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## The U.S. Position in Asia: Stronger Than Ever

*The Honorable Condoleezza Rice*

Thank you very much. I'd first like to thank Heritage Foundation President Ed Feulner for the kind introduction, and I'd also like you to know that the origin of the speech is actually that Ed and I were talking and he said, "You know, it's been a while since you came to talk to us. Why don't you come back and talk to us about Asia before you go to Asia?" So that's why I'm here.

I see a lot of friends this afternoon, and I want to thank all of you for being here. The last time I was here, I talked about U.S. policy in Asia, I talked about the rise of Asia, and I talked about our policies toward North Korea. I'd like to revisit some of those topics today.

### Improving the U.S. Position in Asia

The rise of Asia is a profound geopolitical trend that is reshaping our world today. But I believe that the United States, contrary to much of the commentary, is actually in a stronger position in Asia than at any other time. For over 60 years, the U.S. presence in Asia—diplomatic, economic, and military—has had a calming effect on relations between the region's major powers, relations that have been marked historically by tension, mistrust, and conflict. Since the end of the Cold War, as the wealth and the power and the aspirations of Asian states have grown, there have been concerns that Asia's rise could strain its often frail security relationships, and that, perhaps, Asia's future could look something like Europe's past.

This has been far more than a theoretical concern, because I can tell you that at the beginning of the Bush Administration, it was a bit rocky in Asia. Tensions were rising across the Taiwan Strait. U.S.–China rela-

### Talking Points

- The rise of Asia is a profound geopolitical trend that is reshaping our world today, and the United States is in a stronger position in Asia than at any other time.
- Since 2001, one of the Bush Administration's highest priorities has been to deepen the prospects for peace and security in Northeast Asia.
- No final agreement can be concluded unless we verify the elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons and its programs.
- The non-negotiable demands of human dignity are not bargaining chips.
- We will hold North Korea accountable and if necessary re-impose any applicable sanctions.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/hl1091.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/hl1091.cfm)

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tions were strained by the downed EP-3 plane. Violence in Kashmir was pulling India and Pakistan toward conflict. A failed state in Afghanistan was a source of regional and, as we found out, global instability. And North Korea, illicitly pursuing a uranium-enrichment capability, announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, threw international inspectors out of the country, and began once again to produce plutonium.

These actions contributed to rising tensions across Asia—but most importantly in Northeast Asia, the most dynamic part of the region and, historically, the most volatile. Northeast Asia is the geopolitical intersection of several major powers: Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia. These countries have a long history of rivalry that has led to repeated conflicts, often drawing the United States in, because we have been a Pacific nation for most of our history.

Since 2001, one of our Administration's highest priorities has been to deepen the prospects for peace and security in Northeast Asia, and I believe we are succeeding in that effort. We have reaffirmed and modernized our historic alliances with fellow democracies Japan and South Korea. Our relationships with these allies remain the pillars of regional stability, and we have broadened their scope. We have supported Japan's effort to play a broader global role befitting its great power status. Similarly, we have brought our alliance with South Korea into the 21st century and put it to use, not only to advance regional security, but also to meet global challenges. And by concluding a strong free trade agreement, which we call on Congress to pass, we and our South Korean ally could strengthen the power and the prosperity and the appeal of the democratic model of development in Asia.

Together, the U.S. alliances with Japan and South Korea are now strategic platforms to tackle the global challenges of our time—from failed states and terrorism to weapons proliferation and climate change—and to advance our common values, both in Asia and beyond, to places like Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, we have worked on and, in fact, recast our relations with China and Russia. We have built constructive partnerships and, though to be sure, they are not resting on common values, they do often rest on common interests.

We've worked with our friends and our allies to ensure that China's troubling military buildup does not threaten the region and to urge China to change irresponsible policies. Yet we have treated China with respect, and we've urged it to use its rising power as a responsible stakeholder, working with us to address common global problems that destabilize the international system.

We've adopted a similar approach with Russia. We've raised our concerns and differences, identified areas of agreement, and cooperated on matters of common interest, from advancing security to cooperation on energy and the environment. And we recently concluded a new strategic framework agreement that spells out the many interests on which we and Russia must cooperate. This can guide our relationship for years, even though it is a complex and, at times, very difficult relationship.

Altogether, since 2001, the United States has improved our relationship with every state in Northeast Asia simultaneously. Now I'm a political scientist, and that wasn't supposed to be possible. There are other strategic accomplishments in Asia as well: partnerships with a newly democratic Afghanistan, a democratic Pakistan, and an historic transformation of our relationship with the rising democratic power, India. We've had an enhanced partnership with ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and a new global security agenda with our historic ally in Australia. We have new, deeper relations with other emerging powers, particularly with a democratic Indonesia. When all of this is seen together, it amounts to a new strategic foundation for U.S. influence in Asia, a platform of partnerships that will enable America to advance its interests and its values in this dynamic region for years to come.

In short, we now have better relations with the nations of Northeast Asia than they have with one another. Rather than hoarding this capital, we're trying to use it. We're helping the region's major powers to improve relations among them, to build a future defined more mutually—by mutually beneficial cooperation rather than zero-sum competition.

### **A Multilateral Approach Toward North Korea**

This broader approach also explains the basis for how we have proceeded concerning North Korea.

forum in Northeast Asia for the major powers to discuss their security concerns together. In the past, a major flashpoint of conflict among them has been the Korean Peninsula. This could have been the case again as tensions rose over North Korea's behavior in 2002.

Instead, the United States has taken a different approach. In October 2002, President George W. Bush met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in the living room at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. The President knew that the North Korean pursuit of nuclear weapons was a regional problem requiring a regional solution. He explained to President Jiang in very, very clear terms that China would have to play a key role if the North Korean issue was to be resolved peacefully. He also recognized that the very process of six-party diplomacy, of all the major parties in Northeast Asia working together to solve a common problem, could serve as a model for new thinking about regional security.

In this way, we have sought to turn a crisis into an opportunity. We have sought to turn a potential source of conflict into a source of cooperation. I would submit to you that in this broader aspect of the policy there are some successes. In contrast to where things stood in 2001, tensions among the major powers in Northeast Asia are now lower than at any time in recent memory. Relations between Japan and China, China and South Korea, and South Korea and Japan all are improving.

To be sure, the six-party framework has not caused these breakthroughs, but it has contributed. It has helped. Our decision to support China as the Chair of the Six-Party Talks has also been a strong incentive for Beijing to conduct itself responsibly on the North Korean issue. In time, the six parties have talked about formalizing these patterns of cooperation and creating a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism.

At present, though, our first and highest priority is ensuring the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. All of the commitments made to reach this goal of denuclearization are made among six states, not two. That said, to advance the diplomacy, the six parties recognize that, from time to time, we have to meet in variable groupings. So, at times Japan and North Korea have met. Sometimes

it's Russia and China. It's very often China and North Korea. Sometimes, it's the United States and our allies, Japan and South Korea. And yes, sometimes it is the United States and North Korea.

We are now reaching a point at which all sides will have some very difficult choices to make, including the United States. With all of the present focus on the very tactical steps that we're taking, we must keep the broader goal in mind, the elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons and programs—all of them. North Korea has said that it is committed to this goal. We'll see. No final agreement can be concluded unless we verify the elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons and its programs. It may very well be the case that North Korea does not want to give up its nuclear weapons and its programs. That is a very real possibility. But we and our partners should test it, and the best way to do so is through the six-party framework.

Our Administration has weighed the potential benefits and the risks of this current course. We have done so with no illusions about the nature of the North Korean regime, about its past record, or about its behavior. And today, I would like to offer you an assessment of where we stand and where we're headed, and why we think that this current policy is the best option to secure a complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

### **Diplomacy: More Than Talking**

Let me first stress an important point: Diplomacy is not a synonym for talking. Diplomacy means structuring a set of incentives and disincentives that make clear to states that changes in their behavior will be met with changes in ours. This is an approach that we're taking with North Korea—and with Iran, for that matter. And if these governments doubt that the United States will recognize positive changes in their behavior, they can look to Libya, a former adversary that made the strategic choice to renounce terrorism and give up its weapons of mass destruction. It is slowly returning to the community of nations with economic benefits and enhanced security. The United States has no permanent enemies.

We and our partners have offered North Korea a very clear choice about what its future can be, but it is a choice that only the North can make. No one

can make it for it. If the North continues to violate international law, destabilize the region, and threaten the international community, then the other five parties, acting together, will show North Korea that the cost for irresponsible behavior will continue to increase. We saw a powerful demonstration of this when, not one week after North Korea tested a nuclear device in October 2006, the other five parties agreed on and pressed for a Chapter VII resolution [in the U.N. Security Council], the most far-reaching international punitive action against North Korea since the Korean War. Further confrontation will entail further costs. This is one option North Korea can pursue, but there is another.

If the regime makes different choices, more responsible choices, the other five parties have made it clear that a path is open for North Korea to achieve better recognition and security as a member of the international community. This is the vision of the September 19, 2005, joint statement, which all six parties signed. North Korea, in that agreement, pledged to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs. And the other parties laid out what North Korea stands to gain by implementing its obligations, including humanitarian and development aid, non-nuclear energy assistance, respect for sovereignty, commitment to the principles of the U.N. Charter, and a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. I quote from that document: “joint efforts for lasting peace and stability in Northeast Asia.”

Even as we work toward denuclearization, though, we will continue to press the North Korean regime to improve the lives of its people. We’ve been very active on this issue with the support of many in Congress, especially through legislation sponsored by Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) and by others. We care about the horrible, deplorable conditions of the North Korean people. Jay Lefkowitz, our Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea, will soon travel to the region to discuss our concerns with North Korea’s neighbors. We have helped to resettle refugees fleeing lives of repression and misery in North Korea. We have raised the issue of human rights. We have helped to facilitate talks between Japan and North Korea concerning the tragic cases of Japanese abductees. The United States will never be silent in our support for human

rights. The non-negotiable demands of human dignity are not bargaining chips.

### Getting Results Through Diplomacy

Again, our goal, as stated in the 2005 joint statement, is to do this while verifiably eliminating all of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and programs. To begin achieving this goal, the six parties signed implementation agreements in February and October of 2007. These agreements lay out a series of steps by which all six parties will execute mutual responsibilities, action for action. And this is the effort in which we are now engaged. We are at the start, not at the end of that effort. But it has already achieved some important results.

North Korea is disabling its Yongbyon nuclear facilities—not freezing them, as they did before, but actually disabling them for the purpose of abandonment. And both the United States and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) personnel on the ground—who are on the ground in Yongbyon as we speak—are monitoring this work. Let us be clear: The Yongbyon facility was producing nuclear material for weapons, and we have set back that capability. And every day that North Korea is less able to develop material for nuclear weapons is a safer day for our friends, our allies, and for us.

North Korea has also given us nearly 19,000 pages of documents detailing production records of its nuclear programs. This is an important step in the process of beginning to verify North Korea’s claims about its nuclear programs. If North Korea makes a declaration of its nuclear programs, as it has pledged to do, these documents, along with access to other documents, relevant sites, and key personnel will contribute to our efforts to verify whether that declaration is indeed accurate and complete.

And what have we given up in return? Well, we haven’t given North Korea any significant economic assistance. We have not engaged in any trade or investment. And North Korea is still largely isolated from the international financial system. We haven’t made any security guarantees or normalized relations. And most importantly, we have not lifted any of the pages and pages worth of sanctions that are still in effect on North Korea, both numerous bilateral sanctions passed by our Congress and multilat-

eral sanctions to which we are a party through the U.N. Security Council.

What we have given the regime is 134,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, which cannot be used in cars or trucks or tanks or high-performance engines of any kind. Its only real use is to be burned for heat. We've also allowed the release of \$25 million—not billion, \$25 million—of North Korea's money that had been frozen in an action against a bank in Macau. The matter concerning the bank in Macau was resolved and the money returned to North Korea. But as a result of its history of illicit behavior and our government's efforts, North Korea continues to have difficulty fully accessing the international financial system. North Korea will have a long road to earn back the trust and confidence of the financial community.

It is true that we have also provided food assistance to the North Korean people. But this is unrelated to our diplomacy, because providing food to starving people should never be treated as a tool of policy or as a point of leverage. The policy on which we are now engaged is one that has next steps. North Korea will soon give its declaration of nuclear programs to China, the Chair of the Denuclearization Working Group. And President Bush would then notify Congress of our intention to remove North Korea from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list and to cease the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act. In the next 45 days after that, before those actions go into effect, we would continue to assess the level of North Korean cooperation in helping to verify the accuracy and completeness of its declaration. If that cooperation is insufficient, we will respond accordingly. But let us be clear on what that really means. The statutory criteria for the State Sponsors of Terrorism list are quite specific: Has the state in question provided financial or material support for international terrorism in the past six months?

As to being removed from the Trading with the Enemy Act, just about every restriction that might be lifted will be, in fact, kept in place because of different U.S. laws and regulations. So as we consider our current policy, we are also aware that nuclear aspirants and would-be proliferators are watching—and watching very closely. I think this policy

sends the right signal. It shows that the United States will rally a coalition of major powers to impose growing costs on any state that thinks it can illicitly build nuclear weapons and then gain support from the international community. Furthermore, it also shows that the United States will work with equal dedication to offer real incentives for states to make better decisions, and that if they do, we will hold up our end of the agreement and deliver the benefits we've promised. But it also shows that behavior that does not take into consideration the obligations undertaken with the international community can have a different course.

### **Skepticism and Verification**

As we consider our current policy, we are saying to ourselves, "What if North Korea ultimately violates an agreement we reach? What if it cheats?" And this is a legitimate concern; considering North Korea's track record, it is a necessary concern.

The answer is simple: We will hold North Korea accountable. We will re-impose any applicable sanction that we have waived, and we will add new ones. And because North Korea would be violating an agreement not only with us, but also with Japan, South Korea, Russia, and China, those countries also would take appropriate actions. They would see that the United States had dealt in good faith, that we had made every honest effort to give North Korea a path to a better future, and that North Korea, and North Korea alone, would be to blame for scuttling any agreement. This would help us to rally our partners and to exert pressure on the North Korean regime.

Verifying an agreement with North Korea will be a serious challenge. This is the most secretive and opaque regime in the entire world. Consequently, our intelligence is far from perfect or complete. We therefore need to be very clear about what we know and what we do not know about North Korea's programs and activities and, as importantly, we need to know what we still must learn. We know, for instance, that North Korea has had an active plutonium program for many years. We know it has produced enough fissile material for several nuclear devices, one of which has already been tested. We know that North Korea has proliferated nuclear

technology to Syria. But we do not know the full extent of North Korea's proliferation activities. We also know that North Korea has pursued a uranium enrichment program, but we do not know its full extent or exactly what this effort has yielded.

As we've gotten deeper into the process, we've been troubled by additional information about North Korea's uranium-enrichment capability. And this information has reaffirmed skepticism about dealing with North Korea. That said, we also recognize that through our current policy, we are actually increasing our knowledge of North Korea's nuclear programs. And this reaffirms our belief that we stand the best chance of learning more about North Korea's continuing and current efforts.

Considering the inherent limitations of any intelligence on North Korea and considering North Korea's history, we will not just trust North Korea to fulfill its commitments. Rather, we are insisting on verification. We will insist on verifying that North Korea is fulfilling its pledge to abandon all of its programs, as well as its recent pledge to cease all proliferation activities, and to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty under IAEA safeguards. The goal of our verification effort must be to deter cheating by North Korea, to make cheating as hard as possible, to enhance our ability to detect violations, and if we do, to enable us to respond in a timely manner. Several principles will guide this endeavor.

Verification must be a cooperative effort implemented on behalf of the six parties, as appropriate personnel from the United States, Japan, China, South Korea, Russia, and the IAEA carry out the verification activities. Verification should require, among other measures, on-site access to facilities and sites in North Korea. Verification should require the collection and removal of environmental and material samples, as well as forensic analysis of materials and equipment, all at North Korean sites and facilities. Verification should require access to design documents, operating and production records, reports, logbooks, and other records for all facilities associated with the production and processing of all nuclear materials in North Korea. And verification should require interviews with North Koreans involved in nuclear programs. Verification will not be easy, but it is essential. And the six par-

ties are developing a detailed verification and implementation plan incorporating these principles.

### **Our Best Policy Option**

So, ladies and gentlemen, considering what benefits we could gain and what risks we must tolerate, and considering what we know and do not know about North Korea, how shall we evaluate our current policy? Is it right to proceed cautiously? I would say to you, yes. Will our policy get us everything we want? No, no policy ever will. But in the final calculation, is this the best among alternatives? Yes.

If we thought bilateral U.S. engagement alone would convince North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons and programs, we would do it. If we thought that U.S. pressure alone could remove the threat from North Korea at an acceptable cost, we would do that too. But we believe the best way to achieve our national security goals is through our current policy, which invests all of North Korea's neighbors in an active effort to deter, prevent, and end the regime's proliferation activities and to dismantle its nuclear weapons program—parties that can bring to bear consequences and parties that can do that together should North Korea violate its commitments.

North Korea's nuclear weapons program came into being over decades. It is a danger to the region and to the world. And it's going to take some time to unravel its capability and to put North Korea out of the nuclear weapons business. But we have a better chance of doing that if we work with Japan, South Korea, China, and Russia.

Together, we have the best chance of getting North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and materials. Together, we have the best chance of verifying that North Korea does not violate agreements that we make. Together, we have the best chance of holding North Korea accountable for irresponsible behavior. And together, we have the best chance of building an approach to regional security in North-east Asia that replaces old patterns of conflict with new patterns of cooperation.

Thank you very much.

—*The Honorable Condoleezza Rice is U.S. Secretary of State. These remarks were delivered at The Heritage Foundation.*