



កាកបាទក្រសួងស្រាវជ្រាវមនុស្សសាស្ត្រនិងវិទ្យាសាស្ត្រសង្គម
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The Influence of Major Power Countries in Global and Regional Contexts: A Comparative Views of Cambodian Educated Group

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at exploring the views of Cambodian educated people on the influence of major powers (China, the US, Japan and EU) in global and regional contexts. 212 Cambodian educated participants were requested using snowballing method to fill out the online survey questionnaire. It was found that China and the US were viewed as the most threatening powers to the global peace while Japan was considered the most positive player. In terms of responsibility, Japan was perceived as the key actor and sequentially followed by EU, the US and China. However, China was viewed as the most significant and influential actor in the Southeast Asia region compared to its competitor powers, the US standing the second place and Japan in the third place. EU was seen to be the least influential actor in this region. In addition, the explored views showed that it is important for Cambodia to keep good relation with these major powers. Interestingly, the respondents viewed Japan as the most important actor followed by the EU while China and the US were seen to be the least important players. Gender, education level profession and the respondents' overseas experiences were found to play some roles in segregating their opinions towards China, the US, Japan and the EU.

KEYWORDS: Cambodia, influence, educated group, views, major powers

សង្ខេប

ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះមានគោលបំណងដើម្បីស្វែងយល់អំពីទស្សនៈរបស់បញ្ញវន្តកម្ពុជា ទៅលើឥទ្ធិពលនៃមហាអំណាចមួយចំនួន ដូចជាប្រទេសចិន អាមេរិក ជប៉ុន និងសហភាពអឺរ៉ុប ក្នុងបរិបទពិភពលោក និងក្នុងតំបន់។ បញ្ញវន្តខ្មែរចំនួន២១២រូប ត្រូវបាន ជ្រើសរើសតាមវិធីសាស្ត្រ Snowballing ដើម្បីចូលរួមបំពេញកម្រងសំណួរស្ទង់មតិតាមអនឡាញ។ ជាលទ្ធផល បញ្ញវន្តខ្មែរ យល់ឃើញថា ប្រទេសចិននិងសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកជាប្រទេសដែលមានការកំរាមកំហែងជាងគេទៅលើសន្តិសុខពិភពលោក បើ ធៀបជាមួយនឹងប្រទេសមហាអំណាចផ្សេងទៀត ដោយឡែកប្រទេសជប៉ុនត្រូវបានគេយល់ថាជាប្រទេសដែលមានការកំរាម កំហែងតិចជាងគេ។ ឆ្លើយតបចំពោះទំនួលខុសត្រូវក្នុងការដោះស្រាយបញ្ហាពិភពលោក បញ្ញវន្តកម្ពុជាបានយល់ឃើញថា ប្រទេសជប៉ុនជាប្រទេសដែលមានទំនួលខុសត្រូវខ្ពស់ជាងគេ ហើយមហាអំណាចដែលមានទំនួលខុសត្រូវខ្ពស់ជាបន្តបន្ទាប់គឺ ប្រទេសសហគមន៍អឺរ៉ុប សហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក និងសាធារណរដ្ឋប្រជាមានិតចិន។ សាធារណរដ្ឋប្រជាមានិតចិនត្រូវបានគេយល់ ឃើញថាជាប្រទេសសំខាន់ និងមានឥទ្ធិពលខ្លាំងជាងគេក្នុងតំបន់អាស៊ីអាគ្នេយ៍ បើប្រៀបធៀបជាមួយសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិក និងជប៉ុន ស្របពេលដែលសហគមន៍អឺរ៉ុបត្រូវបានគេមើលឃើញថាមានឥទ្ធិពលតិចជាងគេក្នុងតំបន់។ បន្ថែមពីលើនេះ លទ្ធផលស្រាវជ្រាវ ក៏បានបង្ហាញថា វាមានសារៈសំខាន់បំផុតដែលថាប្រទេសកម្ពុជាត្រូវរក្សាតុល្យភាពទំនាក់ទំនងជាមួយប្រទេសធំៗទាំងនេះក្នុង នយោបាយការបរទេស។ ប៉ុន្តែអ្វីដែលគួរឱ្យចាប់អារម្មណ៍នោះគឺ បញ្ញវន្តកម្ពុជាយល់ឃើញថា ប្រទេសជប៉ុនជាតួអង្គសំខាន់ជាង គេបំផុតដែលកម្ពុជាត្រូវផ្ដោតការយកចិត្តទុកដាក់ក្នុងនយោបាយការបរទេសខ្លួន និងតាមបន្ទាប់ដោយសហគមន៍អឺរ៉ុប។ ផ្ទុយ ទៅវិញ ពួកគេបែរជាយល់ឃើញថាប្រទេសចិន និងសហរដ្ឋអាមេរិកគឺជាតួអង្គមិនសូវសំខាន់ខ្លាំងទៅវិញក្នុងចំណោមមហា អំណាចទាំង៤នេះ។ ទោះជាយ៉ាងនេះក្តី ទស្សនៈរបស់បញ្ញវន្តកម្ពុជាចំពោះមហាអំណាចទាំងនេះ ក៏មានភាពខុសគ្នាខ្លះៗដែរ បើយើងធ្វើការប្រៀបធៀបទស្សនៈរបស់ពួកគេដោយផ្អែកលើកត្តា ភេទ កម្រិតការសិក្សា មុខរបរ/ការងារ និងបទពិសោធន៍ក្រៅ ប្រទេសរបស់គេជាដើម។

ពាក្យគន្លឹះ: (១) ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា (២) ឥទ្ធិពល (៣) បញ្ញវន្ត (៤) ទស្សនៈ (៥) មហាអំណាច

1. INTRODUCTION

Thank to globalization, the countries in the globe have been connected in the political, economic and cultural dimensions, and have influenced one another through ideas or even personal views. The interconnectedness among states and nations have been fuelling and widening by the modern world of “globalization” (AS, 2018). In the international relation agenda, the relationship among nations plays significant role in shaping one country’s development. It is understandable that each country’s foreign policy plays significant role in strategizing and shaping their future cooperation and development with partnering countries (Hudson & Day, 2019). Therefore, policy making is decided and formulated to safeguard and promote its national interests in the conduct of international relations with other countries in the forms of bilateral and multilateral modes (Ahmed, 2020).

It has been widely talked that shaping the country’s foreign policy is the responsibility of

politicians or those holding higher power in the government (Layne, 2017). The ideas might not be true because each country is led and operated in various settings. Taking example of democracy countries, citizens at all levels have actively participated in voicing their concern regarding the future of their countries while in some least democracy or socialist ones, commoners seem to have less freedom to participate in any political issues. Since the mid-1960s, political sociologists observe a “participatory revolution” not only in western liberal democracies where demands for ‘more,’ ‘better’ and ‘enhanced’ citizen participation are frequently raised (ABELS, 2007).

The world situation has drastically change because of the globalization and technological advancement where the Internet provides people with more access to information (Storm, Stone & Benjamin, 2017). Social media, for instance, offers rooms for people to have more talk on economic, political and social issues. This eventually makes

their voices heard and well-informed. Therefore, making a country's foreign policy is no longer the absolute work of policy makers or elite groups alone. The citizens and other groups of people are also key players in shaping their countries' policy (Headly & Wyk, 2012; Holmes, 2011; Janis, 2016; Kim, 2014; Lee & Senator, n.d.; OECD, 2001; Xiaodon, Xiaoping & Feng, 2019). Intellectuals or educated group might have more influential roles as they are the active agents in the society. This holds a very popular idea that more citizen participation is often equated better for effective policy decision (ABELS, 2007).

As the contemporary world order goes, states establish diplomatic and economic relations with ones to another that compel them to maintain the relations through trade, political and economic activities. Sometimes, they build connection within educational and cultural actions as well as in the international organisations (Ahmed, 2020). This has obviously made the people involvement and engagement more diverse in the box. Therefore, exploring and examining the public views prior to policy making and decision are crucial (Headly & Wyk, 2012; Holmes, 2011). Either in political or developmental settings, the government needs to make sure that policies made should address the issue effectively and efficiently.

In similar vein, public views on the major powers' influences over a country or region is also important in light of international relations and politics. The public views not only shape the policy reformulation and development, but also give more insights on the existing ones being implemented by the government institutions and agencies (Toch & Ly, 2020). To more or less, they provide inputs to the governments in regard with foreign policy implementation by compromising it with the changing situation of both domestic and international politics. This clearly proves the phrase of 'public opinions could sway the tide of politics.'

As far as the public's views are concerned, well-educated groups of a society are influential in shaping policy in which they advocate either in the process of making or implementing through media

and other modes of communication (Häusermann, Kurer & Wüest, 2018). In Cambodia, these groups have voiced out their concerns frequently. For Cambodia's foreign relations with major powers, these groups are even more curious about why and how their country manoeuvres in the tide of global politics in harnessing national interests. For instance, the improved relations between Cambodia and China have become controversial to which if the former could benefit or stand to suffer more. However, as a small economy Cambodia has always confirmed their balanced relations with all countries (Heng, K., 2019; Heng, S., 2014). Therefore, exploring their views on the influences of major powers on Cambodia and regions is academically and politically significant.

This quantitative study employed a survey questionnaire to answer the question of what, why and how Cambodian educated group view the influences of major powers including China, the US, Japan and the EU in Cambodia, the southeast Asian region and global contexts. This research, although as a case study focusing on a small number of Cambodian educated group's views, will provide insights for more debates and discussions about the aspect of public view in Cambodian foreign policy making and implementation.

The inputs for policy making and decision has become more collective since the implementation should have been consistent with both domestic and international forces (Bayne & Woolcock, 2003). However, in Cambodia, the policies made in regard with its relations with major powers have always been questionable due to the lack of the public's involvement. The criticism goes on and further echoes policy makers to reconsider the collective policy inputs. Concerning the influence of major powers such as China, the US, Japan and the EU in the kingdom in specific and Southeast Asian region in general, the views of Cambodian educated groups are seemingly unknown in both academic and policy dimensions (Toch & Ly, 2020). This study, though a quick survey of the views of the Cambodian educated groups to the influence of major powers (China, the US, Japan and the EU¹) over Cambodia and the region,

¹ EU consists of many countries joint as membership. So we refer it as one regional block with many countries that play significant roles in regions.

hopes to fill gap in this topic, and will encourage more studies and research on the topic.

The objective of this research was to compare the views of Cambodian educated group on the image and influences of four major powers (China, the US, Japan and EU) in global and regional contexts. The study aims to explore the differences in respondents' opinions in relation to different factors such as gender, education level, profession and participants' overseas experiences. This research did not directly attempt to answer how or why the respondents express their views; however, the discussions in relation with literature and contextual understanding did provide some inputs to these questions.

2. METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research was to compare the opinions of Cambodian educated people on the image and influences of four major power countries in global and regional contexts as mentioned above. The study employed quantitative approach using an online survey to collect data from the respondents.

2.1. Sample and Data

212 respondents participated in this study. Snowballing technique was used for data collection. The individuals who participated in the survey were included in the research sample. To recruit the respondents, the researchers purposely selected colleague, friends or relatives who satisfy the condition as '*well-educated*', the condition that the respondents at least completed a bachelor's degree. They were requested to fill out the online survey questionnaire. Later, they were asked to pass on the questionnaire link (Google Form) to their peers, relatives or colleague who also met the condition as mentioned above. We ensured that the subsequent respondents were well aware of their free participation in the study. The data collection period was set for 100 days, and it took place before and during the early stage of Covid-19 pandemic in Cambodia.

2.2. Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire consists of 21 items which were designed to capture the participants' views on the influence of China, the US, Japan and the EU in global and Southeast Asia regional contexts.

The first part of the questionnaire consists of five questions about personal background information including gender, age, education level, employment and respondents' overseas experience. All items in the second part of the instrument were designed with different 11-point rating scales of 0 to 10. The questions in this latter part aims to measure the respondents' opinions about the four major powers with regard to their global images such as (1) the threats these countries would have to the world peace, (2) the respondents' trust on these major powers to act responsibly on the related world affairs, (3) the influence of these countries in Southeast Asia region and (4) how important it is for Cambodia to keep good relation with them. The measurement for these items were illustrated as following:

- Q6 to Q9 measured how much threatening these major powers to the world peace with the value **0** represents '*No Threat*' and **10** means '*Big Threat*'.
- Q10 to Q13 measured the respondents' trust on these countries to act responsibly in the world. In this case, **0** represents '*No Trust*' and **10** means '*Wholly Trust*'.
- Q14 to Q17 measured the respondents' views regarding these countries' influences in Southeast Asian Region. In this case, **0** means '*No Influence*' and **10** represents '*Big Influence*'.
- Lastly, Q18 to Q21 measure the respondents' view with regard to how important Cambodia to keep good relation with these super powers. In this case, **0** represents '*Not Very Important*' and **10** means '*Very Important*'.

The survey questionnaire had an overall reliability scale Cronbach's Alpha of 0.674 which meant to be moderately reliable.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were numerically coded and entered for analysis using the IBM SPSS Version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and present the findings in numerical and tabulation formats. Since all the dependent variables were measured with 11-point rating scales, mean values of each variable were calculated and used to compare the respondents' views among these major powers. Moreover, inferential statistical tests were utilized to

seek the differences in the respondents' opinions with regard to the independent variables.

Table 1
Normality tests of all dependent variables

Dependent Variables	Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Sig.
How threatening you think China is to world peace?	.946	.001
How threatening you think USA is to world peace?	.952	.001
How threatening you think Japan is to world peace?	.934	.001
How threatening you think EU is to world peace?	.955	.001
How much do you trust China to act responsibly in the world?	.944	.001
How much do you trust USA to act responsibly in the world?	.971	.001
How much do you trust Japan to act responsibly in the world?	.942	.001
How much do you trust EU to act responsibly in the world?	.965	.001
How influential is China in Southeast Asia?	.909	.001
How influential is USA in Southeast Asia?	.944	.001
How influential is Japan in Southeast Asia?	.970	.001
How influential is EU in Southeast Asia?	.963	.001
How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with China?	.947	.001
How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with USA?	.950	.001
How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with Japan?	.887	.001
How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with EU?	.934	.001

The results from Shapiro-Wilk normality tests revealed that the distributions of all items (Q6-Q21) were not normally distributed; therefore, non-

parametric tests such as Mann-Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests were used to identify the differences in the respondents' perceptions with regard to gender, education level, profession and their overseas experience. The choice for these non-parametric tests was in accordance with [Bee Wah & Mohd Razali \(2011\)](#) who mentioned about the importance of non-parametric tests with data that violate the normality assumption.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1. Participants' Background

The respondents participated in this study were among highly educated individuals with at least bachelor's degree in different disciplines. 47.2% of the participants possessed undergraduate degree while the remaining 52.8% finished postgraduate education (see Table 2). Out of the total participants, 75.47% were male while 24.53% of them were female.

Table 2
The distribution of the research participants by gender and education level

	Under-graduate	Post-graduate	Total
Male	74	86	160
Female	26	26	52
Total	100	112	212

The findings in the Table 3 below showed that the majority of the respondents (63.2%) were aged between 27-40 where only 8.5% of them were over 40 years of age. Out of the total sample, 28.3% of them were aged between 18 to 27 years old.

Table 3
The research respondents' age groups

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-27	60	28.3%	28.3%
27-40	134	63.2%	91.5%
40-60	18	8.5%	100.0%
Total	212	100.0%	

Professionally, the result in Table 4 below revealed that the majority of the respondents were working in either private or NGOs sectors with 42.92% while 34% were employed in government sector. The self-employed individuals shared the smallest proportion, 23.08% of all the research sample.

Table 4

The distribution of research participants based on education level and their profession

	Under-graduate	Post-graduate	Total
Self Employed	37	12	49
Public Servant	15	57	72
Private/NGO Staff	48	43	91
Total	100	112	212

The finding from Table 5 indicated that more than 81% of the respondents have had overseas experience (either living, studying, touring or vocational travelling) while only 18.9% have never been abroad before.

Table 5

Respondents' overseas experience (either living, studying, touring or vocational travelling)

	Frequency	Percent
Had Overseas Experience	172	81.1
No Overseas Experience	40	18.9
Total	212	100.0

3.2. Respondents' Views on Major Powers

In this section, we present the findings of the respondents' opinion towards the four major powers in relation to four aspects: (1) the threats these countries would have to the world peace, (2) the respondents' trust on how responsible these major powers to the global affairs, (3) the influence of these countries in Southeast Asia and (4) how important it is for Cambodia to keep good relation with them.

The Threats of These Major Powers to the World

The findings in Table 6 below revealed that the participants perceived both China and the US to be somehow of threatening to the world peace with the mean scores indicating the level of threat, $Mean = 6.28$ and $Mean = 5.78$ respectively. However, the latter was viewed relatively better in term of threat to the world peace. The magnitudes of these mean scores indicated moderately threatening.

Table 6

Respondents' views on major powers with regard to their threats to the world peace (the higher the mean value, the more threatening they are.)

	N	\bar{X}	SD
China	212	6.28	2.48
USA	212	5.78	2.72
Japan	212	3.06	2.31

EU	212	4.16	2.62
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The results from Mann-Whitney tests revealed that the respondents' opinions on China with this particular issue were the same regardless of their gender, education level and overseas experience.

Table 7

Comparisons of the respondents' views on 'how threatening China would be to world peace' with regard to gender, education level and the respondents' overseas experience.

	Gender	Education	Overseas Experience
Mann-Whitney U	4105.50	5575.00	2970.00
Wilcoxon W	16985.50	10625.00	2970.00
Z	-.143	-.057	-1.359
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.886	.955	.174

However, Kruskal Wallis test signified that the differences in the respondents' opinion about China in relation to their professions were statistically significant ($H(2) = 6.554, p = .038$). However, post hoc test for pairwise comparisons using Bonferroni correction for multiple tests showed no significant differences in any pair of the respondents' profession. Judging from the median values, it may be convinced that self-employed individuals viewed China in more positive way ($Mdn = 5$) compared to people working in private businesses or NGOs groups ($Mdn = 7$) and the government officials ($Mdn = 6$).

With the opinions about the US, the results from Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed that the differences in the respondents' perspectives on how threatening the US would be to the world peace were significantly differences in term of gender ($U(160, 52) = 3058.0, -2.887, p = 0.04$) and their profession ($H(2) = 10.619, p = .005$). It was evidenced that male participants viewed the US to be more threatening to the world peace ($Mdn = 7$) than their female counterparts ($Mdn = 5$). Post hoc test for pairwise comparisons among different groups of profession using the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests revealed that the differences in the respondents' opinions about the US with the mentioned issue were seen among (1) people working in the government sector and self-employed individual and (2) private business/NGO staff and self-employed individuals.

Table 8
Post hoc test for pairwise comparisons of the respondents' views on 'how threatening the US to world peace with regard to their profession'

Groups	Median	Sig.	Adj.Sig.
Self-employed & Government Staff	(5.0, 6.0)	.007	.021
Self-employed & Private Business/NGO	(5.0, 7.0)	.002	.006
Official Government Official & Private Business/NGO Staff	(6.0, 7.0)	.746	1.00

Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests

It was clearly shown that self-employed individuals viewed the US in a more positive way ($Mdn = 5$) compared to the people working in private businesses/NGOs institutions ($Mdn = 7$) and the ones working in the government sector ($Mdn = 6$). The finding did not show any significant differences in the respondents' opinions among those working in the government sector and private business/NGO staff.

Interestingly, despite its notorious image in WWII, Japan was considered to be the least threatening country ($Mean = 3.06$) to the world peace, and the EU countries were also viewed comparatively low as the world peace destroyer ($Mean = 4.16$). The results from Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed that the participants' perceptions concerning how threatening Japan and the EU would be to the world peace were not significantly different in relation to their gender, education level, profession and the respondents' overseas experiences.

How Responsible These Countries to Global Issues

In relation to how responsible these major powers would be to global issues, the results revealed that the respondents thought both China and the US would act less responsibly to the global issues with $Mean = 3.18$ and $Mean = 5.24$ respectively. However, the US had more favorable views compared to China, based on the magnitude of the mean scores. In addition, the respondent's views regarding this issue towards Japan and EU countries

are more positive compared to the two formers with respective mean scores 6.89 and 5.88 (see Table 9). Based on these values, Japan was viewed as the most responsible actor to the global issues.

Table 9
Respondents' views with regard to their trust on how responsible these power countries to the world affairs (the higher the mean value, the more responsible they are.)

	N	\bar{X}	SD
China	212	3.18	2.27
USA	212	5.24	2.12
Japan	212	6.89	2.13
EU	212	5.88	2.15

The respondents' views towards China concerning its responsibilities in global affairs were found to have no significant differences among gender, education level, and profession. However, the result from Mann-Whitney test indicated that the participants' views were statistically different with regard to their overseas experiences ($U(172, 40) = 2664.0, -2.243, p = .025$). It showed that those who have had overseas experience tended to view China to be more responsible to the global issues ($Mdn = 3$) while those who had no overseas experience viewed China to be slightly negative ($Mdn = 2$).

Concerning this particular issue, the results from Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed that the respondents' trust on the US, Japan and the EU to act responsibly to the world was found to have no significantly different in relation to their gender, education level, profession or overseas experiences.

How Influential These Countries in the Region

In term of these countries' overall influence in the Southeast Asia region, China was viewed as the most influential actor ($Mean = 7.68$) while the US ranked second ($Mean = 6.71$). Among the democratic allies, it is evidenced that the EU were regarded as the least influential partner ($Mean = 5.81$) slightly lower than Japan ($Mean = 5.93$).

Table 10
Respondents' views on major powers with regard to their influence in Southeast Asia Region (the higher the mean value, the more influential they are.)

	N	\bar{X}	SD
China	212	7.68	1.67

USA	212	6.71	1.77
Japan	212	5.93	1.77
EU	212	5.81	1.79

The results from Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed that the respondents' views on how influential these four major powers are in the ASEAN region were not significantly different in relation to the respondents' gender, education level, profession or overseas experiences.

How Important for Cambodia to Have Good Relation with These Countries

The statistics of Table 11 showed the respondents' views on how important for Cambodia to keep good relation with the aforementioned powers. It revealed that Japan ($Mean = 8.21$), although being a key player in WWII, was viewed as the main actor for Cambodia to keep good relation with, while her neighboring country, China ($Mean = 5.77$), was perceived to be the least important for Cambodia to have good relation with. The views towards EU and the US were also comparatively higher than that of for China with $Mean = 7.53$ and $Mean = 7.17$ respectively though the US scored the lowest among these democratic powers.

Table 11

Respondents' view on how important to keep good relation with these major powers (the higher the mean value, the more important for Cambodia to have good relation with these major powers.)

	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>
China	212	5.77	2.44
USA	212	7.17	1.81
Japan	212	8.21	1.64
EU	212	7.53	1.85

The comparisons of the participants' views in relation to the four independent variables revealed that the respondents' opinions towards China, with the mentioned aspect, were found to be significantly different in term of the respondents' education level ($U(100, 112) = 4658.0, -2.142, p = .032$). It was evidenced that the ones holding postgraduate degree held more positive views ($Mdn = 6$), compared to their undergraduate counterparts ($Mdn = 5$). In this case, we could not detect any differences in the participants' opinions with regard to their gender, profession and their overseas experiences.

For the case of the US, the results from Mann-Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests revealed that the respondents' opinions concerning how important for Cambodia to have good relation with this super power were not found to be of significant different in term of the four independent variables. However, for the case of Japan, Mann-Whitney test revealed that the differences in the respondents' views on this matter were statistically significant in regard with their gender ($U(160, 52) = 3403.0, -2.015, p = .044$). Male participants were found to have viewed that it was more important for Cambodia to have good relation with Japan ($Mdn = 9$) compared to their female perspectives ($Mdn = 8$). However, the differences in their views in relation with the participants' education levels, professions and their overseas experiences were not significant.

Similarly, the Mann-Whitney U test also showed that it was statistically different in respondents' views on how important for Cambodia to have good relation with the EU ($U(160, 52) = 3385.0, -2.045, p = .041$). It proves that male participants prefer Cambodia to have stronger relation with the EU ($Mdn = 8$) compared to the female respondents ($Mdn = 7$). The differences in the respondents' perspectives were not found in relation to their education levels, professions and their overseas experiences.

4. DISCUSSION

The influences of major powers particularly China, the US, Japan and EU in the international arena are extent and variant in different countries in according to their actions and policies. In Cambodia, these major powers have been playing significant roles in Cambodia's social and economic development. After the peace settlement in 1991, Cambodia witnesses significant economic growth (Sotharith, 2010) thank to the assistance and investment from these countries.

In the meanwhile, people's views towards the influences of these powers are also shaped in various forms. Cambodian educated group, ones who are the active agent in the society, also have different perspectives towards their influences. More recently, the relationship between Cambodia and the US and the EU have seen ups and downs in light of political aspect. This is partly caused by human rights issues

repeatedly raised by the US and the EU's withdrawal of Everything But Arms (EBA) scheme from the Kingdom. In contrast, the relationship between Cambodia and China and Cambodia with Japan have been still better and stronger despite in any political situations.

This survey findings, as presented in the result section, show that more research respondents view both China and the US more threat to the world peace as their status quo of peer competitors and the most powerful economies. However, there are more unfriendly views towards China with *Mean* = 6.28, compared to the US with *Mean* = 5.78. Despite being involved in some unjust war in parts of the world (Fisher & Biggar, 2011), the US is somehow viewed more positive compared to China in terms of world threats among Cambodian educated groups participated in the research. This might demonstrate by the fact that the US's soft power is still so strong that can hold the positive public perception in other countries (Servaes, 2012). For instance, the US's Medias are influential in shaping global public opinions in favor of its interests.

For China, in spite of its overwhelming influences in the kingdom in terms of business, financing aids, culture and politics (Marks, 2000; Kosal, 2009; Sambath, 2018), it is still viewed more unfriendly, at least among Cambodian educated group. These perceptions might be assumed by the current China political system ruled by the communist regime and the negative image driven by the Western propaganda. The leadership of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has always been criticized by the West through various media outlets. This would reach out so many audiences including Cambodian educated people. Several prime examples are striking, particularly the moment of trade war between the US and China. Nearly all of media/news outlets have focused on China and put all faults to China. In addition, the past history might be a factor shaping Cambodian educated people's opinions in viewing China more unfavorable. During the late 1970s, China backed the Khmer Rouge. The regime had killed many Cambodian people during that time (Hass, 1991; Ciorciari, 2014; Chandler, 2018). This unfavorable image has not moved from many Cambodian's mindset.

In terms of gender, education and overseas experiences, the analysis shows that there is no statistical significance of the respondent's views towards China on the global threat. In contrast, professions are found statistically different. Self-employed ones tend to view China more positive than groups of NGOs/business and government. This finding elaborates the fact that the current self-employed people (business owners) in Cambodia are the ones who imagine the benefits they would get from Chinese in terms of businesses. They perpetually assume that Chinese business and investment dramatic growth in the kingdom (Chheang, 2017) would also grow their businesses. On the other hand, ones who work in NGO/private companies and government still hold slightly negative perception towards Chinese because these groups are mid-career professionals who are mostly educated in Western education. Even though there is no any previous studies proving the assumption, the younger groups influenced by the Western culture tend to take more unfavorable views towards Chinese in the kingdom.

For the US, there is also no statistical significance of the respondent's views in relation with education and overseas experience. However, gender and profession provide interesting finding. More male respondents view the US more negative in regard with global threat compared to their female counterparts. This finding support the fact that male Cambodian people, particularly ones in the middle age and have access to online sources, tend to be curious about major power's politics, thereby providing them more understanding about negative images of America done in some countries. Self-employed see the US more positive than ones who work in NGOs/private companies and government institution. This corroborate the views discussed earlier that the respondents have the same views towards Chinese.

However, it is even absorbing when the finding presents that both Japan and EU countries are least threatening to the world peace compared to the two aforementioned major powers. In addition, there is no statistical significances of the respondent's views in regard with their gender, education, profession and overseas experiences towards Japan and EU countries. This finding is grounded in the fact that soft power expansion of Japan and EU is comparatively strong

and prominent (Michalski, 2005; Jones, 2010; Iwabuchi, 2015; Naoyuki, 2015) thereby creating good image among Cambodian educated groups. There is a saying 'things made in Japan is in good quality' in Cambodia. Japan's public diplomacy has a very positive impact on Cambodian people in general (Jing & Un, 2021). Moreover, investment and aids from Japan and EU to the kingdom have been playing a vital role for Cambodia's economic development since the 1990s (Sodhy, 2004). The other illustration is that Japan's Constitution did not allow her to have military after the Second World War. This has showed a good image for Japan to be a least threatening actor. It was just in late 2015 that Japan enacted a series of laws to have self-defense force as well as provided material support to allies in combat internationally. The EU countries, however have always been seen as leading aid providers to other developing countries (Carbone, 2011) despite somehow often standing with the US in the global security affairs. Their credentials in the aid provision, development cooperation and politicization might possibly and inevitably take some positive views of the Cambodian intellectuals.

Concerning the views on global responsibility, the statistics presented that both China and the US act less responsibly to the global issues with $Mean = 3.18$ and $Mean = 5.24$ respectively. However, the latter has more favorable views. In addition, the respondent's views towards Japan and the EU are more positive compared to the two powerful economies. The EU bloc has been seen more positive with $Mean = 5.88$, lagging the East Asian Tiger Japan with $Mean = 6.89$. This finding addresses the reality that China and the US as the most powerful economies would have contributed more in solving global challenges but to more or less extent they are not much responsive to the issues. In similar vein, Japan and EU would have adjusted to the same pattern. There are still many unsolved problems struggling on the world now.

In terms of gender, educational level and profession, the respondent's views towards China found no statistically significant in relation to the responsibility in global issues. But, the Mann-Whitney test indicated that overseas experiences play a role in shaping the respondent's views. Those who have been abroad tend to see that China plays more responsible role in some international issues whereas

those who have not exposed to outside environment tend to view China less responsible. This finding demonstrates the fact that ones who have international exposure would have heard more information and gained new knowledge about the global issues the world is facing. Climate change, for instance, is a challenge the global countries need to address. Until now, China has significantly contributed to global climate governance (Chan, Lee & Chan, 2011; Ly, 2020) while the US then withdrew from the Paris Climate Deal. A lot of media outlets headlined the story. For the other three allies, on the other hand, the figure showed that there is no statistical significance of the respondent's views towards them in relation to their gender, educational level, profession and overseas experience.

Last but not least, the numbers show no surprise that China was viewed the most influential actor, followed by the US and its allies Japan and EU in the Southeast Asian regions. This might possibly demonstrate by the fact that China's regional economic clout has explicitly dominated the regions. China has become the most important trade partner with ASEAN member states (Astarita, 2008; Wang, 2018). Cambodia is no an exception. Therefore, the inclination in viewing China as the most influential actor in the region for Cambodian educated people is more probable. In addition, there is no statistical significance of the respondent's views on how influential these powers are in the region in relation to their gender, education level, profession and overseas experiences.

As presented in the finding section, the respondent's views on how important for Cambodia to keep good relation with the aforementioned powers revealed that it is crucial for the kingdom to have good relation with them. However, the number is slightly lower for China than its counterparts. Japan was viewed the highest followed by the EU and the US. The finding validates the fact that all these powers are important partner with Cambodia for the sake of the kingdom's socio-economic development as well as political development. This reflects strategic implementation of Cambodia's foreign policy in engaging diverse cooperation with other countries which matters to its ultimate interest (Chheang, 2021).

However, the difference in the respondent's views towards China was statistically striking in terms of educational levels. The postgraduates thought that it is more important for Cambodia to keep good relation with the Dragon, compared to their undergraduate counterparts. This might be grounded on the fact that as China has risen to be a regional hegemon dominating both political and economic landscapes as mentioned earlier, it is crucial for Cambodia as a small developing country to harness interests through good cooperation and relations with the giant economy. So, only those who have more critical views would see the significances of the good relation. This also supports the previous research finding that the higher education people hold, the more critical views they have towards a powerful economy in the framework of Cambodia's relations with other foreign countries (Toch & Ly, 2020).

For Japan and EU, the finding presents that the differences in respondent's views on how important for Cambodia to keep good relations with these were statistically associated with their gender. More participants support the good relations between Cambodia and Japan or EU, compared to female counterparts. As discussed earlier, male Cambodian educated people would have more understanding about the issue matter to Cambodia's foreign relations than the female ones. They appear to be more curious about it in their daily life. More importantly, Cambodia has built a very good relations with Japan and EU since its peace settlement, despite having a worse period with the latter before and after EBA's withdrawal. But the differences in their views in relation to their educational levels, professions and overseas experiences were not statistically significant.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research found that in term of threat to world peace, China and the US were viewed as the most threat, while Japan was perceived as the least despite being the key player in the Second World War. In term of responsibility to the global issues, the US was considered to be key player followed by Japan and EU. China still took more negative views of the respondents compared to the other counterparts. From the opinion of Cambodian educated respondents, EU plays as an influencing actor in the Southeast Asia region despite there is

small difference in the degree of influences compared with other counterparts. However, more number of respondent's view revealed that it is crucial for Cambodia to keep good relation with China compared to other countries.

This survey study provides more insight for further discussion and studies on how Cambodian educated people's views towards the influences of major powers account for the aspect of Cambodia's foreign relations with others. Even though there is a lack of its rigour in the design with small-representation of the samples, this research would have set some relevant inputs for policy making and decision as well as encouraged more studies about the subject.

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- Diplomacy among states
- Public diplomacy and media
- Community development and natural resource management
- Youth engagement and politics



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Mr. LY Tong has years of extensive experience in teaching and research in education, mathematics education, and social science. He has advanced degrees in education and mathematics. Presently, he is a full-time researcher at the Department of Educational Research, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Royal Academy of Cambodia. Mr. LY Tong also has some experience in designing and developing grant research projects for government and non-government institutions.

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- Machine Learning & Data Science

APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire

The Influence of Major Power Countries in Global and Regional Contexts: A Comparative Views from Cambodian Intellectuals

INTRODUCTION

This survey intends to assess the perceptions of Cambodian educated group on the influence of major power countries, China, the US, EU and Japan, in global and regional contexts. With the structured questionnaire provided below, you are appreciated to take on your voluntary response to the survey. We would like to assure you that the information from this survey will be used for educational and research purposes only, and that your privacy will be kept confidential. We believe that the finding from this study will be significantly contributing to the whole spectrum of research sector, in particular the public’s view on major power countries in the world. Your minutes to fill out this survey is invaluable.

We really appreciate your kindness if you could pass the *Questionnaire Link* to more friends, relatives, colleagues and those you know so that they could also take part in this study.

SECTION I: PERSONAL INFORMATION	
Q1: Age <input type="checkbox"/> Below 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 18-27 <input type="checkbox"/> 27-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 40-60 <input type="checkbox"/> Over 60	Q2: Education Level <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate Degree
Q3: Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Q4: Occupations <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Government Sector <input type="checkbox"/> Private Business/NGO Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....
Q5: Have you ever experienced living or traveling abroad? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

SECTION II: VIEWS ON INFLUENCE OF CHINA AND OTHER GREAT POWERS												
Please provide the tick (√) in the box of number from 0 to 10 (Please see the meaning of these numbers in the above).												
In this section (Q6 – Q9), are measured using 11 scales with meaning: <i>0: No Threat & 10: Big Threat</i>												
	Statements	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q6	How threatening do you think China is to world peace?											
Q7	How threatening do you think USA is to world peace?											

Q8	How threatening do you think Japan is to world peace?												
Q9	How threatening do you think EU is to world peace?												
Q10-Q13 with scales: 0: No Trust & 10: Wholly Trust													
	Statements	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Q10	How much do you trust China to act responsibly in the world?												
Q11	How much do you trust USA to act responsibly in the world?												
Q12	How much do you trust Japan to act responsibly in the world?												
Q13	How much do you trust EU to act responsibly in the world?												
Q14-Q17 with scales 0: No Influence & 10: Big Influence													
	Statements	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Q14	How influential is China in Southeast Asia?												
Q15	How influential is USA in Southeast Asia?												
Q16	How influential is Japan in Southeast Asia?												
Q17	How influential is EU in Southeast Asia?												
Q18-Q21 with scales 0: Not Very Important & 10: Very Important													
	Statements	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Q18	How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with China?												
Q19	How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with USA?												
Q20	How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with Japan?												
Q21	How important do you think it is for Cambodia to have good relation with EU?												