

Lately, few topics seem to cause greater anxiety in the Western Hemisphere than the rise of Asia and its consequences for the rest of the world. Kishore Mahbubani's *The New Asian Hemisphere* gives a powerful account of this changing world seen through Asian eyes.

Mahbubani is dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore and a past ambassador to the United Nations. His thesis is this: the rise of Asia is good for the world, as long as Western leaders embrace it. He postulates that countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and others will follow the model India and China are presenting and that Asia has no interest in endangering the world system established after World War II from which it greatly benefited.

Not without intention to provoke, the author discusses three possible scenarios: the Asian March to Modernity, the Retreat into Fortresses, and the Triumph of the West. He explains why the middle option, in which the West re-erects strong trade barriers, is a lose-lose approach for everyone and warns that the third one, the submission of Eastern countries to Western political and economic dominance, is a dangerous illusion.



Mahbubani argues that the rise of Asia is driven by its adoption of the 'seven pillars' that were the basis of Western successes in recent centuries: free economy, science, meritocracy/equal opportunity, pragmatism, a culture of peace, the rule of law, and education. While some of these must be called visionary at best when considering the realities of China and certain other Asian countries, the author argues that to the most part Asians have finally understood, absorbed, and implemented Western best practices in many areas and are also creating new patterns of cooperation not seen in the West.

Depending on perspective, Mahbubani either tells some unpleasant truths or simply ignores crucial Western values and beliefs. For instance, he criticizes the exportation of democracy to nations that are not ready for it and expresses an expectation of the West to stop dominating international institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, the G8, or the UN Security Council.

Insightful and provocative, *The New Asian Hemisphere* asks us some tough questions: Why are we not happy with the Asians following our historic example? Because it means a loss of power? Will including Eastern leaders in international bodies yield better results when it comes to critical issues such as Middle East policy, free trade, nuclear non-proliferation, or global warming? Even though it does not always have answers to these questions and may do little to calm any (Western) fears, this book is well worth reading.

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