



THE GRIFFITH-TSINGHUA 'HOW CHINA SEES THE WORLD'

Working Paper Series, No 8 (2018)

2017 CCPSIS Survey Report

By Huiyun Feng and Kai He



2017 CCPSIS (Chinese Community of Political Science and International Studies) Survey Report

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The Griffith-Tsinghua Project “How China Sees the World” Working Paper
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Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University

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This project is supported by a research Grant (No.16-1512-150509-IPS) from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Project Introduction

How to understand China's rise and its implications for Asia and the world is an imperative task for both scholars and policy makers. China has become the second largest economy next to the United States since 2010. China is also the major trading partner for over 140 countries in the world. As United States-China relations will define the next century, it is essential to build mutual understanding for policy makers. If strategic distrust is a major obstacle in US-China relations, as Kenneth Lieberthal and Jisi Wang have suggested, deepening our understanding of Chinese perceptions and views on international relations will be a crucial task for bridging the perception gap and mitigating the strategic distrust between the two nations.

This project aims to make sense of China's rise in world politics through examining Chinese International Relations (IR) scholars' perceptions and debates on key issues in international relations and Asian security. This project will deepen our understanding of Chinese scholars, especially regarding how they perceive world politics and how they can impact Chinese policy making via internal debates. There are two parts in this project. First, we organize and conduct onsite surveys of IR scholars at the annual conference of the Chinese Community of Political Science and International Studies in Beijing. Second, we examine the internal debates among Chinese scholars over international politics, Asian security, and Chinese foreign policy.

With generous support from the MacArthur Foundation (grant No. 16-1512-150509-IPS), the Griffith Asia Institute is able to successfully collaborate with Tsinghua University's Institute of International Relations to carry out the survey research as well as conduct the research project on the Chinese IR debates through expert conferences and other academic exchanges. This working paper series will feature major Chinese scholars' analyses of internal debates and our survey findings.

We appreciate your comments and suggestions very much.

Kai He and Huiyun Feng (Co-Chief Investigators, Griffith University)

Xuetong Yan (Lead Project Collaborator, Tsinghua University)

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Executive Summary:

- Most Chinese IR scholars continue to view the US as the hegemon in the world. Although they perceive a gradual decline of US power, they acknowledge US domination in the short run. Most scholars are realistic regarding Chinese power and capabilities. They are relatively optimistic in the economic domain and cautiously optimistic in the domain of comprehensive power.
- Although more confident, scholars do not think China is a challenger to the current international order. One possible explanation is the perception that power transition is not a fast process. The scholars are taking a long-term view, and the gradual change towards the optimistic picture indicates their growing confidence about Chinese power at the societal level.
- Most Chinese scholars in our survey view the US-China relationship as neither good nor bad, and a majority believe that it will continue as it is into the next 10 years. However, there is still a good portion (43.9%) of the participants who believe that the United States poses the largest threat to China's national security. The major problems identified in US-China relations are territorial security-related: Taiwan (66.8%) and South China Sea (51.3%).
- China's relationship with Japan is perceived as the most pessimistic one in China's foreign relations. One-quarter (25.2%) of participants describe China-Japan relations as rivalry or adversary (Figure 25). However, compared to last year's survey, it is clear that Chinese scholars have improved their attitudes about Japan in 2017 (39.3% of participants saw Japan as the rival in 2016).
- While over a third (34.9%) of participants do not think the China-Philippine dispute will escalate, over half thinks it is likely (53.5%) or very likely (7.1%) to escalate.
- Most participants are not optimistic about the future relationship between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea with 81.9% of participants perceiving future low-scale diplomatic and military disputes between the two nations in the South China Sea.
- Interestingly, most participants think that the rules-based order for the South China Sea disputes raised at the 2017 Shangri-La Dialogue was very reasonable (9.1%) or reasonable (65.9%) while only one fifth (20.1%) do not think so.
- On foreign policy changes, an overwhelming majority agree (45.8%) or strongly agree (34.4 %) that China should change its policy towards North Korea. Pessimism is also shown when participants are asked if the Six Party Talks are the key to the North Korean crisis: 48.4% disagree and 12.1% totally disagree; only a third (36.2%) agree.

2017 CCPSIS (Chinese Community of Political Science and International Studies) Survey Report

Huiyun Feng and Kai He

Introduction

With generous support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (Grant No. 16-1512-150509-IPS), we conducted an onsite opinion survey at the annual convention of the Chinese Community of Political Science and International Studies (CCPSIS) in Beijing on June 26-27, 2017. The CCPSIS is one of the largest academic conventions in international relations in China. It is hosted annually by Tsinghua University's Institute of International Relations in Beijing and is well attended by Chinese IR scholars. It is a very dynamic academic setting with heated discussions and debates among scholars.

Since newly elected President Trump assumed office in the United States in early 2017, the world has witnessed significant changes in US-China relations and the Asia Pacific security situation. While the South China Sea and East China Sea disputes have seemingly calmed down, the North Korean nuclear and missile tests seriously challenge regional security. Although the United States tried to reassure the Asian allies of continued US commitment, Trump's policies of withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Paris Climate Change Accords and emphasizing "America First" on national security and economic prosperity (as Tillerson explained) dealt blows to US allies and raised doubts about US leadership in the world. The new Trump administration's bland claims over China's trade imbalance and currency manipulation threatened trade war with China and put China-US relations to the test. In addition, China ran into a more than two-month military and diplomatic standoff with India over Doklam in mid-2017. Finally, a phone call between Trump and Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan in early 2017 and Washington's decision to sell arms to Taiwan drew formal protests from Mainland China.

Despite these troubles in late 2016 and early 2017, China hosted the First Belt and Road Forum in Beijing in May, 2017. China and ASEAN senior officials agreed on the draft Code of Conduct (COC) which was later endorsed by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN. Facing the North Korean threat, China agreed to more severe sanctions with other UNSC members on North Korea. The changes in the general security setting are reflected in the perceptions of Chinese IR scholars. This survey report summarizes the major descriptive survey results and provides some analyses of the perceptions of IR scholars as participants in debates about China's international relations and foreign policy.

Survey Participant Profile

We hired student volunteers to distribute the survey questionnaires to participants during the 2017 CCPSIS conference. Student volunteers were trained and briefed beforehand by our survey collaborators on how to handle the survey. Survey questionnaires were prepared in Chinese. We prepared the questions based on current events and previous surveys. We made some adjustments to the previous year's survey questions and added some new questions, e.g. on the new Trump administration's policies to withdraw from TPP and the Paris Accords.

We distributed about 500 questionnaires and received 317 completed surveys, so the response rate was 63.4%. In the survey, there were 54.5% male participants and 45.5% females. This year the sample is more gender balanced than the previous two years. Most participants are in the age group between 20-40 years old (76.8%) and have overseas study/work experience (59.6%). Over 70% of participants have Masters or PhD degrees. Over half (56.2%) of the participants are university students (in undergraduate or post-graduate programs) while 26% are university professionals. Another 11.4% work in research institutes or think tanks in China. The CCPSIS is an annual event and in our sample, about a quarter of participants did not attend the conference last year.

This general profile of survey participants shown in Figure 1 indicates that the survey target is a group of highly educated and well-informed IR scholars although nearly half of them are still college students (including

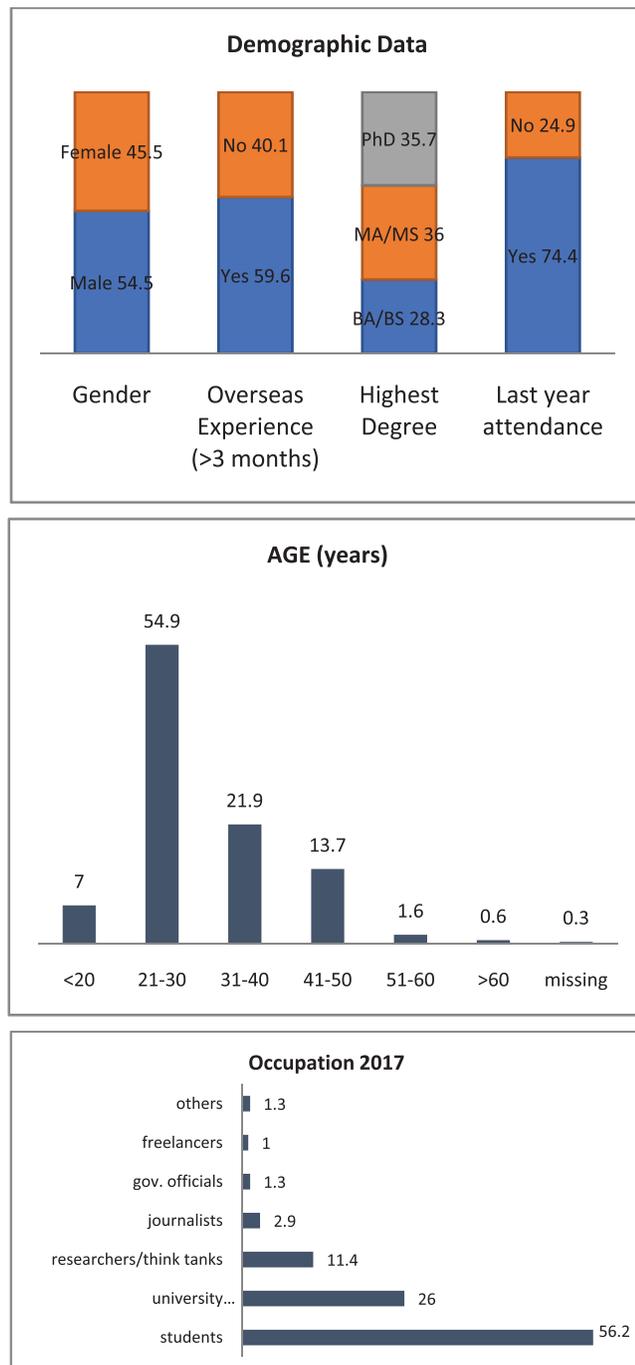


Figure 1 General Profile of CCPSIS Participants (%)

undergraduate and post-graduate students). Despite the sample limitations of the survey, it will shed some light on our understanding of Chinese IR scholars' perceptions and views on China's international relations in particular, and world politics in general.

Section I: China and the World

Chinese IR scholars continue to view the US as the hegemon in the world. Although they perceive a gradual decline of US power, they acknowledge US domination in the short run. Most participants (65%) view the current international system as dominated by one superpower and many great powers, while 21.8% see it as unipolar. It suggests that most participants recognise the power advantage of the United States (See Figure 2). This result is consistent with our 2016 survey.

But over 84% of participants see the United States as either a hegemon that will decline or a slowly declining global hegemon. About 12.7% see the United States as a global hegemon not in decline. This result suggests that most participants perceive a decline in US power in the long run (see Figure 3).

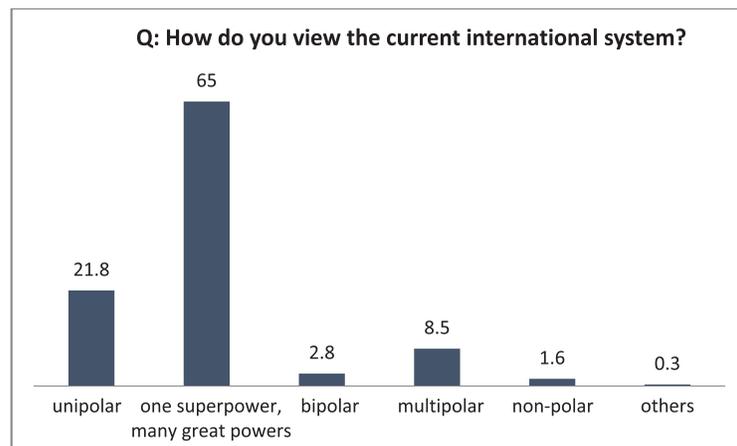


Figure 2 Perceptions of the International System (%)

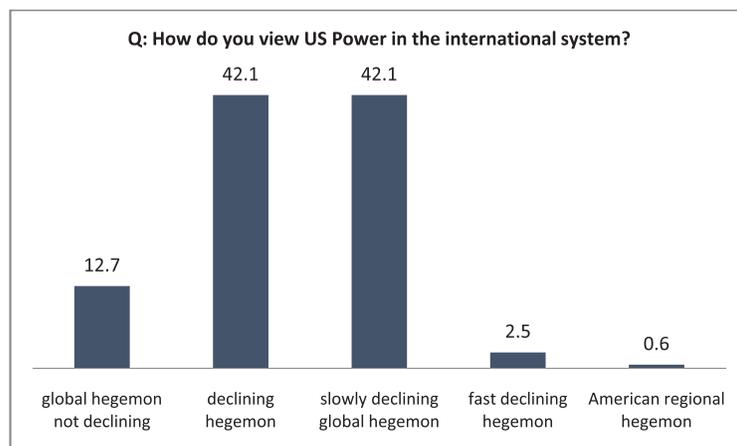


Figure 3 Perceptions of US Power and Status (%)

Most participants are optimistic about China's rise, especially in Asia. Regarding China's current power status, over half (56%) see China as a rising superpower, a significant rise from the 2016 survey (36.7%). There is a decline of the proportion viewing China as a rising Asian hegemon from 44.8% in 2016 to 31.6% this year, and a decline from 13.2% in 2016 to 7.6% recognising China as an Asian hegemon (Figure 4). This suggests that Chinese IR scholars show a rising confidence in Chinese power on the world stage.

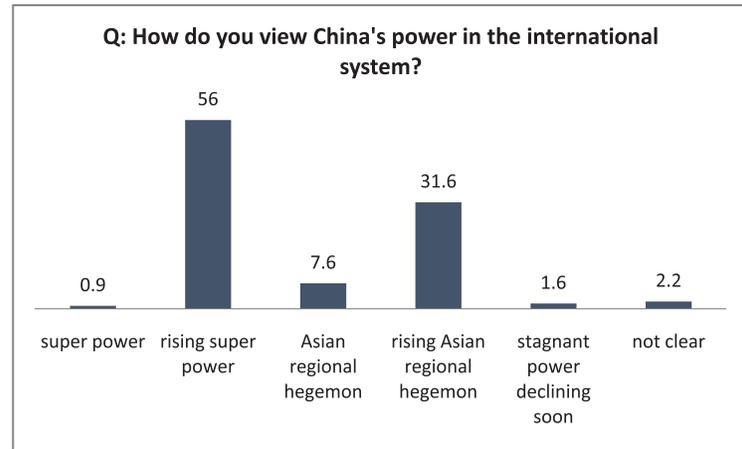


Figure 4 Perceptions of China's Power and Status (%)

Although more confident, scholars do not think China is a challenger to the current international order. A large majority (72.1%) do not think China is a challenger to the current international order, (44.5% somewhat disagree, 27.6% totally disagree), and more than a quarter (26.3%) agree (Figure 5).

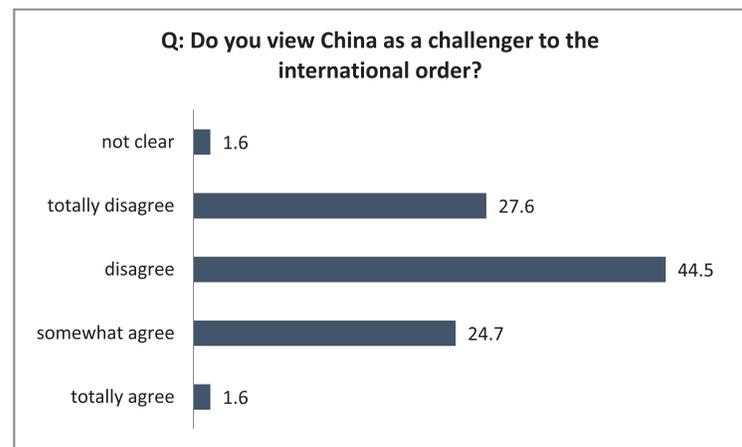


Figure 5 Perceptions of China as a Challenger to International Order

Chinese scholars are realistic regarding Chinese power and capabilities. We use five questions to measure perceptions of Chinese scholars regarding China's hard and soft power.

Roughly 60% of participants (42.5% likely and 18.4% very likely) think China can surpass the United States in the **economic domain** of hard power while 34.3% do not view it as likely. In the **military domain** of hard power, a large majority (55.1% unlikely and 18.7% very unlikely) do not think China can surpass the US in the next 10 years and only 22.5% think it is likely. The same pessimism exists regarding soft power in the **domain of political systems** (51.4% unlikely, 20% not at all likely, 25.1% likely) and the **cultural domain** with a majority believing that China is not likely (50.5%) or very unlikely (17.5%) to surpass the US in the next 10 years. In terms of **comprehensive power**, a small majority thinks that China is not likely (53.6%) or very unlikely (22.1%) to surpass the US in the next 10 years while 22.1% thinks it is likely (see Figure 6).

Our survey shows that Chinese scholars are realistic regarding Chinese power. They seem relatively optimistic in the economic domain and cautiously optimistic in comprehensive power. Compared to the 2016 survey, Chinese scholars are more optimistic about Chinese power in 2017.

This optimistic view on Chinese power is consistent with their

perception regarding a possible US decline in the international system in the long term. However, it is interesting to observe that most of the Chinese participants did not draw a causal linkage between China's rise and the US decline. In other words, Chinese IR scholars are optimistic about China's rise, but they do not believe that China's rise will necessarily challenge US hegemony or change the international order.

One possible explanation is the perception that power transition is not a fast process. The scholars are taking a long-term view, and the gradual change towards the optimistic picture indicates their growing confidence about Chinese power at the societal level. However, the perceived US decline is a slow process. Moreover, it might not be necessarily caused by the rise of China, but by US domestic disarray.

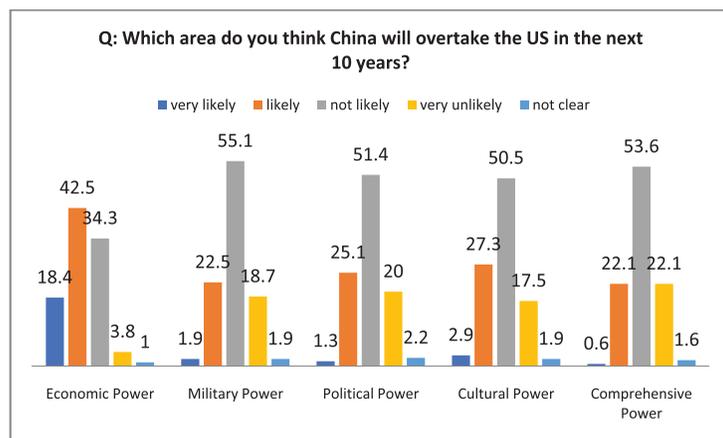


Figure 6 Optimism Regarding Whether China Can Surpass US Power (%)

Section II. US-China Relations: Problems and Prospects

The United States-China relationship has a major impact on the future of the international system. China has always identified its relationship with the United States as a key bilateral relationship in its foreign policy. The significance of rising China towards the international liberal order affects the perceptions of Chinese scholars on this bilateral relationship and its future.

Most participants in our survey view the US-China relationship as neither good nor bad (66.2%), and a majority believe that it will continue as it is into the next 10 years (62.5%). Just over 27% of participants believe that the US-China relations are good presently and the number increases slightly to 28.4% when looking at US-China relations in the next 10 years, exhibiting a little cautious optimism. The trend has generally been something to be optimistic about and there seems to be a general wish toward a good relationship (Figure 7).

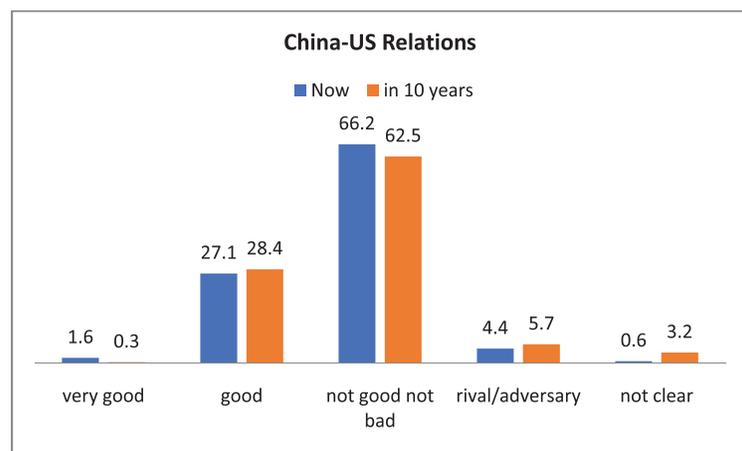


Figure 7 Optimism on Present and Future U.S.-China Relations (%)

That said, there is still a good portion (43.9%) of the participants who believe that the United States poses the largest threat to China's national security (Figure 8). This result echoes the Pew 2016 Report, which shows that 45% of Chinese surveyed, "see U.S. power and influence as posing a major threat to their country."¹

With the South China Sea disputes calming down and the China-Philippines' relaxation of tensions after the Hague ruling, only 2.2% and 3.8%

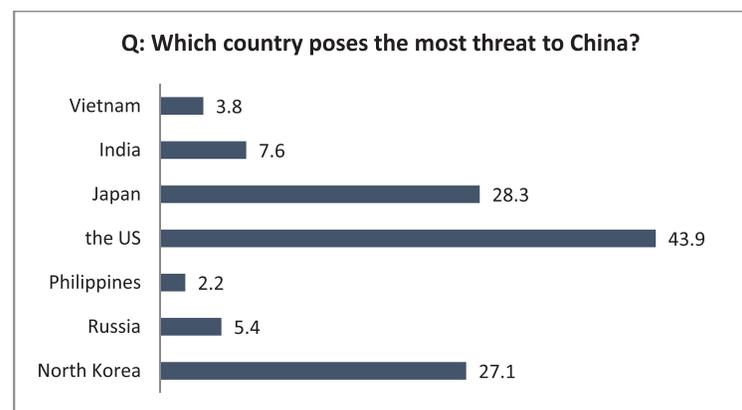


Figure 8 States as Threats to China's National Security (%)

1 See Pew Research Center, October, 2016, "Chinese Public Sees More Powerful Role in World, Names U.S. as Top Threat," p. 10. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/10/05/chinese-public-sees-more-powerful-role-in-world-names-u-s-as-top-threat/>

of the participants see the Philippines and Vietnam, respectively, as posing the biggest threat to China. However, the concerns over North Korea increased with escalating tensions on the missile tests and nuclear threats. Therefore, in 2017, 27.1% of Chinese scholars see North Korea as posing the largest threat to China, behind Japan (28.3%). With the China-Indian Doklam standoff that started in June, the perception of the threat posed by India is higher at 7.6% compared to the 2016 survey (4.1%) (Figure 8).

However, on potential conflict with China in the next five years, about a third (32%) identify Japan, 15.2% pinpoint Vietnam, 14.6% identify India, 12% identify North Korea, 10.8% identify the Philippines, and 10.4% identify the United States (Figure 9). The significant change this year compared to 2016 is the perception of increased conflict with India and North Korea with ongoing crises in Doklam and on the Korean peninsula. While China-Philippines relations are relaxing, Vietnam was mounting challenges towards China in the South China Sea and over historical claims, therefore, Vietnam rises in ranking to the second in likelihood of war with China in the next five year in this year's survey.

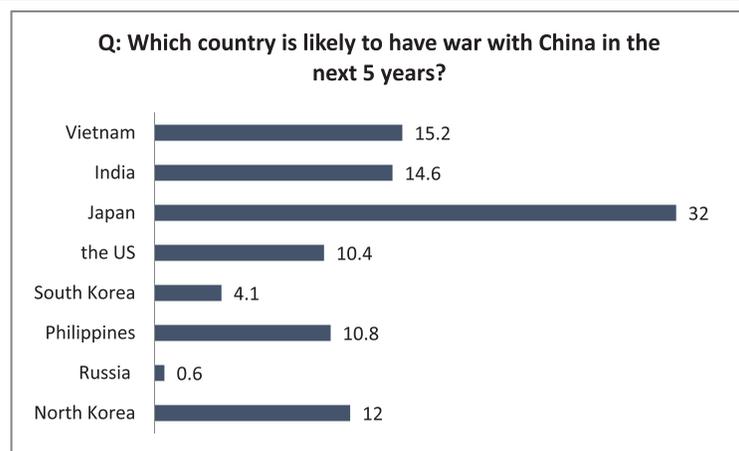


Figure 9 Future Likelihood of Conflict or War with China (%)

The major problems identified in US-China relations are territorial security related, Taiwan 66.8%; South China Sea 51.3%; while the dispute over Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands seemed to have calmed down from last year (19.9%). Principle and rule related problems include: Democracy 28.2%, Human Rights 22.5%, and Cyber security 18%; while economic related issues include Trade 33.9%; Currency 17.4%, and Energy and Environment 9.8% (Figure 10). One significant change is the sharp increase in concern over trade. The Trump Administration's claim of trade war might have

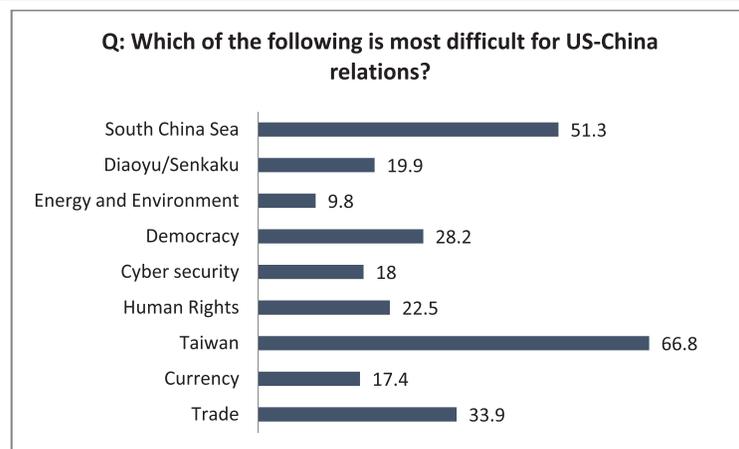


Figure 10 Issues as Threats to US-China Relations (%)

contributed to this concern, but China's trade difficulties around the world and domestic economic slowdown might also be contributing factors. The Taiwan issue became more salient with Tsai's administration.

Despite the problems, **areas of common interests between the United States and China are identified with the following ranking order: anti-terrorism 69%; NPT (Iran and North Korea) 67.7%; Financial stability 61%; Trade 64.2%; climate change 42.6%;** Cyber security 38.3%; Energy 22.7%; Taiwan 5.8% and Human rights 2.2%, (Figure 11). Attention to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) issue significantly increased from 2016 mainly as a result of the deteriorating situation on the Korean Peninsula. **A significant change is the attention given to climate change which dropped from 74% in 2016 to 42.6% in 2017.**

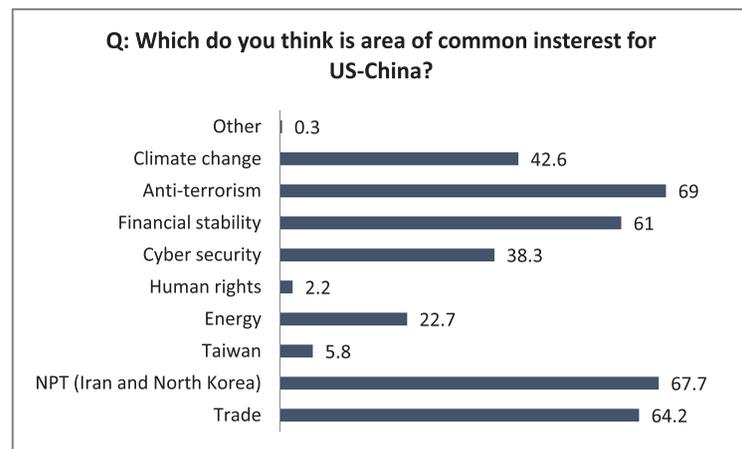


Figure 11 Consensus on Areas of Common Interest for the US and China (%)

When asked about the implications for China of US President Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Accords, **53% of the participants (18% totally disagree and 35% somewhat disagree) do not think it means that China can take up leadership on climate change, while 46% agree (43% somewhat agree and 3% totally agree)** (Figure 12). As Michael Swaine stated in his survey article of Chinese attitudes toward the US withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords, non-authoritative and authoritative statements have not "argued that Trump's decision will benefit China or lead to it challenging the United States' global leadership."² Our survey results slightly support Swaine's observation since over half of the participants totally disagree (18%) or somewhat disagree (35%) that US withdrawal from the Paris Accords will

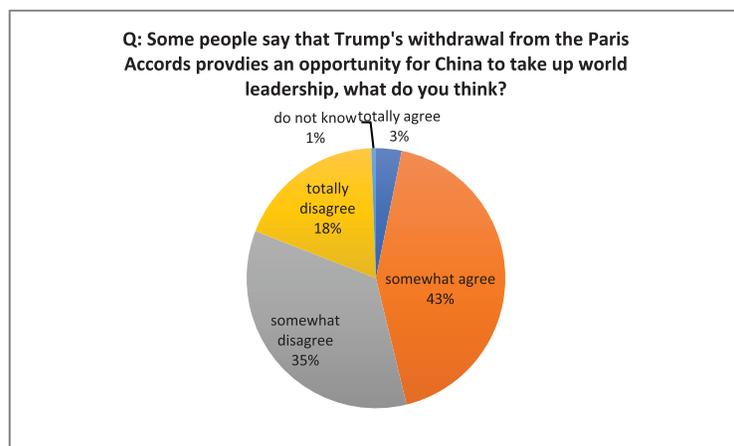


Figure 12 On US Withdrawal from Paris Accords and China's Opportunity

2 Michael Swaine, "Chinese Attitudes toward the U.S. Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords" *China Leadership Monitor*, Issue 54, September 11, 2017. <https://www.hoover.org/research/chinese-attitudes-toward-us-withdrawal-paris-climate-accords>

mean an opportunity for China to take up world leadership. This divergent view among Chinese scholars can also explain the sharp change in the perception of the climate change issue as a common area of interest between the US and China.

On the view of US withdrawal from the TPP, more than half of Chinese scholars (64.2%) in the survey see it as a potential opportunity for China (Figure 13). Given the previous confidence in Chinese economic power, and the Chinese initiatives of AIIB and BRI, this confidence in the economic power of China seems well founded.

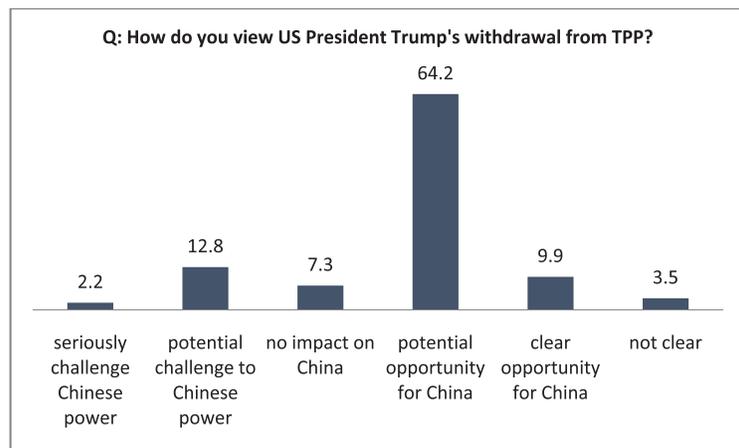


Figure 13 On US Withdrawal from TPP and China (%)

Section III. China's Territorial Disputes as Major Security Challenges

Traditional territorial security continues to rank as the highest security challenge for China. Taiwan, South China Sea and Diaoyu/Senkaku remain major security problems. Regarding China's territorial disputes with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and with the Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea, more than half of the participants believe that Chinese policy is "strong with constraints or very strong" (Figure 14). This result shows a general sense of satisfaction of the participants toward Chinese foreign policy in the South and East China Seas.

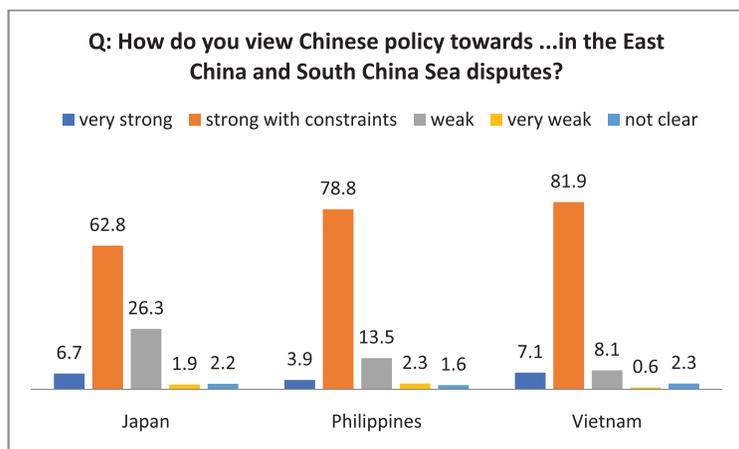


Figure 14 Intensity of China's Conflict Policy with neighbours (%)

On US-Japan alliance, 88.8% of participants see it as a military threat (21.7%) or potential military threat (67.1%) to Chinese security (Figure 15). Most participants think that “it is likely (49.8%) or very likely (22.3%) that the US will get involved if there is a conflict between China and Japan” (Figure 16).

On Chinese policy toward the Philippines in the South China Sea Disputes, a majority think “it is strong (78.8%) or very strong (3.9%) but with constraints,” while 15.8% think “Chinese policy is weak or very weak” (Figure 17). **While over a third (34.9%) of participants do not think the China-Philippine dispute will escalate, over half think it is likely (53.5%) or very likely (7.1%) to escalate.** Given the much-improved bilateral relations under President Ro-drigo Roa Duterte, this result is quite surprising. It indicates that Chinese scholars in this survey are cautious about the future development in the South China Sea, especially with the Philippines.

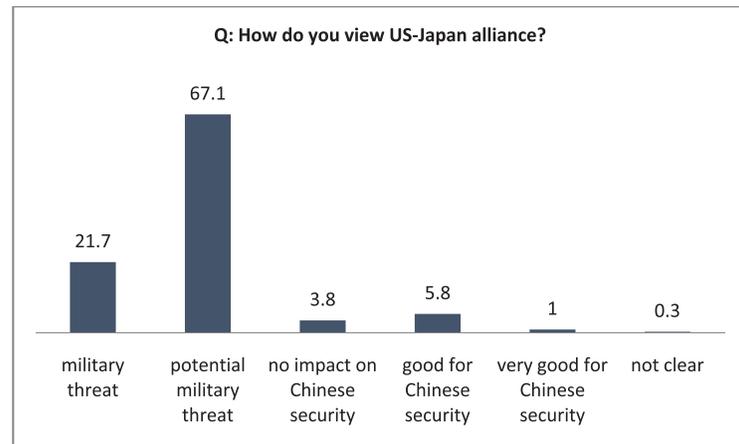


Figure 15 On US-Japan Alliance and China (%)

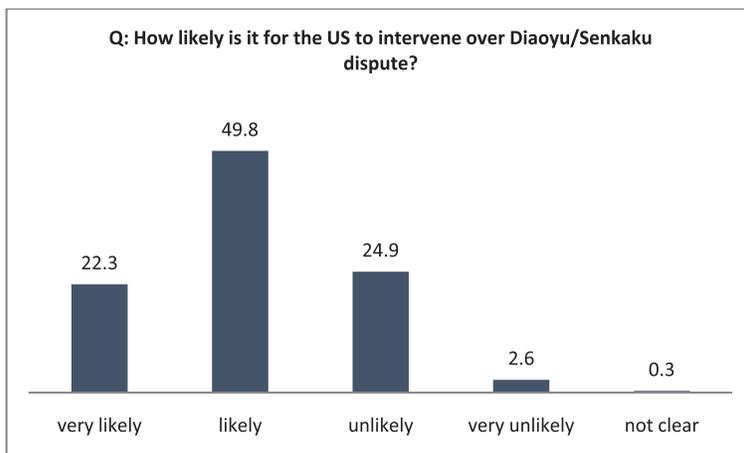


Figure 16 On Possibility of US Intervention in the Diaoyu/Senkaku Dispute (%)

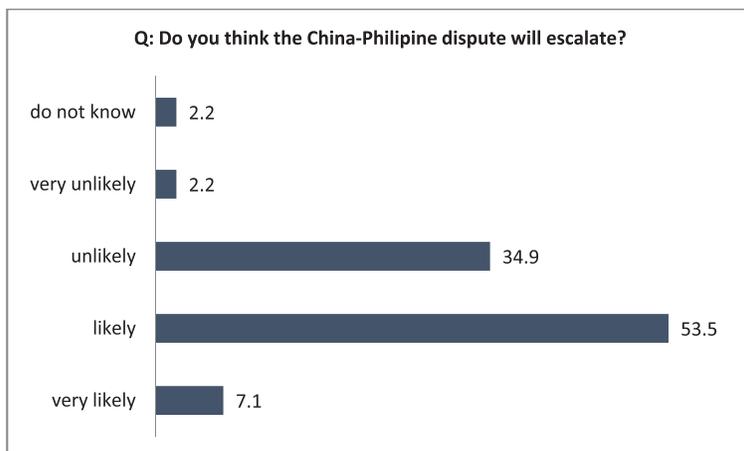


Figure 17 On the Potential Escalation of China-Philippines South China Sea Dispute (%)

With Vietnam, Chinese participants think that Chinese policy towards Vietnam is strong but with constraints or very strong and only 8.1% view it as weak. **Most participants are not optimistic about the future relationship between China and Vietnam in the South China Sea with 81.9% of participants perceiving future low scale diplomatic and military disputes between the two nations in the South China Sea (Figure 18).**

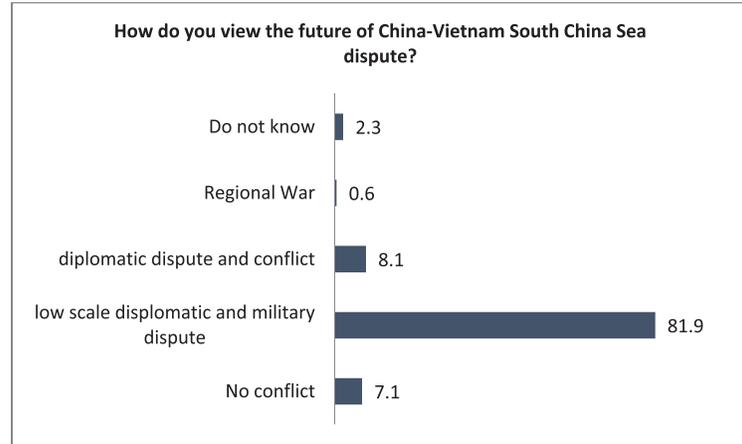


Figure 18 On the Future of China-Vietnam over the South China Sea (%)

On US involvement in the South China Sea, a small majority think it likely (46.8%) or very likely (6.2%) that the US military activities (FONs) in the South China Sea might lead to conflicts between China and the US, while 42.2% of participants believe it unlikely or very unlikely (4.5%). The result indicates a divided perception among Chinese scholars on the danger of US involvement in the South China Sea (Figure 19).

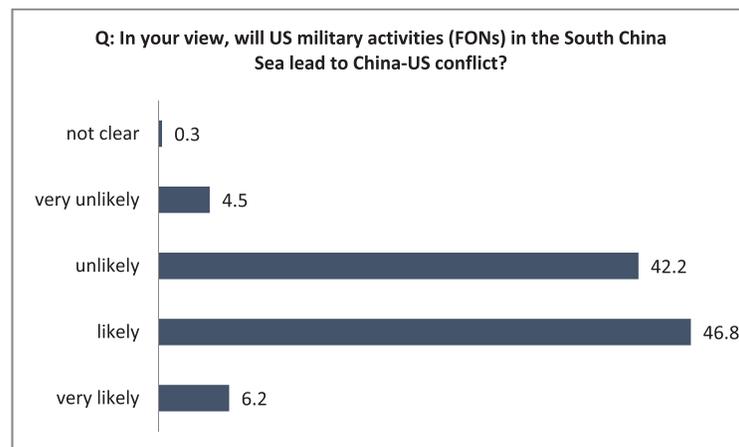


Figure 19 On the US FONs Impact on China over the South China Sea Dispute (%)

Interestingly, most participants think that the rules-based order for the South China Sea disputes raised at the 2017 Shangri-La Dialogue was very reasonable (9.1%) or reasonable (65.9%) while only one fifth (20.1%) do not think so (Figure 20). This is a new question in this year's survey which was not in the 2016 survey. It seems that Chinese scholars support rules-based order in general. However, it is not clear whether they have the same views about the "rules" as the Western countries, including the United States and Australia.

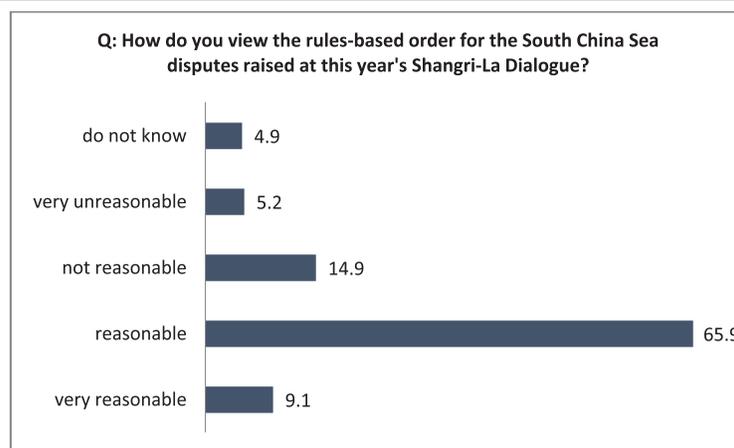


Figure 20 On the Rules-Based Order in South China Sea Conflicts

Section IV. Chinese Foreign Policy

Most participants recognise that Chinese foreign policy has become more assertive (*Qiangying* in Chinese 强硬) since 2008, with 17.5% somewhat disagreeing or 6.5% strongly disagreeing. On the assertiveness of Chinese foreign policy, more than half of the participants (63.8% somewhat agree and 10.7% strongly agree) believe that China's foreign policy became assertive after 2008.

When asked whether the summit between Chinese President Xi and American President Trump in April 2017 symbolized the beginning of shared governance of "G-2", all participants selected "agree"

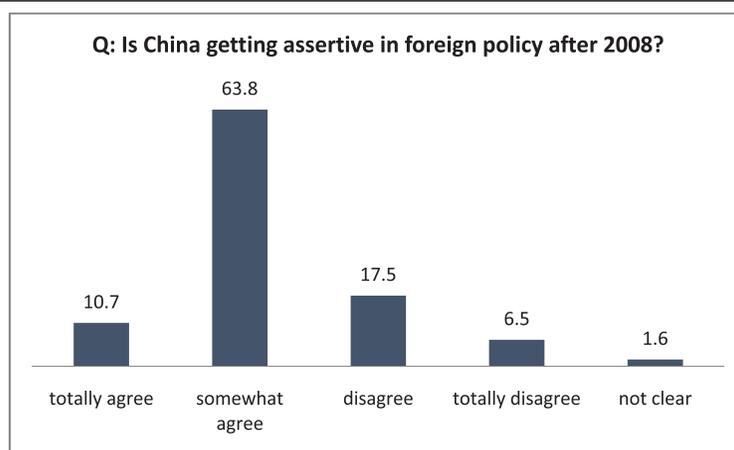


Figure 21 On Assertiveness of China's Foreign Policy (%)

(100%). This is quite surprising because the Chinese official policy strongly denies the possibility of establishing G-2 with the United States. It seems that Chinese scholars in this year's survey hold a quite different view from the Chinese government. Or it reflects a hidden and unspoken perception regarding the future of G-2.

Over the perception of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) and the AIIB establishment, 55.8% of participants agree with reservations and 5.5 strongly agree that these two initiatives symbolize Chinese leadership in the future world. However, over one third of the participants (26% disagree and 12.7 totally disagree) oppose that proposition. This result reflects that some Chinese scholars still hold a cautious attitude toward the BRI and AIIB projects despite the official enthusiasm in China (Figure 22).

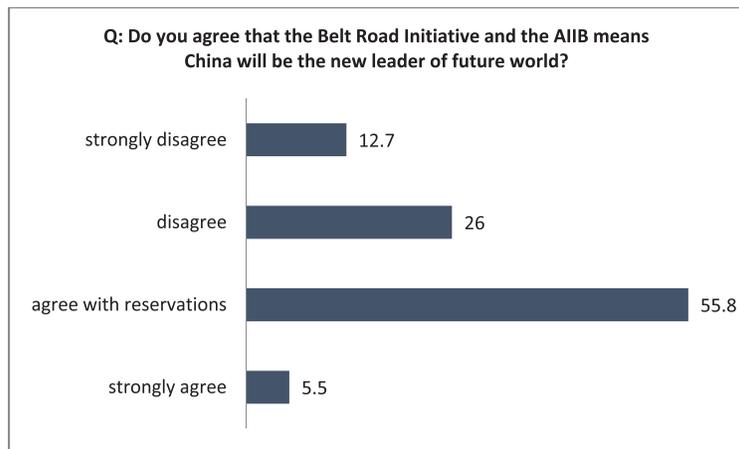


Figure 22 On BRI and AIIB and World Leadership (%)

On foreign policy changes, an overwhelming majority agree (45.8%) or strongly agree (34.4 %) that China should change its policy towards North Korea. This result is similar to last year's survey. It reflects the severe security challenges that North Korea poses to China because of Kim Jong-un's consistent provocations in conducting nuclear and missile tests in 2017 (Figure 23). Recalling the previous question on potential threats to China's national security, it is not surprising to see that 27.1% of participants even identify North Korea as a potential security threat to China in the short run (Figure 8).

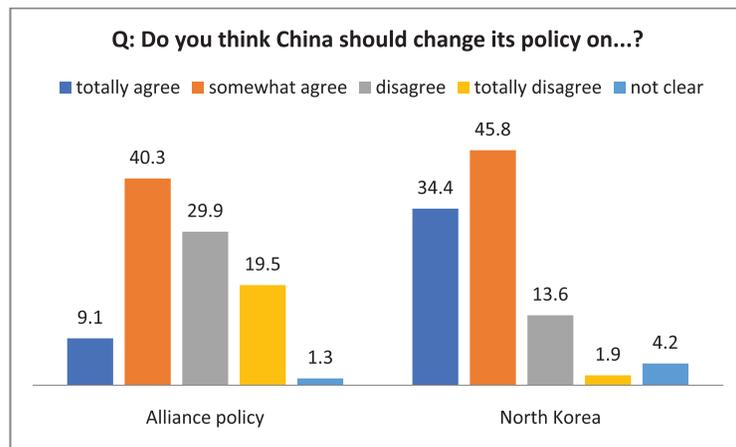


Figure 23 Attitudes about China's Foreign Policy Transformation(%)

Should China form alliances? The answer is mixed. **Almost half (49.4%) of the participants believe (9.1% totally agree and 40.3% somewhat agree) that China should consider forming alliances, while 29.9% somewhat disagree or 19.5% strongly disagree.** This result is similar to the 2016 survey result, reflecting a divided or undecided view of Chinese scholars on China's future alliance policy.

Similar to last year's survey, over half of the participants do not think China has friends in the world (51%)

and one third (32%) believe that China has some (Figure 24). About 70 respondents directly single out Pakistan as the “iron friend” (巴铁 *Ba Tie*) of China, while a dozen others indicated Israel, Cambodia, Russia, or others.

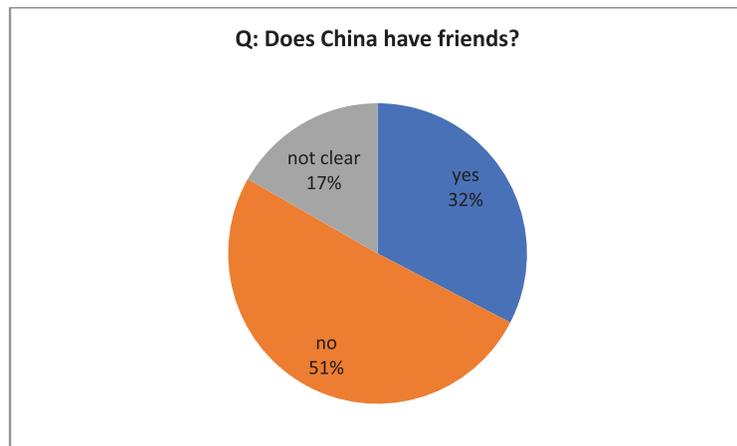


Figure 24 Nature of the Political Universe for China

On bilateral relations, **an overwhelming majority of the participants believe that the China-Russian relationship is good or very good (82.7%)** while 16.6% of participants think that it is neither good nor bad (Figure 25).

Chinese participants are also optimistic about China's bilateral relations with ASEAN, Africa, and Latin America (Figure 25). Even though China has disputes with

some ASEAN countries in the South China Sea, Chinese participants mainly see the China-ASEAN relationship as good (68.8%). On China-African relations, a majority think “it is good or very good” (89%). On China's relationship with Latin America 73.4% think “it is good or very good.” The China-Latin America relationship has improved significantly in the past year (57.1% in 2016).

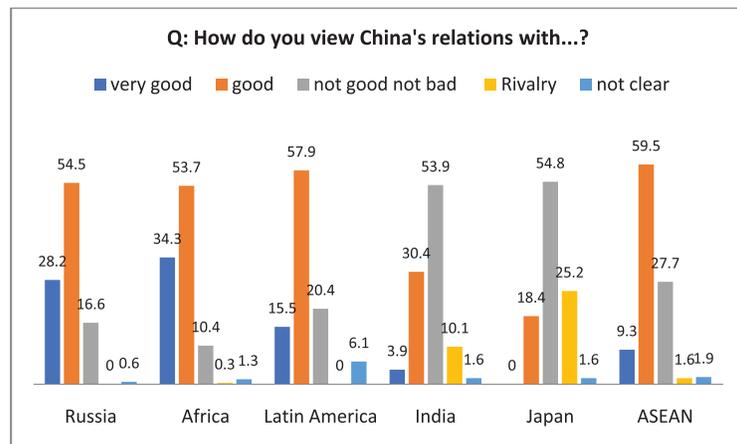


Figure 25 Variations in the Nature of China's Relations with Other States (%)

In contrast, Chinese participants have mixed feelings about China-Indian relations (Figure 25). Roughly one-third (34.3%) of the participants think that the bilateral relationship is good in general (ct. 49.4% in 2016), but 53.9% believe that “it is not good and not bad” (ct. 40.9% in 2016) and 10.1% thinks it is rivalry (ct. 3.9% in 2016). The drop in positive attitude toward China-India relations is caused by the border standoff

between the two nations in Doklam. The 2017 survey took place in late June, when the Doklam dispute had just started.

China's relationship with Japan is perceived as the most pessimistic one in China's foreign relations. One-quarter (25.2%) of participants describe China-Japan relations as rivalry or adversary (Figure 25). However, compared to last year's survey, **it is clear that Chinese scholars have improved their perceptions about Japan in 2017 (39.3% of participants saw Japan as the rival in 2016).**

In the 2017 survey, 54.8% of participants believe that the bilateral relation between China and Japan is not good and not bad" (48.1% in 2016) and **18.4% thinks it is good in comparison with 9.7% in 2016** (Figure 25). This improved perception of Japan can be explained by the diplomatic efforts of both governments in alleviating the East China Sea disputes in 2017.

On North Korea

The Korean crisis continues to heat up. Chinese participants are not optimistic about the new South Korean President (45.5%) and 26% of participants believe he can bring no change, and 16% remain pessimistic (Figure 26). **Pessimism is also shown when participants are asked if the Six Party Talks are the key to the North Korean crisis, 48.4% disagree and 12.1% totally disagree; only a third (36.2%) agree** (Figure 27). This scholars' perception is at odds with the Chinese government, which still insists that the Six-Party Talk is the best way to address the North Korea nuclear issue.

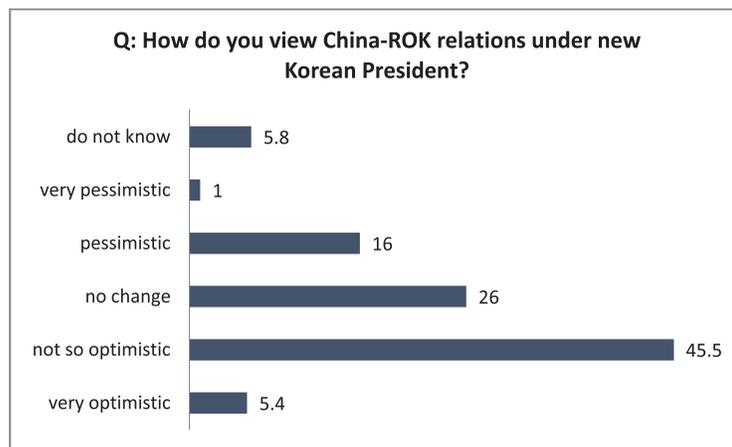


Figure 26 Attitudes towards New South Korean President (%)

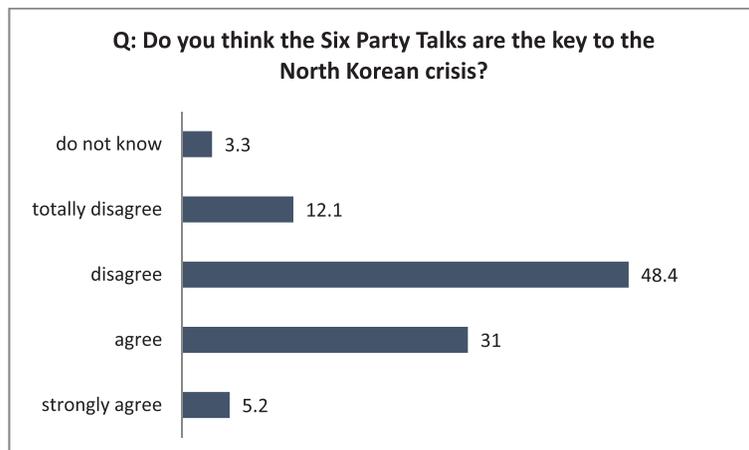


Figure 27 Attitude on the Future of the Six Party Talks (%)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our 2017 survey reflects a general concern of participants over China's bilateral relationship with the United States and India, as well as the future of the Korean Peninsula. Similar to the 2016 survey, Chinese IR scholars tend to have an optimistic view on China's rise, especially on economic growth. However, they do not think that China's rise can easily challenge US hegemony or challenge US-led international order. Even though the United States withdrew from the TPP and the Paris Climate Accords in 2017, Chinese scholars in the survey do not hold a strong perception regarding China's future leadership in global governance, especially in the climate change arena. The survey suggests that Chinese scholars are generally satisfied with the government's foreign policy in the South and East China Seas. Surprisingly, despite the significant improvement of bilateral relationships between China and the Philippines after President Duterte came to power, more than half of the participants still perceive a future escalation of the South China Sea disputes between the two nations. On the danger of the US FON activities in the South China Sea, however, Chinese scholars have a divided view. This might reflect an unsettled perception as well as undecided policy of the Chinese government toward the United States in the South China Sea.

Like last year's survey, Chinese IR scholars perceive the potential for cooperation with major powers, such as the United States, Europe, Russia, and ASEAN, but they also believe that China needs to change its foreign policy practices to cope with immediate threats and long-term national security challenges, especially regarding its policy toward North Korea. Differing from the official rhetoric on the importance of the Six Party Talks, a slight majority of the Chinese scholars believe that it will not work to address the Korean crisis. Most of them are not optimistic about the future of the Korean Peninsula, despite the change of leadership in South Korea.



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