



Next Generation Thinking about  
America's East Asia Strategy



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## Pacific Forum CSIS

Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS ([www.pacforum.org](http://www.pacforum.org)) operates as the autonomous Asia-Pacific arm of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, business, and oceans policy issues through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate arenas. Founded in 1975, it collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region.

## The Young Leaders Program

The Young Leaders Program invites young professionals and graduate students to join Pacific Forum policy dialogues and conferences. The program fosters education in the practical aspects of policy-making, generates an exchange of views between young and seasoned professionals, promotes interaction among younger professionals, and enriches dialogues with generational perspectives for all attendees. Fellows must have a strong background in the area covered by the conference they are attending and an endorsement from respected experts in their field. Supplemental programs in conference host cities and mentoring sessions with senior officials and specialists add to the Young Leader experience. The Young Leaders Program is currently supported by Chevron, the Henry Luce Foundation, and the Yuchengco Group, with a growing number of universities, institutes, and organizations also helping to sponsor individual participants. For more details, see the Pacific Forum CSIS website, [www.pacforum.org](http://www.pacforum.org), or contact Brad Glosserman, director of the Young Leaders Program, at [bradgpf@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:bradgpf@hawaii.rr.com).

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The views expressed here represent personal impressions and reflections of Young Leader program participants; they do not necessarily represent the views of the relevant governments, or the co-sponsoring or parent organizations and institutes.

## Executive Summary

Every U.S. administration is greeted by reports and recommendations on strategy. One such effort, “The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration,” was produced by the Pacific Forum CSIS, in conjunction with the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA), the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), and the Institute for National Security Studies at the National Defense University (NDU/INSS).

A constituency often neglected in these discussions is the next generation. This prompted the Pacific Forum CSIS to ask a group of its Young Leaders (YLS) to provide a different perspective on, and further insight into, thoughts of their successors. This report highlights areas of convergence and divergence between Young and Senior leaders, examines generational differences that might explain these differences, and assesses their significance.

There were considerable areas of convergence:

*Vital Importance of the Asia-Pacific Region:* Given geopolitical trends and developments and the complex range of security issues in the Asia-Pacific region, a strategic presence and persistent prioritization of U.S. relations with the region is imperative.

*Continuity in the Why, Calibration in the How:* The principles of the Bush administration – engagement, multilateralism, a focus on both economics and security – were correct. How these goals were pursued was not. “Getting Asia right” necessitates a coherent strategy to work toward mutually beneficial goals based on shared national interests.

*Actively Continue Bilateral and Multilateral Ties:* Although the hub-and-spoke model of bilateral alliances across the region has helped ensure stability and prosperity over six decades, bilateralism and multilateralism should be seen as mutually reinforcing.

*Advance the U.S. Relationship with China and Address Challenges:* The U.S. should acknowledge China’s successes while seeking to advance a mutually beneficial relationship. By doing so, the U.S. can realize a strong partner in Asia and the world.

*Partnership on Trade:* Promoting a globalist view when dire economic realities threaten to trigger protectionism. Nevertheless, economic interdependence is vital to a peaceful and prosperous world. Recommitting to free markets is an imperative.

*Revisit Democracy Promotion:* While values such as political freedom, rule of law, and human rights are integral American values, the previous administration focused on a certain understanding of “democracy promotion.” Instead of focusing on democratic elections, the U.S. should focus on good governance and rule of law.

*Collaboration on Climate Change and Environmental Degradation:* Regional and global collaboration is necessary to reduce the long- and short-term effects of climate change and environmental degradation. The Obama administration must support multilateral cooperation to mitigate the increasingly harsh realities facing the next generation.

*Coordination on Energy Security:* The Asia-Pacific region has many energy resources that can be derived from wind, maritime, solar, and geothermal assets. Coordination on ways to capture these resources is critical.

*Success of Military-to-Military (mil-mil) Relationships:* Strong mil-mil relations are vital within the Asia-Pacific region as joint training exercises give militaries opportunities to work together toward a common goal and can facilitate coordination and cooperation in times of crisis.

There was one central divergence: the *centrality of nontraditional security threats as a focus of U.S. foreign policy*: For YLs, nontraditional security threats are of equal concern to more traditional security threats. Although Senior Leaders recognize these emerging contours of the new security environment, they tend to be seen as secondary, not primary, threats. Although this may be a difference of tone more than substance, the implications of a divergence may be significant, particularly when setting foreign policy priorities.

Generational differences:

A generational shift is occurring, both here and abroad, and with it may come a re-framing and re-thinking of beliefs about power, interdependence, and cooperation. Preparing for and understanding what this means for U.S. foreign policy is essential. Today's Young Leaders have come to political consciousness in a post-Cold War world, with different possibilities, and potential pitfalls, than did our parents. This matters because many complex issues that seem to defy resolution today may be soluble by future leaders. This is not because we are smarter, or more able, but because we see the world differently.

Younger leaders see a connected, flattening world. The source of our contact with others hasn't been based on conflict but cultural or economic exchanges. Deepening countries' sense of interdependence through shared experiences may strengthen shared identities and interests that supersede national boundaries. In keeping with this pragmatic, cosmopolitan internationalism, Young Leaders generally feel that there is a need for a broader understanding of human security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although instability and limited conflict have become more prevalent since the Cold War, Young Leaders have not grown up with an existential threat as did our parents. This different security context influences threat perception as well as how perceptions of how the United States can and should wield power.

Although nuclear proliferation, great power competition, and resource wars occupy a rightful place in security dialogues, the shifting focus to nontraditional security threats springs from the largely peaceful world in which Young Leaders have come of age. Some consider this shifting focus as a lack of appreciation for realist concerns such as the threat of nuclear war, conflict over territory, or Great Power competition. But ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan largely being fought by our generation force the recognition that wars remain a reality and post-stability operations can only start once stability is achieved. This generation seeks an international order based on multilateral institutions and economic interdependence while discouraging the negative "us" vs. "them" mentalities of the past.

Differences in generational perspectives matters because a coherent Asia-Pacific strategy with a consistent, clear message requires a broad base of support. Integrating diverging viewpoints into a long-term vision will support a higher degree of continuity in U.S. foreign policy and will increase the possibility of long-lasting U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific region.

# Next Generation Thinking about America's East Asia Strategy

by Arthur Lord, A. Greer Pritchett, Adrian Yi, and Stephanie Young

The range of U.S. national interests involved in our relationship with Asia calls for a clear strategy to guide our policy, one that will send a clear signal to allies, friends, and potential adversaries of our objectives and intent. Accordingly, the Pacific Forum CSIS, in conjunction with the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA), the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), and the Institute for National Security Studies at the National Defense University (NDU/INSS), drafted “The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration.” [[http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/issuesinsights\\_v09n01.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/issuesinsights_v09n01.pdf)]

This report has been prepared by Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders, a selected group of young professionals and post-graduate students who have been invited to participate in Pacific Forum policy dialogues and conferences that are normally limited to seasoned experts. The program serves as a catalyst for training young professionals in international policy affairs at an early juncture in their careers, while also giving greater voice to the younger generation's viewpoints within the elite circles of policy specialists. A small group of U.S. Young Leaders attended the security strategy report workshops and produced three volumes of policy recommendations that reflect their perspectives. These three papers are summarized below, followed by additional analyses by the authors of this publication.

Today's Young Leaders intend to improve upon the many accomplishments of those that have come before us. It should come as no surprise, however, that younger generations think differently than their predecessors. We have come to political consciousness in a post-Cold War world, with different possibilities, and potential pitfalls, than our predecessors. This is important because many of the complex issues that seem impossible to solve today, with today's leadership, may be soluble by future leaders. This is not because we are smarter, or more able, but because we see the world differently. Just as many things that weren't possible a generation ago are possible today, what's impossible now may be possible in the decades ahead. This paper is meant to give today's leaders a different perspective, and perhaps insight, into the thoughts of their successors.

This different perspective matters because if Senior Leaders genuinely want to craft a coherent strategy, having a broad base of support is a necessity. Although many views of senior policy experts and younger emerging leaders overlap, a divergence is notable. If today's policymakers can listen to and integrate our viewpoint into a long-term vision, there will be a much greater probability of continuity in U.S. foreign policy, increasing the possibility of long-lasting U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Summary of Young Leader policy recommendations

Young Leaders have produced three previous volumes of analysis related to the East Asia Strategy Report. Each volume resulted from an East Asia Strategy Report workshop. We now summarize the conclusion of those studies.

### *Asian Issues with Regional and Global Impact*<sup>1</sup>

To secure U.S. interests in Asia, the Obama administration should pay attention to four key U.S. interests, (ranked in descending order of importance): economic prosperity; energy security; climate change and environmental security; and regional security framework. These issues emphasize the interconnectedness of current security concerns and the cooperative approach that is necessary to address them.

#### Economic Prosperity

Since economic growth is the lifeblood of a nation's prosperity and health, Young Leaders recommend that the Obama administration foster a system of open trade connections in the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, they suggest pursuit of an APEC-wide agreement that requires all members to include provisions in their Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that stipulate additional countries can subsequently join the agreement if they meet the same criteria agreed to by the original signatories. This will help establish a basic architecture for political and economic relations that makes preferential trade agreements a building block for trade liberalization.

#### Energy Security

Growing demand for energy coupled with a shortage of domestic natural resources is the most important security issue facing many East Asian nations. The Obama administration must lead efforts to ensure that tensions over energy resources do not create open conflict. Energy challenges are an opportunity for cooperation and coordination with East Asia; the U.S. should organize a partnership between the world's three largest oil consumers, the U.S., China, and Japan, that would aim to stabilize oil prices, safeguard sea lines of communication (SLOCs), address the challenges of nuclear power, as well as tackle the threats posed by pollution and climate change.

#### Climate Change and Environmental Security

The Obama administration must recognize the interrelatedness of climate change and environmental security. Reducing greenhouse emissions and integrating climate change into top-level decision-making should be the objectives of efforts to reduce the effects of climate change. Supporting clean energy technology transfers to China and others as part of a broader strategy on environmental security will bolster support for and confidence in a rules-based global order where the U.S. can exert leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> This Young Leader workshop report is available at [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/issuesinsights\\_v08n24.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/issuesinsights_v08n24.pdf)



### Regional Security Framework

An institutionalized Northeast Asia security framework is required to tackle the transnational threats that plague the region, such as port security, piracy, energy security, WMD proliferation, environmental degradation, and humanitarian disasters. A multilateral security framework would embed the U.S. in this vital sub-region, help create equilibrium between major countries in the region, and ensure that diplomatic lines of communication remain open.

### *America's Alliances and the Next Administration*<sup>2</sup>

Consistent with the views outlined in the first volume, this report argues that nontraditional security threats such as terrorism, climate change, and resource scarcity will define the 21<sup>st</sup>-century security environment. Accordingly, the U.S. should renew alliances in the Asia-Pacific region and develop a cooperative mechanism to work with all regional actors, including China, to meet these challenges. Allies such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea (ROK) should be encouraged to take on more proactive and autonomous roles, lessening the burden on the U.S. Each partner has considerable assets to contribute to these new security challenges. Southeast Asian allies should pursue military and intelligence cooperation. While the U.S. needs to pursue a more comprehensive alliance structure, Young Leaders are reluctant to formally link the five U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific region, as this could create distrust from those outside the structure – namely China.

Young Leaders conclude that it is in America's interest to deepen engagement with Asian allies in all fields. Although nontraditional security issues are the center of discussion, Young Leaders recognize that military engagement is a building block of our alliances and thus do not imply that the current emphasis on military relations needs to be decreased. However, without broadening the alliance structure to include more soft power tools, including Track II cooperative efforts, strictly military-based alliances will not be a sufficient tool to face evolving nontraditional security threats. Thus, the U.S. needs to build upon these military alliance structures to ensure they are always relevant to the challenges and threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### *How to Deal with a Rising China*<sup>3</sup>

It is in America's interest to encourage China's active participation in regional cooperation, as nontraditional security threats are most effectively dealt with when all players in the region are involved in a cooperative effort. Young Leaders identify four opportunities that U.S.-China relations can capitalize on, as well as four challenges for bilateral relations.

### Opportunities

1. Sino-U.S. contingency plans for a North Korean regime failure
2. U.S.-China cooperation on food and drug regulatory regime
3. China's inclusion in regional maritime security cooperation
4. China-U.S. aerospace cooperation

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/issuesinsights\\_v08n14.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/issuesinsights_v08n14.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/issuesinsights\\_v08n24.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/issuesinsights_v08n24.pdf)

## Challenges

1. Creating conditions for China to emerge as a non-rival power
2. Balancing the U.S.-China relationship and U.S.-Japan alliance
3. China and U.S. coordinating a stable policy toward Taiwan
4. Contingency plans for the collapse of CCP authority

Though the original authors believed a Sino- U.S. bilateral contingency mechanism is warranted in the event of a North Korean (DPRK) regime collapse, several authors of this report believe that such bilateral cooperation would alienate other key regional players and allies such as South Korea and Japan. Challenge #4 suggests encouraging China toward greater transparency and accountability so as to avoid a regime collapse – a distinct possibility.

Given dynamics between East Asian neighbors, the U.S. must coordinate with allies while engaging China so as not to create diplomatic tension in the region. The interconnectedness of the Chinese and U.S. economies is an opportunity to advance Sino-U.S. cooperation, such as a food safety regulatory regime and aerospace cooperation. To further engage China, opportunity #3 and challenge #1 offer ways to deal with China as a constructive partner instead of a rival power. Including China in efforts to deal with maritime threats can help assure China that patterns of cooperation in the region are not motivated by containment.

## **Areas of Convergence**

Young and Senior Leaders viewed the challenges and opportunities in the region through similar lenses. The result is considerable convergence between the official East Asia Strategy Report and the Young Leader analyses. The following list touches upon major areas of agreement.

### Vital Importance of the Asia-Pacific Region

Young and Senior Leaders agree on the increasing significance of the Asia-Pacific region, and thus, that America's role in the region is increasingly important. Given the extent of U.S. interests in global economic prosperity, stability, and rule of law, a number of regions will – and should – remain an important focus of American attention. Given geopolitical trends and developments, such as increasingly interdependent economies and the wide and complex range of regional security issues – terrorism in Indonesia and the Philippines, the autocratic regime in North Korea, territorial disputes, piracy, and uncertainty about China's rise – a strategic presence and persistent prioritization of our relations with the Asia-Pacific region are imperatives. To deal with these challenges, the U.S. will have to work with friends and allies, old and new. It is necessary for the U.S. to develop a proactive strategy to strengthen its role in the Asia-Pacific region and exert leadership by demonstrating both continuity and change. A central starting point for this leadership is seeking first to understand partners' hopes and fears –which requires, first and foremost, listening more.

### Continuity in the Why, Calibration in the How

With regard to the Asia-Pacific region, the last eight years have suffered more from benign neglect than misdirection. The principles of the Bush administration – engagement, multilateralism, focus on both economics and security – were correct, though attention given to this region was lacking. We applaud President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton for selecting Asia to be her first overseas destination, and hope this will be the first of many trips. In addition to high-level attention, “getting Asia right” necessitates sound choices based on sound judgment. Central to this notion of improving how we approach Asia is creating a *coherent strategy* to reassure friends and allies of our commitment to working toward mutually beneficial goals based on shared national interests.

### Actively Continue Bilateral and Multilateral Ties

Strong bilateral alliances and multilateral relationships are needed to deal with the new security environment. Without clear strategies, these relationships threaten to atrophy, decay, and may even become burdensome. Although the hub-and-spoke model of bilateral alliances across the region has helped ensure stability and prosperity over the last six decades, bilateralism and multilateralism should be seen as mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive options. By evolving our approach to the region beyond the hub-and-spoke framework, the United States can magnify the effect of its political, security, and economic campaigns in the region. Although multilateralism should be seen as a means, not an end, the enduring nature of some issues – currently managed with ad hoc multilateral approaches – means they may be better served through more formal and institutionalized mechanisms. Furthermore, while it is easy to criticize multilateral forums as mere talk shops, it is critical to empower these institutions to do more instead of bypassing them. Although some argue that devoting time and resources to these institutions is a waste, these critics fail to appreciate that exercising strategic restraint by empowering these institutions instead of relying on unilateral action is the most effective way of shaping a lasting international order, one in which stronger states have an incentive to work through the institution, that there will be support from others, and weaker states have an incentive to work through the institution as well so their collective voices will be heard.

### Advance the U.S. Relationship with China and Address Challenges

There are many opportunities to improve the U.S. - China relationship and doing so is crucial. The U.S. should acknowledge China’s economic and diplomatic successes while seeking to advance a mutually beneficial relationship. By doing so, the U.S. could realize a strong partner in Asia and the world. Given China’s economic growth and vested interest in stability, the U.S. could share some of its policing burdens with China. Young Leaders and our seniors agree that China poses challenges as well. The new administration should define its limits – both to itself and foreign leadership – in order to better understand and interact with an increasingly influential China.

### Partnership on Trade

It is vital to put political ideologies aside in order to address issues concerning trade. If we can foster robust international trade, we can all enjoy continued growth and prosperity. Given the state of the world economy, promoting a globalist view of economic health is a difficult sell, with dire economic realities threatening to generate protectionist mercantilism.

Nevertheless, Young and Senior Leaders believe that economic interdependence is a vital element in a peaceful and prosperous world. Washington's promotion of open and free trade can help improve the quality of life for all and reinforce traditional as well as nontraditional security. Political battles over the U.S.-Korea FTA, for example, must be recalibrated to reflect the benefits of liberalization as a cornerstone to a free market global economy.

#### Revisit Democracy Promotion

While certain values such as political freedom, rule of law, and human rights are integral American values, the previous administration focused on a certain understanding of "democracy promotion" that has been detrimental to U.S. interests. Although close cooperation and coordination with allies in the region should and must be a strategic priority, framing this coordination as steps toward creating a "League of Democracies" does more to give the impression of encirclement to non-democracies such as China than encourage them to reform. Instead of focusing on political reform based on democratically elected officials, the United States may do more for peace and prosperity in the region, its central national interests, by focusing on good governance and rule of law instead.

#### Collaboration on Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

Regional and global collaboration are necessary to reduce the long- and short-term effects of climate change and degradation of the natural environment. The new administration must support multilateral cooperation to mitigate the increasingly harsh realities facing the next generation. Arguments about responsibility and ownership of these problems will undoubtedly take place and will likely resolve nothing. The pace at which we as a *human race* handle the problems of environmental degradation must reach past the current horizon; otherwise, the world we currently enjoy will be a vast wasteland of toxic water and air. The U.S. needs to be ahead of this curve and lead by example; this is necessary for both our economic interests and long-term survival.

#### Coordination on Energy Security

Washington must coordinate with friends and allies in the region to ensure that relationships are not strained over energy concerns. The Asia-Pacific region has many energy resources that can be derived from wind, wave, solar, and geothermal assets. It is in the best interest of the United States, as well as countries in the Asia-Pacific region, to develop ways to capture these resources. The Obama administration should take the lead in initiating multilateral agreements that will help oil-consuming countries of the Asia-Pacific region consume less carbon-based fuels and create innovative new ways to fuel our future.

#### Success of Military-to-Military Relationships

Finally, Young and Senior Leaders agree that strong military-to-military (mil-mil) relations are extremely important within the Asia-Pacific region. Mil-mil relations help build confidence between nations while fulfilling special needs such as policing sea lanes and providing coordinated humanitarian relief. These activities build trust between the U.S. and countries within the Asia-Pacific region on both a micro and macro level, while giving our militaries purpose beyond combat. Mil-mil joint training exercises give militaries opportunities to work together toward a common goal and can facilitate coordination and cooperation in times of crisis. Success in this endeavor will lessen erroneous assumptions

and mistrust. Successful mil-mil relationships are deeply important to present and future nuclear threats. Although Young Leaders have grown up in a world (mostly) free of daily total annihilation threats, nuclear proliferation is a concern. However, some Young Leaders find it difficult to preach nonproliferation knowing that the United States has stockpiles of such weapons and can use the threat of their use to coerce.

### **Areas of Divergence: Prioritization of Nontraditional Security Threats**

Despite the considerable convergence between Young and Senior Leaders in both substance and tone, there was one significant divergence that warrants further analysis: the centrality of preventing and responding to nontraditional security threats as a focus of U.S. foreign policy.

Senior Leaders note the importance of nontraditional security threats and argue that the U.S. must exercise “smart power” while broadening the agenda of issues it addresses with regional allies in order to “reassert strategic presence” in the Asia-Pacific region. In order to reframe how the U.S. engages in the region, their Asia strategy report states that “The Defense Department (and/or State Department) can’t do it all; Washington needs to use all the tools in its toolbox.”

We agree. We go farther, however, by explicitly contending that nontraditional security threats such as resource scarcity, natural disaster management, terrorism, climate change and energy security are of equal concern to more traditional security threats of WMD proliferation, great power competition, and armed conflict in the region. We also see alliances as important tools with which to respond to these threats. Although these nontraditional security threats were discussed in the Asia-Pacific strategy report, most of the discussion is tangential, not central. Perhaps this difference in emphasis is best understood as a divergence in tone rather than a fundamental disagreement. That said, the implications are significant, particularly as related to priorities, since they reflect differing paradigms of threat perception.

Views of the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance is a telling example of the policy implications of this difference. Although Young Leaders and Senior Leaders agree that the alliance is the bedrock of America’s presence in the Asia-Pacific region, the Senior Leaders contend that the U.S. must therefore “reaffirm” its role as a security guarantor – with a nuclear umbrella – for Japan. Young Leaders, however, contend that as the United States’ closest ally, as Japan evolves into a “more equal partner” with a global orientation, Washington and Tokyo should look to humanitarian and disaster relief operations as new bonds with which to deepen and broaden the alliance. Although Senior Leaders note the potential for cooperation with Japan in the areas of climate change and energy security, the majority of their assessment of the U.S.-Japan relationship revolves around traditional threat-oriented issues such as the sale of F-22s to Tokyo, ballistic missile defense cooperation, and base relocation. The Young Leaders don’t mention these issues in their assessment of the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance. This omission may result from space constraints rather than a central divergence, but at the very least it represents a telling example of differences in priorities.

## **Implications of the Generational Divide**

### *Toward Pragmatic Internationalism in a Shrinking, Multipolar World*

President Obama's campaign centered on a call for hope and change. This idea resonated throughout the U.S. and the world. However, there is more to this transformative moment than one man. A generational shift is occurring, both here and abroad, and with it may come a re-framing and re-thinking of traditional beliefs about power, interdependence, and cooperation.

The next generation of leaders – both American and Asian – are growing up in an age where America's reputation and power are seen by many as declining. As states contemplate a waning “unipolar moment,” we must remember that tomorrow's leaders came of age in a world vastly different world from that of their predecessors. Young adult generations know World War II, the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and China's opening under Deng Xiaoping through lectures and textbooks, not personal experience; although some remember seeing the fall of the Berlin Wall on TV, many more remember the fall of the Twin Towers. In short, the Cold War was our parents' war, not ours. As with the Senior Leaders, the lessons Iraq holds vary from Young Leader to Young Leader, but a generally shared lesson has been the importance of pragmatism over ideology. Many Young Leaders approach values-based diplomacy with skepticism. Ideologically grounded calls to a war against terror, terrorism, or radical Islam are often greeted with suspicion.

This skepticism suggests that the next generation of leaders may continue and even hasten the current trend evident in China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, to name a few, toward pragmatic, cosmopolitan internationalism. Just as members of China's “fifth generation” of leaders have studied and lived abroad, more and more younger leaders know a connected, flattening world to an unprecedented degree. Significantly, the source of contact hasn't been conflict or war but rather cultural or economic exchanges. Deepening countries' sense of interdependence through these shared experiences may strengthen a sense of shared identities and interests that supersedes national boundaries. Furthermore, Younger Leaders might feel more comfortable sitting down and talking to others from countries who share different beliefs.

Given shifting dynamics in the region, it is increasingly important to pay attention to the needs of our friends, allies, and partners. Though the U.S. alone cannot set the international agenda, it can still play a major role in influencing and shaping it. Much of our influence depends on our ability to realize what countries in the region want, need, and are willing to do in order to achieve their goals, as well as ours. Much of our influence, therefore, depends on our ability to listen.

### *Focusing on Nontraditional Security Threats in a Largely Peaceful World*

As discussed, improving a country's economic, political, and social progress, while dealing with the intrinsic challenges of development such as environmental degradation, climate change, resource shortages, and problems involving the security of SLOCs, health

and food are at the forefront of many future leaders' minds. Although nuclear proliferation, great power competition, and resource wars still occupy a rightful place in security dialogues, Young Leaders generally feel that there is a need for broader understanding of human security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Much of this focus on nontraditional security threats springs from the largely peaceful world in which Young Leaders have come of age. Although instability and limited conflict have become more prevalent since the Cold War, Young Leaders have not grown up with an existential threat as our parents did. This different security context has influenced how Young Leaders perceive threat as well as how Young Leaders perceive how the United States should wield its power.

This shifting sense of threat perception means that Young Leaders will have to grapple with the most effective ways to deal with these (until recently) largely sidelined topics. Will coordination and sustained dialogues in ad hoc or institutionalized mechanisms be best? Will participating in global or subregional campaigns result in better outcomes? How can we galvanize other countries to articulate and coordinate a plan of action around broader, opaque nontraditional security threats, as opposed to the traditional threats that are easier to define and comprehend? Although we haven't discovered the answers to these questions, they will guide our generation's strategic thinking.

Although some might brand our focus on nontraditional security threats as a lack of appreciation for realist concerns such as the threat of nuclear war, conflict over territory, or Great Power competition, we contend that as two ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are largely being fought by our generation, we fully understand that wars are still a reality in the post-Cold War world and post-stability operations can only start once stability is achieved. We wish to create a world that takes the best from those before us – international order based on multilateral institutions and economic interdependence – while discouraging the negative “us” vs. “them” mentalities of the past. It is important to remember that a difference in perception and prioritization of issues need not translate into a rejection of the importance of traditional security threats, but rather complements them by broadening the understanding of what leads to a stable and prosperous world.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to explore similarities and differences in how current and future American policymakers envision a U.S. strategy toward East Asia. In closing, we highlight three themes that could become obstacles to policy coordination between the present and future leadership of the United States.

First, the younger generation tends to emphasize the importance of multilateralism and seeks to illustrate how multilateral institutions must include China instead of hedge against its rise. This counters some prevailing thoughts about a possible League of Democracies, a Concert of Democracies, or the creation of a values-based architecture more generally. If the next administration does pursue such a strategy, this could provoke a younger constituency that feels that an ideologically or values-driven foreign policy is not in the United States' best interest. A generational rift could lead to a lack of internal

coordination on U.S. foreign policy and a failure to articulate core messages. This type of disconnect should be avoided.

Second, many of us feel that democracy promotion should not be a central foreign policy tenet of the United States. Though the Senior Leaders strategy report doesn't emphasize democracy promotion, the Young Leaders didn't discuss the concept at all. Rather, the focus was on the promotion of strategic interests that can, in turn, promote a higher quality of life for all. Although freedom from Cold War ideology may benefit Young Leaders – on both sides of the Pacific – we recognize that there is a legitimate fear that the young may forget that values matter and can enhance U.S. soft power. To deny the importance of liberal democracy is a grave mistake. We therefore must be mindful that the promotion of our strategic interests should not, and need not, be at the expense of our core values. Democratic principles buttress our diplomacy efforts and foreign policy initiatives. Democracy and democracy promotion, however, need not be blunt instruments to affect change.

Finally, our generation believes that focus on the Asia-Pacific region must not fall by the wayside. As is often the case, the urgent tends to crowd out the important, and though the Asia-Pacific region is undoubtedly *important*, when faced with myriad crises – a global financial meltdown, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, instability in South Asia and violence in the Middle East – the sense of *urgency* about the region might take a backseat. Failing to help build a secure foundation for the future development of the world's most populous, fastest growing and most dynamic region, however, would be a mistake of monumental proportions. The costs of benign neglect grow with time. Thus, Young Leaders hope that Secretary Clinton's first visit to Asia is indicative of a new U.S. strategy and that the Obama administration will forge a new, more consistent and engaged path in the Asia-Pacific region. There are vast opportunities for the United States to capitalize on in the region if a closer engagement with Asia is realized, especially if guided by a coherent strategy.



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