

Comparative Connections

A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



Occasional Analysis:

U.S. Presidential Candidate John McCain's Views on Relations with Asia

Overall priorities for East Asia

The resurgence of Asia is one of the epochal events of our time. It is a renaissance that is not only transforming the face of this vast region, but throwing open new opportunities for billions of people on both sides of the Pacific – Americans and Asians alike – to build a safer, more prosperous and freer world.

Seizing these opportunities, however, will require strong American leadership and an unequivocal American commitment to Asia, whose fate is increasingly inseparable from our own. It requires internationalism rather than isolationism, and free trade rather than protectionism. When our friends and allies in the Asia-Pacific region think of the future, they should expect more – not less – attention, investment and cooperation from the highest levels of the U.S. government.

Fortunately, the next American president will inherit a set of alliances and friendships in Asia that are already in good shape. At a time when America's popularity has declined in many regions, Asia stands as an exception. Polls show that the United States enjoys more support in Japan, South Korea, China and India than it did in 2000. Our core alliances with Japan, South Korea and Australia have never been stronger; relations with old friends in Southeast Asia like Singapore are excellent; and promising partnerships have been forged in recent years with friends like India, Vietnam and Indonesia.

The next president must expand on these achievements with an ambitious, focused agenda to further strengthen and deepen these relationships. Putting our alliances first, and bringing our friends into greater partnership in the management of both regional and global affairs, is key to meeting the collective challenges we face in a changing Asia and in a changing world. For the same reason, the U.S. must also participate more actively in Asian regional organizations.

(John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, "Renewing America's Asia Policy," *Wall Street Journal Asia*, May 27, 2008)

U.S.-Japan alliance

The U.S.-Japan alliance has been the indispensable anchor of peace, prosperity and freedom in the Asia-Pacific for more than 60 years, and its importance will only grow in the years ahead. Deepening cooperation, consultation and coordination between Washington and Tokyo is the key

to meeting the collective challenges that both of our nations face – from nuclear proliferation to climate change – and to advancing our common interest in building a safer, better world for all of our citizens.

With respect to North Korea, for example, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was right: We must bring both dialogue and pressure to bear on Pyongyang. We have the right framework in the six-party talks and the right tools in the U.N. Security Council resolution passed after North Korea's 2006 nuclear test, as well as the U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilateral coordination group. Now we must use those tools to press for the full, complete, and verifiable declaration, disablement and dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs – goals already agreed upon by the six parties. Future talks must also prioritize North Korea's ballistic missile programs, its abduction of Japanese citizens, and its human rights record.

The United States and Japan must also work closely together with regard to China – not to contain or isolate Beijing, but to ensure its peaceful integration as a responsible stakeholder in the international system. In fact, it is precisely by strengthening our alliance and deepening our cooperation that Japan and the United States can lay the necessary groundwork for more durable, stable, and successful relations with China.

Ultimately, the enduring strength of the United States' alliance with Japan is rooted not just in a set of shared interests, but in the bedrock of shared values. Thanks to the success of Japan's democracy, numerous other nations across Asia have been inspired to follow in its path. In fact, more people live under democratic government in Asia today than in any other region of the world. Japan is a major reason why. The United States and Japan have a clear interest in enshrining these norms and values at the center of our international system. (John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, "Putting Our Allies First," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 29, 2008)

U.S.-China relations

China's double-digit growth rates have brought hundreds of millions out of poverty and energized the economies of its neighbors. The U.S. shares common interests with China that can form the basis of a strong partnership on issues of global concern, including climate change, trade and proliferation. But China's rapid military modernization, mercantilist economic practices, lack of political freedom and close relations with regimes like Sudan and Burma undermine the very international system on which its rise depends. The next American president must build on the areas of overlapping interest to forge a more durable U.S.-China relationship. Doing so will require strong alliances with other Asian nations and a readiness to speak openly with Beijing when it fails to behave as a responsible stakeholder. (John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, "Renewing America's Asia Policy," *Wall Street Journal Asia*, May 27, 2008)

Firm commitments to our allies will set the stage for an American engagement of China that builds on the many areas of common interest we share with Beijing and encourages candour and progress in those areas where China has not fulfilled its responsibilities as a global power. We have seen both aspects of China's rise vividly demonstrated during the Olympics. Americans and Australians have been impressed with Beijing's glittering landscape and warmed by the hospitality and graciousness of the Chinese people. But in Beijing our journalists have also seen

up close how human dignity suffers when basic rights such as freedom of speech and religious worship are denied. Our shared challenge is to convince the Chinese leadership that their nation's remarkable success rests ultimately on whether they can translate economic development into a more open and tolerant political process at home, and a more responsible foreign policy abroad. (John McCain, "Alliance into the 21st Century," *The Australian*, September 23, 2008)

Cross-strait Relations

I welcome reports indicating that the sale of defensive arms to Taiwan – a package that has been on hold for too long – will now move forward. By notifying Congress of its intent to provide weapons aimed at bolstering Taiwan's self defense, the administration is taking a step in the right direction. I have long supported such sales in order to strengthen deterrence in the Taiwan Strait and to help preserve the peace. American interests in Asia are well-served through faithful implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act, and if I am fortunate enough to be elected President, I will continue the longstanding and close ties between our peoples.

In that spirit, however, I note that the administration has refrained from providing all of the elements requested by Taiwan for its legitimate security requirements. For example, the package will not include submarines or new F-16 aircraft. I urge the administration to reconsider this decision, in light of its previous commitment to provide submarines and America's previous sales of F-16s. These sales – which could translate into tens of thousands of jobs here at home – would help retain America's edge in the production of advanced weaponry and represent a positive sign in these difficult economic times.

We should seek cooperative and productive relations with China that proceed in a spirit of confidence, and we should promote the improvement of cross-strait relations. As we do, however, we should understand that the possibility of productive ties between Taiwan and China are enhanced, not diminished, when Taipei speaks from a position of strength. I believe that America should continue to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan in the future, in accordance with its security requirements, and stand by this remarkable free and democratic people. (Statement by John McCain on Taiwan, October 3, 2008)

Korean Peninsula, denuclearization, and the Six-Party Talks

The next president will need to use intensive diplomacy to move towards a fully denuclearized Korean Peninsula, but cannot make the mistake of assuming that talking is our only tool. We cannot be so naive as to think we will convince Kim Jong-il to give up his nuclear weapons, let alone end his horrific treatment of his people, by promising that the president of the United States will unconditionally sit down with him to ask what else he wants.

Rather, it is through close cooperation with our closest allies – our strong alliance with the Republic of Korea, close trilateral coordination with Japan, and full use of UN Security Council Resolution 1718 – that we can best hope to solve the North Korean challenge.

We strongly support President Lee's strategy of seeking full reciprocity in terms of denuclearization, human rights, and accounting for the hundreds of South Koreans abducted over

the years by Pyongyang. North Korea's bellicose rhetoric towards Seoul in recent weeks is revealing. It tells us that Pyongyang continues to try to divide the participants in the six-party talks instead of taking steps that would reassure the legitimate concerns that have been raised about the North's intentions. We support Seoul's calm and firm response to these efforts. Our priority must be a united front with our democratic allies in confronting the dangers posed by North Korea." (John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, "*Putting Our Allies First*," *Joongang Ilbo*, May 29, 2008)

Reports indicate that the administration may soon remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. I have previously said that I would not support the easing of sanctions North Korea unless the U.S. is able to fully verify the nuclear declaration Pyongyang submitted on June 26. It is not clear that the latest verification arrangement will enable us to do so.

I am also concerned that this latest agreement appears to have been reached between Washington and Pyongyang and only then discussed with our Asian allies in an effort to garner their support. Diplomacy is a critical tool in ending the North Korean nuclear weapons program, and it must involve our closest partners in Northeast Asia. While we conduct this diplomacy, we must keep our goal in sight – the verifiable denuclearization of North Korea – and avoid reaching for agreement for its own sake, particularly if it leaves critical verification issues unaddressed. I am also concerned that recent negotiations appear not to have addressed the issue of North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens, a serious omission and directly relevant to any decision about North Korea's support for terrorist activities.

As this process moves forward, I expect the administration to explain exactly how this new verification agreement advances American interests and those of our allies before I will be able to support any decision to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. (Statement by John McCain on North Korea, October 11, 2008)

Regional economic cooperation and free trade agreements

American leadership is also necessary on trade. For six decades, Democratic and Republican presidents have consistently stood for free trade, but in this presidential election the Democratic candidate has broken with that tradition. I believe that free trade agreements, such as those we have entered into with Australia and Singapore and have negotiated with South Korea, are critical building blocks for an open and inclusive economic order in the Asia-Pacific region. They create billions of dollars' worth of new exports and set a higher standard for trade liberalization that ultimately helps all the nations in the region.

America has never won respect or created jobs by hiding behind protectionist walls and I will continue making the case for free trade, regardless of political expediency. (John McCain, "Alliance into the 21st Century," *The Australian*, September 23, 2008)

The U.S. has successfully negotiated an important free trade agreement with South Korea. This agreement will benefit Americans and Koreans alike by creating new jobs on both sides of the Pacific and setting a new standard in opening Asia's rising economies to America, at a time when some are seeking to exclude us. Unfortunately, some politicians in Washington oppose the FTA. Rather than encouraging American entrepreneurship and competitiveness, they are

exploiting unfounded fears about Asia's economic dynamism and thus retreating from the bipartisan consensus on trade liberalization that has guided America for over 50 years. They are putting the protection of special interests before the promotion of the national interest. This position is irresponsible and shortsighted. Rejecting the FTA will not only leave Americans and Koreans alike worse off; it will also undermine America's global economic leadership. Retreating behind protectionist walls has never created American jobs or advanced America's national security, and it will not today. That is why we remain so strongly committed to the U.S.-South Korea FTA. (John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, *"Putting Our Allies First," Joongang Ilbo*, May 29, 2008)

Norms, Values, Promotion of democracy and human rights, and U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia

Ultimately, America's alliances in the Asia-Pacific region are guided by more than the pursuit of shifting alignments of interest. Rather, our leadership in the region is rooted in the norms and values we hold in common with the region's great democracies.

Sixty-five years ago, there were only two Asia-Pacific democracies: Australia and New Zealand. Today, more people live under democratic government in Asia than in any other part of the world. Japan's leaders have spoken eloquently about the importance of democracy in Asia. India's prime minister has called liberal democracy the natural order of social and political organization in today's world.

We agree. No nation holds a monopoly on the insight that all men and women are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights. These are not only universal truths; they are also the indispensable bedrock for the shared prosperity and stability we all desire. That is precisely why the United States and its allies must work together to put these norms at the center of our international system.

America itself must be a responsible stakeholder in that system, and a good global citizen. American power does not mean we can do whatever we want, whenever we want. On the contrary, our position in Asia has been strongest when we have listened to our friends, and when we have worked not only to persuade them that we are right, but been willing to be persuaded that they are right. We must take seriously our responsibility to address our contribution to climate change, for instance, if we are to persuade others to take seriously their responsibilities to do the same. (John McCain and Joseph Lieberman, "Renewing America's Asia Policy," *Wall Street Journal Asia*, May 27, 2008)