

# Democratic Partnership in Asia

By DANIEL TWINING

**F**OR SOME OBSERVERS, America's economic weakness, Europe's uncertain future, turmoil in the wider Middle East, and challengers to Western leadership from Moscow to Tehran signal a new moment in world politics. It is characterized by the decline of free nations whose power and principles have shaped international society for centuries — and the emergence of an autocratic Chinese superpower whose seemingly unstoppable economic ascent shatters the comfortable belief that capitalist development leads to democracy. Should the liberal West brace itself for the global projection of Beijing's model of authoritarian modernity in preparation for the time, as the title of Martin Jacques's latest book foresees, "when China rules the world"? Not yet. China's geopolitical ascent is creating what Mao Zedong would have termed a "contradiction": China's rising power makes the United States increasingly important to nearly every Asian nation, including

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China itself. By and large, Asian leaders seek closer (and more equal) relations with Washington, scold their U.S. counterparts for neglecting the region, are insecure about hints of any American pullback, and increasingly identify democratic political values as a basis for closer cooperation with America and each other. Popular majorities in countries as diverse as Japan, India, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia, and Vietnam hold the United States in high regard. Even China cultivates America as its most important external partner. North Korea's totalitarian ruler covets a special relationship with Washington and has developed nuclear weapons in a perverse effort to secure it.

Leaders in Beijing increasingly appear to believe that China's growing economic and military might will enable it to dominate Asia. But shared political values, as well as changing constellations of power, are reshaping the region's strategic landscape. Even as they deepen ties with China, big Asian democracies are building new strategic partnerships because they understand that peace and democracy are, as Indonesia's foreign minister has put it, "inseparable." India's prime minister says his country can be secure only in a region of democracies; Japan's leaders hope to build an "East Asian Community" modeled on the liberal principles of the European Union; and Southeast Asian statesmen have declared that regional stability requires democracy at home and abroad. These are the stirrings of a different Asian century from the one China's leaders envisage.

These trends give the United States a promising opportunity to shape an emerging Asia-Pacific era. It should seize it — not only through bilateral regional initiatives, but by working to unite Atlantic and Pacific democracies in patterns of closer cooperation and to sustain a common outlook on China while engaging the country from a position of strength. The Asia-Pacific region encompasses half of humanity, includes five nuclear powers, and soon will contain the world's four largest economies and biggest navies. The present historical moment offers the West a fleeting chance to shape emerging Asia in ways that preserve a privileged position of leadership and strengthen pluralism in the world's most dynamic region.

Despite the widely trumpeted power shift, most Asian leaders express a clear preference for U.S. leadership and are far more comfortable living in a world in which American power, rather than Chinese, is preponderant. Smart policy now can help ensure that the new age dawning will not be "someone else's century," as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned before leaving office.

## Asia's resurgence

**T**HE TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNITY should not despair over Asia's return to economic leadership. In a globalized world, Asian resurgence need not mean Western decline or marginalization.

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Indeed, Americans and Europeans should celebrate the global spread of political and economic modernity through market capitalism and good governance as a historic success for the transatlantic allies. The expansion of the liberal international order to include what used to be called the Third World represents the ultimate victory of Western ideals in the long twilight struggle from 1947–89.

With wise leadership, the United States — and its European allies, should they choose to more closely bind their power and influence with each other and America rather than decouple or retreat — can thrive in the emerging 21st century international system. America will remain the world's indispensable nation. Ideally, it will do so in partnership with a vibrant, outward-looking Europe that can build deeper ties with Asian giants in a way that sustains a preponderance of democratic power in international affairs. A global coalition among militarily capable, like-minded partners from North America, Europe, and Asia would not seek to draw new geopolitical dividing lines. Rather, it would allow Western powers and their natural allies in Asia to collectively shape, and prosper in, an international system amenable to the values and interests of open societies.

Complacency has no place in this vision: No one should take the current international system for granted. What the National Intelligence Council has called a “world without the West” would be violent, chaotic, and illiberal, reversing the rising tide of prosperity and human liberty that has characterized the past two centuries. But American power is resilient. With sustained technological, economic, and human-capital investment at home (including a systematic effort to tackle crippling government deficits and the national debt) and a continued commitment to mobilize public support for international stewardship, the United States will remain well-placed to manage challenges from any imaginable great-power adversary.

The greatest danger to the West may not be that resurgent Asian states will challenge its leadership of the international system through force of arms. Rather, an underappreciated risk is that rising powers like China will not assume their share of responsibility for the provision of international public goods that undergird the liberal order — from sustaining an open international economy to tackling climate change to upholding freedom of sea-lanes and cyberspace to managing energy scarcity on an increasingly crowded planet. The greatest challenge for the United States and Europe in coming decades may not be fending off peer competitors in zero-sum military conflicts but vesting rising powers with responsibilities for global governance commensurate with their international clout — and their status as beneficiaries of an international order sustained disproportionately by Western leadership.

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## What order in Asia means for the West

**A**SIA'S ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION is a key driver of the emerging new world order; the future of this region will play a decisive role in determining America's position and prospects in the international system. China now boasts the world's second-largest national economy (and defense budget), Japan comes in third, and within a decade India should surpass Germany to possess the world's fourth-largest GDP.

In the emerging center of wealth and power along the Indian Ocean and Pacific rim lands, key strategic trends include:

1. China's considerable expansion of its military capabilities and the international influence it derives from the scale and pace of its economic growth.
2. Japan's gradual "normalization" as a great power even as its relative capabilities are eroded by Asia's power shift.
3. India's ascent to the top tier of rising world powers and its frontline role as an Asian balancer.
4. The rise of Asian regionalism and competition between leading Pacific powers over the form and scope of Asia's emerging institutions.
5. The spread of democracy and strategic cooperation among Asia-Pacific democracies as a source of regional order.

In light of these key trends, four broad pathways for Asian order are possible over the coming decades, with determinative effects on Asia's relations with the Western community of democracies. They are:

1. A continuation of the present, Lockean order that mixes rules-based cooperation and quiet competition within a regional framework structured around existing alignments sustained by American leadership.
2. A Hobbesian balance-of-power order of unconstrained great power competition fueled by dynamic shifts in relative power and a reduced U.S. role that induces aggressive self-help behavior among regional states.
3. A Kantian security community in which an East Asian community develops along the lines of Europe's democratic peace, with China's political liberalization a precondition for such a regional evolution.

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4. A Sinocentric regional order that sustains a different kind of East Asian community on the basis of China's extension of a sphere of influence across the region.

*A Lockean order.* In the first scenario, continued American maritime pre-eminence and the U.S. alliance system sustain a security order in which China's "Prussianization," North Korea's nuclear mischief, and other potential security dilemmas in Asia are mitigated by the preponderance of power enjoyed by the United States and its allies, thereby deterring aggressive revisionism on the part of Beijing or Pyongyang and continuing to supply the public goods that underlie wider Asian prosperity. In such an order, Asian institutions could continue to sink roots, but on the basis of a trans-regional outlook in which the United States remains what Defense Secretary Robert Gates has called a "resident power" and economic integration continues to be oriented around a Pacific rather than an exclusively Asian axis. Great powers like Japan and India, secondary powers like South Korea and Australia, and the states of Southeast Asia could continue to engage economically and diplomatically with China, confident that their security ties with the United States constituted a hedge against falling under Beijing's sway.

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In turn, China's development would be shaped by the combination of engagement with the United States and its friends in Asia and Europe, and by the deterrent effect of America's forward military presence and alliance commitments. These raise the costs of Chinese adventurism, allowing Beijing to focus its resources on internal development and peaceful external engagement rather than on wielding its growing power to revise Asia's order against the wishes of lesser states.

*A Hobbesian order.* In the second scenario, a U.S. retreat into isolationism (perhaps following premature withdrawal leading to a self-inflicted defeat in Afghanistan) or accelerated material decline (induced by protectionism or failure to reverse America's alarming levels of national debt) would lead to the weakening of Washington's alliance commitments in East Asia and its willingness to remain the region's security guarantor. Such a regional order would be "ripe for rivalry," as forecast by realist scholars after the Cold War, when an American withdrawal from the region and raw balancing behavior in the midst of dynamic power shifts seemed likely to make Asia's future resemble Europe's war-prone past.<sup>1</sup>

Such a balance-of-power order would feature self-help behavior by Asian states of the kind that has been mitigated to date by American defense com-

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1. Aaron Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia," *International Security* 18:3 (Winter 1993-1994).

mitments. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam might develop and deploy nuclear weapons as the only means of securing their autonomy against the Chinese military giant in their midst. Chinese leaders, no longer constrained by America's Seventh Fleet and robust alliance network, might find themselves free to pursue their declared revisionist aims in the South China Sea.<sup>2</sup> Lesser Asian states whose territorial claims conflict with China's would find they had less ability to leverage a retreating America's support in their favor.

*A Kantian order.* In the third scenario, Asia would evolve in Europe's direction — not the pre-1945 Europe of great-power balancing and war, but today's European Union, in which demilitarized societies between which war

*In the third scenario, Asia would evolve in Europe's direction — but not the pre-1945 Europe of great-power balancing.*

is inconceivable enjoy the fruits of democratic peace through institutional cooperation. Such a pathway for regional order presumes that Asian regionalism will develop in a pluralistic way that preserves the autonomy of lesser Asian states, rather than deriving from a nonconsensual extension of China's sphere of influence. It also presumes a dovetailing of Asian regime-types in a democratic direction. After all, it was only the resumption of democratic control over previously militaristic European regimes following their defeat in war that made possible the institutional deepening that has defined the post-World War II European project.

Another necessary, and often unstated, condition for the development of Europe's Kantian order of perpetual peace has been the American security umbrella. It has created a security cocoon within which European governments can dedicate national resources to domestic welfare rather than military defense and maneuvering against potential adversaries. Ironically, then, the development of a pluralistic and peace-loving East Asian community along the lines of the European Union may require the continued role of the United States as the region's security guarantor, a role that would naturally be more amenable to Washington's leading regional competitor — China — should that country pursue the political liberalization that would make an Asian democratic peace both possible and self-reinforcing.

*A Sinocentric order.* In the fourth scenario, an East Asian community of economic interdependence and pan-regional cooperation would develop not along lines of democratic pluralism but as an extension of an increasingly dominant China. Rather than the horizontal sovereignty between states that developed in post-Westphalian Europe through the institution of the balance

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2. See, for instance "They Have Returned: China Should Worry Less About America's 'Containment' Strategy and More about Why the Neighbors Welcome It," *Economist* (August 14, 2010); Edward Wong, "Vietnam Enlists Allies to Stave Off China's Reach," *New York Times* (February 4, 2009).

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of power, such a regional order would feature hierarchical relations of suzerainty and submission of the kind that characterized pre-modern East Asia when China's Middle Kingdom was strong and cohesive and lesser neighboring states paid ritualized forms of tribute to it. A Sinocentric East Asia could emerge out of this historical past; it could also emerge through what neorealist international relations scholars such as John Mearsheimer define as the imperative of great powers to enjoy regional hegemony. The Monroe Doctrine and its Roosevelt Corollary epitomized this process in the 19th and early 20th centuries with respect to the United States and Latin America.

A Chinese sphere of influence encompassing East Asia and Southeast Asia presumes that states like Japan and South Korea would bandwagon with, rather than balance against, Chinese power.<sup>3</sup> This could follow from either a lack of external alliance options or out of a reemerged Asian identity; in a scenario in which they were economically and geopolitically "Finlandized," these countries might have no choice.<sup>4</sup> An Asian system in which China sat at the summit of a hierarchical regional order presumes that Asian institution-building develops along closed lines of Asian exclusivity, rather than through the open transpacific regionalism that has been the dominant impulse behind Asian community-building since the early 1990s.

Where are the interests of the West in light of each of these possible pathways for regional order? It seems clear that pathways 1 and 3 — the current Lockean order sustained by American preponderance and provision of the public goods that underlie Asia's peace and prosperity, and the development of a Kantian security community grounded in the democratic peace — are most favorable to the security and prosperity of the West, not to mention the vast majority of Asian peoples. Pathway 2, that of zero-sum balancing and self-help behavior among Asian states subject to predation by larger neighbors, recalls Europe's war-prone past, a history that if replicated would upend the Asian economic miracle. Pathway 4, that of a Sinocentric regional sphere from which Western powers are excluded and lesser states lose autonomy to an overweening China, is clearly not the kind of regional order to which the West's Asian allies aspire. That the citizens of many Asian nations view China as a potential security threat reinforces the claim that they do not want their country to be subject to its tutelage in domestic politics or external affairs.<sup>5</sup>

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3. Samuel Huntington predicts that this is possible in his civilizational analysis of future world order: Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, 1996).

4. Gary Schmitt, ed., *The Rise of China: Essays on the Future Competition* (Encounter, 2009).

5. See, for instance "Views of China and Russia Decline in Global Poll," BBC News (February 9, 2009), available at [http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views\\_on\\_countriesregions\\_bt/588.php?lb=brglm&pnt=588&nid=&cid=](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/views_on_countriesregions_bt/588.php?lb=brglm&pnt=588&nid=&cid=) (this and subsequent weblinks accessed August 20, 2010); "World Still Wary of Modern China," BBC News (August 4, 2008), available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7540871.stm>.

## Shaping the Asia-Pacific century

“ASIANs ARE LIKE spectators in a movie theater. They are all looking at the screen, which is America, rather than at each other.” So said one of Japan’s smartest strategic thinkers, Nobukatsu Kanehara, and he is right. Despite the hype surrounding the rise of China, it remains the United States that provides the public goods for order, security, and prosperity in East Asia; China in many respects free-rides on these public goods to sustain its focus on internal development. And it is the quality of relations with the United States that helps determine the nature of Asian states’ relations with each other. For instance, Japan-China relations would be radically different in the absence of the U.S.-Japan alliance; New Delhi’s relationship with Beijing changed significantly in the wake of the U.S.-India strategic rapprochement. Most Asian nations prefer American preeminence to the alternatives — and they want to know that President Obama has a strategic vision for sustaining American leadership in a region that craves it. What should be the core components of American strategy in Asia in light of the opportunities and challenges its ascendance poses for U.S. national interests?

*Sustained commitment to American alliance leadership.* The American alliance system, and the security guarantees and forward military deployments that underpin it, remain an important stabilizing force in a region experiencing the kind of dynamic shifts in relative power that so often lead to arms racing, regional polarization, and conflict. In this context, U.S. leadership and presence reassure Asian states that might otherwise need to pursue aggressive (and destabilizing) self-help policies to provide for their own security. American alliance commitments to Japan, South Korea, and other nations promote what political scientists call “underbalancing” — regional states enjoying U.S. protection are able to invest more of their national resources in the pursuits of peace rather than preparations for war, thus dampening security dilemmas with their neighbors that would otherwise inexorably arise. In light of China’s ambitious military modernization, revisionist maritime claims, and development of sophisticated anti-access capabilities, the United States will need to boost its military posture and capabilities in the region to hedge against any Chinese temptation to declare a “Monroe Doctrine for Asia.”

The U.S.-Japan alliance forms the central pillar of American regional strategy. The conventional narrative about the rise of China and India has obscured the continued relevance of Japanese power: It has the world’s third-largest economy, one of the world’s most capable navies, an advantageous geographic position, an enduring alliance with the United States, considerable soft power in Asia, a latent nuclear weapons capability, and a propensity to reform and renew itself in the face of structural challenges

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from the international system. Japan is struggling to become a “normal” power, and astute commentators recognize that it, no less than China and India, will shape Asia’s strategic future.<sup>6</sup>

Since the mid-1990s, Washington and Tokyo have used the framework of their alliance to expand Japan’s security roles and capabilities, moving it systematically in the direction of becoming a regional and global security provider. Japan has taken on novel responsibilities within the alliance, developed important new capabilities for power projection, and, in a historic first, deployed its Self Defense Forces to the Afghan and Iraq theaters of war. Successive Japanese prime ministers have articulated unprecedented ambitions for Japanese grand strategy.<sup>7</sup> Arguably, the ascent of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), with its calls for a more equal alliance and greater Japanese independence in security and diplomacy, is yet another step forward in Japan’s transformation into what DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa famously called a “normal country.” These are trends Washington should encourage; Japan’s great power “normalization” within a more equal alliance will make it a vital U.S. partner in shaping the emerging global order.

*Consolidating strategic partnership with India.* India is the kind of revisionist power with expanding geopolitical horizons and an exceptional self-regard that America was a century ago. The United States’ rise to world power in the late-19th and 20th centuries is, in some respects, a model for India’s own ambitions, partly because both define their exceptionalism with reference to their open societies. As analyst Pratap Bhanu Mehta told the *New York Times*, Indians have “great admiration for U.S. power” and want their country to “replicate” rather than oppose it. How many other countries — including America’s closest allies — share these sentiments? The United States has an enormous stake in the emergence of a rich, confident, democratic India that shares American ambitions to manage Chinese power, safeguard an open international economy, stabilize a volatile region encompassing the heartland of jihadist extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and secure the global commons.

Indian environment minister Jairam Ramesh has framed India’s foreign policy debate in terms of the tension between the country’s G-20 identity as

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6. Brahma Chellaney, *Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India, and Japan* (HarperCollins, 2006); Kenneth Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (PublicAffairs, 2007); Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle Between India, China and Japan Will Shape Our Next Decade* (Harcourt, 2008).

7. Taro Aso, “Asian Strategy as I See it: Japan as the Thought Leader of Asia,” (December 7, 2005), available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0512>; Shinzo Abe, *Utsukushii Kunibe (Towards a Beautiful Country)* (Bunshun Shinsho, 2006); Taro Aso, “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan’s Expanding Diplomatic Horizons,” (November 30, 2006), available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html>; Yasuo Fukuda, “When the Pacific Ocean Becomes an ‘Inland Sea,’” speech to the 14th International Conference on the Future of Asia (May 22, 2008), available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/speech0805-2.html>; Yukio Hatoyama, “Japan’s New Commitment to Asia: Toward the Realization of an East Asian Community,” speech to the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (November 15, 2009), available at [http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/20091115singapore\\_e.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/20091115singapore_e.html).

a partner of the West and its G-77 identity as part of a bloc of developing nations that define their interests in opposition to the West.<sup>8</sup> Until recently, intensive American engagement centered on defense and civil-nuclear cooperation had a gravitational effect that pulled India into closer alliance. But left to its own devices, India could rekindle alliances that move it in the other direction. India will make its own strategic choices, but they will be critically shaped by the nature of American engagement. Ultimately, the United States has a deep interest in investing in India's success as a democratic superpower — one that can shape a non-Western modernity that is inherently peaceful, pluralistic, prosperous, and attractive to the wider world.

*A recommitment to free trade.* The liberal international economic order has produced a greater degree of wealth for more people than any other economic system in history. Western leadership of this order, based in part on U.S. and allied control of the global commons, has allowed Asian states — including China — to develop deep linkages with each other and the world. Both export-dependent Asian economies, like China and South Korea, and consumer-driven economies like India favor greater international trade liberalization as a way to sustain the flows of trade and investment that drive their growing prosperity. This is broadly true even though rising Asian powers' different stages of development vis-à-vis the West create conflicts over trade liberalization in specific sectors like agriculture in global trade negotiations.

President Bill Clinton understood Asia's fundamental reliance on open international trade and financial flows. He worked accordingly to bring China into the World Trade Organization and strengthen the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC). President George W. Bush also understood this reality, signing a free trade agreement with South Korea and advocating a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). Leaders of the European Union lately have pursued a similarly strategic approach to trade liberalization with Asia: Witness the new EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement and EU negotiations for a free trade agreement with India. President Obama could send the right message to America's Asian partners by pledging to push the U.S. Congress to ratify the stalled Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement immediately.

*Promoting open regionalism.* It is notable that Asian institution-building has been characterized as much by competition between regional powers to set its terms and scope as by cooperation to construct a new Asian community. Since the mid-1990s, Japan and China have viewed Asian regionalism as one arena in which to play out their contest for status and influence,

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8. Nitin Sethi, "Jairam for Major Shift at Climate Talks," *Times of India* (October 19, 2009).

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demonstrated most dramatically in the run-up to the inaugural East Asia summit in 2005. In addition to competition between big Asian powers to drive regional institution-building in ways that maximize their influence, Asian regionalism has also been impacted by a two-decade-long wave of democratization that has changed the terms by which key states like Indonesia relate to their neighbors.

Most Asian states prefer a form of open regionalism that includes the United States and friendly powers like India and Australia. Smaller Asian states want to avoid the construction of “closed,” Sinocentric regional institutions that would cause them to unduly fall under Beijing’s sway, in part by preventing them from balancing their economic dependence on China with similarly deep economic, diplomatic, and security relations with other major powers. Washington has a compelling interest in participating in Asian regional institutions, “internationalizing” them to prevent the construction of any kind of Greater Chinese Co-Prosperty Sphere.

New institutions could include a free-trade area of the Pacific tying together the world’s most dynamic economies. They could include a formalized Asian great-power concert, for which the Six Party Talks about North Korea’s nuclear program have laid a foundation. Deepening partnerships among Asian democracies are also likely, whether in the form of a U.S.-Japanese-Indian-Australian quadrilateral, U.S.-Japan-Australia and U.S.-Japan-Korea trilaterals, more formalized ties linking militarily capable Asian democracies with NATO partners, or a broader grouping of democracies dedicated to promoting good governance and rule of law in forums like the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership.

### A policy true to Western values

**T**HE BUSH ADMINISTRATION pursued what current Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Kurt Campbell calls an “allies-first” Asia strategy — one grounded in the logic that the best way to manage China’s rise is to enjoy strong relations with China’s neighbors. To this end, the previous administration forged a strategic breakthrough with India, accelerated President Clinton’s efforts to transform the U.S.-Japan alliance, and strengthened relations with key Southeast Asian powers like Indonesia, Vietnam, and Singapore. More recently, Asian allies have been concerned that the Obama administration, focused less on the Asian balance of power than on securing Beijing’s support on global issues, may drift in the direction of a tacit “G-2” condominium with China. Such an approach would relegate Washington’s core partners in wider Asia to secondary status.

To offset these regional worries, President Obama could declare that democracies are natural allies, that the United States makes a qualitative distinction between its natural allies in Asia and countries like China — and

that the best way to enjoy constructive relations with the latter is to enjoy the closest possible relations with the former. Rather than downplaying American respect for individual freedom and political liberty in Asia, this approach also calls on the president — and, equally, leaders in Europe at their summits with China, ASEAN, and other Asian powers — to be true to their conviction that the expansion of human rights and rule of law is a source of security and stability for all countries. This is true not only for Western and Asian democracies but for China too.

While European and Asian countries fear a U.S.-Chinese condominium in Asia, they also fear the destabilizing effects of a mismanaged U.S.-China relationship. President Bush earned kudos in Asia for managing a stable and productive period in U.S.-China relations — and did so even as he strengthened Washington's relationships with every other major Asian power, demonstrating that this need not be a zero-sum game. In fact, constructive U.S.-China relations reinforce productive U.S. relations with other Asian partners.

Transatlantic leaders must expand the framework for cooperation with China while hedging against assertive Chinese behavior that undercuts Western interests. One approach would be for Washington and its allies to spell out deliverables that they expect to flow from such a framework. These include specific Chinese initiatives that produce tangible results on climate change, North Korea, international aid transparency, political and economic liberalization in Burma, the undervaluation of China's currency as a matter of state policy, and other hard subjects. The idea should be to test China's willingness to be a good global citizen that contributes to the public goods undergirding the international system. It would mean to indicate to Beijing that the days of free-riding on Western leadership, and banking on Western disunity when it comes to relations with China, are over.

## A preponderance of democratic power

ASIAN LEADERS SOMETIMES seem more acutely aware than their American and European counterparts of the requirements for the transatlantic allies to sustain Western leadership of the international system. Winning the wars they choose to fight is one of them. This became clear when — during the Iraq War — leaders like Lee Kuan Yew were outspoken about the need for the United States to prevail. He noted the wider systemic implications of an American military defeat in the Middle East. Today, a similar, if quiet, debate over the future of Western strategy in Afghanistan is taking place in Asia. In this context, such a conflict is not a localized concern but has broader strategic ramifications for the position of the West in the emerging world order.

Asian nations like Japan and South Korea, whose security depends on the United States, cannot be indifferent to the prospect that their security

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provider would choose to lose the war in Afghanistan. States like India cannot but be discouraged if their newfound American partner demonstrates that it lacks the stomach for a fight against a defeatable adversary like the Taliban. States like China want to accelerate the diffusion of power in the international system away from the West. They are watching as NATO forces bleed in Afghanistan in the absence of the political commitment necessary to produce strategic victory. One of the best things American and European leaders could do to impact the West's place in the future global balance of power would be to recommit to winning the war in the Hindu Kush.

Asian nations have been overly dependent on U.S. military power to maintain regional peace. This has led officials in Japan and elsewhere to call for a greater focus on community-building within Asia in pursuit of a more "fraternal" approach to regional order.<sup>9</sup> But without a consensus on the sources of domestic legitimacy, Asian regional institutions cannot replicate the peace of Europe. In an Asia divided by history and culture, democracy provides a transnational identity that is creating a new basis for regional cooperation.

Japan has recently inked a security pact with Australia, Tokyo's first outside its U.S. alliance. India and Japan are constructing a pan-Asian partnership with extraordinary economic and military potential.<sup>10</sup> The United States is pursuing strategic trilateralism with Japan and Australia, Japan and South Korea, and Japan and India.<sup>11</sup> Japan made the first efforts to link itself with India, Australia, and the United States in what Chinese strategists feared could become an "Asian NATO."<sup>12</sup> Australia has operationalized security pacts with Indonesia and India, taking defense relations with both to a qualitatively higher level. Indonesia is actively debating what Rizal Sukma calls a "post-ASEAN foreign policy" that would reject the principle of noninterference in neighbors' internal affairs in favor of a robust commitment to the promotion of good governance and human rights abroad as sources of security at home, as befits the world's third-largest democracy.

Deep economic interdependence with China and a continuing focus on internal development mean that Asia is unlikely to divide into geopolitical blocs. But the region's strategic future will be shaped in important ways by the success of democratic pluralism in moderating the impulses of authoritarian Sinocentricity to provide the public goods of security, stability, and prosperity that Asian peoples crave. U.S. policy should encourage this trend — not to contain China but to shape a regional environment conducive to China's own peaceful rise.

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9. Yukio Hatoyama, "A New Path for Japan," *New York Times* (August 26, 2009).

10. Anil Joseph, "India, Japan Ink Security Pact," *Hindustan Times* (October 22, 2008).

11. Hillary Clinton, "Remarks on Regional Architecture in Asia: Principles and Priorities," (January 12, 2010), available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135090.htm>.

12. "Commentary: US Dreams of Asian NATO," *China Daily* (July 18, 2003).

## A concerted transatlantic approach

WHEN THINKING OF the linkages between its alliances in Europe and its interests in Asia, the United States still tends to appraise Europe as a potential partner based on its role in the region — by which measure Europe will often fall short. But managing China's rise is a *global* imperative, not simply a regional one. This includes dealing with China in global institutions and negotiation processes like international trade talks, climate change negotiations, the G-20, the United Nations Security Council, and groupings like the P5+1 on Iran. It also includes dealing with China in regional contexts beyond Asia, including concerns over human rights, trade and investment policies, and foreign assistance in Africa and Latin America, where Europe continues to wield clout.

Thus, at both the global level and in regions outside Asia, there is clearly scope for the United States and its European partners to collaborate more systematically vis-à-vis China. The overarching strategic challenge is to defend the liberal international order; China is the leading potential challenger to that order and Europe should be America's natural partner in upholding it. Building coalitions of like-minded, capable partners that span the Atlantic and Pacific realms will be necessary to manage the challenge. This calls for a global strategy of coalition-building among liberal powers that moves beyond the bifurcated regional approaches of the Cold War and its aftermath.

This approach also has critical implications for the reform of the institutions of global governance. Integrating Asian powers is important, but such efforts must coexist with a liberal coalition-building strategy that ensures that the West punches its full weight, and forges closer partnership with like-minded Asian powers, in these forums. A new transatlantic compact could reorient the Atlantic allies away from narrow security concerns in Europe and towards broader global challenges to the West's position stemming from China's authoritarian rise.

For its part, Europe needs a less Sinocentric Asia policy. Its policies should be better attuned to the advantages gained from coordinating more effectively with other major Asian powers on issues related to China, and the leverage that comes from the capacity to influence developments along China's periphery. This includes closer relations not only with great powers like Japan and India and emerging powers like South Korea and Indonesia, but also with societies like Taiwan. Europe has a compelling moral stake in protecting the rights of Taiwanese citizens to choose their own future free from mainland coercion. Europe must also resist the self-defeating competition over China policy among the big three powers of Great Britain, Germany, and France. On issues of Tibet, human rights, and trade, this competition

## *Democratic Partnership in Asia*

has allowed the Chinese to play European states against each other to the detriment of each of them and the EU as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

NATO has been operating behind the curve on Asia, in the opinion of key Atlanticists. This is partly a function of an ongoing debate pitting proponents of a narrow NATO mandate that privileges transatlantic exclusivism against advocates of a more expansive, global role for the alliance. In this latter vision, NATO would serve as the hub of a series of global security partnerships, including with rising, democratic Asian powers — a position endorsed by Washington’s ambassador to NATO before he assumed his current responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

At the NATO summit in Riga in November 2006, the United States secured the alliance’s agreement to enhance military interoperability and joint planning with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand. This was part of a larger U.S. design to encourage Asian partners to assume global security responsibilities as “democratic security providers” — and to formalize multilateral security cooperation among like-minded partners with significant military capabilities.<sup>15</sup> NATO’s new Strategic Concept in 2010 should propound an expansionary vision for the alliance’s engagement with Asia’s leading democracies. After all, it is Asia’s ascent rather than the European security dilemmas of yesteryear that most directly challenges the liberal order that NATO has been instrumental in upholding for 60 years.

## Freedom in Asia

**I**N WESTERN EUROPE after World War II, the United States and its allies constructed a multilateral security regime based on a foundation of shared democratic values that further consolidated when countries like Spain, Portugal, and Turkey embraced representative politics. By contrast, outside of Japan, such a foundation did not exist in Asia during the Cold War. Whereas the United States’ Cold War Asia policy was premised on partnership with regional strongmen at the same time as structural factors pushed America and democratic India apart, today democracy — and converging risk assessments about the dark side of China’s rise — increasingly unite the United States and Europe with Japan, India, South Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Australia, and other states in ways that naturally should promote better coordination amongst them.

The material success of authoritarian China has led to premature anxiety that economic modernization there will not produce a middle class that

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13. John Fox and Francois Godemont, “A Power Audit of EU-China Relations” (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009), available at [http://ecfr.3cdn.net/532cd91dob5c9699ad\\_ozm6b9bz4.pdf](http://ecfr.3cdn.net/532cd91dob5c9699ad_ozm6b9bz4.pdf).

14. Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, “Global NATO,” *Foreign Affairs* 85:5 (September/October 2006).

15. Interview with Kurt Volker, then principal deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, conducted in Washington, D.C. (February 2007).

## *Daniel Twining*

demands democratic rights, as occurred in the West. We have heard similar sentiments before, when Asian strongmen, “Asian values,” and bureaucratic capitalism were perceived as providing development models superior to free-market democracy. Democratization of the Asian tigers, the bursting of Japan’s economic bubble, and democratic India’s successful economic take-off demonstrated how wrong such assessments were. Freedom has firm roots in Asia: Sun Yat-sen declared the first Chinese republic in 1912, and since 1947 the “idea of India” has been democracy. As one senior Japanese diplomat has put it, China will ultimately have no choice but to embrace democracy because every other political system in human history has been tried — and has failed.

The values of democratic modernity to which people across Asia aspire found their earliest and most enduring expression in the West. To the extent that Asian governments and citizens continue to embrace universal values, shared ideals of human liberty will be an enduring source of security and prosperity connecting Asia and the transatlantic community. A reformist China may one day join this global club of open societies. And if it does not, a coalition of capable and like-minded partners spanning North America, Europe, and Asia should be well-positioned to manage the external manifestations of its authoritarian power until it mellows into a form more responsive to its people’s aspirations, and to the requirements of international cooperation to manage the profound challenges that confront the 21st-century world.