

Part I: Shift of power – a new reality and a challenge for the democratic West

Written by Andrew Chang
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It has been clear for some time that there is a gravitational pull – from the traditional West-dominated world to a more Asia-centric geopolitics with the rise of new powers on the Asian Continent, esp. China on the Northeast part of the Continent.

However, the tilt is only relative – not the end of the liberal and progressive West with America as its leader, as many may fear. For in a closely interrelated and interdependent global society, the East and the West has something to offer and complement each other.

There was a bubble of optimism in the Western capitals that the new dynamism will lift millions of people living in extreme poverty, especially China, hoping that the New China will become “a responsible stake holder” and contribute peace and prosperity to the world.

But the hopes have proven to be premature; for it has turned out to be a power trying to use its growing influence to reshape the rules and institutions of the international system to better serve its interests by riding the tide of rising national confidence and nationalism at home.

As we have seen recently, it tried to project its hard power, making its neighboring countries wary and insecure; and many countries in the region are casting a wary eye on it, wondering how it will evolve.

Case in point: its close encounter with the Japanese navy ships in a disputed island in the East China Sea and harassment of U.S. naval vessels in the South China Sea clearly show the assertive stance of China, bordering on arrogance and provocation.

Ominously, the rapid build-up of its military forces (with yearly double-digit defense budget increases for decades), and its over-reaching territorial claim – the Paracel/Spratly Islands

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(disputed no-man islets also claimed by the littoral countries) – are indications of its ultra-nationalism and assertive geopolitics.

The most outrageous case is, however, its unjustifiable claim over Taiwan (the former Japanese colony with its sovereign status remains unsettled since the end of WW II) by stoking nationalism at home. And it makes the Strait a flash point in the Pacific, adding an unsettling feeling in the world.

In the face of such a stark reality, and in a symbiotic global society of a new century, the democratic West has no choice but to face it, and come to terms with a world in which the power is shared with the rising East, esp. China, and try to get the best out of it for peace and safety of the world being plagued with a multitude of serious problems.

But, by the same token, accommodation shouldn't be taken too far; and making room for a hegemonic power should not be confused with giving way to it; it should be firm and justifiable; for weakness will send a wrong message to the rising power for further actions that might lead to instability in that region.

As the single most important country in the world, and champion of democracy and human rights, America should maintain its credibility with its allies, and keep the democratic Taiwan safe and independent, and help China to move toward a more liberal society respecting human rights, and honor the wishes of its oppressed minority ethnic groups.

As a prominent journalist forcefully argues: "...moral progress in international affairs is America's goal," "America should adhere to the values it professes and not to compromise or cower in matter of principle." Well said! (Foreign Affairs: May/June 2010),

Indeed, the greatest moments of American history have been ones when it acted out of

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principle and for peace and justice for the world threatened by egregious regimes, as we had seen during the WWII and Cold War.

Democracy, freedom and liberty have become the universal principles and mainstream of the international society of the Post-War II. And the nation of Taiwan has embodied all these values and is a success story. – nemesis of the authoritarian regime across the Taiwan Strait.

And the safeguard of that precious democratic island state – a lynchpin of islands chain in the strategic western Pacific – is not only crucial to US foreign policy; it would be a touchstone of what the democratic West with America as its leaders believe and uphold. (August 2010: A. Chang)

Source: [I Love Taiwan Google Forum](#) : A letter to American and freedom-loving friends in the world - Support an independent democratic free Taiwan

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