

Regional Architecture in Asia: Principles and Priorities

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I'm delighted to be here at the East-West Center in a new year that marks your 50th anniversary on this beautiful campus in this most extraordinary place. Before I begin with this critically important subject about our future in Asia, I want to just say a few words about developments in Haiti. We are still gathering information about this catastrophic earthquake, the point of impact, its effect on the people of Haiti. The United States is offering our full assistance to Haiti and to others in the region. We will be providing both civilian and military disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. And our prayers are with the people who have suffered, their families, and their loved ones.

It is hard to even imagine how different the region we're talking about today was back in 1959 when Lyndon Johnson proposed creating an institution where thinkers from East and West could come together. And during the five decades since the Center opened, no region has undergone a more dramatic transformation. This progress is the product of hard work and ingenuity multiplied across billions of individual lives. And it has been sustained by the engagement, security and assistance provided by the United States.

The East-West Center has been part of this sea change, helping to shape ideas and train experts, including one young woman who became a pioneer in microfinance and rural economic development and the mother of our President. And I thank all of you for bringing greater awareness and understanding to the economic, political, and security issues that dominate the region and the world today.

By now – almost a year into the new Administration – it should be clear that the Asia-Pacific relationship is a priority of the United States. President Obama spent his formative years here in Hawaii and in Indonesia. His world view reflects his appreciation

of -- and respect for -- Asia and its people. I am deeply committed to strengthening our ties across the Pacific and throughout Asia. And I know the President is personally looking forward to Honolulu – his hometown – hosting the APEC leaders meeting in 2011. Now, I've been informed by the congressman, the governor, the mayor and others that the most difficult decision will be figuring out the aloha shirt that will be given to all of the leaders.

But for these reasons and more, we began last January to lay the foundation for a revitalized Asia-Pacific relationship. My first trip as Secretary of State was to Asia – in fact, this will be my fourth to the region in the last eleven months. President Obama participated in the APEC Summit in Singapore as well as visiting China, Japan, and South Korea; we supported the creation of a regular G-20 leaders summit with strong Asian participation reflecting the new global balance of financial and political power; we held the first ever U.S.-ASEAN summit; we signed the Guam International Agreement that helps sustain a strong U.S. military presence in the region; and we signed the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. And it was no accident that the first state visit hosted by President and Mrs. Obama was for an Asian leader, Indian Prime Minister Singh.

So we are working to deepen our historic ties, build new partnerships, work with existing multilateral organizations to pursue shared interests, and reach beyond governments to engage directly with people in every corner of this vast region.

We start from a simple premise: America's future is linked to the future of the Asia-Pacific region; and the future of this region depends on America. The United States has a strong interest in continuing its tradition of economic and strategic leadership, and Asia has a strong interest in the United States remaining a dynamic economic partner and a stabilizing military influence.

Economically, we are inextricably linked. American companies export \$320 billion in goods and services to the Asia-Pacific countries every year, creating millions of good-

paying jobs. Hundreds of thousands of our servicemen and women provide the region with security – a task that our military has shouldered for generations. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has noted, the United States is not a visiting power in Asia, but a resident power.

And conversely, Asia is an important presence in the United States. More than 13 million Americans trace their ancestry to this part of the world. Asian countries that were destitute a generation ago now boast some of the highest living standards in the world. East Asia has already surpassed the Millennium Development Goal of reducing extreme poverty to half its 1990 levels by 2015.

Asia is also indispensable to meeting global security and humanitarian challenges. Asian nations are helping to prevent nuclear proliferation in Iran, build schools and clinics in Afghanistan, keep peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and combat piracy off the Horn of Africa.

Yet at the same time, Asia's progress is not guaranteed. Asia is home not only to rising powers, but also to isolated regimes; not only to longstanding challenges, but also unprecedented threats. The dangers of nuclear proliferation, military competition, natural disasters, violent extremism, financial crises, climate change, and disease transcend national borders and pose a common risk.

And we must acknowledge that different countries in the Asia-Pacific region face their own different challenges. Some have made more progress politically than economically, and others the reverse. Some are consolidating reforms, others are struggling with ongoing or renewed instability. Regional cooperation must account for these diverse challenges and create more opportunities for broad-based prosperity and political progress.

A core strategic fact is that this region confronts these challenges and opportunities with a dynamic mix of influential actors, from rising powers like China and India, to traditional

leaders like Japan, South Korea, and Australia, to the increasingly influential states of Southeast Asia, like Indonesia. And the United States not only continues to have dynamic and durable bilateral ties, but plays a central role in helping to deal with the difficulties that individual states and this region confront. This new landscape requires us to build an institutional architecture that maximizes our prospects for effective cooperation, builds trust, and reduces the friction of competition.

For years, Asian leaders have talked about strengthening regional cooperation, and Asia's economic, political and security architecture is evolving. Regional institutions have already played a significant part in Asia's evolution. Yet looking forward, we know that they can – and I would argue must – work better. That's a common message I have heard from many of my conversations with Asian leaders and citizens during this past year. There is now the possibility for greater regional cooperation, and there is also a greater imperative.

Now, like any architecture of this building and anywhere else, regional architecture among and between nations requires a firm foundation. And today, I would like to outline the principles that will define America's continued engagement and leadership in the region, and our approach to issues of multilateral cooperation. In formulating this approach we have consulted widely with our Asia-Pacific partners, and these are discussions that I look forward to continuing during my upcoming trip and the months ahead.

First, the United States' alliance relationships are the cornerstone of our regional involvement. The United States' alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines are among the most successful bilateral partnerships in modern history. The security and stability provided through these relationships have been critical to the region's success and development. Our shared values and strategic interests enabled generations to grow up and prosper in a region largely at peace, and they remain key to maintaining stability and security. Our commitment to our bilateral relationships is entirely consistent with – and will enhance – Asia's multilateral groupings.

Beyond our treaty alliances, we are committed to strengthening relationships with other key players. We are pursuing a strategic dialogue with India, a strategic and economic dialogue with China, and a comprehensive partnership with Indonesia. We are working on strengthening our partnerships with newer partners like Vietnam and longstanding partners like Singapore. Strengthened multilateral cooperation should and must respect and build on our already proven bilateral partnerships.

Second, regional institutions and efforts should work to advance our clear and increasingly shared objectives. These include enhancing security and stability, expanding economic opportunity and growth, and fostering democracy and human rights.

To promote regional security, we must address nuclear proliferation, territorial disputes, and military competition – persistent threats of the 21st century.

To advance economic opportunity, we must focus on lowering trade and investment barriers, improving market transparency, and promoting more balanced, inclusive, and sustainable patterns of economic growth. Regional organizations such as APEC have already shown considerable progress in these areas. In addition, the United States is engaging in the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade negotiations as a mechanism for improving linkages among many of the major Asia-Pacific economies.

And to build on political progress, we must support efforts to protect human rights and promote open societies. We applaud ASEAN's decision to establish a new Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights when the Association's new charter went into effect in December of 2008. Over time, we hope the Commission and other regional initiatives will enhance respect for fundamental freedoms and human dignity throughout the region.

Third, our institutions must be effective and be focused on delivering results. This has been a priority for President Obama and me since Day One. Because we believe that

Asia's rise over the past two decades has given the region an opportunity for progress that simply didn't exist before.

The formation and operation of regional groups should be motivated by concrete, pragmatic considerations. It's more important to have organizations that produce results, rather than simply producing new organizations.

Now, dialogue is critical in any multilateral institution. But as Asian nations become regional and global players, we must focus increasingly on action. Groups should assess their progress regularly and honestly, and emphasize that all participants are responsible for playing a positive role.

For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami that devastated South and Southeast Asia, the world witnessed how concrete collective action and a relentless focus on results can provide hope in the face of tragedy. Beyond immediate assistance to areas hit by the tsunami, the disaster response was a catalyst for cooperation across the broader region. It helped to forge enduring political, military, and civilian relationships that have enhanced our ability to respond collectively to natural disasters. We should learn from this example, and act with similar urgency and efficiency in dealing with challenges such as climate change and food security. I am proud that the United States has been and will continue to be a leader in this area. Just this last year, we played a critical role in the civilian-military response that helped bring relief to areas ravaged by cyclones, such as the Philippines and others.

Now, to produce consistent results, institutions need effective governance. That doesn't mean that every organization will use the same mechanism to make decisions. But it does mean that they should embrace efficient decision-making processes and, where appropriate, differentiated roles and responsibilities. At the same time, building serious multilateral institutions requires us to share the burden of operating them. Systems that reward free riders and minimalist contributions are designed to fail.

So on security matters, we are eager to strengthen the ASEAN Regional Forum. The United States will continue to participate in the Forum, and we hope to build on some recent successes, including an inaugural civil-military disaster relief exercise last May. The ASEAN Regional Forum should make good on the vision laid out at our meeting in Thailand last July for it to assume greater responsibilities for disaster relief and humanitarian operations. And the United States stands ready to assist in facilitating that. It should also build on the Forum's demonstrated recognition that Burma and other regional human rights issues will have a substantial effect on regional peace and security. One reason I have established an ambassadorial post to ASEAN in Jakarta is to strengthen this institutionalized process.

Fourth, we must seek to maintain and enhance flexibility in pursuing the results we seek. Now, in some instances, large multilateral institutions may lack the tools necessary to manage particular problems. Where it makes sense, we will participate in informal arrangements targeted to specific challenges, and we will support sub-regional institutions that advance the shared interests of groups of neighbors.

Another example of that is the Six-Party Talks, which show the potential of an informal arrangement to advance shared interests. Key regional actors have joined together to pursue the verifiable denuclearization of North Korea. Now, making progress toward the complete and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea we know will strengthen security across Asia-Pacific countries, and we are working with our Six-Party partners for a resumption of the Six-Party Talks in the near future.

We have engaged in an enhanced relationship the Lower Mekong countries. We have a Trilateral Strategic Dialogue with Japan and Australia, with Japan and South Korea, and we have informal arrangements guiding cooperation in the Straits of Malacca. And these are each examples of how this kind of multilateralism can produce effective outcomes. And I'm on my way to Australia, where Secretary Gates and I will be meeting in a 2+2 setting with our counterparts there. So we welcome further opportunities to engage this way, for example in trilateral dialogues with Japan and China, and with Japan and India.

When it comes to sub-regional institutions, we really believe that ASEAN is an important success story. It has made a bold decision to integrate across the economic, socio-cultural, and political-security spheres. We believe that a strong, integrated ASEAN will serve broader regional interests in stability and prosperity. And so we will continue to support ASEAN and we will continue emphasize capacity-building activities under the enhanced U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership and the economic-focused U.S.-ASEAN Trade and Investment Framework Agreement. President Obama had that valuable first-ever meeting with ASEAN's ten leaders in Singapore.

Now, I know some people, their eyes may glaze over when you hear all these acronyms, but we need to recognize that these regional organizations are very important to the actors who are in them. And the failure of the United States not to participate demonstrates a lack of respect and a willingness to engage. And that is why I made it very clear upon becoming Secretary of State that the United States would show up. I don't know if half of life is showing up, but I think half of diplomacy is showing up.

And as we've also seen new organizations, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN+3, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, we hope that we will be able to participate actively in many of those.

Fifth, we need to decide, as Asia-Pacific nations, which will be the defining regional institutions. So although we respect and will work with the organizations that countries themselves have created, some of recent vintage, it's important that we do a better job of trying to define which organizations will best protect and promote our collective future.

Now, each may have its place and its purpose. But the defining ones will include all the key stakeholders. And these may be well-established, like APEC, or they could be of more recent vintage, like the East Asia Summit, or more likely, a mix of well-established and new. This is a critical question that we must answer together through consultation and coordination.

During his visit to Tokyo last year, President Obama conveyed the United States' intention to engage fully with these new organizations. And as a part of this strategy, we propose to begin consultations with Asian partners and friends on how the United States might play a role in the East Asia Summit, and how the East Asia Summit fits into the broader institutional landscape, and how major meetings in the region can be sequenced most effectively for everyone's time.

There is also a continuing need for an institution that is aimed at fostering the steady economic integration of the region based on shared principles and objectives. I think APEC is the organization that we and our partners must engage in, ensuring that it moves toward fulfilling that responsibility.

U.S. involvement and leadership in Asia-Pacific institutions, ranging from our support for and contributions to APEC to our response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami, can benefit everyone. We can provide resources and facilitate cooperation in ways that other regional actors cannot replicate or, in some cases, are not trusted to do. No country, however – including our own – should seek to dominate these institutions. But an active and engaged United States is critical to the success of these.

As we reexamine our structures for cooperation, we should remember that power is not just concentrated in governments. We should develop organizations that harness the positive role of non-state groups such as civil society movements, NGOs in development enterprises, and businesses that play important and constructive roles in development. We should look for more ways to enhance military-to-military cooperation and decrease mistrust and misunderstanding.

Tomorrow, as I leave for Australia, I will be looking forward to our discussions with Prime Minister Rudd, who has been a leader in promoting dialogue in this region. We value his contributions, and I will use this trip, along with my stops in New Zealand and Pacific islands, as an opportunity to continue our consultation.

The people of the Asia-Pacific region have endured centuries of upheaval. The ultimate purpose of our cooperation should be to dispel suspicions that still exist as artifacts of the region's turbulent past, and build in their place a future of openness, honesty, and progress for all of our people.

I visited the *USS Arizona* earlier today, which is always a moving experience, I'm sure, for everyone, as it is for me. And as we were leaving the memorial, Lieutenant General Darnell told me that he had recently hosted officials from Vietnam. And as they came out of the memorial, the Navy had flown a Vietnamese flag from the boat waiting. It was a stunning moment, stunning on both sides, certainly stunning for our Vietnamese visitors, and stunning for the United States. What other country would do that? What other country applauds the success, the prosperity, and development of former enemies, of competitors, of those who have different systems and different cultures and different points of view?

So I don't think there is any doubt, if there were when this Administration began, that the United States is back in Asia. But I want to underscore that we are back to stay.

In the space of two generations, Asia has become a region in which the old is juxtaposed with the new, a region that has gone from soybeans to satellites, from rural outposts to gleaming mega-cities, from traditional calligraphy to instant messaging, and most importantly, from old hatreds to new partnerships.

Regional cooperation in our part of the world must reflect these new realities and the extraordinary potential that resides within. And the United States looks forward to expanding its engagement, and to working with our partners to help ourselves and this region realize our extraordinary promise.