

Bureau Objective 3.1: In coordination with other federal agencies, improve synchronization of joint security actions and capacity building with foreign allies and partners to strengthen deterrence and influence decision-making of regional adversaries.

- **Bureau Objective 3.1 Justification and Linkages:** The Biden-Harris Administration’s foreign policy emphasizes strengthening allies and partners globally. Capacity-building efforts with allies and partners, at all levels of capability, through diplomacy, security assistance, and access to defense articles and technology, is fundamental to ensuring those allies and partners can resist coercion, defend their sovereignty, and contribute to joint training and operations in the region. This objective links to objectives and lines of effort in the interim [National Security Strategic Guidance](#), the National Defense Strategy, the National Military Strategy, the Indo-Pacific Strategy, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’s Theater Campaign Plan, interagency Counterterrorism Strategy for Southeast Asia (2019), and the Integrated Country Strategies of U.S. missions in the East Asia and Pacific region. Additionally, this objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 1.4: Peace and Security.
- **Bureau Objective 3.1 Risk Considerations:** Failure to leverage robust U.S. diplomacy, security assistance and training and partnerships with both high-capability allies like Australia, Japan, and the ROK, to emerging partners in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, will erode U.S. influence, threaten to reduce interoperability with and access for U.S. security forces, and create greater openings for strategic competitors to replace the United States as a preferred security partner in the Indo-Pacific while also increasing risks posed by other regional adversaries, such as violent extremists and criminal networks. Taking action involves: deploying sufficient diplomatic, federal agency, and foreign assistance resources to engage allies and partners across the entire Indo-Pacific region; support expanded DOD posture in the region, including close synchronization of State diplomatic support to DOD operations, exercises, and presence; increasing efforts to engage civilian security, law enforcement, and disaster response elements to combat gray zone competition and build resilience.

Bureau Objective 3.4: U.S. security and development assistance and forward presence contribute to countries in the region upholding and adhering to international law and norms, including UNCLOS, while countering transnational crime and violent extremism, resolving conflicts, combating human trafficking, and building cybersecurity capacity.

- **Bureau Objective 3.4 Justification and Linkages:** Ensuring partner compliance with and support for international law, along with robust efforts to adequately enforce the law and comport with international norms and standards while doing so, is a critical goal of our security cooperation policy. Security assistance efforts that do not bolster law enforcement and counter illicit activity strengthen adversary nations and non-national groups' ability to use "gray zone" tactics to gain advantage over those who do. This objective links to objectives and lines of effort in the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, the National Military Strategy, the Indo-Pacific Strategy, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's Theater Campaign Plan, regional counterterrorism and counternarcotics strategies, U.S. National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, and the Integrated Country Strategies of U.S. missions in the EAP region. Additionally, this objective supports the JSP Strategic Objective 1.4: Peace and Security and JSP Strategic Objective 3.2: Equity and Inclusion.
- **Bureau Objective 3.4 Risk Considerations:** Further erosion of the rules-based international order, sustained by a robust network of allied and partner cooperation, and the norms that have emerged as a result, would embolden adversaries to damage U.S. and partner interests through illegal, illicit, or "gray zone" hybrid operations designed to evade, distort, or rewrite the international order in their favor. Adversaries would be more active in asserting territorial or maritime claims not supported by international law, increasing the risk of conflict with U.S. partners. It would enable the use of "lawfare" to limit U.S. security presence and to hamper activities or operations in the region against threat groups. Additionally, without assistance to increase their ability to adhere to and uphold international law, countries' sovereignty and economic development could be jeopardized. To help alleviate this threat, we are engaging with allies and partners under the Indo-Pacific Strategy to

identify current and future threats to the rules-based international order, sustaining support to allies in addressing transnational crime, money laundering and terrorism threats, and building resilience to economic and other forms of coercion short of conflict.

Bureau Goal 4: Strengthen democracy in the region; promote equity, accessibility, human rights; and advance transparent, accountable governance that works in the public interest.

- **Bureau Goal 4 Description:** As Secretary Blinken noted at the release of the 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in April 2022, we have seen in many years running an alarming recession of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights in many parts of the world, including in Asia. State/EAP and the Asia Bureau are concerned by an increase in government efforts across the region to shrink the space for civil society and democratic institutions through increased restrictions on human rights, particularly freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. We see it in the genocide and crimes against humanity being committed against predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang and other human rights violations committed in Tibetan regions of China. We see it in persecution and the imprisonment of opposition politicians, anti-corruption activists, labor rights, human rights defenders, lawyers, and journalists in Hong Kong, Cambodia, and the Philippines. We see it in nonviolent protesters being killed, beaten, and imprisoned in Burma after the February 2021 coup d'état by the same military who earlier committed genocide against the Rohingya and other ethnic groups and that has now reversed much of the progress the country had achieved in transitioning to democracy and improving human rights and freedoms. Governments in the region are increasingly exploring options to restrict NGOs, as we see in Thailand, and have increasingly cracked down on internet and media freedoms in places like Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia. These alarming trend lines are being worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which those in power have used as pretext to target critics, restrict freedom of assembly, and further repress human rights. Weakened democratic institutions and impunity open the door for coercive PRC actions and empower the PRC to increasingly disrupt the international order across the region.

Bureau Objective 4.1: Improve human rights conditions and promote equity and accessibility, particularly among women and marginalized and underrepresented groups.

- **Bureau Objective 4.1 Justification and Linkages:** Adhering to universal human rights standards and protecting fundamental freedoms is critical to building and sustaining a democracy. Equal rights and freedoms for all individuals of a society regardless of their background, religion, political or sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, and ethnicity make for stronger governments, more peaceful societies, and prosperous nations. Governments should promote and protect the rights and freedoms of its people and create safe environments for political, social, and economic participation. This objective links to Executive Order 13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), Executive Order 14020 (Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council) the February 4, 2021 Presidential Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World, and the Department's Plan to Implement the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security. This objective also supports JSP Strategic Objective 3.1 Democracy and Governance and JSP Strategic Objective 3.2 Equity and Inclusion.
- **Bureau Objective 4.1 Risk Considerations:** The East Asia and Pacific region has not been immune to the trend of democratic backsliding. At best, some leaders, across all levels of government in the region lack the political will and capacity to advance human rights. At worst, entire groups of a population in the region have been subject to systemic targeting, intimidation, abuse, coercion, political imprisonment and some, like the Rohingya, ethnic cleansing. In some cases, governments, non-state actors, and their proxies have become more sophisticated in their approach to abusing human rights, enacting and enforcing laws that consciously marginalize a segment of a population, targeting human rights defenders themselves or the work they do, applying virtual intimidation tactics, physical force, and psychological pressures. Forced labor and human trafficking remain persistent throughout the region, particularly among the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Additionally, external crises such as the

COVID-19 pandemic and climate change have further contributed to the marginalization of certain populations, such as women and girls who have experienced an increase in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking action involves financial support and technical assistance to activists and organizations working to advance human rights and freedoms, as well as offer protection including psycho-social support to people vulnerable to marginalization, intimidation, and targeting by governments. It also involves diplomatic action to hold perpetrators to account be those government officials or members of organized groups. The USG will also work with like-minded democratic organizations and governments to help strengthen open spaces for free expression, assembly, and association.

Bureau Objective 4.2: Support a resilient, viable civil society and independent media capable of promoting and defending democracy, holding government accountable, and combating propaganda and mis-, dis- and mal-information.

- **Bureau Objective 4.2 Justification and Linkages:** A vibrant civil society and independent media play critical roles in keeping governments accountable, promoting civic awareness and participation, and advocating for people’s needs. Civil society and media serve as watchdogs to expose corruption, efforts which can contribute to holding public sector actors accountable. In a rapidly developing information environment that provides new potential for propaganda and mis-, dis-, and mal-information, a healthy civil society and an independent media serve as the protectors of evidence-based knowledge and decision-making. Nurturing the development of and strengthening the capacity of both sectors is increasingly important to balance the information landscape; to strengthen citizen-government relationships; to ensure meaningful participation across gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and religious and other aspects of identity and communities; to promote and protect the rights of minorities and underrepresented groups; and to advance inclusive and equitable governing systems. This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 3.1: Democracy and Governance.
- **Bureau Objective 4.2 Risk Considerations:** Civil society and media in the region continue to experience an increasingly restrictive and hostile environment. Emerging technologies and the changing media landscape have provided new tools for governments and other actors to restrict free speech and launch disinformation campaigns. According to CIVICUS Monitor, among the most widespread violations documented in the last year was the use of restrictive laws to criminalize and prosecute human rights defenders, journalists and critics.¹ National governments in the region, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a new pretext, have been reported to intimidate and harass independent organizations, manipulate and sensor information, and crush dissenting views. Civil society and independent media continue to experience challenges

¹ <https://findings2020.monitor.civicus.org/asia-pacific.html>

