



ASIA-EUROPE
FOUNDATION

**Symposium on the book,
The New Asian Hemisphere, by
Prof. Kishore Mahbubani**

3rd July 2008

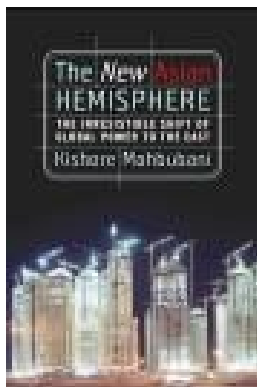
**Singapore,
Asia-Europe Foundation**

Brochure

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Summary



Together with ASEF alumni Mr Asad-ul Iqbal Latif of the Institute of South East Asian Studies, ASEF organised a symposium on the book *The New Asian Hemisphere*, by Prof. Kishore Mahbubani, on 3rd July 2008 at the ASEF premises in Singapore.

In his recently published book, Prof. Mahbubani argues that Asia is returning to the position that it occupied on the world stage before the rise of the West. He calls for a new global partnership. The controversial book has attracted both praise and criticism. However, commentators generally have focused on one aspect or other of his complex argument.

At the Symposium, three Singapore-based scholars commented on three aspects of the book:

- Its examination of Western wisdom that Asia has inherited, by Asst. Prof. Alan Chong, Assistant Professor of Political Science, National University of Singapore (NUS)
- The importance of global institutions in mediating between the West and Asia, by Amb. Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)
- The prospects of a rising Asia, Mr Shafqat Munir, Research Analyst, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

Professor Mahbubani then responded to the commentators, with views and analysis of his own. Ambassador Rodolfo Severino moderated a lively Question-and-Answer session with the audience of over 100, comprising members of the Diplomatic Corps, the media, academics and representatives from the business sector.

About the Speakers, the Respondent and the Moderator



Asst. Prof. Alan Chong

Assistant Professor of Political Science, National University of Singapore (NUS)

Dr. Alan Chong is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore. He has published widely on the notion of soft power and the role of ideas in constructing the international relations of Singapore and Asia. His publications have appeared in *The Pacific Review*, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *Asian Survey*, the *Review of International Studies* and *East Asia: an International Quarterly*. Dr. Chong is currently working on several projects exploring the notion of "Asian international theory", as well as the foundations of International Communication as a sub-field of International Relations.



Amb. Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller

Senior Visiting Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)

Amb. Jørgen Ørstrøm Møller received his Master of Science in Economics from the University of Copenhagen 1968. He joined the Danish diplomatic service and worked on European integration from 1971 to 1997; from 1989 to 1997 he was State-Secretary. From 1997 to 2005, Møller was Ambassador to Singapore and Brunei Darussalam and from 2002 also to Australia and New Zealand, residing in Singapore. In 2005, he joined the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Singapore, as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow. He is Adjunct Professor at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and the Singapore Management University (SMU). His recent publications in English are *European Integration: Sharing of Experiences*, *A New International System*, *The End of Internationalism or World Governance*, and *The Future European Model*.



Mr Shafqat Munir

Research Analyst, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)

Mr Shafqat Munir is currently a Research Analyst with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He graduated from the Australian National University with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Security Studies. His research interests include Terrorism and Militancy in Bangladesh, South Asian Politics and Security, Inter-State Relations, and Defence Studies. Prior to joining RSIS, Mr Munir worked as a Research Analyst at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) in Dhaka. He is also the Assistant Editor of *Peace and Security Review*, a quarterly academic journal published by BIPSS.



Prof. Kishore Mahbubani

Dean, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Prof. Kishore Mahbubani is also author of two other books: *Can Asians Think?* and *Beyond the Age of Innocence: Rebuilding Trust between America and the World*. Currently the Dean and Professor in the Practice of Public Policy of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, Prof. Mahbubani served for 33 years as a diplomat for Singapore and has written many articles on world affairs. He served two stints as Singapore's Ambassador to the UN and as President of the UN Security Council in January 2001 and May 2002. In 2005, *Foreign Policy* magazine included him among the top 100 public intellectuals in the world.



Amb. Rodolfo Severino

Head, ASEAN Studies Centre, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)

Amb. Rodolfo C. Severino is Head of the ASEAN Studies Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. From 1998 to 2002, he was Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Prior to that, he served as Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines. In the Philippine Foreign Service, he was Ambassador to Malaysia from 1989 to 1992, Chargé d'Affaires at the Philippine Embassy in Beijing from 1975 to 1978, Consul General in Houston, Texas, and officer at the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D. C. Before joining the Philippine Government, Amb. Severino worked at the United Nations and with Operation Brotherhood-Laos.

About the Book

In his book *The New Asian Hemisphere* Prof. Kishore Mahbubani describes how for centuries, Asians – from Tehran to Tokyo – have been bystanders in world history, reacting defenselessly to the surges of Western commerce, thought, and power. That era is over. Asia is returning to the center stage it occupied for eighteen centuries before the rise of the West.

Asians have absorbed and understood Western best practices in many areas, from free-market economics to the embrace of innovative science and technology, meritocracy and the rule of law. And they have become innovative in their own way, creating new patterns of cooperation not seen in the West. Their rise is unstoppable – by 2050, three of the world's largest economies will be Asian: China, India, and Japan.

Will the West resist the rise of Asia? This scenario will be disastrous. Asia wants to replicate, not dominate, the West. But the West must gracefully share power with Asia, by giving up its automatic domination of global institutions from the IMF to the World Bank, from the G7 to the UN Security Council.

History teaches that the rise of new powers almost always leads to tension and conflict. This, too, may happen. But they can be avoided if the world accepts the key principles for a new global partnership spelled out in *The New Asian Hemisphere*.

About the Organiser



The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) advances mutual understanding and collaboration between the people of Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms. The major achievement of ASEF is the establishment of permanent bi-regional networks focussed on areas and issues that help to strengthen Asia-Europe relations.

Established in February 1997 by the partners of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)¹, ASEF reports to a board of governors representing the ASEM partners. ASEF is the only permanent physical institution of the ASEM process. Since 1997, the Foundation has initiated projects engaging 14,000 individuals from Asia and Europe. ASEF works in partnership with other public institutions and civil society actors to ensure its work is broad-based and balanced among the partner countries. For further information, please visit www.asef.org

¹ **ASEM** (the Asia-Europe Meeting) is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission.
<http://www.aseminfoboard.org>

Presentation I

Western Wisdom and Speed Bumps on the Asian Road – The Leadership Factor²

**Alan Chong, Assistant Professor
National University of Singapore**

Two decades after journalists, academics and politicians fuelled expectations of a 'Pacific Century', one can still broadly agree that Asia remains on course for political and economic ascendancy. Mahbubani has filled his readers' consciousness with a breathtaking array of statistics and anecdotes. One of my favourites is the one utilizing mobile phones as a metaphor for the 'March to Modernity in Asia':

According to Iqbal Quadir, cofounder of Grameenphone, "Connectivity is productivity. If you connect people, they are more productive. You can see throughout the developing world that the people are not dependent on aid, their governments are. What we have done with aid is [empower] the governments in poor countries, put them on their high horses, so they don't have to be concerned with their citizens, because they don't rely on them for funding. The Bangladeshi economy has gone up because of mobile phones by 2 percent. That surpasses the money given to Bangladesh through aid."

When India eventually goes from eight million people connected to telephones in the 1990s to over five hundred million people with cell phones by 2010, the world will have been truly transformed. China will no doubt match the figure. In addition there are a billion other Asians outside China and India aspiring to join the mobile revolution. Effectively this means that in the space of two decades, over a billion to a billion and a half people will have been connected to the modern world. That is the scale of the March to Modernity in Asia.³

This lengthy quote is pertinent for introducing my commentary because its focus of attention – as in so much of the book – neglects that great intangible of human agency in world politics: leadership. The March to Modernity, as Mahbubani explains it, is an emulative process. The West is *the one* to be emulated in terms of physical improvements to standards of living, along with their 'software' of sustaining the "heaven" of modernity' as Mahbubani calls it. Indeed, the recurring picture painted in the book is that of Asian urban life remade along the clean standardised lines of consumerist America and Europe. According to this logic, mobile phones are as much an object of Asian aspirations, as it is of the West. Likewise, it appears that China and India have emulated the western habit of demonstrating their military and political modernity by acquiring the nuclear bomb. One can run down the checklist of emulation and immediately sense that something is amiss in the new Asia that has been

² This short article is authored as a commentary on Kishore Mahbubani's *The New Asian Hemisphere – The irresistible shift of global power to the East* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2008).

³ Mahbubani, *New Asian Hemisphere*, pp.25-6.

photographically enhanced in the image of 'western-looking' skyscrapers on the book's jacket cover. In a nutshell, this book is provocative in being insufficiently attentive to whether an Asian modernity possesses a convincing vision for the future. Secondly, the Progress and Legitimacy in the relations between modernizing and modern states are often contradictory, and potentially irreconcilable propositions. Thirdly, the thesis of a new Asian hemisphere must ponder the meaning of empire, or in Mahbubani's preferred parlance, a virtuous Asian-led order. But all the same, it must be asked what would constitute the content of Asian leadership of any new world order. Empowering the Asian peoples with mobile phones will logically enhance connectivity, enable speed and intensity in business, and induce greater social communication. But in talking up the potential of new Asia, one must also scrutinise if greater connectivity will be matched with commensurate expansion of vision to remake societies for the better. In this regard, one must remember that on the eve of the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Ferdinand that ignited World War One, virtually all the great powers of Europe were integrated into transnational webs of communication in terms of telegraphic networks, roads and maritime transportation. Had the war not broken out, commercial aviation might have been added to the web of transnational linkages. The war was driven in the main by furious, and often blind, nationalist passions. Historians will have their theories about how the elected and constitutional elites in Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, London, Paris, Rome, and Istanbul lost control in the face of nationalism, but surely it cannot be denied that an important lesson of leadership has to be drawn for the new Asia in relation to the dangers of unbridled nationalism. This is a question worth posing even to 'mobile phone' and 'Internet-enabled' nationalism in China, India and Japan, across both Koreas and throughout the ten members of Southeast Asia.

Power without Leadership

In Chapter Two, Mahbubani refers to an Asian culture of peace that is in play. This cannot remain unexamined – and ought perhaps to be addressed in detail in a future book. I contend that this culture of peace is tenuous and demands leadership. I would also argue that the milestones of history preceding the 'culture of peace' serve as lessons in power and leadership. In fact, the story of Asian decolonization illuminates the mainstream definition of power as the ability to get others to do what they would not do on their own. Asian nationalists organised themselves and their peoples, and in doing so, wielded political, military and economic power that made the position of the colonizers untenable. I do not need to go into the examples of Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta, Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-Shek, Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, Ho Chi Minh and Aung San to illustrate the point. The powers these personalities wielded were necessarily a power to unite social kin against the colonial outsider. Decolonization histories also reveal the fact that some exclusionary nationalisms have also lost their bearings following independence, leading to 'permanent revolutions' persecuting imagined class enemies at home, and wars against neighbouring states. It required changes, or interventions, in leadership to reset the powers of nationalism toward a more constructive mode. The difference between building improved standards of living – that is, the March to Modernity – and revolutionary destruction, lies in leadership. Leadership must constitute the central idea in any rumination upon Asia's future in world order, and it must be understood as something larger than merely directing force for ejecting invading enemies. Leadership must also be about creating normative designs for

reinforcing peace abroad, for sustainable development, for providing a guide for peaceful coexistence between strong and weak, and for post-conflict reconciliation. If the plethora of unresolved resource-related and territorial disputes around the Asian mainland and insular seas are any guide, Asian leadership for peaceful international relations has yet to demonstrate significant achievement in 2008.

Progress and Legitimacy at Cross Purposes?

Asian progress, exemplified by the huge material strides made by India and China, inspires awe. But it must be asked if Indian and Chinese diplomacy have attained firm grasps of the sober demands of world order. Chapter Four introduces a lengthy documentation of what non-western editorials identify to be the specks in the western eye, but what is left unsaid in much of the book is how the new Asian hemisphere will provide the intellectual apparatus for erecting world order. In this regard, Mahbubani ironically provides a service for the West by both envying and decrying western legacies in political thought. Mahbubani admits that every great civilization is often associated with flourishing centres of learning. In that light, he admires educational institutions in the West, and the USA in particular, for 'protecting old knowledge and developing new frontiers of learning for all mankind.' Furthermore, 'Asia should thank America when its modernization is complete because the US has done more than any other society to train and educate Asian elites. Since World War II, several hundred thousand Asians have studied in American universities and returned home.'⁴ The quality of intellectual indigenization, as opposed to wholesale transplantation of the 'best of the West', matters a great deal when one intends to speculate intelligently about the future of world order. Western wisdom in international political thought has given humanity a range of schools of thought ranging from Realism and Liberalism, to Marxism, Constructivism and Postmodernism. The shades in between them have also covered hybrid concepts such as 'international society'. The latter envisions that while the world still falls short of the ideal of a supra-sovereign world government, states admit that there is an absolute minimum of common goals of survival which they would wish to achieve despite lingering animosities. This concept, associated with the so-called 'English School' of international thought, along with parts of what is labelled 'neoliberal institutionalism' in US academia, suggests that an international order built upon the 'absence of major war' can be tolerable. Such social scientific explanations surely cannot be dismissed out of hand when one thinks of the current state of relations between the participating members of the Six Party Talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, or of the reluctance of ASEAN members to resort to dispute settlement mechanisms inherent in their 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. In fairness, the George W. Bush Administration has not taken to heart the spirit and value of existing international organizations either, and Mahbubani justly criticizes the former for it. Asian powers should however think through the existing intellectual foundations of international order, and do so in tandem with their preoccupations with domestic development. What does China mean when its heads of government refer to the need for a stable external environment for domestic modernization? The same questions ought to be asked of Indian power. Mahbubani has provided us with mere glimpses of answers to these questions. China's quiet constructive diplomacy on the North Korean issue does not a world order make.

⁴ Ibid p.91.

Likewise, the extensive write-up⁵ on India's potential as an intellectual minder and connector between diverse cultures beckons deeper intellectual inquiry into an Indian school of international thought.

The victorious powers of World War II have between them crafted the Atlantic Charter, the Bretton Woods agreements, and the Dumbarton Oaks negotiations establishing the United Nations, all with the active support of an intellectual elite that predated the signatures of these agreements.⁶ That said, it must also be admitted that while all of the institutions that emerged from the dawn of 1945 have suffered from operational flaws of one form or another, their institutional legacies remain with us today because they have attained the status of a practical compromise on the world stage. One should even qualify that the WTO, IMF and World Bank remain as feasible highlights of a transitional world order simply because the non-western world has yet to offer the equivalents of a Keynes, White, Churchill, Morgenthau, Zimmern, Roosevelt, Thatcher or a Reagan to legitimise a new world order in thought. Of course, to be fair, when the Cold War was at its zenith, there were plenty of left-wing challengers in the form of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Dos Santos, Prebisch and Fanon. Therefore, Mahbubani could have also reaffirmed that the nature of western pre-eminence is intellectual by default. I believe that Mahbubani's earlier book, *Can Asians Think?*, is more pertinently provocative for the future of Chinese and Indian contributions to world order than the present one. Based on my own line of research, I do not believe that China and India are intellectual inferiors to the West, they simply need to transcend the temptations of navel-gazing political analysis and excessive criticism of the western heritage of thought. The post-Cold War era of continued western dominance of world structures can therefore offer future generations of Asians and non-Asians alike the lesson that material progress does not automatically convey commensurate legitimacy. The West had blundered in many of its policies towards the Middle East and Asia over the past 50 years, but this does not diminish all of its intellectual attractions. Fledgling Asian leaderships could also reflect on this experience in preparation for their moment on the world's stage.

Vision and the Good Empire?

At the time of writing, I was struck by a sound bite given by Gothom Arya, a veteran human rights campaigner in Thailand. He was in the midst of attacking the government of Premier Samak Sundaravej for being a front for the policies of his ousted civilian predecessor Thaksin Shinawatra. He said, "there are three things that can make Thai people emotional. The royal family, nationalism and religion." According to the report, Gothom claimed he was making headway on two of the three tripwires for a change in government.⁷ In post-Thaksin Thailand, power and leadership are in contention over the meaning of progress and legitimacy. Surely it cannot be denied that the Thaksin administration presided over a period of growth in the Thai economy measured by statistical indices, yet Thais in the urban centres remain fundamentally embittered towards Thaksin's alleged corruption and anti-democratic attitudes. A similar

⁵ Ibid, pp.167-173.

⁶ This is point is best understood by reading Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds.) *Ideas and Foreign Policy: beliefs, institutions, and political change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁷ Quoted in Thomas Fuller, 'Everywhere he looks, trouble for Thai leader. Dispute over Temple adds to Problems', *International Herald Tribune* 26 June 2008.

conundrum might be expressed for China's situation based on any analysis of the news headlines during the 'Olympic year' of 2008: three things might prove to be tectonic triggers for an irate revanchist Chinese superpower – recovering historically alienated territories (i.e. Tibet, Taiwan and proximate islands in neighbouring seas), nationalism, and the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. These are inward-looking dependent variables conditioning China's emergence as a great power. Mahbubani's reference to Deng's 'twenty eight characters'⁸ guiding future leadership fuels further pessimism about the nascent potential of Chinese leadership in a new world order; if these precepts have not been modified by Deng's successors, they predict a power that is comfortable hiding behind its own shadow because it is unsure of when and how to step into the limelight. To be fair to the Chinese, Howard French's recent 'Letter from China' credits the team of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao for demonstrating statesmanship in applying the balm of soft power towards troubled relations with Tokyo, and wooing Taiwan with transportation diplomacy; but these initiatives 'roughly amount to the first few turns of a Rubik's Cube in a region that will require many, many more turns in order to bring its diplomatic and geopolitical realities in line with its economic achievement.'⁹ Similarly, Indian power might be exercised by nationalism, and thwarted international status vis-à-vis the future reorganisation of the membership of the UN Security Council. Through my own encounters with friends and colleagues from India, I can second Mahbubani's impressions of India being a potential intercultural facilitator in a revised new world order. The vision for doing so however, remains to be articulated in a major policy announcement.

All great powers pursue 'empire' in one form or another. And if one probes at the Latin roots of this concept, all the way back to its ecclesiastical and Greco-Roman roots, it is not simply a military and territorial concept, it is very much about establishing an *imperium* of desirable mindsets. The western imperium of political ideas has never been linear in its evolution. Every dominant western idea has generated its detractors across the ages. The modern western educational mindset still militates against a straightjacket version perpetuated by politically-connected intellectuals. For every forum in *Foreign Affairs*, and *Foreign Policy*, there is the *Review of International Studies*, *Global Society*, *Alternatives*, the *New Left Review*, *Critical Asian Studies* and the *Journal of Asian Studies*. The thesis of the *New Asian Hemisphere* could be better clarified as being targeted at the supremacy of hegemonic knowledge centres that preach one version of the rise and revitalisation of western political influence. In this way, one can sympathise with the in-built irony in Mahbubani's book: western political elites in control of the levers of formal power are despicable in underestimating Asia's emergence as the newest members of the modern world order, but western institutions of higher learning remain venerable in many Asian eyes for their spirit of inquiry. Such is the nature of the current western intellectual imperium – its pluralism and its ability to criticise itself in self-appraisal.¹⁰ It is thus significant that a notable American scholar of East Asia, Bruce Cumings, has called for a revisionist interpretation of the Cold War; in his words 'the triumph of the Western liberal programme does not mean "the end of history" because modern liberalism is itself a heterogeneous, contested, and deeply unfinished

⁸ Mahbubani, *New Asian Hemisphere*, p.224.

⁹ Howard W. French, 'Letter from China: A Sense of Community Elusive for East Asia', *International Herald Tribune* 20 June 2008.

¹⁰ See for instance Edgar Morin, 'European Civilization: Properties and Challenges' in Mehdi Mozaffari (ed.) *Globalization and Civilizations* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.125-150.

business.¹¹ The challenge for Asian leadership is to compete with the West in supplying its own intellectual imperium to presage the arrival of its substantive political presence in the inner sanctums of decision-making in global financial institutions and the UN. Owning more mobile phones and higher talk volume do not translate inevitably into great power status. This author is not a scholar of Indian philosophy, but he can offer a modest gem of wisdom from Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.) that speaks to the underappreciated potential of Asian intellectual leadership in global matters. In what might well be the single most illuminating statement on international conduct in all of his texts, Confucius ventures that

To escort [labourers or 'artisans'] on their departure and meet them on their coming; to commend the good among them, and show compassion to the incompetent: – this is the way to treat indulgently men from a distance. To restore families whose line of succession has been broken, and to revive States that have been extinguished; to reduce to order States that are in confusion, and support those which are in peril; to have fixed times for their own reception at court, and the reception of their envoys; to send them away after liberal treatment, and welcome their coming with small contributions: – this is the way to cherish the princes of States...

In all things success depends on previous preparation, and without such previous preparation there is sure to be failure. If what is to be spoken be previously determined, there will be no stumbling.¹²

Surely, there is more than a hint here of an Asian version of cosmopolitan philosophy for a more benign world order. Therefore, in closing this reflection on the *New Asian Hemisphere*, I express the wish that Mahbubani would write another book, but one that picks up where a speech made in 2000¹³ left open speculation about the tangible shapes of Indian and Chinese leadership that would draw upon their cultural roots.

¹¹ Bruce Cumings, 'Time of Illusion: Post-Cold War Visions of the World' in Ellen Schrecker (ed.) *Cold War Triumphalism: the Misuse of History after the Fall of Communism* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p.99.

¹² Confucius, 'The Doctrine of the Mean', Chap.XX, paras.14-16, in Confucius, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean*, translated with Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, Copious Indexes and Dictionary of All Characters by James Legge, 2nd ed., (New York: Dover Publications, 1971),pp.410-411.

¹³ Mahbubani, 'The Rest of the West? (Review Cover Story)', *Straits Times* (Singapore) 18 June 2000. An online version of this speech, originally delivered as part of the British Broadcasting Corporation's series of 'World Lectures' is available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/world_lectures/mahbub_lect.shtml, accessed 30 June 2008.

Presentation II

The Importance of Global Institutions in Mediating Between the West and Asia.

Joergen Oerstroem Moeller, Senior Visiting Research Fellow
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

Let me start by emphasizing some basic principles about institutions, primarily how they work or do not work in an international context, but also valid for national and domestic institutions.

- Institutions cannot create or shape policies, nor can they lead to decisions if the political will is not present. They are channels or instruments to implement policies.
- They are not an end or a goal in itself. They serve a purpose and are mobilized only if a goal cannot be reached without them or is reached less efficiently.
- Formalities cannot twist realities. The substance dictates what we do and who is doing it.
- To be a suitable vehicle for decision-making, institutions must respect the balance of power, as seen by their member-states.
- To be effective, institutions must be perceived as being “theirs” by those they serve. A former Secretary-General of NATO had a sign above his desk saying: « The Secretary-General is the servant of the member states. »
- Institutions stop working effectively when their *raison d'être* disappears, but keep working inefficiently until that truth dawns upon the member-states.

1. The Post-War system

The Cold War ended in 1989-1991. Until the UN Security Council in 2003 failed to agree on the Iraq issue, the Cold War global system continued to function because the autopilot was switched on. No one really pressed for changes and no challenges popped up to disclose that the job it was designed to do had disappeared. The Iraq war did so for a variety of reasons and since then, the world has sailed on without a steering system.

Let us cast a glance on the post-World War II system, if for no other reason than that it served the world well for more than 50 years.

1) The system was comprehensive in setting up the UN, a trade organization (ITO/GATT, to be replaced by the WTO), a channel for funding reconstruction and development (with the World Bank designed to be the world's family bank), and a fund to help overcome balance of payments difficulties (the International Monetary Fund). Later, these

institutions were supplemented by a host of other more or less specialized institutions, organizations and agencies. These institutions supported one other and where one could not help, another one was called in.

2) The institutions looked like multinational or international institutions, but were in fact a vehicle for the mightiest country, the US, to exercise power in conformity with its political priorities. The rest of the world not only acquiesced, but went along because the US resisted – not always but most of the time – the temptation to use the institutions to pursue narrow American interests. When the US acted alone, it acted.....alone. The majority of the other member states were comfortable with sharing most of the set of values steering US policies and felt that they had joined the institutions for this reason. The institutions made it possible for the US to impose its will with some civility and most other countries saw themselves as its partners.

3) World opinion backed the institutions, perhaps not unanimously and not all the way, but to a large extent. It took a long time for pressure groups and NGOs to emerge as opponents or critics and when that happened, it was only half-hearted and aimed at part of the system or at isolated policies.

4) There was a dominating model, the American one, but there was still room for the socialist model to challenge it until 1989, when socialism collapsed and caused some developing countries like India to try their own model. The dissenters, so to speak, were not reigned in, but allowed to try their model.

5) In retrospect, that may have been one of the reasons it was only in the 1980s that the free market began to run amok. Before then, it was kept under control or might have kept itself under control because there was an alternative. So long as that was the case, aberrations were held in check. When the challenger disappeared, the economic model began to lose self-control.

2. How does it look now?

Leaving aside, for a time, the question whether the institutions are looking at the right target, there is no doubt that decision-making is out of tune. Examples are the veto right in the UN Security Council being vested in the five victors from World War II; the composition of the Security Council, which leaves out India, Germany and Japan and which has no representative from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America; voting rights in IMF and the World Bank which, though adjusted, do not reflect the power balance. The WTO is based formally upon unanimity but in reality leaves decision-making in the hands of a few major powers, asking the rest of the world to endorse what they have agreed on. Bodies like the G-7, G-8 or G-9 reflect the idea of a directory, but are, in fact, a rich man's club that views the world from that particular angle.

People around the globe do not see the institutions taking consensus decisions but being moulded in the tradition of American interests, even if Americans sometimes appear to be their most vocal critics. There is a saying that a political compromise is a good one if no one is happy, but the same proverb cannot be applied to global institutions.

Those who shaped the institutions 60 years ago would probably have been pleasantly surprised if told that the institutions would still be there in 2008, but even more pleasantly surprised to see that all the rising powers have joined the system. It is one of the marvels of the past 20 years.

As a *quid pro quo*, the established powers should have stretched their hands out to welcome the new powers and made room for them by adjusting decision-making procedures. By not doing so, they have created a constituency of members which feel that the institutions are not really theirs but belong to the establishment. They did not join the institutions; they joined the global economic model and chose to live with the institutions set up to run that model.

The established powers, especially the US, apparently are unable to come to grips with the following dilemma:

- Either to welcome new powers, share decision-making with them and relinquish some of their power, but at the same time reap the benefit brought by the values guiding or controlling the system, which continues to be theirs. In short: You can shape a global system in your own picture.
- Or hold on to formal powers, counting on players to see things as they used to be, which will be the case for a time, perhaps a long time, but which sooner or later will change. When change occurs, it will do so in circumstances that will cut deeply into their influence and open the door for others to shape a world order.

What you cannot do is to do both – or neither.

3. Global system out of touch

The basic problem is not, however, that the decision-making procedures do not reflect the picture of the real global economic and political power, but that they have lost track of what happens in the world. This can be illustrated by five observations:

- The existing global model, which is the American post-1990 edition of capitalism, is not any longer accepted as universal.
- Free trade is being questioned by a number of countries, business (Warren Buffett!) and academics (Paul Samuelson!).
- The dissemination of information and the shaping of opinion is shifting. Facebook and YouTube have made interaction real.
- We are moving from an international environment of plenty and low prices for the whole range of commodities to an era of scarcities with high prices.
- The nation-state is gradually losing power to clusters, megacities, cross-border regions, and multinational or supranational companies. A whole range of new players has entered the fray without being integrated into the system.

The existing edition of globalization is out, another model is feeling its way in, but international institutions are caught by inertia.ⁱ

The system is out of touch, does not respond to current challenges and does not incorporate a number of important players. The contrast is striking with the post-World War II system, which was responsive and delivered the goods.

The new main topics for global action must either be incorporated into the existing institutions – alternatively, the institutions' objectives must be changed – or new institutions must be built. The world has seen this before – for example, in the post-World War II period – and knows how difficult it is. The drivers for this to take place should be the rising powers because they are the countries expected to benefit the most from new issues, but are newcomers in the game and lack experience.

It looks as if the US will still be the dominating power for a long time, with Europe presumably but not for certain to support it. But the US will not any longer be strong enough to design and impose a system on others. In other words, we are moving into an era with a strong power that is much stronger than the other powers, but is not strong enough to exercise undisputed leadership and impose its will and, if I read the signals coming from the US, has some self-doubts about where it wants to take the world.

Who is going to lead? The established powers are strong enough to block, but not to lead. The rising powers voice their discontentment, but are short of alternative suggestions.

Let me enumerate what I see as the topical issues that will shape international institutions in the years to come.

Issue number one. Regional internationalization.

Coming from Denmark with the Lego bricks, I do not hesitate to tell you that a durable global model needs to be built by the Lego bricks method. We operate with several layers: national, regional and global. The nation-state is too small and the global level too diffuse. The regional level offers the prospect of tackling congruous problems in collaboration with adjacent nation-states pursuing analogous political objectives. The depth of regional institutionalization depends upon similarity of political objectives, political systems, economic model and governance in a broad senseⁱⁱ.

Regional organizations serve as vehicles for helping nation-states with problems confined to a region, for example currency cooperation in Europe or Asia, or freedom of movement for labour inside a region. Gradually, they take over safeguarding the interests of member-state at an international/global level. These regional organizations will gradually replace the nation-states and link together to shape a kind of global governance. Monetary cooperation will come first. In a not too distant future, we will probably see Europe and adjacent regions in a Euro Zone, North America and at least some of the rest of the Western hemisphere in a US Dollar Zone, and a large part of Asia uniting around a Yuan Zone. The rest of the world will choose one of these three currencies as its anchor. From there will emerge some kind of policy body to fix currency rates and control global economic policy and from that platform may emerge a new global body with wider competences.

The problem is that, so far, only one of the organizations, the European Union, has reached a level where it is capable of playing that role.

But the good news is that if we actually look at what is happening, we can see how regional organizations are growing in number and stature and gaining more clout in East Asia, Latin America, South Asia, the Middle East and in Africa.

Issue number two. Sovereignty

We have passed from the era of the nation-state to the era of internationalism. The nation-state is fighting a tough rearguard battle – yes, it fighting for its life – but its days are numbered. How can a global steering system managing economic globalization be composed and controlled by nation-states? That is a contradiction in terms.

The hard core in all this is sovereigntyⁱⁱⁱ. In the former global model, sovereignty was the bulwark for the nation-state against what came from the outside world. It decided what it would let in and what it would block. The plinth of the system was the nation-state's right to defend itself against the outside world. In the era of globalization, it is the other way around. We have moved into an age where the international or global system reserves for itself the right to intervene in case it finds that the policies of a nation-state threaten global stability. For those in doubt, see what has happened over the last 10-15 years. Having digested that, just think of what would happen to globalization if we opted for a toothless global system allowing nation-states to disrupt international relations. We do not yet have a high priest or an icon as a whistleblower setting it out in specific terms, but we can see it happening.

If this is not intercepted by a global system, the next thing to happen will be the spread of coalitions of the willing – as we have seen.

The only thing that is not going to happen is that the international system sits back, adopting the cast of a lame duck. Formerly national economies could and did function on a domestic base and the international economy was seen as a potential disruptive force. Disruption came from external circumstances hitting the national economy. Now, the global supply chain, logistic networks and ICT must be secured against disruption emanating in one country and, *via* the global economy, making the other national economies fall like dominoes. Disruption originated nationally, putting the spanner into the works of the global economy. To mention a specific example, during the SARS pandemic in East Asia, the fear among several Asian countries was that the WHO would move to impose restrictions on travelling out of the countries/territories hit – not help the countries hit – to protect the international system

Sovereignty will be adapted to globalization, giving the right to intervene inside nation-states. An unconditional condition for this to be accepted is an institutional framework with rules and procedures, just as the world today has rules and procedures for how the nation-state can defend its sovereignty.

The intriguing question in the West-Asia perspective is that Europe, Asia and the US find themselves on different stages on the lifecycle of the nation-state, the guardian of

sovereignty. Europe is dismantling the nation-state even if a host of people say the opposite. Asia is on the upward bend of the curve, with many Asian nations striving to build a national identity. The US may be at the beginning or the end of the curve, but is not near either Europe or Asia. A witty comment in *Fortune* (June 23, 2008) predicts that the US will fall apart with an oil price of US\$1,000.

Issue number three: Burden sharing^{iv}

All the institutions are designed to distribute the benefits of economic growth or, alternatively, to support economic growth.

The game is changing. In the future, we are going to live in an era of scarcities, with high prices for commodities, pressure for pollution abatement and a focus on global warming/climate change.

The institutions we now have are not designed to do that and, although not impossible, it is unlikely that they can be turned around.

The future game will be a battle about burden-sharing, a brutal and ruthless exercise where everybody will try to pass the buck to somebody else. Politicians, be they national or international, have found it difficult to deal with distributing benefits. It is nothing compared to burden-sharing.

But if we do not succeed in shaping some kind of common policies to tackle this in an orderly way, the alternative is not to go on, but that large parts of the world will implode.

Issue number four: Interaction

International institutions probably, like national institutions, have not adjusted to the era of mass communication, dissemination of knowledge and information, how a consensus is shaped outside institutional frameworks and how to incorporate the new players in decision-making.

Just to give one example. When the London underground was bombed in 2005, it was not the authorities or the traditional mass media which were there first but people with their cell phones and cameras. The result was that before the authorities had had the chance to assess what had happened and how to shape public opinion, there already was a public opinion shaped by people themselves on the spot.^v

Conventional communication *via* the authorities and/or by established mass media, which consider themselves to be part of the establishment – albeit, in some cases, being a pain in the neck for the authorities – is losing the game.

International institutions are delinking from national governments as a consequence of globalization and must accordingly build up their own channels to intercept this new

trend on a global basis, take in the new players, and open channels on how to receive information and how to give information. This is interaction, not one-way communication.

4. Why institutions at all?

I almost forgot!

Institutions are not perfect, but are the best instruments for delivering continuity, coherence, compromise/negotiations, transparency, legitimacy and accountability.

When international institutions are criticized – which, for example, is the case with EU institutions and the WTO – they are almost always compared to national institutions and not compared with an alternative global model.

The virtues above are well-known and not many would seriously dispute that institutions are better placed to deliver goods than, for example, bilateral diplomacy, where the mightiest powers either force their will through making less-powerful nations fear them, or show magnanimity to draw others into their orbit as client-states.

Let me finish by mentioning two virtues and two criticisms.

The two virtues are essential although their benefits may not at first glance be tangible and even less measurable.

First, institutions reflect a stage of political maturity, forcing countries into a negotiation framework instead of confrontational attitudes. It is easily forgotten, but until 1945 exactly such a framework guided global politics and the first attempt to change the pattern under the aegis of the League of Nations failed completely.

Second, institutions operate by rules and procedures. The virtue is that powerful and less-powerful nations both know the rules, and that a set of rules declares what is permissible and what is not permissible. The effect is not only transparency but also an improved basis for decision-making, so that the reaction of others becomes more predictable. Surprises cannot be ruled out, but will be the exception.

An extrapolation of this is the discipline imposed on member-states by the institutions and the self-discipline the member-states impose on one other. The trick, so to speak, is to make the member-states abide by the rules. That makes it unnecessary to bring enforcement into the picture

There are, however, two criticisms again international institutions that are somewhat difficult to deal with.

First, institutions normally are far away from the citizens they serve. This transforms them into faceless monsters regardless of whether they are or not monsters, because a citizen can go to the local community and talk with a person, but not to international institutions.

Second, when there is not sufficient trust among member-states, institutions will not enjoy trust, either. Country A has no trust in country B. An institution means that a citizen from country B takes decisions in matters of great importance for country A.

How these difficulties are to be overcome is an unresolved question that explains much of the public scepticism towards European institutions.

The somewhat disappointing observation is that we are still in first gear, where international institutions belong to the national government and nation-states. Hopefully, we will be able to move into second gear, where they start to belong to the people.

Presentation III

Prospects of a Rising Asia

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Introduction

Professor Kishore Mahbubani's book 'The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East' comes to us at a very important time. The whole world is witnessing the significant economic rise of two Asian countries China and India. The books discusses about the prospects that will be resultant of this rise in Asia. As the title suggests, this paper aims to explore the prospects of Asia as it continues to rise based on the book and my own reflections on the subject.

What is Asia?

The fundamental question that comes to mind at the very outset is how do we define Asia? For centuries, scholars, academics, geographers, writers and travellers have wrestled with this question but have not been able to come up with a clear and conclusive answer. Some have called it a Eurocentric concept; some have dismissed the idea of Asia altogether. While Professor Mahbubani has talked about the socio economic upheaval that is taking place in Asia, he has not given us a clear definition of what he means by Asia. As I started writing this paper, this question was paramount in my mind, how do I talk about the prospects of a continent before defining what that continent is? The book has talked about the rise of two Asian countries, China and India. Each of those countries belong to two particular regions within the Asian continent, South Asia and North East Asia. The people living in both countries perhaps identify themselves as Chinese or Indians first, secondly with their region and perhaps lastly as Asians.

At an event which I attended a month ago, Professor Mahbubani was posed the same question. I was encouraged and illuminated by the answer that he had given. I had a realisation that it is perhaps not possible to define Asia just based on geographical lines alone; perhaps the definition of Asia needs to be philosophical. I remembered one particular incident, of being fascinated as an adolescent in Cambodia by the sheer similarity between the Khmer language and my own mother tongue Bangla.

I remember being astounded to hear words such as 'Apsara' and 'Sulakshana', as those words have the same meaning in Bangla. Perhaps Asia is a patchwork quilt of different languages, cultures, histories, literatures and a story of struggles. Perhaps it is the story of those struggles, the struggle to achieve the right to self determination, the struggle to uplift the socio economic conditions, the struggle to preserve one's own culture and heritage that binds Asia together. Despite all the differences, it seems that Asia is kept

together by a thread which bridges all divides and creates a sense of Asianness in the minds of the teeming multitudes that live within its geographical confines.

Asia's Prospects

As Professor Mahbubani has articulated in his book, in first century CE, Asia accounted for more than seventy five percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the world. Similar points have been made by authors such as the noted writer and historian William Dalrymple. It is indeed sad and unfortunate that a continent, which was so robust and strong economically, became impoverished with the passage of time. The reasons behind that are multiple and complex and could be the subject of another discussion but this paper aims to reflect on the magnificent levels of development achieved by many countries in Asia and what that means to the rest of the continent.

Professor Mahbubani quotes a particular article by Shashi Tharoor, the writer and former UN Under-Secretary General about the power of mobile telephones. Both Professor Mahbubani and Dr. Tharoor have talked about the power of mobile phones in acting as a harbinger of social change. Growing up in Bangladesh in the 80's and 90's, I have experienced that change first hand. Until about ten to twelve years ago, telephones in Bangladesh were more of a luxury than a necessary part of life. The same picture was evident in India and other countries in South Asia. However, the scenario changed with the advent of mobile phones. Within five to six years since the first mobile phone came out in the market, a social upheaval took place. People, for whom in the past owning a telephone was more of a dream, were now connected. The country currently boasts about 25 million mobile phone subscribers, with one company alone having more than 10 million subscribers. Hence the total number of mobile phone subscribers is larger than the population of Australia. The numbers are certainly a lot greater in India and Pakistan and in China. Why is it important and how does it relate to a Rising Asia? As Iqbal Quadir, a Bangladeshi and one of the pioneers behind bringing mobile phone technology to the country calls it, 'Connectivity is Productivity'. Mobile phones have connected a vast number of people across Asia who were previously not connected and that has contributed to their level of productivity. Ten years ago I simply could not imagine that, I could stand in the dense jungles of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and search for things on Ebay. It would have sounded like fiction, but today thanks to mobile internet, it is reality. It has not only connected people, it has changed lives. A female entrepreneur sitting in a small Bangladeshi village can find out about the prices of vegetables in the world market, fishermen can communicate while they are fishing in the rivers and determine the prices that they are likely to get. Professor Mahbubani has rightly used mobile phones as a manifestation of the socio-economic change that is taking place in Asia. I have seen how it has changed lives in my own country and I am sure the same reality has been replicated in a number of other Asian countries.

Pragmatism and Education

In his book Professor Mahbubani talks about the policy of pragmatism adopted by Asian countries. Countries across Asia such as Japan, China, Korea and India have all adopted various western techniques, methods, procedures and most importantly they have benefited from western education. Several thousand Asian students have studied in the west and then returned to their respective countries where they have applied their learning and made important contributions to their national development. This story has been observed in countries across the continent from China and India to Bangladesh and Laos. Even today, many individuals who had decided to migrate to other countries in search of a better livelihood are coming back. In many cases they are leaving behind well established careers to return to their respective countries to use their skills and expertise. I know many personal examples of Bangladeshis who after having spent a lifetime in North America, Europe and Australia have decided to return. The word 'Brain Drain' has become an important part of our vocabulary; perhaps we are witnessing a reverse of that. Why is this significant? It is significant because the people who are coming back are bringing with them in most cases decades of experience and more importantly new ideas. Ideas that can often lead to major achievements and make a phenomenal contribution to the socio-economic development of those countries.

Another highly encouraging aspect which Professor Mahbubani has raised in his book is the development of educational institutions. According to a figure which he has provided in his book, 14 of the top 100 universities in the world are now located in Asia. The universities in Singapore are a great example in this regard. Singapore is now home to a number of centres of excellence such as the institution which Professor Mahbubani heads and also the institution to which I belong. The book cites several examples of major collaboration between universities in Europe and North America with universities in Asia. The example of Stanford University collaborating with Peking University or John F Kennedy School of Government collaborating with a university in Taiwan is certainly encouraging and exudes a message of inspiration.

One important thing which Professor Mahbubani has touched upon in his book is the importance of education in Asian societies. Most Asian societies, the Chinese society for instance takes education very seriously. Asian parents are ready to sacrifice on their own personal comforts in order to give their children good education. That is why if we study the biographies of many Asian high achievers, one trend will become evident; many of them have come from really modest backgrounds. Despite their modest economic realities there was no dearth of ambition and zeal in them and more importantly their modest backgrounds notwithstanding, they realised the importance of education and more specifically tertiary education. It is important to note that while significant social, economic and political changes have taken place in Asian countries this trend has not been reversed. People still attach a great degree of importance to higher education and they will continue to do so even as the overall socio-economic conditions improve.

The Possibility of Conflict

While these signs are certainly encouraging there are some dark clouds in the horizon. Professor Mahbubani has talked about not only achieving peace but as he aptly terms it 'The Zero Prospect of War'. He has cited the examples of Canada and the European Union. Eliminating or at least significantly reducing the possibility of armed conflict is certainly a major factor behind achieving overall progress. As the North American example shows us, two inter dependent economies have reached a situation where there is no possibility of armed conflict between them. However, is the same true about Asia? Despite highly encouraging economic progress, there are still a number of inter state disputes and a whole history of conflict. Asia is home to two nuclear armed neighbours with a history of conflict and discord behind them. There are other flashpoints such as the Taiwan straits and the Korean peninsula and various other territorial disputes within the continent. While we have noticed major economic growth in most of these countries and some important breakthroughs in settling those disputes, a final solution has not been reached yet. While their progress on the socio-economic front has been encouraging and has been an inspiration for others, the possibility of conflict still looms over the horizon. Asian countries will need to progressively work amongst themselves to solve their disputes and bring down the prospect of conflict. Hence, we need to consider the point that the major socio-economic achievements made by countries such as China, India and Korea could be marred by a major conflict which can not be ruled out given the factors explained earlier.

Conclusion

Finally, Professor Mahbubani has given us a very important book. He has recounted the success of an entire geographical region, encompassing a large community that includes a diverse range of nationalities, cultures and ethnicities. He has taken us on a journey across decades of how Asian countries have evolved, how their socio-economic conditions have improved manifolds, how in one lifetime they have confronted the troubles of poverty and tasted the fruits of prosperity. It is certainly an important account and as a reader what I felt more important was the message of hope and optimism that he has conveyed. Instead of hearing just about the myriad problems and difficulties that are a part of our everyday lives we hear a message of hope, of optimism. We hear about a wave of change that is being felt across Asia, from the mangroves of the Sundarbans to the heights of the mighty Himalayas, a major change is taking place. The Asian continent is rising and while it faces many challenges, its prospects are immense. Despite its challenges and shortcomings, it has the prospects of becoming a highly prosperous and peaceful region and serve as an example for other regions in the world.

Response

Heralding the Asian Century

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A big lesson I learnt from the publication of my book, "The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Power to the East" is that there is no global consensus on whether or not Asia has arrived and whether or not we will have the Asian century. Perhaps the most telling indicators come from the reviews of my book. Thus far, in Asia - and I must confess that I may be wrong - I have yet to find a single negative review. The Asian reviews, especially the ones in India, have been remarkably positive. Many Asians have expressed their delight at finally seeing a book that describes the goals and aspirations of Asians. In the West, however, the reviews have been mixed. While Jeff Garten's review in *Newsweek International* was positive, the same cannot be said of the other Western reviews. I believe that these negative reactions reflect the Western resistance to the idea of "the Asian century".

Perhaps a more telling indicator of this resistance is the behaviour of Western policymakers. If these policymakers believed that the Asian century had arrived, they would reflect this in their behaviour. But as recently as 2007, the Western policymakers have refused to change their policies on the IMF and World Bank. Last year, we changed both the Head of the IMF and the Head of the World Bank. However, we still adhered to the old rule that the Head of the IMF had to be a European and the Head of the World Bank had to be an American. Hence, 3.5 billion Asians who have with the fastest growing economies, the world's largest pool of foreign reserves and who are now producing more economics PhDs than the other parts of the world, did not qualify to run these two organizations. This reluctance to change provides a powerful indication of whether or not Western policymakers believe that times have changed.

If they believed that we still live in the era of Western domination of world history, then they would retain their control over these institutions. If they believed that times had changed, then they would change policies. However such signs of change have not appeared yet. If you want to see an example of a picture of the past, just look at the G8 meetings. They represent what the world used to look like and not what the world will look like in the future. But look at the thousands of Western media personnel who go to report these useless G8 meetings which actually achieve nothing. These G8 meetings provide an indication of the resistance to change in the West, which refuses to accept that the world is moving away from the era of Western domination of world history.

Then, the big question of course is: why is it happening now? As an Asian, the question that confounds me is: why couldn't my ancestors have figured this out a hundred years ago? The Japanese, to be fair, figured out how to modernize an economy in the 1860s. China only figured it out in the 1980s – 120 years later. This is a great historical mystery. Since I am ethnically Indian, I also reflect a great deal over the fact that 300 million of my ethnic Indian ancestors allowed themselves to be ruled peacefully

by a hundred thousand Englishmen. How did they accept colonial rule so peacefully? These are the large questions that need to be asked. But the good news is that all of this is finally changing. Here I am baffled by *The Economist's* description of my book as an "anti-Western polemic". In my book, I argue that Asia is rising now because Asia has finally absorbed and implemented the seven pillars of Western wisdom. Hence, without these seven pillars of Western wisdom, Asia would not be rising. I believe that all of us in Asia should send a big "Thank you" note to the West. How can a book that says Asia is rising because of Western wisdom be seen as an "anti-Western polemic"? But the fact that this can be said is an illustration of the western psychological resistance to accepting the changes in Asia. One of the biggest pieces of Western wisdom that Asia has to learn is how the European Union members managed to achieve "zero prospect of war". That is the greatest civilizational achievement. It is wonderful to live in a society where you don't have to fear that you will ever have to go to war with your neighbours. Asians have yet to achieve this and have a long way to go in achieving "zero prospect of war". This is another area where the West is way ahead of Asia.

Several intellectuals have expressed their concern that the inherent tensions in Asia may cause it to tear itself apart in geopolitical rivalry. The most recent review of my book was by Thomas Fuller, published in the *International Herald Tribune* (IHT) on 18th June 2008. In the review, he reviewed my book and Bill Emmott's book. The theme of Bill Emmott's book is how the new Asian powers will become fierce rivals. Fuller concurred with Emmott's view that the Asian countries are going to tear themselves apart. I don't deny the possibility that with new rising Asian powers, China and India may go to war again or that China and Japan may go to war again. That's conceivable. But is it going to happen? Is it likely? I don't think so. This is because one of the biggest and most remarkable developments that has not been noticed in the world, especially in the West, is the rising geopolitical competence in Asia and the rising geopolitical incompetence in the West.

To understand the geopolitical competence in Asia, look at the obvious example of Southeast Asia. In the 1990s, if you were to predict whether the Balkans of Europe would go to war or whether the Balkans of Asia would go to war, most would predict that the Balkans of Asia would experience war and the Balkans of Europe would be at peace. Instead, the exact opposite happened. There were even proxy wars in the Balkans amongst EU member states. Today, nobody wants to talk about that chapter. This is an illustration of an area where Asia is clearly ahead.

Also, if you look at China and its neighbourhood, you will see that in the past few months, tensions between China and Taiwan have greatly abated. Similarly there have been significant improvements in the Sino-Japanese relationship. Clearly we have some master geopolitical players in Beijing who know how to handle these challenges beautifully. One of the most delicious moments I had when I spoke about my book was at the Council of Foreign Relations, New York.

At that meeting, I turned to the American audience and said "if you want good geopolitical discussions, come to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. However, if you want good geopolitical performance, go to Beijing, don't waste your time at the Council of Foreign Relations." This is the kind of idea that is inconceivable in Western minds. All you have to do is go and read the reviews of my book on my website, www.mahbubani.net. If you do so, you will find that there is clearly a fundamental

resistance to the idea that Asians can get it right. The West will always talk about old conflicts and old problems in Asia when in fact the trend in Asia is in the opposite direction.

Now, is the West part of the problem or part of the solution? And the simple answer is that it is both. It is very much a part of the solution because the West has done the world an enormous favour by creating a benign world order in 1945. At the same time, the tragedy and the paradox here is that the West (which used to be, as I mentioned earlier, geopolitically competent in its handling of many issues) is now becoming incredibly incompetent in responding to new challenges. In my book, I give four examples. Look at the relations between the West and the Islamic world. If you really wanted a plan to aggravate tensions between the West and the Islamic world, carry out Western policies in the Middle East; carry out Western policies in the invasion of Iraq and carry out Western policies in Afghanistan. You can see that the West just doesn't understand how to deal with the Islamic world. It has completely flawed policies and has alienated the Islamic world.

Now look at the biggest danger we face today -- the total collapse of the Doha Round of trade talks. Why is this happening? It is happening because of a lack of confidence in the West that enhancing free trade is good for them. Indeed, the political reaction against free trade is now very powerful in the Western countries.

Third, look at global warming. The West refuses to accept the fact that they are responsible for the stock of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. Instead, they want to focus on the new flows created by new Asian industrial economies. Finally, the non-proliferation treaty is dying now because of Western incompetence also. But let me come to the key question: is there a solution? Here, the really big message in my book that hasn't come through at all in the Western reviews is that at the end of the day, I am an optimist. The book actually has a happy ending, not an unhappy ending. The happy ending is: yes we can work together. Frankly, the new Asian powers do not want to dominate the West. They want to replicate the West. Some of the most brilliant speeches on the vision that Asia has for the future have been given by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. He did so for example, on 7th December 2006 at the LSE Asia Forum in New Delhi. In this speech, he explains how we can work together in a new global order if we learn to share power and compromise. But on the day when his speech appeared, Tony Blair happened to give a speech on the Middle East. There have been hundreds of Western speeches on the Middle East with no progress on this issue. Despite this, Tony Blair's speech received global coverage in the media and PM Manmohan's speech which described the way forward for the 21st century received no coverage at all because the Western media controls what goes out in the world. As a result of this, we get a very distorted perspective of what's really happening in the world.

What I have tried to do in my book quite simply, is to say that we need to balance the distorted perspectives we get from the Western media. This is why we need to have a different point of view expressed and the main goal of my book is to explain the Asian perspectives of the world that the West simply refuses to listen to.

ⁱ See, for example, Bobbitt, Philip, *The Shield of Achilles*, New York, Random House, 2002.

ⁱⁱ The European Union mapped out at the meeting of the European Council in June 1993 the Copenhagen criteria for accession to the union. See

http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhagen_en.htm

The European Constitution, rejected by a majority of voters in France and the Netherlands in early summer 2005, contains for the first time an attempt to describe what the EU stands for and what keeps the member-states together. See Title I, Definitions and Objectives of the Union plus articles I-9, I-10, and I-11:

http://europa.eu/institutional_reform/index_en.htm

ⁱⁱⁱ I have tried to take the analysis a bit further in the following works: Møller, Jørgen Ørstrøm, *European Integration-Sharing of Experiences*, Singapore, ISEAS, 2008, *A New International System*, Singapore, ISEAS, 2004, *A New International System*, In *The National Interest* February 18, 2004, *A Vacuum in Strategic Thinking*. *The National Interest* online. November 2004.

^{iv} See, for example, Møller, Jørgen Ørstrøm, "The Return of Malthus", *The American Interest*, Vol. III, Number 6, July/August 2008.

^v See, for example, *The New Media, Inc.* Co-author Terence Chong. *The National Interest* online, October 30, 2006.



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