

SOUTHEAST ASIA BULLETIN



CSIS SOUTHEAST ASIA INITIATIVE

The CSIS Southeast Asia Initiative is a project of the International Security Program, Asia Division. CSIS launched the initiative in January 2008 to provide a venue for greater focus, examination, and analysis of Southeast Asian affairs within Washington's policy community. The initiative includes regular roundtables, conferences, studies, and forums to spotlight developments in the region. CSIS also partners with organizations and individuals within and outside Washington to maximize the flow of information, analysis, and outreach on Southeast Asian affairs in the United States.

An important component of the initiative is the monthly *Southeast Asia Bulletin*, which provides a timely overview of key developments, events, and facts about the region and offers a forum for short essays by official and unofficial commentators on regional affairs.

Derek Mitchell, director, Southeast Asia Initiative, and Brian Harding, research associate, welcome your feedback on the *Southeast Asia Bulletin* at dmitchell@csis.org and bharding@csis.org respectively.

Feature Article

TOWARD A NEW PARTNERSHIP OF EQUALS

José Ramos-Horta

President of Timor-Leste and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1996)

Even before this extraordinarily embarrassing economic and financial meltdown caused by the United States, it was obvious for at least two decades that the United States needed to forge a new international partnership and consensus to bring about peace and prosperity around the world.

However, there were too many missed opportunities when the United States could have taken the lead but instead found itself almost alone in a number of milestones like the Kyoto Protocol and the Rome statute that created the International Criminal Court. It could have championed a new international trade regime that is fairer to developing countries; brought meaningful reform of the United Nations; or worked toward a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a wider Arab-Israeli peace agreement. These are just a few examples where the United States failed the test of leadership.

I am not suggesting that these matters are simple and or easily resolved. Understandably, there are numerous complicating factors, both at the national and international levels. It is far too simple to blame all on George W. Bush. Do we really know how Presidents Bill Clinton or Barack Obama would have reacted to the September 11 terrorist attacks? Would they have bombed a target somewhere and declared themselves satisfied? Would they have invaded Afghanistan? The Afghanistan invasion was "legal" while the Iraq invasion was "illegal." Yet the United States seems to be succeeding in Iraq while the U.S.-NATO-UN coalition seems to be failing in Afghanistan.

The United States remains the indispensable leader and will remain so for decades to come, but an enlightened leadership is one that knows the limits of power and is wise to mobilize partnerships and consensus. The U.S. and European financial meltdown must be seized by President Barack Obama as an opportunity to expand the aging G-7 into a more representative community that includes Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, China, India, and Indonesia.

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As the United States, Europe, and Japan pour in hundreds of billions of dollars to save their mismanaged banks, the poor of the world have been largely forgotten. Yet the legions of poor who will suffer even more might rise up and pose a greater threat than the small band of extremists in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. So I plead on behalf of the poor that maybe for every dollar the West gives to their banks and automobile industries, it sets aside at least 10 cents toward poverty alleviation programs in the worst-affected countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The UN Security Council should be expanded to accommodate major regional players like Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Germany. Asia is very underrepresented in the UN system. China and India alone have twice as many people as Africa and Europe together, but while there are only three seats on the Security Council for Asia, there are five for Europe and three for Africa. The inclusion of Egypt and Indonesia in a reformed Security Council would correct the imbalance where there is not a single Muslim country represented in this world security body.

The United States should scrap the missile shield plan, which has dubious value, and NATO should simply desist from encroaching further on Russia's historical areas of direct interest. Instead, the United States and its NATO and EU allies should actively pursue with Russia a new twenty-first century partnership to bring about prosperity and peace in Europe and the Middle East.

I believe the European Union should embrace Turkey and give Israel, which is not a member of any regional alliance, a special status in the union. Israel should also be accorded some special status in NATO. In regard to Asia, the United States must seek to develop strategic partnerships with India and China (not one or the other, but both) and with them seek to pursue a more active policy in reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons in the region. Asia is the most nuclearized and most dangerous region of the world, where historical mistrust and rivalries—such as border disputes—run deeper than anywhere else. From India to Pakistan, China, and North Korea, not to mention other countries with the capability to develop nuclear weapons if they decide to do so, leaders in Asia seem to look at nuclear weapon possession as a status symbol, a shortcut to being a regional and global power. They seem oblivious to recent and current lessons where the now-defunct USSR was not able to save itself from implosion in spite of its enormous nuclear and conventional arsenals and where heavily armed neighbors like India and Pakistan are not able to subdue internal threats and insurgencies.

Only John F. Kennedy evoked in millions around the world the same hopes and illusions now generated by President Barack Obama. This is partly because of his eloquence and partly because he is black, as he symbolizes what is possible in a word of anger, despair, and hopelessness. That a black man, son of Africa, son of slaves who for centuries endured the worst of what human beings can inflict on others, can reach the mountaintop of power, proves to all in the remotest corners of the world that that not all is lost, that there is hope. However, President Obama will have to deliver—and soon. For the fall from the height of his almost deity can be a very crushing one, for all.

SOUTHEAST ASIA AT CSIS

February 24, 2009: The CSIS Southeast Asia Initiative hosted Renato Cruz De Castro, professor at De La Salle University in Manila, for a roundtable discussion entitled “The Philippine Experience in Counterinsurgency.”

February 25, 2009: CSIS hosted Jose Ramos-Horta, president of Timor-Leste, as part of its **Statesmen's Forum series**. A transcript, video, and audio can be found [here](#).

March 2, 2009: The CSIS Southeast Asia Initiative hosted Sunai Phasuk, Thailand-Burma consultant for Human Rights Watch's Asia Division, for a discussion on the insurgency in southern Thailand.

FEBRUARY & MARCH TIMELINE OF EVENTS

February 2, 2009: 150 high-ranking Indonesian Army officers hold a closed-door meeting to discuss the military's neutrality in upcoming elections. The meeting comes after allegations by President Yudhoyono that an Army officer had attempted to influence voter behavior against him. The Indonesian military is now required to be politically neutral after decades of having an explicit role in politics. Active-duty military personnel are also not allowed to vote.

February 2, 2009: Indonesia and Singapore reach an agreement over a disputed sea border after three years of negotiations. Included in this agreement is the status of Nipah Island, on which Indonesia plans to develop for economic and sea monitoring purposes.

February 2, 2009: Brunei commits 30 peacekeeping troops to the Southern Philippines. It is the first and only country to return monitors to the region since peace talks broke down between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) last year.

February 3, 2009: 1,000 protesters gather in Ranong, Thailand, near the Thailand-Burma border, to protest the suggestion of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that a Rohingya refugee center be built in the city.

February 4, 2009: Three opposition lawmakers from Malaysia's Perak state assembly defect to the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, wresting control of the state from the opposition. The opposition asserted it had dissolved the assembly shortly before the defections and that new elections are necessary. However, the sultan of Perak (a largely ceremonial figure) intervenes on behalf of the BN and forces the opposition to relinquish control of the state government. Seven opposition leaders are suspended from the assembly for between 12 and 18 months on charges of contempt, dealing a further blow to an opposition that has endured several setbacks since its gains in the national legislature last March.

February 11, 2009: The Philippine supreme court rules that convicted rapist U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith must be released by the U.S. embassy into Philippine legal custody according to provisions in the U.S.-RP Visiting Forces Agreement. Smith has been held at the U.S. embassy since 2006 when he was sentenced to 40 years in prison and an agreement was reached for him to be held at the U.S. embassy under a "temporary custodial arrangement" while he appealed his sentence. The Philippine government said it will appeal the supreme court's decision.

February 12, 2009: Taufik, a former member of GAM (Free Aceh Movement) and leader of the Aceh Party (GAM's successor political party), is fatally shot in Aceh in the run-up to April's provincial elections in which his wife is seeking a seat in the provincial legislature. This is the latest and most high-profile incident in a recent escalation of violence in Aceh, indicating continued need to consolidate peace and stability in the Indonesian province.

February 17, 2009: The Philippines passes its revised Baselines Bill, which, among other issues, lays claim to islands in the disputed Spratlys chain. Brunei, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam also claim some or all of the Spratlys. The passage of the much-debated bill prompts rebukes and reassertions of rival claims from China and Vietnam.

February 17, 2009: The UN-sponsored Khmer Rouge trials begin in Phnom Penh, dogged by financial woes and allegations of corruption. The first defendant, Duch, is the first Khmer Rouge leader to face justice in court.

February 17, 2009: President Obama signs into law a \$787 billion stimulus package that includes \$198 million to compensate Filipino veterans who fought alongside American soldiers in World War II and never received veterans' benefits. The issue has long been a sore spot in Philippine-U.S. relations.

February 22, 2009: The Burmese government releases 19 political prisoners, including 5 monks and an unknown number of members of jailed democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. The release came after a visit by UN special representative Ibrahim Gambari, who had called for the release of all "prisoners of conscience."

February 24–27, 2009: Thousands of "red shirt" supporters of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra protest in Bangkok, calling for the ouster of the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. The protests occur as delegates arrive for the ASEAN Summit.

February 26, 2009: The UN Security Council extends the mandate for the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) for an additional 12 months. Some 3,000 police and civilians from dozens of countries make up the current mission, which was established in 2006 and is tasked with maintaining law and order until TL's police forces may be reorganized.

February 27–March 1, 2009: The 14th ASEAN Summit takes place in Hua Hin, Thailand. **See Major Regional Developments**

EVENTS TO WATCH FOR IN MARCH

March 19, 2009: Admiral Timothy J. Keating, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, will testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee as part of a series of annual oversight hearings with combatant commanders.

March 31, 2009: Malaysian prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will step down as president of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), thus ceding the premiership. Najib Razak, his appointed successor, will become leader of UMNO and its Barisan Nasional coalition, making him prime minister.

U.S. ENGAGEMENT IN THE REGION

February 6, 2009: Indonesian vice president Jusuf Kalla met with U.S. vice president Joseph Biden in anticipation of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Indonesia later in the month while in Washington for the National Prayer Breakfast. The meeting was Biden's first with a counterpart from another country. A statement from the embassy of Indonesia can be found [here](#).

February 7, 2009: Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo traveled to the United States to attend the National Prayer Breakfast. While in Washington, she met with congressional leaders to discuss a bill concerning Philippine World War II veterans (see below). She also met with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The lack of a meeting with President Obama became a major story in the Philippine press.

February 18–19, 2009: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits Indonesia. See [Major Regional Developments](#)

MAJOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

ASEAN Summit

From February 27 to March 1, the leaders of ASEAN's 10 member states—Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—gathered in Hua Hin, Thailand, for the rescheduled and much anticipated 14th ASEAN Summit. The leaders naturally focused on the economic crisis but also addressed human rights at this first summit since last year's ratification of the **ASEAN Charter**, which institutionalized the grouping for the first time.

On the economy, the leaders pledged to cooperate to combat protectionist impulses stemming from the current crisis, an issue of particular importance to the region's many export-dependent economies. The summit produced the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement to integrate all existing ASEAN initiatives on trade in goods into one comprehensive framework to facilitate the organization's 2015 target for economic integration. The leaders also signed an ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement to coordinate various ASEAN investment initiatives.

On human rights, the meeting began poorly as the delegations from Burma and Cambodia threatened to walk out if activists from their countries were included in the discussion. Although they had been invited as part of the dialogue, the Burmese and Cambodian activists were asked to leave. All parties did agree to establish a regional human rights body later this year, as mandated by the ASEAN Charter. However, hopes that the body might have teeth were dashed when reports of a draft "terms of reference" for the body surfaced after the summit. ASEAN members did not grant the body a fact-finding or investigative function, let alone the right to sanction or otherwise punish human rights offenders, sticking close to ASEAN's long-standing policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of member states.

For more information on the summit, including the official press release, visit the summit's Web site [here](#).

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Visits Indonesia

From February 15 to 22, Hillary Clinton traveled to Asia on her first overseas trip as secretary of state. Her itinerary included Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, and China (in that order). This was the first time a U.S. secretary of state visited a Southeast Asian country on her first trip as secretary, raising expectations at home and abroad that the Obama administration will give increased attention to the region in coming years.

Secretary Clinton arrived in Indonesia on February 18 and departed February 19, but she had a full agenda. While in Jakarta, she had meetings with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, appeared on a popular television show, had dinner with civil society leaders, and visited a USAID project in a poverty-stricken area of the city. In her remarks, she stressed the growing importance of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Indonesia, as an economic and security cooperation partner, and as an example of the compatibility of Islam, democracy, and modernity. She called for the development of a “comprehensive partnership,” echoing **the call of President Yudhoyono** last November in Washington for a new U.S.-Indonesia “strategic partnership,” the details of which were left vague but presumably are to be worked out in coming months by working-level officials on both sides. Secretary Clinton also declared her intention to restart the U.S. Peace Corps program in Indonesia.

Significantly, Secretary Clinton visited the ASEAN Secretariat where she met with ASEAN secretary-general Surin Pitsuwan. This marked the first visit by a secretary of state to the ASEAN Secretariat, sending a strong and welcome signal to other Southeast Asian countries of U.S. commitment to the region broadly, and to ASEAN in particular. While there, she indicated that the United States would begin a process with the intent to sign ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

Prior to her trip, Secretary Clinton gave a speech at the Asia Society in New York outlining the Obama administration’s strategic approach to Asia. Her remarks can be found [here](#).

In addition, Secretary Clinton’s remarks at a press conference with Foreign Minister Wirajuda can be found [here](#), and her remarks to the media alongside Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan can be found [here](#). Additional information on the trip can be found [here](#).

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS ABOUT TIMOR-LESTE (EAST TIMOR)

- Timor-Leste was a Portuguese colony from the seventeenth century until 1975. After Timor-Leste declared its independence in late 1975, Indonesia invaded and occupied the territory, and made it Indonesia’s 27th province. This situation lasted until 1999, when a UN-sponsored referendum in the territory reflected popular will for independence. Following two years of UN administrative assistance, Timor-Leste became a fully sovereign state, joining the United Nations in September 2002.
- A bilateral Indonesia–Timor-Leste Truth and Friendship Commission, which was created to bring to light abuses that occurred during Indonesia’s occupation and to promote reconciliation, delivered its findings in July 2008. It assigned “institutional responsibility” for human rights abuses to the Indonesian military.
- The 1859 Treaty of Lisbon ceded the western half of Timor Island to the Netherlands. As a result, the western half of the island is part of Indonesia.
- Portuguese and Tetum are the official languages. Approximately 13 percent of the population speaks Portuguese and 91 percent speak Tetum; 43 percent speak Indonesian, as a result of its 23-year occupation.
- Revenues from oil and gas compose approximately half of Timor-Leste’s gross national income and 90 percent of government revenue.

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