Despite the historic and perhaps transformative nature of this year’s presidential election in the United States, major changes in U.S. foreign policy in Asia, at least in the near term, are less likely, EWC President Charles E. Morrison predicted at a public program in early October. “This is an election about change,” said Morrison. “But I’m not sure, particularly in the early years, that there will be as much foreign policy change as some expect.”

The consensus around basic foreign policy values and the pressure of dealing with the paramount issue of the economy — as well as the economic outlook for the country, continued on page 2

New U.S. President Likely to Hold Steady Course on Asia

As U.S. newspapers wrestle with slumping circulation and advertising, its staffing and coverage are declining, undermining a fundamental premise of democracy, maintains veteran journalist and award-winning author Lou Cannon, the 2008 George Chaplin Fellow in Distinguished Journalism.

In a speech at the East-West Center in October, Cannon made the point that the decline of local coverage, Washington coverage — and, “even more worrisome,” coverage of Congress — is not good for the nation and public interest.

He quoted Founding Father James Madison: “A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both.”

Cannon worked 26 years for The Washington Post, including as White House correspondent, and is best-known as author of five Reagan biographies. His most recent book, “Reagan’s Disciple: George W. Bush’s Troubled Quest for a Presidential Legacy,” was co-authored with his journalist son, Carl, and published earlier this year.

“Reporters are rarely at many local government meetings across the land, and state government fares even worse. News organizations are also reducing their Washington coverage,” Cannon said. “Except for The New York Times, every newspaper bureau in Washington has shrunk in size in the last two years. Entire news organizations have consolidated or disappeared. We’re approaching the point where a majority of members of Congress will have no reporter in America assigned to keep an eye on them.”

Cannon also shared his concern for the paucity of economics coverage and the lack of context. “Until the housing market imploded and the credit crunch arrived, economics stories held little media appeal,” he said. “Most reporters and editors don’t know much about economics and those who do may work for papers that don’t. But even the big battalions of the press with good business staffs were absent without leave in the coverage.”

continued on page 2
New U.S. President Likely to Hold Steady

continued from page 1

He lamented the quality of media coverage of this year's presidential campaign. “Throughout this campaign there has been a trivialization of political issues,” he said. “Was Obama wearing a flag lapel pin? What color pantsuit was Hillary wearing today? How many homes does McCain really have? How does any of this help voters? There has been much good coverage, of course, but with 24/7 news cycles, journalism operated under a version of Gresham’s Law in which bad coverage drives out good. While indulging in trivia we haven’t held the candidates’ feet to the fire on some of their wilder claims.”

For example, Cannon said, the media “has done some reporting, much of it confusing,” on how long Obama and McCain would stay in Iraq. “How long would either of them stay in Afghanistan, where there are now 33,000 U.S. troops that both have said they’ll increase and where monthly casualties are now higher than in Iraq?”

He expressed a concern that the Internet tends to debase the political dialogue. “Many of the wilder rumors and cruder descriptions of the candidates began on the Internet and worked their way into the mainstream press, driving coverage of the campaign,” he said. While talk radio and cable television have also contributed to “a coarsening of the dialogue … they lack the reach of the Internet and operate under more constraints.”

The journalist also was skeptical about the impact of race on voters in this year’s presidential election. He referred to a survey by Frank Newport, who heads the Gallup Poll. “Mr. Newport, one of the nation’s most sophisticated pollsters, found that Obama might actually receive more votes because of his race than he will lose,” Cannon said.

In his conclusion, while critical of the decline of newspapers, the over-reliance on the Internet and the trivialization of political coverage, Cannon said, “I’ve been critical about our profession tonight in the belief that we need to examine ourselves with the same rigor and severity that we apply to others. We can do better, we need to do better — and I believe we will.”
Q&A WITH:  Terry Bigalke

Tracking Progress in Timor-Leste

EWC Education Director Terry Bigalke with Timor-Leste alumni Domingos Lequi Siga Maria, Flavia da Silva and Jose Turquel.

The EWC Director of Education discusses the growing network of alumni who have participated in the United States-Timor-Leste Scholarship Program administered by the Center and funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. To date the program has produced 21 alumni and 17 participating students. Five more recipients will begin their studies at the Center in January.

Q: How long have you been going to Timor-Leste?
A: Every year since 2002. My main purpose is to be part of the final selection process for recipients of the U.S.-Timor-Leste scholarships. We now offer five scholarships a year.

Q: How do you recruit students in a country where communication is not as sophisticated as in other parts of the region?
A: The whole process of recruiting in Timor-Leste is complicated. We need to have someone on the ground who can work with local agencies, NGOs, churches, different organizations that have reach throughout the country, who can disseminate information about the scholarships.

In 2002, most people didn’t have much access except to radio. We depended on radio and word of mouth. Now people have cell phones. Sending text messages is an effective and inexpensive way to communicate with villages. We rely on text messaging, radio, television ads and newspapers. Because Timor is a Catholic country, we find religious organizations, in particular, various Catholic orders with mission activities there are very supportive.

Q: Is there a lot of interest in the U.S.-Timor-Leste Scholarship Program?
A: Definitely. Over the last three years, we’ve received 150 to 200 applications a year. We make the first cut based on students meeting basic criteria. That leaves around 100 or so who sit for an English proficiency exam. Applicants who score 525 or above on TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) are invited to come for an interview. I’m a member of a team of three who then interview 30 candidates over a period of two days.

Q: How would you describe the changes you’ve seen in Timor-Leste over the past six years?
A: There’s been real change recently but you can’t appreciate it unless you go there regularly. When I went back this year, in September, the dynamic had changed and the government was able to move on getting people to go back to their villages and their neighborhoods. They started paying them $4,000 to $5,000 a family to renovate houses or whatever. A lot of people used it to buy motorbikes, for something economically useful. The IDP (internal displacement) camps were gone and there was just such a different feeling. Of course, there’s concern about corruption, but there’s a sense that money is available to do things. It’s just figuring out the best way to do it.

Q: What kind of needs do you see the EWC providing Timorese students?
A: U.S. Ambassador Hans Klemm has cited a large percentage of ministry officials who have only third-grade educations. The EWC scholarship program provides Timorese with an education that really teaches people to think and be problem solvers and to not be narrowly channeled into some vocational track. They’re competent in a major field and exposed to so much more, so they’re able to deal with things that fall outside of their immediate area of responsibility.

Q: Would you tell us about a couple of alumni who’ve returned to Timor-Leste and what they’re doing now?
A: Jose Turquel completed his bachelor’s degree and was working toward a master’s degree here when he was offered and accepted the position of chief of staff to President Ramos Horta. His outstanding skills have been recognized by the president and he recently accepted the position of Director of International Relations in the presidential office.

He emailed me when he was in New York, representing Timor-Leste at the Clinton Millennial Conference in October. Then he was going to attend meetings in Germany. He wrote back to say, “I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the experience I had at the East-West Center. It just transformed my life.”

There’s Flavia da Silva. She works for the United Nations World Food Program. She was hired for a position that is normally given to a foreign hire. Her level of responsibility has grown dramatically as it’s realized she can perform at the level of foreign specialists. She’s responsible for trying to set up a food monitoring system at the village level so they can map where the problems are in the food distribution system so they can import food to address shortages.

What’s so exciting for her is that she’s turned this into this amazing career path where she’s making such a huge difference for the country and also has the potential of rising higher in that international agency.

Q: Based on your interaction with alumni, how do you feel about the future of Timor-Leste?
A: I’ve been interviewing alumni every year when I’m there and everybody, everybody, is on the track to doing really good things. I knew this was a good scholarship program. I knew these were good people. But when you see them go back and see the things they’re doing, it’s so validating of the whole effort. This brings you right back to what it’s all about — the essence of the Center.
**Sananikone Leads EWC Board of Governors**

Puongpun Sananikone was elected chairman of the East-West Center’s Board of Governors. He is the first EWC alumnus to be elected chairman. In a speech Sananikone delivered to the board, he credited the Center’s cross-cultural environment with shaping both his personal life and his career as an international development economist and business executive. Please see story on page 9.

**Morrison Re-Elected PECC Chair**

EWC President Charles E. Morrison was unanimously elected to a second term as chair of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC). He is the first chair to have served a three-year term and the first American to chair PECC since 1993.

As chair of PECC, Morrison guides the network of 26 Member Committees representing most of the economies of the Asia Pacific region. Each Member Committee comprises leaders from the academic, business and governmental sectors. The American committee, which is called the U.S. Asia Pacific Council, has its secretariat at the East-West Center’s office in Washington and is chaired by Ambassador Stapleton Roy, now of Kissinger Associates. The Council will be the host committee for the next PECC general meeting in Washington in May 2009.

**Henick Joins EWC as Diplomat-in-Residence**

Jonathan Henick, a 15-year veteran of the U.S. State Department’s Foreign Service, has joined the East-West Center for a one-year post as a visiting research fellow and diplomat-in-residence. At the end of July 2009, he will assume the post of Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Dili, Timor-Leste (East Timor).

Henick most recently served as the Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, where he was the embassy spokesperson and was responsible for cultural, educational, civil-society and English-language programs. He received the 2008 Award for Achievement in Public Diplomacy granted by the Public Diplomacy Alumni Association.

**EWC Awarded $350,000 for Environmental Stewardship Institute**

The Center received a grant of $350,000 from the U.S. Department of State to support a new six-week institute on environmental stewardship for undergraduate students from Southeast Asia.

The EWC, working in partnership with more than 20 organizations including the University of Hawai‘i’s Environmental Studies Program, Stanford University’s Woods Institute for the Environment and the Nature Conservancy, will host and facilitate this program in May and June 2009 for students from non-traditional and underserved groups in the region.

Participants will examine pressing environmental issues through different lenses such as advocacy, market, policy, cultural and scientific approaches, culminating in a field study tour to San Francisco and Washington, D.C. They will interact with American peers and engage in job shadowing and service projects with community leaders.

**Exhibition of Mughal Treasures from Doris Duke Collection**

A rare pair of Mughal carpets from the collection at Shangri La — the Honolulu estate of the late Doris Duke and now a museum — are featured in “Field of Flowers: Mughal Carpets and Treasures,” on display at the East-West Center Gallery through December 31st. Co-curated by EWC Gallery Curator Michael Schuster and Shangri La Curator Sharon Littlefield, the exhibition features intricate works of art inspired by Mughal floral patterns, including metalwork, paintings, stonework and textiles.
Across Asia, millions of people are pouring into crowded and often unmanageable urban areas in search of a better life. To some, particularly those who are tasked with running cities, these denizens of the “informal sector” represent a social and planning nightmare. But others see these striving urban slum and shack dwellers as the source of solutions to some of Asia’s urban planning challenges.

This was the thrust of a discussion recently at the East-West Center that brought together a number of planning specialists, city leaders and others to talk about the implications of the urban transformation in Asia. They gathered for the inaugural seminar of a series on “Urban Asia — Challenges in Transition and Governance.”

Role of Civil Society

Among the many topics discussed during the seminar was the role of civil society — citizen groups, nongovernmental organizations and others — in improving urban governance.

Opinion among participants was somewhat divided between those who seek a greater role for civil society groups and those who believe that the ultimate responsibility rests with those who have been elected to govern and manage.

The most passionate voice for involving marginalized members of a city in its planning decision was Celine d’Cruz, originally from Mumbai, India, who is co-coordinator of the multinational service organization “Slum/Shack Dwellers International.”

d’Cruz said the focus of her group is not so much to take over the task of urban planning, or even to change basic policies. It is simply to win the urban poor a place at the table when decisions are being made. This, she argued, rarely happens under traditional circumstances.

“We chose not to make changes in policy our first goal,” she said. “If you make the right changes on the ground, you prove yourself. We don’t have a problem with good policy; our problem is with implementation.”

Voice in Decision-making

d’Cruz said her organization works not to direct the activities of slum dwellers or take charge of their lives, but rather to give them a voice so they can make their own decisions. In Mumbai, for instance, when residents of one slum area came to recognize that there was just one functioning toilet for some 800 residents, they realized that marching on city government with broad demands for an improved sanitation system would result in nothing more than studies, planning and applications for loan funds.

Instead, they simply asked for help in building one clean and functioning toilet facility for their neighborhood, and then built the facility themselves.

“The whole point is to come to the table with information and with solutions, and then the city leaders have to listen to you. It was like a dam burst open,” she said.

Shack/Shack Dwellers International recently received a $10 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the urban poor in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The importance of the grant is that the money will go directly to grassroots groups to support their efforts in negotiation with urban governments.

d’Cruz said the key will be to use resources to get marginalized people directly engaged with those who ultimately make the decisions about urban planning and development.

Model to Work Together

d’Cruz’s presentation drew a sharp response from Feliciano Belmonte Jr., the mayor of fast-growing Quezon City in the Philippines. With 2.68 million people, this city — just north of Manila — poses just about every urban planning and management problem imaginable. That includes, Belmonte said, dealing with the urban poor and the “informal sector” who have moved to the city in search of jobs and opportunities.

“But can we really make a difference in the lives of these people?” Belmonte said. “When you’re talking about hundreds of thousands of people, what do a few thousand matter? What are we trying to achieve?”

Belmonte put a practical spin on the problem that faces administrators throughout the region: “The job is so immense. I am supposed to help everyone in the city, not just the 30 percent who are marginal. I’d welcome any help here.”

d’Cruz said that is precisely what groups such as hers intend to do. They are not there to fight government or replace it, but rather to help make it more efficient in dealing with the problems of human migration and growth that are beyond anyone’s ability to control.

“You do your homework,” she told Belmonte. “We do our homework. That’s the model we choose. Then we can work together.”
China’s Rise Dominates Emerging Challenges for U.S. in East Asia

“China’s rise as a great power dominated a briefing by EWC Senior Fellow Denny Roy on the emerging challenges for the United States in East Asia. “I’m often asked is China’s rise a great threat?” Roy told a gathering of business and community leaders at an AsiaPacific Breakfast Briefing, sponsored by Bank of Hawaii in mid-October.

“I answer that question this way: China is growing in its capabilities, its economic capabilities, its military capabilities,” he said. “That means a couple of things to the United States. First, China is increasingly able to constrain some of the things the United States would like to do in the region. Secondly, it means that some countries in the region that up until now have gone out of their way to be friendly and maintain good relations with the United States, may start accommodating China. These have consequences for the U.S. maintaining its influence in the region. This is the way I would couch the China threat.”

Roy joined the East-West Center in 2007 after seven years with the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu. His work focuses mostly on Asia Pacific security issues, particularly those involving China.

In his overview of the pressing issues likely to present problems for U.S. interests in East Asia, Roy enumerated seven challenges, including the threat of an international pandemic, restoring America’s international credibility, competition for resources, the future of Korea and of Japan, and democratization of Asia.

Throughout the discussion of these issues, Roy often referred to the growing influence of China in the region. When it comes to competition for resources, he noted the Chinese government will feel the pressure to respond to demands from the Chinese people for higher living standards. “The question rises,” he said, “will China and other countries be content to buy their energy in the marketplace or will they try to control their own outside sources of energy?”

He cautioned that while a new government in Taiwan emphasizes “an atmosphere of relaxed tensions across the strait rather than emphasizing provocations with China,” this doesn’t mean the Taiwan Strait issue is settled.

The public in Taiwan is no more committed to unification with China now than it was under Chen Shui-Bien. The Chinese talk about moving very slowly, having a long period of building trust across the strait before trying to settle some of the more difficult issues between Taiwan and China. However, he noted, “The people of Taiwan on the other hand demand action now on some of the issues that matter to them” regarding China.

“There is a limit to how much inaction they will tolerate,” he said. “There will be some pressure to produce some results before the next presidential election.” Without satisfying these domestic demands of the Taiwanese, he believes there’s a possibility of a return to power of the opposition government.

Roy also questioned the validity of the theory that democratic countries don’t go to war against other democracies, a strategy which is key to the U.S. push for democratization of Asia. “If China were to become a democracy, would this dramatically and automatically change the feelings China has for Taiwan or Japan?” he asked. “I think not. Would U.S.-China tensions disappear if China were to become a democracy? I think not.”

Research shows, he said, that new and young democracies are more prone to allow public opinion to have more influence over foreign policy than previously. He pointed to recent events in some of the Eastern European countries that were formerly Soviet bloc countries. The transition to democracy means new leadership is under intense pressure to take strong positions on narrow nationalist issues that sometimes involve ill feelings toward neighboring countries, he said.

“When it comes to Asia, it’s not hard to imagine this kind of scenario playing out over these really emotional nationalist issues that involve control of disputed areas,” he warned. “Northeast Asia probably rivals any other region in the world in having a fairly large group of very strong civilizations with very strong nationalist feelings compressed into a very small area sharing borders with each other — both land and maritime borders.”

Denny Roy
Generous donors have made the following funds possible. At the “Ho‘opuka” ceremony welcoming new students in August, some of the recipients and donors of these awards were delighted to be able to meet each other.

The Jean E. Rolles Fellowships provide annual awards to students who have a past record and intention of future involvement in the fields of environment, economics or the travel and hospitality industry.  
*2008 Scholarship Recipient: Rita Madarieta Gallardo (Philippines), Graduate Degree Fellowship Program*

The Sumi Makey Awards will benefit worthy degree candidates who have a background and interest in the arts and humanities, with a preference for women from S.E. Asia.  
*2008 Scholarship Recipient: Clare Suet Ching Chan (Malaysia), Graduate Degree Fellowship Program*

The Jhamandas Watumull Scholarship Fund makes it possible for highly qualified candidates from India with demonstrated leadership skills to participate in the Asia Pacific Leadership Program.  
*2008 Scholarship Recipients: Neha Chaturvedia and Huma Sheikh (both from India) Asia Pacific Leadership Program*

For these recently established awards, the first scholarship recipients will arrive in August 2009.

The Amanda & Natalie Ellis Women Leaders Scholarship Award  
EWC alumnae Amanda Ellis established this $50,000 scholarship endowment in honor of her mother, Natalie Ellis, who has made significant contributions to the education of young women for more than 50 years. The scholarship aims to encourage young women leaders from Australia and New Zealand to study in the Asia Pacific Leadership Program.

Buddy & Melga Torre Gendrano Fellowships  
Buddy and Melga Gendrano created the Buddy & Melga Torre Gendrano Fellowships as a $50,000 Permanent Named Endowment. Awards will assist Degree Fellows or APLP participants from the Philippines or Hawai‘i with preference given to those with a past record and intention of future involvement in the fields of education and/or agriculture. Buddy and Melga own the real estate firm, KFG Properties.
Donors

On behalf of the East-West Center, we would like to thank those individuals, corporations, businesses, foundations, and organizations that have generously contributed to the East-West Center Foundation.

Listed are the gifts received between June 1, 2008 and September 30, 2008.

In memory of Richard Via
Elizabeth Buck
Jeanne M. Hamasaki
Isao Ozawa
Milly and Gordon Ring
Larry E. Smith

Programs

Asia Pacific Breakfast Briefings at Bank of Hawaii
October 14, 2008: Denny Roy, EWC Senior Fellow, see page 6.
September 16, 2008: Keith Coates gave a thought-provoking presentation on “Seven Global Trends Changing the Face of Business and Leadership.” He is the co-founding partner in the consultancy TomorrowToday.biz, which specializes in understanding the emerging connection economy and its global implications for business and leadership.

Arts ‘Ohana
September 23, 2008: Carpet weaving techniques by carpet specialist Sanjay Kalra and carpet maker Ayyoob Khan from Agra, India were demonstrated for Arts ‘Ohana members during the “Field of Flowers: Mughal Carpets and Treasures” exhibition in the EWC Gallery.

Foundation Staff

James Kia joined the East-West Center Foundation as the administrative assistant to Carol Fox, director of strategic planning and partnerships. He was most recently the administrative assistant at Aloha Medical Mission.

Donate online by using our secure website service: www.eastwestcenter.org/giving

Going green:
want to get your newsletters by email?

You can help reduce paper use, save energy and postage costs by viewing your newsletter as a pdf.

To receive an electronic version of the Observer and EWCA Update, please send an email message to obriend@EastWestCenter.org

Please include your name and current mailing address in your email message.

Address Subject line as: “get newsletters by email”