

Anatomy of Choice Alignment Index (AOCAL):

Indicator Factsheet

with summary observations on II, III, and V data periods

UNGA Voting (Political-Diplomatic Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects voting alignment ratios of a given country between CN and the US at the United Nations General Assembly between 1995-2023 (September), based on the Universite de Geneve's UNGA-DM dataset, as calculated by Xi Lu & Pei Junjie.

[FOOTNOTE]: Votes are 'weighted': If country X follows the voting of superpower Y on a particular resolution which ends up being in the minority, this is treated as more consequential (heavier) than if that vote had ended up being in the majority.

[LIMITATIONS]: Data for 2024 has yet to be published.

[FORMULA]: Considering all voting sessions within a given year, if country X votes the same as US in 50 votes (for each of these 50 votes, there are $a_1 \sim a_{50}$ countries that also vote the same as both the US and X), and country X votes the same as CN in 30 votes (for each of these 30 votes, there are $b_1 \sim b_{30}$ countries that also vote the same as both CN and X), then the weighted score is therefore computed as:

$$\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{50} 1/a_i}{(\sum_{i=1}^{50} 1/a_i + \sum_{i=1}^{30} 1/b_i)}$$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2023, all countries are on average more aligned with CN in terms of their UNGA voting patterns. This ranges from Laos (18) and Vietnam (20) at one end, to Singapore (30) and Philippines (29) at the other.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2023, countries have on average shifted towards the US (+9), with the exception of Cambodia (-2). The greatest shifts come from Myanmar (+16), Vietnam (+14) and Singapore (+13). All countries nevertheless remain considerably more aligned with CN overall for this indicator.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2023, countries initially shifted marginally towards CN (-2), before shifting somewhat significantly in the direction of the US (+10).

[V PERIODS]: The 2001-2006 period witnessed the largest shifts towards CN (-10) on average by the SEA countries. Since then, countries have on average shifted towards the US, with the largest average shifts occurring during the 2013-2018 (+8) period.

[ANALYSIS]: In relative terms, countries are voting comparatively less closely in alignment with CN at the UNGA over the last decade or so, particularly Myanmar, Vietnam and Singapore. Cambodia by contrast has bucked the trend, and votes more closely with CN.

Partnership Level (Political-Diplomatic Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of the level of partnership formally institutionalized with CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: A four-point scale is used to measure the bilateral cooperation status of each country vis-à-vis CN and the US, which ranges from sanctions ('null') at one end to an alliance ('4') at the other.

[LIMITATIONS]: Upgrading from a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' (level '3' by our categorization) to an Alliance (level '4') may in actuality represent a significant qualitative leap that cannot be captured by our attempts at imposing a 'quantitatively-graded' scale, since it is mathematically treated as being of equal magnitude to an upgrade from Level 1 to Level 2.

[FORMULA]: $US/\{US+CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, Philippines (70), Thailand (68) and Singapore (59) are closest to the US, whereas Myanmar (8), Cambodia (35), Laos (36), and Vietnam (38) are closer to CN. The remainder are middling, albeit with a slight lean towards CN.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, with the exception of Myanmar* (+15), Singapore (+1), and Vietnam (+1), all countries have shifted towards CN, with most notable being Cambodia (-21), Thailand (-19), Philippines (-15).

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, countries initially shifted in CN's direction (-8), but subsequently barely shifted moving into 2015-2024.

[V PERIODS]: The 2001-2006 (-5) and 2007-2012 (-6) periods saw some the largest movements on average by SEA towards CN. By contrast, 2013-2018 was the only period that saw marginal movements towards the US (+2).

[ANALYSIS]: Much of Southeast Asia's shift towards CN took place in the 2000s and early-2010s. As a whole, countries like Cambodia, Thailand, and Philippines have shifted most towards CN, whilst *Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam by contrast have shifted towards the US. *Myanmar's gains are due to a brief period when US sanctions were lifted (2012-2020). Since the civil war in 2021, sanctions have been reimposed. Myanmar has been and remains the closest to CN in terms of Partnership Level.

Bilateral Visits (Political-Diplomatic Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of high-level (Head-of-State or equivalent) bilateral visits to-and-from CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: An official visit is defined as being attended by at least one Head-of-State or Head-of-Government. This count excludes bilateral meetings in a third-country, Hong Kong visits, courtesy calls, and those involving business leaders.

[LIMITATIONS]: Frequency of intercourse may be partly a function of geographical proximity rather than quality of relationship; quantity may not necessarily mean quality.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, all countries are more aligned with CN on average (28). This ranges from Laos (18) and Cambodia (20) at one end, to Philippines (45) and Brunei (46) at the other.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a marginal shift towards the US on average (+2), with the largest movements coming from Myanmar (+17), Philippines (+16), and Singapore (+14). At the other end, Indonesia (-18) and Cambodia (-17) saw the largest shifts towards CN.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted in the US' direction (+5), before continuing to do so (+2), albeit marginally, moving into the latter period. The US has therefore made consistent gains in this indicator, although it has slowed moving into 2015-2024.

[V PERIODS]: With the exception of the 2013-2018 (-2) period, when CN made marginal gains, Southeast Asian countries have on average been shifting towards the US across different periods. The biggest shift towards the US took place in 2019-2024 (+4).

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have shifted slightly in the US' direction over the last decade or so, particularly over the last 6 years. Vietnam and Myanmar have shifted the most in the US' direction, while Cambodia and Indonesia have by contrast seen the largest shifts in CN's direction. Note nevertheless that overall, all countries with the exception of the Philippines are more aligned with CN for this indicator.

Multilateral Groupings (Political-Diplomatic Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of a given country's membership in multilateral groups containing CN, the US, or both, between 1995-2024, based on open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: A total of 30 multilateral groupings are considered: 14 contain CN but not the US, 3 contain the US but not CN, and 13 contain both. Dialogue partners are included, while observer states are excluded.

[LIMITATIONS]: CN is heavily overrepresented in this calculation since it features in 27/30 groups, whereas the US is involved in only 16/30 groups. There is also considerably less variation in the overall results of this indicator relative to others.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, all countries on average more aligned with CN.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a slight shift towards CN on average (-3), with the largest shifts coming from Cambodia (-7) and Myanmar (-6). At the other end, Vietnam (+2) and Brunei (+1) have bucked the trend. All countries are more aligned with CN for the indicator.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, countries initially shifted in the direction of CN (-4), but subsequently have barely shifted (-1) moving into 2015-2024. All countries are more aligned with CN for the indicator.

[V PERIODS]: Countries shifted most towards CN in the 2001-2006 (-7) period, which is where a majority of the shift takes place. Since then, countries have barely shifted, although there has been a slight uptick towards CN in the 2019-2024 (-2) period.

[ANAYLYSIS] Countries have shifted slightly towards CN overall, particularly Cambodia and Myanmar. Vietnam by contrast is the only country to have bucked the trend. Much of the shift has taken place in the early-2000s. All countries remain more aligned with CN for the indicator.

Aggressive Acts (Military-Security Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of aggressive acts involving a given country and CN or the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on the Correlates of War (CoW) dataset [1995-2014], the CSIS' South China Sea Incidents Tracker [2015-2020], and the International Crisis Group South China Sea Conflict Tracker [2020-2024].

[FOOTNOTE]: Examples of such acts include 'Show of Troops', 'Seizures' and 'Raids'.

[LIMITATIONS]: Findings are not particularly differentiated, since half of the countries have experienced aggressive actions for neither CN nor the US.

[FORMULA]: $CN / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, the Philippines (77) and Vietnam (75) are strongly aligned with the US; with Malaysia (53) and Indonesia (52) having marginal inclinations towards the US. The rest of the countries are non-aligned (50).

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a shift towards the US on average (+5), which has been driven primarily by Vietnam (+30), Philippines (+7), and Malaysia (+7).

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, countries initially barely shifted (-1), but this was subsequently followed by a shift towards the US (+4) during the 2015-2024 period.

[V PERIODS]: Countries shifted most towards CN during the 2001-2006 (-3) period, but since then, countries have consistently shifted towards the US' direction, albeit marginally, with the greatest shift coming in the 2013-2018 (+3) period.

[ANALYSIS]: SEA-10 has on average shifted towards US, although most of this movement is being driven by a handful of countries, namely Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia. Most countries do not suffer, or engage in, aggressive acts with either superpower.

Arms Supply (Military-Security Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of arms supplied by CN and the US respectively for a given country between 1995-2024, based on the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) dataset.

[FOOTNOTE]: The value (in USD\$ millions) of arms supplied from each superpower is compared for each year.

[LIMITATIONS]: Certain countries rely on neither superpower for the majority of their arms. Also, in a given year, if for example a country receives no arms from CN, but receives a minuscule amount of arms from the US, said country is nevertheless treated as being in full alignment with the latter, which might be a questionable proposition.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, with the exception of Myanmar (2), Cambodia (35), and Laos (37), all other countries are more aligned with the US, with Singapore (98), Philippines (93), Indonesia (79) and Malaysia (77) being closest.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a shift towards CN on average (-6), particularly Indonesia (-23), Laos (-20) and Cambodia (-17). Countries like Vietnam (+10) and Philippines (+7) have on the other hand bucked the trend and shifted in the US' direction.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, SEA on average moved significantly in the direction of CN (-11), before barely moving over the last decade.

[V PERIODS]: The largest shift towards CN (-13) occurred in the 2007-2012 period, whereas the largest shift towards US (+9) took place in 2013-2018. The 2019-2024 period saw a shift towards CN (-7).

[ANALYSIS]: Although most countries remain aligned with the US in terms of arms supply, CN has made not-insignificant gains in certain countries.

Military Exercises (Military-Security Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of military exercises conducted with CN and the US respectively for a given country between 1995-2024, based on Evan Laksmana's dataset and supplemented with open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: List contains multilateral and multinational exercises, but excludes those falling under ASEAN's auspices. Observer states are also excluded, whilst multiple iterations/editions of the same exercise in a given year are treated singularly.

[LIMITATIONS]: All exercises are treated equally – no attempt has been made to 'weight' the exercises conducted in terms of importance/significance.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, with the exception of Myanmar (28), Laos (30), and Vietnam (50), all other countries are comparatively more aligned with the US, particularly Philippines (98), Indonesia (95), Singapore (95), and Malaysia (94).

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, most countries have shifted towards CN on average (-11), with the exception of Cambodia (+12) and Vietnam (+7). Much of the shift towards CN is driven by three countries: Myanmar (-44), Laos (-40), and Thailand (-21).

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, SEA initially shifted marginally towards CN (-3), before doing so significantly (-11) in the latter decade. Note nevertheless that countries remain more aligned with the US overall.

[V PERIODS]: The largest shift towards CN took place in the 2013-2018 period (-10), with most other periods experiencing shifts, albeit to smaller degrees, towards CN. By contrast, the period 2001-2006 was the sole period which saw a marginal shift in the US' direction (+2).

[ANALYSIS]: Although most countries remain more aligned with the US in terms of military exercises – the US is the most dominant here out of all AOCAI indicators – CN has made not insignificant gains in countries like Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand to a lesser extent. That being said, the US continues to enjoy a significant quantitative advantage in military exercises.

Security Dialogues (Military-Security Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of security dialogues/consultations engaged with CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: Multilateral and multinational dialogues/consultations are excluded, along with those that are convened under ASEAN's auspices.

[LIMITATIONS]: Informal and ad-hoc meetings are generally excluded, although it is not necessarily always clear how to distinguish between institutionalized and non-institutionalized dialogues. Furthermore, certain cases may not strictly qualify as security dialogues per se, as many often have non-security-related matters on their agenda.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, countries are slightly more aligned with the US on average (55), with Myanmar (37) and Laos (39) at one end, to Malaysia (91) and Philippines (70) at the other.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have on average barely shifted towards CN (-1). Nevertheless, there is quite a diversity of shifts: Myanmar (-27), Indonesia (-25), Malaysia (-14) and Cambodia (-13) have shifted most towards CN, whereas Thailand (+37), Brunei (+17) and Philippines (+14) have shifted most towards the US.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially barely moved, before shifting marginally towards CN (-3) in the latter period. However, the V PERIODS analysis below demonstrates that there have been significant shifts.

[V PERIODS]: The 2001-2006 period saw a significant shift towards CN (-10), while the 2007-2012 period saw by contrast a significant shift towards US (+10). Moving into 2013-2018, countries again saw a significant shift towards CN (-10). The latest period of 2019-2024 saw the US see modest gains (+4).

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have rather differentiated alignment positions in terms of Security Dialogues. Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Malaysia have generally shifted in the direction of CN, whereas Brunei, Philippines and Thailand have shifted in the direction of the US.

Imports Value (Economics-Trade Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio imports from CN and the US respectively for a given country between 1995-2024, based on the World Bank World Integrated Trade Solutions (WB-WITS) database, and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF-IMTS) trade database.

[FOOTNOTE]: The value (in USD\$ millions) of imports from each superpower is compared for each year respectively. Includes trade with Hong Kong but excludes Taiwan.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, all countries lean towards CN, ranging from Myanmar (2), Laos (6) and Cambodia (7) at one end, to Singapore (47), Philippines (40) and Malaysia (39) at the other.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a significant shift towards CN on average (-18), particularly from Philippines (-35), Malaysia (-32), Brunei (-32) and Thailand (-31). Countries like Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam has seen less significant shifts, primarily because they were already (i.e. have long been) aligned with CN in this domain, from the 1990s.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted significantly towards CN (-18), before continuing to a lesser extent (-6) moving into 2015-2024.

[V PERIODS]: Countries have consistently shifted towards CN – in 2001-2006 it was (-13), 2007-2012 (-9), and 2013-2018 (-7) – although this has stalled (0) moving in to 2019-2024. The latter period is notable for witnessing the US make unprecedented gains, in relative terms, in countries like Brunei, Laos, and Singapore. Note nevertheless that almost all countries, with the exception of Singapore, are strongly aligned with CN in this indicator.

[ANALYSIS]: Countries are on average significantly more aligned with CN in imports, with the partial exception of Singapore. This indicator has undergone one of the largest shifts in CN's direction overall, particularly countries like Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Thailand. Countries like Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam has seen less significant shifts, primarily because they were already (i.e. have long been) aligned with CN in this domain, from the 1990s. The 2019-2024 period is notable for having seen shifts towards CN stall.

Exports Value (Economics-Trade Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio exports from CN and the US respectively for a given country between 1995-2024, based on the World Bank World Integrated Trade Solutions (WB-WITS) database, and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF-IMTS) trade database.

[FOOTNOTE]: The value (in USD\$ millions) of exports to superpower is compared for each year respectively. Includes trade with Hong Kong but excludes Taiwan.

[FORMULA]: $US/\{US+CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, Myanmar (22), Laos (22) and Singapore (33) are closest to CN, while Cambodia (74) and Vietnam (57) are closest to US. The rest of the countries are middling.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a significant shift towards CN on average (-23), particularly from Brunei (-65), with only Cambodia (+7) and Vietnam (+2) bucking the trend.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted significantly towards CN (-24), before continuing to do so to a much lesser degree (-4) moving into the latter period.

[V PERIODS]: Countries shifted most significantly towards CN in the 2001-2006 (-11) and 2007-2012 (-18) periods. This continued to a significantly lesser degree moving into 2013-2018, and has since stalled in 2019-2024, with the US making marginal gains (+1).

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have rather differentiated alignment positions in terms of exports. Nevertheless, this indicator has undergone one of the largest shifts in CN's direction overall, particularly from Brunei and Laos. On the other hand, Cambodia and Vietnam have generally bucked this trend by shifting in the US' direction.

Business Associations (Economics-Trade Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of business associations that are oriented towards CN or the US respectively for a given country between 1995-2024, based on open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: Only national-level associations within the host-country are considered. Includes Hong Kong but excludes Taiwan.

[LIMITATIONS]: Such associations may be more indicative of cultural/people-to-people connections rather than commercial relations/alignments.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, countries are significantly more aligned with CN on average (27), with the exception of Vietnam (52).

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have shifted towards CN (-11) on average, particularly by Indonesia (-38), Thailand (-25) and Vietnam (-24). Only Myanmar has bucked the trend (+21).

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted significantly towards CN (-11), before doing so to a lesser degree (-6) moving into the latter decade. Indonesia's shift in the earlier period is particularly notable.

[V PERIODS]: The 2001-2006 period saw the largest shifts towards CN (-16). Since then, shifts toward CN have been to a significantly lesser extent.

[ANALYSIS]: All countries are on average significantly closer to CN in terms of Business Associations, with the partial exception of Vietnam and Laos. Indonesia's overall shift towards CN in this indicator is particularly apparent.

Foreign Debt (Economics-Trade Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of foreign debt owed to CN and the US respectively by a given country between 1995-2023, based on the World Bank Debt Statistics database on Long Term External Debt Stocks.

[FOOTNOTE]: The value (in USD\$ millions) of debt owed is compared for each year. Countries with no foreign debt with either superpower are treated as equidistant.

[LIMITATIONS]: Data for 2024 has yet to be published at the time of writing.

[FORMULA]: $CN / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2023, Laos (0), Myanmar (0), and Vietnam (33) are more aligned with CN, Thailand (74), Indonesia (69) and Philippines (61) with the US, while Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore are equidistant (50).

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2023, countries have moved significantly towards CN on average (-23), with Cambodia (-74), Indonesia (-56), and Philippines (-55) driving the shift. Brunei, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore saw no movement.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2023, countries initially moved towards CN (-9), which accelerated moving into the latter period (-18).

[V PERIODS]: The greatest shifts towards CN took place during the 2007-2012 (-11) and 2013-2018 (-12) periods, which has continued to a lesser extent moving into 2019-2024 (-7).

[ANALYSIS]: Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines have shifted significantly towards CN in this indicator. Nevertheless, because such countries have been indebted to the US since the 1990s – foreign debt owed CN only began to feature in the mid-2000s – the overall position 1995-2024 of countries like Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand remains US-aligned, even though the former two have been actively reducing/repaying their US debt whilst taking on CN debt, which has translated into their shifting towards CN in relative terms.

Regime Type (Soft Power Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the degree of openness of a country's governance system between 1995-2024, based on the Freedom House Democracy Index dataset.

[FOOTNOTE]: Original scale ranging from 1-7 has been converted to 0-1 as per our alignment ratio. Countries which are more open ('democratic') are presumed to be comparatively more attracted to or otherwise inclined towards the US, whereas those that are more closed ('autocratic') are expected to be closer to CN.

[LIMITATIONS]: Regime type or political openness may not necessarily be correlated with alignment choices; may be more a function of elite-preferences rather than Soft Power.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, most countries are more aligned with CN on average (33), with only Philippines (67) and Indonesia (58) being more aligned with US.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have shifted slightly towards to US on average (+3), particularly Indonesia (+20), Myanmar (+18), and Singapore (+11). Only Thailand (-31) and Philippines (-7) have bucked the trend, whilst Cambodia and Laos have not moved.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted towards the US (+6), but then shifted marginally towards CN (-2) moving into the latter period.

[V PERIODS]: Countries shifted most towards the US in the 2001-2006 period (+8). By contrast, countries shifted most towards CN in the 2019-2024 period (-4).

[ANALYSIS]: Although most countries are comparatively closer to CN overall, there has been a general shift towards the US, given the improvement in democracy scores of certain countries. The most recent period of 2019-2024 has nevertheless seen a shift towards CN on average, which is notable.

Visa-Free Travel (Soft Power Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of visa-free travel agreements (if any) with CN and the US respectively for a given country between 1995-2024, based on the VisaIndex database and open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: Countries that have visa-free travel agreements with neither superpower – or both – are treated as equidistant.

[LIMITATIONS]: Certain countries lack information on the specific year in which a visa-free travel agreement first came into force. Accounting for periodic fluctuations is also difficult. Data from earlier periods may be less reliable.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, most countries are more aligned with the US on average (63), with the closest being Brunei (82), Singapore (78), and Philippines (75). Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam are non-aligned.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have shifted slightly towards CN on average (-3), driven predominantly by Brunei (-13) and Singapore (-10). Half of the countries have not moved.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted marginally towards CN (-3), but barely shifted (-1) moving into the latter period.

[V PERIODS]: Countries have generally shifted marginally towards CN in all periods, with the exception of 2013-2018, when there was no change.

[ANALYSIS]: Brunei, Singapore and to a lesser extent Malaysia and Thailand have shifted towards CN.

Inbound Tourists (Soft Power Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of inbound tourists from CN and the US respectively to a given country between 1995-2024, based on the ASEAN Statistics Division Data Portal and official statistics from individual SEA countries.

[FOOTNOTE]: ‘Outbound tourists’ could be used to complement this indicator, although data spanning both countries across the entire duration of 1995-2024 is unavailable.

[LIMITATIONS]: Handful of datapoints missing for certain countries. Indicator does not capture tourist expenditure, which could be more indicative/consequential.

[FORMULA]: $US/\{US+CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, countries are more aligned with CN on average (36), with only Philippines (78) being more aligned with the US, whilst Indonesia (48) remains middling.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have shifted significantly towards CN on average (-24), particularly Indonesia (-47), followed by Laos (-33), Myanmar (-32) and Cambodia (-31).

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted significantly in CN’s direction (-20), and continued to do so in the latter period, although to a lesser extent (-10).

[V PERIODS]: Countries have since the 2000s consistently shifted towards CN, with the greatest shifts coming in the 2007-2012 (-15) and 2013-2018 (-13) periods. Since then, however, the latest period has seen countries shift towards the US (+9), likely due to the near-complete collapse of CN’s outbound tourism during the pandemic. That being said, all countries with the exception of the Philippines are significantly more aligned with CN on this indicator.

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have on average shifted significantly towards CN for this indicator. Overall, only the Philippines is more aligned with the US, whilst Indonesia is middling – the rest of the countries are heavily aligned with CN. The recent period is notable for the US making unprecedented gains, although this is likely to be a temporary occurrence due to domestic restriction imposed by CN on outbound tourists during the pandemic.

Cultural Institutions (Soft Power Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of key cultural institutions from CN and the US located in a given country between 1995-2024, based on open-sourced research.

[FOOTNOTE]: CN's prime overseas cultural institution is taken to be the Confucius Institute, with US' comparable institution being the American Corner/Centre; countries which play host to both – or neither – are treated as equidistant.

[LIMITATIONS]: Whether the Confucius Institute is indeed comparable to the American Corner/Centre may be questionable

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, countries like Singapore (17), Myanmar (28), and Thailand (28) are on average more aligned with CN, while Philippines (88) and Vietnam (87) are more aligned with the US.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have shifted significantly towards CN on average (-17), particularly Singapore (-33), Myanmar (-32), and Thailand (-31). Only Cambodia has bucked the trend (+3).

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted in CN's direction (-8), continuing to do so (-8) moving into the latter period.

[V PERIODS]: The 2001-2006 period saw countries shift towards the US (+7), although 2007-2012 witnessed a significant shift in the direction of CN (-15), which proceeded into 2013-2018 (-7) albeit to a lesser extent. Moving into 2019-2024, countries have barely shifted.

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have generally shifted in CN's direction for this indicator, with the exception of Cambodia. The US initially saw some gains in the early-to-mid 2000s, but since then countries have consistently moved towards CN.

Negative Sent (Signalling Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of negative signals sent by SEA to CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) dataset for 1995-2022 and Political Event Classification, Attributes, and Types (POLECAT) dataset for 2023-2024, as derived by Kai Quek & John Koo.

[FOOTNOTE]: Due to the nature of the data recording, there may be a ‘time-lag’ of up to a year for the signalling positions to be captured

[LIMITATIONS]: ICEWS records multiple reports on same event for salient issues, which may produce some distortions/inaccuracies. Data for Brunei in particular, and Laos to a lesser extent are incomplete, and may produce a somewhat misleading picture for those two countries.

[FORMULA]: $CN / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, most countries are more aligned with CN on average (36), with the exception of Brunei (59), and countries like Philippines (51) and Singapore (50) which are middling.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, most countries have shifted significantly towards the US on average (+16), particularly Vietnam (+51), Laos (+25), Myanmar (+25). On the other hand, only Singapore (-10) and Indonesia (-1) have bucked the trend and moved towards CN.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, countries shifted in the US’s direction (+5), and this continued doing so even more significantly moving into 2015-2024 (+14).

[V PERIODS]: The 2001-2006 period saw countries shift towards CN’s direction (-8), but by contrast, the US saw significant gains in the subsequent 2007-2012 (+9) and 2013-2018 (+16) periods. The 2019-2024 has seen a marginal shift towards CN (-3).

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have generally shifted towards the US for this indicators, even if most countries remain more aligned with CN overall. Most of the shift towards the US came in the decade between the late-2000s to the late-2010s, which could be due to the US’ rebalance to Asia, or CN’s growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

Positive Sent (Signalling Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of positive signals sent by SEA to CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) dataset for 1995-2022 and Political Event Classification, Attributes, and Types (POLECAT) dataset for 2023-2024, as derived by Kai Quek & John Koo.

[FOOTNOTE]: Due to the nature of the data recording, there may be a ‘time-lag’ of up to a year for the signalling positions to be captured

[LIMITATIONS]: ICEWS records multiple reports on same event for salient issues, which may produce some distortions/inaccuracies. Data for Brunei in particular, and Laos to a lesser extent are incomplete, and may produce a somewhat misleading picture for those two countries.

[FORMULA]: $US/\{US+CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, most countries are somewhat more aligned with CN on average (42). Countries like Philippines (51), Vietnam (50), Singapore (48), and Indonesia (47) are middling.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, there has been a slight shift towards the US (+4) on average, particularly Brunei (+12), Myanmar (+10), and Philippines (+10). Countries like Laos (-14), Indonesia (-2), and Singapore (-2) have on the other hand bucked the trend.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, and subsequently 2015-2024, countries initially shifted marginally in the US’s direction (+4), before shifting marginally towards CN in the latter period (-2).

[V PERIODS]: Countries shifted towards CN in the 2001-2006 period (-5), before shifting in the US’s direction in 2007-2012 (+6). The 2013-2018 period barely saw any movement (+1), whereas the 2019-2024 period saw marginal a shift towards CN (-4).

[ANALYSIS]: Most countries are considerably more aligned with CN overall in this indicator, with the exception of Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore and Indonesia, which are in middling positions. The US saw the greatest gains in the 2007-2012 period, but in the most recent period of 2019-2024, countries have on average shifted in the direction of CN.

Negative Received (Signalling Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of negative signals received by SEA from CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) dataset for 1995-2022 and Political Event Classification, Attributes, and Types (POLECAT) dataset for 2023-2024, as derived by Kai Quek & John Koo.

[FOOTNOTE]: Due to the nature of the data recording, there may be a ‘time-lag’ of up to a year for the signalling positions to be captured

[LIMITATIONS]: ICEWS records multiple reports on same event for salient issues, which may produce some distortions/inaccuracies. Data for Brunei in particular, and Laos to a lesser extent are incomplete, and may produce a somewhat misleading picture for those two countries.

[FORMULA]: $CN / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, most countries are significantly more aligned with CN on average (28), with the exception of Brunei (48) and Philippines (46), which are middling.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have shifted towards the US on average (+10), particularly Philippines (+25) and Vietnam (+20). At the other end, Singapore (-12) has bucked the trend and shifted towards the US.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, countries initially shifted towards the US (+7), but subsequently barely shifted (-1) moving into the 2015-2024 period.

[V PERIODS]: Countries shifted towards CN (-8) in the 2001-2006 period, but then significantly shifted in the US' direction (+12) moving into 2007-2012. This shift would slow in 2013-2018 (+2), and by 2019-2024, countries would see a shift in CN's direction (-5).

[ANALYSIS]: Countries are overall closer to CN in this indicator. The US made significant gains in the 2007-2012 period, and to a lesser extent during 2013-2018, but since then countries have shifted towards CN. Countries like Philippines and Vietnam have undergone notable shifts towards the US, whilst Singapore on the other hand is the only country to have shifted towards CN.

Positive Received (Signalling Domain)

[DESCRIPTION]: Reflects the ratio of positive signals received by SEA from CN and the US respectively between 1995-2024, based on the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) dataset for 1995-2022 and Political Event Classification, Attributes, and Types (POLECAT) dataset for 2023-2024, as derived by Kai Quek & John Koo.

[FOOTNOTE]: Due to the nature of the data recording, there may be a ‘time-lag’ of up to a year for the signalling positions to be captured

[LIMITATIONS]: ICEWS records multiple reports on same event for salient issues, which may produce some distortions/inaccuracies. Data for Brunei in particular, and Laos to a lesser extent are incomplete, and may produce a somewhat misleading picture for those two countries.

[FORMULA]: $US / \{US + CN\}$

[OVERVIEW]: For the period 1995-2024, countries are on average slightly more aligned with CN (42). Countries like Philippines (51), Vietnam (50), Singapore (49), and Indonesia (48) are middling.

[II PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2009 with 2010-2024, countries have on average barely shifted (+1). Myanmar (+9), Philippines (+9), and Vietnam (+4) have shifted towards the US, whilst on the other hand, countries like Laos (-12), Singapore (-3) and Cambodia (-3) have shifted in CN’s direction.

[III PERIODS]: Comparing 1995-2004 with 2005-2014, countries initially shifted marginally towards the US (+3), but then subsequently shifted marginally towards CN (-4) moving into the 2015-2024 period.

[V PERIODS]: The 2007-2012 period saw a marginal shift in the direction of the US (+3), although subsequently in 2013-2018 countries would shift marginally towards CN (-2), which would continue into the 2019-2024 (-4) period.

[ANALYSIS]: Countries have on average shifted in the direction of CN in the last decade or so, even if the US made marginal gains in the 2007-2012 period. With the exception of countries like Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore, and Indonesia, which are in an overall middling position, the rest of the countries are considerably more aligned with CN.