

## America's Grand Design in Asia

In a dynamic Asian order featuring new centers of power, China's rise will naturally challenge Washington's ability to protect its interests in the region.<sup>1</sup> In 2000, presidential candidate George W. Bush labeled China as the United States' leading strategic and military competitor.<sup>2</sup> In September 2005, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick explicitly warned Beijing not to "maneuver toward a predominance of power" in Asia, suggesting that it was doing exactly that.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of this challenge, the United States has strengthened the two pillars of its Cold War-era regional security posture: its hub-and-spoke system of bilateral military alliances and its forward-deployed military forces. Washington has reconfigured its permanent troop deployments in Japan and South Korea, tightened its alliance with Australia, declared Thailand and the Philippines to be major non-NATO allies, and signed a wide-ranging strategic cooperation agreement with Singapore. Meanwhile, the Pentagon has deployed significant new power-projection capabilities to the region, including attack submarines, cruise-missile destroyers, long-range bombers, and fighter aircraft stationed in Guam.

To these two preexisting pillars of its Asian security strategy, the United States is adding a third, designed to hedge against the danger of Chinese hegemony in Asia by limiting and constructively channeling China's regional ambitions. U.S. policy seeks to accelerate the economic and military rise of key Asian states with the power potential and ambitions to constrain China's ability to dominate its region. The United States is not working to contain China. Rather, U.S. policymakers are employing a radically different strategy:

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to preserve Washington's strategic position in the region by facilitating the ascent of friendly Asian centers of power that will both constrain any Chinese bid for hegemony and allow the United States to retain its position as Asia's decisive strategic actor. In the face of the China challenge, the United States is encouraging the emergence of new centers of strength that will not erode U.S. power but protect the U.S. position in a new Asian balance featuring emerging world powers in China, Japan, and India.

### **Encouraging Japan's Normalization**

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Over the past decade, the United States has employed the framework of the U.S.-Japanese alliance and changes in Japan's domestic political climate as well as security outlook to bring about its gradual, ongoing normalization as a military great power. As Japan's modern identity as a nonmilitarized trading state has been increasingly challenged by changes in the Japanese social and security environment, the United States has systematically pushed its ally to develop new military roles and capabilities that necessarily erode Japan's pacifist norms of restraint but legitimizes these changes by giving Tokyo a growing stake in the global order.

After the 1994 North Korean nuclear crisis and around the time of the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, Washington successfully pushed Tokyo to assume responsibilities as an active guarantor of Asia-Pacific security well beyond the defense of Japan. This shift occurred as the short-term threat from North Korea and the longer-term challenge of rising Chinese power first became clear to leaders in Washington and Tokyo, inspiring a U.S. campaign to enlarge Japan's security responsibilities. The 1996 Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security declared that U.S. and Japanese security are “tied inextricably to the future of the Asia-Pacific region” and mentioned the importance of maintaining security in the “Asia-Pacific region” 11 times.<sup>4</sup>

Then, building on the alliance's shift from bilateral to regional affairs, the Bush administration took office in 2001 determined to sponsor Japan as the United States' “Great Britain of the East,” a powerful ally with significant military capabilities that would act as a global security partner.<sup>5</sup> Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage repeatedly called on Japan to revise its interpretation of Article IX of its constitution, which prohibits Japanese participation in collective self-defense, declaring it an “obstacle” and a “constraint” on alliance cooperation.<sup>6</sup> In 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell advised Japan that jettisoning its pacifist constitution would strengthen U.S. support for its bid for permanent membership on the UN Security Council.<sup>7</sup> Senior U.S. officials actively lobbied Japan to deploy naval forces to the Indian Ocean during the Afghanistan conflict and publicly urged Japan to put

“boots on the ground” in Iraq, resulting in Japan’s first military deployment to a war zone since 1945.

Washington legitimizes new Japanese military roles abroad by helping to make Japan a mutual stakeholder in and enforcer of the global balance in a time of rising new challenges. After strong U.S. lobbying, Japan became a founding member of the Proliferation Security Initiative, “a global initiative with global reach,” and hosted armed interdiction exercises with navies from three continents.<sup>8</sup> Successive U.S. administrations have also successfully lobbied Japan to jointly develop a theater missile defense (TMD) system with the United States.

This cooperation has put political and technological pressures on Japan to abandon old norms of military restraint, as TMD development requires Japan to plan for a range of regional and international contingencies unrelated to the defense of Japanese territory. To meet its TMD and ever-expanding security responsibilities within the alliance, Japan possesses, is producing, or is acquiring from the United States weapons systems that give it significant offensive power-projection capabilities, undercutting its postwar pledge never to become a military great power. Tokyo also may have to abandon the principle of limiting defense spending to 1 percent of its gross domestic product.<sup>9</sup>

Japan has called its regional security role within the U.S.-Japanese alliance a “public good” for all the countries of Asia.<sup>10</sup> Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called strengthening public support for Japan’s “responsibility” to maintain stability and security across Asia “the unfinished business of my generation.”<sup>11</sup> Within the context of Japanese domestic politics, Japan’s expanded regional, global, and theater defense missions legitimize the expansion of Japan’s military capabilities and responsibilities in ways that reduce the political costs of future militarization.<sup>12</sup>

When asked whether U.S. support for Japan’s transformation into an active regional security actor upsets the Asian balance of power, U.S. officials have responded that it is China’s growing military capabilities that most threaten the balance and that encouraging Japan’s new security activism is a way to stabilize it.<sup>13</sup> As Japan grows increasingly comfortable as a great power that is able to deploy military forces overseas and to possess growing military capabilities, Washington is actively working to construct Japan as a center of power in an effort to position it within a new Asian and global security order as China rises.

**Washington is actively working to construct Japan as a center of power.**

## Facilitating India's Rise

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The United States is also cultivating India as a strong, independent center of power. "India as a global power is in an early, formative phase," said a senior U.S. official. "The United States' job for the next 5 to 10 years is to promote, assist, and shape that process."<sup>14</sup>

As early as 1988, a Pentagon commission charged with anticipating the future security environment identified India as a defense-industrial center of strength that the United States should cultivate,<sup>15</sup> but proliferation disputes stalled this design during much of the 1990s. A strategic dialogue between Washington and New Delhi, however, launched after India's nuclear weapons tests in 1998 revealed a startling congruence of interests, including a mutual concern about the strategic implications of rising Chinese power.

In 2000, Bush and his advisers determined that their Asia policy would include a greater role for a dynamic and democratic India in shaping the Asian balance and tackling global challenges. Going a step further, in 2005 the Bush administration announced its intention to accelerate India's rise, a decision to "play midwife to the birth of a new great power"<sup>16</sup> unprecedented in the history of U.S. foreign policy. The United States announced in March 2005 that it would "help India become a major world power in the 21st century" and fully understood the military implications of this policy,<sup>17</sup> which U.S. officials saw as largely positive.<sup>18</sup> U.S. officials welcome the rise of Indian power because they believe that no other two countries so closely share such a wide range of interests over the long term, from managing Chinese power to protecting the sea lanes to combating Islamic terrorism.<sup>19</sup>

The United States has given substance to this vision through agreements designed to comprehensively strengthen India's military, economic, and technological capabilities. A 10-year program of defense cooperation encompasses advanced joint exercises and training, expanded defense trade, defense technology transfer, missile defense collaboration, and defense procurement and coproduction. The United States has aggressively promoted defense and technology transfer to India with little concern for relative gain, offering to transfer an entire fighter jet assembly line and other defense platforms to India, without insisting on an Indian commitment to a military alliance or even to common geopolitical goals. Strategic partnership agreements in 2005 and 2006 formalized collaboration with India on the transfer of high technology, civil nuclear energy, economic capacity building, trade and investment, science, education, agriculture, and other areas, all designed to boost India's development trajectory.

A pending agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation will, if implemented, significantly raise India's long-term trend rate of economic growth, granting

India access to the international trade in dual-use technologies and critically boosting India's capabilities. It will also allow India, with U.S. complicity, to protect and strengthen its nuclear weapons capabilities as a rising military power in a changing Asia.

As with Japan, the United States has increasingly pushed India to assume responsibilities as a global security partner. In 2001, senior U.S. officials launched a structured dialogue with India on a range of international security issues, from missile defense to terrorism.<sup>20</sup> Washington regularly consults New Delhi on issues such as Chinese military power, Iran's nuclear program, and sea-lane security in international waters.<sup>21</sup> Privately, U.S. officials are blunt about their determination to promote India's geopolitical ascent as "an independent, confident, and powerful state" to help manage international order. "In 15 years, the world will be a more dangerous place than it is today, and we will want friends like this."<sup>22</sup>

**In 2005 the U.S. announced its historically unprecedented intention to accelerate India's rise.**

Rather than the bipolar U.S.-Chinese order that many in Beijing expect to emerge, Indian officials share the U.S. confidence that, as India's economy and capabilities grow with the help of U.S. technology, military hardware, and investment, New Delhi will be an important center of power in the emerging Asian order. Like China, India expects to be "a major player in Asia," and with the United States, it "can contribute to a much better balance in the Asian region."<sup>23</sup> "China is a central element in our effort to encourage India's emergence as a world power," says a senior U.S. official. "But we don't need to talk about the containment of China. It will take care of itself as India rises."<sup>24</sup> India's historical wariness of China, as well as its ambitions to match China's rise to world power, give U.S. officials confidence that it will emerge as a friendly, independent pole in Asia's emerging security order.

India's trajectory as a rising world power means it will not be a subordinate ally but a strong, equal partner. The CIA has labeled India the most important "swing state" in international politics, predicting that by 2015 India would possess the fourth-most capable concentration of power in the international system.<sup>25</sup> The United States intends to capitalize on India's importance to "creat[e] a strategically stable Asia."<sup>26</sup>

## **Partnering with Emerging Regional Powers**

Washington is also quietly reshaping security in Southeast Asia by constructing new partnerships with emerging regional powers Indonesia and Vietnam. Unlike

Thailand and the Philippines, these states will probably never be formal U.S. allies, given their different histories and national identities. Yet, they are also unlikely to bandwagon with China. Samuel Huntington predicted that Indonesia's cultural identity as an independent maritime empire and Vietnam's national identity forged during 5,000 years of resistance to Chinese imperial authority mean that these two states, along with India and perhaps even more than Japan, are most likely to balance Chinese power in a future China-centric Asian order.<sup>27</sup>

**Washington is also quietly reshaping Southeast Asian security by constructing new partnerships.**

As the world's fourth- and eleventh-most populous states, with dynamic economies, sizable armed forces, and an abiding historical wariness of China, Indonesia and Vietnam have the potential and inclination, as they modernize their economies and military forces with U.S. assistance, to serve as autonomous counterweights to Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. U.S. officials

believe that both, as strategic partners and independent centers of strength, may prove more important than traditional Southeast Asian allies such as Thailand and the Philippines. These states, for economic and cultural reasons, appear to be growing more comfortable with rising Chinese influence in Asia even as their neighbors become more wary. Moreover, they do not possess the long-term power potential of Indonesia or Vietnam.<sup>28</sup>

### **CULTIVATING SHARED VALUES IN INDONESIA**

As Indonesia emerges from a decade of turmoil caused by the Asian financial crisis, domestic political revolution, East Timor's secession, and a successful democratic transition, the United States has identified Indonesia as an important emerging power and strategic actor in its wider region. Analysts predict that Indonesia's economy could surpass in size all but the largest European economies by 2020. During that same period, Indonesia, with China and India, will account for most of the increase in world population and consumer demand.<sup>29</sup>

Recognizing a democratic, pluralistic, and prosperous Indonesia as a potentially significant power with which the United States enjoys a confluence of interests and values, the Bush administration has sought to strengthen it as an autonomous counterweight. Indonesian military complicity in the 1999 East Timor crisis and resulting congressional sanctions limited Washington's ability to pursue this design for some time. Following Indonesia's first direct presidential election, Washington restored full military-to-military ties in 2005 in order to strengthen Indonesian democracy, help build Indonesia's military

and maritime capabilities, and “highlight our support for Indonesia’s role in the region.”<sup>30</sup>

The U.S. and Indonesian navies now regularly conduct joint exercises in strategic Southeast Asian waters. The United States has sold military equipment and spare parts to the Indonesian military and has provided substantial foreign assistance for Indonesian capacity building in governance, education, and economic development. Indonesian officials understand the U.S. design: “The United States wants us to be stable, to develop economically and politically, so we can be a power within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [(ASEAN)],” says Minister of Defense Juwono Sudarsono. “The unstated reason is of course to balance the rising power of China.”<sup>31</sup>

Although U.S. officials recognize that Indonesia will not join a formal military alliance, given its identity as an Asian maritime empire wary of threats to its independence from external powers, Washington perceives a stake in Indonesia’s autonomous development as a democratic power of considerable strategic importance. As a Pentagon official puts it, in addition to helping Indonesia expand its military and economic capabilities, “We hope that, by building up Indonesian democracy, we will cement a shared value system, and that in itself will pay strategic dividends in the broader balance of power game in Asia.”<sup>32</sup>

### **DEVELOPING VIETNAM’S AUTONOMY**

Washington normalized diplomatic relations with Hanoi in 1995 with an eye on what Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.) identified as the importance of a strong and independent Vietnam to the regional balance of power. With China emerging as “our number one security problem,” it was “absolutely in our national security interests to have an economically viable Vietnam strong enough to resist ... the heavy-handed tactics of its great-power neighbor.”<sup>33</sup> Washington’s closer strategic ties with Hanoi buck a trend of pursuing security cooperation primarily with Asia’s great democracies, raising the risk that U.S. engagement could empower Vietnam’s autocracy rather than encouraging its liberalization. To the United States’ credit, U.S. pressure on human rights and religious freedom issues has promoted a degree of domestic political liberalization within Vietnam, allowing Washington to correctly claim that its growing partnership with Vietnam need not conflict with U.S. support for universal values.

The United States has gingerly cultivated an increasingly important military relationship with Vietnam, dating from the first visit of the U.S. commander of Pacific forces in 1997 and culminating most recently in a series of visits by U.S. warships to Vietnamese ports and an agreement for Vietnamese officers to undergo training in the United States. A U.S. planner says that the United States wants to build up Vietnam’s capability to police Asian sea lanes

and play a broader role in Asian security as rapid economic growth allows it to develop better military capabilities.<sup>34</sup>

Although it will continue to tread cautiously, given its history with the United States and its geographic proximity to China, Vietnam has compelling reasons to welcome Washington's interest as rapid economic growth and military modernization fuel its emergence as a regional power. Although they mimic China's political and economic model, many officials in Hanoi believe China "would never want a strong and independent Vietnam."<sup>35</sup> In 2003 a senior Vietnamese official told a U.S. counterpart that, thanks to China's growing regional presence and Washington's lack of attention to Southeast Asia, "the [U.S.-Chinese-Vietnamese] triangle is out of balance" and urged the United States to contest China's influence more vigorously.<sup>36</sup> In the same year, Vietnam's ruling Politburo made a strategic decision to enhance defense cooperation with the United States significantly.

Vietnamese officials privately acknowledge the "indispensable" role the United States plays in ensuring regional stability through its security commitments and leadership.<sup>37</sup> This creates a confluence of interests. As Vietnam seeks to enhance its autonomy by creating equilibrium in its external relations with the United States and China, the United States, Vietnam's largest trading partner and most important military suitor, will continue to support Vietnam's development and independence to prevent the formation of a Chinese sphere of influence across Southeast Asia.

### **A Concert of Asia-Pacific Democracies?**

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U.S. efforts to develop multilateral security cooperation with militarily capable Asian democracies reveal a further element of the U.S. design, which breaks from the bilateralism of Washington's Cold War alliance policies. In 1993 the Clinton administration sketched a vision of a "fellowship of free Pacific nations" that would uphold security and prosperity in Asia and identified nurturing a concert of Asian democracies as one of its 10 policy priorities in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>38</sup>

President Bill Clinton's efforts to construct such a regional democratic partnership, however, were never systematic, obscured by a series of crises in relations with North Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and China. The most tangible expression of the administration's interest in formalizing multilateral security cooperation with its Asian allies was the establishment in 1999 of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group among Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul to coordinate North Korea policy.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush reiterated the goal of an Asian concert, saying that the United States should "work toward the day

when the fellowship of free Pacific nations is as strong and united as our Atlantic partnership.” Bush promised to build “strong democratic alliances” in Asia that would leave China “unthreatened, but not unchecked.”<sup>39</sup> The 2002 National Security Strategy declared that the United States would “implement its strategies by organizing coalitions—as broad as practicable—of states able and willing to promote a balance of power that favors freedom,” singling out Japan, South Korea, and Australia in Asia, with the goal of “develop[ing] a mix of regional and bilateral strategies to manage change in this dynamic region.”<sup>40</sup>

U.S. officials viewed the December 2004 Asian tsunami as a chance to advance security cooperation among the United States and Asia’s leading powers, resulting in the unprecedented military cooperation among the core group of Australia, India, Indonesia, Japan, and the United States to provide humanitarian relief to stricken areas. U.S. officials have expressed the aim of transforming the tsunami coalition into a more enduring regional alliance united around shared democratic values.<sup>41</sup>

Washington has also encouraged Tokyo to move the U.S.-Japanese alliance beyond bilateralism to enable formal U.S.-Japanese military cooperation with other Asian democracies. In 2005 the United States and Japan agreed for the first time in alliance history to undertake joint military exercises and training with other states to contribute to regional and international security. In the same year, Japanese forces participated for the first time in the U.S.-Thai-Singaporean “Cobra Gold” military exercises, the largest in Asia.

To enhance trilateral strategic cooperation and joint planning, Australia, Japan, and the United States launched a formal Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD) at the ministerial level. Before its March 2006 meeting, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice criticized China as a “negative force” in the region, declared the TSD talks would focus on China’s rise, and deemed its military buildup “concerning for those of us that have a responsibility for defending the peace in the Asia-Pacific region. ... All of us in the region ... have a joint responsibility and obligation to try to produce conditions in which the rise of China will be a positive force in international relations, not a negative one.”<sup>42</sup> It appeared that the United States was working to unite its main Asian allies in an effort to help shape China’s strategic options and encourage it to behave responsibly as a rising power. Asked if China should see the trilateral forum of Washington and its key Asian allies as cause for concern, a U.S. official said that he hoped it would.<sup>43</sup>

**Indonesia and Vietnam may prove more important to the U.S. than Thailand and the Philippines.**

At the NATO summit in Riga in late 2006, the United States secured the alliance's agreement to enhance military interoperability and joint planning with Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. This is part of a larger U.S. design to encourage Asian partners to assume global security responsibilities as what U.S. officials call "democratic security providers" and to formalize security cooperation among partners combining shared values with significant military capabilities.<sup>44</sup> In late 2006, Japan and India declared a strategic and global partnership, and in early 2007, Japan signed a formal security pact with Australia, Tokyo's first such agreement outside the U.S.-Japanese alliance since 1945. The United States has welcomed both developments.

Thanks to the leadership of Abe, Australia, India, Japan, and the United States are holding their first formal security dialogue together this year. In April 2007, Japan joined the United States in unprecedented joint naval exercises with India in the Pacific Ocean. Although more a vision than a policy at this early stage, the idea of developing functional new security coalitions with and among leading Asian democracies is appealing to U.S. officials, who share an interest with counterparts in Australia, India, and Japan in maintaining a security order that protects shared values in the shadow of China's authoritarian power.

### **Does Washington Seek Strength or Compliance?**

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U.S. policy seeks to build and bind together friendly centers of power in Asia to help maintain a regional balance that preserves U.S. interests and values as China rises. "We want to encourage the rise of friendly, independent Asian powers, but we also want to bind their interests to ours," says former National Security Council official Michael Green.<sup>45</sup> The United States is trying to build strength in its Asian partners, not subordinate or contain them in Cold War-type alliance structures in which the United States institutionalizes its own dominance.

This policy is attractive to Asian leaders who want to build national capabilities and increase their respective country's room to maneuver in the emerging Asian order and who recognize that cooperation with the United States to strengthen their economic and military capabilities will accelerate this process, enhance their autonomy, and countervail growing Chinese influence. Yet, U.S. policy rekindles traditional wariness in India, Indonesia, and Vietnam about perceived U.S. hegemonic designs. Ironically, although U.S. leaders welcome these countries' determination to protect their autonomy as China rises, thereby helping to preserve a pluralistic Asian security order, their very independence also means that they are wary of U.S. dominance.

Nonetheless, the United States values its key Asian partners for their growing strength. As former Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran notes, "If there

is a greater focus today on India in the [United States], it is not because India is weak but because India is strong. We are being recognized as a country which has [an] array of capabilities and has the potential to emerge as a very important power in the future.”<sup>46</sup> Former Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi controversially maintained that building Japanese strength within the U.S. alliance would actually improve Tokyo's relations with Beijing.<sup>47</sup> Washington's policy of building new centers of power in Asia is premised on a congruence of interests with states such as India and Japan in strengthening their national capabilities and expanding their security horizons to shape the emerging order of the new century.

**The U.S. is trying to build strength in its Asian partners, not subordinate or contain them.**

The United States is not pursuing this design to contain China but to shape its geopolitical options as a country at a “strategic crossroads.”<sup>48</sup> Washington is limiting China's potential strategic choices by strengthening and cultivating friendly Asian powers along its periphery that will constrain and constructively channel Beijing's regional and international ambitions. “It is very useful to remind China,” says one U.S. official, “that there are other emerging powerful countries, such as India, who are setting standards we agree with. This is very different from containment; it is more about encouraging or shaping China's view of the international system in a constructive way.”<sup>49</sup>

## China's Response

Such assumptions highlight the danger that the U.S. design could create increasingly acute security dilemmas for China as Japan and India develop potent new capabilities and as coalitions of China-wary democracies form along its periphery. Such spirals of insecurity could help bring about the very threat from China against which the United States is working to hedge. Before assuming his current post as president of China, Hu Jintao, in internal leadership discussions leaked and published in the West, revealed Beijing's anxieties about U.S. encirclement of China through strengthened relations with its key neighbors. As Hu pointed out, the United States had

strengthened its military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region, strengthened the U.S.-Japanese military alliance, strengthened strategic cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam, inveigled Pakistan, established

a pro-American government in Afghanistan, increased arms sales to Taiwan, and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points on us from the east, south, and west. This makes a great change in our geopolitical environment.<sup>50</sup>

Chinese analysts have voiced their greatest alarm not about U.S. strength in Asia, which has been a constant since the end of the Cold War, but about Japan's rise as a more "normal" military power, demonstrating a widely shared belief that Japan's resurgence gravely complicates China's leadership ambitions in Asia.<sup>51</sup> So does India's U.S.-sponsored strategic ascent. As Indian strategist

**The U.S. is not pursuing this design to contain China but to shape its geopolitical options.**

Brahma Chellaney recounts, "On my visits to China, I have found as an Indian that the only time the Chinese sit up and listen is when the U.S.-Indian relationship comes up. India and the United States ganging up militarily is China's worst nightmare."<sup>52</sup>

Beijing's response to Washington's efforts to nurture Asian counterweights to Chinese power has been to pursue a Bismarckian policy of strengthening relations with key neighbors to prevent them from joining any U.S.-led

containment coalition.<sup>53</sup> Singapore's *Straits Times* described an October 2006 summit between the leaders of China and Southeast Asian nations as part of a Chinese design to make it more "difficult for the United States to seek to contain China by drawing the region's countries to its side."<sup>54</sup>

Chinese leaders have skillfully worked to reassure their neighbors about China's "peaceful rise" while prioritizing the maintenance of good relations with the United States, given the importance of U.S. trade and investment to China's modernization and the dangers an overt military competition with the world's superpower would pose to China's development prospects. Perhaps most fundamentally, overt military conflict with the United States might threaten the legitimacy of Communist Party rule at a time when China's greatest political and economic challenges are internal.<sup>55</sup>

China and the United States are working to shape Asia's emerging regional order in ways that preserve their security, economic, and diplomatic interests. Yet, these interests sometimes clash in fundamental ways. Beijing has worked to exclude the United States in key regional forums such as the East Asia Summit and to decouple key Asian allies such as the Philippines from the U.S. embrace by offering enormous grants for infrastructure development with few strings attached. The United States is hedging its relations with a rising China by assisting the rise of strong neighbors along China's periphery.

Ironically, Beijing and Washington seem to agree that overt U.S. containment of China is impossible. Yet, China's rise is occurring at a time when India, Indonesia, Japan, and other traditional centers of power in Asia are resurgent and when a preponderant United States still retains the ability to shape strategic outcomes. Washington is taking advantage of the natural fears of Chinese hegemony among China's neighbors to stabilize a new Asian balance as China rises.

## Preserving Its Interests

Accelerating the rise of friendly, independent centers of power in Asia may allow the United States to maintain its privileged position within an "asymmetrically multipolar" Asian security order characterized by multiple power centers—China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and ASEAN—that makes it naturally resistant to Chinese domination.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, the implications for the United States of trends in Asia are inescapable. Relative U.S. power will wane as China and India rise. "It's not possible to pretend that [China] is just another player," said Singapore's former prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, in 1993. "This is the biggest player in the history of man. ... The size of China's displacement of the world balance is such that the world must find a new balance" within a few decades.<sup>57</sup> The United States is pursuing a grand design to shape that new balance in ways that preserve its interests in a pluralistic security order that is dominated by no one regional power and that aligns it increasingly closely with democratic and like-minded centers of strength in a rising Asia.

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