy and that Beijing might in the future use that dependence to pressure the region."[79] Overall, there exists a regionwide consensus that Southeast Asian countries "need to have a strong foundation in ASEAN to deal with China over time."[80] More importantly, the use of the multilateral approach through the institutional network of the ASEAN helps allay a sense of dependency on great powers and provides a regional mechanism to cope with various strategic challenges.[81]

Conclusion

As China's rise coincides with the perceived decline of US influence, the East Asian regional order appears to be in great flux. Pundits and scholars have characterized the state of affairs in various ways. Some predict that either balancing or bandwagoning behavior will prevail in the region, but before assuming a particular policy behavior on the part of

the region's small states, one must investigate how they understand and grapple with the challenges associated with confronting great powers. Our historical and cross-country comparative study of sentiments toward Japan and China found that the nature of historical experiences and the domestic politicization of great-power relations have influenced the strength and salience of anti-great-power sentiments in Southeast Asia.

Recent dynamics concerning the South China Sea provide a unique window into the challenge of navigating between the different regional powers, including China, Japan, and the United States. As China's activities around the area took on a more aggressive pattern, some of the regional countries expressed concerns and even reached out to other great powers, such as the United States, Russia, and Japan.[82] After the South China Sea dispute, Japanese leaders also attempted to capitalize on this new regional development. In November 2011, for instance, Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko agreed with Philippine president Benigno Aquino III "to forge closer maritime security ties to resolve disputes with China in the South China Sea."[83] For the Obama administration, which has been seeking to rejuvenate US regional influence, the tension between China and its Southeast Asian neighbors also became "an opportunity to reassert itself."[84] In September 2010, the United States hosted an unprecedented summit in New York with all 10 leaders of the ASEAN nations and discussed the South China Sea dispute.[85]

More broadly, in January 2012 the Obama administration issued the strategic defense guidance document which formally announced the US shift in strategic focus to Asia.[86] Echoing Southeast Asian sentiments toward a rising China, however, the impact of the US pivot has not been uniform in the region. For instance, relations with Vietnam have improved markedly, as manifested in Hillary Clinton's three visits as secretary of state and the two-way annual trade volume of more than $22 billion.[87] That Vietnam is one of the claimants disputing China's ownership of the Spratly Islands adds momentum in the US-Vietnam rapprochement, a dynamic mirrored in the Philippines' growing ties with the United States.

However, owing largely to its historically close strategic ties with Beijing and the absence of domestic politicization, Phnom Penh has been more pro-China in its orientation, rejecting "the Philippines' and Vietnam's attempts to include its South China Sea grievances against China in a joint ASEAN communiqué."[88] Even in the Philippines, where defense

cooperation with the United States has recently been pronounced, the US pivot intensifies domestic political contestation. For political elites in Manila, including President Aquino, the United States is favorably viewed as a strategic partner, providing military assistance in establishing a "minimum credible defense posture." For others, "the prospect of an American 'pivot' reads as a warning against an expansive military presence" in the context of "a legacy of human-rights violations and the perception that U.S. soldiers are above Philippine law."[89] As a result of such deeply divided political opinion, many protests against the United States and its military forces erupted in 2012.

In other words, there are significant variations among several Southeast Asian claimants in the South China Sea in terms of their domestic politicization of the issue and policy responses. Instead of balancing with the United States against China in a straightforward manner, most countries in the region have thus far shown a remarkable degree of strategic ambivalence, reflecting their long and varied historical interactions with China and different degrees of politicization of anti-great-power sentiments. In this regard, Southeast Asian countries have made conscientious efforts to avoid appearing to side with the United States, as that would increase a sense of dependency on the United States—a political move that might be unpopular in some countries. As a result, the joint statement issued after the first US-ASEAN summit did not include the term *South China Sea* that the United States had initially inserted in the draft. A high-ranking Southeast Asian official explained that leaders in the region "did not want to give the impression that we were willing to do whatever the United States said. By deleting 'South China Sea,' we saved the face of both China and the United States."[90]

After 2010 ended with friction and growing regional concerns about its assertiveness, China has sought to reassure neighbors in Southeast Asia. In July 2011, Chinese foreign minister Yang and his ASEAN counterparts "formally endorsed a set of guidelines to lay the framework for a potential code of conduct in the South China Sea."[91] China also made a series of proposals on cooperation, including "the convening of a symposium on free navigation in the South China Sea, and the establishment of three special committees on marine scientific research and environmental protection, navigation safety and search and rescue operations, and combating transnational crimes on the sea."[92]

How Southeast Asian nations will respond to China's diplomatic charm offensive in the coming years is not entirely clear at the time of this writing. If the findings of the present study are any guide, however, the type and nature of those responses will hinge crucially on the nature of interactions with the Chinese and how anti-Chinese sentiments are politicized domestically. We also believe that a better understanding of anti-great-power sentiments in the region is critical not only to managing the South China Sea dispute, but to gauging the future stability of the East Asian regional order. **SSQ**

Notes

1. By *structure*, we are referring primarily to international systemic conditions—specifically, the asymmetry of power (both material and ideational dimensions) between great powers and smaller states in Southeast Asia.

2. While recognizing that the United States has also been a key "great power" in the region, we do not specifically examine anti-US sentiments in this article primarily for both pragmatic and theoretical reasons. Because we were interested in comprehensively examining the intraregional variations in anti-great-power sentiments during specific moments of structural change, we limited our analytical scope to anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese sentiments in the early twentieth century and early 2000s respectively. The United States creates additional layers of complexity for comparability of cases. The role of the United States, in terms of its political-military as well as social influence, was not established or experienced as a similar structural constraint in Southeast Asia. The Philippines and Vietnam emerge as important outliers, while other Southeast Asian nations forged (or reforged) relations with the United States after 1945. For a systematic survey of anti-US sentiment in various parts of the world, see Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Anti-US in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007). For analyses of anti-US sentiments in Asia, see Matthew Carlson and Travis Nelson, "Anti-Americanism in Asia? Factors Shaping International Perceptions of American Influence," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 8, no. 3 (2008): 303–24; and Mark Beeson, "U.S. hegemony and Southeast Asia: The Impact of, and Limit to, U.S. Power and Influence," *Critical Asian Studies*, 36, no. 3 (2004): 445–62.

3. This analytical framework has been previously used in examining anti-great-power sentiments in the Northeast Asian context—specifically, in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. See Il Hyun Cho and Seo-Hyun Park, "Anti-Chinese and Anti-Japanese Sentiments in East Asia: The Politics of Opinion, Distrust, and Prejudice," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2011): 265–90.

4. For a useful historical overview of the role of external powers in Southeast Asia, see N. Ganesan, "ASEAN's Relations with Major External Powers," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22, no. 2 (August 2000): 258–78.

5. John Lee, "Malaysia 'Punching Above Its Weight' . . . And Finally Hitting the Target," in *Southeast Asian Affairs*, ed. Daljit Singh (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), 158–70.

6. Richard Weitz, "Nervous Neighbors: China Finds a Sphere of Influence," *World Affairs* 173, no. 6 (March/April 2011): 14.

7. On the mixture of continuity and change in ruling coalitions and legitimacy politics after the momentous structural shock that was the Asian Financial Crisis, see Etel Solingen, "Southeast Asia in a New Era: Domestic Coalitions from Crisis to Recovery," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 2 (2004): 189–212.

8. Bronson Percival, *The Dragon Looks South: China and Southeast Asia in the New Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 141.

9. John Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment: Southeast Asia and the Great Powers since 1975* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 3–4.

10. David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 132.

11. Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 161.

12. Michael J. Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 168.

13. In her study of regionalism in Southeast Asia, Alice Ba discusses ASEAN member states' acute sensitivity toward larger powers involved in the region and argues that their "self-identification as lesser powers informs their worldviews and conceptions of what they should and should not do." Alice D. Ba, *(Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 8–9, 25.

14. Kuik, "Essence of Hedging," 161.

15. In their influential study of different forms and practices of anti-Americanism, Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane argue that attitudes toward the United States lie on a continuum, with *opinion* being the most mild which could harden into *distrust*. The severest form of negative predisposition is *prejudice*. See Katzenstein and Keohane, "Varieties of Anti-Americanism: A Framework for Analysis," in *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, 9–38.

16. Mark Beeson, "Southeast Asia and the Major Powers: The United States, Japan and China," in *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, ed. Beeson (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 205–6.

17. Cited in Ken'ichi Goto, *Tensions of Empire: Japan and Southeast Asia in the Colonial and Postcolonial World* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), 90.

18. Goto, *Tensions of Empire*, 93–95.

19. Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1996), 12–13.

20. James Putzel, "Social Capital and the Imagined Community: Democracy and Nationalism in the Philippines," in *Asian Nationalism*, ed. Michael Leifer (New York: Routledge, 2000), 170–86.

21. Goto, *Tensions of Empire*, 228.

22. Masashi Nishihara, *The Japanese and Sukarno's Indonesia: Tokyo-Jakarta Relations 1951–1966* (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1976), xv. On the role of ethnic and substate nationalism as a major force in Southeast Asian legitimacy politics, see Michael Leifer, *Dilemmas of Statehood in Southeast Asia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972), 28.

23. Sueo Sudo, *The International Relations of Japan and South East Asia: Forging a New Regionalism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2. See also Sudo, *The Fukuda Doctrine and ASEAN: New Dimensions in Japanese Foreign Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), 32–33.

24. Wolf Mendl, *Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interests* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 97–98.

25. Mark T. Berger, "Decolonizing Southeast Asia: Nationalism, Revolution and the Cold War," in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 45.

26. Michael Leifer, "The Changing Temper of Indonesian Nationalism," in *Asian Nationalism*, ed. Leifer (New York: Routledge, 2000), 158.

27. Berger, "Decolonizing Southeast Asia," 47.

28. Nanshi Matsuura, "Anti-Japanese Sentiment in Southeast Asia: Case of Thailand" (Master's thesis, San Francisco State University, 1974), 1.

29. Sueo Sudo, *The International Relations of Japan and South East Asia: Forging a New Regionalism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 34; and Lim Hua Sing, *Japan's Role in Asia: Issues and Prospects* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1995), 2.

30. Sudo, *International Relations of Japan and South East Asia*. See also Mendl, *Japan's Asia Policy*, 98; and Yeo Lay Hwee, "Japan, ASEAN, and the Construction of an East Asian Community," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 28, no. 2 (2006): 259–75.

31. On the Fukuda Doctrine and its subsequent extension to and influence on the Takeshita Doctrine of 1989 and the Hashimoto Doctrine of 1997, see Sudo, *Fukuda Doctrine and ASEAN*.

32. H. H. Michael Hsiao and Alan Yang, "Soft Power Politics in the Asia Pacific: Chinese and Japanese Quests for Regional Leadership," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 8-2-09, 17 February 2009.

33. Takashi Shiraishi, "Japan and Southeast Asia," in *Network Power: Japan and Asia*, eds. Peter J. Katzenstein and Shiraishi (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 169.

34. Fumitaka Furuoka, "Malaysia-Japan Relations under the Mahathir Administration: Case Studies of the 'Look East' Policy and Japanese Investment in Malaysia," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 3 (May/June 2007): 514.

35. Mendl, *Japan's Asia Policy*, 110.

36. Hsiao and Yang, "Soft Power Politics in the Asia Pacific," 6.

37. Yeo, "Japan, ASEAN, and the Construction of an East Asian Community," 264.

38. Donald E. Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 2.

39. Michael R. Chambers, " 'The Chinese and the Thais Are Brothers': The Evolution of the Sino–Thai Friendship," *Journal of Contemporary China* 14 no. 45 (November 2005): 602–3.

40. Percival, *Dragon Looks South*, 35.

41. Chambers, "Chinese and the Thais Are Brothers," 603.

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43. Chulacheeb Chinwanno, "Rising China and Thailand's Policy of Strategic Engagement," in *The Rise of China: Responses from Southeast Asia and Japan*, ed. Jun Tsunekawa (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2009), 83.

44. Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1989), 93.

45. Percival, *Dragon Looks South*, 39–40.

46. Leifer, "Changing Temper of Indonesian Nationalism," 157.

47. Ibid., 165–66.

48. Ibid., 162.

49. Rizal Sukma, "Indonesia-China Relations: The Politics of Reengagement," in *Living with China: Regional States and China through Crises and Turning Points*, eds. Shiping Tang et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 91.

50. Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Malaysia's Post-Cold War China Policy: A Reassessment," in *Rise of China*, 49.

51. Chinwanno, "Rising China and Thailand's Policy of Strategic Engagement," 87.

52. Percival, *Dragon Looks South*, 47.

53. Leifer, *ASENA and the Security of Southeast Asia*, 95.

54. Amitav Acharya, *An Arms Race in Post–Cold War Southeast Asia? Prospects for Control*, Pacific Strategic Papers (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994), 33.

55. Ibid.*,* 33–34.

56. Located in the South China Sea, the Spratly Islands are a group of islands claimed by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. The islands and their surrounding areas are considered invaluable for their huge oil and natural gas reserves and for fishery and commercial shipping lanes.

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58. Percival, *Dragon Looks South*, 142.

59. Ibid., 164.

60. Amitav Acharya, *Asia Rising: Who is Leading?* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2008), 4.

61. Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2009), 225–26.

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63. Liow, "Malaysia's Post-Cold War China Policy," 49.

64. Kuik, "Essence of Hedging," 172–75.

65. Percival, *Dragon Looks South*, 47.

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75. Percival, *Dragon Looks South*, 53.

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