

East Asian and Pacific Affairs

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No other part of the globe holds greater potential benefits and challenges for the United States than East Asia. The region is home to some of our most stalwart security and trade partners, to an established power—Japan—and a rising power—China—and to a political and economic dynamism that is the envy of other regions. The region accounts for nearly a third of the Earth's population; a quarter of global GDP; a disproportionate share of global growth; and 26 percent of our exports, including about 37 percent of our agricultural exports—in all, some \$810 billion in two-way trade with the United States. In every regard—geopolitically, militarily, diplomatically, economically, and commercially—East Asia is vital to the national security interests of the United States.

At their core, the United States' long-term, strategic foreign policy priorities are very simple. We want to see a world that is democratic, prosperous, stable, secure, and at peace. Our policies toward the East Asia-Pacific region are based on these global objectives, and we are engaged

extensively throughout the region to advance these fundamental goals.

FAVORABLE TRENDS

As I have traveled throughout the region over the past year, I have seen a dynamic wave of transformation taking place. For example, since January 2004, successful elections have taken place not only in established democracies—Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—but also in newly democratized Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation.

We have also seen a rise in prosperity and economic opportunity throughout the region, fueled by China's rapid development and by broad recovery from the financial crisis of the late 1990s among member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Regional economies are moving toward greater economic openness, lower trade barriers, and regional cooperation.



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U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (fourth from the left in the front row) poses with other participants in the 13th ASEAN Regional Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in July 2006.

Income levels have climbed, and extreme poverty has, on the whole, declined. Several of the fastest growing world economies in 2005 were in East Asia.

Today, East Asia is largely at peace. The region has not seen a single major military conflict for more than 25 years. Notwithstanding occasional terrorist attacks, we have seen a widespread rejection of terrorism.

As East Asia has emerged politically and economically, it has also come together as a region. We are witnessing expanding regional cooperation—politically, economically, and culturally—through the region’s major institutions, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, ASEAN, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

REMAINING CHALLENGES

Against this backdrop of favorable trends, several threats remain. Chief among them is the situation in North Korea, where the Pyongyang regime continues to challenge the international community through its pursuit of nuclear weapons. To deal with this challenge, we have established the Six-Party Talks framework aimed at obtaining the dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear programs in a permanent, thorough, and transparent manner.

We continue to pay close attention to evolving cross-Strait relations. We pursue our “one China” policy in accordance with the three communiqués issued jointly by the United States and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1972, 1979, and 1982 and the Taiwan Relations Act passed by Congress in 1979. We do not support Taiwan independence and are opposed to unilateral steps by either the PRC or Taiwan that would change the status quo. We urge both sides to engage in direct dialogue to reach a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait differences, absent the threat or use of force and in a manner acceptable to people on both sides of the Strait.

There is a growing realization throughout the region that terrorism threatens all governments and that the best way to confront this threat is by working together. We are also continuing to look for ways to help regional states that have sovereign responsibilities for ensuring security of the vital Strait of Malacca trade route to enhance their maritime law enforcement capabilities and cooperation.

Finally, we must work with allies and friends in the region to promote national reconciliation and democracy in Burma. The country’s continued estrangement from the international community is an increasingly worrisome problem for the region, especially for ASEAN.



U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei prior to a meeting at the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, in April 2006.

TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY

To make our diplomacy more effective, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has embarked on a program to revise the way the State Department does its work. She describes this “transformational diplomacy” as “work[ing] with our many partners around the world to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system.” Integral to this effort is a broad and vigorous program of public diplomacy—promoting the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad.

BILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

In considering the tasks embodied in the objective of transformational diplomacy—to promote democracy, good governance, and responsibility in the international system—no effort offers greater potential challenges or rewards than engagement with China.

The success we have in achieving our long-term strategic vision in East Asia will depend in large measure on China’s role as an emerging regional and global power. The United States welcomes a confident, peaceful, and prosperous China. We want to see China take on an increasing role as a responsible stakeholder in the

international system, and we are working toward that end.

Like China, Southeast Asia is changing rapidly, with many countries advancing along the road of economic development and prosperity. Southeast Asia offers fertile ground for our transformational diplomacy efforts to support reforms being undertaken by the peoples of the region that will promote democracy and good governance, foster broad-based and sustainable economic development, strengthen their societies, and make them stronger partners.

A case in point is Indonesia, which has emerged from over three decades of authoritarian rule to become the world’s third-largest democracy. In 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono became Indonesia’s first-ever directly elected president. He has launched an ambitious reform agenda and is working to fight corruption and strengthen Indonesia’s young democratic institutions, while creating conditions for sustained economic growth, which is essential to the country’s development and stability.

In recent years, we have invested considerable time, effort, and resources into supporting the efforts of Cambodia and Vietnam to integrate fully into regional institutions and the global economy and to institute reforms that improve their peoples’ lives. The APEC Leaders’ Meeting, to be held in Vietnam in November 2006, will highlight both Vietnam’s emergence as a dynamic regional power and our increasingly warm bilateral relationship. We have begun negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Malaysia to strengthen ties to a country that is already our 10th-largest trading partner.

REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

One of the favorable trends in the Asia-Pacific region is toward greater regional cooperation, which includes the development of regional organizations. We are broadening our engagement with these organizations to discuss issues of common interest that can be more effectively addressed multilaterally.

We are deeply involved in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, an association of 21 economies bordering the Pacific Ocean that are working cooperatively to enhance the security and prosperity of our region. For the United States, APEC is the key institution for pursuing trade and investment liberalization and addressing issues that demand multilateral cooperation, such as confronting the threat of an avian influenza pandemic and ensuring secure trade in the region.



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South Korean veterans demonstrate in support of strengthening the U.S.-Korea alliance in August 2006.

The United States is an enthusiastic participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)—the region’s only broadly inclusive institution dedicated to security issues—and has begun discussions with ASEAN governments on an ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership, which will include new cooperation on political/security, economic, and socio-cultural issues.

We actively assist Pacific area programs, primarily through regional organizations like the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Pacific Island Forum, by providing economic, technical, and development support to the 22 nations and territories of the Pacific.

We will continue to watch the East Asia Summit (EAS) to gain an understanding of its relationship to the regional fora which we actively support and participate in and to our goals for the region.

STRENGTHENING OF ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

To address threats to regional peace and security, President Bush has emphasized the strengthening and revitalization of alliances. The ties we have with our five key allies and a key partner in the region have improved significantly since 2001, but the challenge of continuing this progress will occupy our time in the coming years.

The United States and Australia have a long history of working together as the closest of allies, and our relationship is the best it has ever been. Australia stands with us in Afghanistan and Iraq—sending forces to the conflicts and playing a major role in reconstruction. We share a commitment to nonproliferation, to combating terrorism and international trafficking in persons, and other transnational issues.

President Bush has called Japan “a force for peace and stability in this region, a valued member of the world community, and a trusted ally of the United States.” We continue to work closely with Japan, advancing our relations toward a more mature partnership, one in which Japan plays an increasingly effective role in advancing our mutual interests regionally and globally.

Our relationship with South Korea is moving beyond its original security rationale as the Republic of Korea begins to play a global political role commensurate with its economic stature. South Korea is the third-largest troop-contributing state to international operations in Iraq, and we have decided to initiate negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement that, when concluded, will make Korea our third-largest free trade partner after Canada and Mexico.

Both Thailand and the Philippines are major non-NATO allies and important partners in the war against terrorism. Thailand has contributed troops to coalition efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq and is another country where we are engaged in free trade negotiations. U.S. and Philippine armed forces cooperate closely, and we are engaged in a jointly funded, multi-year program called Philippine Defense Reform aimed at modernizing the structure of the Philippine defense establishment.

Our arrangements with Singapore, not a treaty ally but an increasingly close partner, give us access to world-class port and airfield facilities strategically located along key transportation routes. Singapore is playing an active role in regional efforts to safeguard the vital sea lanes that pass through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

CONCLUSION

We are moving forward throughout the East Asia and Pacific region to achieve our objectives of strengthening stability, security, and peace and expanding opportunities for democracy and prosperity.

My travels have given me optimism that, despite some difficult obstacles, the favorable trends I have outlined can be built upon in the years to come. ■

For more information:

<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/>

<http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/>

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U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice speaks with teachers at an Islamic school in Jakarta, Indonesia. Her trip to the world's most populous Muslim nation demonstrated U.S. support for Indonesia's burgeoning democracy and its fight against terrorism.



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This miniature humanoid robot, HRP-2m Choromet, was developed by the National Institute of Advanced Science and Technology in collaboration with four other firms in Tokyo, Japan.

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Red Cross volunteers unload boxes of relief supplies from the U.S. government in Leyte province in the Philippines following a massive landslide in February 2006.



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Children are being bussed to school, building supplies and fish are being brought to market, and aid is being delivered by organizations such as World Vision (shown in the photo) along this highway, a centerpiece of the U.S. government's reconstruction package following the tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia.



Participating in a humanitarian mission from the hospital ship USNS *Mercy*, an American dental officer observes a tooth extraction by a Filipino dentist in Isabella, the Philippines.

The Seoul, Republic of Korea, Metropolitan Subway is one of the most heavily used subway systems in the world, with well over eight million trips daily on the system's nine lines.

