

# Background

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## Hedging Against China

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According to the Central Intelligence Agency, China is the world's second largest economy.<sup>1</sup> Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has observed that China is becoming a "military superpower,"<sup>2</sup> and Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte has testified before Congress that China "may become a peer competitor to the United States" in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>3</sup>

By itself, the rise of a new power in Asia need not be alarming, but a new superpower that works against the interests of freedom, free trade, and global stability is now becoming a reality. On the eve of Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit, it is time for America to reexamine its China strategy and its stake in the Pacific.

The Bush Administration, to its credit, seems ready to face the challenge of a rising China. The recent National Security Strategy of the United States specifies that America's new "strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities."<sup>4</sup> Significantly, the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review, issued on February 6, 2006, also warns that the U.S. must "hedge against the possibility that a major or emerging power could choose a hostile path in the future,"<sup>5</sup> undoubtedly referring to China.

While hedging against China as a new superpower is a prudent choice, the Administration's task now is to develop and implement sound policies that protect and advance American interests.

### Talking Points

- China is emerging as the new "military superpower" and "peer competitor" in East Asia and is poised to dominate it in the 21st century as American influence recedes.
- Beijing prudently avoids head-on collisions with U.S. policies, but China's strategic unhelpfulness in virtually every policy area—WMD proliferation, North Korea, Iran, Taiwan, the war on terrorism, and even the traffic in counterfeit currency—is destabilizing.
- China's international behavior has moved too far in the wrong direction for anyone to say that Beijing will act as a responsible stakeholder without considerable pressure.
- American leaders' current talk of "hedging" against China must give Beijing pause, but unless the talk is followed by concrete action to support democratic allies and friends in Asia, it is just bluff and bluster. If China successfully calls American bluffs, its power in Asia will strengthen, and America's will wane.

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## The New Strategic Environment in Asia

China is the new superpower in Asia, distrustful of the Pacific's status quo power, the United States. For example, at the Chinese Communist Party's 16th Congress in November 2002, Party leaders not only reiterated that they "oppose hegemonism and power politics" (i.e., the United States) and will "boost world multipolarization" (i.e., oppose America's role as the sole superpower), but also compared "terrorism" and American "hegemonism" as equal threats.<sup>6</sup> However, China's strategy is not solely to balance American power in Asia. China's leaders seek to reclaim China's ancient place as the preeminent power in Asia, replacing the United States.

While Beijing has prudently avoided head-on collisions with U.S. policies, an examination of China's strategic unhelpfulness at virtually every

level of engagement with the United States—from the war on terrorism to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to even the traffic in counterfeit currency—is unsettling.

Nothing in China's strategic behavior is more unsettling than its military buildup. Since 1992, Chinese defense spending has grown at an annual double-digit rate. The Pentagon estimates that total defense-related expenditures were between \$50 billion and \$70 billion in 2004 and as high as \$90 billion in 2005, placing China third in defense spending (in nominal dollars) after the United States and Russia.<sup>7</sup> On March 6, 2006, China announced another 15 percent increase in military spending, on top of 13 percent in 2005,<sup>8</sup> giving China the world's fastest growing peacetime defense budget. This led Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to muse, "Since no nation threat-

1. China is listed as the second largest national economy behind the United States in "purchasing power parity" terms (a quantitative measure of equivalent goods and services rather than nominal dollar values at official exchange rates). Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2005*, updated March 29, 2006, at [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html) (April 11, 2006). In nominal dollar terms, China was the world's fifth largest economy at the end of 2005, after the U.S., Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom. James T. Areddy and Jason Dean, "China's GDP Exceeds Italy, Nudges France," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 2005, p. A12. Data for 2006 indicate that China now has the world's fourth largest economy (after the U.S., Japan, and Germany) if new revised figures for China's service sector and Hong Kong's GDP are included. Joe McDonald, "China Says Economy Much Bigger Than Thought," Associated Press, December 20, 2005.
2. Neil King, Jr., "Rice Wants U.S. to Help China Be Positive Force," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2005, p. A13.
3. Negroponte testified that "China is a rapidly rising power with steadily expanding global reach that may become a peer competitor to the United States at some point." Bill Gertz, "China's Emergence as Military Power Splits Strategists on Threat to U.S.," *The Washington Times*, February 7, 2006, p. A3, at [www.washingtontimes.com/national/20060206-102324-3179r.htm](http://www.washingtontimes.com/national/20060206-102324-3179r.htm) (April 11, 2006).
4. The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, March 22, 2006, p. 42, at [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf) (April 11, 2006).
5. U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 6, 2005, p. 40, at [www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf) (April 11, 2006).
6. Jiang Zemin cautioned the 16th Party Congress that "the scourge of terrorism is more acutely felt. Hegemonism and power politics have new manifestations." Jiang Zemin, "Build a Well-Off Society in an All-Round Way and Create a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," report to 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, November 8, 2002. Jiang's message of equating "terrorism" and American "hegemonism" is explicated in Liu Jianfei, "Renqing Fankong yu fanbade guanxi" (Grasp the Relationship Between Antiterrorism and Anti-Hegemonism), *Liaowang* (Beijing), February 24, 2003, pp. 54–56.
7. Richard P. Lawless, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense, testimony before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, April 26, 2004, at [foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2004/LawlessTestimony040422.pdf](http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2004/LawlessTestimony040422.pdf) (April 11, 2006), and U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China*, July 18, 2005, at [www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050719china.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050719china.pdf) (April 11, 2006), p. 22.
8. Shai Oster, "China Plans 15% Boost in Military Spending; Leaders Cite Price of Oil, Soldiers' Pay; Neighbors Are Wary," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2006, p. A8.

ens China, one must wonder: Why this growing investment?”<sup>9</sup>

However, budgets do not tell the whole story. For example, Beijing’s military is rapidly increasing its ballistic missile capability. Short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) production has doubled from 50 per year in 2002 to over 100 per year by 2006.<sup>10</sup> In addition, China is fielding growing numbers of medium-range and intercontinental-range missiles, such as the DF-21 and DF-31 and the submarine-launched Julang-1. Chinese media reports indicate that a new DF-31A intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range of 10,000 kilometers (km) and an improved Julang-2 SLBM with a range of 8,000 km will enter service in four years.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the fact that China’s first-ever military exercises with Russia last summer included drills with the Russian SS-N-22 Moskit supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles, which are specifically designed to sink American aircraft carriers,<sup>12</sup> calls into question Beijing’s peaceful intentions in the region.

Perhaps the most unsettling facet of China’s military buildup is its naval modernization. In addition to four advanced Russian *Sovremenny*-class destroyers that the Chinese navy will have this year, China has been deploying a new series of Type 051 and Type 052 missile destroyers since 1996.<sup>13</sup>

China’s submarine fleet is also growing prodigiously. The Chinese navy has already deployed four super-quiet Russian *Kilo*-class diesel submarines. Eight more *Kilos* are on order from Russian yards, and China has increased production of the new, formidable *Song*-class diesel/electric submarine to 2.5 boats per year. It is also testing a new diesel submarine that the defense intelligence community has designated the *Yuan*. The *Yuan* is heavily inspired by Russian designs, including sound-absorbing tile coatings and a super-quiet seven-blade screw.

The addition of “air-independent propulsion,” which permits a submarine to operate underwater for up to 30 days on battery power, will make the *Song*-class and *Yuan*-class submarines virtually inaudible to existing U.S. surveillance networks, including U.S. nuclear subs. By 2025, Chinese attack submarines could easily outnumber U.S. submarines on station in the Pacific by a five to one ratio, and several Chinese nuclear ballistic missile submarines will be capable of patrolling America’s west coast.<sup>14</sup>

American intelligence analysts and academic researchers are unanimous in their assessment that China’s submarine strategy is aimed at neutralizing America’s carrier-centered naval strength in the Pacific.<sup>15</sup>

9. Donald H. Rumsfeld, remarks at Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, June 4, 2005, at [www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2005/sp20050604-secdef1561.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2005/sp20050604-secdef1561.html) (April 11, 2006).
10. SRBMs were deployed against Taiwan at a pace of 50 per year between 1996 and 2002. Bill Gertz, “Missiles Bolstered Opposite Taiwan,” *The Washington Times*, April 29, 2002, p. A12. By the end of 2005, new SRBM deployments had reached a rate of at least 100 per year. Foster Klug, “Pentagon Official Warns of Chinese Buildup,” Associated Press, March 16, 2006.
11. For a comprehensive look at China’s missile industry, see Evan S. Medeiros, Roger Cliff, Keith Crane, and James C. Mulvenon, *A New Direction for China’s Defense Industry* (Santa Monica, Cal.: RAND Corporation, 2005), pp. 51–108, at [www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG334.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG334.pdf) (April 11, 2006).
12. Agence France–Presse, “Chinese, Russian Defense Chiefs Assess Joint Exercises,” *Defense News*, August 24, 2005, at [www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1054075&C=asiapac](http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1054075&C=asiapac) (April 11, 2006).
13. Including the Type 051C *Shenyang* class, Type 052C *Lanzhou* class, Type 052B *Guangzhou* class, and Type 051B *Luhai* class. For details on these ships and their weapons systems, see “Navy,” *China Defence Today*, at [www.sinodefence.com/navy/surface/052b.asp](http://www.sinodefence.com/navy/surface/052b.asp) (April 11, 2006).
14. For a discussion of this, see John J. Tkacik, Jr., “China’s Submarine Challenge,” Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1001, March 1, 2006, at [www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/wm1001.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/wm1001.cfm).
15. See U.S. Department of Defense, *The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China*; U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, pp. 29–30; and Lyle Goldstein and William Murray, “Undersea Dragons: China’s Maturing Submarine Force,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Spring 2004), pp. 161–196.

Beyond the U.S., what else might China intend for its military buildup? Taiwan is certainly a near-term target of China's military modernization, but some analysts see China's forced "unification" with Taiwan not as an end in itself, but as key to China's ability to project power well into the Pacific. They cite a senior Chinese military theorist:

[Taiwan is of] far reaching significance to breaking international forces' blockade against China's maritime security.... Only when we break this blockade shall we be able to talk about China's rise.... [T]o rise suddenly, China must pass through oceans and go out of the oceans in its future development.<sup>16</sup>

### A Responsible Stakeholder?

In a September 2005 speech, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick asked, "For the United States and the world, the essential question is—how will China use its influence?" To answer that question, he said, "we need to urge China to become a responsible stakeholder in that system."<sup>17</sup> While Zoellick's speech "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" was designed to express concern about Chinese policies that run counter to international norms and standards, Beijing's proliferation record has to be among the most troubling of these policies.

**Serial Proliferator.** For several decades, Beijing has pursued an insouciant approach to the prolifer-

ation of weapons of mass destruction and WMD technologies, components, and materials.<sup>18</sup> As then-Under Secretary of State John Bolton described the problem in 2005, the Chinese government displays a deliberate lack of attention to "the continuing problem of business-as-usual proliferation by Chinese companies."<sup>19</sup> The U.S. Department of State considers China a "serial proliferator" and has sanctioned Chinese companies 80 times (out of a total 115 sanctions actions) for proliferation-related shipments between 2001 and 2005.<sup>20</sup>

**Iran.** Chinese exports of nuclear technology, chemical weapons precursors, and guided missiles to Iran have caused American proliferation officials the most heartburn. For example, in 2003, the Central Intelligence Agency reported that "Chinese entities are continuing work on a zirconium production facility at Esfahan that will enable Iran to produce cladding for reactor fuel." Although Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and is required to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards on its production of zirconium fuel cladding, it has made no moves to do so, and China has exerted no influence to this end.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, China tacitly supports Iran's nuclear power program by ignoring overwhelming evidence that has persuaded the U.S., Germany, France, Britain, and others of Iran's intentions to produce nuclear weapons.

On January 10, 2006, Iran finally removed seals from the last nuclear enrichment laboratories that

16. U.S. Department of Defense, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China*, p. 12.

17. Robert B. Zoellick, "Whither China: From Membership to Responsibility?" remarks to National Committee on U.S.–China Relations, New York City, September 21, 2005, at [www.state.gov/sd/rem/53682.htm](http://www.state.gov/sd/rem/53682.htm) (April 11, 2006).

18. For example, the U.S. has complained about China's assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program since the mid-1980s, and China supplied medium-range ballistic missiles to Saudi Arabia in 1988. For a list of current U.S. sanctions on China for proliferation behavior dating from 1990, see U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2004 Report to Congress*, June 2004, Appendix A, pp. 136–140.

19. John R. Bolton, "Coordinating Allied Approaches to China," remarks to the Tokyo American Center and the Japan Institute for International Affairs, Tokyo, February 7, 2005, at [www.state.gov/t/us/rm/41938.htm](http://www.state.gov/t/us/rm/41938.htm) (April 11, 2006).

20. Bruce Odessey, "Weapons Proliferation Threat a Major U.S. Concern: United States Sanctions China's Repeat Offenders for Controlled Export Lapses," U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs, May 2, 2005, at [usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/May/02-538299.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2005/May/02-538299.html) (April 13, 2006).

21. Central Intelligence Agency, "Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 January Through 30 June 2002," posted November 2004, at [www.cia.gov/cia/reports/721\\_reports/pdfs/721report\\_july\\_dec2003.pdf](http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/721_reports/pdfs/721report_july_dec2003.pdf) (April 11, 2006).



remained under IAEA safeguards. The day before, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister met with the Chinese Foreign Minister in Beijing to brief him “about the views and considerations of the Iranian side.” As one Washington commentator put it, “in other words, Tehran cleared its action with Beijing.”<sup>22</sup> This might explain why China managed to water down subsequent IAEA language censuring Iran. One Western official dryly observed that “technically, China is being difficult.”<sup>23</sup>

On January 31, China’s representative in the IAEA relented in a vote to “report” Iran’s nuclear violations to the U.N. Security Council, provided that no action would be taken until March. On March 20, after the Security Council failed to reach agreement on a formal statement ordering Iran to stop its uranium-enrichment program, China’s U.N. ambassador, Wang Guangya, suggested that no action be taken for “four or six weeks” until the IAEA issues yet another report on whether Iran has ceased its objectionable activities—effectively delaying the matter at least until June when the 35-nation IAEA governing board meets again.

Accordingly, on March 29, the Security Council requested the IAEA governor to report, yet again, in “30 days” on Iran’s progress in complying with IAEA request, thereby ensuring that the issue would not come up inconveniently during Hu Jintao’s April visit to the United States.<sup>24</sup> China’s assumption of the Security Council presidency in April also placed it in a stronger position to stymie efforts to slow Iran’s weapons program.

In addition, China appears to have persuaded Russia to oppose any Security Council action beyond a reprimand calling on Iran to cease uranium enrichment, and it is likely that China will

threaten to veto any U.N. sanctions on Iran. Without sanctions, Iran will have no incentive to negotiate the dismantlement of its nuclear weapons program.

Beijing’s policies appear grounded in a strategic calculation. In April 2002, shortly after President George W. Bush labeled Iran a member of the “Axis of Evil,” Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited Teheran and conveyed a message that China and Iran hope to “prevent domination of a superpower on the entire world,” according to the Iranian press.<sup>25</sup> Jiang also declared that China’s policy was “to oppose American deployments in Central Asia and the Middle East.” He pledged that “one of China’s most important diplomatic missions is to strengthen unity and cooperation with developing countries and to avoid having developing countries become the targets of American military attacks.”<sup>26</sup>

**North Korea.** Washington should not be surprised by China’s lack of interest in deterring the Iranian nuclear weapons program; its behavior mirrors Beijing’s policies toward North Korea.

Washington policymakers must ask themselves why, despite North Korea’s absolute economic and security dependence on China, China’s three years of involvement in multiparty talks on North Korea’s nuclear ambitions have resulted in no progress. Indeed, the situation has worsened.

Since 2002, the United States has sanctioned Chinese companies for providing North Korea with tributyl phosphate, an acid solvent used to extract uranium and plutonium salts from nuclear reactor effluents. The most recent sanction action was in April 2004—incongruously, just one month before the State Department recommended that China be admitted to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, an infor-

22. William R. Hawkins, “China Collusion with Iran... Walking into a Trap?” *The Washington Times*, February 13, 2006, p. A18.

23. Sue Fleming, “Tehran Told to Cease Fuel Research,” Reuters, January 10, 2006.

24. See last paragraph of “Statement by the President of the Security Council,” United Nations Security Council document S/PRST/2006/15, March 29, 2005, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/290/88/PDF/N0629088.pdf>. See also “Foreign Affairs Envoys Try to Break Iran Impasse,” Reuters, March 20, 2006, at [www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1630513&C=mideast](http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=1630513&C=mideast).

25. See “Iran Radio Commentary Says China Ties Can Reduce Dependence on West,” Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Radio, April 19, 2002, transcribed by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, FBIS-NES-2002-0419.

26. Iran National Broadcast Service, “Jiang fang Yilang, Fandui Mei zhujun Dongya Zhongdong” (Jiang visit to Iran, opposes U.S. troops in East Asia, Middle East), *China Times* (Taipei), April 22, 2002, p. 2.

mal international nonproliferation organization.<sup>27</sup> In 2003, China interdicted one such shipment at U.S. insistence,<sup>28</sup> but there is no indication that China has made any other effort to enforce its export controls on North Korea.

In the opinion of arms control experts at the U.S. State Department, China enforces its rules “only under the imminent threat, or in response to the actual imposition, of sanctions,” and China’s failure to respond represents more an “unwillingness” than an “inability” to enforce its export regulations.<sup>29</sup>

Pyongyang removed irradiated fuel cores from its Yongbyon reactor in February 2005 and thus far has apparently fashioned fissile plutonium cores for six to 10 nuclear weapons.<sup>30</sup>

China’s support of the Iranian and Pakistani nuclear programs, both of which have been connected to Pyongyang’s nuclear program, could be grounded in Beijing’s calculation that a nuclear-armed North Korea is in China’s interests. A nuclear-armed North Korea complicates U.S. strategic planning, especially in scenarios involving conflict in the Taiwan Strait or island territorial disputes with Japan.

This may explain why, when North Korea admitted on February 10, 2005, that it already had

nuclear weapons, China’s reaction was a shrug of the shoulders. “We are still researching the situation,” it announced, and China continues to say that it is uncertain whether Pyongyang has a nuclear device. Moreover, China’s steadfast insistence that the six-party talks are the only way to address the situation may mean that North Korea will keep its nuclear weapons indefinitely.

Clearly, Beijing’s involvement with North Korean, Pakistani, and Iranian nuclear programs belies the idea that China has become a responsible stakeholder on weapons proliferation.

**Obstructionism in the War on Terrorism.** China has attempted, with varying degrees of success, to hinder U.S. coalition forces supporting operations in Afghanistan. In June 2005, China pressured its Central Asian allies in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to demand that the U.S. set a timetable for withdrawal from U.S. bases. Within weeks, American officials accused China of “bullying” Uzbekistan to remove U.S. bases and cajoling neighboring Kyrgyzstan to agitate for increased U.S. funding to retain bases there.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, American bases were closed in Uzbekistan and nearly shuttered in Kyrgyzstan.

27. In May 2004, Assistant Secretary of State John Wolf told a congressional committee that the U.S. still supported China’s membership in the NSG: “Let me be clear on the April cases. . . . [T]he Iran Non-Proliferation Act covers all of the export control regimes, not just the Nuclear Suppliers Group list. And most of the sanctions that were imposed on Chinese entities related to things that were non-nuclear.” He then noted, “We have not seen the kinds of activity that worried us several years ago. That does not mean that it is not taking place. It is only that we have not seen it.” Hearing, *Should China Join the Nuclear Suppliers Group?* Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, 108th Cong., 2nd Sess., May 18, 2004, pp. 16–17; emphasis added.

28. See Colin L. Powell, “Remarks at Conference on China–U.S. Relations,” Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, November 5, 2003, at [www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/25950.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2003/25950.htm) (April 11, 2006). A RAND Corporation researcher sees the Chinese action as a sign of cooperation. Evan S. Medeiros, *Chasing the Dragon: Assessing China’s System of Export Controls for WMD-Related Goods and Technologies* (Santa Monica, Cal.: RAND Corporation, 2005), p. 90, at [www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND\\_MG353.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2005/RAND_MG353.pdf) (April 11, 2006). However, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher refused to make a judgment on whether China is helping North Korea’s nuclear program “without having to base it on intelligence sources,” which he could not do. Intelligence officials “told *The Washington Times* that a Chinese company in Dalian sent 20 tons of tributyl phosphate to North Korea earlier this month. The chemical is believed to be for North Korea’s program to turn spent reactor fuel into weapons-grade material.” Nicholas Kravev, “Kremlin Divided on How to Disarm Pyongyang,” *The Washington Times*, December 18, 2002, at [www.nicholaskrlev.com/WT-korea-121802.html](http://www.nicholaskrlev.com/WT-korea-121802.html) (April 11, 2006).

29. Paula A. DeSutter in hearing, *China’s Proliferation Practices and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, 108th Cong., 1st Sess., July 24, 2003, pp. 7–31, esp. p. 26, at [www.uscc.gov/hearings/2003hearings/transcripts/03\\_07\\_24tran.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2003hearings/transcripts/03_07_24tran.pdf) (April 11, 2006).

30. Private conversations with former Bush Administration officials.

A number of U.S. officials have remarked about China's lack of enthusiasm for the global war on terrorism.<sup>32</sup> One reason for China's disinterest is ideological. Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin has cautioned against "unreserved support for the war on terror" lest it aid the United States in its quest for hegemony.<sup>33</sup>

**Support for Oppression.** Another reason to hedge against China is its support for illiberal regimes, insulating them against criticism on human rights from the United States and other Western democracies. The Beijing regime views constant harassment from the West on human rights issues as undermining its own legitimacy. To the extent that it can defend despots around the world—such as the leaders of Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Burma—as only “exploring a road to development suited to their national conditions,”<sup>34</sup> it can claim that its own lack of civil and political rights is suited to China's national conditions.

Despite international concern about human rights in China, the post-Tiananmen Beijing regime remains and will probably continue to be a counterliberal force, encouraging despotism and undermining democracy at home as well as in Asia and around the globe.

### What the Administration and Congress Should Do

Hedging against China as a new military superpower is a prudent posture, but hedging must become an active strategy as opposed to a mere slogan. The Administration's task now is to insist that

its national security bureaucracy act on the urgency of the China challenge as it makes Asia policy. Specifically, the U.S. should:

- **Advance reform in China.** Change in Chinese policies will not evolve naturally. Reforms must be undertaken, but they will come only with strong international pressure. U.S. policy must include a vocal public diplomacy campaign to discredit the abysmal political and human rights record of the Beijing regime.
- **Strengthen ties with Japan and India.** Japan and India, two of the world's most populous democracies and among the leading economic powers in Asia, are natural partners of the United States in managing China's rise. New Delhi, Tokyo, and Washington should expand their strategic discussions on China.
- **Protect Asia's democracies.** Public diplomacy in the form of presidential and Cabinet-level speeches that reassert America's intention to remain an Asia-Pacific power is a strategic imperative. Reaffirming America's commitment to Asian democracies would buttress relations in the region. While slogans are not a substitute for policy, authoritative speeches help give coherence to policy.
- **Deepen the strategic dialogue with Europe.** Formal regular strategic consultations with America's European allies on China will help to address the challenges of Chinese security threats, proliferation, and support for oppressive regimes.

31. Ann Scott Tyson, “Russia and China Bullying Central Asia, U.S. Says: Pentagon Pressured to Pull Out of Uzbek, Kyrgyz Bases,” *The Washington Post*, July 15, 2005, A19, at [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/14/AR2005071401768.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/14/AR2005071401768.html) (April 11, 2006).

32. For an extended discussion of this problem, see John J. Tkacik, Jr., “Time for Washington to Take a Realistic Look at China Policy,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 1717, December 22, 2003, at [www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/bg1717.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/bg1717.cfm).

33. Liu Jianfei, “Renqing Fankong yu fanbade guanxi.”

34. China has praised North Korea for following a development model suited to its national conditions. See Luo Hui, “Jin Richeng hui Li Changchun: Chaozhong Renmin Chuantong Youyi Bu Ke Po” (Kim Jong Il sees Li Changchun: The traditional friendship between the peoples of the DPRK and China is unbreakable), Xinhua News Agency, September 12, 2004, at [www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/1024/2778612.html](http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/1024/2778612.html) (April 11, 2006). China uses similar phraseology to support dictatorships in Africa. See Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “China's African Policy,” January 12, 2006, at [www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm) (April 11, 2006).

- **Downgrade the strategic dialogue with China.** While the State Department had downgraded the strategic dialogues with Japan and Australia to the under-secretary level, it launched a new deputy-level “senior dialogue” with China in 2005. This senior dialogue has proven fruitless.<sup>35</sup> It should be downgraded or terminated until the Chinese begin to show evidence of becoming a responsible stakeholder.
- **Support Taiwan’s democracy.** To counter Beijing’s campaign to isolate Taiwan, the U.S. should support Taiwan’s meaningful participation in international organizations such as the World Health Organization and informal counterproliferation regimes such as the Australia Group, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Wassenaar Arrangement, and the Missile Technology Control Regime. Opening talks with Taiwan on a free trade agreement would also serve America’s strategic aims in this regard.
- **Confront Beijing’s subtle but substantial support for the North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons programs.** Public statements of disappointment over China’s support for North Korea’s and Iran’s nuclear weapons ambitions would help both to clear the air and to deny China international public opinion leverage. As long as the U.S. pretends that China is helping, China can claim to be an honest broker between the U.S. and the nuclear pariahs. Washington should publicly express anger at Beijing’s eternal temporizing on Iranian and North Korean nuclear proliferation.
- **Maintain military pre-eminence in the Pacific.** The Department of Defense is already increasing U.S. naval and air presence in the Western Pacific, despite the pressures on U.S. ground forces in the Middle East and Central Asia. To support this effort, Congress must appropriate additional resources to bolster America’s ability to project power in the Western Pacific, especially for the submarine force.

## Conclusion

Beijing’s behavior in the international arena has moved too far in the wrong direction for anyone to say that China will ever act as a responsible stakeholder without considerable pressure. Unless Chinese leaders believe that their policies will bring serious consequences, they will have no incentive to moderate them.

That American leaders now openly talk of “hedging” China should give their Chinese counterparts pause, but unless the talk of hedging is accompanied by action, China will dismiss it as just more bluff and bluster. If China successfully calls American bluff and bluster, its power and influence in Asia will only strengthen, and America’s will diminish. The predictable result will be a 21st century Asia under China’s sway and Asian democracy subject to China’s gentle protection.

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35. William C. Mann, “U.S., China End Talks Agreeing to Disagree,” Associated Press, December 8, 2005. See also Glenn Kessler, “Zoellick Details Discussions with China on Future of the Korean Peninsula,” *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2005, p. A22, at [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/06/AR2005090601562.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/06/AR2005090601562.html) (April 11, 2006). After 20 hours of discussions with his Chinese counterpart at the August 2005 “senior dialogue,” Zoellick admitted that he still “did not know if the Chinese deals being struck with countries the United States considers problematic were driven by individual bureaucracies seeking market openings or part of a ‘strategic plan.’”