

# Introduction by Guest Editor\*

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Emerging from the region's most devastating monetary meltdown in 1997, Asia's economies now rank among the world's fastest growing and strongest performing economies in many global economic indexes. These indicators have prompted some observers to hail a second renaissance for Asian economies. The first renaissance in the 1980s, or economic miracle, was led by the robust economies of the Four Tigers: Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong. This second tide has been largely spearheaded by China and India's "supereconomies," these two economies differ significantly from the Four Tigers in terms of its both sheer size and structure, and differ between themselves. In a report released by the Asia Development Bank (ADB) in December 2007, the Chinese and Indian economies account for 64% of total real GDP of the 23 economies that were engaged in the ICP Asia Pacific. As a result of the two major powerhouse economies that are also the most populated countries in the world—institutionalizing regional cooperative mechanisms are finally beginning to be seen by Asian governments as a necessary requisite for insulating economic growth against another potential fall out, which in the era of globalization, both the regional and international community can ill afford.

The 1997 crisis accelerated the surge by many Asian governments toward economic integration and reinforcing regional polities to hedge

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\* The views expressed in this article represent the author's personal view, and not those of the *China Brief* or The Jamestown Foundation.

against international economic volatility and political vagaries. The United States, whose web of security and economic alliances with states in region formed the pillars for security and economic prosperity in the region since the end of World War II, is increasingly seen as becoming detached and disengaged from the region, the gulf in both perception and action have profound implications because Asia stands at an important crossroad. One that will affect how the region develops and transforms to address both the old challenges and meet the new challenges, thus dramatically shaping how future relations are conducted in the region.

As the region's economies grow and become increasingly interdependent, the process creates more incentives for states to cooperate, by opening political space—in theory—leaders are better able to maneuver and reconcile on political issues for economic growth in a stable environment. The process of building viable regional institutions in Asia has been widely criticized to be lackluster at best, most states in the region gained their political independence in the 1950s, and harbor historical grudges and unresolved disputes that have largely been unaddressed. The move towards integration prompted the need for more dialogue to strengthen confidence-building measures and reduce spontaneous political risks resulting from the many potential political pitfalls, leading some to conjecture that in the era of globalization, political and economic reconciliation must proceed hand in hand.

As governments throughout the region push forward the integration agenda, NGOs and think tanks are increasingly playing more prominent roles and their utility are recognized as effective facilitators for the institution building process. The cooperation between think tanks offers a channel for experts and officials to interact and discuss solutions in less politically sensitive environments, and debate topics that are politically sensitive in an open and unconstrained discourse. Cooperation like these contributed to this special issue on "Taiwan's Role in the Future of Asia-Pacific Security and Peace," which was made possible by the

collaboration between the Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies (CAPAS) at Academia Sinica, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) and the Pacific Forum CSIS.

The Asia-Pacific Security Forum (APSF) is an annual forum that brings together international experts with the aim to promote mutual security dialogue on regional and global issues. The APSF 2007 convened in Taipei from August 29-31, 2007, to address the topic of "Economic Security in the Asia-Pacific." The Pacific Forum CSIS co-organized the event with the Institute for National Policy Research (INPR) in Taiwan, the Institute for Strategic and Development Studies (ISDS) in the Philippines and the Asia Centre in France. The conference invited members of the Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders Program, which included promising young professionals and graduate students from Asia, Europe and the United States to participate in the expert discussions.

The Pacific Forum CSIS created the Young Leaders program to reach out to the next generation of foreign policy makers and leaders. Select graduate students and young professionals from the Asia-Pacific are regularly invited to join the Pacific Forum's policy dialogues and conferences to gain insight into the thinking of established professionals, to join professional networks and to establish their own and to share insights on key issues.

The views presented by the authors in this special issue offer a prism that shed light on the concerns that the next generation of opinion makers and policy specialists in the Asia-Pacific region have regarding the profound changes taking place in the region. Furthermore, this special issue offers their assessments and solutions to the challenges and opportunities presented to states in the region as well as Taiwan in this new emerging regime.

The papers include the perspectives of Young Leaders from Japan, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines. The views can be generally categorized into three overarching themes. First, cautious optimism

permeates the attitude of this generation, especially as it relates to the importance of strengthening regional institutions. The authors point out that multilateral institutions are addressing a host of new issues on top of the traditional security issues that still affect lasting peace in the region. They point as positive signs that new multilateral institutions as well as existing institutions are adapting to respond to emerging new concerns, as well as to deal with traditional security threats. In East Asia, however, where the United States still maintains its most robust alliances both in military and economic terms is also the region with the longest standing and combusive traditional security issues like North Korea and the Taiwan Strait.

Second, the general attitude is that China's economic rise has accelerated the move toward regionalism, as is the perceived detachment of the United States from the region. The general perception is that Southeast Asian states want to see a co-management of Southeast Asia between China and the United States to provide regional balance and stability for promoting the region's economic growth. China's rise is associated with economic opportunities but with political risks in equal weight, and more economic interdependence has not translate to political trust, which therefore requires, as one Young Leader states, "absolute" U.S. presence and commitment to the region as a balancing power. Lingering doubts persist about China's grand strategy, due to—in a large part—a lack of transparency in China's military intent. Moreover, because China is less so bound to existing international norms, China's predominance in the region may reset the rules of engagement. Therefore, while Southeast Asia woos China's capital, it is also hedging China's growing influence by reminding and reassuring the United States of the region's relevance and importance.

Third, challenges to the states in the region are profoundly more complex and non-traditional. While official channels to engage Taiwan are limited, this regional and international environment provides Taiwan with an opportune channel to engage the international community via soft issues and thereby participate in regional or international programs or initiatives

since they are not political in nature: environment, energy, human trafficking and non-proliferation. The views confirm that this generation perceives as an important stakeholder in the region: both in strategic, economic and political terms. Moreover, Taiwan's economy and technological advancement should be seen as a tool to leverage and counter growing concern about China's political influence, through forming what one Young Leader calls an "economically symbiotic relationship."