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A JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE ON EXPECTATIONS FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

What to Expect from the New US Administration #1

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A dramatic transformation of the global system is taking place as the distribution of power shifts from the advanced democracies to the emerging economies. The sharp rise of oil and food prices and continuing crises in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and North Korea are steadily undermining the existing global system. The dramatic impact of recent instability in US financial markets manifests the structural changes that have occurred in the global

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economy. In the context of evolving multipolarity, these developments have combined with the recent decline in US global leadership to deepen uncertainty about the future of the existing international system. As the United States prepares to elect a new president, it is a good time to consider Japan's expectations for the next US administration.

It must be stressed at the outset that, although US influence has undergone a relative decline in recent years, the United States continues to be the world's preeminent power. Although some may find fault with several of its foreign policy choices in recent years, there is no doubt that the world continues to need its leadership. However, unless the United States adjusts its foreign policy outlook in response to the recent transformation of the international system, the world as a whole—not just the United States—will suffer.

There are four key issue areas in which I would like to see the United States change its ways. First and foremost, the United States must reassert its global leadership. Unilateralist tendencies have harmed its image overseas and severely damaged its moral authority. The war in Iraq and Washington's unwillingness to step up to the plate and lead the world in the fight against climate change—one of the most significant challenges of the next 100 years—have not only severely compromised US leadership but also contributed to a weakening of global governance. Twenty-first century challenges will require a style of leadership that is demonstrated not through saber-rattling but through multilateralism and diplomacy. In short, the United States must evolve into an internationalist power.

Second, the United States must spearhead the reform of the institutions of global governance so that they more accurately reflect the changing global power balance and are better able to address emerging 21st century challenges. Reform must be carried out in a manner that recognizes how the world has changed since 1945, with particular attention to be paid to the integral roles of Japan and Germany and the rapidly growing influence of rising powers such as China, India, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa. It should be noted that three of these nations are nuclear powers and there is no guarantee that they will of their own volition seek to adopt Western norms of behavior. Consequently, the United

States, Japan, and other Western nations must make every effort to engage these emerging nations and enmesh them into the existing rules-based international system. To this end, the focus of institutional reform must be placed on strengthening inclusive—not exclusive—multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations.


Third, at the same time that it becomes an internationalist power and works to reform and expand inclusive global institutions, the United States must also reinvigorate relations with its friends and allies. A particular focus should be placed on strengthening its global network of bilateral alliances and NATO. Tight linkages among advanced democratic powers (in particular among G7 nations) will form the core of global governance and serve as an indispensable hedge against uncertainties surrounding the rise of China and other emerging nations. These democratic powers must continue to provide direction and moral leadership and serve as the driving forces behind global governance and international peace and prosperity.

Fourth, one of the United States' primary tasks in the coming decades will be to ensure the stable emergence of East Asia, a region that is quickly becoming a central player in world affairs. The rise of China and India and the emergence of a vast number of regional challenges make it clear that a more stable regional order will be an integral component of efforts to strengthen global governance and ensure the stability of the future global system.

Above all else, it is imperative that the United States make clear to the world that it continues to see East Asia as a region of strategic importance. Its basic objective for the region should be to minimize risks (i.e., prevent potential threats from materializing) and maximize opportunities by taking advantage of economic liberalization and regional integration to deepen trust between states and promote prosperity. In particular, every effort must be made to ensure that the region emerges in a manner compatible with the norms and principles of the current global system.

Additionally, it is crucial that the United States lead the charge and work with regional partners to consolidate a multilayered security architecture in East Asia. This architecture should have three main pillars: 1) strengthened bilateral

security arrangements and minilateral strategic links and dialogues between the United States and its friends and allies as well as regular trilateral strategic dialogue among the United States, Japan and China, 2) an expanded Six-Party Talks framework as a sub-regional forum that also covers issues on the Korean Peninsula beyond North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and 3) an East Asia Security Forum as a regionwide, inclusive mechanism for joint operations to combat transnational security issues such as maritime piracy, resource scarcity, disaster relief, environmental degradation, infectious disease, and nuclear proliferation. This forum would involve ASEAN+6 member states and the United States. In order to make this forum possible, the United States should sign a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and accede to the East Asia Summit.

In sum, the next US administration has an incredible opportunity to reengage East Asia and the rest of the international community and reestablish US global leadership. Working to ensure peace and stability in East Asia—an integral building block of the future global system—will complement its efforts elsewhere to strengthen global governance. Although US leaders will need to make some concessions and adapt to the transformed global order, there is no doubt that the vast majority of nations will continue to welcome responsible US leadership in the 21st century. 

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