

## **The Greatest Asian Century (and America's Role in It)**

**By Kishore Mahbubani<sup>1</sup>**

The 21st century will be the best century for Asia. The past two or three centuries have been traumatic and difficult: European colonial rule, multiple invasions and wars, growing poverty and relative under-performance vis-à-vis the rest of the world. In the second half of the twentieth century, Asia began to re-emerge. The time has come to try and understand the factors that explain this rise. These factors would include Asian mastery of Western science and technology, acceptance of free-market economics, the democratization of the Asian social fabric (overcoming centuries of feudalism), growing peace among nations and the spread of the rule of law and universal education. However, America has also contributed critically to the rise of Asia. In 1945, it changed the grain of history by encouraging decolonization and creating a rules-based global order that allowed new powers to emerge. Asians also benefited from American education. The big question the world will face is how Asians will change the world order as they emerge. Will they reinforce the 1945 consensus or attempt to create a whole new order?

---

<sup>1</sup> Kishore Mahbubani is the Dean and Practice Professor of Public Policy at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and the author of 'Can Asians Think?' and 'Beyond the Age of Innocence: Rebuilding Trust Between America and The World'.