

A Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader

SINCE THE COLLAPSE of Japan's bubble economy in the early 1990s, and the fitful efforts at political and economic reforms that followed, it has become almost customary among many observers to see Japan as a nation paralyzed by an inability to change its ways. The country's "lost decade" is giving way, in the minds of some, to a second lost decade. The Land of the Rising Sun looks increasingly like a sunset country. Or does it?

In our remarkable package of cover stories in this issue of *Global Asia*, "Reinventing Japan," we examine the many pressures for change that Japan faces — from social inequality, the need for political, economic and foreign policy reforms to the role of the military. Noted Japan specialist Gerald L. Curtis served as Guest Editor for our cover package, and assembled a distinguished team of scholars to delve deeply into the transformations taking place in Japan.

Their conclusions — while not whitewashing the obstacles that lie ahead — are broadly encouraging for several reasons: They highlight the vigorous intellectual debate that is taking place in Japan across a broad range of issues; and they suggest that change is, indeed, taking place. The end result is that Japan, to the surprise of many, will likely emerge from the transitional period that began in the early 1990s with a stronger, more vibrant society, political system and economy than it had before the bubble economy burst. As Curtis says in his introduction to the cover package (see page 8), "The image of Japan as unchanging has never been as inappropriate as it is today. Japan is going through a great transfor-

mation, comparable to the periods following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the end of World War II. It took about 20 years to consolidate each of those two previous transformations." He predicts that sometime around 2015, the full effects of Japan's current transformation will take the world by surprise.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Global Asia*, we debate whether the global response to eight years of George W. Bush's foreign policies has triggered an end to the era of American dominance, or whether US hegemony can be maintained. We examine US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's recent trip to Asia and ask whether it really signals a change in US attitudes and actions in the region; we look at how globalization may be exacerbating India's Hindu caste-based system of social exclusion; we explore one of the toughest challenges facing Asian companies as they become global — the shortage of executive leadership talent; we delve into the tragic plight of Burma's Rohingya Muslim minority, and ask why the world seems unwilling to respond; and finally, we provide an excerpt from a new book that provides a surprising argument in favor of the role nuclear weapons are playing in maintaining security and stability in Asia.

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Sincerely yours,

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