



U.S. Policy Toward Asia

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
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Thank you. Thank you very much. I'd first like to thank Ed 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 being here. And 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. And I'd like to revisit some of those topics today.

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.

Now, this has been far more than a theoretical concern, because I can tell you that at the beginning of our Administration, it was a bit rocky in Asia. Tensions were rising across the Taiwan Strait. U.S.-China relations 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 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. And 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, and 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 our 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.

All together, 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 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. And 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. This broader approach also explains the basis for how we have proceeded concerning North Korea. There is no established forum in Northeast Asia for the major powers to discuss their security concerns together. And 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 Bush met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in his living room, at his ranch in Crawford. The President knew that the North Korean pursuit of nuclear weapons was a regional problem requiring a regional solution. He explained to President Jiang Zemin 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. And 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, South Korea and Japan, all are improving.

Now, 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. And 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 the 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.

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, and that 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 and 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 7 resolution, 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 members 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 UN 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 Brownback 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.

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. And 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 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 personnel on the ground – are on the ground in Yongbyon as we speak, monitoring this work. Let's 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 multilateral sanctions to which we are a party through the UN 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. And 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. And 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. And so 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.

And 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 must still 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.

Now 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 Nonproliferation 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 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 parties are developing a detailed verification and implementation plan incorporating these principles.

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 Northeast Asia that replaces old patterns of conflict with new patterns of cooperation.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Madame Secretary. Ladies and gentlemen, the Secretary has agreed to take a few questions.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, even though most of your comments were obviously directed toward Northeast Asia, you did mention South Asia, so I want to direct you that way a little bit, if I may. Are U.S. military objectives in Afghanistan remotely compatible with the commitments that the Pakistani democratic government has made internally? How do you see the U.S. negotiating arrangements with the Pakistani Government in that regard?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, thank you. Well, first of all, we have – we were strong advocates for a democratic election in Pakistan, and we're working with this new civilian government. It's a step forward for Pakistan. We've made very clear to the Pakistani Government that the extremists who operate in the Northwest frontier in the Federal Administered Tribal Areas are a threat to them and to us and to everybody on the globe, and that we have a common goal and a common objective in making sure that they cannot operate. After all, it was the forces of some of those people, some of those extremists, that killed Benazir Bhutto. So we have a common objective here.

Now, we have – it is obviously the sovereign state of Pakistan's right to handle this situation, but we've made very clear that we are concerned that any deal with the region would be very clear that terrorists cannot be harbored, terrorists cannot operate with impunity, because ultimately that's going to come back, first and foremost, to haunt Pakistan. It will haunt the rest of us too, but first and foremost, it's going to haunt Pakistan.

We're trying to develop with the government a positive agenda for that region, and we have to remember that region wasn't governed for years and years and years. And so the positive agenda is to work in this very poor region with aid projects and with ways to – will give the people a better choice. After all, in some of the toughest areas, when allowed to vote, they did not vote for extremist parties. So there's something there to work with, but it has to be, as is always the case in counter insurgency, you have to be willing to make sure that the bad forces are destroyed and you have to be willing to give the population another chance. And so – or a chance to live a better life.

And so that's been the nature of our conversation with the Pakistani Government. It's a difficult time for them as they try to settle in, but we're prepared to help, and we're prepared to help with a better life for the population, and we're prepared to help in helping them to get the means to deal with this area where terrorists who are a threat to them as well as us, are lodged.

Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you, Madame Secretary. Is there an agreement between North Korea and the other five parties on what is entailed in a complete and correct declaration, for example, number of weapons, UEP proliferation; and secondly, is there an agreement on what phase three entails, whether the dismantlement of the nuclear weapons is included in that? Recent comments by a former U.S. official who returned from North Korea suggest North Korea may have a different understanding of phase three. Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Well, let me get first to phase three. North Korea has an understanding that it signed on to that the abandonment of all of its weapons and weapons programs is the endpoint for this agreement. Not the abandonment of some of them, not showing us what they've done in the past, but the abandonment, dismantlement. That is very clear.

Now, I've read and I've heard people say, well, they don't have any intention to do that. Well, if they have no intention to do that, then we will not move forward in phase three. That's why this is in phases.

Now, the parties have only begun to discuss how phase three will unfold, what the obligations of the five will be to North Korea if it indeed begins to and then is prepared to complete the verifiable elimination of its nuclear programs. But those are discussions that will begin very shortly.

As to phase two, which is to end with the declaration and disablement, the parties are in agreement that the declaration must address the North Korean programs and facilities and that it must provide the means to know whether that declaration is complete and accurate. Obviously, we're not going to take the word of the North Koreans that what they say on the piece of paper is a full representation of what they have. We will make a judgment as to whether or not we think, in accordance with what we know, it is, but we have to go and we have to verify. Let me give you an example.

In order to verify the amount of plutonium that they've actually made, you have to have records, many of which they've given us, but you also have to have access to the reactor itself and to the waste pool, and they've said they will give us that access. What we've done, in a sense, is move up from issues that were to be taken up in phase three, like the verification, like access to the reactor, into phase two. Because we recognize that once we get the declaration, it's going to be important to be able to verify it, and verify it over a period of time with an understanding that if we find something at some point in time that's not right, we'll act accordingly.

As to the weapons themselves, we expect that that is a phase three issue. But once we have a clearer view of how much plutonium has actually been made, I think we'll also have a clearer view of what might have happened to it.

Let's see. I'm going to take questions on this side. If you're press, I'm going to take the Heritage folks first if you don't – don't mind, okay? All right.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. I like the way you focus on North Korea issue. I think you're right that the Bush Administration has done great job. But can you – is it too late to do same thing for you to – to engage China and Russia and also the region in Iraq and Afghanistan to do the same thing?

SECRETARY RICE: In terms of – I'm sorry –

QUESTION: In terms of a reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan. (Inaudible) I was reading news of it yesterday that China right now is going into Iraq, helping Iraq into (inaudible). But Saudi Arabia has not been there. So I think that this kind of economic reconstruction, use the same kind of model, and how many nations can be (inaudible) besides Russia and China? Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Well, we do have a good model, actually, for international support to the reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, they're somewhat different circumstances. Iraq is obviously a country that has significant resources of its own. The Iraqi budget this year will be close to \$50 billion. That is the combined budgets of Oman, Kuwait, and Jordan. So the Iraqis have significant resources of their own, and they need more in the way of technical assistance, more in the way of capacity building, and there is actually – and debt relief. And there is an International Compact with Iraq that has met a number of times, and that Compact has certain obligations that the Iraqis undertake and certain obligations that the international community will take. But it's less a kind of foreign assistance pact, and more that to do with capacity building, debt relief, political support, and so forth. It's a huge number of countries and, by the way, both China and Russia have been part of that Compact.

When it comes to Afghanistan, you're dealing with a very poor country. You're dealing with a country that has suffered decades of civil war and conflict. You're dealing with a country that has had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. As a matter of fact, it's one of the poorest countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa. And so this is a country that needs a sustained level of foreign assistance. And I just got back from an important donors conference in Paris, for Afghanistan, where the Afghans presented a five-year plan for reconstruction and development, particularly emphasizing roads and electricity. And the international community is then going to donate to those efforts. And, again, both Russia and China have been a part of that effort.

And so I think we have models that work, even though they are somewhat different. In the Asian theme, I might note that Japan has been extremely generous, particularly in Afghanistan, but both South Korea and Japan have been involved with Iraq and with provincial reconstruction in Afghanistan. So I think we have a pretty good model for going forward. But countries are now going to have to meet their commitments.

One of the hardest things about donor conferences is you go to the conference, everybody pledges, and then the pledges seem to get lost and forgotten. And so one reason we keep having these meetings is to remind people of their pledges.

Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, there are coal fires in China that equal -- in the production of greenhouse gases, many experts believe they equal or exceed all the greenhouse gases we produce from our cars and trucks in the United States. China has indicated they would like to work on putting these out, but they don't have the money nor the technology. Is there any possibility, if we approached China, that they would respond to a joint venture effort to put these fires out, and then actually take that technology to Indonesia, to India, to Russia? We -- actually we have two of them in the United States that are burning. Would that -- is that -- would China -- how would China respond to that approach?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I don't -- I can't make a comment about this specific proposal, but I can tell you how they've responded to the notion of cooperation on clean technology and on dealing with the problems of greenhouse gas emissions, CO₂ emissions, and climate change. One of the reasons that the United States, the President, rejected the Kyoto Treaty was that I don't care what you do in terms of U.S. and European emissions, if China and India are not part of it you're not going to make any progress. And Kyoto was a framework that was not going to work. We now are working toward a framework in which China -- countries like China and India, could be included. But it's, frankly, not going to be a one-size-fits-all kind of approach, because if you tell China or India that they have to stop growing in order to deal with greenhouse gas emissions, they're not going to do it.

If you tell them that we can together, for instance, harness technologies to deal with coal fires, harness technologies to deal with the fact that the Chinese are building coal plants at a very, very rapid pace, clean coal technology and others, then you are going to get the Chinese and the Indians bought into a regime. And so the President has had an approach that talks about the major economies, which include China and India working together with Europe, with the United States, to have a program for reducing greenhouse gas emissions over a period of time, with perhaps a goal for doing that. He will press that case at the G-8 in -- when he goes to Japan.

We have already got a head start on that, because we developed an Asia Pacific clean energy partnership with China, India, the United States, Australia involved in it, South Korea involved in it, and it's precisely to get public and private partnerships to deal with the kinds of very specific problems that you talked about. So we found a very -- a China that is very much amenable to cooperation on these issues, but not at the expense of the growth of its economy, and certainly not with a kind of one-size-fits-all approach that would strain its economic growth. And so I think that the approach the President has taken, and I believe is now being embraced by much of the world, will bring China and others into a framework that would allow us to address this in a sensible way.

Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, I have a question. I just want to know how safe are we from a nuclear attack? Period. Are we ready for one?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, look, I think that – let me not speak to the nuclear issue, but we're safer than we were on September 11th in general, but we are not yet safe.

Look, I understand that there are a lot of people debating have we fought terrorism in the right way, has the Bush Administration been overly zealous about the fight against terrorism? But I would tell you something: If you were in a position of authority on September 11th, every day since has been September 12th. And if you were in a position of authority on September 11th, every day since then you have said to yourself, "Oh my God, what can I do not to let it happen again."

And so this President was prepared to do everything within our laws, everything within our treaty obligations, to make sure that we were doing everything from the time we got up until the time we went to bed to try to keep America safe. And you know what? It's an unfair fight because we have to be right 100 percent of the time, and they've got to be right once. And so it's hard.

And I know that as the memories of September 11th have faded, we feel safer. But if we're going to stay safer, it requires extraordinary vigilance, it requires extraordinary defensive measures, but it also requires meeting them on their own turf. And that's why dealing with the root causes in places like the Middle East, working with allies, whether it's Pakistan or Saudi Arabia or others, to root out terrorism at its core – this is the great struggle.

And as to the nuclear issue, you know, there is no worse nightmare than the bringing together of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. It is one reason that I think we've worked so hard on the nonproliferation piece. And we have had successes. Libya is out of the business, verifiably. The A.Q. Khan network, about which we're continuing to learn more, is at least out of the business. We can, I believe, deal with what North Korea has produced in terms of materials that might be proliferated and put a collar around it of the other five parties to try to keep it from proliferating. There isn't any higher priority than proliferation. We've had the Proliferation Security Initiative, which some 80 countries are together using intelligence to deal with suspicious cargo.

So time and time again, the Administration has stepped up about proliferation issues. We do it because it's important, but we also do it because anybody's worst nightmare is that nexus of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Yes, ma'am, in the white.

QUESTION: Thank you so much, Madame Secretary. Thank you. Thank you so much. You have not addressed – along the lines of the theme of security, I would like to have you revisit the Philippines. The Philippines – the United States has, of course, been continuing to support the modernization of the Philippine military. Now, could I just ask you, Madame, how do you see or hope that after the end of the Bush Administration, how do you see U.S. and Philippine relations will proceed along the lines of security and other issues of concern that you might want to address?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, thank you. And I expect to be visiting the Philippines this summer. It is a very close and good ally. We do have excellent security relationships. You're right; we've tried to contribute not just to the security side but to the modernization and prosperity of the Philippines itself.

But I can give you one example where I think we've made a lot of progress. When the Administration came in to office, Mindanao was considered a runaway terrorist haven. It was – the Abu Sayyaf group was causing all kinds of problems and, in fact, even threatening attacks in more central areas of the Philippines. And through a very aggressive counterinsurgency strategy there – which has been the best of matching counterterrorism tactics, training the Filipino military, working together in a cooperative environment, using intelligence as well as active military training, and a very strong hearts and minds effort for the people of Mindanao – we've seen real improvements there. And the Abu Sayyaf group has been seriously hurt, and I think it's an example of what you can do, because if you think about the terrorism threat in Southeast Asia, it was really considered on the rise when President Bush came in to office. It is still there. We still have work to do with countries like the Philippines and others. But I think we've made real inroads against terrorism in that part of the world. The Philippines is one of our strongest allies, a non-NATO ally, and it has a special relationship there with us as a result – a non-NATO major ally, and therefore has a relationship with us. And so we'll continue to work very hard with the Philippines.

Yes, on the corner here.

QUESTION: Thanks so much, Madame Secretary. So far, you have talked about the Korean Peninsula about those nuclear things. I just want to talk about beef issues.

SECRETARY RICE: Oh. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: I know that you have mentioned that during the President Bush's Administration the relationship among the Northeast Asian countries has been developed and improved. Of course, the relationship between those Korean Government and the U.S. Government has been increased, developed, or better – has been better since the last election, and that – President Lee Myung-bak's election as the new Korean Government leader.

Unfortunately, because of this beef issue, we believe that Korean people may be a little bit getting farther away from the U.S. Government because of these beef issues. As a – Madame Secretary, as a representative of the U.S. Government, do you have any kind of action to – how could I say? – to make it better?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, I understand.

QUESTION: The relationship between the new Korean Government and the U.S. Government.

SECRETARY RICE: I think we have a very good relationship with the new Korean Government. Let me just say, U.S. beef is safe. I need to start by saying that. (Laughter.)

We are working with the Korean Government. We understand, you know, Korea is a – South Korea is a democracy. It's one of the great – really one of the great successes of the last couple of decades that this is a strong democracy and people have strong views. And when that's the case and you have a democratically elected government and it's an ally, then you need to work with them. And so my colleague, Susan Schwab, and others have been in constant conversation about how we can move forward on this issue. We'd like to move forward on the issue. We'd like to move forward on the free trade agreement. But we recognize that it's been difficult. I hope that the word can get out that U.S. beef is safe, but as to precisely what next steps we can take, we're going to respect the Korean Government's views on this and we're working at it almost daily.

Thank you. Maybe one final question here on the end. Yes.

QUESTION: During President Bush's recent visit to Britain, we saw very tangible evidence of the special relationship with the announcement that extra troops will go to southern Afghanistan. I wonder if you share the frustration of many of us here at the Heritage Foundation about the lack of willingness by many other NATO allies in Europe to undertake the Afghanistan mission seriously.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, thank you. Let me start with the good news about the alliance. I'm an old, first, Soviet specialist, and when that collapsed Russianist and specialist in international politics and I have done a lot of work on NATO over the years. And we used to have these debates about what we called out-of-area, which meant kind of everything that wasn't Europe. And the idea that NATO would actually take on the mission of Afghanistan, and not just Afghanistan in a kind of peacekeeping role but Afghanistan in a pretty tough military fight, particularly in the south, that's pretty remarkable for the alliance. And it was done by consensus because all allies' decisions are taken by consensus.

And I saw at Bucharest a reaffirmation of the alliance's commitment to that goal, the goal of a free and prosperous and democratic Afghanistan, a secure Afghanistan. And people have made more commitments – Britain, France, and others.

Yes, I do wish that the allies were able to do more and willing to do more. Some have done a lot and some are taking some very heavy fighting. And one of the things the alliance has to be careful about is it cannot be a two-speed alliance; there has to be real burden sharing in the alliance.

But I also recognize that this is perhaps the effect of Europe having taken too deep a "peace dividend" at the end of the Cold War. We have militaries that are not capable of getting themselves to the fight. We have militaries that have let their numbers decline. We have militaries that have let their defense budgets decline precipitously. And the United States took a peace dividend, but in much of Europe it was a very, very deep peace dividend.

And the President has – I think one of the things that this Administration should be most proud of, this President should be most proud of, is that the NATO alliance has really been transformed since 2001. I remember in 2001 that there were just acrimonious debates about missile defense. At this Bucharest summit, the NATO alliance affirmed the need for missile defense and for cooperation for missile defense as a NATO – as an alliance, and essentially told the Russians: Accept cooperation with the United States; it would be in your interest to do so.

This is an alliance that is now training Iraqi officers. It's an alliance that is helping with the planning in Sudan. It is an alliance that is fighting in Afghanistan. But the pieces that are not seen are the following: It is also an alliance that is trying to rebuild its capabilities – a rapid reaction force, a commitment to try to keep defense budgets at a stable level. These are things that the alliance is trying to do. And I think it will be better positioned for these kinds of missions in the future.

It's hard, because Afghanistan is not a peacekeeping mission and it's really not a war mission. It's something in between. Counterinsurgency is a continuum. It's not peace, then war. It's often going into a village, clearing a village of bad guys, holding it with police, and bringing in economic development – all within a matter of a very short period of time. And so we've had to learn how to do that. NATO is trying to learn how to do that.

So yes, I do hope that there will be greater alliance contributions, but I do think there is alliance commitment.

I would make only two other points. One is that the one thing – if I could get the alliance members to do one thing, yes, more forces and so forth, but it's to talk to their people honestly about Afghanistan. I very often hear, well, we want to provide for the hearts and minds of the Afghan people. Well, first, you have to provide security for their bodies. That's the one thing we've really learned from the surge in Iraq. When people are more secure, they will make better choices.

And so we need to talk to our people about the fact that this is just not a peacekeeping mission. This is a peacemaking mission. And unfortunately, you're going to have losses and it's tough. And I would like to see more conversation from our NATO friends to their publics, who I'm afraid sometimes don't understand this mission very well.

But I want to close with a positive note about the alliance. You know, I was the White House Soviet specialist at the end of the Cold War, and it doesn't get much better than that to be there in '89 and '90 and '91 when Eastern Europe was liberated and Germany unified and the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union had begun. But if you had told me then that in 2006 President Bush would sit at a NATO summit in Latvia, I would have told you you were out of your mind. And if you'd told anybody that, they would have thought you were out of your mind.

And it just shows what can happen. And it just shows, too, that this is an alliance now in which 12 of the 26 + 2 – the 2 who are soon to be admitted – 12 of those countries are former captive nations. And I'm going to tell you something: They have fundamentally changed the nature of the alliance because they are close enough to having lived in tyranny that they really value freedom, and they have reenergized NATO's commitment to freedom and they have reenergized NATO's original purposes, which was to unite democratic states in defense, not just of our territory, but of our values. There is nothing like a NATO meeting now when you sit next to an Estonian or a Latvian or a Pole or a Czech or Bulgarian, and realize that these are the states that value NATO not for what it was, but for what it is and what it's going to be. And that, more than anything, gives me great hope about what the future of the United States and Europe looks like going forward.

Thank you very much, and thank you for inviting me. (Applause.)

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