

## **The Near Past and Near Future of Indonesian-U.S. Relations**

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Thank you for that kind introduction. And thank you, also, to the University of Illinois for hosting this event. It is a great pleasure to speak at such a fine school.

Before I begin, I would like to ask for a moment of silence to remember the victims of the shooting at Virginia Tech. Few people know this, but an Indonesian Ph.D. student, Partahi Lumbantoruan, was among those shot and killed. I called his father to offer my support. He sounded devastated. Please, let us pause now to remember all 32 victims, and to pray for their wounded families.

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Thank you.

Faculty, staff, and students,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

My subject this afternoon is timely. With President Bush's visit to Indonesia in November, and Secretary's Rice trip in March, Indonesian-U.S. relations have returned to the news. Just two weeks ago, I attended a thoughtful conference on this very subject. We heard from former ambassadors, senior academics, experienced government officials, and interested observers. As usual in Washington, there were some disagreements. But there was one point of unanimous agreement: Since 2004, Indonesian-U.S. relations have improved past all expectations.

Why is this? What has drawn our two countries closer?

At first, this development seems strange. Not many Americans are familiar with Indonesia, and U.S. foreign policy is unpopular in Indonesia. After the United States invaded Iraq, for instance, the percentage of Indonesians holding a favorable view of the U.S. plummeted from 61 percent to 15 percent.

So how can we explain the improvement in Indonesian-U.S. relations?

Well, that is a big question. I have thought much about it myself. I think that any explanation would have to start with four areas: security, trade, democracy, and understanding. Though far from identical, Indonesian and American views of these four areas have had much in common since 2004. And so our cooperation has increased.

But will it last? Looking toward the future, I believe that stronger relations are not only possible, but likely. Shared interests will continue to draw our countries closer, and to grow what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has already called a “tremendous partnership.” Our cultures are different. Our perceptions are different. But, looking ahead, I see a shared future.

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Indonesia is a sprawling country of 230 million people and 17,000 islands. It is the largest country in Southeast Asia and the largest country with a Muslim majority in the world. From Sumatra in the west to Papua in the east, Indonesia stretches some 3,000 miles—about the distance from Los Angeles to New York City. It is a remarkable place with everything from deep, unexplored rainforests to calm, tropical beaches, and the bustle of modern cities.

And, since 1998, it has also been a home to democracy. Frustrated with poverty and corruption, Indonesians took to the streets after the Asian Financial Crisis and demanded reformasi, or reform. The outcry was tremendous and, shortly, democracy took hold. In 2004, we voted President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to power in our country’s first ever direct presidential election.

This rapid change has helped to improve Indonesian-U.S. relations. Since 2004, our nations have cooperated positively in security, trade, democratic consolidation, and understanding.

First, in security, Indonesia is an important partner in the global war on terror. Like America, my country has suffered at the hands of radicals. In 2002 and 2005, terrorists attacked nightclubs in Bali. In 2003, they targeted Jakarta. And, in 2004, a suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives in front of Australia’s Embassy in Indonesia. In total, these attacks stole 243 promising lives.

Together, the United States and Indonesia have made progress on this issue. The U.S. resumed military trade and training programs with Indonesia in 2005. Officials from the FBI, CIA, Department of Defense, and Department of State are in regular contact with their Indonesian counterparts. And, two weeks ago, American and Indonesian officials opened the fifth U.S.-Indonesian Security Dialogue.

Second, there is trade. Without knowing it, business people from both our countries have helped improve bilateral relations. Your morning cup of Java may indeed have come from Java, an island in Indonesia. You may be wearing clothes made in Indonesia, where Gap, Nike, Esprit, H&M, Old Navy and others have operations. And

your last candy bar likely came from Indonesian cocoa—Mars, Inc. is a major investor. All told, bilateral trade between our countries amounted to over \$15 billion last year. And our natural resources and large market continue to attract new American investors.

While trade brings us closer, so do the shared values and ideals of pluralistic democracy. Like America, Indonesia is a diverse place, home to hundreds of ethnic groups and local languages. Under our national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or “Unity in Diversity”—similar to America’s *E Pluribus Unum*—our government remains committed to giving each group a voice. The American poet Walt Whitman once praised the many voices of his country. “I hear America singing,” he wrote, “the varied carols I hear.” His vision of different voices joining in one chorus is beautiful. Thousands of different voices. One country. This is also the dream of Indonesia.

The United States has helped us build such a democracy. Newly restored military training programs and trade is helping our government reduce the political role of the military. We are proud that, in just a few years, we have re-established civilian control, taken the military out of Parliament, and rewritten its doctrine. With continued military-to-military contact, such reform can continue.

The fourth area is the newest—understanding. Jim Leach, a former U.S. Senator from Iowa once said that, “there is no country in the world of such vital importance that is less understood than Indonesia.” Our countries are moving closer together, but our societies still have a long way to go. What does the average Indonesian know about America? What do Americans know about Indonesia?

For most Americans, Indonesia remains a question mark. On the news, my home looks like a country of non-stop flooding, airline crashes, ethnic strife, widespread earthquakes, devastating tsunamis, and radical Islam. But some of you might know Indonesians. Some of you may have visited Bali or Jakarta. You know that these images are far from the truth. This is a problem in understanding.

And for most Indonesians, America is just as unknown. In the newspapers, they see war in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Jakarta, they see the high walls around the U.S. embassy, and hear how difficult it is to get a visa. They see the pictures from Abu Ghraib. But this is also a problem of understanding. I live in Washington. I travel around the country. I know that America is not Abu Ghraib. When your country came to our assistance after the devastating 2004 tsunami, Indonesians began to see the real America, a place of compassion and generosity. We need to continue to improve this understanding. More than official meetings. More than “American Idol” and Brad Pitt, which are both very popular. More than government contact and television. Society-to-society. Travel, work, education. Greater understanding is within our reach.

Since 2004, cooperation in security, trade, democracy and understanding has improved Indonesian-U.S. relations. Today, in 2007, there are three opportunities to expand that cooperation even further.

The first opportunity is change. Asia is on the move. India and China are growing very rapidly. Japan and Australia remain important U.S. allies. India, China, Japan, Australia—at the center of these countries is Indonesia. As Asia changes, more trade, people, and ideas will flow across Indonesia. This coming shift in Asia's architecture is an opportunity for Indonesian-U.S. relations.

Another opportunity is engagement. In both Southeast Asia and the broader Islamic world, Indonesia is becoming more active internationally. Within Southeast Asia, Indonesia is home to both the largest population and the biggest economy. It is also a rapidly reforming democracy. Indonesia demonstrated its renewed engagement in 2003, when it successfully proposed the ASEAN Community, or Bali Concord II, which will help ensure future regional cooperation.

Indonesia is also willing to play a more active role in the Muslim world. With over 200 million adherents, Indonesia has a Muslim population equal to that of the entire Middle East. Just a few weeks ago, Indonesia hosted a dialogue between Sunni and Shiite religious leaders from around the world to find solutions to the religious conflict in Iraq. Further moderate engagement is another opportunity in Indonesian-U.S. relations.

And third, there is energy. The United States is the world's largest energy consumer. Your country's thriving economy requires fuel. Indonesia is a major producer of energy. Recent surveys estimate Indonesia's petroleum reserve to be around 9.7 billion barrels. And, according to a 2004 report, Indonesia is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas. As Indonesia's economy opens up further, energy investment may grow to become a key area of future cooperation.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The recent history of Indonesian-U.S. relations has been remarkable. Ten years ago, my country was under authoritarian rule, suffering from U.S. sanctions. Today, Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy. Far from sanctions, the United States now seeks our partnership. Across matters of security, trade, democracy, and understanding, Indonesia and the United States have grown closer. Looking into the future, I see important opportunities for further cooperation in Asia's changing architecture, Indonesia's international engagement, and my country's energy potential.

I am often asked to speak about international affairs. And, often, I am asked why I feel Indonesian-U.S. relations are so important. To me, the answer is simple. Between Indonesia and the United States is a partnership that breaks the rules. For ours is not a clash of civilizations, but cooperation between civilizations. Our cultures are different. Our perspectives are different. But, looking ahead, I see a shared future. And, from where I stand, that future looks bright indeed.

Thank you.