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Ahead of the UN's December 2009 climate change meeting in Copenhagen, Asia's leading emerging economies, particularly China and India, are under increased international pressure to offer binding commitments on addressing climate change. [Elizabeth C. Economy](#) of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) believes that both countries should be decoupled from the rest of the developing world and should make a firm commitment related to timing for cutting emissions. Economy contends that China has more ability to address climate change, while India needs more international resources. India's environment minister [Jairam Ramesh](#) spoke about coordinating positions with China for Copenhagen and India's domestic emissions control targets. Meanwhile, a number of Asia Business Council members have signed [The Copenhagen Communiqué](#) on Climate Change, including The Bank of East Asia, Hang Lung Properties, Philips, Infosys, Novartis, and Rolls-Royce.

**G20 to Become Premier Forum for Global Economic Decisions? Perspectives from Asian News Media**

Reactions from key Asian newspapers are mixed to the news that the G20 Summit will become the premier forum for international economic cooperation. [The Times of India](#) was optimistic in the shift of global economic governance structure from the G8 towards multilateral consensus-building across the G20. [China Daily](#) noted the slow progress of international financial reform and the dangers of trade protectionism. Malaysia's [The Star Online](#) questioned the legitimacy of the G20 in making global economic decisions in the absence of most developing countries. Similarly, [The Jakarta Post](#) was concerned that commitments will remain weak without binding enforcement mechanisms to keep members accountable. But [Japan Today](#) focused on Hatoyama not offering concrete proposals during his diplomatic meetings.

**Global Trade and Protectionism: Trade Wars Looming?**

Trade tensions and protectionism are on the rise. According to [Global Trade Alert](#), at least 121 protectionist measures have been implemented by G20 nations since their first meeting last November. In addition to the well-publicized U.S. decision to impose tariffs of up to 35% on imported Chinese tires (and China's complaint about U.S. chicken exports in response) raising concerns about protectionism between two of the world's largest economies, [trade cases against China](#) increased 120% to 79 in the first eight months of 2009, involving \$10 billion of goods. In [this article](#), CFR editor Robert McMahon summarizes the debate between those who warn of a trade war and those who say that damage from these trade disputes will be minimal.

**The Rio Tinto Case: Troubling Questions for China**

The arrest of four Rio Tinto employees (including one Australian and three local staff) in Shanghai remains a controversial topic. Is China turning into a country in which business negotiations are subject to interference by state security forces? The [China Economic Quarterly](#) (CEQ) argues that the Rio case illustrates China is not a "strongman state" like Russia, nor a "fully modern country." China has a bureaucratic system characterized by "balance-of-power politics between different political groupings, bureaucratic institutions and commercial interests." However, China has a way to go before it can become a leader in the global economic order. CEQ points out that the "legal" proceeding against the Rio executives is still a matter of "closed-door bureaucratic negotiation." Read [more](#).

**Is China's Rebound for Real?**

China's rebound from the global economic downturn has been quicker and stronger than most had expected. Economist [Pieter Bottelier](#) attributes the rebound to credit expansion and an effective government stimulus program. However, China's growth pattern will not be sustainable unless consumption growth exceeds GDP growth for an extended period of time. [Nicholas Lardy](#) of the Peterson Institute of International Economics (PIIE) has a series of data slides suggesting that China's fundamentals can sustain a long-lived recovery: Strong household consumption growth, low household, financial sector and public debt, and relatively healthy banks all augur well.

**"Thai-style" Democracy Three Years after the September 2006 Coup**

Three years after the September 2006 coup that ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, Thailand's democracy remains shattered and the pro-Thaksin Red Shirts and the pro-government Yellow Shirt factions continue to spar. In a [national survey](#) of attitudes toward democracy and amendments to the current constitution by the Asia Foundation, two-thirds of respondents were pessimistic about the direction of their country. The results also indicated that 53% of the population wanted constitutional reform or a new constitution. [Dr Pavin Chachavalponpun](#) of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies writes about the intense weakness of Thai democratic institutions. An opinion piece in [The Nation](#) suggests that for Thailand to move forward, it is critical for a systematic development policy favoring quality over quantity and prioritizing long-term sustainability over short-term political interest.