

# When Asia Emerges, How Will the World Change?

by

**Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani**

**Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani:** I must confess that I'm both delighted and terrified to be here. I am delighted because I was first posted to Washington, D.C. in 1982, 22 years ago. Since then I have made many, many friends in the city. I am so happy to see many of you here in this room and to have a chance to meet you again. One thing that John Ikenberry did not mention is that I'm actually completing my 6-year tour of duty in New York in June this year. In July I'll be back in Singapore. One reason why I accepted this invitation is because this is an opportunity to say goodbye to my friends.

The reason I'm terrified is that it is a bit foolhardy to try to predict how the world will change when Asia arises. It is a bit dangerous, but what the hell, I have got nothing to lose; I am here and I am going to try. However, whenever I speak about the future, I remember two points. One is the famous Arab proverb which says, "He who speaks about the future lies even when he tells the truth." It is important to bear this in mind. The other point is a remark by some wise soul that said, "While you cannot predict the future, if you can tell how much snow has fallen in the Himalayas in a particular winter, you can actually make a reasonable prediction of what the flood levels will be in the Ganges six months later, because of the amount of melting snow. This is one dimension in which one can speak about the future with confidence and predict the consequences of what has already happened.

In my case today, I will begin with three fundamental premises that will influence what I'm going to tell you today. The first premise, of course, is that we probably live at a time of the greatest change that anyone has ever seen. I hope that is a given fact of life. In fact, we're not seeing the end of history in any way. What we are seeing is the acceleration of history. Therefore, a reasonable assumption we can make is that a great deal of change is coming.

## **Inevitable Rise of Asia**

The second premise I have—and I hope it is also a reasonable assumption—is that one of the big changes that's going to happen is the rise of Asia. This is inevitable. This is something that one can also confidently predict because, going back to my story about the snow falling in the Himalayas, if you look at the number of young Asians going to universities and look at the number of young Asians entering the job market, you can work out the consequences of having this sudden surge of new Asian brain power in every sphere. You can make a reasonable prediction that Asia's weight is going to rise in the world.

The third premise I have is that if you look at the existing world order and the structures and institutions that we have in place to take care of the world order, you will discover that most of them are not metaphorically, but literally, antiques. They were set up in 1945, in a different time, in a different era. Some want to believe that these an-

tiques of 1945 will carry us for the next 45 to 50 years. I suggest to you that this is not a reasonable assumption. It is more likely that changes will come.

On the basis of these three premises, my own gut feeling is that we can expect a lot of changes to come. There's no way anybody can tell you what specific changes will come but I can try to, at least, suggest where we should be looking at, rather than tell you what will actually happen.

As I begin my remarks, I also want to apologize to Kurt Campbell because I do not have a prepared text. I've been thinking about these ideas for a long time. These are still thoughts in progress. Poor Kurt will have the disadvantage of having to respond to them on the run.

There are five areas I wanted to look at in terms of understanding how the world will change when Asia emerges. The first area is, of course, geopolitics. I chose this area partly because this is Kurt's area of strength. I want to learn from what he's going to say. The second area I want to refer to is the whole area of multilateral institutions and structures that we have in place today, and to see how they will be changed. The third area is concerned with the question—and here I'm going to steal Joe Nye's concept of "soft power"—how will the area of "soft power" be changed by Asia's emergence? The fourth area I want to look at is the cultural area, the Asian renaissance. And the fifth and final area, the one that's most delicate and the one that I will have to handle with some caution, is the development of the Islamic world, and how it will impact on the world. So let me try to go through these five areas and say a few provocative things to try to get the discussion going.

## **GEOPOLITICS:**

In the area of geopolitics, the rise of China is probably a certainty. Other Asian powers are also emerging. We are now much more confident that India, too, will emerge. It's clear that in the field of geopolitics, the emergence of new Asian powers will happen in the next decade or two.

What happens when new powers emerge? I'm going to read to you a few things that were written ten years ago by various American and Western scholars about the impact of the rise of new Asian powers. I want to read these passages to give you a feel of what conventional wisdom is. Then I will try and tell you why I don't agree with this conventional wisdom.

This is what Richard Betts said ten years ago and I quote: "One of the reasons for optimism about peace in Europe is the apparent satisfaction of the great powers with the status quo," while in East Asia there is "an ample pool of festering grievances with more potential for generating conflict than during the Cold War, when bipolarity helped stifle the escalation of parochial disputes."

Now let me quote Aaron Friedberg. This is what he said: "While civil war and ethnic strife will continue for some time to smolder along Europe's peripheries, in the long run it is Asia that seems far more likely to be the cockpit of great-power conflict. The half of a millennium during which Europe was the world's primary generator of war, as well as wealth and knowledge, is coming to a close. But, for better or for worse, Europe's past could be Asia's future."

I want to read one more quote. The reason why I'm reading these quotes to you is to emphasize how deeply embedded the notion is in most Western thinkers' minds that

if great powers arise, there will be conflict. Here, I'm going to quote Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal. After reviewing the potential conflicts in East Asia, they said: "All of these historical legacies remain and, taken together, they suggest political fragmentation and hostility, characterizing the region's international relations. There is little that binds its states and societies together, but much that divides them. Any chance of finding unifying common ground against the West has long since disappeared. As the particular distortions imposed by the Cold War unravel, many historical patterns that were either suppressed or overridden by ideological and superpower rivalry are re-appearing...History, therefore, strongly reinforces the view that Asia is in danger of heading back to the future."

### **No War in Asia Despite Recent Economic Crisis**

I think it is pretty clear from these quotes what is considered conventional wisdom about Asian geopolitics among Western scholars. Let me emphasize that all this was written over ten years ago. In the last ten years, if they were right, we should have had conflict. Fred Bergsten of the Institute for International Economics (IIE) said that the Asian financial crisis was of enormous magnitude. Yet we did not have a conflict. The guns remained silent. Why was that so? Why didn't conflict break out? Why is there no danger today of conflict breaking out in the region, if you accept the conventional wisdom, that when great powers emerge and you have an economic crisis, that's a recipe for war, as the history of Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrated? Yet there has been nothing coming close to war. The reasons, of course, are very complex.

One of the reasons why conflict has been avoided is because the Asians may be making quiet adjustments among them-

selves, watching each other, adapting, changing, adjusting, but not doing it in the sort of public, spectacular fashion that Europeans do. The Asians do not go out and create new treaty bodies like NATO's or the European Union. We don't have structures like them in Asia.

### **Significant Changes in Asian Relationships**

When Western scholars see the absence of structures, they say that it proves that Asians are not adapting, that they are caught in the past. But you don't need new structures to make changes. Other processes can take their place. Indeed, if you observe how the relationships have evolved in the last ten years, it's quite clear there have been significant changes.

Let me give you a couple of examples to illustrate how changes take place. The most dramatic one, of course, is the case of China and Vietnam. As late as 1989-1990, the Sino-Vietnamese border was one of the most militarized borders in the world, a million men on both sides of the border, full of land mines and bristling with tension. Today, I'm told the armies are gone, the land mines are gone, and in place, they've got a flourishing border trade between the two countries.

Now, there was no big bang, no big change, yet something fundamental did change. And how did this happen? I remember as far back as 1986 when I was speaking at Columbia University in a room like this, and there were three Vietnamese diplomats in the room. I was giving a speech on Sino-Vietnamese relations. I said then that when China and Vietnam went to war, that wasn't surprising; that had happened before. When China succeeded in invading Vietnam, that also was not surprising. But what was surprising about 1989 was that after Vietnam

had successfully fought the Chinese army, the Vietnamese did not do what they had done in past history, which was to send emissaries to Beijing to say, “We’re terribly sorry we defeated you in the war, please accept our apologies.” I thought that I was saying something heretical until the three Vietnamese diplomats in the front row nodded in agreement. These were three Vietnamese diplomats who were then representing a country closely allied to the Soviet Union. Vietnam had not yet changed its policy then.

Clearly, there is a rich history in Asia. There will be adjustments in Asia, but they will be on the basis of Asia’s past history. It is also clear that as new powers emerge, the various Asian states will have to learn to adjust to each other. One relationship that I find fascinating is the Sino-Japanese relationship. There has, in fact, almost never been a time when both have been powerful at the same time. But the time is coming when both will be powerful at the same time. Later, as both become more powerful, how the two of them adjust to each other will be fascinating.

### **Lessons of European History**

If you go by the lessons of European history, you have to assume when the two begin to be powerful, they will engage in a zero-sum game, that there’ll be tensions, there’ll be gunboats, there’ll be conflicts, and so on. But it is conceivable that they may make some adjustments within their own cultural parameters. That is something, frankly, that those of us who are outside may not be able to understand. When the two of them meet each other and they look at each other face to face, they will begin to adjust and to decide within their hierarchically led world views who is number one and who is number two. It’s a very delicate game that will be played. They will show it

in the symbolic gestures, in their various moves. These adjustments will happen quietly without any overt events taking place on the surface.

You can see this happening to some extent already in the ASEAN Plus Three summits that are held every year. When the first ASEAN Plus Three summit was held four or five years ago, I can tell you that when the three Northeast Asian leaders came from China, Japan and Korea to a room full of Asian leaders, there was an incredible amount of discomfort. They had never met among each other. They rarely talked to each other as a group. Then they came the second year, they came third year, they came a fourth year, and I think by the third or fourth year they started to spin off and began to meet among themselves. They did not need to have the ASEAN presence to meet among themselves. And this process of them talking to each other has taken off. Again, it happened quietly, without any big events, without any fanfare.

The point I’m making to you is that if you try to judge Asia’s future purely on the basis of what happened in 19<sup>th</sup> century or 20<sup>th</sup> century European history, you may end up not understanding or anticipating the sort of changes that will come in Asia. This doesn’t mean, by the way, that there will be no rivalry or competition. All of that will continue, but the forms in which they will compete will be quite different.

### **U.S. Presence Is Major Reason for Asian Stability**

There is also one important qualifying point I need to make here to illustrate why it is not easy to give black and white answers. One major reason for the continuing stability in the Asia–Pacific region is the huge American presence. That huge American presence does play a very important role: It

is the single most important reason for stability in the region.

The crucial point here is that there is no push in the region to get rid of the American presence. Indeed, each of the parties, for their own reasons, have arrived at the conclusion that perhaps we should encourage the United States to stay because the United States' presence plays a role like the cork in the bottle preventing some genies from appearing from the bottle. For example, if the American presence disappeared, it would force Japan to rearm. If Japan rearms, that would be bad for the region and for the world. Hence, the American presence also plays a role in the complex Asian game. Here you have American military power, American superpower presence and an Asian game going on. All of these factors are affecting each other to work towards the stabilization of the region and therefore ensure that what happened in Europe in the past will not happen in that area.

#### **MULTILATERAL STRUCTURES:**

Let me turn to an area that is completely different, the multilateral structures of the world. Let me give two examples to illustrate the nature of the problems we face. I am going to refer to the UN Security Council and the International Monetary Fund. I'm choosing them as examples because they are, in real terms, the two most powerful multilateral institutions that we have. The Security Council is powerful because it has the right to mandate the use of force. It also deploys peacekeeping forces and has a concrete impact on the ground. Speaking in Washington D.C., I don't have to describe why the IMF is powerful; you probably know this better than I do.

#### **Role of International Institutions**

If you look at the role of these institutions—and here I'm going to apologize for

descending to a low level of simplicity—the essential points to note are the reasons for their creation. One of the most important reasons why they were created was that the world leaders then felt that, in the area of peace and security for the Security Council, and in the area of international monetary stability for the IMF, we needed something similar to a fire department to take care of crises, to respond to them. Both the UNSC and the IMF will be judged by their ability to respond impartially and effectively to crises. Unfortunately, there are real questions about their performance.

Most fire departments in any city react automatically whenever a fire emerges. In New York City, for example, if a fire breaks out in Park Avenue, or a fire breaks out in Harlem or the Bronx, the fire department comes out automatically. But the record of the Security Council shows that it only responds when the interests of the rich and powerful in Park Avenue are affected, and not when the interests of the poor are affected. This has been a structural flaw of the Security Council. To some extent—although here I'm treading on somewhat more dangerous grounds since I am not a monetary expert—I would say that the same structural flaw also affects the International Monetary Fund. It sometimes appears more concerned with the interests of the creditor nations than the interests of the countries affected in a financial crisis. Let me also say in passing that a lot of questions remain in East Asia about the role that the IMF played in the Asian financial crisis. This explains a lot of the questioning in Asia about these multilateral institutions.

#### **Inevitable Collisions Between Institutions and New Powers**

So what's the problem here? The problem here is that when these institutions respond to the interests of the powerful, they re-

spond to the interests of those who were powerful in 1945 and do not necessarily respond to the interests of those who are powerful in the year 2005. So far, there has been no major collision between these two institutions and the rise of new powers, but such a collision will inevitably come at some point in time. If you have institutions that continue to respond to the great powers of the past and not to the great powers of the future, it is inevitable that change has to take place in these two institutions. But I also have some bad news for you: change will be very difficult in these institutions.

Let me just illustrate why change is very difficult, from the case of the Security Council. The first reason is that—and here I hope Kurt will comment on this—change comes only when the greatest power of the day decides that it is in its interest to change the organization. Even though the United States is on record as having officially said that it is in favor of changing the composition of the Security Council, the general understanding within UN corridors is that the United States doesn't want change. In private, American diplomats tell me that it is hard enough having to deal with fourteen other countries, let's say on the Iraq question, while the U.S. is much worse off when it has to deal with twenty members, or twenty five members. Hence, if the greatest power of the day doesn't want to see change, it freezes an organization.

The second reason why change is very difficult in the Security Council is that for every country that wants to come in and believes that it has the right to permanent membership, there is another country which believes it has an equal claim. For every India there is a Pakistan that says, "Why not me?" For every Brazil that wants to come in, there's an Argentina that says, "Why not me?" For every Germany that wants to

come in, there's Italy and Spain which say, "Why not me?" Let me also quote a former Italian Ambassador to the U.N. who said, "What's so special about Germany? We lost the war, too." Hence, you have a gridlock situation.

The third reason why change is difficult is that when the U.N. charter was written in 1945, even though it was supposed to be a dynamic new institution, the five permanent members, the United States, the then Soviet Union, China, UK and France, decided that they could agree in principle to any change in the U.N. charter, as long as they had the right to veto any change. It's very clear that no current veto-bearing member of the Security Council is going to voluntarily step down and give up its place in the Security Council. That creates another logjam.

The reason why I point out the difficulties of changing these institutions is to illustrate the point that if you see the world changing so fast—you see new powers emerging and see a Council that is stuck in the past—you begin to understand why, when we look ahead to the future at large, there will be tensions and difficulties, because the 1945 institutions, at some point, will have to give way to new realities. That's one area of change that the world has to adjust to.

#### **SOFT POWER:**

Let me now turn very quickly to the other areas. They are much more fuzzy and much harder to get into. The third area will focus on soft power. Let us begin with international news reporting. Most of us in this room travel a great deal. We find ourselves in hotel rooms in Johannesburg, in Buenos Aires, in Sydney, and in Tokyo. When we want to stay in touch with the world, we turn on the TV sets in our room. We expect to see CNN International, BBC world news. For newspapers, we pick up the IHT, we

pick up the *Wall Street Journal* and we assume that this is how you monitor what is happening in the world.

There are good reasons why the international media is completely Western. The news organizations that deliver these news media to us are excellent, they are wonderful; they are world-class and they have achieved levels of competence and objectivity that are very hard to re-create anew. Yet, at the same time—and I hope this is not too controversial a point—all the examples that I gave are all culture bound. They are written by people with one set of eyes describing the world. We would like to believe that this is the only set of eyes with which to look at the world, but this, too, will have to change.

#### **Asians Feel Cultural Condescension from Western Media**

I cannot tell you how exactly Asia will change the news media universe, what news organizations will emerge, where the challenge will come from. But if you look in terms of the consumers, the largest growth in consumers for these kind of news products will come from Asia. Surely, at some point, these consumers from Asia will say, “Hang on a second, why are we looking at the world through the eyes of New York, or Washington, or London? When are we going to see the world through our own eyes?” One point I’m going to make about the West may sound politically incorrect, but it is important for me to register it so that you know some of the sentiments I hear when I travel in Asia. When I read some of the editorials in the Western media, or some of the commentaries, especially those focused on Asia, there’s no doubt that the Asians feel a great deal of cultural condescension coming through in these journals and newspapers. I want to register this point so you know, in a sense, where the

seeds of change are going to come from. At some point, all these new Asian consumers will get tired of this cultural condescension and say it’s time for us to also have our say.

#### **THE ASIAN RENAISSANCE:**

Let me next talk about the Asian renaissance. In the world of ideas, in terms of the ideas that have transformed the world in the last 50 years, there can be absolutely no doubt that all these ideas have come from the West. In a sense, the entire political and economic infrastructure of the world is built on Western ideas. For those who have lived outside the West, we should be grateful that such a political and economic infrastructure was created, because it has enabled not just Western societies to thrive, but also enabled other societies to thrive, including Asian societies.

#### **New Conversations within Asia**

However, while this infrastructure has brought up the Asian societies, at some point this one-way street of ideas will have to transform itself and become a two-way street of ideas. Again, I can see this coming. I cannot tell you precisely how it’s going to come, or where it’s going to come from, but it is something that is coming. What will make it more interesting is that it will not just be the case of an Asian bloc talking to the West; within Asia itself there will be new conversations. Different parts of Asia have, frankly, been caught in silos for the last hundred years. They are going to emerge from their silos and get to know each other.

Let me just give two examples. If you look at the density of interaction, human interaction, visitors, and so on within China and India, it’s been remarkably low, partly because of the colonial period, partly because there were other preoccupations. But if you go back 500 years or 2,000 years ago, there

were lots of cultural exchanges that took place. The Buddhism that went to China came from India, but the colonial period came and, in a sense, sliced up Asia. Until today, these Asian societies haven't really overcome the colonial divisions. But if you go today to Asia and observe the travel pattern, I think you'll begin to see signs of new travel patterns emerging. The most obvious one is the number of Chinese tourists, for example, coming to Southeast Asia. This is a new phenomenon that hasn't happened before. This sort of spillover of one Asian society to another Asian society is another new kind of change that we will see and it will also affect the chemistry of the region.

### **THE ISLAMIC WORLD:**

Let me come very quickly to the most delicate and difficult point I want to discuss, which is, of course, the state of the Islamic world. And as you know there are far more Muslims in Asia than in any part of the world. In fact, the three biggest Muslim societies are in Asia, in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Clearly, all these societies want to succeed and want to modernize, and, as we all know, they are facing difficulties. The challenge for them is deciding where they go from here. If you look, for example, at the discussions in Europe, in North America, about how to transform the Islamic societies, you get these manifestos, these visions, that we shall create a democratic Middle East and we shall replicate liberal democratic societies in the Middle East. The assumption is that you can take a successful Western pattern of development, parachute it into the Islamic world, and succeed in transforming the societies.

### **Middle East Societies Should Look to East Asia**

I suggest to you that you could instead take the same Middle Eastern societies, take

their scholars, and take their young minds and say to them, "Don't come to the West, go to East Asia. Go and see what East Asia has done and see whether you can learn from them." If that happens, the likelihood of success is much, much greater. Because even though there are cultural differences, there are also cultural affinities in Asia. If young Muslims travel and see the success of China, see the success of India or some Southeast Asian societies, these success stories are more likely to have a positive impact on the Islamic world. That will hopefully be a positive result of the rise of East Asia.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that while I've touched on many different strands to make the point, nobody can tell precisely what changes are going to come, but it is also clear that great changes will happen for certain in the next ten to fifteen years. My final point, I must confess, may be a bit of a commercial. I'm going back to Singapore soon. If you do want to have a good ring-side view of what's happening in Asia, consider coming to Singapore. I make this point because I remember a conversation some time ago with a friend of mine, Stanley Roth. Many of you know him. When we were discussing Singapore, he said to me, "I tell my friends not to go to Singapore." So I said, "Why?" He said, "Singapore is just a sterile, Western outpost. It's just a bit of the West in Asia."

That may be a fair point, but if you look in terms of the rising new countries, rising new forces, whether in China or India, or even the Islamic world, the one place where these three cultural strands come together and live very closely together is in Singapore. If you want to get a sense or feel for how these cultural strands will come together eventually in Asia, maybe Singapore

might give you a glimpse of Asia's future. Thank you.

**Kurt Campbell:** Thank you very much, Ambassador. I want to begin quickly with an anecdote that happened to me just a couple of weeks ago, and I'll try to disguise it a little bit, but give it to you as straight as I can. A very dear friend of mine, who is from an Asian foreign ministry and is now in Washington, called the other day and said, "Oh, Kurt, it's been a long time since we've talked, a couple of years, but I just want to be in touch with you. We've been noticing that, you know, we have completely discounted the Democrats, and we didn't think there was any chance they'd come back. In fact, we really don't like them very much. We are very happy with the Bush administration, but we noticed that the Democrats are sort of back, so we'd like to get to know some of these Democrats that might be, God forbid, in a position of potential importance. What I'd like to do is work with you so that we can have some sort of meeting, and I could bring people from the embassy. We'll do it outside of the embassy and we'll sort of hustle you in, because we wouldn't want anyone in the administration to see that we're actually meeting with Democrats. And we'd like to get to know you and build strong relations of trust, so if you do come to power, it will be great. But if not, hopefully the Bush administration will never find out, because you know these guys are mean, and they'll all retaliate against us. What do you say?"

#### **Many Commonalities between Asian, U.S. and European Power Dynamics**

And I just wanted to point out to all our Asian friends that I think there is a view somehow that with Asia's rise will come enormous subtlety, right? I would just point out that, at least in my experience over the years—and I am not an expert on Asia—I

think Asians in many respects can match the United States step-for-step without being subtle. So when we think about the rise of Asia, I think, rather, I like what the ambassador had to say on many levels, but I think there is a view that we're dealing with power dimensions and culture in Asia that somehow sets it apart from other regions and other places. And basically, my experience suggests that there are a lot of commonalities between Asia, the United States and Europe. There are many differences as well, but in power dynamics, I have been more struck by the commonalities than the differences.

#### **Emerging Asia Will Likely Happen in the Future**

I want to compliment John again on this wonderful series; I learn more and enjoy this group that comes together to interact more than anything else that goes on in Washington of its kind. When I looked at the topic, specifically, "When Asia emerges, How Will the World Change," what I tried to think about was: what do we know so far about this topic? And I would say, just in thinking about it over the last 30 years, that we've had a couple of false starts, what I would call "mini-arrivals," where it looked like we were on the verge of some dramatic new period in which an Asian country or region was about to dominate global politics. Now, most of these periods are short-lived, but I think we can learn a little bit from each of them, and they will help inform us about a situation that we think might happen, and I think all of us believe will likely happen in the future.

I would suggest that the first period—again, in the last 30 or so years—was sort of in the 1980s and into the early 1990s, which was associated with the idea of Japan's rise, Japan's dominance. And I think all of us have a book gathering dust on our shelves

at home that is entitled *The Coming Conflict with Japan*, which suggests that the United States and Japan were on a collision course and that we were going to war. It's sort of laughable now, but that was a major strategic worry. In fact, if you look at the early documents that were written in the so-called American Predominance Working Group at the Pentagon headed by Paul Wolfowitz in 1991-1992, what people don't understand is that this concept has been enshrined in the National Security document, which is really about anticipating the possible rise of China. China was only a glimmer in people's eyes a decade and a half ago.

What really animated the then neoconservatives, the people who were thinking about American primacy, was the challenge potentially posed by a newly unified Germany and Japan. That was going to be the real worry: how are we going to maintain American dominance facing those kinds of challenges? Obviously the Japanese challenge was short-lived, at least in the idea that Japan was number one, and if we were going to sort of give it a time period, it was probably less than a decade.

#### **ASEAN Previously Thought to Be Dominant Driving Feature of Asia**

I think a second period I would suggest—on which maybe the ambassador would disagree with me—is a period of about five or six years where there was a profound belief that somehow ASEAN had figured out the code and that we could sustain 8, 9, 10% growth rates off into the future. So this is in the sort of early 1990s, and that ASEAN was going to be the dominant driving feature of Asia, and that it would interpret China's rise. It would deal with bringing the United States into the region in a careful way. It would also deal with the potential problems associated with Japan as well. And again, I think in that period, which was

dominated by interesting dialogues about Asian values—something we have actually heard very little about since that time—there was a real sense of “We've won, we are proceeding ahead, we are the future.”

I think there was actually a brief period between about 1999 and about 2001 in which there was a belief among the strategic cognizance here in the United States that the next dominant Asian power would be the United States: the United States was finally, after many false starts, beginning to redirect our strategic viewpoint away from Europe and more towards Asia. I think if you look back at some of the early documents of the Bush team—the Balkans and those people that were helping then Governor Bush think about the world—he was thinking about Asia as the next great game, really the next focus. Then all the major challenges to peace and stability really, for the first time in modern history, were now found in Asia, not in Europe. In fact, it was inconceivable that a conflict could start and then spur globally in Europe. Again, this was completely different than along traditional potential problems in Europe; Asia was where the action was going to be, and the United States was going to be the dominant figure and player in that region.

#### **U.S. Has Been Almost Completely Focused Away from Asia**

Now, I would argue generally that the last three years have suggested something quite different, and I think what's most interesting is that the United States has been preoccupied away from Asia. Except for periodic sort of interventions and incursions, the United States has been almost completely focused away from Asia. I think that is actually an interesting thing and it does not receive as much attention, but it is actually quite obvious when you spend time in Asia, because basically we are entering a

rise of Asia—and again, it’s hard to know whether this is going to be another sort of mini-rise, or if, in fact, this is the real thing.

Anyone who spends any time in Asia today recognizes that the great power of Asia is not the United States. By any aggregate measurements the United States’ power is great, in terms of our military power, our ability to influence and twist arms, and our very real, demonstrable hard power. But I would argue that the subtle power—it’s really not soft power per se, but it’s the subtle power, the power that you see behind the scenes—is almost exclusively exercised by China right now. I think it’s really quite astonishing, and I think that has been the most amazing development of the last couple of years.

I told this story once or twice before. I’m going to have to tell it quickly, about being in a meeting several years ago with Chinese friends at Monterey with the white wine set. These are the people that really wanted to get along with China, really want to have a good relationship with China. The Chinese foreign ministry guy completely misunderstood the sort of ambiance of the meeting, and so began by essentially screaming at the top of his lungs at this group about some perfidy associated with Taiwan or America and Germany, or just about us being generally bad guys.

And during the discussion he sort of hit a bottle of wine and it went everywhere, and glass was everywhere. He didn’t even miss a beat, just kept going on and on, and I was the next person speaking and was hearing myself think, “That’s what we will always have. There is a nails on blackboard quality to Chinese diplomacy that will undermine their ultimate ability to influence decisions on the ground in Asia.”

Skipping just a couple of years forward, last summer I was in a meeting, a very good session with lots of Asians there, including very high level Chinese officials, and we were grateful. Obviously, folks in the administration were extremely busy—they don’t really have time to get out—but we got a very influential person from the Defense Policy Board who could spend at least a few minutes with us before going off.

So he came in, stopped to talk, sat down, and explained why it’s so great to be a superpower: because you can have your cake and you can eat it, and then you can take your fork and reach across the table and you can eat someone else’s cake, and they are going to be quiet and watch because you’ve got a big fork. And then you can eat someone else’s cake, then eat everyone else’s cake and eat your own, and then you can get up and leave, “As I’m going to do,” he said. So he explained how great it is to be a dominant American power, then got up and left.

The Asians in the room were just in shock. This is just a classic example of a powerful foreign policy but no diplomacy. This is a sort of hallmark of the United States right now. And this was then immediately followed by Chinese diplomat friends who said, “It’s wonderful to be here with you because I really came to listen. I want to listen to you about how China can arrive and work with you in the global environment to make sure that we understand your interests and concerns.” I thought, “My God, we’ve completely flipped places!”

### **China’s Successful Arrival on the International Scene**

I would suggest to you that, at least in the last couple of years, what we’ve seen is a very successful—both active and sort of passive—arrival of China on the interna-

tional scene. The question is going to be: how? And so, the following comments are my thoughts, if I had to suggest from these four things, these four different periods, what we think we've learned from each of them, taken together. The first thing I would say about each of them is that there is a little bit of an overreach and a bubble associated with each of them, or hubris. So even though we think it's hubris almost exclusively associated with the United States, I actually think there is a headiness associated with the sense that they're prevailing. You have seen this play out in Japan and Southeast Asia with the United States, and with China as well, though it's more carefully shrouded.

### **Growing Ambivalence about the United States in China**

A second issue, I think, suggests that beneath the surface there is some very real and also inevitable tension associated with the relationship with the United States. And although the ambassador laid out what I would agree is a relationship that requires interactive quality, and there is a sort of mutual reliance, I think underlying that is some very deep and probably growing ambivalence about the United States in many dimensions: culturally, politically, strategically. If anything, those dimensions of ambivalence will likely continue. I think Democrats have allowed themselves a belief—which I think is an illusion—that somehow, with the regime change in Washington, this process will be reversed. That is not the case. I think much of this structure will continue, although you can mitigate it around the edges.

The other issue that I think is interesting is that if you look at the machinery that is then developed in Asia as a whole—I agree with the ambassador, there is not much of it—what is there is associated with the ASEAN

Regional Forum. Much of that I would also suggest, although you talked about the last decade, and people normally think about that associated with Japan. But I would say that Southeast Asians missed an incredible opportunity to put an imprint on some machinery in the 1990s, to think a little bit more about how to govern and interact among the great powers.

I think for a variety of reasons they didn't want to make an imprint, or chose not to, so that now it will be up to China. And something that is most astonishing is how confident and how forward-leaning Chinese diplomats are in the multilateral arena. The most interesting proposals that have come forward in the last couple of months—about Defense Ministerial meetings, about some confidence and security-building initiatives, about a variety of other things in the health arena in the last couple of years—have actually come from China, not the United States, not Southeast Asia and not Japan.

### **Chinese Realize Multilateralism Is Their Vehicle to Extend Dominance in Asia**

And so I actually think there was this previous belief that China was uncomfortable with multilateralism. I think they have well appreciated that multilateralism will be their vehicle to extend dominance in Asia as a whole. And while Southeast Asia created the hardware, it will be up to China to create the software to move forward.

I also think there are just two other points, and then I'll be quiet. I also agree that one of the things we're going to see soon is the rise of real strategic thinking. I think the reality is that you are right: you pick up any *Foreign Affairs* or any major American journal and you are shocked at the lack of real Asian voices. And what's interesting is that, except for a few of what you would

call the sort of usual suspects who appear, there are remarkably few new strategic writers appearing on the Asian scene. I think that is about to change, and change dramatically.

One of the things that I'm struck by in China is also in Japan and Korea, by the way: that there is a new generation of people who are much more explicit in their writings and assumptions about power and about how Asia functions both internally, strategically and with the United States. Less, I think, they believe in implicit understandings, or that the rules and the mechanisms of power somehow have been thrown out and are not applicable in Asia as a whole. I actually believe that process will begin rather dramatically. I believe that it will also be led by aggressively strategic thinkers from China.

The best young strategic thinkers I've interacted with over the last ten years are in China. And their ability to interact toe-to-toe with Americans, Singaporeans, Japanese or others is really quite astonishing, and to see that of late really should make Americans think a little bit about how we think of the region as a whole.

### **U.S. Needs Help from Asia to Remake the Middle East**

I don't have anything to add to what the ambassador said about the Islamic issue, and I think it is enormously important. There was a major conference last summer about this American desire to remake the Middle East. What we were left with is that we did not have the tools, the capability, the knowledge or the public consensus to enter into an intergenerational sort of foreign policy challenge to remake the Middle East. We were sort of destined from failure at the outset, and if anything, more than anything, we are going to need help to even begin this

process. And I think that help is most likely to come from Asia, not from Europe.

I think all of you or some of you have spent time in Europe. One of the funny things about going to Europe is that it's almost like an anthropological experience: you're sitting in a meeting and you're thinking to yourself, "These people are our allies? I mean, we actually worked with these people?" It's in the level of vitriol, nastiness and insults, back and forth between the transatlantic side. It's just astonishing, and I think it's actually going to be very, very difficult to get an agreement, even in the short term, about a common purpose to do this great sort of nation building.

It's really not a region building or civilization building experience, or an experiment in the Middle East. I think what the Bush administration needs to do is to look more to Asia for assistance rather than to Europe. What is interesting is that very little has been done today on this, and I would agree with the ambassador very much.

The last thing that I would ask is how long is this really going to go on without the United States really understanding what's going on? One of the things that's interesting about the United States is that our span of consciousness is relatively small. When was the last time that you heard any really senior official talk in an interesting way about Asia?

To the extent that we are engaged in Asia, it is largely to get Asia's thinking about an out-of-area problem like Afghanistan or Iraq, which is in itself a very interesting dynamic that the first vehicle for out-of-area activity and thinking has been driven by the United States. Now, where that will end up remains to be seen. But what's interesting is that if you look on September 10, 2001,

there was really this belief that this is where we better gear up, everyone had to study Chinese, and we need the capability to understand cross Strait balances.

### **U.S. Has Very Little Strategic Awareness of Asian Developments**

And then there was a major move: when you look at government, it's like artillery lines, and all the agency guys are moving, trying to bolster up and understand more about these issues. Then suddenly September 11 took down all the barricades and now the focus is on the Middle East and Southeast Asia. There is very little strategic awareness about these developments that are taking place in Asia. And the question is: how long will this go on without the United States appreciating it, at a deep, strategic level? Thank you.

### **Q&A**

**John Ikenberry:** I know the ambassador would love to respond immediately to Kurt's remarks, but I think we could hold his comments and fold them into discussion with the audience, so raise your hand and identify yourself and we'll start the conversation.

**Questioner:** Thank you very much for describing these complex issues. But to understand these complex issues or emergent traditions or emergent cultural differences, I wonder if you can subscribe to two different methodologies to understand all these issues. One methodology is two-dimensional, the basic views of history, its rise and fall. And then here goes probably a dialectical approach, with all the dynamic interaction and movement on to another stage. I wonder which methodology is most appropriate to understand what you're describing in all these? I'm just thinking in terms of doing research on where the methodology

should stay, in terms of understanding dynamic interaction. Is the dialectical approach more appropriate, or is it more of a two-dimensional foreign civilization's rise and fall? I wonder if you can comment on this.

**Mahbubani:** It's not an easy one to answer, but your question suggests to me how the world will change. When we have conversations on the future, and when we look for models to explain the future, we assume that it has to be a choice of one of two Western models. I don't speak Chinese unfortunately. I wish I did. When the Chinese look at the world, their world view precedes Toynbee and Hegel. A thousand years ago, a thousand five hundred years ago, patterns of relationships were developed between China and its neighbors. China will go back to its own history. It will rediscover its history and its traditional relationships in the same way that other neighbors of China will also discover their old relationships with China.

So it may not be any kind of Western dialectic or Western pattern that will influence the relations between Asian states. The difficulty we have in trying to understand these processes is that all these changes are happening very quietly. The Chinese will not talk about it. I am glad to hear from Kurt that the Chinese are now speaking more openly. That's good, because I hope they will not do what the Japanese did. When the Japanese became very powerful, they practiced the art of *honne* and *tatamae*. Most of the time when they met with Western audiences, they tried to figure out what the West would like to hear. They would then tell the West what the West wanted to hear. But what they really thought, they kept to themselves. In the same way, many Asians still continue to be very discreet about their thought patterns. Eventually, it's going to

change. My short answer to your question is that you'll have to go beyond Toynbee and Hegel.

**Ikenberry:** Could I just follow up on that? There's a little bit of distinction between the ambassador and Kurt Campbell on how Asia, as it rises, interacts with the West in some ways. I thought the ambassador was, in effect, saying that the process is most likely going to be a kind of integration and a kind of power sharing dynamic. In effect, this is kind of like having new members of the board but being in the same company, not a rising region attempting to create his own company. So this implies integration, power sharing and shifted influence, but really I'm somewhat optimistic about the ability of this larger order to be a combined order. After all, as you said quite strongly, the U.S. is still terribly important for security stability in the region.

Kurt seems to have a little bit more of a rising China, with the U.S. not fully aware of the implications, the implications being a kind of response to a new power center that may be much more of a challenge—as of yet, a not fully appreciated challenge. I'm just wondering whether those two characterizations are correct, and how you might go beyond those different images.

**Mahbubani:** By the way, I should explain, I'm not speaking as the ambassador; I'm speaking as Kishore Mahbubani. I'm not sure whether the Singapore Government will like all the things that I've said here today. So, I'm actually very glad that Kurt described East Asia as he saw it for the last ten or fifteen years, because it is actually very useful to have different mental maps. From my perspective, I look at the events of the last ten or fifteen years as just ripples. These are ripples that will come, ripples that will go, but these are not the ripples

that will tell you where the tidal shifts are coming from. The big tidal shifts are happening below the ripples, and you will not get to understand them through the ripples on the surface.

### **China Realizes Its Emergence Concerns the United States**

One point that I completely agree with Kurt on is the brilliance of Chinese diplomacy in the last three years. The Chinese have realized that China's emergence will trouble the United States. You don't have to be a genius to arrive at this conclusion. Therefore, what the Chinese tried to do was to anticipate that by buying insurance policies. China has sought insurance policies by reaching out to every neighbor it has and is sometimes making painful adjustments to come to a good relationship with its neighbors. Vis-à-vis Southeast Asia, the Chinese have been visionary. If I had come here five years ago and told you that the Communist Party of China was going to propose a free trade agreement between China and Southeast Asia, you would have laughed at me. But that is what has happened. The way they handled the SARS outbreak and their capacity to come forward to tell the Asians how sorry they were went down very well. The Chinese message was: let us work together, we must find a solution. They are now prepared to do things that they never did before.

But the Chinese time horizon is different from ours. They are not thinking of what happened in the last five to ten years. They feel that they've wasted two centuries and suffered hundreds of years of humiliation. Now they feel that their moment is coming. They can finally make it, but they are also aware that attempts will be made to trip them up. They are going to try to anticipate how they'll be tripped up and they're trying to deal with that, but it's against the back-

drop of 150 years of history, not over the last ten years, because a decade is no big deal to them.

One final point that I should mention here. I am trying very hard to understand how it is that you can have in the United States the largest pools of information—I mean, just look at this building, the Carnegie Endowment—and all the resources, tremendous knowledge and writings, and so on and so forth, and yet from time to time the United States really cannot see the big changes that are coming.

Did I mention that I'm trying to write a book, which is more than halfway through, on America and the world? The theme is very simple. America has done more than any other country to change the world, and frankly to change the world for the better. And yet America paradoxically is one of the countries least prepared to handle the world that it has changed. Asia is one area where you can see this clearly. Frankly, the other area is the Islamic world and what the United States is doing down there. On this point, there are very large question marks coming up for us.

**Campbell:** I like what the ambassador said about the ripples and tides. But the reality is that it hides and disguises something, which is that all Asians thought that these ripples were the big waves. But I think the reality is different. I think there is the sense that some of these developments really shaped strategic thinking for short periods of time. That would be the first point.

### **China Is Increasingly Focused on Short-term Goals**

The second is, I do believe that there is a mistaken belief that somehow China has this extraordinarily long-term view about everything. I think that's nonsense. When I

deal with Chinese officials, I think they are increasingly focused on very short-term goals and gains, and I think that is the modern phenomena associated with globalization and societies that have to be increasingly responsive, so I think that China is more impatient than many of us believe. That would be the second point.

The third and the most interesting thing about China that I think many of us believe is that China's real strategic goals have not changed; their tactics have changed, but underneath it maybe they remain the same. I think many Chinese might entertain that belief. I actually think it may be the case that China has enduring tactics that will actually deeply influence their strategy. So although they believe they're taking these tactical changes, I think it will fundamentally shift the way that they are doing business.

So they're going to find out, wake up fifteen or twenty years from now, and realize that they don't have some of the options that they thought they had. They'll in fact realize that, "Oh, my god, we woke up and we have become our parents. We are responsible members of the international community deeply wedded to the status quo."

**Questioner:** I want to take a departure point from what Kurt said towards the end. He said that the United States should really look to Asia for more support rather than Europe. That would mean that the United States finally will have recognized Asia as a full partner rather than a subservient partner, rather than perhaps even half of one-quarter of a partner. And having myself spent most of my professional life in the U.S. government, much of which is in foreign affairs, I don't think I will hold my breath for this to happen. I don't think it will happen in my lifetime.

So I would like to ask Ambassador Mahubani a question. I've been curious: everybody knows about this disagreement or spat between the United States and our European partners or alliance partners, the Transatlantic flak, if you will. So why hasn't Asia taken advantage of this, to position itself as a region, as individual countries, geopolitically?

**Mahubani:** Well, the difficulty with speaking about Asia is that there is not one Asian voice; there are many Asian voices. However, I am also trying to suggest that underneath these many voices there are some common themes that run through them. I would say that since 9/11, the Asian states have benefited a great deal from the change in the international strategic environment. Some of it could be due to luck, right? Sometimes, you're just lucky.

Some of it, I think, is due to careful positioning. Look at just one little theatre, the Security Council. In the build-up to the Iraq war, the French and Germans were sending diplomats to sit outside the Bulgarian foreign minister's room. As the American ambassador left, the French and German ambassadors would walk in to speak to the same foreign minister, "Hey, remember you are also a European." China has never engaged in that kind of contest.

Frankly, China demonstrated in the six months before the Iraq war that even though it could not support the war, it was very careful not to go out there and oppose it. And before the war and after the war, in terms of what it did, many in the administration found very helpful.

So there has been a lot of careful diplomacy behind the scenes. If you look at where we were in March-April 2001—after the downing of the spy plane in Hainan—and where

we are today, it has been a remarkable change. Some of it may be due to luck, but a lot of it is due to efforts under the surface. This is like a duck crossing the lake. You see the duck moving very smoothly, but you don't see its feet paddling away ferociously beneath the surface.

**Campbell:** I'd actually disagree with your premise. I think several Asian countries have very, very effectively created almost completely new and different relations with the United States, and I would put on that list Japan, Singapore, Australia, the Philippines and China. If you think of India as a growing region, then those six countries are now almost all punching well above their weight, all working much more closely with the United States than probably at any time in our history.

**Questioner:** I have two related questions. One is that there is a contrast between Kurt's point, that even if the United States reengages and stops defaulting in Asia, we can only change things on the margins because there are structural things that are happening in China's rise, and all of that. And it contrasts with your point, ambassador, that every country in Asia virtually has a keen interest in having us there and present, whether as a counterweight or for whatever other reasons; I think you went as far as to say that the United States is the most important stabilizing force. I'm not saying that there's a contradiction between these two, but I'd be interested in any comments on that.

And the second related issue is that I'm not aware that Asians are more united than Europeans. The opposite may be the case. We're looking at how you folks have painted us, how you've given us not just a snapshot, but a kind of movie that's moving forward. But if there's one thing that is certain

it is that that, too, will change, and that as countries rise they will come into different kinds of relationships and conflict even a bit, but not exactly the same as Europeans did. And so, we cannot go from where we are today and the changes that have taken place and assume that everything will move in a certain direction in Asia, with China as the lead power, while the United States increasingly descends. It's the dynamics that I'm looking for internally in Asia. I'd appreciate it if you would comment on either or both.

**Ikenberry:** Could I tack on a question to the first part of that? The question would be, is the following situation stable: a situation where countries inside East Asia are increasingly looking to China for their economic future, but remain looking at America for their security future, increasingly, in effect, cutting across those two great powers, seeing the future economically in one and clinging to the other for security reasons. Is that a stable situation over the next 20 or 30 years?

**Mahbubani:** I would say that these are, frankly, very tough questions. A couple of points. The reason why I read out all the quotes from the Western scholars earlier was because of their assumption that it always has to be a zero-sum game. That is their assumption. But it is also conceivable—although it may not necessarily happen—that you could have win-win formulas for everybody. Look at the fundamental goals of these societies. What is the fundamental goal of China? To succeed and become a modern power, and to transform its society. China's main preoccupation has to be with its internal political evolution. They have been preoccupied with this for 30-40 or 50 years.

### **China Focused on Internal Issues**

So while they are preoccupied with their internal political evolution, they don't want to get involved in external conflicts. They don't want to deal with external problems. My sense is that they will bob and weave and bend and adjust so as to keep all the relationships around them peaceful. That also gives an opportunity for all of China's neighbors to grow with China. It doesn't necessarily mean that everything is wonderful with China. But there are no fundamental, conflicting long-term goals that are going to push us into conflict. In fact, all of us can actually work together and create an environment where we can all succeed. The big question mark is the U.S.-China relationship. Here, from China's point of view, the Chinese goal is to buy time, be it five years, ten years, fifteen years, or twenty years, plus avoid any kind of conflict with the United States, because if you have a conflict, China will suffer.

The real question here is how the United States will handle the rise of China. So far, on balance you can say that the United States has handled China, with ups and downs, relatively well. If we can preserve stability over the next 10-20 years, then we may not have the sort of conflicts that would seem to be inevitable when you have these great changes.

On your point about Asian states not being united, you are right. They have very, very different points of view. If you read all the conventional wisdom, you must believe that within five years or 10 years there will be conflicts among Asian states. But if my assumptions are right, in terms of how the minds of Asian policy makers are thinking, my own prediction is that there will be no conflict because that is not what they want. Each one of them has other priorities. For

the sake of these other priorities, they will find ways and means of reducing or avoiding conflict.

**Questioner:** Very quickly, I have a question on institutions. Kishore, you mentioned progress that could be made without institutions and so there's a more informal way, but Kurt mentioned that ASEAN sort of missed an opportunity to establish machinery. That is an issue that comes up in looking at Asia, whether Asia collectively can acquire a stronger voice in the world without institutions, and if there is an Asian way, so to speak, around the need for institutions or instead of institutions. I'd like to hear both of you on that one.

#### **Dream Scenario in Southeast Asia**

**Mahbubani:** My response to Kurt's point of view is that for the one or two years after the Asian financial crisis, all that the Asian countries could think about was how they were going to survive. They had no time for institution building. They were focused on day-to-day survival. At the height of the financial crisis, some of us in Southeast Asia expected many Asian institutions to crack and break up in those two or three years. It has come as a remarkable surprise that all these institutions have held up well and, indeed, some new processes are beginning.

Certainly, the ASEAN Plus-3 process has worked out much better than any of us anticipated. The ASEAN-India summit has also turned out much better than we thought. From ASEAN's point of view, compared to where we were in '97, we are much better off in 2004. With China proposing a free trade agreement, Japan proposing a common economic partnership, and India proposing something similar to ASEAN, it is a dream scenario for Southeast Asia to have all three economic giants in Asia come to

Southeast Asia and say, "We want to work with you."

#### **SE Asians Had Potential to Be Visionary on the Future Governance of Asia**

**Campbell:** I take it slightly different. I think that you had a brief period in which, before the Asian economic crisis, Southeast Asians had the potential to be more visionary about structures and ideas associated with the future governance of Asia, both in commerce and strategically, across the board. I think, although there are many reasons for that, they all suffered from almost a complete lack of ambition, confidence and strategy about how to proceed. They were much more focused on membership and the dynamics associated with tables. And in fact, the United States was complicit in much of that.

Now, given where we are today, I do agree that when the Ambassador says or when Kishore says that this is a better situation or a good situation, there is some truth in that. But the reality is that each of the countries are competing for Southeast Asia in a way that they are, sort of, the rabbit that eats China. The United States has largely not played and Japan, I think, has probably played ineffectively, and Europe and India to a large step.

I think what we will see very soon is that the very nature and character of multilateral institutions in Asia will change in which the agendas are dominated by the issues that are put on the table by the big powers and the big players. Although it is nice to be sought after, it's also nice to be able to set the agenda, and I think what Southeast Asia has done is largely forfeited the agenda; the agenda has been set by others. Now, it's nice to be coveted, but at the same time it's also nice to be able to get the big players to

be playing on your score of music, and I think it's the reverse.

**Questioner:** Since you mentioned that Asian countries all want to avoid a confrontation between U.S. and China, and we understand that Taiwan might be one of the flashpoints, and in the past few years you have seen the escalation of the confrontation going on from Asian countries' point of view, would you like to get more involved in forming a mechanism that will help both sides come to a peaceful resolution? Or would you rather just see the U.S. play along as the major factor to keep the balance in cross-Strait relations?

**Mahbubani:** I can be very, very quick in responding to this question. I don't think any of the Asian nations believe that they can play a role on the Taiwan question. They can do it privately in terms of talking to both sides, but it's something that has to be worked out fundamentally, I guess, directly or indirectly, between China and Taiwan. Here the position taken by the United States is absolutely critical. The one thing that the region has been quite grateful to the United States for over the last three years has been United States' signals and positions on this issue. They helped stabilize the Taiwan situation at a time when it could have been extremely unstable. I don't know whether Kurt has a different point of view.

### **U.S. Has Shifted Policy Toward China and Taiwan**

**Campbell:** I have a slightly different viewpoint on this. I actually think that it's been an extraordinarily difficult challenge and that we had a period, a relatively long period, of what we will call strategic ambiguity, in which people were beginning to understand the very real limitations associated with strategic ambiguity. I think in the last couple of years the Bush administration has

made some adjustments in our policy vis-à-vis Taiwan and China. But this has been in the grand tradition of clumsiness of American foreign policy when it comes to Taiwan and China, which we've seen in every previous administration, where things were done ad hoc and were not well thought out, with enormous infighting inside government agencies. But what we have shifted to is the policy of what has been referred to as strategic clarity, in which we have stated that we are going to do certain things in certain circumstances.

The problem associated with that is that now no one can any longer define what the status quo is. So I actually think that I agree with the ambassador that the last couple of years we've been enormously blessed by sort of remarkably lower tensions. But I think it has more to do with the fact that the United States was able to say to all countries, "Cool it, we're involved in a life or death struggle, and if you do this you're going to piss us off, alright?" This is the message, roughly, that President Bush thought he had sent to President Chen Shui-bian.

I think the farther we get away from September 11, the harder it is to make that case in a way that backs off China and Taiwan. And if I had to guess, although I wish that this were not the case, I actually believe that the next couple of years is likely to be very, very difficult and offer the United States some very hard choices. I think your question may well be directed to the United States, "Will the United States play a more active role in cross-Strait diplomacy," because I think it's actually interesting that the United States is involved diplomatically across the globe in every potential place, such as Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

The one place that we make a point in taking a position on that we will not be dip-

lomatically engaged in, at least formally, is across the Taiwan Straits, and for extremely good reasons. There are extremely good historical reasons, but at the same time, it's one of those few places that overnight U.S. forces can be brought in.

So, on some strategic level—and if you come into the problem and you think, “Wait a second, I'm not involved diplomatically but I can be involved overnight militarily”—there's something wrong with that picture. Now, Asianists and China specialists can explain very well why this makes sense. If you come from outside of the region and just look at it on its own, on some level it seems counterintuitive.

**Questioner:** As you mentioned, the major selection of international multilateral institutions were formed by Western society. The majority of international organizations are located in New York, Washington, Paris and Geneva in the European countries and the United States, but there are no big international organizations in Asia. In terms of population, India and China are the core of the population. Is there any possibility to establish large international organizations in Asia in order to solve the problems of the twenty-first century?

### **Asian Cities Will Increasingly Become Major Centers of Activity**

**Mahbubani:** I cannot tell you which international organization will emerge, and so on, and so forth in Asia. But new centers of activity will emerge. Previously, if you looked at the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, you went to London, Paris, Berlin, New York, or Washington if you wanted to link up with major centers of activity. The big change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that more and more Asian cities will become centers of activity.

I can confidently predict that Shanghai will give New York a run for its money. How will Shanghai do it? It is amazing how they could build this world-class museum in a very short time, for example. Realizing their potential, they will find something very imaginative and say, “Let's have an organization like this in Shanghai,” and so on and so forth. Asian cities will play a bigger role. They will compete among themselves and they will come up with new ideas. What exactly these new ideas will be, I don't know. We will have to wait and see.

**Ikenberry:** I guess it means we're going to have to have a fifth year of the Asian Voices seminar series.  
(End)

## About the Panelists

### Main Speaker

**Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani** is Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations. In his diplomatic career, he has served in Cambodia, Kuala Lumpur, Washington, D.C. and New York. He is serving his second term as Singapore's Ambassador to the United Nations. Ambassador Mahbubani was President of the Security Council in January 2001 and May 2002 when Singapore was serving on the UN Security Council. He was Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Ministry from 1993 to 1998. He also serves in various advisory capacities with organizations such as the International Peace Academy, New York, the Institute of International Education, New York, and the Global Strategy Group. Ambassador Mahbubani received a First Class honors degree in philosophy from the University of Singapore, and a Masters degree in philosophy and an honorary doctorate from Dalhousie University, Canada. He has published *Can Asians Think* (2002), several articles in leading journals and op-ed articles in newspapers and magazines.

### Discussant

**Dr. Kurt Campbell** is Senior Vice-President and Director at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Before joining CSIS, he worked at the Department of Defense as deputy assistant director of defense, at the White House as deputy special counselor to the president for NAFTA and as a member of the National Security Council staff. Dr. Campbell has also been an associate professor of public policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. In addition, he was a fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He received a B.A. from the University of California, San Diego, a Ph.D. in international relations from Oxford University and a certificate in music and political philosophy from the University of Erevan in Soviet Armenia. Dr. Campbell's publications include *The Power of Balance: 100 Strategic Insights into the Pacific Century* (2003) and *To Prevail: An American Strategy for the Campaign against Terrorism* (principal author, 2001).

### Moderator

**Dr. G. John Ikenberry** is the Peter F. Krogh Professor of Geopolitics and Global Justice at Georgetown University. He also has been a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. Professor Ikenberry is the author of numerous publications, including, *State Power and World Markets: The International Political Economy* (2002), *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (2000), and *Reasons of State: Oil Politics and the Capacities of American Government* (1988).