

Comparative Connections

A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



Regional Overview:

Let Freedom (and Democracy) Ring!

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The 2006 *National Security Strategy (NSS)* was released this quarter. News coverage has focused primarily on one word: preemption. Largely overlooked has been the much greater emphasis on the promotion of freedom and democracy as the primary objective of U.S. foreign policy in the second George W. Bush administration. How far and fast a nation (like China) proceeds down the path toward democracy – or refuses to do so (North Korea and Myanmar) – will have a major bearing on its future relations with a State Department that is being reoriented toward “transformational diplomacy.” Largely overshadowed by the *NSS* release were two Defense Department documents: the *Quadrennial Defense Review* and the *National Military Strategy to Combat WMD*.

While Washington pushes the theory of democracy, its practice has proven difficult for both Manila and Bangkok this quarter, even as the fruits of democracy have added challenges to Washington’s relations with Taipei. Meanwhile, Pyongyang has used the “hostile attitude” reflected in the *NSS* as yet another excuse for not returning to the stalled Six-Party Talks. One significant gathering of democracies this quarter was the inaugural ministerial-level Australia-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue focused, in part, on supporting the emergence of new democracies. Finally, Washington took a major step forward in advancing its “strategic partnership” with the world’s largest democracy, India, during President Bush’s historic visit to New Delhi in early March.

National Security Strategy: preemptive diplomacy?

In mid-March, the White House released the 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* outlining the Bush administration’s approach toward accomplishing its “most solemn obligation: to protect the security of the American people.” While the principle of preemption is reaffirmed, with the same caveats as previously expressed, the aspect that most distinguishes this year’s version from its 2002 predecessor is the increased emphasis on, if not preoccupation with, the promotion of democracy and, with it, a continued downplaying of traditional alliance mechanisms as a primary means for dealing with security challenges, in favor of ad hoc coalitions of the willing.

The terms democracy (in its various permutations) and freedom appear in the 2006 *NSS* over 200 times (a roughly three-fold increase over 2002). “Promoting democracy,” the 2006 *NSS* asserts, “is the most effective long-term measure for strengthening international stability, reducing regional conflicts, countering terrorism and terror-supporting extremism, and extending peace and prosperity.” Lifting a line verbatim from the president’s 2005 inaugural address, it further argues that “the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.”

This year’s report is 18 pages longer than the 2002 version, in large part due to one additional chapter dealing with the challenges of globalization and a significant expansion of the opening chapter, which lays out the game plan for spreading democracy throughout the world. Given the importance of this blueprint of future U.S. action, this quarter’s regional overview will be devoted, in large part, to a chapter-by-chapter review of the 2006 *NSS*.

A nation at war! President Bush’s cover letter introducing this year’s report quickly sets the tone: “My fellow Americans,” it begins, “America is at war.” A “wartime national security strategy” is required, given “the grave challenge we face – the rise of terrorism fueled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder.” It also notes that the U.S. has “an unprecedented opportunity to lay the future foundation of peace,” observing that “the ideals that have inspired our history – freedom, democracy, and human dignity – are increasingly inspiring individuals and nations throughout the world.”

The opening letter also introduces the central theme of the *NSS* itself: “Because free nations tend toward peace, the advance of liberty will make America more secure.” As a result, the letter concludes, the Bush administration’s national security strategy is founded on two pillars: “promoting freedom, justice, and democracy” and “confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies.”

I. Overview of the U.S. National Security Strategy. Building on this theme, the one-page overview states at the onset that “[I]t is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world.” The 2002 report was criticized for beginning with a bit of braggadocio about “unprecedented and unequalled” U.S. strength and influence. This year’s report avoids the bragging and simply asserts the intention to use this power to promote democracy and combat tyranny. It does include an important caveat, however, noting that this is “the work of generations,” that we are in the “early years of a long struggle,” comparing the current struggle against terrorism and tyranny to the early years of the Cold War.

II. Champion aspirations of human dignity. This chapter, barely over a page long in 2002 but six full pages in 2006, lays out the game plan for how the Bush administration intends to spread democracy throughout the world; a game plan which, with the possible exception of “applying sanctions that [are] designed to target those who rule oppressive regimes while sparing the people,” does not anywhere threaten or imply the use of military force to achieve this objective. The dozen other tools are primarily diplomatic:

supporting reformers in repressive nations, using foreign assistance selectively, building new initiatives, strengthening partnerships, etc. It promises to use such tools “vigorously to protect the freedoms that face particular peril around the world,” highlighting in particular religious freedom (a constant Bush theme) and women’s rights, among others.

Chapter II notes that the U.S. has “a responsibility to promote human freedom,” yet acknowledges [an Iraq lesson learned?] that “freedom cannot be imposed; it must be chosen,” and that its form “will reflect the history, culture, and habits unique to its people.” “In the cause of ending tyranny and promoting effective democracy,” it further asserts, “we will employ a full array of political, economic, diplomatic, and other tools at our disposal.” The emphasis is on helping nations “make the difficult transition to effective democracies,” while not “clinging to the illusionary stability of the authoritarian.” This apparent repudiation of the previous “interests-based” (vs. today’s “values-based”) approach to global partnerships continues to raise concerns among many less than fully democratic nations, especially in the Middle East, that continue to seek and value close partnership with Washington without being particularly eager to give up their firm control over their citizens for fear of the results of a democratic process (witness the Hamas victory in Palestine). Nonetheless, the 2006 *NSS* warns that governments failing to deliver the “benefits of effective democracy” leave themselves “susceptible to or taken over by demagogues peddling an anti-free market authoritarianism.” It should be noted, however, that the *NSS* acknowledges that the process of democratization will be a slow one. More importantly, none of Washington’s current close friends is on the current tyrants list.

In listing the nations whose citizens “know firsthand the meaning of tyranny,” two East Asian nations are singled out: the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), and Burma, using North Korea’s official name while avoiding to do so for Myanmar. The others were Iran, Syria, Cuba, Belarus, and Zimbabwe. China, whose “transition remains incomplete” (see discussion of Chapter VIII), is not listed.

III. Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends. Despite its title, this chapter makes no reference to Washington’s long-standing traditional alliances, focusing instead on the broader group of “friends and allies” who have joined the U.S. in the war on terrorism. The chapter lays out the sources of terrorism – political alienation, grievances that can be blamed on others, subcultures of conspiracy and misinformation, and an ideology that justifies murder – and notes that “the genius of democracy is that it provides a counter to each.”

It notes that “democracy is the opposite of terrorist tyranny, which is why the terrorists denounce it,” but also acknowledges that “democracies are not immune to terrorism,” thus explaining how the home-grown London bombers can emerge even in a democracy. Most importantly, it argues that “the strategy to counter the lies behind the terrorists’ ideology is to empower the very people the terrorists most want to exploit: the faithful followers of Islam.”

This reinforces another constant Bush administration theme, repeated in Chapter III: “While the War on Terror is a battle of ideas, it is not a battle of religions. The transnational terrorists confronting us today exploit the proud religion of Islam.” One can find ample fault with the Bush administration in how it has conducted its war on terrorism, but it has made every effort, repeatedly in this and other documents and statements, to separate terrorism and Islam. It is only the terrorists themselves who try to make the connection. Rather than continue to brand the Bush administration as anti-Islamic, “responsible Islamic leaders need to denounce an ideology that distorts and exploits Islam for destructive ends and defiles a proud religion.” Amen!

While noting that “the advance of freedom and human dignity through democracy is the long-term solution to the transnational terrorism of today,” the 2006 *NSS* outlines four steps that will be taken in the short term: prevent attacks by terrorist networks before they occur, deny WMD to rogue states and to terrorist allies who would use them without hesitation, deny terrorist groups the support and sanctuary of rogue states, and deny the terrorists control of any nation that they would use as a base and launching pad for terror.

Unlike the 2002 edition, the term “preemption” does not appear in this chapter this year, although the first of the above four steps certainly indicates a need to be proactive, since “the hard core of the terrorists cannot be deterred or reformed; they must be tracked down, killed, or captured.” (A discussion of the doctrine of preemption is confined this year to Chapter V.) The discussion of “rogue states” and “terrorist allies” specifically identifies two states, Syria and Iran, as among those who have “chosen to be an enemy of freedom, justice, and peace,” adding that “the world must hold those regimes to account.”

Chapter III ends with a discussion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the “front lines in the War on Terror,” noting that “winning the War on Terror requires winning the battles in Afghanistan and Iraq.” As regards the broader struggle, it concludes that “America will lead in this fight, and we will continue to partner with allies and will recruit new friends to join the battle.” While the phrase “coalitions of the willing” is not specifically used in this chapter, this represents a clear call for like-minded states to join the U.S.-led ad hoc effort to combat terrorism and tyranny.

IV. Work with others to defuse regional conflicts. As was the case in 2002, this short chapter seems to be the catch-all for issues not addressed elsewhere. In the “Successes and Challenges” section, the only East Asia reference is to the tsunami relief efforts that “resulted in political shifts [in Indonesia] that helped make possible a peaceful settlement in the bitter separatist conflict in Aceh.” It does address, in more theoretical terms, such issues as conflict prevention and resolution (the “most effective long-term measure,” not surprisingly, being “the promotion of democracy”), conflict intervention, post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction, and genocide, noting in the latter case the “moral imperative” of taking action to “prevent and punish genocide.”

V. Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with weapons of mass destruction. As was the case in 2002, the need and justification for preemptive action is spelled out in this chapter. The U.S., the document asserts, “will, if necessary, act preemptively in exercising our inherent right of self-defense.” There are important caveats, however. It notes that the U.S. “will not resort to force in all cases to preempt emerging threats,” stating instead a strong preference for “nonmilitary actions.” It also warns that “no country should ever use preemption as a pretext for aggression.” The *NSS* pledges that the U.S. “will always proceed deliberately, weighing the consequences of our actions. The reasons for our actions will be clear, the force measured, and the cause just,” it asserts, further stressing that international diplomacy remains the primary means of dealing with potential threats to national security.

The chapter identifies two specific nonproliferation objectives: closing a loophole in the Nonproliferation Treaty that permits regimes to produce fissile material that can be used to make nuclear weapons under cover of a civilian nuclear power program, and keeping fissile material out of the hands of rogue states and terrorists.

As regards the first objective, Iran and North Korea are identified as primary cases in point. In each case, a diplomatic solution is the preferred outcome. In praising the Six-Party Talks September 2005 Joint Statement aimed at denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the *NSS* clearly states that “regional cooperation offers the best hope for a peaceful, diplomatic resolution of this problem,” despite Pyongyang’s “long and bleak record of duplicity and bad-faith negotiations.”

This concept of “preemptive diplomacy” – my term, not theirs – can be seen in action both in the Six-Party Talks (assuming the talks resume – more on this later) and in Washington’s collaboration with the EU and others in dealing with Iran’s presumed nuclear weapons aspirations. Nonetheless, the *NSS* makes it clear that while diplomatic and other nonmilitary means are preferred, “we do not rule out the use of force before attacks occur,” in preventing or defending against the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in general, even while avoiding any specific reference to military action in dealing with Pyongyang or Tehran.

As regards the second objective, the White House praises the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI), which locates, tracks, and reduces existing stockpiles of nuclear material, and efforts such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), aimed at shutting down WMD trafficking by targeting key maritime and air transportation and transshipment routes, along with “efforts to cut off proliferators from financial resources that support their activities.”

The latter is an obvious reference to the financial tightening actions being taken against North Korea. The *NSS* spells out the administration’s “broader concerns” regarding the DPRK: “The DPRK counterfeits our currency; traffics in narcotics and engages in other illicit activities; threatens the ROK with its army and its neighbors with its missiles; and brutalizes and starves its people.” It calls on Pyongyang “to change these policies, open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people.” In the interim, it warns that

Washington “will continue to take all necessary measures to protect our national and economic security against the adverse effects of their bad conduct.”

Unlike 2002, this chapter also devotes some attention to the grave threat posed by biological and chemical weapons, stressing early detection and emergency response requirements (but avoiding discussion of global regimes such as the Chemical Weapons Convention or Biological Weapons Convention). It also addresses, head-on, the issue of Iraq and WMD, admitting that “pre-war intelligence estimates of Iraqi WMD stockpiles were wrong,” and identifying the following lessons learned: first, our intelligence must improve; second, there will always be some uncertainty about the status of hidden programs since proliferators are often brutal regimes that go to great lengths to conceal their activities; and third, Saddam’s strategy of bluff, denial, and deception is a dangerous game that dictators play at their peril.

It ends on a completely unapologetic note: “We have no doubt that the world is a better place for the removal of this dangerous and unpredictable tyrant, and we have no doubt that the world is better off if tyrants know that they pursue WMD at their own peril.”

VI. Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade.

As in 2002, this chapter underscores Washington’s commitment to promoting free and fair trade while reinforcing the mutually supportive link between economic and political freedom. It assesses successes and challenges since 2002 and then spells out a future three-prong strategy: opening markets and integrating developing countries; opening, integrating, and diversifying energy markets to ensure energy independence; and reforming the International Financial System to ensure stability and growth. The 2006 *NSS* provides a full page of specifics regarding each of these steps.

VII. Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy. Noting at the onset that “[H]elping the world’s poor is a strategic priority and a moral imperative,” this chapter also reviews successes and challenges since 2002, while indicating “The Way Ahead” for U.S. diplomacy, highlighting “transformational diplomacy and effective democracy” (a point further expanded upon in Chapter IX) and “making foreign assistance more effective,” in part through the creation of a new position of Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA) in the State Department, who will serve concurrently as Administrator of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

VIII. Develop agendas for cooperative action with the other main centers of global power. Unlike the *NSS* reports issued during the Clinton era, where alliances formed the foundation upon which U.S. security strategy in Asia was based, Washington’s Asian alliances – with Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand – are scarcely mentioned at all in the section on East Asia.

The one reference to the U.S.-ROK alliance in the 2006 *NSS* is a significant one, however, and bears repeating here: “With the ROK, we share a vision of a prosperous, democratic, and united Korean Peninsula. We also share a commitment to democracy at

home and progress abroad and are translating that common vision into joint action to sustain our alliance into the 21st century.” This seems to imply that promoting democracy abroad (including in North Korea and China?) is a shared vision that provides a future rationale or action plan for the alliance. Perhaps this is true from Washington’s perspective. But, one finds little support for this particular mission in ROK strategic statements.

Significantly, more than half this section is dedicated to a discussion of China’s proclaimed decision “to walk the transformative path of peaceful development.” The 2006 *NSS* admonishes China to “act as a responsible stakeholder,” repeating a term originally used by Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick in a major China address last fall and repeated earlier in the quarter in the Defense Department’s *Quadrennial Defense Review* – it is particularly refreshing to see State, Defense, and now the White House all singing the same tune regarding China. It is a song of engagement, that opens up the possibility of even greater cooperation between Washington and Beijing, as long as China’s leaders “continue down the road of reform and openness . . . [to] meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Chinese people for liberty, stability, and prosperity.”

This cannot happen, however, if China continues “holding on to old ways of thinking and acting that exacerbate concerns throughout the region and the world.” Many have described Washington’s approach toward Beijing as a “hedging strategy.” The White House has now confirmed this suspicion, closing its East Asia discussion with this simple assertion: “Our strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities.” Compare this to 2002, when the section ended by noting that “we will work to narrow our differences where they exist, but not allow them to preclude cooperation where we agree.”

The contrast is even greater in discussing Russia. In 2002, Washington “was already building a new strategic relationship,” despite Moscow’s “uneven commitment” to free-market democracy. In 2006, the desire to work with Moscow remains, but “recent trends regrettably point toward a diminishing commitment to democratic freedoms and institutions” which will make a strengthening of the relationship difficult, if Washington cannot persuade Moscow “to move forward, not backward, along freedom’s path.” On the positive side of the ledger, the 2006 *NSS* applauds the “great strides in transforming America’s relationship with India,” even while improving its strategic relationship with Pakistan.

IX. Transform America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century. In order to help transform the world, the Bush administration pledges to “continue to reorient the Department of State toward transformational diplomacy, which promotes effective democracy and responsible sovereignty.” In 2002, it was the Defense Department that was slated for “transformation.” That effort will be extended and enhanced, but the focus now is on getting U.S. diplomats “to step outside their traditional role to become more involved with the challenges within other societies, helping them directly, channeling assistance,

and learning from their experience.” This new “mandate to meddle” – again, my term not theirs – takes the traditional U.S. commitment to democracy to a new, more proactive level.

This effort will include ensuring that foreign assistance is used as effectively as possible; improving U.S. “capability to plan for and respond to post-conflict and failed state situations” (another Iraq lesson learned); developing a civilian reserve corps, analogous to the military reserves; and “strengthening our public diplomacy, so that we advocate the policies and values of the United States in a clear, accurate, and persuasive way to a watching and listening world.”

Transforming the Department of State is just one of three priorities, the other two being sustaining the transformation already under way (in the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Justice, the FBI, and the Intelligence Community) and improving the capacity of agencies to plan, prepare, coordinate, integrate, and execute responses covering the full range of crisis contingencies and long-term challenges.

In working with allies, the *NSS* identifies three additional priorities: promoting meaningful reform of the U.N., enhancing the role of democracies and democracy promotion throughout international and multilateral institutions, and establishing “results-oriented partnerships” on the model of the PSI to meet new challenges and opportunities. In further defining these coalitions of the willing, the 2006 *NSS* notes that “these partnerships emphasize international cooperation, not international bureaucracy. They rely on voluntary adherence rather than binding treaties. They are oriented towards action and results rather than legislation or rule-making.”

X. Engage the opportunities and confront the challenges of globalization. This is a new chapter, focused on dealing with the challenges of globalization – public health issues (like pandemics), illicit trade (drugs, human beings), and environmental disasters – noting, again not surprisingly, that “effective democracies are better able to deal with these challenges than are repressive or poorly governed ones.”

XI. Conclusion. Also new in 2006 is a final chapter, which is short enough to repeat in its entirety, to let the reader decide for him- or herself:

“The challenges America faces are great, yet we have enormous power and influence to address those challenges. The times require an ambitious national security strategy, yet one recognizing the limits to what even a nation as powerful as the United States can achieve by itself. Our national security strategy is idealistic about goals, and realistic about means. There was a time when two oceans seemed to provide protection from problems in other lands, leaving America to lead by example alone. That time has long since passed. America cannot know peace, security, and prosperity by retreating from the world. America must lead by deed as well as by example. This is how we plan to lead, and this is the legacy we will leave to those who follow.”

In sum, there were many who saw the strong assertions regarding freedom and democracy in President Bush's second inaugural address merely as an after-the-fact justification for the war in Iraq (given the absence of suspected weapons of mass destruction). The 2006 *National Security Strategy* should remove any doubt that this commitment to the promotion of freedom and democracy is real and will be pursued proactively (but not necessarily through force of arms) during President Bush's second term.

The Quadrennial Defense Review and the National Military Strategy of the U.S.

Largely overshadowed by the *National Security Strategy* were two other key documents released by the Defense Department during this quarter: the *Quadrennial Defense Review* (*QDR*, released in January) and the *National Military Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* (*NMS*), released shortly after the *NSS* and designed to show how the Defense Department plans to implement the *NSS*.

QDR. The *QDR* is not a strategy document, nor is it a programmatic or budget document. Instead, it reflects the thinking of the senior civilian and military leaders of the Defense Department regarding defense transformation and where that effort stands.

It does contain a section on future challenges, noting that “the choices of major and emerging powers, including India, Russia and China, will be key factors in determining the international security environment of the 21st century.” Of the three, it identifies India as an “emerging” great power and a “key strategic partner.” While Russia remains “a country in transition,” the *QDR* states that it is “unlikely to pose a military threat to the United States or its allies on the same scale or intensity as the Soviet Union during the Cold War.” It does, however, express concern about “the erosion of democracy in Russia.”

China, by contrast, “has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages absent U.S. counter strategies.” That said, U.S. policy remains focused on “encouraging China to play a constructive, peaceful role in the Asia-Pacific region and to serve as a partner in addressing common security challenges, including terrorism, proliferation, narcotics, and piracy.” As noted, it identifies Washington's desire for China to “emerge as a responsible stakeholder and force for good in the world.”

In dealing with all major and emerging powers, a “balanced approach” is needed, “one that seeks cooperation but also creates prudent hedges against the possibility that cooperative approaches by themselves may fail to preclude future conflict.” The *NSS*, as noted, more directly tied the need for a hedging strategy directly to the PRC.

NMS. The *National Military Strategy to Combat WMD* is very much a planning document that uses an “ends, ways, means” approach to planning, executing, and resourcing. It emphasizes those combating WMD missions in which the military plays a prominent role. It does not address specific threats – there are no references to China or

North Korea anywhere in the document; nor does the term “preemption” appear anywhere in this report.

The reality of democracy

While Washington pushes the theory of democratization, its practice has proven difficult for several of Asia’s newer democracies. As fate would have it, one particular day in February proved eventful for both Manila and Bangkok. Meanwhile, the vibrant practice of democracy has added new challenges to Washington’s up-and-down relations with Taipei.

Philippine press crackdown. In the Philippines, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared a state of emergency on Feb. 24, following rumors of a coup attempt. The decree was lifted one week later (March 3) after the arrests of several alleged plotters and other dissidents, but concerns about the stability of the Arroyo regime continue. Concerns are also growing regarding a government crackdown on the free-wheeling Philippine press – three journalists from *The Tribune*, a daily newspaper critical of Arroyo, have been charged with rebellion and the director of the National Police has warned the press that it must conform to certain (unspecified) standards, subject to interpretation on a case-by-case basis.

The government also appears to be singling out the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, a small group whose corruption exposes were instrumental in bringing down Arroyo’s predecessor, Joseph Estrada. The government has threatened to charge several Center members with sedition, raising more concerns about the Arroyo government’s commitment to a free and fair press.

Thaksin’s sudden demise. Meanwhile, in Bangkok, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra dissolved Parliament, also on Feb. 24, calling for snap elections on April 2, following repeated accusations of corruption and demonstrations of concern about steps allegedly taken by Thaksin to curb press freedoms and interfere with independent institutions. Massive street demonstrations followed, along with an opposition threat to boycott the elections, thus creating a constitutional crisis (due to minimum vote percentage requirements). While Thaksin’s supporters won easily on April 2, given the opposition boycott, his Thai-Rak-Thai Party gained fewer votes than expected and 39 legislative seats remained open due to insufficient turnout, prompting Thaksin to surprisingly resign on April 4 (a day after claiming that he would never do so, but within a few hours of meeting with Thailand’s revered King, who appears to have convinced him otherwise). The drama seems far from over, however, and is likely to experience additional twists and turns during the next quarter.

Taiwan’s unruly democracy. Last quarter, President Bush was praising Taiwan’s democracy, citing it (during his Asia policy address in Kyoto) as a model for Beijing to follow. However, domestic politics in Taiwan continue to raise concerns in Washington, especially considering the unpredictable nature of its president, Chen Shui-bian, who keeps promising “no surprises” but seems full of them nonetheless.

Chen's New Year's surprise was a statement arguing that it was time to seriously consider abolishing the National Unification Council (NUC) and Guidelines for National Unification, one of the "five no's" that he had promised to avoid doing in his two inaugural addresses. "I'd also like to see the nation join the United Nations with the name of Taiwan," he wished out loud, raising concerns about another "no" (no name change). Direct U.S. intervention persuaded Chen to tone down, but not to abandon, his quest; on Feb 27, he announced that the Council "will cease to function" and the Guidelines "will cease to apply." Chen, for his part, argued on both sides of the issue, alternatively saying that he had not broken his promise and that the precondition for his promise – "as long as China has no intention of using military force" – had "already disappeared."

Chen's critics, in the U.S., China, at home, and elsewhere, argued that he had still gone too far, but the real concession was buried deeper down in his February announcement, when he acknowledged that constitutional amendments must be approved by three-fourths of Legislative Yuan (LY) members (unlikely given opposition control of the LY) and then be confirmed by a national referendum and that "any sovereignty issue that strays from constitutional proceedings not only fails to contribute to maintaining the status quo, but also should be disregarded."

Nonetheless, Washington remains alert for future surprises and sent a clear signal of its discontent with Chen's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) when it warmly hosted opposition leader (and likely Kuomintang candidate in the 2008 presidential elections) Ma Ying-jeou in Washington in late March.

Six-Party Talks: Pyongyang refuses to talk (again)!

There was no progress to report on the six-party front this quarter, with North Korea continuing to demand a lifting of the financial restrictions imposed last September and October on North Korean companies and on banks and other institutions dealing with the DPRK as a precondition to returning to the negotiating table. A meeting between U.S. and DPRK officials in New York in early March to explain (but not negotiate) U.S. legal actions failed to break the deadlock and Washington made it clear it would not relent on this point. In fact, a Swiss company, Kohas AG, joined the club this quarter, having its assets frozen for its alleged role in assisting North Korean proliferation efforts.

Pyongyang also used the "hostile attitude" reflected in the *NSS* as yet another excuse for not returning to the stalled Six-Party Talks, quickly condemning the report as a "brigandish document declaring a war." The DPRK Permanent Mission issued a statement on March 23 accusing the *NSS* of designating the DPRK an "outpost of tyranny" and a "target of pre-emptive attack," which reveals the Bush administration's "undisguised attempt to realize its wild ambition to realize 'regime change' through a 'pre-emptive attack.'" For the record, a word scan of the entire 2006 *NSS* report finds no reference to "outpost," "target," or "regime change," even though, as previously noted, it did acknowledge that the people of the DPRK (and of six other nations) "know firsthand the meaning of tyranny" and, in discussing Pyongyang's counterfeiting and narcotic trafficking, does state that "the DPRK regime needs to change these practices."

At quarter's end it was noted that senior officials from all six nations were scheduled to take part in the nongovernmental, track-two Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) in Tokyo in early April, raising hopes that this informal gathering could help move the denuclearization process forward. Of course, if Pyongyang wanted to return to the talks, it would not need a track-two meeting to provide the vehicle for its announcement. At a similar track-two gathering involving representatives from all six nations in late March – organized by the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of WMD – the DPRK showed no hint of future flexibility.

Also scheduled along the sidelines of the NEACD was the first U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral senior officials meeting in over a year (since Feb 2005). The so-called (or previously called, since the term seems to have fallen out of official use) Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) is an important initiative dating back to the Clinton era, aimed at ensuring consistency among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo in dealing with Pyongyang. No explanations have been given for the hiatus, but tensions between Tokyo and Seoul over history and territorial issues and growing concerns in Seoul about doing anything with Japan that does not also involve China no doubt contributed to the lull in this three-way dialogue.

Trilateral cooperation down under

While trilateral cooperation among U.S. allies has been on hold in Northeast Asia, it appears to be flourishing down under. The past few years have seen increased cooperation among Australia, the U.S., and Japan, highlighted at the beginning of last year by their close cooperation in responding to the tsunami disaster in Indonesia. That cooperation culminated this quarter in the inaugural ministerial-level Australia-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue involving Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her Australian and Japanese counterparts, Foreign Ministers Alexander Downer and Aso Taro.

Both prior to and during the trilateral meeting, a great deal of press attention was paid to differing views among the allies on China, with many observers noting that Canberra's ties with Beijing seemed much closer than Washington's and certainly better than the current strained relations with Tokyo. Others, as Minister Downer acknowledged in his Q&A session, have accused Australia of being too close to China or "not robust enough" in criticizing Beijing. The Joint Statement, however, devoted less than half a sentence to China, merely stating "we welcomed China's constructive engagement in the region," while Downer went to great effort to note that it was "very natural" for good friends "to meet together periodically to talk about global [and] regional issues" and that this "shouldn't be interpreted as an act of conspiracy against China. Of course it is not."

The Joint Statement noted that the three countries, "as longstanding democracies and developed economies" have "a common cause in working to maintain security and stability," indicating that discussions covered a "wide range of current security challenges, both regional and global." In a line no doubt enthusiastically supported, if

not deliberately inserted, by Washington, the Joint Statement also noted that “supporting the emergence and consolidation of democracies and strengthening cooperative frameworks in the Asia-Pacific region was a particular focus of our attention.” The three sides promised to continue the dialogue regularly at the ministerial level, augmented by senior officials meetings throughout the year.

Indian-U.S. “strategic partnership”

Finally, we would be remiss if we failed to at least acknowledge a significant event just outside the East Asia neighborhood that could have significant regional and global ramifications; namely, President Bush’s historic visit to the world’s largest democracy, India, and his signing of a Joint Statement expressing satisfaction with the “great progress” both countries have made “in advancing our strategic partnership to meet the global challenges of the 21st century.”

Few would argue against the advisability of closer ties between Washington and New Delhi. But even many enthusiastic fans of closer India-U.S. relations have expressed concern about the implications of Washington’s decision to treat New Delhi as a de facto nuclear weapons state by pledging to seek changes in U.S. laws and international protocols to allow greater cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Proponents argue that it will bring the vast majority of India’s nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and that India’s track record as a nonproliferator (and as a democracy) merits special consideration. Critics argue that the precedents such a move would set could undermine the nonproliferation regime and be used as an excuse by countries like Iran and North Korea to justify their own actions (which is already occurring).

The debate is too complicated to sum up in a few sentences. Much has been written, including several series of *PacNet Newsletters* [www.csis.org/pacfor/pacnet] which will shed more light on the subject. What is clear is that the Bush administration faces an uphill struggle both internationally and perhaps more so domestically, in delivering on the U.S. side of the bargain, even as many critics in India complain that New Delhi gave too much or received too little in the deal. The debate is sure to heat up in the coming quarter as the U.S. Congress begins deliberations on legislation to allow the implementation of the U.S.-Indian agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation.

Regional Chronology January-March 2006

Jan. 1, 2006: Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian’s New Year’s address calls for new policy of “active management, effective opening” toward China.

Jan. 3, 2006: Chinese government releases Hong Kong journalist Jiang Weiping who was on a list of prisoners the U.S. had wanted released prior to President Bush's November 2005 visit.

Jan. 3, 2006: North Korea says it will not attend the Six-Party Talks as long as U.S. financial sanctions remain in place.

Jan. 4, 2006: PM Koizumi reiterates his position that Yasukuni Shrine visits are "a matter of heart."

Jan. 5, 2006: Aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk* sailor admits killing a 56-year-old Japanese woman in Yokosuka.

Jan. 6, 2006: Japan refuses to join Germany, India, and Brazil in new bid for permanent UN Security Council seats. Instead, Japan will work the U.S. on an alternate plan.

Jan. 8, 2006: Last of the KEDO workers withdraw from the light-water reactor construction site in Kumho, North Korea.

Jan. 9, 2006: North Korea officially denies U.S. claims of DPRK counterfeiting.

Jan. 9, 2006: Australian FM Downer meets Secretary Rice in Washington D.C.

Jan. 9-11, 2006: Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran visits Beijing for second round of strategic dialogue.

Jan. 9-27, 2006: Japanese Ground Self Defense Forces conduct joint exercises with U.S. Marines in California; exercises focus on defense of remote islands.

Jan. 10-18, 2006: Kim Jong-il makes "secret" visit to China, echoing Deng Xiaoping's 1992 "Southern tour."

Jan. 10-19, 2006: JDA Director General Nukaga meets with counterparts in Britain, Russia, and U.S.

Jan. 11-12, 2006: Asia Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate meeting held in Sydney, including representatives from the U.S., Australia, China, India, Japan, and South Korea. It is considered an alternate to the Kyoto Protocols.

Jan. 11-17, 2006: Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill visits Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia.

Jan. 13, 2006: USTR Rob Portman announces South Korea will reopen ROK markets for specific beef products.

Jan. 17-22, 2005: ROK FM Ban travels to New York to meet UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (Jan. 18) and to Washington for the Strategic Consultation on Allied Partnership (SCAP) meeting (Jan. 19).

Jan. 18, 2006: Asst. Secretary Hill visits Beijing to meet Chinese Vice FMs Yang Jiechi and Wu Dawei and DPRK Six-Party Talks envoy Kim Gye-gwan.

Jan. 19, 2006: Secretary of State Rice hosts ROK FM Ban for first SCAP meeting to discuss global, regional, and bilateral issues. A joint statement is released on the “strategic flexibility” of U.S. forces in South Korea.

Jan. 20, 2006: Japan halts import of U.S. beef after shipment of beef that did not conform to standards.

Jan. 20-Feb. 15, 2006: Third year of direct cross-Strait Lunar New Year’s flights between Taiwan and China.

Jan 19-25, 2005: Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick visits U.S. Pacific Command (Jan. 19-20) for consultations, Japan (Jan. 22-23) for talks on alliance and trade issues, and China (Jan. 23-25) for Senior Dialogue.

Jan. 23, 2006: U.S. Treasury Dept. team briefs ROK officials on alleged currency counterfeiting by North Korea.

Jan. 23, 2006: *Mainichi Shimbun* public opinion poll shows public evenly divided on question of whether next prime minister should visit Yasukuni Shrine.

Jan. 25, 2006: Taiwan resumes import of U.S. beef.

Jan. 25, 2006: Google officially launches service in China with .cn address.

Jan. 27, 2006: WHO secretariat rejects proposal giving Taiwan observer status.

Jan. 29, 2006: In Lunar New Year’s address, President Chen considers abolishing the National Unification Council and Guidelines, reapplying for UN membership as Taiwan rather than Republic of China, and calling for a new constitution.

Feb. 2, 2006: U.S. and ROK announce plans to open FTA talks in May.

Feb. 3, 2006: U.S. Defense Department releases 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review*.

Feb. 3, 2006: ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong indicates that ASEAN is in discussions with Washington on establishment of the first formal U.S.-ASEAN Summit, which could take place in late 2006 or early 2007.

Feb. 4-8, 2006: DPRK and Japan resume normalization talks in Beijing, using the three-track format to cover one topic – historical, security, and abduction issues – per day.

Feb. 5, 2006: Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni pardons political opposition leaders Sam Rainsy and Cheam Channy.

Feb. 9-10, 2006: Fourth round of China-Japan Strategic Dialogue held in Japan to discuss bilateral, regional, and global issues.

Feb. 10, 2006: Lee Jong-seok takes office as new ROK minister of unification.

Feb. 10, 2006: China and the Philippines formalize extradition treaty, which will support law enforcement efforts on drug trafficking and other transnational crimes.

March 10, 2006: Former Deputy Secretary Armitage visits Taipei.

Feb. 10-11, 2006: Moscow hosts G-8 finance ministers meeting; China, Brazil, India, and South Africa also invited.

Feb. 12, 2006: National Security Council Acting Senior Director for Asian Affairs Dennis Wilder and Clifford Hart, director of the State Department's Taiwan Desk, reportedly travel secretly to Taiwan to try to dissuade Chen Shui-bian from abolishing the National Unification Council.

Feb. 14, 2006: Myanmar's junta extends house arrest of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's Deputy Tin Oo for another 12 months under the anti-subversion law.

Feb. 14, 2006: ROK FM Ban declares candidacy for United Nations secretary general.

Feb. 14-15, 2006: ROK Assistant DM for Policy Ahn and U.S. Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Lawless meet in Guam for sixth round of Security Policy Initiative meeting. Transfer of wartime operational control of ROK armed forces to Korea, consolidated relocation of U.S. forces, and the U.S. handover of 10 major security missions to Korea are on the agenda.

Feb. 14-18, 2006: Myanmar PM Soe Win meets Premier Wen Jiabao in Beijing.

Feb. 16, 2006: Macau's Banco Delta Asia agrees to terminate all links with North Korean entities and has appointed two independent accounting firms to monitor clients.

Feb. 16-19, 2006: *The Korea Times* and *Hankook Ilbo* conduct a survey of 1,000 people aged 18-23; 48 percent of respondents say they would support North Korea if the U.S. attacked nuclear facilities in the DPRK.

Feb. 17, 2006: Mudslide on the Philippine island of Leyte kills more than 1,800 people.

Feb. 20-March 5, 2006: U.S. and Philippine forces hold *Exercise Balikatan 2006* in Cebu, Luzon, and Jolo, Sulu. Two U.S. warships are diverted from the exercise to provide humanitarian aid to those affected by the Leyte mudslide.

Feb. 21-23, 2006: ROK and DPRK Red Cross committees meet at Mt. Kumgang to exchange letters between families and to discuss repatriation of ROK prisoners of war remaining in the North and abducted South Koreans.

Feb. 22, 2006: U.S. embassy official reveals the U.S. has provided the ROK government physical evidence of DPRK counterfeiting activity.

Feb. 22, 2006: Unification Ministry official states that the ROK government has agreed to the DPRK request for 150,000 tons of fertilizer for use in spring.

Feb. 24, 2006: Philippine President Arroyo declares state of emergency in the Philippines on the rumors of an attempted coup.

Feb. 24, 2006: Thai PM Thaksin dissolves Parliament and calls for snap elections on April 2, 2006.

Feb. 24, 2006: Amb. Ray Burghardt is appointed AIT Washington chairman; Amb. Stephen M. Young is AIT director in Taipei.

Feb. 27, 2006: President Chen declares the National Unification Council “will cease to function” and unification guidelines “will cease to apply.”

Feb. 27-28, 2006: Eighty ROK and DPRK divided families meet via video conferencing.

Feb. 28-March 4, 2006: Asst. Secretary Hill travels to the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Korea.

March 1, 2006: Seoul sends stone stele *Bukgwandaechepbi* to Pyongyang.

March 1-5, 2006: President Bush travels to India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

March 2, 2005: President Bush and Indian PM Singh sign Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.

March 2-3, 2006: North and South Korean generals meet in Panmunjom to discuss reopening the railway lines and roads between the two Koreas, and establishing a joint fishing area to prevent future skirmishes.

March 3, 2006: President Arroyo lifts state of emergency in the Philippines.

March 5-16, 2006: China holds its annual session of the National People’s Congress.

March 6-7, 2006: Fourth round of consultations is held on East Sea oil explorations between China and Japan in Beijing.

March 7, 2006: U.S. State and Treasury officials meet DPRK representatives in New York to discuss issues related to sanctions levied on Banco Delta Asia.

March 8, 2006: The State Department releases its annual human rights report, detailing abuses in China and expressing concern about Russia's "backslides."

March 8, 2006: DPRK test-fires two short-range missiles toward the East Sea (Sea of Japan).

March 11-19, 2006: Seoul Mayor Lee Myung-bak travels to Washington, New York, and Los Angeles, meets Deputy Secretary Zoellick, Sen. Richard Lugar, among many others. ROK opinion polls put Mayor Lee as the leading presidential contender.

March 12, 2006: Voters in Iwakuni overwhelmingly (80 percent) reject a plan to bring more planes and troops to a nearby U.S. Marine base.

March 13, 2006: Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe announces that despite the rejection by Iwakuni residents, Tokyo plans to go ahead with the plan.

March 14, 2006: *KCNA* states that the DPRK has the right to launch a pre-emptive attack because the DPRK and U.S./ROK are technically still at war.

March 14, 2006: Chinese Premier Wen announces at a press conference that the RMB will not be revalued this year. He also cautions that unless the Yasukuni issue is resolved relations will be difficult with a post-Koizumi government.

March 14-19, 2006: Secretary Rice visits Indonesia and Australia, attends Trilateral Security Dialogue (March 18 in Canberra), and has side meetings with Australian FM Downer and Japanese FM Aso.

March 15, 2006: South Korea opens two official immigration checkpoints at the border shared with North Korea.

March 15, 2006: *Yoduck Story*, a musical written by a North Korean defector and set in a DPRK gulag, opens in Seoul.

March 16, 2006: White House releases its 2006 *National Security Strategy*.

March 16, 2006: Ambassador Vershbow says there are "plenty of opportunities" to discuss North Korea's alleged illicit financial activities in the Six-Party Talks.

March 17, 2006: Ambassador Schieffer warns that Japan's ban on U.S. beef imports could set off a trade war, also says that he expects Japan to reduce the disparity in defense spending between the two countries.

March 18, 2006: Trilateral Strategic Dialogue joint statement welcomes "China's constructive engagement" in the region.

March 19, 2006: A Korea Institute for Defense Analyses survey shows 37.7 percent of Koreans see China as the biggest security threat in 10 years, followed by Japan (23.6 percent), North Korea (20.7 percent), and the U.S. (14.8 percent). 81.7 percent thought the U.S. was Korea's best ally.

March 20, 2006: U.S. and Indonesia conclude a two-week Joint Combined Exercise for Training in the Sulawesi Sea to improve mutual cooperation and enhance mil-to-mil relations.

March 20-25, 2006: The 13th round of inter-Korea family reunions is held at Mt. Kungang resort in North Korea. There was a flap on March 22 when two ROK reporters file a report describing a DPRK participant as an abductee.

March 20-26, 2006: Sen. Schumer (D-NY), Sen. Graham (R-SC) and Sen. Coburn (R-OK) travel to China to discuss currency valuation, intellectual property rights protection, and barriers to foreign investment.

March 21-22, 2006: President Putin meets President Hu in China for opening ceremony of the "Year of Russia."

March 22-23, 2006: Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou visits Washington.

March 22-23, 2006: U.S. human rights group Freedom House holds third international Conference on North Korean Human Rights in Brussels. South Korea attends as an observer. Some 90 ROK leftists protest that the U.S. is using human-rights as a ploy to block peace on the Peninsula.

March 23, 2006: Japan announces it is freezing loans to China, but may restart loans in April if relations improve.

March 23, 2006: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld states that ROK and U.S. generally agree on a transfer of wartime command of ROK forces to the ROK and are discussing a timetable.

March 23-25, 2006: Malaysian FM Syed Hamid Albar visits Myanmar on a fact-finding trip on the progress of Myanmar's democratization progress; request to visit with Aung San Suu Kyi refused.

March 24, 2006: Indian PM Singh offers “treaty of peace, security, and friendship” to Pakistan.

March 24, 2006: Indonesia recalls ambassador to Australia to protest the granting of asylum to 42 people fleeing alleged abuse by Indonesian military in the province of Papua.

March 24, 2006: The Pentagon issues a report stating that Russian diplomats based in Baghdad may have passed along information about U.S. war plans to the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

March 25-31, 2006: U.S. and South Korean forces take part in *RSOI (Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration)* and *Foal Eagle* exercises in South Korea.

March 26-31, 2006: U.S. Commerce Secretary Gutierrez visits China and Japan to discuss market access, intellectual property rights, and U.S. beef.

March 27, 2006: Japan integrates Self-Defense Forces’ land, sea, and air branches to deal more effectively with terrorism, disasters, and joint action with U.S. military.

March 27, 2006: PM Koizumi defends visits to Yasukuni and says that he will use “appropriate judgment” about visiting the shrine again.

March 27, 2006: DPRK issues arrest warrants for four Japan-based activists “luring and abducting its citizens ... in broad daylight,” apparently in reference to assistance given to North Koreans fleeing the DPRK.

March 28, 2006: U.S. and Japan postpone U.S. force realignment working-level talks scheduled for March 30-31 until April.

March 28, 2006: Sens. Graham (R-SC) and Schumer (D-NY) delay vote on a bill to impose punitive 27.5 percent tariff on Chinese goods for restricting its exchange rate.

March 29, 2006: UN Security Council passes unanimous resolution for Iran to suspend enrichment and reprocessing activities and submit to IAEA inspections within 30 days.

March 30, 2006: Treasury Dept. adds Swiss firm Kohas AG and Jakob Steiger to the list of proliferation supporters, which prohibits trading with any U.S. entity and freezes all assets of the designee in the U.S. Kohas AG acted as a technology broker for the DPRK.

March 30-April 1, 2006: Heads of seven Japan-China friendship organizations, including former PM Hashimoto, visit Beijing to exchange views on how to increase nongovernmental exchanges and promote bilateral growth. President Hu tells them he will agree to summit if Japan PM refrains from Yasukuni visits.

March 31, 2006: Taipei rejects applications for zoos to import gift pandas.