



U.S.-Asia Pacific Council

John D. Negroponte, Deputy Secretary
Washington, DC
April 11, 2008

Thank you Ambassador Roy for your kind introduction. It is so good to be with you here today.

You know, I've been involved with Asia since I joined the Foreign Service at the age of twenty-one. I was assigned to Hong Kong in late 1960, arriving there in January 1961. In 1964, I was assigned to our Embassy in Saigon after almost a year of Vietnamese language training. And I worked almost continuously on the Vietnam question thereafter, until we signed the Paris agreement on Vietnam in 1973, first as a member of our delegation to the Paris Peace talks, and then as Director for Vietnam on the National Security Council.

Since then, I have continued to work on United States policy towards Asia, as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in 1980-81, and as ambassador to the Philippines from 1993 - 1996. I've observed Asia's extraordinary transformation from a variety of perspectives. And it is Asia's development, present and future, as well as our nation's relationship with the changing Asia, that I would like to talk with you about today.

By almost any measure, Asia today is thriving. Not only has the region avoided military conflict for nearly three decades; relations between the major powers have never been better. Chinese President Hu Jintao's upcoming visit to Japan reflects this trend.

Nearly all the countries in the region have dynamic, market-based economies. And robust democratic systems are flourishing throughout the region, as evidenced by Indonesia's remarkable transformation, Thailand's recent return to democratic rule, and recent elections in Taiwan and Korea.

There are a few laggards like Burma, where misrule by dictators stifles economic opportunity for an oppressed people. But most Asian states are focused on bettering the lives of their citizens. Over the past three decades, more people have risen out of poverty faster in Asia than over any other period in human history. For example, in what the World Bank has described as one of the most successful anti-poverty campaigns ever, Vietnam reduced its poverty rate from 58% of the population in 1993 to under 14% in 2007.

The economic rise of China, combined with Japan's continued status as the world's second largest economy, leads to great expectations that these countries will expand their global roles as responsible stewards of the very international order that made possible their success. As we strive to solve major issues confronting the international community—from climate change to preventing the spread of dangerous weapons—the United States looks increasingly to our partners in Asia not only to help, but to lead.

These positive developments in Asia were by no means guaranteed, and indeed were no accident. Hardworking Asians deserve primary credit for the region's economic accomplishments. But Asia's prosperity has been made possible by a broader international economic and security order sustained by American leadership. Following the Second World War, the United States put in place the building blocks of the global economic and trading system that Asian economies from Singapore to Taiwan have used to fuel their growth. After the end of the Cold War, the United States pushed to establish the World Trade Organization—including making China a member in 2001. We also have strongly promoted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and fashioned high-quality free trade agreements with Singapore, Australia, and Korea.

America's military alliances with like-minded Asian partners have fueled prosperity by encouraging regional powers to compete for the fruits of peace rather than prepare for the dangers of war. Our alliances with Japan, Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand remain the cornerstone of peace and security in Asia.

Over the past 7 years this Administration has reinvigorated these alliances to ensure that we and our allies have the flexibility to address future security challenges—not only in Asia but around the world. The transformation of the U.S.-Japan alliance has been especially remarkable. America's Asian alliances have grown stronger, not weaker, since the end of the Cold War. Our strong alliances and close cooperation continue through periods of leadership change, including those in Japan, Korea, Thailand and Australia over the past year.

The Bush Administration has also comprehensively engaged with Asia's rising powers, including the largest, China. China's rise is one of the major events of our time. It is a growing player in the international community, and we are encouraging China to play a responsible and constructive role. This approach requires patient, creative diplomacy. We've seen progress with North Korea, and are urging China to do more in Sudan beyond their provision of engineering troops. We believe China must also do more with respect to Iran and Burma.

We currently convene over 50 bilateral dialogues and working groups with China, spanning subjects from aviation to counterterrorism, and from food safety to non-proliferation. The Senior Dialogue, which I lead with my counterpart in the Chinese Foreign Ministry, covers the full spectrum of global security and political issues. It has provided an opportunity for open and frank discussion on the broadest range of issues, including those over which we differ, including human rights and Tibet.

This dialogue includes, of course, the Taiwan Strait, where the United States is committed to ensuring peace and stability. We make known our concern about China's rapid increases in military outlays, and we encourage the Chinese leadership to be more transparent about its military spending, doctrine, and strategic goals. Transparency and exchanges will most effectively build trust and reduce suspicion.

In addition to China, the United States has reached out to new and old friends in Southeast Asia. We have a growing partnership with Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, a country that has made a remarkable transition to democracy. To help cement Indonesia's success, the United States has pledged over \$200 million to assist civic, governance, and educational institutions in Indonesia.

Our relationship with Vietnam has also entered a new chapter. Our countries enjoy significant and growing trade and economic ties; an emerging military-to-military relationship; successful cooperation on health and development issues; growing cultural and educational links; and a shared interest in ensuring peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

2007 marked the 30th anniversary of U.S. relations with ASEAN, and our ties with that organization are growing. We nominated a U.S. ambassador for ASEAN Affairs earlier this year.

I see three major tasks that the United States faces in the coming decade as we look at Asia: (1) further improving regional cooperation to complement our existing bilateral security alliances, (2) promoting continued prosperity, and (3) accommodating rising Asian powers into the international system while also challenging them to assume global leadership on major international issues.

The Six-Party Talks bring together North Korea's neighbors and key regional players on an issue with overlapping interests and a clear, focused purpose: denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. While the process of denuclearization is far from complete, we hope an eventual peace and security mechanism for Northeast Asia will form to institutionalize the security cooperation we are forging through the Six Party process. This would be separate from, but supporting, any peace regime that may emerge on the Peninsula. It would also in no way infringe upon our alliances.

As Asia continues to engage with the global community and Asian leaders focus on economic growth, the United States must continue its work to further knock down barriers to trade and investment. That's why President Bush endorsed a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTA AP) during his visit to the APEC leaders meeting in November 2006. We look forward to working with partners in APEC to make this initiative a reality.

More immediately, Korean President Lee's visit here next week reminds us that we need to work with Congress to ensure passage of our Free Trade Agreement with the Republic of Korea. Approval of this high-standard FTA with our treaty ally will help American businesses and workers and demonstrate continued U.S. leadership in the world's most dynamic region.

While institutions established after WWII have served the U.S., Asia, and the international community in many respects, we must work to ensure that growing Asian nations are integrated into this framework. Today, China's booming economy is driving energy demand, yet it is not a member of the International Energy Agency. For a number of years now, we have supported Japan's permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council, so that the world's second-largest economy can meet its broader responsibilities to uphold international peace and security.

With global influence and power comes responsibility. Now is the time, as beneficiaries of the global trading system, for Asian powers to take the lead in trade liberalization under the WTO's Doha Round. The world needs and expects today's global winners to be tomorrow's pacesetters, not to lag behind the pack. Addressing climate change in the coming decade will also require inclusion of the developing world—most notably China as well as India.

Ladies and gentlemen, for more than 60 years, the United States has worked with friends and allies in Asia to promote free markets and the free exchanges of ideas. Unlike the beginning of the Cold War, when strongman rule was a feature of the region, the ballot box has gradually transformed the face of Asia. America now has democratic partners across the region, committed to political liberty, human rights, and rule of law.

While trends in Asia are positive, and the long-term future of this dynamic region bright, the United States must and will remain engaged in Asia to jointly address the problems and issues confronting us—especially in the coming year. We will continue to consult and collaborate with our alliance partners as the foundation of our strategy for Asia. We will continue to push for progress in the Six Party Talks, which represents the best path forward to a more stable Northeast Asia. We will continue to work with and encourage China to become a responsible actor in the international system. And in Southeast Asia, in particular, we will continue to support democratic reform and economic development as hopeful alternatives to extremism and terrorism.

Ongoing challenges will require our full attention, but they will not distract us from our commitment to playing a leadership role in the Asia-Pacific—a region that is defined far more by the scope of its opportunities than by its challenges. America is a Pacific nation, and our prosperity and global stability are increasingly tied to that of Asia. The goal we seek, as we have for decades, is an Asia that is growing in peace, prosperity, and freedom—and we will continue our work with Asia's leaders and its people to achieve that goal together.

 [BACK TO TOP](#)

Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.