

TOWARDS A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE USA AND ASEAN

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Abstract

Globalization demands a global diplomacy adaptable to regional requirements. In the Asia-Pacific area the close engagement between the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States of America (US) remains a key foundation for regional peace, security and prosperity.

For ASEAN the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia (TAC) is a legal code of conduct governing relations in the region. The US acceded to the TAC in 2009. That was a very significant symbol of collective political commitment offering useful juridical foundations for the implementation of the Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership released in November 2005. This partnership must continuously be adapted to new dynamics and realities.

By the Joint Statement of the 4th ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting of November 20, 2012, the door was officially open to elevate this partnership to a strategic level. The US endorsed ASEAN centrality in future attempts to build a new regional architecture.

Defining a long-term workable and comprehensive strategy requires more energetic diplomatic efforts from all parties for deepening and broadening multi-dimensional cooperation in South-East Asia in the years to come.

บทคัดย่อ

ในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์จำเป็นต้องมีการเจรจาต่อรองระดับโลกที่ปรับเปลี่ยนเข้ากับความต้องการของภูมิภาค ในภูมิภาคเอเชียแปซิฟิกการมีส่วนร่วมอย่างใกล้ชิดระหว่างสมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ (อาเซียน) และสหรัฐอเมริกา ยังคงเป็นพื้นฐานที่สำคัญสำหรับการรักษาสันติภาพ ความปลอดภัยและความเจริญรุ่งเรืองของภูมิภาค

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สำหรับสมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ สนธิสัญญาไมตรีและความร่วมมือในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ (TAC) เป็นจรรยาบรรณทางกฎหมายด้านความสัมพันธ์ในภูมิภาค สหรัฐอเมริกายอมรับสนธิสัญญามิตรภาพและความร่วมมือในเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ในปี 2552 ซึ่งเป็นเครื่องหมายที่สำคัญของพันธกิจทางการเมืองโดยรวมซึ่งเป็นรากฐานทางกฎหมายที่เป็นประโยชน์สำหรับการดำเนินการของแถลงการณ์วิสัยทัศน์ร่วมว่าด้วยความเป็นหุ้นส่วนที่เพิ่มพูนระหว่างสมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้และสหรัฐอเมริกาซึ่งจัดทำในเดือนพฤศจิกายน 2548 ความร่วมมือนี้จะต้องนำไปปรับใช้เพื่อให้เป็นพลศาสตร์ใหม่และเกิดผลที่เป็นจริงอย่างต่อเนื่อง

แถลงการณ์ร่วมของการประชุมผู้นำอาเซียน – สหรัฐอเมริกาครั้งที่ 4 เมื่อวันที่ 20 พฤศจิกายน 2555 เป็นการเปิดประตูอย่างเป็นทางการเพื่อยกระดับความร่วมมือนี้ให้อยู่ในระดับยุทธศาสตร์ สหรัฐอเมริกาได้รับรองความเป็นศูนย์กลางของสมาคมประชาชาติแห่งเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้สำหรับความพยายามในอนาคตที่จะสร้างเป็นสถาปัตยกรรมแห่งภูมิภาคใหม่

การกำหนดระยะเวลาการทำงานในระยะยาวและกลยุทธ์ที่ครอบคลุมจะต้องใช้ความพยายามทางการทูตอย่างจริงจังจากทุกฝ่ายเพื่อความร่วมมือในเชิงลึกและเชิงกว้างในหลายมิติในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ในอนาคต

I. THE FRAMEWORK

In an appropriate Asian context, Henry Kissinger made the assertion that “The continents interact, but they do not necessarily understand each other”.¹ As the winds of monumental changes are blowing in many parts of the world today, it is the responsible role of diplomacy to contribute to making inter-continental understanding possible. This is not an easy task during the irreversible process of globalization which demands a new diplomacy more flexible and adaptable to regional specificities and requirements.

If development recommends itself as a universal concern, development-centered globalization must become a common cause at the planetary level.

In terms of development, the Asia-Pa-

cific area is emerging as the epicenter of future global economic growth leading to a scenario where the current century is expected to enter contemporary history as the Asia-Pacific Century. Consequently, adequate attention should be given to South-East Asia and its main institutional structure represented by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) established in 1967.²

With its ten members (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) ASEAN is home to about 620 million people, 60 per cent of whom are under 30 years of age. Its combined GDP is the third largest in Asia, after China and Japan. It covers an extraordinary spectrum of cultures, religions and political systems. Its members

have linked their destinies to a regional institution unique by its content and finalities.³

In accordance with article 2 of the ASEAN Charter which entered into force on December 15, 2008, all Member States of this organization shall act in accordance with a set of principles from which we mention: respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all ASEAN Member States; the centrality of ASEAN in external political, economic, social and cultural relations, while remaining actively engaged, outward-looking, inclusive and non-discriminatory.⁴

The history of the official ASEAN-US dialogue goes back to 1977.⁵ Its content is characterized by a great diversity of issues on the agenda, including: exchanges of views on political and security matters; cooperation in commodities, market and capital access; transfer of technology; development of energy resources; shipping and food security.

At the beginning of the 21st century ASEAN and the US focused more on trade and investment, technology transfer and human resources development.

At present, ASEAN- US cooperation encompasses a much more impressive multitude of sectors, including political and security matters, economic and trade exchanges, social, cultural and development cooperation.

From the institutional and organizational perspective, the US is being represented on a continuous basis in major consultative meetings with ASEAN: the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Post Ministerial Conferences (PMC). All

these meetings have been traditionally used by the chiefs of US diplomacy to review in a pragmatic manner contemporary political, security, economic and development cooperation issues within the well-established dialogue relations with the ASEAN Foreign Ministers.

In addition, a great number of periodic dialogue meetings with the participation of senior officials from the two sides facilitate a more detailed and systematic review of political and security, economic, functional and development cooperation activities.

To give substance to it, ASEAN and the US signed the ASEAN-US Joint Declaration on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism on 1 August 2002 and later adopted a Work Plan to implement it.

A further evidence of the political will of both sides to strengthen ASEAN-US relations is offered by the Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership of November 17, 2005. Its provisions were made more specific in a Plan of Action to implement the Joint Vision Statement, signed on July 27, 2006 by the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN and the US Secretary of State.

From the legal point of view, the most significant and promising event took place during the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference + US in Phuket, Thailand, on July 22, 2009, when the US signed the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-east Asia (TAC)(6). More substantive references will be made to this legal instrument in these pages, as the US signature is a clear legal proof of its political and security commitment to the ASEAN area and this very fact is expected to contribute by



its strong and far-reaching impact to regional peace and security.

In 2009, after the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, the US appointed its first Ambassador to ASEAN.⁷

In the political sphere of US-ASEAN relations, President George W. Bush was supposed to be the first American president to attend a summit meeting with the ASEAN leaders in May 2007, but this meeting was canceled. Consequently, the honor of being the first US president to participate in a summit meeting with ASEAN fell to Barack Obama. The event took place in Singapore on November 15, 2009 and it was largely interpreted as a qualitatively new development in a succession of diplomatic efforts meant to infuse more substance and predictability to the US-ASEAN relationships.

As the Joint Statement issued by the US and ASEAN on June 28, 2005, shows, the key strategic issues shaping ASEAN-US relations include: ongoing commitment to the reconstruction of tsunami-devastated areas; significant and growing trade relationships; co-operation in fighting terrorism; ensuring the security of critical waterways; a shared commitment to halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction-related technology; and joint efforts to prevent the spread of diseases like avian influenza, and so on.

While geopolitics is not a concept frequently associated with ASEAN, the close engagement between ASEAN and the US as defined in relevant documents remains a key foundation for promoting regional peace, security and prosperity. The ASEAN Regional Forum mentioned above is the primary and for the time being the only

forum for enhancing political and security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN is proclaimed and is expected to continue to be in the “driver’s seat” in that structure and its position has to be further recognized and respected for strong strategic reasons.

The common expectations of the parties for their future relations as derived from their similarity of views on many issues were re-affirmed and updated in the already mentioned Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership, released in November 2005. This partnership was optimistically described in the document itself as being comprehensive, action-oriented and forward-looking, and comprises political and security cooperation, economic, social and development collaboration.⁸

Having in mind the volatile security situation in Asia, some examples of the specific components of this partnership are significant for their highly visible topicality in 2013: recognition of the importance of non-proliferation in all aspects of nuclear weapons in South-East Asia; cooperation on disaster management; enhancing ASEAN’s regional energy infrastructure; and deepening cooperation in science, technology, information, communications technology and education.

Listing the major components of the US-ASEAN cooperation is not enough. Challenges are not static. Therefore, the ASEAN foreign ministers and the US Secretary of State developed a Plan of Action to implement the Enhanced Partnership, as, in their view, it must attentively and continuously be adapted to changing dynamics and realities of the current world.



During diplomatic conversations, ASEAN's representatives expressed the wish that the US become an important strategic economic and development partner as much as it was already perceived as an important diplomatic partner. In this context, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice re-affirmed in 2006 that the US was eager to work with ASEAN through this new Enhanced Partnership.

On the economic front, the US is working to conclude Free Trade Agreements with countries from Southeast Asia. These are important future-oriented steps towards the consolidation of the legal foundations for a free trade community leading to more knowledge-based and technology-intensive economies.⁹

On the diplomatic front, even before 2009, the US took additional measures and initiatives to enhance ties with ASEAN countries, acting in conformity with their objectives of transformational diplomacy, as promoted by various diplomatic modalities at regular, public and summit levels. Thus, the US demonstrated by its own plans and practical steps that it was preparing to work with its partners in Southeast Asia to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that would respond to the needs of their people and would conduct themselves responsibly in international affairs.

In order to avoid possible misinterpretations, it has been emphasized over the years at the highest professional and political levels that transformational diplomacy was rooted in partnership, not in paternalism. With this clear and pragmatic understanding of this original diplomatic concept, America's diplomatic power is

expected to be used to help foreign citizens build better lives, build nations and transform futures.¹⁰

However, beyond indisputable positive results in promoting bilateral cooperation, there are clearly expressed perceptions in Southeast Asia that this area has been to some extent neglected by the US. Yet, this element of perceived indifference in the American attitude which was being criticized by analysts was in fact less a result of deliberate policy, rather being due first of all to some special but temporary circumstances. Indeed, before 2009 the US Administration had some other priorities and felt obliged to focus mostly on pressing problems in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas of the world.

On the other hand, there is no shortage of criticism about ASEAN and its diplomatic conduct both at regional and global levels. In the light of many negative or skeptical views about it, irrespective of their true motivation, this institution is being described in some American circles as just a regional "talking shop".¹¹

If based on obvious evidence, constructive, even sharp criticism proves to be useful in many instances, including the ASEAN's case. While scrutinized on the basis of some ideal institutional standards, there is no doubt that ASEAN is not in its best shape, but at the same time some more positive and optimistic assessments about the largest regional organization in South-East Asia should not be ignored. In this spirit, having in mind the central theme of this article, a few authoritative American and ASEAN pronouncements deserve to be evoked.

In this regard, in 2008, in a special mes-



sage addressed to the ASEAN Regional Forum Senator Barack Obama emphasized the fact that ASEAN's impact extends beyond South-East Asia and provides the model for, and in some cases the core of, many transnational institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN has led efforts to construct new vehicles for regional cooperation and confidence-building among nations with histories of tension and mistrust.¹²

In a similar spirit, carefully negotiated documents adopted by ASEAN leaders, such as the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015), and the ASEAN Political-Security and Socio-Cultural Communities Blueprints, as well as more recent documents to be analyzed in these pages can contribute by their rich and quite inspirational substance to eliminating the image of ASEAN as being just a "talking shop".

The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during her first visit to the ASEAN Headquarters in Jakarta in February 2009, which represented a historic premiere in the US-ASEAN relations, stated: "(...) we have listened to our friends in ASEAN. They have expressed their concern that the United States has not been fully engaged in the region at a time when we should be expanding our partnerships to address the wide range of challenges confronting us, from regional and global security, to the economic crisis, to climate change and human rights (...) we believe that the United States must have strong relationships and a strong and productive presence here in Southeast Asia (...) an American-ASEAN partnership is an important part

of our new approach to development and diplomacy, what we call "smart power".¹³

Significant events in 2009-2012 demonstrated that this new approach formulated in programmatic terms by the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the first chief of American diplomacy who visited all ten ASEAN countries, has been gradually reflected and embodied in comprehensive documents the implementation of which has proved to be fruitful both for the US and for ASEAN.

II. NEW CONTENT

In the Chairman's Statement of the 15th ASEAN Summit entitled "Enhancing Connectivity, Empowering Peoples", Cha-am Hua Hin, 23-25 October 2009, in the section dedicated to ASEAN's External Relations it was specifically mentioned that the Leaders of this regional organization "warmly welcomed the decision by the United States and ASEAN to convene the ASEAN-US Summit in Singapore on 15 November 2009 which would mark a historic point in ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations. The Summit is a reflection of the strong commitment of the US Administration to deepen and expand its engagement with ASEAN. We looked forward to the United States working closely with ASEAN to develop our regional connectivity and to playing a pivotal role in contributing to the regional architecture in the Asia Pacific".¹⁴ The expression "pivotal role" will be frequently used in many future analyses related to the US-ASEAN relations, as the US intends to pursue its "strategic pivot" to Asia.



As realistically mentioned by Robert Fitts, President Barack Obama's 10-day, four-nation tour of Asia in November 2009, achieved no headline agreements or political breakthroughs. But by its very objectives it should go far to dispel any doubts about the seriousness of the US commitment to the region.¹⁵

In international politics doubts are, as a rule, persistent and solid evidence is needed to dispel them. After years of hesitations, the US signed, as noted above, the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia on July 22, 2009. Shortly before signing the treaty at the 42nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Phuket, Thailand, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that "the United States is back in Southeast Asia", and that the signing of the TAC "seals our commitment to work in partnership with the nations of ASEAN to advance the interest and values we share".¹⁶

Signing the TAC was not a simple formal act. It had a great legal and political significance to be further tested in the years to come. The US demonstrated in a most visible way that it changed its previous approach toward the region and reflected by that gesture a greater understanding of the area covered by TAC. Reaching such an understanding is an imperative pre-requisite for developing a visionary strategy.

It should be recalled that the preliminary objections and hesitations expressed in the political circles about the TAC were largely caused by the apprehension that the treaty would limit the US freedom of action. Yet, by finally signing it, the US acknowledged that the TAC would not limit the US freedom of action. In fact, the signing of the TAC symbolized the US willing-

ness to re-engage Southeast Asia, and play a much more dynamic role in the area. At the same time, it contained a strong signal addressed to all parties concerned that the US cannot be "ignored" in the regional processes and in the future institutional structures of South-East Asia.

Moreover, signing the TAC has opened the procedural possibility for the US to take part in the East Asia Summit (EAS). However, the very functioning of the EAS itself still needs many prior clarifications. These clarifications are more necessary than ever during the current period characterized by an important strategic transformation in East Asia, as a result of the rise of China and the emergence of India, as major powers.

This strategic transformation should not be treated as a simple geopolitical event, as it has a direct, strong and far-reaching impact on the emerging new institutional architecture in the Asia-Pacific as a whole. From this perspective, it is quite natural to interpret the return of the US to the region as being meant to prevent and discourage any future attempts of domination by other powers in the area.

The commitment by the US to become more closely involved in Asian regional affairs appears well justified from the American side, but at the same time it also generates a new and serious challenge for ASEAN which has not been sufficiently debated by the members of this regional organization. As pointed out above, and Secretary Hillary Clinton made it clear, the US also wants "to advance the interest and values we share".¹⁷ However, while interests and values are considered to be permanent, the concept of transformational



diplomacy was not specifically reiterated in this context as an instrument for the further promotion of these interests and values.

At the first US-ASEAN Summit on November 15, 2009 President Obama stated the US intention to re-engage with ASEAN and other regional bodies. This was just a preliminary but a significant diplomatic act to be re-enforced by the second ASEAN – US Summit which took place in 2010.

In anticipation of the second Summit, as clearly emphasized by ASEAN Secretariat on 15 November 2009, the day of the historic first ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting, this event highlighted ASEAN's growing capacity and role in global issues and the importance of continuing dialogue at the highest level between the two sides.¹⁸

Dr Surin Pitsuwan, the Secretary-General of ASEAN at that time, said that "the successive and proactive re-engagement of ASEAN and the US has brought about a transformation of seismic proportions to ASEAN-US relations".¹⁹ This re-engagement, he said, comes in the wake of a series of initiatives undertaken earlier in 2009, including the visit already mentioned by the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the ASEAN Secretariat in February 2009 and her participation at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 2009 in Phuket, Thailand.

While evoking the involvement of Thailand in this process, it should be recalled that the US – ASEAN Summit in Singapore was co-chaired by Abhisit Vejjajiva, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand at that time, in his capacity as Chairman of ASEAN, and v by Barack

Obama, President of the United States, who in his remarks referred to ASEAN as an "organization of global importance". President Obama was also quoted as saying that, the "US is not just a Dialogue Partner but a member of the ASEAN family due to linkages with families in America".

The Joint Statement of the 1st ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting, dated Singapore, 15 November 2009 is quite comprehensive by its content. It has 28 paragraphs and is suggestively entitled *Enhanced Partnership for Enduring Peace and Prosperity*. Its substance is rich and deserves to be summarized below with full respect for its original terminology.²⁰

As an initial observation, it can be recognized that this document charts a new and promising direction for US participation in Asian multilateral diplomacy. Indeed, the Leaders noted with satisfaction that over the last 32 years of Dialogue relations, ASEAN and the US have developed mutually beneficial cooperation in many areas, reflecting their broad shared interests guided by the Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership of 17 November 2005, the 2006 Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership, and Revised Priorities for Cooperation under the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership 2009.

Implementing into an ambitious partnership is a highly complex process. Therefore, it was decided to establish an ASEAN-US Eminent Persons Group in support of enhanced ASEAN-US cooperation in addressing regional and global issues. The recommendations of this Group will be analyzed below in section IV of the present article.



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Reflecting a well recognized necessity, the Leaders agreed on the need for a broader and deeper ASEAN-US cooperation to promote educational exchanges, including in science and technology and in people-to-people interactions. They pledged to increase opportunities for English language learning and those studying overseas in the US and ASEAN. They also agreed to explore future areas of cooperation such as people/labor mobility, inter-faith dialogue and development cooperation.

The US President re-affirmed in clear terms the US policy of enhancing engagement with ASEAN which is regarded as a key partner in the promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. The Leaders of ASEAN welcomed the US accession to the TAC in Southeast Asia, the naming of an Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs, the intent to open a US Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta, and its ASEAN Development Vision to Advance National Cooperation and Economic Integration program.

It is useful and instructive to remind in this context that the Leaders shared a vision of a regional architecture meant to be inclusive, to promote shared values and norms, and to respect the diversity within the region. They agreed to work closely together in building this regional architecture, and were ready to study initiatives of this nature. They re-affirmed the importance of ASEAN centrality in this process, an aspect of great practical relevance for the relations of this regional institution with its external partners.

The US President expressed US support for the establishment in 2009 of the

ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, which demonstrated the commitment of the ASEAN Member States in the promotion and protection of human rights. The US also supported the Human Rights Resource Centre for ASEAN, a track 2 initiative, with a university in Jakarta as the hub of the Centre and including a network of universities throughout ASEAN.

In a separate paragraph of the document under consideration in this section of the present article the US welcomed the ASEAN Leaders Statement on ASEAN Connectivity adopted at the 15th ASEAN Summit in Hua Hin, Thailand, already mentioned above.

The Leaders of ASEAN welcomed the continued active support of the US in other regional fora, such as the ARF, which is a unique and critically important regional political and security forum.

On economic issues, drawing on valuable lessons from the crises of 1997 and 2008, the Leaders resolved to contribute to reforming the global economic and financial architecture to safeguard the global economy from future crises, and to promote regional and global economic growth and recovery. This reform is also on the agenda of the United Nations where further debates are expected to take place in 2013.

The US re-confirmed its support for ASEAN's continuing role in multilateral efforts where ASEAN has a growing ability to make contributions. The US President also supported regional efforts initiated by ASEAN and ASEAN-led fora to address the impact of the global financial and economic crisis in the region and



looked forward to continued close coordination between such regional efforts and the global efforts undertaken by the G-20. On political and security issues, the Leaders resolved to deepen cooperation against international terrorism under the framework of the ASEAN-US Joint Declaration for Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism.

They also agreed to strengthen efforts to prevent and combat other transnational crimes, such as illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, money laundering, arms smuggling, sea piracy, international economic crime and cyber crime, in accordance with national laws and regulations.

Dealing with other significant political issues, in the Joint Statement the two sides re-affirmed their commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Leaders of ASEAN also welcomed the efforts of the US President in promoting international peace and security, including the vision of a nuclear weapons free world through efforts such as the agreement between the US and Russia to reduce their respective nuclear arsenals through the START Follow-on Treaty negotiations.

An important assessment in the Joint Statement referred to the South-East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty which would contribute towards global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and peace and security in the region. Consequently, the Leaders encouraged nuclear weapon states and states parties to the SEANWFZ to conduct consultations, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Treaty, to resolve comprehensively outstanding issues with the view to ensuring the early acces-

sion of the nuclear weapon states including the US to the Protocol of the Treaty.

An appeal of increasing political resonance in 2013 was launched to North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks process and to fully implement its commitments made in the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards.

On other global issues the leaders recognized the critical importance of adapting to the increasingly severe effects of climate change in the region and agreed to strengthen collaboration in both research on climate impacts and development and implementation of appropriate policies and measures.

Another agreement was also reached to strengthen cooperation on food security and on disaster management. The Leaders of ASEAN expressed their appreciation for the contribution of the US to disaster relief efforts in the region.

The conclusion of the Joint Statement contained a short but optimistic message. In order to sustain the momentum of the ASEAN-US dialogue partnership after the Inaugural Leaders' Meeting, the participants stressed the importance of continuing dialogue at the highest level between the two sides.

Philippines was the Country Coordinator for ASEAN-US Dialogue Relations from July 2009 to July 2012 and contributed to the drafting of the next five-year Plan of Action.

President Obama in his Remarks on November 15, 2009 after the ASEAN –



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US Summit, said: “the United States is committed to strengthening its engagement in Southeast Asia both with our individual allies and partners, and with ASEAN as an institution”.²¹ This commitment, in particular the reference to ASEAN as “an institution” is essential for the future relations between the USA and this prestigious regional organization which will cross a further institutional development in the years to come.

Immediately after the ASEAN – US Summit, on November 19, 2009, Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore and author of “The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East”, wrote: “The time has come for American strategic thinkers to stop functioning on autopilot, retaining policy prescriptions and practices from the past”.²² In other words, the US is expected to build a much stronger partnership with ASEAN, and to demonstrate that it will invest in the future without being captive of its past.

III. A STRATEGIC APPROACH

On November 20, 2012, the White House released the Joint Statement of the 4th ASEAN-US Leaders’ Meeting, adopted in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on November 19, 2012. This 40 paragraphs document covering an impressive range of issues is highly significant and symbolic, as it is related to the commemoration of the 35th Anniversary of ASEAN-US relations. Being the most recent relevant document on the topic of the present article, a detailed

summary of the most important of its provisions, using its original terminology, is fully justified.

The first decision announced in this document was to accelerate the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-US Enhanced Partnership for Enduring Peace and Prosperity 2011-2015 adopted at the 3rd ASEAN-US Leaders’ Meeting on 18 November 2011 in Bali.

While there is no consensual definition of partnership as concept, paragraph 4 of the document contains an important and clear reference to the efforts to elevate the ASEAN-US partnership to a strategic level and the commitment that the annual meeting between the Leaders of ASEAN and the US should be institutionalized from an ASEAN-US Leaders’ Meeting to an ASEAN-US Summit.

A special paragraph deals with the 2011 Declaration of the East Asia Summit (EAS) on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations, which reaffirms and elaborates the broad vision, principles, objectives and modalities of the EAS. The priority areas of cooperation under the EAS framework include energy, education, environment and disaster management and response. Other strategic issues of common interest and concern are also mentioned, such as non-proliferation and disarmament, maritime security cooperation, food and energy security, and ASEAN Connectivity.

From the political point of view it is necessary to remind that the Statement contains a reaffirmation of the importance of ASEAN as the driving force of the EAS, working in close partnership with the other participants. This may prevent potential misinterpretations of the role of ASEAN



in the EAS.

The ASEAN-US Leaders appreciated the substantial increase in high-level US engagement in ASEAN-led political-security fora, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, the EAS, and the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum. They encouraged efforts to strengthen coordination among these fora, which is stimulating for the diplomatic dialogue on a large number of issues of common interest.

Paragraph 8 of the document is dedicated to the importance of the US and emerging role of ASEAN as a US\$2.2 trillion engine of global economic growth. Ever closer economic ties are described as being of crucial importance to both ASEAN and the US, as well as to the world economy. A commitment was formulated to redouble efforts to increase both two way trade and investment.

According to US data, total goods trade between ASEAN and the US in 2011 showed a 9.2% increase to \$194 billion. US foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in ASEAN countries was US\$ 159.6 billion, up 11.2% from 2010. ASEAN FDI stock in the United States demonstrated even stronger growth, increasing 13.1% to US\$ 24.6 billion.

The ASEAN-US Leaders re-affirmed their commitment to deepen trade and investment ties and welcomed the launch of the 2013 ASEAN-US Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement Work Plan, as well as the launch of the US – ASEAN Expanded Economic Engagement initiative, which will promote closer economic cooperation between ASEAN and the US, and facilitate the pursuit of high standard

trade agreements. They announced the holding of annual US-ASEAN Business Summits.

The ASEAN-US Leaders noted the official launch of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiations as part of ASEAN's efforts towards deepening regional economic integration, as well as the development of the Trans-Pacific Partnership as a high-standard agreement, which will boost trade and investment and promote regional economic integration throughout the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

An important provision of the Statement (paragraph 14) refers to the commitment to resist protectionism and to achieve strong, sustainable, and balanced growth. The ASEAN-US Leaders stressed that global financial turmoil and elevated commodity prices underscored the urgency for continued attention through policy coordination.

The ASEAN-US Leaders paid special attention to the high human and economic cost of natural and man-made disasters in the region and recognized ASEAN's cooperative disaster management and response efforts which promote a sense of ASEAN Community and relevance among its populations. They highlighted consistent ASEAN-US cooperation on disaster management and response in support of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response and its mechanism.

On political and legal issues the ASEAN-US Leaders re-affirmed their shared interests on the importance of regional peace and stability, which are fundamental to growing prosperity in the re-



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gion. They underscored the importance of maritime security, freedom of navigation and over flight, unimpeded lawful commerce, respect for international law, continued constructive dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the universally recognized principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The ASEAN-US Leaders recognized the importance of the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and welcomed its implementation. They looked forward to the early conclusion of a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. At the same time, they expressed support for ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on ASEAN's "Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea", adopted on 20 July 2012, and its effective implementation.

Anticipating, in a sense, future events in 2013, the ASEAN-US Leaders re-affirmed the critical importance to regional and global security of the complete verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. They called on the DPRK to comply fully with its commitments under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six Party Talks and its obligations under the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and return, at an early date, to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards.

Interesting provisions of the Statement were dedicated to the cooperation against international terrorism, to the efforts of ASEAN and the ARF in addressing cyber security matters, as well as to the efforts

to prevent and combat transnational crimes, such as illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, people smuggling, money laundering, arms smuggling, sea piracy, armed robbery against ships, cybercrime and other forms of international economic crime in accordance with national laws and regulations.

The US welcomed ASEAN's goals to realize an ASEAN Community based upon adherence to rule of law, democracy, and the promotion and protection of human rights, and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter.

In the same context, the ASEAN-US Leaders welcomed positive steps being taken in Myanmar that could facilitate national reconciliation, and encouraged further progress towards a democratic and open political and economic system. They expressed their hope that the US and Myanmar would continue to deepen their engagement, including through taking advantage of Myanmar's role as Country Coordinator for the ASEAN-US dialogue relations until July 2015.

Elaborating on some past experience on the matter, the ASEAN-US Leaders welcomed the US announcement of the Innovation in Science through Partners and Regional Engagement initiative, which will foster cooperation between US and ASEAN scientists in such areas as pandemic flu monitoring and prevention, development of low-cost vaccines, drug treatment monitoring, health innovation, and disease research.

It is appropriate to recall that the ASEAN-US Leaders discussed the pivotal role of education in ASEAN in promoting human resources development, bridging



the development gap, enhancing regional competitiveness, promoting sustained economic development, and facilitating friendship and mutual understanding among people in the region. They looked forward to continued US support for the ASEAN University Network (AUN), including through implementation of an ASEAN Studies course, which was launched in ASEAN universities in 2012.

In the diplomatic sphere, the ASEAN-US Leaders acknowledged the consistent and productive engagement among the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN, the US Mission to ASEAN and the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, and expressed their commitment to work together to boost the capacity of ASEAN to address regional challenges. ASEAN appreciated the US Mission to ASEAN's efforts in promoting frequent meetings and exchanges of views with visiting US officials, which have enhanced common understanding of ASEAN and US policies, and facilitated development and implementation of new programs.

The next ASEAN-US Summit will take place in Brunei Darussalam in 2013.

IV. PERSPECTIVES

The elaboration of appropriately targeted and calibrated common objectives and strategies is a highly complex task. The ASEAN-US Eminent Persons Group (EPG) has been tasked by the Leaders of ASEAN and the US to take stock of ASEAN-US dialogue relations over the past 35 years and explore ways to deepen and widen existing cooperation between

ASEAN and the US, as well as to recommend measures for elevating the ASEAN-US relationship to a strategic partnership. These recommendations were submitted to the 4th ASEAN-U.S. Leaders' Meeting on 19th November 2012 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and many of them are reflected in the Joint Statement already analyzed in the IIIrd section of the present article.

The major aim of the recommendations was to elevate ASEAN-US relations from an enhanced to a strategic partnership to be formed by 2015. The majority of the EPG's recommendations have been included in the Statement of November 19, 2012, analyzed above.

The ASEAN-US EPG envisioned a mutually supportive ASEAN-US relationship focusing on areas of mutual interest and on strengthening ASEAN. In advancing ASEAN-US relations, ASEAN centrality and its role as the driving force in the region should be key guiding principles in achieving regional peace, security, prosperity, and stability.

To enhance ties, deepen economic and cultural cooperation, and elevate the existing relationship, the EPG recommended a cardinal initiative that the Leaders of ASEAN and the US announce their intention to form a strategic partnership by 2015.

Some additional recommendations formulated by the EPG are still on the waiting list to be implemented. Five of them which seem to be the most significant are presented below.

The first recommendation is to commission a study in coordination between US-based and ASEAN-based research institutions with a view to defining a vision



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for the ASEAN-US relationship by the year 2020. The study should focus in particular on political and security relations, and include a detailed implementation strategy. The study should be completed and delivered by September 30, 2013 if possible so that Leaders can consider the findings and recommendations ahead of the 1st ASEAN-US Summit.

The second recommendation is to encourage leading think tanks in ASEAN and the US to stimulate thought leadership for the relationship by inviting them to provide an annual report for consideration by the ASEAN-US Summit.

The third recommendation is related to the support of the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and recognition of the threat of proliferation to regional and global security. In this respect, Leaders remain committed to the South East Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty and should identify concrete steps to promote technical cooperation with a view to preserving South East Asia as a Zone free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction, enhancing relevant safeguard mechanisms in the region and promoting national implementation of the relevant IAEA instruments.

In accordance with the fourth recommendation, Leaders should re-affirm their commitment to strengthen the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, particularly its capacity to better assist and facilitate ASEAN-US cooperation and more effectively coordinate within ASEAN as well as between ASEAN and its external partners.

A fifth recommendation refers to the economic sector and asks the Leaders to

set a goal to double ASEAN-US trade within five years and increase investment in one another's economies by three times.

Several final recommendations refer to education. It is suggested to double the number of ASEAN and US students studying in one another's countries by 2015, as well as increase exchanges of researchers and lecturers. Moreover, in practical terms, ASEAN and the US should announce a training initiative designed to train over 10,000 officials and high-potential leaders from different sectors in less-developed ASEAN countries within the next two years with a view to narrowing the disparities between ASEAN countries.

In keeping with this pragmatic approach, it has also been recommended to create an ASEAN-US Center in Washington D.C. to be a nexus for ASEAN-US tourism, investment, cultural cooperation and education, enhancing exposure, familiarity and engagement with ASEAN and US cultures.

How do academics envisage the future of US-ASEAN relations?

To answer that question we will quote first of all from an analysis made by Amitav Acharya. The writer is professor of International Relations at American University in Washington, DC. We refer to an article adapted from his speech to the inaugural ASEAN Secretariat Policy Forum, held on July 14, 2009 in Jakarta, where ASEAN Secretary General, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan also launched the 2nd edition of the book: *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*.

In accordance with Amitav Acharya's assessment, to remain relevant, ASEAN is



expected to keep its promises by implementing the Blueprint for an ASEAN Community and the ASEAN Charter. These documents contain many important ideas which should be implemented. In this context, ASEAN should improve compliance by all its members of the new provisions, rules and mechanisms.²³

However, this is not enough. ASEAN must make additional efforts to be able to deal with new challenges in an era of rapid and unexpected developments. It must also maintain the solidarity of all its members in dealing with the great powers.

In 2009, under a doctrine of engaging both friends and foes, a new US policy was announced that provided for diplomatic engagement with Myanmar's military regime. This policy offered an alternative to the strict sanctions-led policies of the Bill Clinton and Bush presidencies and removed a recurring impediment to US-ASEAN ties caused by ASEAN's insistence of non-interference in the internal affairs of member states and US animosity towards the rights-abusing military regime.²⁴

Some analysts believe that a renewed US interest in the region will be welcomed by most ASEAN members as a useful counterbalance to China's surging influence. The final conclusion is prudent: How the US calibrates its new engagement, and how China reacts, will go some way in determining the region's future stability and prosperity.²⁵

Beyond mutual understanding, mutual interests have a greater practical importance. A new partnership based on mutual interests demands a new vision about Southeast Asia. The ASEAN area is becoming a real force in global affairs and

needs to be dealt with on its own terms. This is not easy because the prevailing tendency is still to see global affairs only through an Atlantic lens. Such a limited vision risks distorting Washington's understanding of significant events in the area. In addition, an incorrect reading of the forces at work in the region could be detrimental to the very pragmatic objective of harnessing Asia's dynamism and energy in promoting both US and ASEAN interests. Defining a long-term workable and comprehensive strategy requires more energetic diplomatic efforts from all parties for deepening and broadening bilateral and multilateral cooperation in Southeast Asia. Valuable lessons can be learned from ASEAN's diplomatic experience according to which reforms, institutional arrangements and decision-making processes should move forward at a pace comfortable to all participants.

Precipitation may prove to be the enemy of progress. The old geopolitics of "win-lose" should be replaced by the unambiguous politics of "win-win" for all. In order to succeed, this demands a diplomacy characterized by flexibility, imaginative work, a greater sense of predictability and reliability.

What is the future of ASEAN in the post-American world? The question is a complex one as the future world order itself is variously described as "multi-polar", "non-polar", "post-American", "a-polar", and there is no general agreement on how it will evolve.²⁶

At the regional level, the challenges to ASEAN are numerous, including some bilateral disputes and internal instability in several ASEAN member states. Imagina-



tive diplomatic efforts are necessary to identify workable solutions acceptable to all parties. Such efforts, involving substance and style, should be inspired and guided by the provisions of the ASEAN Charter.

V. A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT

Without making specific and direct references to ASEAN, some American publications assert that the current American diplomacy regarding Asia fails to impress critics at home. While recognizing that President Barack Obama may have planted the flag of US diplomacy back in East Asia, some diplomatic analysts do not fail to remind unpopular military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this regard, it is noted that constraints imposed by cautious Asian customs and diplomacy made the success of the US policy in Asia even more difficult and the US Administration is being criticized for practicing a “diplomacy of deference”.²⁷

From the Asian side, in accordance with an analysis by Riza Sukma, who is the executive director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, it is an obvious fact that not all ASEAN countries share US values, especially democracy, human rights and freedom. In this author’s opinion, the inclusion of these issues in the US foreign policy agenda in South East Asia might generate complaints from individual ASEAN members. However, it is wrong to assume that the US agenda in promoting democracy and human rights in the region would create new division with ASEAN, as this regional institution has already been divided on such

issues in previous years. Therefore, it is estimated that the region would be better off if it was allowed to resolve this division without excessive outside interference. In this regard, the US is expected to adopt a measured policy in its support to democracy-building agenda in the area, and needs to work closely with democratic ASEAN states to strengthen democracy in these states.²⁸

Another essential question to be answered in this context is: *Can ASEAN survive in the post-American world?* In an article with the title contained in this question by Ary Hermawan it is cogently recalled that the world is not as it was a decade ago: before 9/11, before the Iraq War, and, most fundamentally, before the strategic influence of the US – once the sole global superpower – faded and “the rest” began to rise. ASEAN was then struggling amid the Asian financial crisis. Incredibly, it survived, but a question persists: is it ready to face the challenges posed by today’s new world order?²⁹ Persuasive answers are expected to come from ASEAN itself.

Amitav Acharya, quoted above, asserted that ASEAN is facing new global challenges, but has yet to resolve old regional challenges, which have long undermined its development. “At the global level, we all know about the rise of China. It’s a challenge because it changes the picture, the international distribution of power and influence”, he said at the inaugural ASEAN Secretariat Policy Forum.³⁰

Another important question is: what will ASEAN do if rivalry between India and China escalates? “The best option for ASEAN is not to take sides in the compe-



tition, and not to approach either power unilaterally; it has to approach India and China as a group, rather than half of ASEAN siding with China, half of ASEAN siding with India. That would be devastating for ASEAN”, Amitav Acharya said.³¹

In Jusuf Wanandi’s opinion, the most effective way to maintain peace, stability and economic dynamism is to establish a regional institution that could accommodate the three big powers -- China, India and Japan -- in a kind of concert of power that will be able to maintain future equilibrium in the region, together with the US.³²

The ASEAN Regional Forum is recommended by scholars to be maintained for human security (or non-traditional security) cooperation, but to be credible it must include defense ministers, have a non-ASEAN co-chair and a secretariat and become an action-oriented institution (not only a talk shop for confidence-building measures).³³

On the other hand, a future concert of powers for East Asia is recommended which Jusuf Wanandi suggestively calls the G8 for East Asia. In his view while the EAS will be composed only of East Asian countries, the G8 for the region would include two important strategic countries : the US and Russia.³⁴ This aspiration received initial tangibility in 2011 by the admission of these two states to the EAS.

From a regional perspective there is an obvious need for a realistic assessment of the ASEAN’s past, present and future performance. It is a topic cogently developed in the article entitled *ASEAN: from defiance to accommodation* by Kavi Chongkittavorn. The references from this article to ASEAN – US relations are fully

appropriate.³⁵

Watching US-ASEAN leaders talking about cooperation and coexistence at regional and global levels, one could be optimistic that the grouping has taken a new mode – a willingness for closer cooperation with dialogue partners to resolve common challenges, asserts Kavi Chongkittavorn.³⁶

In his view, in the near future, ASEAN leaders must show it is worthwhile for the dialogue partners to increase their engagements with their headquarters through their permanent diplomatic missions. The US and China have already decided to open such ambassadors-led missions in Jakarta by early 2010. Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, New Zealand and the EU followed the American example by accrediting their ambassadors to ASEAN.³⁷

VI. CONCLUSION

In the absence of an effective architecture for global governance, the major achievements in ASEAN-US relationships should not be over-estimated. Still, what was already accomplished is highly significant. The current US President made crystal clear that his nation understood its stake in the world’s most dynamic region and that the US will be at the negotiation table for the many different dialogues that will shape its future. ASEAN nations have important stakes in issues to be negotiated in the years to come.

President Obama’s visits to Asia in 2009 and 2012 demonstrated that the US fully accepts that Asia has risen to equal status with Europe as a centre of growth,



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vigor and world culture. This development was well anticipated.

Before the first US – ASEAN Summit, the US Ambassador to Thailand, Eric G. John, in his article *Committed as ever to friendship* pointed out that the US has two overriding objectives in ASEAN. First, it wants the nations of Southeast Asia to remain strong and independent, to enjoy peace, stability, growing prosperity and greater freedom, and to succeed in their efforts to integrate. If the countries of Southeast Asia are doing well-making progress along these lines – then all parties are in great shape. Most of US assistance is focused on helping these countries – and ASEAN as a whole – achieve success, broadly defined.

Second, in the opinion of Eric G. John, the US looks to the ASEAN region to address bilateral, regional and global issues ranging from promoting commerce to addressing climate change to combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The US wants the ASEAN region to be a good partner and that requires developing a good partnership with ASEAN.³⁸

From a non-governmental perspective, in his article *Asia's Regionalism Block*, Michael Auslin, from Asian Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, affirms: “(...) any future regionalism realistically needs the US to be a willing and central participant. Because any talk of security cooperation without America is wildly premature, the region's nations must take care not to forget that the US system of alliances undergirds stability in Asia and is central to lubricating political engagement among countries large and small”.³⁹ But how about ASEAN's centrality in this con-

text?

From the US perspective, the answer must be clear, as the ASEAN region is vital to the future of not only the US and each ASEAN country, but to the world's common interests. The administration of President Obama is committed to strengthening these relationships and maintaining a productive presence in this part of the world.

This pronouncement is in harmony with previous assessments on the matter. In a 2007 commemorative publication, the final paragraph of the text reads as follows: “For the United States, ASEAN is a highly respected institution, a force for positive change in Southeast Asia, and a wellspring of inspired and independent growth. With ASEAN Member Countries we look forward to many more years of fruitful partnership as ASEAN achieves its goals for economic, political, and social development”.⁴⁰

As for the immediate future some recent concerns have to be properly addressed. An American analyst asserts that “in Asia, many of the continent's other powers had begun worrying about a newly assertive China. From Japan to Vietnam to Singapore, governments in Asia signaled that they would welcome a greater American presence in the region, one that would assure them that Asia was not going to become China's backyard”.⁴¹ However, as cogently reminded by S. Jayakumar, ASEAN is not prepared to allow external players to bully ASEAN, because it would affect ASEAN's credibility and its position of being in the “driver's seat”.⁴²

In the light of all these significant statements, the final conclusion can be a mod-



erately optimistic one. The US has special and ever-stronger bonds with ASEAN and there are persuasive reasons to believe that after some contemplative process future diplomatic developments will revalidate this assessment.

Indeed, as reminded by Henry Kissinger, “An international system is relatively stable if the level of reassurance required by its members is achievable by diplomacy”.⁴³ It can be realistically expected that diplomacy will facilitate the emergence of an ASEAN-US strategic partnership capable to contribute to giving tangibility to the aspiration for a peaceful Asian-Pacific Century.⁴⁴

The continuation of a rules-based cooperation and peaceful competition structured on the basis of strong legal foundations can lead to a results-oriented consensus reflecting common aspirations. The US and ASEAN share similar concerns and responsibilities and are able to work together towards a robust strategic partnership inspired by the diversity of national experiences and values, and stimulated by daunting challenges.

Endnotes

¹Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, *Foreword* to Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2000, p. IX.

²The information and data from the present article are mostly taken from the sources available on the ASEAN site at <http://www.aseansec.org> visited in February-March 2013.

³Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, former foreign minister of Thailand, provided relevant data used in the present study in an overview of ASEAN diplomacy at a conference jointly orga-

nized by Chile Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chile Pacific Foundation. See *The Nation* dated November 13, 2009. (online version). One of the most recent articles on the US-ASEAN relations is Prashanth Parameswaran, *Advancing US-ASEAN Relations under the Second Obama Administration*, available in electronic version at http://www.fletcherforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Parameswaran_37-1.pdf visited on February 15, 2013.

⁴The full text of the ASEAN Charter is available at <http://www.aseansec.org>. For a very preliminary analysis of this important legal instrument see Tony Hotland, ASEAN Charter ushers in historic new era for region, *The Jakarta Post*, December 16, 2008. For a lucid assessment of this legal instrument see Tommy Koh, Asean Charter at one: A thriving tiger pup, *The Straits Times*, December 9, 2009. See also Roby Arya Brata, Reviewing the ASEAN Charter, *The Jakarta Post*, March 7, 2013.

⁵For a short general overview of the US-ASEAN relations until 2007 see the brochure issued by the ASEAN Secretariat, *United States Engagement with ASEAN, 1977-2007. Thirty Years of Friendship and Cooperation*. Jakarta, 2007, 16 p. On ASEAN's foreign relations see in particular Jurgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, Routledge, London, 2009. For a more general approach to this topic, see David Shambaugh, Michael Yahuda, *International Relations of Asia (Asia in World Politics)*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, 2008, 392 p.

⁶The TAC can be consulted in its full version at <http://www.aseansec.org>.

⁷As stipulated in Article 46 of the ASEAN Charter, non-ASEAN member states and relevant inter-governmental organizations may appoint and accredit ambassadors to ASEAN. As of March 1st 2013 there are 70 ambassadors accredited to ASEAN. See <http://www.asean.org/news/item/ambassadors-to-asean> visited on March 4, 2013.

⁸For the concept of partnership see <http://www.state.gov/s/partnerships/vision/index.htm> visited on February 20, 2013. It is pointed out that a new Era of Partnerships in American foreign policy is characterized by a more comprehensive approach to diplomacy, development, and



defense - the 3Ds of smart power. The Joint Statement of the 4th ASEAN-US Leaders' Meeting, adopted in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on November 19, 2012 is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/11/20/joint-statement-4th-asean-us-leaders-meeting> visited in February and March 2013. The full text of the report of the US-ASEAN Eminent Persons Group analyzed in this article is available at http://csis.org/files/publication/121213_U.S.-ASEAN_EPGFinalReport.pdf.

⁹On FTAs see the relevant information at <http://www.state.gov>. On the US position concerning an ASEAN Economic Community see at: <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2009/11/132079.htm> the remarks made by US Ambassador Scot Marciel, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, on the occasion of the Book Launch: Realizing the ASEAN Economic Community, Singapore, November 14, 2009.

¹⁰See the relevant statements at <http://www.state.gov>.

¹¹See in this regard all eyes on regional 'talking shop' this week, *Bangkok Post*, February 25, 2009, p. 8. Tommy Koh in his article ASEAN Charter at one: A thriving tiger pup, *The Straits Times*, December 9, 2009, reminded that just before the Charter entered into force, a critic of ASEAN described it as a "paper tiger". In academic terms, Ellen L. Frost in her book *Asia's New Regionalism*, NUS Press, New York, 2008 formulates in that regard a prudent conclusion: "Asian governments seek a form of regionalism that both manages and takes advantage of market forces while enhancing their sovereignty and their ability to cope with the challenges of governance". *op.cit.*, p.248.

¹²See the Statement of Senator Barack Obama on the ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting, July 24, 2008, available at www.mizzima.com/.../1247-barrack-obama-and-burma.html visited on February 15, 2013.

¹³The statements of Hillary Clinton are available at <http://www.aseansec.org>.

¹⁴For more information see <http://www.aseansec.org>.

¹⁵See Robert Fitts, Obama trip sets tone, now US will need to follow through, *Bangkok Post*,

November 20, 2009. The author of the article is a former US ambassador, Director of the American Studies Program at Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Security and International Studies in Bangkok.

¹⁶The full statement of Hillary Clinton is available at <http://www.aseansec.org>.

¹⁷See note 16 supra.

¹⁸For detailed information see the ASEAN site at <http://www.aseansec.org>.

¹⁹See note 18 supra.

²⁰The full text of the Statement is available at <http://www.aseansec.org>.

²¹All relevant statements and remarks are available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov>. For a critical assessment see Elliott Abrams, People Not Placards, *The Weekly Standard*, November 27, 2009.

²²Kishore Mahbubani, America's Conflicting Destinies, *The International Herald Tribune*, November 19, 2009.

²³See Amitav Acharya, Reconstructing ASEAN: Challenges for the 21st Century, *The Jakarta Post*, July 18, 2009.

²⁴See Brian McCartan, A new courtship for Southeast Asia, available at <http://www.atimes.com> visited on February 20, 2013.

²⁵See note 24 supra.

²⁶See Amitav Acharya, *art.cit.*, note 23 supra.

²⁷See the *Monday Morning* dated November 30, 2009.

²⁸See Rizal Sukma, Welcoming the US back to Southeast Asia, *The Jakarta Post*, July 27, 2009.

²⁹Ary Hermawan, Can ASEAN survive in the post-American world?, *The Jakarta Post*, July 16, 2009. See also David J. Berteau et al., U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, August 15, 2012, <http://csis.org/publication/pacom-force-posture-review> visited on March 4, 2013.

³⁰See Amitav Acharya, *art.cit.*, note 23 supra.

³¹See Amitav Acharya, *art.cit.*, note 23 supra.

³²See Jusuf Wanandi, The ASEAN Charter and remodeling regional architecture, *The Jakarta Post*, November 3, 2008. The writer is vice chair of the board of trustees, CSIS Foundation, Jakarta.



³³See Jusuf Wanandi, art.cit., note 32 supra.

³⁴ See Jusuf Wanandi, art.cit., note 32 supra.

³⁵See the following articles: Kavi Chongkittavorn, First Asean-US summit: symbol and substance, *The Nation*, November 2, 2009. Kavi Chongkittavorn, US policy on Asia: balanced and pragmatic, *The Nation*, November 16, 2009. Kavi Chongkittavorn, ASEAN: from defiance to accommodation, *The Nation*, November 23, 2009.

³⁶See note 35 supra. In a more recent article Kavi Chongkittavorn cogently reminded that at present China have a total of 43 committees with ASEAN - the largest number - covering the whole gamut of engagement and cooperation, while the US has only 33 to oversee their cooperation with ASEAN. See *China's new leadership faces complex problems*, *The Nation*, March 25, 2013.

³⁷For the number of ambassadors accredited to ASEAN see note 7 supra.

³⁸See Eric G. John, Committed as ever to friendship, *Bangkok Post*, February 27, 2009. The author of the article was US Ambassador to Thailand.

³⁹See Michael Auslin, Asia's Regionalism Block, *The Wall Street Journal*. October 12, 2009.

⁴⁰The quotation is taken from the brochure mentioned in note 5 supra.

⁴¹See Fareed Zakaria, China should be on Kerry's mind, *New Straits Times*, March 2, 2013 (electronic version) See also Matt Schiavenza, How China Will Shape Global Diplomacy, *The Atlantic*, March 11, 2013 (electronic version) In accordance with the most recent assessments, Beijing is searching for a response to the Obama administration's strategic "pivot" toward the Asian-Pacific region, a move many Chinese interpret as an effort to contain the country's rise. China welcomed the US to play a "constructive role" in the Asian-Pacific region, but "at the same time the US side should respect the Chinese side's interests and concerns". See *The Wall Street Journal* dated March 10, 2013 (electronic edition).

⁴²S.Jayakumar, *Diplomacy. A Singapore Experience*, Straits Times Press, Singapore, 2011, p.122.

⁴³Henry Kissinger, *On China*, The Penguin Press, New York, 2011, p. 515.

⁴⁴Some American analysts share this view. For instance David J. Berteau et al assert: "A key

point here is that US strategy is not to prepare for a fight with China. (...) The strategy must therefore be to "win the peace" by building a relationship with China that makes conflict virtually unthinkable and cooperation mutually attractive. This requires instruments of national power beyond military forces alone. Trade, diplomacy and the broader regional acceptance of American values will be critical". For full reference see note 29 supra.

Bangkok, Assumption University of Thailand, March 5, 2013.