

**Keynote Speech of
The Singapore Conference Luncheon Session by
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“Building Security Partnerships in Asia”**

Rise of the Asia-Pacific

- Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen;
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote in November's *Foreign Policy* that the key driver of global politics in the coming decades will be the Asia Pacific.
- Indeed, Asia is now home to the world's fastest growing and largest economies. China, India, and ASEAN are fuelling the region's economic expansion, and we expect to post a growth rate of 7.5% for 2011. Economic power is gradually shifting to the East.
- Nearly half of the world's population live in Asia, which is also home to established and rising military powers. Spending on military capacities has increased steadily as countries look to tackle the myriad of security challenges in our region.
- The ASEAN-centric regional architecture is now growing in depth and breadth. Related fora such as the East Asia Summit have increased in prominence with the recent entry of the US and Russia.
- I thus concur with Secretary Clinton's assessment that this will be an Asia Pacific century.

Uncertain Strategic Environment

- However, the narrative of an Asia Pacific century is still a story that is unfolding. While Asia is the most dynamic region in the world, there remains much to be uncertain about.
- With rapid growth, new points of strategic tensions and conflict will emerge, as States seek to secure access to sea-lanes and energy resources, pursue their trade and economic interests. This could lead to the flexing of new-found military prowess to placate their increasingly nationalistic and confident populations.

- In Asia, the US-China relationship will continue to dictate the complexion of developments in the region. Potential flashpoints such as the South China Sea, East China Sea and the Korean Peninsula cannot but reflect the larger geopolitics in play.
- The predominant thinking in the region is that it does not want to see a zero-sum game between the US and China. It is big enough to accommodate a rising China and a resurgent US.
- At the same time, the US' continued benign presence and engagement with China can make China a more responsible international citizen and a positive stakeholder for the region, while providing space for smaller countries like Singapore.

An Interconnected World

- Recent global events have further reminded Asians that we now live in an increasingly interconnected world.
- The effects of the 2008 global financial crisis are still with us, as the US and Europe continue to face economic difficulties. Stuttering economic recoveries elsewhere in the global economy will ripple outwards, and affect Asia with the threat of financial contagion.
- With the dramatic changes from the "Arab Spring", the outlook in the Middle East remains uncertain. Political turmoil there will have staggering implications for Asia, which is dependent on Middle Eastern oil, and also home to the largest Muslim population. Furthermore, the usage of social media as well as the demise of long entrenched dominant political regimes have weighed heavily in the calculations of many Asian governments and their concern about domestic social stability.
- A decade on from the tragedy of 9/11, the world still continues the fight against terrorism.

Evolving Security Challenges

- Against this uncertain environment, we now face security challenges that are more complex, multifaceted, and rapidly evolving. These challenges are increasingly transnational, and respect no international boundary.
- These include concerns over food security, energy security, water

security, and security against pandemics. They also include the threats of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, maritime security, natural disasters, and climate change.

- These challenges are too large for any country to tackle alone. Mindsets that disregard “whole of government” thinking, or partnerships with civil society and the private sector, will be obsolete.
- As strategic uncertainty becomes the new norm for Asia, we need new security partnerships that extend beyond traditional defence partnerships.

A Regional Architecture Rising to the Challenge

- ASEAN has developed several regional architectures to maintain regional stability and prosperity in East Asia through the engagement of all key stakeholders in and outside the region. These include the ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three, ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting Plus, ASEAN Regional Forum, and the East Asia Summit.
- These frameworks form a mosaic of multiple overlapping structures with ASEAN at their centre. They have developed organically in response to different needs at different times. This may appear untidy, but each structure plays its own unique role and complements the others in reflecting the region’s diversity. In an increasingly brittle international environment, having such overlapping architectures will make the regional framework more robust and able to withstand shocks.
- While aimed at different purposes, these fora are all anchored on fundamental principles such as (i) building trust through open and inclusive dialogue; (ii) a commitment to cooperation and collaboration; and (iii) respect for international norms and the rule of international law.

Broad and Inclusive Framework for Cooperation

- Large multilateral fora such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus, or ADMM Plus comprise a broad and inclusive framework to encourage cooperation on concrete initiatives both within the region, and with extra-regional countries.
- For example, the ADMM-Plus which had its inaugural meeting in

October 2010 has already established Experts' Working Groups in April 2011 to enhance practical cooperation in five key security areas – disaster relief, peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, maritime security, and military medicine.

- The ASEAN Regional Forum is now into its 19th year and has moved from confidence building measures to developing preventive diplomacy initiatives. The ARF is also taking steps towards concrete mechanisms for cooperation, which will supplement the ASEAN Coordinating Centre on Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) in efforts to accelerate the deployment and acceptance of assistance personnel, supplies and services in the event of disasters.
- The EAS is now more significant given the formal entry of the US along with Russia. US participation will contribute to a more robust and resilient regional architecture which will in turn promote regional stability and economic prosperity. It will also enrich the discussion on strategic issues even as the EAS continues to focus on strengthening functional cooperation. The EAS has identified five priority areas for functional cooperation – finance, education, energy, disaster management, avian flu prevention – and EAS members should focus on putting meat on the bones in these areas to bring tangible benefits to their peoples.
- Cooperation is also underway for non-traditional security challenges such as food security. The US\$10 million US-led cooperative MARKET (Maximising Agricultural Revenue through Knowledge, Enterprise Development, and Trade) Programme will support the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework and its associated Strategic Plan of Action for Food Security.
- These initiatives at the multilateral fora also sit atop an extensive web of multilateral and bilateral defence cooperation, which include the ASEAN Regional Forum Maritime Security Shore Exercise, the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, as well as the inaugural ASEAN Table Top Exercise on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief that was co-hosted by Indonesia and Singapore in July 2011.

A Norm of Dialogue and Consultation

- Second, regular but informal Track 1.5 meetings such as the Shangri-La Dialogue that help foster a norm of dialogue. The broadening scope of participants, with the recent 2011 meeting having 31 Defence Ministers or Vice Ministers in attendance, will ensure that the Shangri-La Dialogue continues to be a useful platform for leaders to

meet and share perspectives.

Operational Cooperation

- Third, operational cooperative groupings like the Malacca Strait Patrol that continue to build regional security and enhance trust. With 60,000 vessels each year and an estimated 15 million barrels of oil per day transiting through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, the participating States of Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore have banded together and collaborated on our counter-piracy efforts via the Malacca Strait Sea Patrols and the “Eyes-in-the-Sky” air patrols. These regional efforts have been successful in reducing the incidence of piracy in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.
- The three littoral states of the Strait of Malacca and Singapore have also worked together with the International Maritime Organisation to develop a Cooperative Mechanism to engage extra-regional stakeholders and drive concrete operational cooperation on navigational safety and environmental protection of the Straits. This Cooperative Mechanism has provided a focal point for key user States like the US, Japan, China, Republic of Korea, and India to contribute resources and expertise to various projects (including post-tsunami repair of aids to navigation, and quick response to chemical spills).
- Another example of successful operational cooperation is the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, or ReCAAP, which has provided an open and inclusive platform for governments to share and analyse data on piracy and armed robbery incidents in the Asia region. The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, which was established in Singapore in 2006, has helped to enhance maritime domain awareness in the Asian region, and is now sharing its successful model and expertise with littoral states of the Somali Basin region.
- The principle of shared effort and inclusive cooperation that is behind these initiatives will transfer well to the region’s efforts in tackling other transnational security challenges such as terror networks, pandemics, and natural disasters.

Building Developmental Capacity to Combat Security Challenges

- In sum, the overall regional architecture provides multiple opportunities for stakeholders to communicate, and cooperate.

- Singapore and other countries in the region are building up our individual capacity and military assets, but as we are increasingly intertwined through diplomatic exchanges, we are bringing these assets to bear in wider collaboration networks of joint exercises and training.
- Singapore has played a part in building the region's capabilities. Our Singapore Cooperation Programme looks to share Singapore's developmental experience and technical skills with the rest of the region.
- This includes our Initiative for ASEAN Integration Centres to which Singapore has pledged S\$15 million for the next 3 years that works to narrow the development gap in ASEAN. The Singapore Cooperation Programme also includes our recently agreed Singapore-US Third Country Training Programme that will conduct, among others, capacity-building programmes for countries in the region in areas such as health, and combating pandemics. Taken together, Singapore has worked for the region to come together and prepare to confront these new security challenges.

The Role of the USA

- In this overarching regional architecture, all countries desire to deepen understanding and mutual cooperation. Both the major regional and extra-regional powers have necessary roles to play, as do smaller states.
- Singapore has thus been a consistent and reliable partner of the US because we believe that the US has played and will continue to play a vital role in maintaining Asia's stability and prosperity.
- We have supported the US' continued strategic, security and economic engagement of the region. For example, the US Navy regularly deploys ships to the region, and Singapore is happy to facilitate the deployment of the Littoral Combat Ships in line with our 2005 Singapore-US Strategic Framework Agreement, so that the US can continue to engage other countries through port calls and exchanges with other foreign navies.
- Singapore itself also works with the US in many other areas such as maritime safety, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, as well as counter-piracy. The main objectives are to build up mutual trust and cooperative mechanisms within the region.

- Singapore also works with the US on counterproliferation initiatives, and we are a committed member of the US-initiated Proliferation Security Initiative, and the only Southeast Asian member of the Initiative's Operational Experts Group which drives its agenda and activities. In addition to co-chairing the ARF Inter-Sessional Meetings on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation with the US and China, we have more recently co-chaired with the US and EU the 12th International Export Controls Conference in Singapore in May 2011.

America's Pacific Century

- Hence, Singapore welcomes the significant strides that have been made, over the course of the Obama Administration, by the US in engaging the region.
- US-ASEAN relations have grown since the US' accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2009. Annual ASEAN-US Leaders' Meetings have been convened in the three years since, which we recognise as a strong signal of the US' attention to our region.
- During the third and most recent ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting held in November 2011, the Leaders adopted the ASEAN-US Plan of Action for 2011 – 2015 as an updated framework for cooperation. The US also announced its representatives to the ASEAN-US Eminent Persons Group, and launched several new initiatives on ASEAN Connectivity, maritime security, food security, youth programmes, and education in ASEAN. These are very positive indications of US interest in our region.
- President Barack Obama's visit to Asia for the East Asia Summit last November, after the successful APEC meetings in Honolulu, was also the culmination of the past three years of renewed US engagement with ASEAN.
- President Obama's announcement of the US' commitment to be "here to stay" was positive and well-received across the region. The continued constructive presence of the US is welcomed in a region where dynamism and growth are taking place.
- Yet, despite the many high-level visits and substantive initiatives that the US is undertaking with countries in the region, the increasingly partisan mood in Congress and the many difficulties that the US

economy faces are not far from the minds of Asian observers who will consider the sustainability of the US' engagement.

- Moreover, traditional military cooperation appears to have been a key outcome from the visits in November, including the rotation of US Marines in Darwin, and the step up of defence engagement with the Philippines.

Looking Ahead

- In view of this, we urge the US to continue to project a coherent and sustained policy of engagement towards Asia.
- The US can build on the past four years of engagement to broaden and deepen its cooperation with treaty allies, new partners, as well as the regional institutions, especially ASEAN.
- The US has played an active role in the ADMM-Plus, which provides strategic balance in the regional security architecture. We welcome the US continuing to do so, as we would welcome Secretary Panetta picking up on Secretary Gates' tradition of attending every Shangri-La Dialogue during his time in office.
- This year will mark the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-US relations. ASEAN is working towards its integration and community-building targets by 2015. With a total population of around 600 million and an economy of some US\$1.5 trillion, ASEAN has the potential to be one of the world's most dynamic regions, and there is scope for the US to play a significant role in promoting ASEAN's growth.
- ASEAN is where the "contest of ideas" between major powers would play out most intensely in the coming years. It is thus important that the US remains deeply involved in the region not just strategically, but economically, and holistically.
- In this regard, apart from President Obama taking part in Summit-level strategic discussions at the East Asia Summit, we welcome the US' comprehensive engagement of Asia, including in functional areas of cooperation like health, education, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Here, Singapore is ready to cooperate closely with the US via the US-Singapore TCTP to help address the developmental needs of countries in the region.

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