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TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

“Pivotal Player: Marty Natalegawa and U.S.-Indonesia Relations”

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Andrew Schwartz: Welcome to The Asia Chessboard the podcast that examines geopolitical dynamics in Asia and takes an inside look at the making of grand strategy. I'm Andrew Schwartz at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Hannah Fodale: This week. Mike sits down with Raden Mohammad Marty Muliana Natalegawa, former foreign minister of Indonesia, to explore current U.S.-Indonesia relations and U.S. foreign policy towards Southeast Asia. The two discuss Marty's time in government and how the bilateral relationship should deal with issues like Myanmar, Covid-19, Chinese assertiveness, climate change and support for democracy in the region.

Mike Green: Welcome back to the Asia Chessboard hope everyone has been having a good summer. We're joined today by a very distinguished guest, Raden Mohammad Marty Muliana Natalegawa, known to his many friends and admirers in government and academia as Marty Natalegawa, the former foreign minister of Indonesia and a leading thinker on Southeast Asia U.S. relations with Asia and democracy. We're going to talk about all of those things in a strategic context today, but Marty, if I may, we always start, because our listeners are curious how you got here. You were born on Bandung, I think, but how did you come into the foreign ministry and this interest in democracy and international affairs?

Marty Natalegawa: Well, I think thank you, Mike, for having me on this program. I'm really fortunate, I feel in the sense that diplomacy or foreign policy something that I had long been interested in ever since I was little actually. And naturally when I finished school and university, the first option would be to apply to the foreign ministry of my country, which is Indonesia. And therefore, throughout some 30 years of service in the foreign ministry, I was able to synergize between my personal interest in diplomacy and foreign affairs and the profession that I pursue and especially the sense of service I wanted to facilitate and to pursue. So I've been fortunate in that respect, but I couldn't think of doing anything else other than what I have been doing over the past 30 years actually, yeah.

Mike Green: And you studied in the UK?

Marty Natalegawa: Yes. Actually, I should have said when I was at school then, not many people in the UK know about Indonesia. So a great deal of my time at the boarding school at boarding school in the UK was spent explaining to my fellow students what Indonesia was all about. And I guess, that became a natural inclination for me to be able to try to explain my country, Indonesia, its past, its present and its future. And those years in the UK was quite transformational as well in the sense that whilst I was out of the country, I felt I was able to observe developments in Indonesia from hopefully a more objective manner and equip me at, I believe, in a better way to be able to pursue the career that I chose, namely diplomacy.

Mike Green: In some ways, the best way to manage the United States foreign policy bureaucracy, maybe to study in the UK. We still have a bit of an inferiority

complex. And I understand, so you were an ambassador in the UK before coming to the UN and then foreign minister, and you were knighted, right? You are actually, Sir Marty Natalegawa I understand.

Marty Natalegawa:

Well, yes. There was that kind of acknowledgement. But I spent some time in the UK as a student at the university as well, and then, as a ambassador, but only for a year and a half before I was transferred to the United Nations where I spent about two years and then back to Jakarta as foreign minister of Indonesia. So all-in-all, although I was in the foreign service, I spent actually quite a great deal of time in Indonesia itself, especially during a very, what was an exciting period of transformation. Indonesia for some of you, I'm sure your listeners would appreciate at one time was an authoritarian state where the military essentially, was the predominant power. And we went through a important democratic transition. And I was very much part of the system in the diplomacy and trying to make sure how the democratic transformation within the country, gets manifested and implemented in foreign policy domain. And so that was a very exciting period in a way you have almost a blank page on which to project your own values.

Mike Green:

It's a remarkable story. And I got into this business after studying Asian studies in the United States, where many prominent scholars, American scholars I studied under, basically made the case that Suharto's regime, Marcos in the Philippines, these were normal. This was the normal Asian view of democracy, don't expect democracy. And then, while I was a graduate student, Indonesia and Korea and Australia, many others, in the same period, went through these remarkable democratic transitions, imperfect perhaps, but unanticipated. In many ways as a foreign minister, you were really sui generis. You really put Indonesia in a global context in a way I think really no foreign minister had before. So I'm curious, who, are there any Indonesian foreign policy figures or thinkers who inspired you or were you really creating this foreign policy thinking in an entirely new context?

Marty Natalegawa:

Well, I mean, I wasn't driven by any specific personalities, because but I felt a great sense of responsibility and burden even, in the sense that knowing all these figures have proceeded me as a guardian of Indonesian foreign policy, I felt that in the time that I have in terms of being the foreign minister of Indonesia, I had an opportunity to make a difference. And I didn't want to simply do the routine matters, but I want to be as transformational as possible and try to make a change. And some of those I managed to implement or to introduce, but others are yet to be fully carried out. But I mean, I'd rather that we try and not succeed rather than not trying at all. But Indonesia shouldn't be an insignificant country given the normal indices of a country's potential power or potential influence. But I feel often case, we are punching below our weight, that we can do more. There's always room for advancement, yeah.

Mike Green:

You became foreign minister when Barack Obama was president.

Marty Natalegawa:

Absolutely, yeah.

Mike Green: And of course, you really could not think of an American president in history who is even remotely close to Barack Obama in terms of understanding Indonesia and Indonesia's importance. So in some ways you lucked out, you came to power in this sort of golden era for U.S.-Indonesia relations. Did it feel that way in Jakarta? It certainly seemed that way here.

Marty Natalegawa: Yeah, well, absolutely. Of course, there are many factors that goes into the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, but personalities matter, leaders matter in terms of the policy itself and the way those policies are implemented. And having figures such as President Obama, who is obviously very much informed, not only of the region, but also for Indonesia, requires their tremendous assets and potential for Indonesia. Then what becomes urgent then, was how to ensure that there is actual concrete delivery in terms of the potential and step-by-step, I can recall occasions when the then Obama administration and our government then, work hand-in-hand on issues such as Myanmar. Unfortunately, another portfolio that is now seizing us and issues of the region, including the East Asia Summit, et cetera. But yeah, I mean, President Obama administration at the time was important, but at the same time, I don't want to overemphasize the point, because one of the successes of Indonesia-U.S. relationship has been how across government it has been.

Marty Natalegawa: I mean, government can come and goes in DC and sorry, and Jakarta, but we've been able to maintain a rather steady progress in the development of the bilateral relationship.

Mike Green: I'm interested in where do you think we are right now? Secretary of Defense Austin had in August, early August, a visit to Jakarta that most people thought including in the region was quite successful. He managed to navigate that difficult rock and hard place of wanting to shore up U.S.-Indonesian relations, pushed back against China without entrapping Indonesia in U.S strategic competition. And most observers, including in Indonesia thought you did a good job. And Vice-President's going to the region, not Indonesia, but to the region, and Secretary Blinken and others have highlighted Indonesia as an important partner on, as you said on Myanmar and ASEAN. On the other hand, there isn't a lot of progress on Myanmar, despite Indonesia's efforts to take a lead with an ASEAN since the coup. And things like you had a vision for Indonesia as a kind of global maritime fulcrum. The idea that Indonesia is a maritime state. It really is a fulcrum, that is how British and American, Australian foreign policy thinkers for decades thought of Indonesia as this fulcrum in the middle of the Indo-Pacific.

Mike Green: But the cooperation has not really manifested itself, Indonesia's position on the Quad and some of these issues is still a bit ambiguous. And even on vaccine distribution, the U.S. has offered lots of vaccines, but is struggling to actually do the bureaucratic work, to distribute them. So much in terms of vision, but so many implementation challenges between the U.S. and Indonesia. Is that a fair characterization, do you think?

Marty Natalegawa: Yes. I can subscribe to your description just now, Mike, because I do recall, I mean, between Indonesia and United States, we have almost 3, 4 million in Indonesia, I meant post-1998 onwards. We have had no real serious stumbling block in our bilateral relationship. And there's certainly been a lot of good intentions and plans and visions described and put on paper in the latest buzzword is the notion of a strategic partnership between the two countries that recently the foreign minister said, the Secretary of State reinforced. But as I recall, one of the problem as you have just now said, is the implementation of this kind of commitment. And in the past, I recall there was an idea to have more regular annual bilateral meetings between the Secretary of State and the foreign minister of Indonesia that had sort of support a number of technical ministries.

Marty Natalegawa: I think during my time we met about two or three times in that format, which in a way becomes a way of having like a scorecard of where we are on the different issues and to discipline ourselves to make sure that we are actually making concrete progress. Otherwise, we have lacunae between high level meetings, whether it is for ministerial or summit level meetings. So I think the mechanics, although it sounds very mundane and very too technical, but the mechanics or the bilateral relationship need to be facilitated, need to be smoothen and make sure that it's working. But it's not only that, the leadership matters as well on our part. Obviously, I'm not privy to what has been going on from within Indonesia decision-making potential. But I do get the impression reading from public statements that Indonesian governments have made recently, foreign policy had become essentially almost like a commerce diplomacy basically to do with commerce, with trade, which is fair and fully understandable.

Marty Natalegawa: But until recently, there was an impression, this was almost at the expense of bigger strategic issues. So I hope I'm wrong, but, and therefore it's sort of unnecessarily limits the portfolio of issues on which Indonesia and the United States engages. But I hope things are now going to be more than simply mercantilist trade or commerce foreign policy issues.

Mike Green: The U.S. through the Trump and Biden administrations has been a little bit guilty of that kind of transactional non-strategic approach to economic statecraft too. So we're unfortunately emulating each other in that sense. We might be around the corner. I mean, the U.S. does not have a confirmed assistant Secretary of State at the time of recording. We don't have undersecretaries for economic affairs in place. We do have an ambassador in Chicago, of course. And then Indonesia has been very distracted I imagine by Covid. So the potential's there just around the corner, perhaps. What would you prioritize if you were advising President Biden, President Jokowi for their first big summit in person? What would you emphasize as areas for strategically significant U.S.-Indonesia cooperation?

Marty Natalegawa: Well, as you know Mike, sometimes these things are decided for us in the sense that events or developments are such that priorities are predetermined. And at

the moment for many countries, governments in Southeast Asia, the pandemic, the Covid is front and center in their preoccupation, and how to address the health dimension of the pandemic and the economic repercussions must occupy the first two list of priorities, because that is been so challenging to all of us and predetermined in a way, a set of priorities. But beyond those two obvious ones, I would, especially given the changes now taking place in DC, in Washington, I would put place issues such as climate change at the forefront as well. This is not only climate change as is essential environmental issue, but the many other facets of climate change as well, because as you may concur, nowadays, a lot of these issues, whether it be pandemic or climate change, they're also security dimensions potentially.

Marty Natalegawa:

So that is an issue of potential importance and the geopolitics of the region. And here, I think and there, the reason orientation or the recent approach adopted by the administration in terms of not making it to, from the prism of China, but rather looking at from the perspective of the region, I think is well received in our part of the world, because I mean, a country like Indonesia wouldn't want to be forced to approach this issue simply from the U.S.-China competitive dynamics. I think United States in my view would do well to project it's comprehensive engagement in the region, not only security that's obvious, but U.S. has so much assets and [inaudible 00:15:55] in other areas that it must employ and deploy as well.

Mike Green:

What about maritime security? One of the big changes for Indonesia geopolitical picture since you left office in 2014, is that the Chinese maritime presence has now extended to the Natuna Sea and persistent presence and quite aggressive presence. So I imagine that has rattled Jakarta's sense of maritime security. And we do have more cooperation bilaterally, training centers and so forth. Do you think that will grow in years ahead or will Indonesia still be a bit cautious?

Marty Natalegawa:

Yeah, actually, I mean, you're quite right. In recent years, we have seen a more assertive policy by China in the maritime domain to South China Sea, even beyond it impacts us in the Natuna Sea as well. I'm not sure how the management of this issue that has been in recent past, but actually, if as I recall it's not actually quite a new phenomenon, because even then there was always a concern testing or prodding by China on these type of issues. But we, Indonesia and ASEAN were quite disciplined in not simply, they seem to be acquiescing. We were quite determined to each time there is a prodding or testing by China, we always respond diplomatically and they always on the whole, step back. But I'm not sure what had happened since then, because we have seen obviously ASEAN less united than ever before, and well, ASEAN has not always been united, because back in 2012, I experienced myself on the South China Sea when ASEAN for the first time actually failed in adopting a joint statement at the end of the foreign ministers meeting, because of divisions over the South China Sea.

Marty Natalegawa: But the difference then was as soon as there was a division, Indonesia quickly sought to repair the damage. And sought to quickly reunify ASEAN's position and therefore once again, we were able to have some kind of a basic minimum common position, but nowadays I get the sense that it has become, there's a sense of resignation as if this is how things are, and there is no longer the sense of common investment on the issue, which is a shame really, because all throughout Indonesia's strategic objective is to ensure that on the South China Sea, while the protagonists or the claimant states are, certain member states of ASEAN, it must be still an ASEAN, collective ASEAN issue. But at the moment, there's a sense of an a la carte splitting off of hairs and different countries have different positions. It's unfortunate, yeah.

Mike Green: It's unfortunate in many, many ways the Obama administration until 2016, until the tribunal ruling in favor of the Philippines position against China's position. Up to that point, not only the U.S., the EU, Japan, Australia, a lot of countries worked with Indonesia, worked with Singapore, worked with others to try to back up ASEAN unity, and it broke. It just broke in 2016 in July, when the ASEAN leaders were unable to come up with a consensus view, because Cambodia blocked it. I was in Cambodia that summer and the Cambodian government spokesman publicly acknowledged China gave them \$650 million. And so, that's a lot of money and very transactional, very transparent. I was sort of surprised to hear it. Now, Americans are wondering, and maybe you have good advice for us, how seriously should we take ASEAN?

Mike Green: Are we better off investing heavily in strategic partnerships with Indonesia, Vietnam, repairing our alliance with the Philippines, or is there still a case to be made for a strong U.S. ambassador to ASEAN and a robust approach to ASEAN and as a whole? It's a harder case to make than it was when you were a foreign minister, but is that case still there?

Marty Natalegawa: Well, I think it's the challenge or the onus is now on ASEAN to demonstrate that it does matter to countries such as United States. It has in the past, I mean, at the risk of over-simplification. Typically, I would say, ASEAN has mattered, because it has transformed relationship between Southeast Asian countries that had once been inimical and marred by tensions, become more of a security community. Not perfect, but still the notion of having an open conflict between them is less so today. It has mattered in the sense that ASEAN has provided some kind of a platform on which non-ASEAN countries can meet the ASEAN classes and ASEAN Plus Three, Plus Ones, the East Asia summit, as a regional forum, at least a convening power, and it does matter as well in terms of the economy, the economic transformation and how the economies such as the United States and ASEAN has become increasingly meshed between them.

Marty Natalegawa: But it's now less of a given. I think it's now we have to, the Myanmar issues, obviously a serious test case. However, what I am concerned about Mike, is that now there is some kind of a distinction being made between Southeast Asia and ASEAN. Until recently, it used to be considered as one and the same. When we are thinking about Southeast Asia, it basically means ASEAN, that's the chief

modality of back to which you should project your interests and communicate with countries of the region. But now, when I see a lot of white papers and policy papers by governments, I increasingly know that the term used is a little bit more than once, countries speak of Southeast Asia rather than necessarily ASEAN. But having said all that, the obituary of ASEAN has been written many times over in the past.

Marty Natalegawa: There's been so many occasions in the past when ASEAN it was has been deemed to be irrelevant to be at the end of its usefulness, but somehow it has proven its resilience and therefore, it would be extremely folly in my view, if the United States was to abandon or to set ASEAN aside and pursue something else without clear, guarantee that this other approach will be as effective in projecting its interests and its concern. In this connection therefore, I mean, notions such as the Quad which is obviously recently more developed, shouldn't be at the expense of Asia-U.S. engagement with ASEAN as well. Just one final point on this note. It is a huge wish list, So hope. If and when the United States feels comfortable domestically to re-engage in terms of one of those big trade agreements, I would hope that one day United states will not completely close the option of joining the RCEP, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, because otherwise that RCEP will become perceived to be a China-led process.

Marty Natalegawa: But that's just, I know the domestic politics, whether it be RCEP or the PPP and others, would not allow it at this time, but you wouldn't want to abandon a process of this type completely to the other side, so to speak, yeah.

Mike Green: That's very good advice for this administration. And one, they're hearing a lot from friends and allies in Asia. And originally, going back 15, 20 years, the idea was that TPP, the U.S.-Korea free trade agreement, RCEP, all of these would sort of merge into this free trade over the Asia-Pacific. That's a very hard political sell now, because of strategic competition. The hope is that after the midterm elections in the U.S., the Biden administration starts being more proactive on trade. Could you clarify one thing, Marty, you said that you're noticing in white papers more and more reference to Southeast Asia, less reference to ASEAN. I've noticed that in white papers from the U.S., Britain, Australia. Are you seeing that within ASEAN as well? Or are you just describing outside?

Marty Natalegawa: Well, more external.

Mike Green: Outside.

Marty Natalegawa: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Mike Green: That's sort of the reality, the rest of the world faces and the U.S., the EU, Australia, Japan, a lot of countries put some of their best people in as ambassadors to ASEAN and work actively with the ASEAN secretariat. So the will is there, but as you point out there has to be something to work with.

Marty Natalegawa: Yeah. One domain is the cooperation on the Mekong area as well. I think, when we think of geopolitical tension, so to speak in Southeast Asia, typically one think of the South China Sea, as the theater for geopolitical back and forth. In the recent past, there was some going back and forth on the Straits of Malacca as well. Not many talk about the Straits of Malacca nowadays, because the three literal states, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore essentially have gotten that somewhat managed. But now on so-called mainland Southeast Asia, or mainland ASEAN, the Mekong dynamic is becoming increasingly contested as well in between, the China-driven initiatives. There is a United States as well, Japan, and in my friendly and informal advice to some of my ASEAN colleagues, this would do well for ASEAN to be able to have almost like a code at how to preempt, we don't, we wish to avoid I think, the kind of the going back and forth on the issue of cooperation over the Mekong area that could be inimical to ASEAN's interests. Yeah.

Mike Green: And here I should give a shout out to our friends at the Stimson Center in Washington, who were really trying to keep the spotlight on the lower Mekong. As we speak an absolute tragedy is unfolding in Afghanistan and the Biden administration pulled out as quickly as they did in part, so they could focus on the Indo-Pacific, but the implications for the Indo-Pacific are not good. Everything from distracting India away from the maritime domain, because they have to be worried, to the danger of foreign fighters, finding a safe haven that would perhaps more than any other part of Asia threatened Indonesia, and then questions about American competence. I personally don't think this is a signal about American commitment to allies in Indo-Pacific. Public opinion polls in the U.S. show that there's fairly robust support for our friends and allies in Asia and fatigue about Afghanistan, but nevertheless, some very, very unsettling signals. How do you see it? How do you think Jakarta will view it today, tomorrow, down the road?

Marty Natalegawa: Yeah. Well, I mean, as we speak, as we record this now, things happening in Afghanistan in the way in the way that it is. Afghanistan in a way manifests situation in many other parts of the world, where what had originally been a local national situation, quickly becomes over wider ramifications beyond the country, beyond the region to becoming a global geopolitical issues as well. And even a country like Indonesia has felt the implications, so the impact of the conflict in Afghanistan over the past two decades in terms of radicalization of individuals involved in terrorist movements, in terms of outflow of migrants, refugees, trying to flee the country to go to Australia and end up stranded in Indonesia. So it has to become the over the past 20 years. And probably now in the future, as we have all felt the implications of the developments in Afghanistan, but at the moment, I think governments in the region would be observing how the United States will react and we will respond to the developments.

Marty Natalegawa: We are not as, I mean, we've always felt as the United States I'm sure has recognized as well, that development of governance, democratic governance, and et cetera, must have ownership and sense of participation by the local

population. And I guess, ultimately now, it's shown that the capacity or the resilience of the democratic governance in Afghanistan is not as robust as we had hoped for. Yeah.

Mike Green: It's a real tragedy. Did you visit as foreign minister?

Marty Natalegawa: Yes. I visited actually, I don't recall as foreign ministers, but I do recall as an ambassador to the UN, when we went as a Security Council mission to Kabul. The UN Security Council mission had a visit to Kabul and so, to see firsthand the situation in the country. And this would be in the mid-2000s, late 2000s. And it was a difficult environment obviously. And yeah, all of us are dismayed by what is happening, to be honest. I recall, I mean, one issue that I hope we can touch on is on our democracy as well. But I do recall actually, Indonesia, we have what's called Bali Democracy Forum. At one time, we had actually President Karzai come and participate in the forum and because we wanted to showcase or wanted to demonstrate that Islam, democracy and development can go hand-in-hand, but we are seeing what we're seeing just now.

Marty Natalegawa: So it is quite a tragic situation, but for someone from outside looking in, we don't have the responsibility of the full picture of what's going on in the country and you can't second guess what's happening, but I don't at the same time though, to your original question, I see necessarily that this will detract or take away U.S. attention elsewhere, for instance, in the Indo-Pacific et cetera. I think that this has its own dynamic, but I can see a situation where the regions' dynamic meaning, there's India there is Russia, there is China, that will be interesting to observe as well. Yeah.

Mike Green: It changes the strategic quite apart from the massive humanitarian tragedy, it changes the chess board. We don't know exactly how, but it does, it shifts it up.

Marty Natalegawa: Absolutely.

Mike Green: I'm glad you mentioned that Bali Democracy Forum, which you initiated I believe, to show in effect that there are multiple pathways to democracy and as skeptics look at Afghanistan today and say, "We have no business expecting countries to transition to democracy." Indonesia is one of the most important counter examples, and I hope your own work as a thought leader and democracy will continue in that context. We worked together two years ago on the Sunnylands principles at CSIS and the National Endowment for Democracy and others put out trying to frame an approach to democracy that fit the Indo-Pacific that underscored our common values, but the different approaches and different experiences in different contexts. My sense is the Biden administration's really struggling with this democracy summit. Very important to the president, that's why he got into the race, because of what happened in our country with Charlottesville demonstrations and nativism in the Trump era. But I don't think they know quite what to do with the Indo-Pacific. What would you advise?

Mike Green: How would a democracy summit unfold in the coming months, in a way that would be attractive to Indonesians and others who have more recent experiences actually building democracy?

Marty Natalegawa: Well, I don't think there's any one-size-fits-all. That's what makes it difficult, because every country's situation unique to itself and therefore, any attempt to have a one-size-fits-all or a uniform approach, I think may disappoint. And from my perspective from the region, one of the major nexus that a country like the United States must try to synergize is this relationship between promotion or partnership on democracy and the idea of state sovereignty and non-interference in our region. In our region, in Southeast Asia, certainly there is still a very acute and a very intense suspicion with anything to do with promotion of democracy. And they see this as being something that is to be imposed from outside to the target country. And this is where I think a challenge would be. How to, I liked the term that we've been using in Sunnylands, Mike, in terms of having a partnership rather than necessarily any other terminology, partnership and recognizing the notion of common ownership and national ownership and national common participation.

Marty Natalegawa: These are important principles to be able to help facilitate, but you know what I mean, the United States must also navigate the fact if we call I mean, there's one nexus is that between promotion of democracy and principles, such as non-interference to make the case that they actually go hand-in-hand, they're not necessarily an either or. And the other one is the nexus with geopolitics, because at the moment, the suggestion is being made, which is in my view is force, excessive. When we talk about the promotion of democracy, is only the agenda of some countries and not of others. It has to become a part of a geopolitical back and forth. And this is where I think one must be the guard against. And I guess, appealing to the young, the youth of this country has become especially important. When you look at what's happening now in Myanmar, you are seeing some of the most ardent defender of democracy are the young people who had over the past 10 years and slightly more, have had their performative years during the relatively open system and they don't wish to return to how the situation was before.

Marty Natalegawa: So I guess, projecting that sense of partnership is extremely important, because sometimes less can be more, it has to be just right. Not too much that you begin to suffocate the local process, but at the same time, not to be totally disengaged. It's easier said than done Mike, because we, and ASEAN, we have been failing in my view in recent years, because up until recently, the democratic dynamics in Southeast Asia was in my view was on the ascendancy we saw in the 2011, 2013, '14 developments in Myanmar. But then since then, many of the country's foreign policies and policies tend to be, as I said before, more mercantilist trade-oriented and they don't consider largely issues as a democracy, as an issue to be discussed as an interstate effort. And therefore, there was a benign neglect or neglect. And we see what we are seeing now in Myanmar.

Marty Natalegawa: And the cost now is far quite a greater in terms of repair than would have been if they have really paid attention and continued to nurture the democratic transition in Myanmar. So all-in-all, a lot of us have a lot to learn, to be honest, yeah.

Mike Green: None of us or almost none of us, including the United States can claim that we own the high ground right now. And I certainly hope that the summit goes ahead and I hope that the Biden administration has the bandwidth and the wisdom to be consultative about it. And perhaps to ask Indonesia to lead a discussion on lessons from the Bali Democracy Forum. Ask Japan to lead a discussion on lessons from good governance, through their quality infrastructure, free and open Pacific financing. This is not a very American way of doing foreign policy, but we're in an era where we should maybe step back a little bit. We can still be the conductor of the orchestra, but we need a first violin. We need a cello section. We need to let other countries take a leading role based on their experience or this summit can end up being a Western European, Canadian, American rather isolated event, which would be all the wrong signal.

Marty Natalegawa: Brilliant that's a point well-worth underscoring Mike, because often the case, the process is as important as the actual intended results. And having a process as you described it, which is engaging, inclusive, well, it may be a little bit slower, but you invest a sense of common ownership and potentially it becomes more sustainable, a more sustained and more long-lasting than a very efficient one country-driven process that doesn't have a continued lasting impact. And when administrations come and go, we may see the potential of the effort well-invested at one time suddenly come to an end. For instance, not on democracy, on the policy, pursued by the Obama administration on nuclear, is it nuclear security or nuclear safety?

Mike Green: Yes, Nuclear Security Summit.

Marty Natalegawa: I attended two, three of those summits and I thought, "Wow." This is a really important initiative on an area that had relatively been lacking attention. And having all these leaders suddenly give attention, actually created a lot of new dynamics and new progress, but because it was so U.S.-singularly-driven, once the administration changed and had new ideas, then the whole thing sort of came to a halt. So I think along the line that he suggested, yes, I couldn't agree more. It has to be inclusive. And even I hasten to add, perhaps even to have you shouldn't be a process necessarily of having meeting of the converted, I'm mean, the office like-minded. There has to be a readiness to go back and forth and to have a really great debate on issues. So this should be summit on democracy. It shouldn't be simply be a summit of democratic countries, but summit on democracy, then it becomes a bit more open-ended. Yeah.

Mike Green: Well, you're a leading thinker on this in an Asian context and in a global context, I hope the administration listens to you. Sir Marty Natalegawa, thank you for

joining us. And I think our listeners will learn a great deal from this podcast. I really appreciate it.

Marty Natalegawa: Thank you for having me, Mike. Thanks very much, indeed.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening. For more on strategy and the Asia program's work, visit the CSIS website at csis.org and click on the Asia program page.