“Spokes or Spines? U.S. Regional Allies and the New Asian Power Structure”

By: Professor Bill Tow, Professor of International Security, Australian National University, Canberra

U.S. policy officials insist that American power and influence remain alive and well in the contemporary Asia-Pacific security environment. Traditional regional allies and independent observers, however, remain apprehensive that Washington's strategic retrenchment from Asia is inevitable and is intensifying. They point to China's rise, to the United States' preoccupation with the Middle East and international terrorism, and to America's protracted economic crisis as evidence that a fundamental shift in Asia's balance of power is now taking place. This development could lead to heightened regional instability as historical animosities, unresolved territorial and irredentist issues and arms racing fuel intensifying security dilemmas throughout Asia. Australia and other U.S. postwar allies may soon confront a fundamental strategic choice. Should they remain allied with a more tenuous U.S. balancer or to hedge against regional anarchy via closer collaboration with other regional powers and regionally indigenous security architectures? This presentation will consider alternative scenarios related to this question and examine various policy options that U.S. allies might pursue in a rapidly changing Asia-Pacific regional security order.

Bio: William Tow is Professor of International Security and Head of the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University (ANU). He leads the security component of the ANU/Griffith University Centre of Excellence for Policing and Security (CEPS) and the ANU component of the MacArthur Foundation's Asia Security Initiative. He has published 18 books and over 100 journal or book articles on Asian security and alliance politics. His book on /Asia-Pacific Strategic Relations: Seeking Convergent Security/ (Cambridge 2001) remains one of the most widely discussed accounts of Asian security politics.

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To RSVP, please contact Kathy Bailey on (07) 3735 54252 or kathy.bailey@griffith.edu.au no later than 5:00pm Friday 19 November 2010.