

## Outside View

(China Daily)

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### **How the West has turned a spoiler**

The West is not welcoming Asia's progress, and its short-term interests in preserving its privileged position in various global institutions are trumping its long-term interests in creating a more just and stable world order, an article in the Foreign Affairs says.

Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, writes in the May/June 2008 issue of Foreign Affairs that the West has gone from being the world's problem-solver to being its single biggest liability.

"The West has become the most powerful force preventing the emergence of a new wave of history, clinging to its privileged position in key global forums, and refusing to contemplate how the West will have to adjust to the Asian Century," Mahbubani says.

Many Western leaders often begin their speeches by remarking on how perilous the world is becoming, yet Westerners seldom look inward to understand the deeper reasons these global problems are being mismanaged.

The West has become increasingly incompetent in its handling of key global problems such as the Middle East mess, nuclear nonproliferation, the world economy.

"Western policies have been most harmful in the Middle East", which led to the Iraq War, deterioration of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and so on, Mahbubani says, "and few doubt the problem's origin: the West."

"Nuclear nonproliferation is another area in which the West, especially the US, has made matters worse."

For example, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)'s principal progenitor, the US, continues to maintain thousands of nuclear weapons, which is one of the biggest sources of nuclear proliferation, thus eroding the infrastructure on which the NPT's enforcement depends.

As to the world economy, the West has recently been faltering in its global economic leadership by hindering trade liberalization, while failing to take the lead on battling global warming.

The West's failures to tackle such challenges suggests that a systemic problem is emerging in the West's stewardship of the international order.

"First and foremost, the West needs to acknowledge that sharing the power it has accumulated in global forums would serve its interests," Mahbubani says.

The experience of Asia shows that where Western aid has failed to do the job, domestic good governance can succeed, which is likely to be Asia's greatest contribution to world history. In addition, Asia's march to modernity can help produce a more stable world order.

"Fortunately, some Asian states may now be capable of taking on more responsibilities, as they have been strengthened by implementing Western principles," Mahbubani says.

China has responded positively to the call to become a "responsible stakeholder", as have other Asian states, Mahbubani says.

In recent decades, Asians have been among the greatest beneficiaries of the open multilateral order created by the US and other victors of World War II, and few today want to destabilize it. The number of Asians seeking a comfortable middle-class existence has never been higher.

"And so the West should welcome the fact that Asian states are becoming competent in handling regional and global challenges," Mahbubani says.

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