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**Perception and Response to Power Display in Southeast Asia: Sifting the Soft from the Hard**

Panel: East Asian Hard and Soft Power

Southeast Asia has been the geopolitical theatre for various big powers throughout the past couple of centuries. Some stayed on, while others left. The various periods have witnessed the fluctuating fortunes of different powers in response to global, regional and more importantly national demands. The states in Southeast Asia, meanwhile, evolved according to their own route and in partnership with bigger, richer powers. The progress was not inherently smooth, with intra power rivalry for influence over the landscape. Current display of power is distributed amongst leading players – China, Japan, the United States and to a lesser extent, Russia. Each power has embarked on retaining and sustaining its position in the region through a myriad of methods, some subtle, others more brute.

This introductory study explores the perceptions, attitudes and reactions from a Southeast Asia perspective with a view to understanding the regional dynamics, not just towards the foreign players but also amongst the component Southeast Asian actors themselves.