

# The Challenge of Maintaining American Security Ties in Post-Authoritarian East Asia



Washington must address the challenges associated with political transition to better mitigate the various risks associated with the liberal democratization of its East Asian partners.

Andrew S. Erickson and Ja Ian Chong

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The United States faces challenges trying to maintain robust security partnerships with politically liberalizing societies where Washington was perceived complicit in suppression of legitimate indigenous interests. This mixed legacy can inspire electorally empowered publics to raise new complications for continued U.S. presence and influence. Washington must understand and mitigate attendant risks. To explain why and how, we draw on in-depth conversations and interviews with a wide variety of interlocutors in the societies discussed.

New domestic dynamics in politically liberalizing societies demand revisions to relations with Washington, complicating a range of U.S. interests, including forward deployment, ensuring freedom of navigation and maintaining regional stability. Yet, these societies often wish to maintain substantive security cooperation with Washington. Hence, their “ambivalent alignment.” Today, these developments are most readily apparent in East Asian societies, complicating “rebalancing” efforts. Over time, the legacy of American complicity in single-party dominance and even authoritarian rule may likewise affect the U.S. position in other key regions such as the Middle East.

Washington must actively address challenges associated with political transition to better mitigate the attendant volatility and risks associated with such processes. American policy makers have to recognize how American security ties influence the politics of liberalization and consider measures to preemptively dampen fallout that may follow from attempts at using perceptions of the United States for partisan mobilization. The U.S. military, in particular, should minimize negative social effects associated with numerous personnel operating from a given area. These concerns are especially salient in areas where the United States has a long relationship with a previously dominant regime.

## **Background**

Political liberalization in Asian societies where Washington previously supported dominant regimes that suppressed significant indigenous interests fosters alignment ambivalence. Such societies increasingly desire to address the costs, risks and historical baggage of authoritarian rule, including those associated with long-standing strategic relationships with Washington. Even if existing strategic arrangements remain mutually beneficial, attempts to adjust ties with the United States to better meet local needs may impose new restrictions on the quality of cooperation. Resulting incongruity among key partners can hinder, even undermine, American efforts to [rebalance toward Asia](#), and requires special attention.

During the Cold War, Washington cooperated with authoritarian and single-party-dominant governments to defend maritime East Asia from communism. This history embroils Americans in complex national identity and political liberalization struggles. Important as political

liberalization is to better governance, domestic stability and cooperation with other liberal polities, it can create multiple short-term stress points for strategic partnerships. These include pressure to revise basing and alliance commitments, intensified regional rivalries and inattention to broader security concerns.

As the more powerful, domestically stable actor, Washington is in a better position than its partners to think ahead about the possibilities and opportunities for redefining relations. Historical East Asian cases highlight key challenges and suggest how to frame responses.

### **Political Liberalization and Alignment Ambivalence**

Many East Asian societies today, freed from Cold War security imperatives and facing political liberalization, are viewing old problems through a new lens. In an oft-repeated pattern, popular political opposition, repressed under U.S.-backed authoritarian or single-party-dominant rule, finally achieves power and pursues policies to overturn elite power structures domestically, strengthen national identity symbolically and put military relations with Washington on more equal terms. Authoritarian rule often facilitated passing social costs of U.S. backing disproportionately to ordinary locals, particularly in places with a heavy U.S. military presence. This legacy incentivizes politicians to at least appear to have some distance from Washington. Basing and related issues give local politicians new ways to channel sincere grievances or profit politically. Problems, often unintended, emerge when they seize opportunities that generate alliance friction for internal or external reasons.

Efforts by new democracies to revise relations with Washington typically result in deteriorating relations that frustrate management of new and ongoing security challenges—including threats that helped motivate partnerships with Washington to begin with. Politicians thus must resume a viable working relationship with Washington. Examples have appeared in South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, Indonesia and even in long-democratized Japan. Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore represent possible future cases where such concerns may emerge.

### **What's at Stake**

Ambivalence in East Asia toward security relationships with the United States during and after democratization affects maintenance of an American presence regionally and globally. Bases in Japan critically support U.S. Western Pacific and Indian Ocean deployments and ensure freedom of navigation. Visiting-forces agreements and strategic partnerships across East Asia augment these American interests and regional counterterrorism. U.S. bases in South Korea enable responses to a North Korean contingency, just as [America's security relationship with Taiwan](#) helps manage cross-Strait tensions.

Maintaining a robust American presence in East Asia is particularly crucial for enhancing U.S. bilateral and regional cooperation with an emergent China. Washington continues to be a key provider of public goods such as global commons security and underwriting of an open international economic system. This undergirds the stable regional environment that supports trans-Pacific development and prosperity while China negotiates internal challenges and reforms necessary for its continued progress.

Moreover, development of a rule-based regional order that incorporates a clear Chinese voice and enables effective management of Sino-American differences hinges on Washington's ability to work with actors around East Asia regarding common interests. Reliable regional interlocutors for Washington facilitate realization of these gains; shaky or dysfunctional partnerships undermine such benefits. Neglect of security issues during political transition may encourage a U.S. partner's rivals to alter the existing security situation in ways that heighten regional tension and instability.

Adequately addressing liberalizing partners' strategic ambivalence can help Washington preempt and mitigate manifold policy complications that can harm regional security and American interests. Continued engagement of security partners during and after liberalization affords Washington a means to avoid crises and manage escalation. Effective American influence can dissuade liberalizing security partners from unnecessarily provoking rivals while encouraging them to pay attention to key strategic and foreign-policy issues. We now examine principal extant cases of alignment ambivalence among key U.S. partners in Asia and their consequences, in descending order of the severity of challenges for Washington.

## **South Korea**

A history of war, national division and regional identity struggle complicates South Korea's post-authoritarian alignment choices. A complex, volatile domestic situation produces internal policy disagreements and political polarization regarding North Korea. Many conservative South Koreans regard North Korea as a significant nuisance, but one that they would rather handle minimally. Many progressives see the north as misunderstood kin. Pyongyang's erratic, provocative behavior is seen as business-as-usual; providing limited food aid currently appears most realistic. While many South Koreans still support the [U.S.-Korean alliance](#) and its security contributions, a substantial minority does not share these perceptions, and appears suspicious of assertive efforts by either Washington or Seoul vis-à-vis Pyongyang.

Roh Moo-hyun, perhaps ambivalent alignment's greatest single exemplar, exploited such dynamics in capturing the presidency in 2002. A former student and legal activist jailed briefly

before entering politics, Roh expanded “[Sunshine Policy](#)” overtures to Pyongyang and subjected the alliance to unprecedented criticism. He drew partially on heightened anti-American sentiment, exacerbated by the latest in a series of controversial incidents involving U.S. military personnel dating to the Korean War. In multiple instances, Korean strongmen engaged in brutal suppression and manipulated public perceptions of American support for their actions. Most prominently, in the 1980 Gwangju massacre, Korean troops loyal to then-president Chun Doo-hwan attacked unarmed civilian protesters while claiming American support. Death toll estimates range widely, from [144 to as many as 1,000-2,000](#).

In June 2002, a U.S. Army vehicle returning from training [killed two schoolgirls in Yangju](#). Despite American apologies, special access for victims’ families to court proceedings and compensation, the tragedy triggered demonstrations from both veterans of Korea’s existing anti-basing movement and previously uninvolved individuals. At issue: the U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement required American military personnel involved in an incident while performing official duties to be tried by a U.S. court. The tribunal found the American personnel involved “not guilty” of negligent homicide. Then-President Kim Dae-jung, and subsequently Roh, tried unsuccessfully to have a South Korean court hear the case.

Roh ultimately suffered a precipitous collapse in popular support, and bribery charges that ended with his suicide on May 23, 2009. Yet some of the very factors that propelled him to power haunt his successors. A nontrivial South Korean minority has embraced diverse conspiracy theories from Internet websites and even media outlets suggesting that some force other than North Korea—even the Lee Myung-bak government itself—caused the March 26, 2010 explosion and sinking of ROKS *Cheonan* and death of forty-six of its crew. This cynicism stems largely from widespread ambivalence about South Korea’s own authoritarian legacy, in which Pyongyang’s external threat and Washington’s alliance needs were often invoked to justify harsh, “undemocratic,” even at times repressive, domestic policies. Fueling this view is an instinctive response that sees “Koreans” as intrinsically right and “intrusive” Americans as wrong.

Elites and policy makers have disagreement and internal division at all levels concerning basic principles and priorities. South Korean conservatives and progressives disagree fundamentally on critical issues, including even on the *Cheonan* report’s basic credibility. Some progressives felt ignored by the Obama administration. They loathed Lee’s government, which they accused of being “undemocratic”; opposed its efforts to coordinate policy more closely with Washington; and advocated closer ties and coordination with China, which they view quite positively and uncritically in some respects.

Many progressives believe that, at a minimum, the Lee administration violated democratic principles fundamentally and undermined severely the possibility of political good will by pushing the *Cheonan* investigation too rapidly and in too closed and U.S.-focused a fashion. These progressives preferred a slower, domestically focused process: consulting the minority party carefully through established congressional procedures and building consensus among key political stakeholders before involving other governments—including China's and Russia's.

Lee was thus unable to marshal support for a firm North Korea policy. Rather than uniting South Korea against a common threat, the *Cheonan* incident fragmented it further. Pyongyang could scarcely have designed a better provocation to divide foreign opposition and build internal support for Kim Jong-il's passing leadership to his third son, Kim Jong-un.

Subsequently, however, the November 2010 Yeonpyeong Island bombardment and continued belligerent rhetoric and nuclear/missile tests afford Lee's successor Park Geun-hye support for more assertive deterrence of Pyongyang and clearer alignment with Washington. Even with anti-Americanism ebbing for now, as North Korea and China seek to influence and exploit shifting internal dynamics, Washington must develop stronger, more consistent working relationships with political parties both in power and in opposition in South Korea. Doing so effectively can help establish more stable, sustainable mutual expectations about relations that reduce long-term volatility in the Seoul-Washington partnership.

## **Taiwan**

The United States continues to have an important stake in Taiwan's security, even though the Carter administration abrogated the U.S.-Republic of China (ROC) Mutual Security Treaty in 1980. While Washington does not officially recognize Taiwan, the [Taiwan Relations Act](#) formally articulates U.S. concern for Taiwan's security. American opposition since the Korean War to unilateral changes to the Taiwan Strait *status quo* remains key to guaranteeing Taiwan's continued autonomy. Yet, Taiwan's transition to and consolidation of democracy since the late 1980s made relations more volatile, straining Taipei-Washington ties, particularly between the mid-1990s and late 2000s.

Democratization brought overt efforts by politicians to mobilize popular support by channeling Taiwanese distinctiveness and pride, particularly during competitive island-wide elections. This was apparent with both the Kuomintang (KMT) administration of Lee Teng-hui and the subsequent Democratic Progressive Party administration under Chen Shui-bian. Chen and his party shared strengths and weaknesses strikingly similar to Roh and his Uri party. Chen, a veteran activist, former legislator and ex-Taipei City mayor with little foreign-policy experience, won two presidential terms by mustering electoral support as a champion of Taiwanese identity

and internal and external interests. Domestic support for Chen came, in part, from him taking positions to challenge Beijing, even if this sharpened Sino-American differences and Taipei-Washington friction. Chen's two terms in office were followed by corruption charges directed against both him and close family members.

The foreign-policy and strategic consequences of overt political emphases on Taiwanese identity first appeared with Lee Teng-hui's efforts to highlight the ROC's international legitimacy during a 1995 U.S. visit. This elicited strong reactions from the People's Republic of China (PRC), preceding the island's 1996 presidential election, including 1995-96 missile tests, the first time since the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis (besides periodic offshore island shelling) that Beijing used outright force to threaten Taiwan. This triggered a robust American response including deployment of two aircraft carrier groups near Taiwan. PRC reactions combined with Taiwanese identity mobilization to boost both Lee and Chen's campaigns, as voters regarded them as champions of Taiwan against Mainland pressure.

Driving policies on Taiwan were long-held desires to express local identity alongside confidence in American support against PRC use of force. The 1987 lifting of martial law enabled Taiwanese identity expression, as well as pride in the island's economic success and newfound freedoms. Martial law under the KMT previously suppressed such sentiments with American acquiescence. However, U.S. support for democratization on Taiwan since the early-1980s, coupled with relative quiescence from Beijing over unification's immediacy, encouraged a view on Taiwan that there was political space to push for greater distinction from China. Such conditions prompted politicians to celebrate Taiwanese identity and seek greater international space and recognition.

Assertions of Taiwan's separateness from China, counter to Beijing's position that the island is a renegade province awaiting unification, invite forceful Mainland reactions. Apparent movement toward *de jure* Taiwan-Mainland division challenges the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s status as guardian of Chinese nationalism, a pillar of its claim to political legitimacy and continued rule. Taiwanese challenges to CCP versions of nationalism may become even more apparent since political affinity toward the Mainland is falling, despite rising economic integration. [Multiple recent opinion polls](#) suggest that 20 percent or less of people in Taiwan [support unification](#), and this number is [declining steadily](#). This could put pressure on a PRC leadership eager to burnish its nationalist credentials, and spark cross-Strait tensions embroiling the United States.

Further complicating ties with Washington is [Taiwan's defense underinvestment](#). Expensive but restricted-capability American defense sales create an impression among Taiwan's electorate that Washington is forcing Taipei to purchase second-rate equipment while bolstering its own arms

industry. U.S. efforts to encourage Taiwan's defense modernization tend to fuel this view while feeding Beijing's suspicions that Washington is perpetuating Taiwan's separation.

American attempts to bolster ties with Taiwan and manage any cross-Strait tensions can strain Washington's relations with both Taipei and Beijing. Efforts to restrain Taiwanese leaders from making statements and taking actions Beijing finds provocative can seem like American opposition to legitimate expressions of political views from a democratic system or even unjustified intervention.

A parallel dynamic exists when U.S.-Taiwan differences emerge over defense acquisitions. Such developments erode trust between Taipei and Washington, complicating communication and cooperation. Dissuading Beijing from pressuring and threatening Taipei, including efforts to deter use of force by the PRC, increases Chinese suspicion of the United States and can potentially provoke escalation. Insofar as Taiwan and its international status remain important to Beijing, island developments will continue to affect U.S.-Chinese relations. Washington needs to pay attention to Taiwan's domestic politics and their strategic implications.

## **Japan**

In September 2009, Yukio Hatoyama became prime minister of a Japanese government headed by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), unseating the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Although a scion of a political dynasty, Hatoyama shared with leaders of newly liberalized societies a somewhat eccentric, nonmainstream personality. In 1996, he cofounded the DPJ with his brother, which gained support as a force to break the LDP's previous near-stranglehold on power. The DPJ subsequently shifted leftward, channeling grievances including impacts associated with U.S. forces such as environmental degradation surrounding American bases, and the fact that Japan's highest crime rates occur in districts adjoining them.

Like Roh and Chen, Hatoyama proposed significant social spending. He sought to make relations with the United States more transparent and "equal," and reorient Japan towards Asia while pursuing a policy of "friendship" toward China. Relations with Washington suffered immediately as many American policy makers and experts dismissed what they viewed as naiveté. U.S. policy elites exacerbated the situation by failing to anticipate DPJ pronouncements, thanks to an overwhelming LDP establishment orientation in their personal ties, and by criticizing them preemptively in public.

Hatoyama's government aggravated this discord by ending an eight-year-long mission by Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels operating in the Indian Ocean to refuel U.S.-led forces supporting Operation Enduring Freedom—of symbolic importance to Washington as one



of Tokyo's few direct-support contributions overseas. Lack of Japanese operational assistance compared to complete American commitment to Japan's security has long strained the alliance. Ultimately, Hatoyama's campaign vow to close Futenma Marine Corps Air Base and move the replacement facility off Okinawa proved the undoing of his prime minister-ship. Local opposition prevented the station's relocation elsewhere in Okinawa, Washington's preferred alternative, given the island's unmatched strategic position.

Here, a Japan-specific problem manifested itself: unlike Cold War bastion Hokkaido, Okinawa has its *own* ambivalent alignment with Tokyo. Economic incentives from Tokyo that worked elsewhere in Japan had less effectiveness in this archipelago when facing a robust set of competing interests. Okinawa's unique history includes vastly disproportionate sacrifices in World War II's final stages, where fighting with U.S. troops decimated 10-30 percent of the population. Okinawans also believe they bear the brunt of social costs associated with American basing in Japan. Hatoyama's consequent inability to fulfill his promise, combined with rising North Korean threats, including the *Cheonan* sinking, compelled him on May 28, 2010 to promise President Obama that Futenma would not be moved off Okinawa. The resulting unpopularity of this and other decisions, amid general charges of incompetence, compelled Hatoyama to resign on June 2, 2010.

Displaying problems common to leaders pursuing alliance adjustment, Hatoyama's ideas about security and foreign policy were arguably inchoate. He and many of his appointees appeared inexperienced and unwise in their attempts to reduce experienced bureaucrats' traditional power. Hatoyama's entente with China lacked a realistic basis, with Beijing reluctant to reciprocate.

Fallout for U.S. foreign and security policy resulting from increasingly competitive Japanese domestic politics appears to be a feature of the U.S.-Japanese relationship that has outlasted Hatoyama. A right-wing effort to purchase three of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands led Yoshihiko Noda, one of Hatoyama's DPJ successors to the prime minister-ship, to nationalize those islands. While designed to preempt a right-wing purchase and communicated to Beijing in advance, the move sharply increased Japanese-Chinese tensions, and prompted public questioning in both Tokyo and Washington of the extent of America's alliance commitment to Japan. Following the LDP's return to office in 2012, pandering to right-wing voters and sentiments included downplaying Japanese World War II atrocities and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Yasukuni Shrine visit. Such behavior antagonizes Japan's neighbors, notably China and South Korea, and complicates American efforts to work simultaneously with Japan and other regional actors.

## **Philippines**

In the Philippines, America's colonial legacy casts a long shadow. The military-basing agreement between the United States and the Philippines following its independence, due to expire in 1991, drew increasing Filipino elite opposition in the 1980s. In June 1991, Mt. Pinatubo's eruption destroyed Clark Air Base. U.S. and Filipino negotiators could not agree on a formula for Subic Bay Naval Base; all American forces were therefore removed from the Philippines before 1993. Ending the archipelago's permanent U.S. military presence necessitated finding alternative sites to sustain an active American forward presence in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. This presence is important to safeguarding freedom of navigation amid simmering South China Sea territorial tensions.

With Corazon Aquino assuming office following the end of Ferdinand Marcos' authoritarian rule, Filipinos began the long process of reworking their political institutions and foreign policy. This included rethinking the Philippine-U.S. relationship, which granted Cold War ally Marcos considerable assistance, including military aid. Washington even facilitated Marcos' final departure from the Philippines and exile in Hawaii. American complicity in authoritarian administration and disruptive behavior by U.S. troops, mixed with lingering unhappiness with colonial rule—including brutal suppression of the indigenous anti-colonial movement—fueled widespread opposition to continued American basing. Mt. Pinatubo merely accelerated what seemed to be the Philippines-based U.S. forces' inevitable departure.

One result is greater difficulty in promoting stability and broadly accepted management of South China Sea disputes. Filipino military weakness and lack of an American presence make it easy for other disputants, notably China, to occupy and reinforce Philippine-claimed islands and reefs. Such action is destabilizing, potentially escalatory and reinforces a precedent for using forcible measures to handle differences. Continuing domestic ambivalence toward Washington and factional elite oligarchy politics make reviving a more active U.S. security role through anti-terrorism efforts and some form of visiting-forces arrangement tricky, the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Security Treaty and American military disaster assistance notwithstanding. Manila also prefers to have much stronger and clearer U.S. support for its South China Sea claims, steps that Washington is wary of making to avoid direct involvement in those disputes.

## **Indonesia**

Parallel patterns have manifested themselves in Indonesia, too, given its long and convoluted history of relations with Washington. This included clear, long-term American backing of Suharto, whose government was responsible for at least tens of thousands of deaths during an anti-communist purge between 1965 and 1966. Then, just as Indonesia was transitioning to democracy in 1998-99, the United States suddenly withdrew support. Washington's distancing from Jakarta followed mass killings, rape, arson and looting perpetrated by supporters of a

crumbling Suharto government. These accompanied human-rights abuses committed by U.S.-trained Indonesian Special Forces and Jakarta-backed militia in East Timor. Though understandable then, the freeze in U.S.-Indonesian relations paradoxically limited Washington's ability to support a post-Suharto transition. Complicating the picture are recent allegations of U.S.-supported Singaporean tapping of Indonesia's telecommunications.

Further muddying the Jakarta-Washington relationship is Indonesia's revolutionary, anti-colonial past. A key element of Indonesian nationalism is its past struggle against Dutch and Japanese imperialism. Jakarta accordingly emphasizes an active, independent foreign policy, free of great-power interference. This was a key motivation behind Indonesia's leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement, despite American support for its independence struggle with the Netherlands. Such sentiments reinforce desire for distance from Washington, even if U.S.-Indonesia cooperation is mutually beneficial.

The legacy of past policies creates an impression of a United States complicit in widespread state violence, indifferent to Indonesian interests and unforthcoming in Indonesia's hour of need. Washington's mixed legacy in Indonesia feeds an underlying discomfort with the United States among the local populace and elites that can hinder cooperation with a key Southeast Asian actor.

Nevertheless, Indonesia is Southeast Asia's largest, most populous country and traditionally first among equals in ASEAN. Jakarta's leadership and sustained attention is important to successful ASEAN cooperation and initiatives. An active ASEAN can support U.S. interests in promoting regional economic and security cooperation, including support for freedom of navigation and regional stability, with less risk of escalating Sino-American rivalry. With Indonesia a democracy and home to the world's largest Muslim population, good U.S.-Indonesian relations send a strong signal of Washington's openness to engagement and consistent commitment to supporting the values it espouses so vociferously.

### **Handling Ambivalence**

Washington must be attentive to host nations' domestic challenges. U.S. basing will continue to be sensitive in this era of dynamic domestic political change. But this is about far more than access rights and alliance commitment problems. While the U.S. military rightly remains studiously apolitical, it cannot avoid operating in host nations' domestic sphere by virtue of basing in and cooperating with allied and partner nations. To address these challenges, Washington needs to treat historical grievances and symbolism carefully, particularly vis-à-vis basing issues. It must maintain robust connections and dialogue with actors across the political spectrum in its partners and allies. Such an approach is important to underpinning robust,

sustained relationships that help maintain stability and advance American interests in a world of simmering tensions and heightened uncertainty.

A factor common to all these cases of political liberalization—and potentially others—is the inherent reaction of any polity to a dominant global power with its broad interests coupled with past complicity, if not support, for the suppression and even repression of local interests. Such reactions were previously contained by Cold War concerns and more restrictive domestic politics. That these imperatives no longer override domestic desires spurs pressure to reshape long-standing security ties with Washington, even if persistent security challenges delay and dampen these impulses to varying degrees. That said, the intensity of ambivalence toward Washington varies among these societies, given different experiences with single-party dominance or authoritarianism, the trajectory of transition toward democracy and the timeline and extent of U.S. responsibility therein.

Overall implications are clear. Experience from East Asia suggests that American policy makers need to better anticipate the complications that accompany political liberalization and increased domestic contestation in the societies of U.S. partners. Carefully considering political minefields helps ensure that these long-standing security ties remain effective through political transition. This requires (1) comprehending various political factions' positions; (2) understanding how they can manipulate the legacy of cooperation with the United States in contemporary domestic politics, particularly if Washington has had a close relationship with the past regime; (3) recognizing how that legacy may resonate, especially with the voting public during electoral contests; (4) devising working relationships with different political factions throughout the political liberalization process; (5) ensuring that foreign counterparts can convince voters and neighboring leaders that alliances serve national interests; (6) pursuing a “whole of government” approach that ensures operational activities are undertaken and coordinated with firm local support; (7) emphasizing transparency and proactive engagement, since the modern media makes concealing most information impossible and rumors flourish when aligned with ambivalence narratives and (8) devising plans to handle potential alignment crises.

A heavy-handed U.S. approach to these issues will likely compound problems by potentially implicating American involvement in partners' domestic politics. Therefore, U.S. policy makers and officials need to manage the politics of liberalization and contestation in key security partners quietly, but firmly and consistently. Effectively handling the politics of an authoritarian legacy during democratic transition enables the United States to maintain alliances and partnerships capable of addressing geopolitical challenges and containing turmoil.

More careful thinking and preparation for the bumpy processes of political liberalization are particularly important to American foreign and security policy today. The United States needs to

work with Asian allies to incorporate China as a partner and innovator in the current international framework. This is in part the rationale behind the Obama administration's rebalancing strategy. Such an approach becomes more trying when societies across Asia are undergoing their own domestic political transitions. This is as much the case with key treaty allies like South Korea, Japan and the Philippines as it is with partners like Taiwan and Indonesia. Outside East Asia, Washington must work with long-term partners— like Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt— that are undergoing political liberalization. This phenomenon will likely proliferate as existing regimes in places like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore face greater pressure for political reform. Better preparedness in this regard will better safeguard the interests of both the United States and its partners.

*[Andrew S. Erickson](#) is an associate professor at the Naval War College and coeditor of [Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific](#). [Ja Ian Chong](#) is an assistant professor of political science at the National University of Singapore and author of *External Intervention and the Politics of State Formation: China, Indonesia, Thailand—1893-1952*.*