



*The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review
and National Security Strategy:
Is There an American Strategic Vision for East Asia?*

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Executive Summary

Unlike its two predecessors, the George W. Bush administration has not issued a comprehensive specifically East Asia-oriented document outlining its strategic intentions and priorities for East Asia. Nonetheless, a careful review of the White House's 2006 *National Security Strategy (NSS)* and the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)* provides a clear outline of the Bush administration's strategic vision for East Asia. This paper examines those two documents and provides a general overview of the strategic vision that is likely to guide the Bush administration during its final two years.

America's strategic vision for East Asia remains defined by five fundamental interests that have informed U.S. strategy toward the region for decades and in some cases for more than a century. These include: the strategic importance of access to Asian markets for U.S. business; the importance of maintaining a permanent U.S. military presence in the region, given the enormous distances that separate the opposite sides of the Pacific Rim; the prevention of domination of East Asia by a hostile or anti-American power; continued military bases in East Asia to sustain U.S. military power overseas, along with the mutual security alliances that make them possible; and the encouragement of democratic development, which is particularly highlighted in the 2006 *NSS* but is a long-standing U.S. priority.

Both documents start with the reminder that "America is at war." Both assert the first priority is fighting and winning the war on terror. The *QDR* asserts that the U.S. will be fighting terrorists for years, perhaps decades, and that this battle is conceptually akin to the Cold War. The *NSS* reinforces this argument. East Asia strategy must be viewed in this context.

Of the two, the *NSS* is a better strategic document as far as East Asia is concerned. It dedicates two full pages to East Asia, and the broad outlines of a strategy C dominated by thinking about China C are spelled out. One statement captures the essence of U.S. East Asian strategy: "The United States is a Pacific nation, with extensive interests throughout East and Southeast Asia. The region's stability and prosperity depend on our sustained engagement: maintaining robust partnerships supported by a forward defense posture, supporting economic integration through expanded trade and investment and promoting democracy and human rights."

The *QDR* missed a clear opportunity to present a compellingly coherent view. A one-time reader might be left with the view that all the Pentagon is worried about is the "long war against terrorism," China, transformation of the military, and internal transformation of the DoD itself. The *QDR* could have been a document that makes unequivocal Washington's intention to remain an Asia-Pacific power over the long run. Perhaps it is time for another East Asia Strategy Report to make that case.

*The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review
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Is There an American Strategic Vision for East Asia?
By Michael McDevitt*

Unlike its two predecessors, the George W. Bush administration has not issued a comprehensive specifically East Asia-oriented document outlining its strategic intentions and priorities for East Asia. Nonetheless, a careful review of the White House's 2006 *National Security Strategy* and the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Review* provide a clear outline of the Bush administration's strategic vision for East Asia. This paper examines those two documents and provides a general overview of the strategic vision that is likely to guide the Bush administration during its final two years.

The Fundamentals of U.S. East Asia Strategy

America's strategic vision for East Asia remains defined by five fundamental interests that have informed U.S. strategy toward the region for decades and in some cases for more than a century. Though the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)* and *National Security Strategy (NSS)* provide the Bush administration's overall rationale and approach to East Asia, it is first necessary to return to these enduring elements in U.S. strategy to best understand elements of change or continuity in current administration policy declarations.

The first interest, still very much alive today, is the strategic importance of access to Asian markets for U.S. business. Access to what was called "the China Market" and now is simply called the Asia market, has been a pursuit of U.S. merchants and entrepreneurs from almost the very beginning of the republic. Advancing U.S. commercial interests in Asia has often involved active participation of the U.S. government. For example, over 150 years ago the U.S. Navy took the lead in gaining access by "opening Japan."

Over the decades, the government pursued access for business using various tools at its disposal. These have included diplomatic partnering with European powers (mainly with the British), then unilateral diplomacy, force of arms, and since 1945 a combination of diplomacy and military presence. Although access is what is desired, U.S. policy and strategy has focused more on the flip side of the access coin – making certain that the U.S. *was not excluded from the economic life of Asia*. The defining goal was clear: Asia's door could not be closed to Americans. Arguments about the need for level playing fields for American business have been a constant theme in Asian strategy documents since 1990, reflecting the region's ever increasing importance in global trade.

In this context, the lure of the "China market" has become incredibly strong over the past decade and a half. The arguments made during the 1990s in defense of the annual renewal of China's Permanent Normal Trade (PNTR) relations, or subsequent arguments in support of admitting China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) both

reflected this belief. Now that Asia is becoming rich, the prospect of millions of wealthy East Asians as customers for U.S. goods, agriculture, and services remains a very strong element of America's strategic vision for the region.

A second fundamental interest concerns the importance of maintaining a permanent U.S. military presence in the region, given the enormous distances that separate the opposite sides of the Pacific Rim. Few analysts appreciate that the U.S. has maintained a Navy presence in East Asia almost consistently since as 1835 when the East India Squadron was formed. With the exception of 1942 to 1944, U.S. naval power (followed later by ground and air forces) has been continuously in East Asia. It is almost startling to consider that in 1835 the U.S. was present in the region almost a decade and a half before America had a Western seaboard. For the first 110 years, the U.S. was a relatively minor player in the East Asian balance of military power compared to the British and later the Japanese. But, since 1945 the U.S. has been the dominant military force on the rimland of Asia.

This point relates directly to the third fundamental interest – that there be no domination of East Asia by a hostile or anti-American power. The first U.S. policy formulation of this strategic objective was the effort to safeguard the U.S. territory of the Philippines by combining naval arms limitations agreements with multilateral security guarantees at the Washington Conference of 1920-21.¹ Unfortunately, arms limitations and multilateralism failed to prevent the emergence of Japan as a regional hegemon. Belated U.S. attempts to arrest Japanese expansion through economic sanctions and the posturing of the main U.S. fleet “forward” in Pearl Harbor as a deterrent also failed to shape or deter Japanese behavior. Following the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. moved quickly to ensure a significant military presence, and then to build alliances so that another regional hegemon, in this case the Soviet Union and its purported ally China, did not dominate East Asia.

This approach, initially foreshadowed by Washington's unwillingness to permit the Soviet Union to share in the occupation of Japan, was articulated in NSC-68 in 1950. It focused on the areas of Northeast Asia – Japan and Korea – that were considered most important to the West – and were realistically within the reach of U.S. military power. U.S. strategy would seek to prevent a regional hegemon from emerging and gaining control of the entire region by making certain the U.S. and its allies controlled the military balance of power in littoral East Asia, because by 1950 China was already “lost” to the Communists. Since that time U.S. strategy has focused on the countries of East Asia on the periphery of China.

The fourth fundamental interest is based on the need for bases in East Asia to sustain U.S. military power “overseas.” Without such bases, the first three strategic goals could not be fulfilled. During the 19th century, naval presence was maintained thanks to the British making facilities available in South China, including Hong Kong. Besides “opening Japan,” Commodore Mathew Perry also sought to establish a coaling station, i.e., a base, in Japan so that steamers traveling the great circle navigation route from San Francisco to Canton could take on coal in Japan. After the Spanish American War, the U.S. had its own base structure in the Philippines and for a time in the first half on the

20th century, a base in Shanghai. After World War II, bases in Japan and Korea became available.

Today America's military bases in Northeast Asia and the mutual security alliances that make them possible are inextricably linked. The alliances beget the base structure and the base structure makes alliance commitments credible. They also enable the military dimension of U.S. strategy. This is particularly true in the case of Japan. The bases in Japan made available through treaty arrangements are absolutely essential to sustaining a credible air and naval presence in East Asia today.

The final fundamental interest is America's long encouragement of democratic development. The Bush administration has been criticized for being unrealistic and naïve regarding its democratic agenda, especially in the Middle East. But in East Asia the U.S. has a long, if inconsistent, record of supporting democracy, starting with the Philippines 100 years ago. It was not long after annexation that the policy objective of creating viable democratic institutions in the Philippines became a focus for Washington. U.S. policy long supported the ultimately unsuccessful attempts to bring democracy to the Republic of China before Chiang Kai-shek lost the Chinese Civil War. American support for "democratic China" was part of the backdrop leading to World War II. The development of democracy in Japan and South Korea was a priority following the war. U.S. attempts to foster and defend democracy in South Vietnam failed, but ultimately succeeded in Taiwan and the Republic of Korea, and more recently in Indonesia. While Washington's support for democracy has waxed and waned, it has a consistent element of U.S. strategy toward East Asia, especially since the Carter administration.

Overarching Observations

Before assessing the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* and *National Security Strategy* against these strategic fundamentals, it is important to note some overarching issues in contemporary U.S. strategy discussed in these documents. Both documents start with the reminder that "America is at war."ⁱⁱ Both assert the first priority is fighting and winning the war on terror. The *QDR* introduces a new formulation to impart that the war on terror is going to be prolonged, dubbing it the "long war." As the report observes, "Unlike the image many have of war, this struggle cannot be won by military force alone, or even principally. And it is a struggle that may last for some years." The document indicates that the U.S. will be fighting terrorists for years, perhaps decades, and that this battle is conceptually akin to the Cold War. The *NSS* reinforces and explicitly makes this argument: "The United States is in the early years of a long struggle, similar to what our country faced in the early years of the Cold War."ⁱⁱⁱ

The *NSS* echoes a number of the themes found in NSC-68, one of the Cold War's capstone documents. There is a philosophical similarity between these documents. Both place heavy emphasis on protecting and advancing freedom. It is not certain whether there was a conscious effort by the White House to link the beginning of these two eras. However, simultaneously comparing the documents suggests a strong element of continuity between the beginning of the Cold War and in the thinking behind the Bush administration democracy agenda.^{iv}

Beyond the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the *QDR* makes clear that in other regions such as Southeast Asia, the U.S. is taking the “indirect approach” to the long war, by building up friends and allies to help them police and govern their nations. It points out that clandestine operations and persistent but low visibility operations define DoD’s application of the indirect approach.^v This is what U.S. forces in the Philippines and elsewhere in Southeast Asia are doing, which seems the necessary approach when operating in the Islamic portions of Southeast Asia, which are former colonial states that remain extremely sensitive about sovereignty. In a passage directly relevant to Southeast Asia, the *QDR* argues, “Victory can only be achieved through the patient accumulation of quiet successes and the orchestration of all the elements of national and international power.... broad cooperation, across the entire U.S. government and ...with other allies is essential” – a realistic and uncharacteristically self-effacing assessment from DoD.^{vi}

Both the *QDR* and *NSS* emphasize the continuities in Bush administration policy. The documents are not intended to be bold departures from either the 2001 *QDR* or the 2002 *NSS*. The 2006 *NSS* is formatted so that the administration can detail progress in eight specific objectives specified in the 2002 *NSS*, while also serving as a plan of action to advance the same essential strategic tasks in the future – with one more added in the 2006 version, to bring the total to nine essential strategic tasks.

The first eight verbatim repeats from the 2002 *NSS* are:

- Champion aspirations for human dignity
- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts
- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with WMD
- Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade
- Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building infrastructure of democracy
- Develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power
- Transform America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century

The new task added in the 2006 version is:

- Engage the opportunities and confront the challenges of globalization^{vii}

Each of these tasks is addressed in a separate section of the document, which makes the *NSS* easy to use, and for policy makers and outside observers alike, to keep track of the administration’s performance. Each section summarizes what the 2002 *NSS* said on the subject, and what action has been taken so far. More impressively, each section lays out in some detail a list of specific actions that still need to be taken. This conveys a very business like approach to strategy that should leave all branches of the Executive Branch in little doubt of what is expected of them.

In 2001, President Bush purportedly said that the *NSS* was written so “the boys in Lubbock could understand it.” They would likely understand this version as well, but probably become bored before finishing it. It is nonetheless a very useful way to connect the various dimensions of the *NSS* with specific actions that need to be accomplished. For an administration with less than two years remaining in office, the number of the specific objectives is very ambitious. Perhaps because of its length and its format the *NSS* has received very little attention in the press – unfairly so in my judgment.^{viii}

The 2002 *NSS* grabbed headlines because it announced a strategy of preemption regarding states or actors with WMD. The 2006 *NSS* indicates that the U.S. remains committed to the doctrine, explaining that while diplomacy is the preferred course of action the U.S. will “not rule out the use of force before attacks occur, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack.” It further emphasize that, “The place of preemption in our national security strategy remains the same.” Within the context of East Asia, this clear linkage of preemption and WMD remains a consideration that Pyongyang cannot ignore.^{ix}

The new *QDR* has received much more attention than the *NSS*, most of it negative. The critics were again disappointed that the *QDR* did not have a detailed assessment of what defense programs would stay and which would be cut, nor did it address affordability issues. The *QDR* self consciously avoided becoming either a programmatic or budget document, but rather was “a reflection of the thinking of senior civilian and military leaders of the Department of Defense.”^x

The document is a statement of continuity within DOD. It was the second *QDR* overseen by then Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and it is the first *QDR* to be written with the country involved in ongoing combat. As a result, it uncomfortably bridges the here and now of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, with assessments of the “long war” and of future threats, largely China, cast in the guise of a potential future great power competitor. I say uncomfortably, because the *QDR* gives scant attention to the counter-*insurgency* campaign taking place in Iraq today, while devoting considerable space to the counter-*terrorism portion* of the long war. This is an important distinction that may imply that DoD is not very interested in engaging in any more regime change and follow-on occupation campaigns.

The current “clear and hold strategy” in Iraq is a manpower intensive strategy, but the manpower demands of the strategy in Iraq are not addressed. Only the Special Forces are scheduled to receive a manpower increase, because Special Forces Command has the lead in fighting the long war. Thus only the “future long war” receives attention.

In 2001, East Asia received disproportionate attention in the *QDR* discussion of regional areas “critical” to the United States. Northeast Asia and a newly identified region called “Littoral Asia,” which was defined as the area stretching from south of Japan through Australia and into the Bay of Bengal, shared pride of place with Europe and the Middle East as pivotal regions. The 2006 *QDR* does away with specific regional definitions of critical areas, and instead argues that the U.S. military needs to operate around the globe and not just from the four regions mentioned above.^{xi}

The concept of a region known as littoral Asia seemed a useful construct. It was an artful way to include Taiwan in a region of “critical” importance to the U.S. without officially including it by name in any statement that implied an official U.S. defense commitment. It was also an accurate way to define the limits of U.S. power around continental Asia. That distinction is now lost, but probably without damage to deterrence across the Taiwan Strait, since this *QDR* is much more outspokenly negative about China.

The *QDR* and *NSS* and America’s Enduring Strategic Interests

No Exclusion from the Economic Life of East Asia

The *QDR* offers only a single vague reference to not being excluded from the economic life of East Asia. In the discussion regarding hedging against a major or emerging power the *QDR* states: “The pursuit of exclusionary or coercive policies...are of particular concern.” Otherwise it is silent on this strategic fundamental.^{xii} By comparison, the *NSS* is very expansive about the economic aspect of U.S. strategy, dedicating five full pages to the topic. The administration’s approach to economic access is based upon the establishment of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). As the document states, the United States has used FTAs “... to open markets... and create new opportunities for American farmers and workers.”^{xiii} This element of America’s overall economic strategy is not limited to East Asia alone, but progress in Asia is impressive. FTAs have already been concluded with Australia and Singapore and in progress with Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea. Regarding the biggest East Asian market of all, China, the *NSS* is clear that the strategic approach to improving U.S. access to this market is for Beijing to adopt a flexible exchange rate regime so that U.S. exports are more competitive. The U.S. is also particularly concerned with opening China markets to U.S. financial services.^{xiv}

Permanent Military Presence in East Asia

In the introduction to the *NSS*, President Bush makes a classic statement of U.S. strategy that highlights the importance Washington has long placed on keeping U.S. military power deployed abroad. He states: “We fight our enemies abroad instead of waiting for them to arrive in our country. We seek to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy.” Beyond this, the *NSS* only mentions military presence in East Asia in passing.^{xv} By contrast, the *QDR* is quite specific about the importance of the U.S. military presence in East Asia. In a repeat of five years ago, East Asia is a region where increases in presence are mentioned. In the 2006 document, specific reference is made to the rotational deployments of Air Force bombers to Guam in order to provide “Pacific Command a continuous bomber presence in the Asia-Pacific region.”^{xvi} The *QDR* also announces that the Navy will adjust its force posture so that at least six operationally ready and logistically sustainable carriers are available for deployment. It also indicates that the Navy needs to ensure that 60 percent of its submarine force is home ported in the Pacific.^{xvii}

The reason given for these shifts is to enable the Pacific Fleet to improve its engagement, presence, and deterrent posture. The pace and scope of China's military build-up has clearly garnered the attention of the Pentagon. In 2005, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld publicly questioned the rationale behind the PRC's modernization efforts, especially those that provide it with capabilities in the maritime arena, the area of traditional U.S. preeminence. The *QDR* claims that the China's military build-up already puts regional military balances at risk. This suggests that the U.S. and its allies (especially Japan) are very concerned about the growth in the PLA Navy's submarine fleet and its efforts to use conventionally armed ballistic missiles to target U.S. bases, and perhaps in the future, U.S. ships at sea.

In the 2001 *QDR* DoD announced that it was shifting to a concept it called "capabilities based planning." The idea was to identify capabilities that adversaries could employ and assess them against capabilities that the U.S. possesses, or should possess. This is what is taking place in the Pacific today. As the PLA's capabilities improve, so too are U.S. capabilities. DoD appears intent on maintaining America's current advantages that allow it to continue to shape and deter.^{xviii} In essence, there is a capability competition between the PLA and DoD. As the *QDR* states, "The aim is to possess sufficient capability to convince any potential adversary that it cannot prevail in a conflict." Quite simply, the U.S. intends to rise on the same capabilities tide as China in order to preserve the strategic leverage that its predominant military presence off the East Asia littoral has provided since 1945.

No Regional Hegemon – No Domination of East Asia by a Hostile or Anti-U.S. Power

The *QDR* makes a firm statement clearly in the tradition of American anti-hegemonic strategy. It states that the United States will "seek to ensure that no foreign power can dictate the terms of regional or global security."^{xix} This statement is in the paragraph immediately following the discussion of China. After the Cold War ended, the United States made it a strategic priority to maintain a favorable balance of power to prevent the rise of any regional hegemon, even though in the early to mid 1990s none was in sight. During the time between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the realization that China's military modernization was actually delivering improved capabilities (circa 1998), maintaining this balance was not in question. The Clinton administration was able to define explicitly the requirements for balance. It established a floor on U.S. forces in the region of 100,000 designed to accomplish this objective.

At the start of the 21st century, as China's modernization took hold, the military balance of power began to look more challenging to the Pentagon. Today DoD judges China as the country with the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States – a military competition that would be regionally, not globally, based. DoD is nonetheless worried that China could field what it calls disruptive technologies that could in the future successfully counter traditional U.S. strengths in Asia (namely maritime and air power) if the U.S. does nothing to counter these capabilities.

The *QDR* devotes four times as much space to China than it does to other emerging or major powers in the section titled "shaping the choices of countries at a

strategic crossroads.” (India and Russia are the other two such powers identified in the report.) The physical layout of the pages in question sends a clear message. The discussion of China starts on the page with a picture of a U.S. submarine launching a land attack cruise missile. Lest the message be missed, the page that concludes the discussion of China has a picture of USAF and Japanese fighter pilots discussing tactics, with the caption emphasizing the importance of the U.S.-Japanese alliance to regional stability.^{xx}

The *NSS* has a more nuanced discussion of China, but in many ways with an even harder edge. On the now well-known notion of China becoming a stakeholder as a global player, the text does not say China should become a stakeholder, it says China “must.” Similarly in the discussion of China’s avowed strategy of “peaceful development” the *NSS* includes the cautionary caveat “if” – that is if China really does this, then the U.S. will welcome the emergence of a China that is peaceful and prosperous. But China is expected to cooperate with the U.S. on common challenges and issues of mutual interest. Obviously the U.S. would not welcome the emergence of a China that is not on the path of peaceful development, but this skeptical formulation gives the passage a tone that is different from former Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick’s speeches on the stakeholder concept. This passage is followed by some straightforward lecturing on political freedom, and a chiding of the Chinese for their “old way of thinking,” to wit; non-transparent military expansion, mercantilist attempts to lock-up energy supplies, and consorting with resource rich countries that treat their people poorly or are bad actors.^{xxi} The *NSS* concludes its long discussion of China – as in the *QDR*, China again receives more verbiage than any other country or region – with the strategically succinct, if patronizing, conclusion, “Our strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities.”^{xxii}

Overseas Bases and Concomitant Alliance Structure

Since 2003 DoD has undertaken what is now called the Global Defense Posture Review (GDPR). The goal is to adjust U.S. force posture to arrive at a better match between traditional threats, and unconventional threats associated with the war on terror, and to break free of the base structure that has been in place since the beginning of the Cold War. Much of the focus of this comprehensive examination of basing posture was on bases in Europe, although the U.S. posture in South Korea and Japan has and will also continue to receive a lot of attention. Led by former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, critics within the Department of Defense were concerned that too much of America’s overseas military base structure reflected the position of forces at the end of World War II, and in some cases did not reflect the security challenges now faced by the United States. Another criticism, appropriate especially to the U.S. presence in South Korea, was that these forces were focused on a singular threat and were thus not very flexible in terms of their ability to become more expeditionary, i.e., usable in areas distant from their permanent bases.^{xxiii}

Because the GDPR process was so thoroughly discussed over the past three years, the 2006 *QDR* did not dwell on the particulars. However, since this process is so intimately linked to administration strategy toward East Asia, it is worth mentioning what the impact on forward presence will be even if the *NSS* and *QDR* do not specifically

cover these details. In East Asia the lack of flexibility has been an issue since early in the Bush administration, and is a central focus of DoD's efforts to "transform" the U.S. military, including its forces in Korea. A U.S. initiative originally known as the Future of The Alliance (FOTA), and now called the Security Policy Initiative (SPI) has produced U.S.-ROK agreement to: (1) relocate U.S. forces from the Seoul metropolitan area and return Yongsan Garrison to the Korean people; (2) redeploy 12,500 troops out of Korea by end 2008, (3) consolidate the remaining 25,000 troops into two hubs south of Seoul by 2009, (4) agree to a contingent role for U.S. forces both on and off the peninsula; (5) agree to terms of reference for a command relations study; and, (6) begin to transfer appropriate missions from the U.S. military to ROK forces.^{xxiv}

One of the primary objectives of this initiative is to make changes that reduce the impact of the U.S. presence in Korea on the lives of the Korean people. Another objective is to change the threat focus for U.S. forces from North Korea alone to one that includes the preservation of regional stability. From DoD's perspective, permitting U.S. forces to be limited to the single mission of deterrence in a cluster of bases along the DMZ was akin to having been frozen in time since the 1950s. Everywhere else in the world the U.S. military is being transformed to become more "expeditionary," that is, being able to move promptly from one locale to another.^{xxv}

In addition to the continuing mission of deterring North Korea, U.S. forces would be able to respond elsewhere in East Asia or (as is evident today), to be assigned to the rotation of Army forces into Iraq. These forces, which will be concentrated in the two hubs south of the Han, will:

- Be available for the defense of Korea, but also be "untethered" so they can respond quickly throughout East Asia, or globally if need be.
- Have the political or policy freedom from the ROK that permits them to use bases for contingencies not directly associated with the defense of the host country. (It is unlikely that Seoul would agree to their use in Taiwan contingency.)^{xxvi}
- Be agile enough to carry out a wide range of tasks anywhere in the region. This agility is a combination of the characteristics of the forces themselves as well as their training and command arrangements.

These are attributes that U.S. forces in Japan possess. The unstated objective for the transformation of the U.S. presence in Korea is to make Korea more like Japan, in terms of the relative freedom for the employment of U.S. forces. At this stage of the dialogue process between Washington and Seoul, this objective has only partially been realized. The other strategic implication of these moves is that the U.S. recognizes ROK military strength and its ability to act as the first line of defense against a North Korean invasion.^{xxvii}

Changing Existing U.S.-ROK Command Structure

An issue related to command arrangements in the ROK, with important long-term implications, has arisen since the *QDR* was published. Over the last decade it has been commonplace to speculate about the future of Korea, the presumption being that the threat of a North Korean attack would eventually disappear, either because of a Korean peace treaty or the collapse of the North. When this transpired, it was also reasonable to suggest it was inevitable that the UN and Combined Forces Command (CFC) command structures would have to be changed.

The issue of changes in the command structure was always lurking in the background when considering the future. However, it has now become a near-term issue because President Roh Moo-hyun expressed a desire to take the leading role in the defense of the ROK by assuming wartime operational control (OPCON), DoD took this request as an opportunity to go ahead and accelerate the ongoing evolution of the alliance.

Implicit in DOD's decision to embrace Roh's ideas *must have been the judgment* that the \$11 billion in deterrence improvements that DoD says it has made to U.S. forces in East Asia (including Guam) meant it was safe to evolve the command structure even though the threat from the North was still present. In Congressional testimony, DoD officials argue it can accomplish the OPCON shift "within the next three years with low risk."^{xviii} Whether this target date will remain valid given the North Korean nuclear test remains to be seen. In 1992 then Secretary of Defense Cheney "froze" any further reductions in U.S. ground force presence in Korea so the North did not receive the wrong signal during a period when the North Korea nuclear program was a serious issue.

In light of the North Korean nuclear test, this may be a wise step to once again take. "Freezing" the issue of command changes on the peninsula would insure that the current "unity of command" is not upset and Pyongyang does not receive the wrong signal.

Force Posture in Japan

Just as the changes in Korea are resulting in a reduction of ground force strength, base changes in Japan are also taking place. This subset of activities is called the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI). Unlike Korea, the objective in these discussions is not to break a Cold War mold, but rather to strengthen the U.S.-Japan Alliance by reducing U.S. presence in areas that do, or could, cause friction with the citizens of Japan and result in anti-alliance public opinion. The details of actual implementation were approved in Washington on May 1, 2006. The plan is to dramatically reduce the Marine Corps presence in Okinawa, by relocating some 8,000 Marines and approximately 9,000 dependents to Guam by 2014 – which removes them from Okinawa but keeps them in the region, while relocating many of the remaining USMC facilities in Okinawa further north out of the congested southern portion of the island.

The plan also involves agreement to replace the conventionally powered aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk* with the nuclear powered carrier *USS George Washington*, and to relocate the attached carrier air wing from congested Atsugi Air Base to Iwakuni on the

southern coast of Honshu. The details associated with these moves are found in the Roadmap for Realignment issued following the May 1 meeting between the Secretaries of State and Defense and their Japanese counterparts; and approved during the so-called annual 2+2 meetings.^{xxix}

The strategic vision related to these changes is to reduce frictions that could undermine the alliances with Korea and Japan while improving flexibility and the utility of the U.S. presence in the region. While the overall numbers will go down as some ground forces leave Korea, the objective is to improve the ability to provide regional stability. This is largely dependent on how much flexibility the forces in Korea, especially the 7th Air Force, will have in the future. If they are able to operate routinely beyond the Korean peninsula, the objective will have been met. This is because, beyond Korea, East Asia is a theater in which maintaining capable air and naval forces are the most relevant way to not lose any of today's advantages to the military challenges posed by a militarily modernizing China.

Value of Alliances

While both the *QDR* and *NSS* do not have much to say about basing, they both have substantive observations about the value of alliances. The *NSS* dedicates three sections to addressing the need for “strengthening alliances,” or “working with others” and “preventing enemies from threatening us and our allies.” There should be no doubt that the administration has had a decided change of heart about the importance of alliances since its early days in power. As Secretary of State Rice said in May 2006, “We have no better friend than Japan... The U.S.-Japan relationship...has been a pillar of stability in Asia Pacific region.” Secretary Rumsfeld added: “This alliance is vital... Together [with Japan] we’ve developed a realignment plan that will make *Guam a key part of this alliance* (emphasis added) and the Pacific security architecture.”^{xxx}

The *NSS* talks specifically about enjoying the closest relationship with Japan in a generation, and about the global nature of the U.S. alliance with Australia. The *NSS* makes some potentially provocative comments about Korea. It discusses sharing a vision for a *united and democratic* Korean Peninsula. Since the late 1990s when then President Kim Dae-jung changed ROK policy to peaceful coexistence, it has not been “politically correct” in Seoul to imply Pyongyang ultimately loses the Korean civil war. The *NSS* vision implies North Korea ceases to exist and is consigned to the dustbin of history. What impact this may, or may not have, could be a good indicator whether anyone in Korea has read the *NSS*, or cares what it says.^{xxxi}

These remarks reflect the administration's ambivalence about the long-term survival of the North Korean regime. The *NSS* does not endorse the Sept. 19, 2005 (so-called 919) Six Party joint statement, which called for a peace treaty and peaceful coexistence. It promised only that the U.S. will press Pyongyang to implement its commitments in the statement. It is also clear that the administration has not abandoned its 2001 approach to seeking a “comprehensive” solution to the many issues it has with the DPRK. The document specifically puts Pyongyang on notice that any deal about

nuclear weapons is only the first step in process that will also have to address the North's conventional military posture, its missile program, and its treatment of its population and the entire range of illegal activities. Reading this paragraph gives the impression that time had stood still since Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly went to Pyongyang in October 2002 to discuss a comprehensive approach with the North Koreans.^{xxxii}

Democratic Development in East Asia

In 2002 President Bush created a stir with his "Axis of Evil" characterization of Iraq, Iran and North Korea. In the 2006 *NSS*, the axis of evil has disappeared, replaced by nations that are considered tyrannies. The *NSS* lists seven "tyrannical" states. North Korea and Iran make this list, as do Syria, Cuba, Belarus, Burma, and Zimbabwe. Ending tyranny abroad is the overarching U.S. policy goal. To advance freedom, the administration contends that tyrannies need to make a transition to effective democracies. In Asia, North Korea and Burma are identified as not having even started this transition. Apparently China, Vietnam, and Laos have begun the transition, since they are not listed by name as tyrannies.

The *NSS* discusses a tailored approach toward pressing for freedom – indicating that tactics will vary on a country-by-country basis, depending where each country finds itself on the "path from tyranny to democracy." The *NSS* indicates realistic policies will be followed: "we will be guided by what will most effectively advance freedom's cause while we balance other interests that are also vital to the security and well being of the American people." The notion that other interests will compete for primacy with the ending tyranny policy injects an element of realism into the approach, makes it seem less Pollyannaish and in fact sounds very much like the policy that the U.S. has followed in pressing for democracy in East Asia over the last 50 years.^{xxxiii}

Conclusions

This essay attempts to answer the question of whether the *NSS* and *QDR* present an American strategic vision for East Asia. Measured against the postulated fundamentals of U.S. security strategy for East Asia, the answer is yes. Unfortunately, it is not an answer that is easily determined. Public documents have some responsibility for clearly conveying policy and strategy, and the *QDR* in particular is deficient in conveying a clear vision of regional security strategies. By contrast, the *NSS* is a better strategic document as far as East Asia is concerned. It dedicates two full pages to East Asia, and the broad outlines of a strategy – again dominated by thinking about China – are spelled out. One statement captures the essence of U.S. East Asian strategy: "The United States is a Pacific nation, with extensive interests throughout East and Southeast Asia. The region's stability and prosperity depend on our sustained engagement: maintaining robust partnerships supported by a forward defense posture, supporting economic integration through expanded trade and investment and promoting democracy and human rights."^{xxxiv}

The *QDR* missed a clear opportunity to present a compellingly coherent view. A primary audience for this document is the large family of thoughtful and observant

analysts and security experts in East Asia. During the 1990s this audience became accustomed to periodic authoritative documents from Washington that articulated U.S. East Asian Strategy. The 2001 *QDR*, while not as expansive as the four preceding strategy reports, did present a clear indication of the strategic thinking of the administration.^{xxxv}

A one time reader of the 2006 *QDR* might be left with the view that all DoD is worried about is the “long war against terrorism,” China, transformation of the military, and internal transformation of the Department itself. This is probably accurate, but not sufficient. It does not instill confidence that DoD has thought carefully about East Asia and the stabilizing role of American power in the region.^{xxxvi} As a result, analysts of U.S. strategic interests will have to work harder piecing together sundry speeches, Congressional testimony, and policy statements to discern strategy. This is not necessarily bad, but for a department that places so much stock in “shaping” it represents an important missed opportunity. It is also too bad, because a number of poorly informed East Asian commentators are becoming convinced that China will inevitably replace the U.S. as the arbiter of security and stability in East Asia. This will be true only if the U.S. permits it to take place. The *QDR* could have been a document that makes unequivocal Washington’s intention to remain an Asia-Pacific power over the long run. Perhaps it is time for another East Asia Security Strategy report from DoD to make that case.^{xxxvii}

ⁱ Erik Goldstein and John Mauer, editors, “The Washington Conference, 1921-22, Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor,” Frank Cass, 1994, pps. 250-255.

ⁱⁱ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, March 16, 2006, President Bush forwarding letter, no page number. www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006 hereinafter *NSS*.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Report of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review*, 6 February 2006, preface, p. v and p. 9. www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/ODR20060203.pdf, hereinafter *QDR*. *NSS*, p. 1.

^{iv} S. Nelson Drew, editor, *NSC-68: Forging the Strategy of Containment*, National Defense University, NDU Press, 1994, pps. 40-97 passim.

^v *QDR*, p. 11.

^{vi} *QDR*, p. 22. The *QDR* also has this to say about victory, “...[It] will come when the enemy’s extremist ideologies are discredited in the eyes of their host populations and tacit supporters, becoming unfashionable, and following other discredited creeds, such as Communism and Nazism, into oblivion.” p 21.

^{vii} *NSS*, p.1.

^{viii} The Lubbock quip in David E. Sanger, “Bush to Outline Doctrine of Striking Foes First,” *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 2001, p.1.

^{ix} *NSS* p.23. The entire section on WMD is worth reading as it addresses Iran and broader counter and nonproliferation objectives and policies, pps. 20-24.

^x *QDR*, p. vi – list reviews of *QDR*.

^{xi} *QDR*, p. 36.

^{xii} *QDR*, p. 28.

^{xiii} *NSS*, p. 25.

^{xiv} *NSS*, pps 25-30 inter alia.

^{xv} *NSS*, President Bush’s introductory letter of March 16, 2006.

^{xvi} *QDR*, photo caption, p. 37.

^{xvii} *QDR*, p. 47.

^{xviii} *QDR*, p. 4.

^{xix} *QDR*, p. 30.

^{xx} *QDR*, pps. 29-30.

^{xxi} *NSS*, pps. 41-42.

^{xxii} *NSS*, pp. 42.

^{xxiii} Carnes Lord, Editor, “Reposturing the Force: U.S. Overseas Presence in the Twenty-first Century,” *Naval War College Newport Paper 26*, February 2006, Naval War College Press, Newport, Rhode Island addresses various aspects of this issue. Especially helpful are articles by Ryan Henry from DoD and Lincoln Bloomfield writing about his role as the State Department representative to the process. See also, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, “Transforming the U.S. Global Defense Posture,” a presentation at CSIS, Washington DC, Dec. 3, 2003.

^{xxiv} Alexander Vershbow, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, Remarks to the Korea Freedom League, Seoul, Korea. April 18, 2006. DOSSDO@lists.state.gov of 5/2/2006. Adm. Thomas B. Fargo, “Testimony Before the House Armed Services Committee Regarding U.S. Pacific Command Posture,” March 31, 2004, pg. 24 and 30. www.pacom.mil/speeches/sst2004/040331. The FOTA/SPI process did the staff work on the decisions to consolidate U.S. forces into an air power-oriented central base – or hub as it

is called – focused on Osan Air Base, and a sea-oriented “hub” in the southeast near Pusan

^{xxv} Feith, “Transforming the U.S. Global Defense posture,” In talking about the global posture review that DOD had been working on, Feith emphasized that forces would “project power into theaters that may be distant from their bases.” p. 4.

^{xxvi} The issue of strategic flexibility for Korean based forces, specifically the ability to use U.S. forces stationed in Korea for missions beyond Korea and not in the defense of Korea, was discussed at the inaugural “strategic dialogue” between the Secretary of State and the ROK Foreign Minister in January 2006. The ROK made it clear that the ROK was not going to be drawn into a conflict against its will. Statement of Gen. B.B. Bell, Commander U.S. Forces Korea, before the House Armed Services Committee on March 9, 2006. www.usfk.mil/org/FKPA/sptr

^{xxvii} General Bell testimony, pps13-15.

^{xxviii} Richard Lawless, “The U.S.-ROK Relationship. Prepared statement of before the House Committee on International relations,” Sept. 27, 2006.

^{xxix} Media Note, Office of the Spokesman of the Department of State, Washington DC, May 1, 2006. www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/65517.htm

^{xxx} Remarks with Secretary of State Rice, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Japanese Foreign Minister Aso Taro, and Japanese Defense Minister of State Nukaga Fukushima – U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee. www.state.gov/secretary/

^{xxxi} *NSS*, pps 8-30.

^{xxxii} *NSS*, p. 21.

^{xxxiii} *NSS*, p. 6.

^{xxxiv} *NSS*, p. 40.

^{xxxv} Michael McDevitt, “The Quadrennial Defense Review and East Asia,” *PacNet* 43, Oct. 26, 2001.

^{xxxvi} It is worth noting that DoD is in the process of reorganizing its policy Undersecretariat. Asia will benefit, since the proposal establishes an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia position. This individual will have three sub-regional directorates (NE Asia, South /Southeast Asia, and Central Asia) reporting to him. This would bring much needed coherence to internal OSD deliberations, and greatly improve interagency influence for DoD when addressing the security element of U.S. Asia policy.

^{xxxvii} As discussed on page 11, DoD is in fact addressing China’s improving capabilities by also improving U.S. capabilities, by adding more naval forces to the Pacific Fleet, and deploying more Air Force assets to Guam. However, I am concerned that because these activities are not widely publicized they have not had much of an impact on defense pundits throughout East Asia. Certainly these moves are not lost on the militaries of our allies or on the PLA. But without a clear statement of intent to maintain America’s stabilizing role by keeping pace with potentially destabilizing military developments in the region as a part of U.S. East Asian Strategy, these moves lack the appropriate strategic context that can reassure friends and allies while convincing China it will never be able to deter the U.S. from acting in the defense of our interests or those of our allies.

About the Author

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