



**"Creating a Pacific Rim Community of
Academic, Business, and Diplomatic Leaders"**

**Remarks at the exploratory meeting of the
Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU),
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President Sample, chief executive officers of the premier universities of the Pacific Rim.

The distinguished American statesman Dean Acheson selected the words "Present at the Creation" as the title for his memoirs describing his service in the U.S. government in the critical initial period following World War II. As Secretary of State, he participated in forming the vital institutions that helped keep our world from plunging into a third world war during the second half of this century and that helped launch an unprecedented period of global prosperity. Those words also express my satisfaction at having the opportunity to be present at this exploratory meeting, a session that could also have far-reaching positive consequences for the next century.

The concept behind this meeting is a sound one. Technology, despite all its brilliant advances, is not yet a better means of promoting communication and understanding than face to face meetings. I think it was Sir Francis Bacon who once said: "Put little or nothing in writing, deal face to face where a man's eye upon the countenance of him with whom he speaketh may give him a direction how far to go...." I hope that your meeting here will set you on the right direction and speed you on your way.

It is a special personal pleasure for me to be here. I come from a family of educators. Indeed, as the black sheep in the family, I am the only male member who did not become a university professor. But I have a connection to Pacific Rim education. My father devoted his life to working in higher education in universities on the Pacific Rim, spending nearly half a century in China and Hong Kong and then heading for Mexico to brush up his Spanish and recapture his boyhood memories of life on the Mexican border.

Those memories date from the early years of this century, and we are now poised on the threshold of the next one. With the end of the Cold War, people throughout the world nourished hopes that the dangers and tensions of that period would give way to an era of tranquility and order. Subsequent developments have shown that a multipolar world is not necessarily peaceful or stable. Nevertheless, the desire to cooperate is an innate part of the human spirit. It has made civilization possible and

constantly inspires us to keep searching for a civilized international community. It is this spirit that has spurred efforts to launch a new Pacific community that can draw together countries from both sides of this great ocean. While in Bangkok last November, President Clinton spoke of sharing a "common vision" for an "Asian-Pacific region where economic growth and democratic ideals are advancing steadily" despite the "distance and differences between us."

This vision is not simply being pursued through official channels. In the same month of November last year, a group of distinguished leaders from nine countries, including such well known Americans as former Senators Sam Nunn and William Cohen, now the U.S. Secretary of Defense, assembled in Kuala Lumpur to sign a Pacific Charter. This was an unofficial initiative, but it drew its inspiration from the same desire to find common ground that has brought you here. As David Hitchcock noted in his recent study of East Asian views of the United States, there are many social and economic problems that beset us all, but people on both sides of the Pacific share quite similar fundamental ideals and goals: to build more decent, just, fair, humane, and prosperous countries, and, I might add, better educated societies.

The Asia-Pacific region is the perfect arena in which to take up this challenge. The Pacific Rim brings together many of the great cultures of the world, including the Anglo, Hispanic, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and what some have called the Indianized cultures of Southeast Asia. It is also the meeting place for three of the world's great religions: Judeo-Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. Your group here includes representatives of three of the four most populous countries in the world, the country with the largest Islamic population, and arguably the southern-most and northern-most countries in the world.

This very diversity has spawned two alternate visions of the future. The first stresses the need to draw on the common goals and aspirations I have noted to build a community of nations in the Asia-Pacific basin. Lester Pearson, one of the great statesmen of the immediate post World War II period, warned in the 1950s that humans were moving into "an age when different civilizations will have to learn to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each other's history and ideals and art and culture, mutually enriching each others' lives. The alternative, in this overcrowded little world," Pearson warned, "is misunderstanding, tension, clash, and catastrophe."

The other, more pessimistic vision foresees that divisions between East and West, North and South, will produce what Samuel Huntington has called a "clash of civilizations." Which view proves right may depend, to a significant degree, on the manner in which we educate ourselves and our children. Yale professor Stephen Carter, in his book on the subject of Integrity, quotes Václav Havel, the Czech intellectual who became President of his country, as warning that efforts to craft institutional arrangements that meet the necessities of our complicated age are "doomed to failure if they do not grow out of something deeper, out of generally held values." Such knowledge does not come to us automatically. On the contrary, education, and especially higher education, plays a major role in giving us a perception of common values, as well as in enhancing our understanding of the world's different cultures and civilizations.

This meeting is significant for a second reason. Much of the attention paid to the Pacific Rim has centered on the economic potential of this region. This is hardly

surprising since this is one of its most dramatic features. Asia-Pacific economies have averaged over 6.5 percent growth over the last decade, and this figure would rise to 9 percent if Japan, with its lower than normal growth rate in recent years, were excluded. Experts estimate that these economies will account for nearly a third of the global economy by the year 2000. Practitioners of straight-line projection techniques rush to predict that China will have the world's largest economy by 2020, or that Indonesia will have the fifth largest in the same time frame.

In fact, the degree to which rapid economic growth has transformed both the face of East Asia, and its image in the West, is stunning. During my childhood in China, when we lived on the campus of West China Union University, the rice paddies literally began right over the wall behind our house. These days one would have to travel for miles from that same campus through bustling urban development to find irrigated rice cultivation. Similarly, where images of famine and toiling coolies used to pop into Western minds when they thought of Asia, people now see the thriving Asian economies as tigers, and worry about the possibility of losing jobs to Asian workers, and about the ravages that rapid industrialization will wreak on the natural environments of these countries.

Often overlooked is the degree to which U.S. economic prosperity is tied to the Asian-Pacific region. According to the recent report of the Commission of United States - Pacific Trade and Investment Policy, the Asia-Pacific region is America's best customer, purchasing 30 percent of U.S. exported goods and absorbing more than \$40 billion of U.S. direct foreign investment between 1991 and 1995. The same report points out that between 1989 and 1993, one of every six new jobs created in the United States was attributable to trade with the Asia-Pacific economies.

Significantly, much of Asia's economic success came in tandem with its emphasis on education. The so-called Asian tigers of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea had attained universal primary education by the mid 1960s, a decade or more ahead of other countries at their income level. Some attribute this to the influence of Confucianism, but the phenomenon is found throughout the region, including in those countries that were culturally less influenced by Confucian traditions. Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia were also surging ahead. Whether you call it Confucianism, the Protestant work ethic, or some other term of choice, the common characteristic is the importance attached to education and the willingness of Asians to work hard to better themselves.

Jim Rohwer, an economist in the Hong Kong office of CS First Boston, has written a book entitled *Asia Rising* in which he points out the significance of the rise in the quality of human capital in Asia. In 1990, he points out, six Asian countries produced more than 500,000 graduates in science and engineering, compared with America's 170,000. China alone graduated more than 128,000 engineers, twice as many as in the United States. In 1995-96, of the over 450,000 foreign students who were studying in the United States, nearly fifty percent came from Asia, and 56 percent were >from countries represented here in the Association of Pacific Rim Universities. Overall, Asian enrollment in American universities was more than 200,000 by the early 1990s, up from 20,000 in 1975.

The flow of foreign students to the United States has been going on for years, but a heartening recent development is that educational interchange is spreading throughout the region. The Japanese expect 100,000 of their university places to be

occupied by other Asians in the year 2000. The Chinese already have 35,000 university students in Japan. This trend is adding to the number of persons in the region who through education have gained broader insights into the world outside the borders of their respective countries.

Significantly, also, Americans in growing numbers are going abroad to study. Last year the figure was over 80,000, an increase of over 10 percent >from the previous year. Over the past nine years the number of Americans studying abroad has increased by 74 percent. Given the problems of language, it is not surprising that some 65 percent of Americans going abroad to study select Europe as their destination, with only six percent heading for Asia. For Pacific Rim countries, however, which include our neighbors Canada and Mexico, the figure rises to 17 percent.

Frankly, given the growing importance of the Pacific region, too few students from the United States are going to Asia to study. I would hope that this Association, by strengthening bonds between universities on both sides of the Pacific, will stimulate a greater flow of students in both directions, to our mutual benefit.

At this point it might be useful to pause for a moment and ask what a diplomat is doing at a conference of this sort. One answer, of course, is that diplomacy can create the conditions that permit the expansion of educational exchanges. Conversely, when diplomacy fails, academic relationships suffer as well. When I returned to China in 1978, not a single student from the People's Republic of China was studying in the United States. With the establishment of US-PRC diplomatic relations in 1979, that situation began to change rapidly, and within a few years there were tens of thousands of Chinese students here, as is the case at present. Similarly, when I began serving in Southeast Asia in the 1950s, there were virtually no ties among any of the academic institutions in that region. Only with the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1967, just thirty years ago, did such ties begin to expand.

A second factor, of course, is that both diplomats and educators rely on information, even though they seek information for different reasons. Diplomats, with their simple and uncluttered minds, know that the goal of diplomacy is influence, while our great educators, with their more sophisticated view of the world, are locked in an endless debate, as reflected in the mottoes of some of our leading universities, over whether the goal of education is knowledge, truth, light, or some combination thereof. Despite these differences, education and diplomacy have much in common in their desire to know and to understand. In a recent speech to the Institute of Peace, former Secretary of State George Shultz, pointed out that "good diplomacy relies on accurate information that is relevant. The job of sifting out what is critical is crucial. So is the process of analysis of what the information means." He added that "it is important to distinguish between excellent means of communication and excellent communication. Computers offer the former. And educated men and women can manage the latter."

If education can be helpful in transforming information into knowledge and understanding, then the challenge facing universities is growing by leaps and bounds. The reason should be obvious: information does not automatically lead to understanding. On the contrary, it can be manipulated, controlled, and packaged so that it misleads and misinforms. Moreover, information now moves throughout the

world on a scale and with a speed never seen before in world history. Try as they will, governments can no longer maintain a monopoly on information. Moreover, as I saw first hand when I was Executive Secretary of the Department of State during the Gulf War in 1991, the media can gather and disseminate information as quickly, or even more quickly, than can governments, with all the advanced technology they have at their disposal. When Iraq would launch a ballistic missile toward Israel, I would often alert the Secretary of State that an attack was underway when I heard the sirens over CNN, seconds or minutes before we received confirmation of the launch through intelligence channels. We also daily see how financial markets react to information with blinding speed.

Unfortunately, too often information is not contributing to the understanding necessary to manage relationships effectively. This was graphically driven home for me in 1993 and 1994 when I was serving as the United States ambassador in Beijing. In 1992, China had decisively returned to the path of reform and openness after three years of leadership gridlock in the wake of the tragic events in Tiananmen. Fueled by domestic incentives and a flood of investment capital from outside sources, the economy was moving into high gear and attaining growth rates in excess of those achieved by the much smaller Asian tigers during their periods of most rapid growth.

And yet Americans were largely oblivious to this. I realized something was awry when over a period of six months, every American visitor I met with, including China scholars, CEOs of major corporations, and tourists, expressed shock and amazement at finding conditions in China so different from the images of China then prevalent in the United States. Why, I wondered, were citizens of the country with the best technology and sources of information about what was going on in the world so ill-informed about developments in China. The situation was reminiscent of my experience in the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, where Soviet citizens were woefully ignorant of the conditions in the United States because they were fed a constant diet of propaganda by the government-controlled information apparatus about all the social, economic, and political ills of my country. But the media in the United States were not controlled by the government. Rather the information was being filtered by a free media operating in accordance with the passions, prejudices, and conventions of a free society. Unlike the Soviet Union of the Brezhnev era, in the United States there were always contrary voices to be heard, but one had to listen carefully to hear them amid the din of negative reporting.

During my regular background sessions with American Journalists in Beijing at that time, we discussed this phenomenon. They described the subtle pressures that affected their choice of stories. Reporting on political dissidents or religious repression got front page placement in their papers, while stories on economic reforms tended to be buried in the back pages. Moreover, Chinese officials had negative attitudes toward the foreign media and tended to keep them at arm's length, while the security apparatus followed and harassed them in their constant quest for the story behind the version carried in the Chinese official press organs.

Mike Chinoy, the CNN correspondent in China at the time, has written a just-published book titled *China Live: Two Decades in the Heart of the Dragon*, in which he describes the difficulty of using television to provide accurate coverage of the process of change in a giant, complex, and fast changing country like China. And yet television is the medium by which most information reaches the American public

about developments in the world. During the two years that I was Executive Secretary in the State Department, with a television set on in my office from 7:00 am until 10:00 pm, I do not recall seeing a single story on China on any of the major networks that did not include a clip of the Chinese demonstrator defying tanks in Tiananmen Square. Who can deny the power of that image, but can any image, no matter how powerful, provide the basis for informed judgments? In Chinoy's words: "...the power of those images ...seared into people's consciousness" and made it "hard for many Americans to acknowledge or look at the vastly more complex reality that exists in China today."

This, then, is the challenge that we face. At a time when the world is getting smaller, when the extraordinary advances in transportation and communications over the last century have shrunk the world and made it possible, in the real sense, to think of the Pacific Rim as a community of nations, our knowledge of the world is being whipsawed by information that reaches us in near real time but that conveys only a tiny fraction of the reality we think we are observing. The rapid movement of information, and the ability of the pictorial media to have a giant, and often distorted, impact on perceptions, is increasing superficial knowledge, but often contributes to misunderstanding rather than understanding.

In a different context, this same point is made in a book I have been reading called *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. The author, literary critic Sven Birkerts, is uncomfortable with what he sees as the displacement of books and reading by electronic media. He feels we are being deprived of the ability to savor and reflect on information, at the expense of profundity and wisdom. As he puts it: "There will be people who will never in their lives have the experience that was, until our time, the norm - who will never stand in isolated silence among trees and stones, out of shouting distance of any other person, with no communication implement, forced to confront the slow, grainy momentum of time passing." His core fear is that "we are giving up on wisdom, the struggle for which has for millennia been central to the very idea of culture...."

Whether or not one accepts this lament over the implications of technological advance, many commentators have noted that the onset of the information age is having a massive impact on world affairs, from how we fight our wars, to how and whether we can keep the peace. It seems to me that one of the major tasks facing education, and especially a group such as yours, is to help bridge the gap between information on the one hand and knowledge and understanding on the other. This is particularly important at a time when the old blocs and old certainties have given way to a more fluid international situation with both proponents of community and of civilizational clashes vying for our attention. Books such as *The Coming Conflict With China* or *The China That Can Say No* are influencing readers on both sides of the Pacific, with potential dire consequences for both nations and universities.

Surely a constant and hopefully expanding two-way flow of students across the Pacific will hope to break down the stereotypes that are spawned by and thrive on ignorance. While Samuel Huntington is more often cited in terms of his proposition that conflicts are more likely between states of different civilizations, I frankly find sounder the rules he lays down on how to maintain peace in a multi-civilizational world. His third rule, which he calls his commonalities rule, is that people in all civilizations should search for and attempt to expand the values, institutions, and

practices they have in common with people of other civilizations.

That, I would offer, is one of the major reasons why this exploratory meeting to consider the formation of an Association of Pacific Rim Universities is timely and well-conceived. Expanded cooperation among Pacific Rim universities is desirable for a variety of educational, cultural, and social reasons. But it is also necessary to help ensure that the accelerated flow of information across and on both sides of the Pacific contributes to knowledge, mutual understanding, and appreciation of our common values. Equally important, such cooperation can reinforce the efforts of diplomats, academicians, the business community, and good citizens everywhere to make the next century, the Pacific Century, a peaceful, prosperous, and enlightened one.