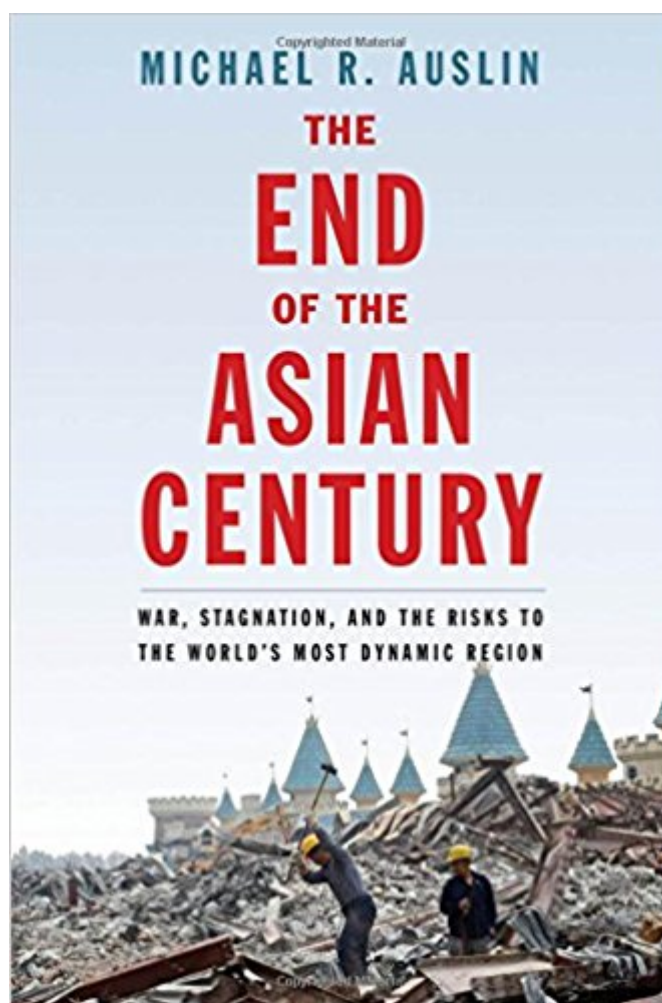


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# The End Of The Asian Century: War, Stagnation, And The Risks To The World's Most Dynamic Region



## Synopsis

An urgently needed "risk map" of the many dangers that could derail Asia's growth and stability. Since Marco Polo, the West has waited for the "Asian Century." Today, the world believes that Century has arrived. Yet from China's slumping economy to war clouds over the South China Sea and from environmental devastation to demographic crisis, Asia's future is increasingly uncertain. Historian and geopolitical expert Michael Auslin argues that far from being a cohesive powerhouse, Asia is a fractured region threatened by stagnation and instability. Here, he provides a comprehensive account of the economic, military, political, and demographic risks that bedevil half of our world, arguing that Asia, working with the United States, has a unique opportunity to avert catastrophe "but only if it acts boldly. Bringing together firsthand observations and decades of research, Auslin's provocative reassessment of Asia's future will be a must-read for industry and investors, as well as politicians and scholars, for years to come.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Auslin argues powerfully for a dose of reality when assessing the current situation in Asia and its future problems and prospects." "George P. Shultz, former U.S. Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury, and Distinguished Fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University" "Michael Auslin combines an historian's perspective with the art of diagnosis to map Asia's possible futures. The surprising result is anticipatory, cautionary, and contrarian. Written with verve and a readable style, Auslin urges us to weigh the wide-ranging implications of these risks for America and the rest of the world." "Robert B. Zoellick, former President of the World Bank, US Trade

Representative, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State. "The End of the Asian Century is the essential user's guide to the gathering risks in the dynamic Indo-Pacific crescent. Not since Robert D. Kaplan's *The Coming Anarchy* and Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* has a study so originally and presciently captured the risks to the emerging international order." —James Kraska, Howard S. Levie Professor of International Law, U.S. Naval War College

"Michael Auslin has built a reputation as an astute and forward-looking observer. In his new book, Auslin paints a vivid picture of a region waiting to see the full extent of Beijing's ambitions while wondering how the United States will ultimately respond. Those wishing to understand the scale of the challenge posed by China's destabilizing behavior would be well-served by this timely book." —Congressman J. Randy Forbes (R-Va), Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower & Projection Forces and Co-Chairman of the Congressional China Caucus

"For years, many Americans have seen a rising Asia as a region of opportunity. But Asia scholar Michael Auslin has come to see it as a region of risks — military, economic, demographic. In *The End of the Asian Century*, he provides a 'risk map' of a region of great promise and great problems." —Michael Barone, resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and Washington Examiner senior political analyst

Michael R. Auslin, a former history professor at Yale, is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington, DC.

The last 16 years I spent in the Philippines as a businessman, service buyer and consumer. Doing some business with China. I give the author 4.6 stars (rounded of to 5 stars) because I truly agree with him in chapter 1-6. The important part of the book, chapter 1-6 analyzes, structures and presents the risks of Indo-Pacific in an easy readable way. I only disagree with the author in the less important chapter 7, a discussion chapter. In academics and non-fiction the last chapter is not that important. It is mostly the author's opinion. You will save yourself years of reading and watching boring "news" about Asia trying to discern what is "news" and what is propaganda. Read this book if you like to invest some money in equities or bonds in Asia, which I recommend as it has given me a higher growth. The total sum of risks are not much different compared to the sum of the risks in EU or USA, but the growth potential is higher in Asia. I am an EU citizen and I highly recommend this book to a general audience from socialists to capitalists, and in between. :) Update: Video from a 10 min speech by Dr John Chipman (head of IISS) at the opening of Munich Security Conference March 8, 2017. The speech confirms most of what Michael Austin writes.

For several years now, political pundits, economists and foreign policy experts have assured the public that the next century will be the Asian century due to the incredible economic growth in the region along with its seemingly stable, safe environment. This prediction, once considered an inevitability, has become far less rosy in the current decade as problems with economic stagnation, slowdowns, demographics, political unrest, and corruption become more apparent. As someone who has lived in Asia for many years I can confirm that much of what is written here matches what I've been seeing, but I find myself skeptical of the solutions presented inside the book. The book defines Asia as the Indo-Pacific region and attempts to educate the reader about the problems these countries face via demographics, economic stagnation and slowdowns, corruption, authoritarianism, and the increasing chances of regional armed conflict. The author skips around to different countries in all the chapters, but most of the focus is on Japan, India, and China with less time spent with ASEAN. The chapters on economics shows that while some countries like Japan, South Korea and China have seen tremendous growth, other nations are barely getting themselves off the ground as the economic picture becomes far less stable. The chapter on armed conflict largely focuses on China's rapid military growth and the instability presented by North Korea. The detailed, factual picture presenting the wide-ranging problems Asia faces is one that matches what I have seen and heard myself. Unfortunately, the major problem I have with this book is the solutions section presented in the final chapter. I was hopeful when the author expressed that Asia is a region torn between authoritarianism and democracy, while making it clear that democracy was not going to be the inevitable winner in the region as many Westerners might think. However, at the end the book only offered the predictable solution of promoting liberalization throughout all of Asia as the antidote for all its problems, along with accepting and supporting the global economy with massive, multi-party trade deals like the recently shelved TPP. It prescribes the US and the Europe as integral parts of the cure since they can help inject liberal values into Asia to create a Pan-Asian region similar to that of the EU. I find this type of rhetoric similar to the "end of history" line presented by Francis Fukuyama after the Soviet Union fell, which is now considered by many to be wishful thinking. This book, while informative for someone who has little to no understanding of this part of the world, leaves out some insights that I have found in my time living and traveling in the area. It is why I cannot simply agree with the solutions presented and I will try my best to explain some of my own misgivings below. First of all, there's the idea that the US and the EU should support the democracies of Asia in order to spread liberalization to the more authoritarian countries. This might be a good idea if several clear instances hadn't already been made that neither of these candidates

for advocating democracy are willing to stand up for those brave people defying authoritarianism in favor of democracy and liberalism. The Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong, a protest against unfair election practices, saw no support from either party against Beijing. When Hong Kong book sellers were kidnapped and imprisoned for selling books critical of China's leadership and when fairly elected Independence candidates were denied their seats by Beijing, the EU and US did not protest on their behalf. Taiwan, the only ethnically Chinese democratic country in the region, receives no support from the EU as far as I'm aware and marginal, vague support from the US. When the Hague voted in favor of the Philippines against Beijing in a dispute of sovereign territory, China simply decided to ignore the ruling and continue its previous behavior. The US and EU, predictably, did nothing. I cannot understate the sense of disillusionment this gives to the people of the region who do believe in democracy. In Taiwan, where I have lived, the young and the old have all come to the same conclusion: the only value that matters is money. China has it. They don't. Democracy doesn't actually matter and, as much as I might have wanted to argue, I couldn't. They're facing reality and realizing that in spite of adopting Western values, no one is going to help them when China comes for them. The same message is being received in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, make no mistake. Money matters. They don't. Adding to the disillusionment is the deeply embedded corruption found in democratic governments, which seems on par with those in authoritarian regimes. Democracy should, technically, create more trustworthy politicians and institutions than authoritarian states. Yet, for many people, the only difference seems to be that democratic leaders are a bit easier to get rid of, though that doesn't stop them from returning to power in some other form. Now, onto the idea that liberalization and democracy are the keys to long term stability in Asia. For this point, one should consider what people in this region are seeing inside the democracies of the US and EU. The reports of frequent terrorist attacks, violent shootings, ethnic tensions, riots, migration crises, and staggering unemployment rates do not present a strong case for democracy against authoritarianism. Many Westerners comment that they enjoy visiting or living in Asia because of how safe they feel inside these countries, authoritarian or otherwise. Internal security matters and tourists from Japan, South Korea and China are now avoiding traveling to countries like France because they fear for their safety. Clearly, democracy and liberalization does not necessarily make a stable, safe society. Finally, focusing on democracy and liberalization before creating a stable economic environment is basically placing the cart before the horse. Japan, for example, only began to become a more liberal society after its economy was able to provide for the needs of its citizens, not before. If democracy advocates become too pushy in pressing for liberalization, then Asian countries will turn to more authoritarian states who will give them money

regardless of their stance on human rights. This is already becoming the case with Thailand and Malaysia. It is also furthered by the international business climate, whose investments largely depend on cutting the best possible deal. This, of course, usually entails the exploitation of the poor and underprivileged. Thus, money will trump liberalization and democracy every time. There are other points I could make regarding saving face, pride, ethnicity and power, but this review has become quite wordy as it is. To summarize: geopolitics is a blood sport and money trumps any other value in today's world. Spreading liberalization and democracy would require its advocates to forgo wealth for the sake of unshakeable, uncompromising values--which, given what I've seen recently, seems unlikely to happen. More importantly, the very people who the Westerners are supposed to be instilling their values in are fast losing faith in said values as their democratic "allies" largely abandon them. Authoritarianism will be the winner as long as any semblance of value is forsaken for monetary gain.

This was a good analysis of the dangers facing Asia in the coming years. However, this book went to press before Brexit occurred, before the election of Trump occurred, and before the Italian referendum occurred. Because of this, the examples and comparisons to Europe are not quite accurate. It may be that 2017 will see the end of the EU. This could mean a great deal of revision to this book will be necessary. Also, this book does not deal with populism and that is a key factor in the world today. Still and all, this is a very good effort.

Auslin provides a holistic view of the developments in the Indo-Pacific. He includes the medium-term view looking at demographics and political institutions - things that are often overlooked in mainstream discourse. The metaphor of map is useful here. I hope more people will read this book and be more even-keel about the challenges that countries face in the Indo/Asia-Pacific.

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