



Candidates' Views on Asia

With the presidential elections in the U.S. to be held Nov. 4, the candidates' views of Asia are of great interest. To provide some insight into the policies of Senators John McCain and Barack Obama, the most recent issue of Comparative Connections (<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/ccejournal.html>) surveys both campaigns' statements regarding their Asia policies. Excerpts are provided below. For the full text, visit the Pacific Forum web site.

Overall priorities for East Asia

Senator Obama

The United States has long played a pivotal role in preserving the peace in Asia and undergirding its economic development. That leadership should continue, but must adjust to changes taking place in Asia. Our alliances remain crucial elements for Asian confidence and security. But new ideas are in play, and the U.S. must be attentive to calls for change. The emergence of an economically vibrant, more diplomatically engaged China and India has energized interest in Asian economic and security arrangements that could augment bilateral alliances and build confidence among adversaries and friends alike. We need to demonstrate unequivocally to Asians that our presence in the region is enduring, that our economic, political, and security interests demand it, and that we will reengage with, and listen to, our Asian friends after years of giving the region short shrift.

Senator McCain

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 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. Fortunately, the next American president will inherit a set of alliances and friendships in Asia that are already in good shape. 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, are 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.

U.S.-Japan alliance

Senator McCain

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. Deepening

cooperation, consultation and coordination between Washington and Tokyo is the key to meeting the collective challenges that both our nations face. 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.

Senator Obama

The U.S.-Japan alliance has been one of the great successes of the postwar era. The U.S. and Japan have a shared interest in promoting security and prosperity in Asia and around the world – shared interests that rest on a bedrock of shared values: in democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and free markets. Japan plays a vital role in working with the U.S. in maintaining regional security and stability, promoting prosperity, and meeting the new security challenges of the 21st century.....The U.S.-Japan alliance must remain at the core of efforts to revitalize Japan's role in ensuring stability and security in the region....The alliance demands, and is deserving of, close political cooperation and coordination at every level, reflecting the key role Japan plays as anchor of U.S. economic and security interests in the region and across the globe.

U.S.-China relations

Senator Obama

The U.S. and China face challenges that require fresh thinking and a change from the U.S. policy approach of the past eight years...U.S. and Chinese cooperation in the Six-Party Talks on the North Korea nuclear issue makes clear that we can work together constructively bilaterally and with others to reduce tensions on even extraordinarily sensitive issues.... America and the world can benefit from trade with China but only if China agrees to play by the rules and act as a positive force for balanced world growth. I want China's economy to continue to grow, its domestic demand to expand, and its vitality to contribute to regional and global prosperity. I will take a vigorous pragmatic approach to addressing these issues, utilizing our domestic trade remedy laws as well as the WTO dispute settlement mechanism wherever appropriate.... I look to China to work with us to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons..... to halt the genocide in Darfur.....Greater progress in protecting the human rights of its people and moving toward democracy and the rule of law will better enable China to achieve its full potential as a nation, domestically and internationally.

Senator McCain

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 international system on which its rise depends. The next

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. 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.

Cross-Strait Relations

Senator McCain

I have long supported the sales of defensive arms 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 ... I will continue the longstanding and close ties between our peoples. 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. 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 accordance with its security requirements, and stand by this remarkable free and democratic people.

Senator Obama

It is important for Beijing to demonstrate to the people of Taiwan that the practical and non-confrontational approach ... toward the mainland can achieve positive results. I hope there will be progress including development of economic ties, expanding Taiwan's international space and cross-Strait security. I support the "one China" policy of the U.S., adherence to the three U.S.-PRC joint communiqués concerning Taiwan, and observance of the Taiwan Relations Act. On that foundation, the U.S. should strengthen channels of communication with officials of the Taiwan government. We should continue to provide the arms necessary for Taiwan to deter possible aggression.

Korean Peninsula issues

Senator Obama

North Korea's agreement to these verification measures is a modest step forward in dismantling its nuclear weapons program. President Bush's decision to remove North Korea from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism is an appropriate response as long as there is clear understanding that if North Korea fails to follow through there will be immediate consequences. It is now essential that North Korea halt all efforts to reassemble its nuclear facilities, place them back under IAEA supervision, and cooperate fully with the international community to complete the disablement of the Yongbyon facilities and to implement a robust verification mechanism to confirm the accuracy of its nuclear declaration. If North Korea refuses to permit robust verification, we should lead all members of the Six-Party Talks in suspending energy assistance, re-imposing sanctions that have recently been waived, and considering new restrictions. Our objective remains the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

The U.S.-ROK alliance has been a remarkably strong and successful one. Nonetheless, the U.S.-Korea relationship has been adrift in recent years. At the heart of it have been our respective approaches to North Korea. We need to work with South Korea on a common vision for the alliance to meet the challenges of the 21st century, not only those on the Korean Peninsula but in the region and beyond. The U.S.-Korea economic relationship has also benefited both nations and deepened our ties. I look forward to supporting ways to increase bilateral trade and investment ties through agreements paying proper attention to our key industries and agricultural sectors, such as autos, rice, and beef, and to protection of labor and environmental standards. Regrettably, the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement does not meet this standard.

Senator McCain

The next president will need to use intensive diplomacy to move toward a fully denuclearized Korean Peninsula, but cannot make the mistake of assuming that talking is our only tool. ... 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. I 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 by Pyongyang. 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. 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.

The U.S. has 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. Rejecting the FTA will not only leave Americans and Koreans alike worse off; it will also undermine America's global economic leadership.

Regional economic cooperation and free trade agreements

Senator McCain

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' of exports and set a higher standard for trade liberalization that helps all nations in the region. ... I will continue making the case for free trade, regardless of political expediency.

Senator Obama

It is essential that Asian countries work with us to ensure balanced growth and openness of the global trading system. This means shifting away from their traditional dependence on export-led growth and weak currencies toward stronger consumption at home and greater absorption of imports. The United States should negotiate only "gold standard"

agreements with our Asian trading partners that stimulate growth and jobs and contain binding labor and environmental standards and intellectual property protections. Existing mechanisms, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, are a useful platform for U.S. economic engagement with the Asian region, and that any new trade agreements negotiated with the U.S. must have binding labor and environmental standards, provide effective access for American exports, and be rigorously monitored and enforced.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2008-2009 Pacific Forum Vasey Fellow position. Details, including an application form, can be found at the Pacific Forum web site [<http://www.csis.org/experts/fellows/vasey/>].