

Local Columns

> [News](#) > [Local Columns](#)

[Print this Page](#)

[«--back to story](#)

Rise of China posing hard questions for U.S. and others

POSTED: May 8, 2010

The global balance of power is shifting: China is rising and is expected to eclipse the United States economically in the near future. The rise of China is posing hard questions for the U.S. as well as countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

For many Asia-Pacific countries, including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, the key issue is a huge trade imbalance that is turning evermore political. Even with countries like India and ASEAN states, trade deficits with China are widening as well-the balance was in favor of China to the tune of \$16 billion and \$22 billion, respectively, in 2009.

For America and its allies in the region, the issue is political, too. China is not a democracy and Chinese government's attitude toward human rights and free expression and Chinese Communist Party's pervasive censorship-including of the Internet, leave a lot to be desired. Beijing's decisions to jail well-known Chinese political dissidents and human right lawyers in December, to arrest and convict Australian business executives and kick Google.cn out of mainland China in March, and to execute Japanese nationals on charges of drug trafficking in April are just few high-profile examples of Beijing's willingness to flex its muscles.

Public opinion-wise, perceptions of China in other countries have been declining notably. According to the BBC World Service Poll, carried out jointly by international polling firm Globe Scan and the Program on International Policy Attitudes, with nearly 30,000 people in 28 countries interviewed, views of China around the region have deteriorated sharply over the past five years, falling from 49 percent in 2005 to less than 34 percent in 2009 and 2010.

The cause of why Beijing is acting in such a bellicose and arrogant manner is yet to be determined. "There is a lively debate in Western intelligence communities," according to Greg Sheridan, foreign editor of the Australian, "over whether this reflects Beijing's growing self-confidence, as the China-is-set-to-dominate-the-world school would have it or, conversely, growing Chinese apprehension about the future."

But the result of China's rise in the Asia-Pacific region is clear. As Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president of the Cato Institute, puts it, even though many countries of the Asia-Pacific region "have major economic stakes in their relationships with China, they are exceedingly nervous about the possibility of Chinese hegemony in East Asia. Since most of them also are reaching the reluctant conclusion that the United States will not be able to afford indefinitely the financial burden and military requirements of remaining the region's security stabilizer, a role the United States has played since the end of World War II, they are looking for other options to blunt China's emerging preeminence."

Given America's gradually waning supremacy, Beijing is envisioning itself to be the most prominent power, if not a hegemon, in Asia and the Pacific in coming years. Consequently, Washington must encourage and support other major countries, in particular India, Japan, and Australia, to step up and become significant strategic players in the region.

There is an emerging consensus among policy makers and political leaders in Asia and the Pacific that the region needs new strategic counterweight to China. As Ted Galen Carpenter noted, "Leaders in Australia and New Zealand are receptive to the prospect of both India and Japan playing more active security roles in the region, thereby acting as strategic counterweights to China. Australia and New Zealand may be a little ahead of the curve in that process, but the attitude in those countries about the desirability of Japan and India adopting more active security roles is not unique."

India can play a leading role in forming the new alliance. "The world takes a benign view of India, they want us to succeed," declares Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, "unlike China's rise, the rise of India does not cause any apprehensions. India has chosen the democratic values: respect for fundamental human rights and the respect for the rule of law. Although China's GDP is higher than that of India's, India would still not like to choose the Chinese path."

A strategic "quadrilateral" of America, India, Japan and Australia (AIJA) would set a new tone of peace and security for the Asia-Pacific region and grow into a lasting alliance to contain China's rising military might and strategic ambitions. Fail to do so will lead to a dangerous power vacuum in the region, a vacuum that China is well-positioned to fill.

Xiaoxiong Yi is the director of Marietta College's China Program.

[Subscribe to The Marietta Times](#)

[Recommend](#)

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Share:

[Facebook](#)
[MySpace](#)
[Digg](#)
[Stumble](#)
[Buzz up!](#)
[Mixx](#)
[Fark](#)
[del.icio.us](#)
[LiveSpaces](#)

