Sino–U.S. relations got off to a rocky start in the first six months of the Bush administration. The April 1 accidental collision of a Chinese fighter with a Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane off China’s coast, followed by Beijing’s detention of the crew for 11 days, dealt a severe blow to an already strained and fragile relationship. The handling of the incident by the Chinese and U.S. governments created negative feelings and stoked nationalist sentiments in both countries. Its impact on Sino–American ties still lingers. The episode highlighted the deep-seated mistrust between the two countries and underscored the real and fundamental disagreements over security that exist and may be intensifying. Beijing’s priority in demanding an apology from the United States was to make a point with the new administration that China’s territorial integrity, dignity, and nationalist sensitivities must be respected. Washington’s main concern, in addition to winning the release of its citizens, was to signal its determination to maintain a strong security role in the Asia–Pacific region.

Apart from the friction resulting from the plane collision, which took more than four months to resolve, the return of the EP-3 and the settlement of the bill and other issues contributed to growing bilateral discord. Sharp disagreements over human rights and especially Chinese arrests and the detention of American citizens and permanent residents hampered progress in the relationship. The Bush administration’s zeal for developing missile defense systems worried Beijing, despite reassurances from American officials that China’s already unreliable nuclear deterrent would not be further undermined by U.S. plans. China also was alarmed by a succession of U.S. decisions involving Taiwan—notably, President Bush’s approval of the largest arms package for the island since 1992 and the granting of permission to Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian to stop in New York City and meet with members of Congress on his way to Latin America. Bush’s remark that he would do “whatever it took” to help Taiwan defend itself achieved the new administration’s goals of strengthening deterrence by reminding Beijing that a Chinese attack on the island would not go unanswered, but at the same time it was viewed by most Chinese as confirmation that the United States is unalterably opposed to reunification.

The events that transpired in Sino–U.S. relations in the first six months of the Bush administration are reminders that many of the differences between the United States and China cannot be easily resolved and in some cases may be unbridgeable, particularly over Taiwan’s security and the American military role in East Asia. Nevertheless, there exist numerous areas in which the two countries have complementary or convergent interests and can pursue cooperation. They share important interests in preserving regional peace and stability—critical preconditions for continued economic growth. Curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction and controlling their means of delivery are mutually desirable, even though the United States and China disagree on the best means to achieve this goal. Preventing war, fostering economic prosperity, and promoting a sustainable, peaceful resolution on the Korean Peninsula are common Sino–American interests. Bringing Pakistan and India into the Nonproliferation Treaty, forestalling weaponization and the deployment of nuclear
weapons on the subcontinent, and encouraging both sides to resolve their differences peacefully are important to both American and Chinese security.

Ever-expanding transnational issues that affect regional and international security also are increasingly important to the United States and China and provide opportunities for coordination and cooperation. These include protecting the environment, combating narcotics production and trafficking, tackling HIV/AIDS, fighting organized crime, controlling illegal immigrant smuggling and piracy, and promoting global economic stability and security.

As noted by Secretary of State Powell during his July visit to Beijing, the United States and China have a complex relationship that cannot and should not be captured in a single phrase. It is undeniable that the United States and China are both partners and competitors. The attempt to draw a dichotomy between strategic cooperation and competition is unhelpful to advancing understanding of the multifaceted and complicated nature of the bilateral relationship among the populace in both societies. Emphasizing the partnership component of the relationship without appreciating the significant areas of differences creates unrealistic expectations for Sino-American relations and undervalues genuine U.S. strategic partnerships with such nations as Japan and Australia. Emphasizing the competitive nature of Sino-U.S. ties without recognizing the areas of common interest and cooperation runs the risk of promoting an adversarial relationship, thus creating a self-fulfilling prophecy that would be devastating to both countries’ national interests.

Two Challenges Facing China and the United States: Missile Defense and Taiwan

Among the many challenges facing the United States and China, the U.S. determination to deploy missile defense systems and handling the Taiwan issue are two of the potentially most divisive and dangerous. Both will demand high-level attention by Chinese and American leaders. It is important that the two sides approach these challenges with open minds and a willingness to consider each other’s sensitivities and concerns. It also is imperative that Washington and Beijing engage in regular dialogue on these critical issues and clearly convey to each other their “bottom-line” security requirements.

Missile Defense

The Bush administration has declared its intentions to build and deploy a layered missile defense system to counter prevailing and emerging threats to American interests worldwide. The president and his national security team are firmly committed to moving American defense planning beyond the cold war. They deny that it is necessary to continue to rely on mutual assured destruction and massive retaliation. They are eager to embrace a very different defense structure to deal with what they view as a very different era. Efforts are underway to persuade U.S. allies that their interests will be protected under U.S. missile defense plans. Although Russia continues to oppose U.S. testing and deployments that would abrogate the Antibalistic Missile Treaty, President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin have agreed to work toward a new agreement that would reduce nuclear weapons on both sides while allowing the United States to build the missile shield.

To avoid being isolated, Beijing may soften its opposition to Bush’s missile defense plans, but this should not be misconstrued as a reduction in China’s concerns about the ramifications of missile defense deployments for Chinese security interests. It merely represents Beijing’s recognition that it lacks the single-handed clout to have an impact on Washington’s decisions regarding missile defense. China is very much worried that the deployment of missile defenses will disrupt
global strategic stability, undermine efforts to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, neutralize China’s strategic deterrent, and hamper Chinese attempts to promote the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. Beijing also is convinced that U.S. missile defense plans are at least in part driven by American concerns about a rising threat from China. Thus, a decision to proceed with deployment of theater and national missile defense systems, if not carefully managed, will be perceived in Beijing as evidence of U.S. hostile intent.

A heated debate about the wisdom of missile defense continues in the United States. The China portion of this debate is increasingly focused on whether the United States should accept or deny China’s desire to have a credible strategic deterrent against the United States. Some argue that it is immoral to permit Americans to be vulnerable to nuclear attack by any country if the technology exists to defend U.S. territory against such attacks. Others explicitly seek to capture China’s deterrent either because they foresee an adversarial relationship with China or because they want to deny Beijing the opportunity to deter U.S. involvement in a Taiwan Strait conflict by making nuclear threats against U.S. territory. Yet others maintain that any attempt to deny China a reliable strategic deterrent capability will almost certainly have destabilizing consequences. The United States has never explicitly made a policy determination about the legitimacy of China’s deterrent. Hence this will be an important decision the Bush administration will have to address as it proceeds to finalize its missile defense plans.

Both Assistant Secretary of State Jim Kelly and Secretary of State Colin Powell have explained to Beijing President Bush’s strategy of moving forward with missile defense as part of a new, postcold-war strategic architecture. They also have provided oral assurances that the layered missile defense system the United States plans to develop and deploy will not undermine China’s strategic deterrent. These assurances are welcome, but the Chinese remain skeptical. Even if an initial missile defense system could intercept only a small number of ballistic missiles, Beijing worries that the United States at any time could decide to expand the number of interceptors; thus its promises that China’s deterrent will remain intact are considered meaningless.

In the next decade the United States and China are likely to embark on a transition to a new strategic nuclear relationship. The United States will almost certainly move toward a redefinition of deterrence that encompasses both offense and defense. China will be modernizing its nuclear forces to enhance the survivability, safety, and reliability of its deterrent. This transition period could be one of tremendous uncertainty and suspicion. It could further promote the perception of an adversarial bilateral relationship in both countries and result in an unchecked competition of offense and defense. Such an outcome can be averted, however. It is incumbent on officials and strategic thinkers in both the United States and China to consider measures the two sides can take to manage the strategic nuclear transition in a way that alleviates tension and builds trust.

**Taiwan**

Taiwan remains the most sensitive and potentially the most explosive issue in Sino–American relations. For Beijing, the U.S. attitude and policy toward the Taiwan issue embody the essence of U.S. intentions toward China and determine the overall state of Sino–U.S. relations. The intensification of Chinese worries over the past several years that Taiwan is drifting toward independence has combined with heightened Chinese suspicions that the United States seeks to prolong the separation of the two sides of the Strait indefinitely. The establishment of a democratic political system on the island and the election of a president from the Democratic Progressive party, which calls for independence in its party platform, have further increased the complexity of the issue. Chen Shui-bian’s refusal to
acknowledge the existence of one China has irritated Beijing. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan have become increasingly objectionable to China, especially the transfer of weapons and capabilities that reduce Taipei’s vulnerabilities to military coercion by China.

From the perspective of the United States, any outcome of the dispute between Beijing and Taipei will be welcome, as long as their differences are resolved peacefully. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated in his confirmation hearings on January 17, “Let all who doubt, from whatever perspective, be assured of one solid truth: We expect and demand a peaceful settlement, one acceptable to people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.” A priority objective of U.S. policy under the Clinton administration was to encourage both sides of the Strait to reopen talks, settle outstanding problems, and discuss confidence-building measures. Bush administration officials also seek to achieve these goals but are less willing to take a proactive stance than their predecessors.

The uncertain and unstable relationship between Taiwan and the PRC represents a dangerous security risk for the United States. If strained relations between China and Taiwan were to erupt into military conflict, the United States would inevitably be drawn in because of its legal and moral commitments to Taiwan’s defense. If a military conflict occurs, it will upset regional stability and likely result in long-term enmity between the United States and China. The outbreak of a Cross-Strait war would represent a colossal failure of Chinese and American policy.

The unrelenting military buildup in southern China opposite the Taiwan Strait, especially the deployment of hundreds of short-range ballistic missiles, has raised U.S. doubts about Beijing’s commitment to rely on peaceful means to manage Cross-Strait relations. U.S. calls for China to exercise military restraint—for example, by freezing the numbers of SRBMs deployed opposite Taiwan and pulling back those already deployed out of range of the island—have gone unheeded. Chen Shui-bian’s concerted efforts to avoid provoking China since his inauguration in May 2000, unlike his predecessor Lee Teng-hui, have led to the widespread perception in Washington that the major source of Cross-Strait instability has shifted from Taiwan to the mainland.

On the positive side, trade and investment across the Strait are expanding, even as political relations have stalemated. The accession of both China and Taiwan to the World Trade Organization (WTO), expected later this year, should further boost trade and economic ties between their two highly complementary economies. Although it is uncertain whether the economic integration of the two sides of the Strait will promote political reconciliation, it is likely to contribute to a general easing of tensions and will increase the costs to both Beijing and Taipei of seeking to force a change in the status quo.

Although the robust arms sales package approved for Taiwan last April evoked a relatively muted response from China, it should not be assumed that future sales would be similarly tolerated. Many factors contributed to Beijing’s subdued reaction, including China’s desire to win the bid to host the 2008 Olympics, uncertainty about whether the eight diesel submarines authorized by the Bush administration will ever be acquired by Taipei, and worries in China that a strong reaction against U.S.–Taiwan policy early in the new administration would provide ammunition to “anti-China hardliners” in Washington and influence the evolution of Bush administration policy in ways that would be negative for Beijing. The Chinese continue to warn that the provision of AEGIS-equipped destroyers, a decision that has been deferred twice, and selling advanced TMD capability to Taiwan will cross China’s red lines and trigger a grave response.

In discussions with Chinese military and civilian leaders, the United States should draw a clear connection between U.S. assistance to boost Taipei’s ability to deter and resist an attack, on one hand, and the buildup of Chinese military capabilities against Taiwan, on the other. American officials should clearly convey to China the
information that the U.S. provision of additional enhancements to Taiwan’s modest missile defense capability can be averted only if Beijing agrees to halt its production and deployment of missiles in China’s southern Fujian Province opposite Taiwan. The continuing militarization of Cross-Strait relations serves no one’s interest. This must be recognized by China.

The United States also should use its diplomatic skill to encourage the opening of a dialogue between the Chinese and Taiwanese militaries to discuss Cross-Strait confidence-building measures. Military CBMs, implemented step by step, could play an important role in increasing trust and understanding between China and Taiwan. In addition, CBMs could diminish the risk of military conflict between the two sides triggered by miscalculation or an accidental engagement. Increased sorties by PRC and ROC fighters in the Taiwan Strait in recent years, including jets crossing the midline that demarcates the air space of the two sides, underscore the need for the replacement of a communications link between the PRC and ROC militaries to avert an accidental air skirmish. Such a “hotline” also could mitigate the possibility that intentions will be misread, which could lead to the escalation of a crisis, as occurred in 1995–1996, when China test-fired ballistic missiles off the coast of Taiwan.

Both the United States and China should handle their differences over Taiwan carefully. It is contrary to China’s interests to make U.S. policy toward Taiwan, and arms sales in particular, a litmus test of broader U.S. intentions toward China. Taiwan is one of numerous issues on which the United States and China will continue to disagree. Moreover, although the reunification of the island with the mainland is understandably a pressing matter for China, it is only one of Beijing’s priorities. Other priorities include raising farmers’ incomes, developing China’s western lands, addressing the needs of unemployed workers, solving China’s water and energy needs, sustaining overall economic development, and preserving a peaceful international environment.

**Setting a Positive Agenda for Sino–American Relations**

An agenda for progress in Sino–American relations in the next few years should be realistic and not overly ambitious. Washington and Beijing should identify areas where real achievements can be made and seek to bring those to fruition. Both sides should focus on issues in which bilateral interests overlap and cooperation is possible. Differences should be discussed in depth, and on matters in which critical security interests are at stake, bottom lines should be clearly articulated. Expectations should not be set too high on either side to avoid failures and subsequent disappointment. The broad objective of the next phase in stabilizing bilateral relations should be to accomplish small but concrete progress that contributes to building trust and confidence between the two sides.

**Regularize High-Level Consultations and Engage in Substantive Strategic Dialogue**

Beijing and Washington should regularize both annual summit meetings and strategic dialogue. Summit meetings provide opportunities to set the tenor of the relationship, to build a rapport and achieve a better understanding between top Chinese and American leaders, and to make progress on specific issues. Summit preparations put pressure on bureaucracies to resolve outstanding problems and propose new cooperative initiatives. Presidential meetings played a significant role, for example, in realizing the WTO accession agreement in 1999 and in producing the November 2000 agreement on missile proliferation controls.

At both mid- and high levels, the United States and China should conduct regular discussions on a broad range of security issues. These should cover issues such as each side’s respective global strategies, foreign policy priorities, and
security concerns. They should also include conversations about major power relations, the evolving role of the United Nations, the use of force and diplomacy in international relations, and regional security issues (Northeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East/Persian Gulf, and Central Asia). East Asian matters should be explored in depth, including the exploration of a new regional security architecture that retains strong U.S. security alliances and forward-deployed American military forces and, at the same time, involves China as an active participant in maintaining regional security.

One important goal of such a dialogue would be to identify new areas of common interest and potential cooperation, such as keeping the sea lanes open for the shipment of oil and combating Islamic fundamentalism. A second objective would be to clarify areas of possible conflicts of interest and discuss ways to manage differences on intractable issues such as Taiwan and missile defense. A third objective would be to establish channels of communication that would be readily available in the event of a crisis or a perceived need to exchange views on important issues.

Frequent, in-depth track II discussions, in which well-informed American and Chinese experts engage in a frank exchange of views on the changing security environment, also would serve as a valuable supplement to official dialogue. Such informal meetings can provide occasions for both sides to improve their understanding of each other’s perceptions, concerns, and policies. Also, they can afford an invaluable opportunity to identify points of potential convergence and divergence between the United States and China and provide opportunities for considering proposals for promoting bilateral cooperation.

**Open a Dialogue on Managing the Strategic Transition**

Chinese and U.S. leaders should agree to open a bilateral dialogue at a senior level in which both sides discuss how to preserve each other’s strategic interests as their two countries proceed with plans to alter their respective strategic nuclear force structures. Such a dialogue could include (a) a discussion of the past, present, and future role of nuclear weapons; (b) the meaning of nuclear deterrence and mutual assured destruction (MAD) in the postcold-war era; and (c) acceptable offense/defense balances.

The United States also should consider unilateral steps to clarify its strategic intentions toward China and the capabilities of its missile defense systems once defense architectures are determined. In turn, Beijing should be more transparent with the United States about its strategic nuclear modernization program and make commitments to not proliferate ballistic missile defense (BMD) countermeasure technology to other states.

**Make Further Progress in Encouraging Cooperation Toward Nonproliferation**

Curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems remains an area in which the United States and China have overlapping but not identical interests. There is a need for regular and close consultation between the two sides, and cooperation should be expanded where possible. When agreements are reached, both sides should strictly adhere to their terms and respond to each other’s concerns about violations as well as unfulfilled promises.

Beijing should reiterate its commitment of November 2000 to not export ballistic missile components and technology restricted by the Missile Technology Control Regime and to strengthen export controls on missile-related items. Action must be taken to investigate and respond to U.S. claims of continuing Chinese assistance to missile programs in Iran and Pakistan. In addition, a target date should be set for the Chinese publication of the promised ex-
port control list for missile-related and dual-use technology items. If Beijing is perceived to be backsliding on those obligations, it will provoke a major backlash in Congress and inhibit the Bush administration’s efforts to build a new consensus on China policy. Conversely, evidence that Beijing is abiding by its latest nonproliferation commitment will help to deflect criticism of China and boost confidence in the value of U.S.–China cooperation in curbing the proliferation of WMD and their delivery systems. Once Washington’s confidence in China’s November 2000 pledge has been restored, the United States should fulfill its part of the agreement by resuming the processing of applications for American companies to launch satellites on Chinese rockets.

In addition, the United States and China should consider next steps to advance their bilateral cooperation in the nonproliferation sphere. Chinese membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) remains in the U.S. interest, and Washington should not abandon this goal. At the 1998 summit, Jiang Zemin told President Clinton that Beijing would “actively consider” joining the MTCR; China has not subsequently denied interest in membership, although serious consideration of this issue was suspended following the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999. Consultations between Chinese and American officials to discuss formal Chinese participation in MTCR should resume as soon as possible. In the meantime, China should implement the steps that would make it eligible for membership in the future.

China’s past linkage of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan to Chinese cooperation on nonproliferation should be reassessed. Curbing WMD proliferation is in Chinese interests and should thus be pursued as an end in itself, not linked to other matters. Moreover, there is no leverage to be gained over the United States through such a linkage, especially with the new team in charge in Washington. Any deliberate horizontal proliferation activities by China to signal displeasure with U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan will be extremely counterproductive and damaging to Sino–American relations.

**Complete Chinese Membership in WTO and Promote Trade and Economic Ties**

The resolution of bilateral issues that posed an impediment to China’s joining the WTO have revived hopes that China can become a member of the global trade club and take part in rule-setting negotiations by the group’s members slated for November in Doha, Qatar. Both the United States and China have a strong interest in the smooth completion of China’s entry into the WTO and should cooperate to see that it is achieved. Once multilateral documents are approved by the WTO’s ruling executive body that explain in detail how China will implement its commitments under the WTO, China’s National People’s Congress should ratify the documents expeditiously and dispatch notification to WTO headquarters.

The smooth accession of Taiwan to the WTO following China’s entry opens new possibilities for the development of Cross-Strait trade and economic cooperation, which would serve Chinese and U.S. interests in easing tensions between Taipei and Beijing and promoting reconciliation between the two sides of the Strait. Both sides of the Strait should implement the necessary measures to come into compliance with WTO rules relevant to Cross-Strait economic interactions.

The recent resumption of U.S. Trade and Development Agency Aid to China, which was suspended in June 1989, will facilitate the expansion of Sino–U.S. cooperation in the fields of energy, infrastructure, and environmental technology. Agreements to convene the Joint Economic Commission in September and the Joint Committee on Commerce and Trade later this year will provide a boost to trade and economic cooperation as well.
Engage in Constructive Interactions on Human Rights and in Promoting the Rule of Law in China

Both the United States and China need to find ways to engage in constructive interactions on human rights. The agreement reached during Secretary of State Powell’s visit to resume bilateral discussions on human rights is a good first step. An agenda should now be developed to ensure that such a dialogue produces positive results. The bilateral talks should not be used simply as a platform for each side to criticize the other’s human rights record. The United States should credit China with making advances in the areas of social and economic rights while continuing to urge greater progress in the provision of political rights. The discussion of such issues as religious freedom and freedom of speech and assembly no doubt will be contentious but should take place. One positive outcome of the bilateral human rights dialogue would be to persuade Chinese leaders that Washington does not seek to destabilize Chinese society or undermine CPP rule.

Beijing should recognize that achieving its economic modernization goals requires the strengthening of the rule of law in China. The Chinese should take steps to allow greater transparency and implement due process of law in the arrest and prosecution of those charged with breaking Chinese laws. Congressional approval for spending U.S. government funds to support rule-of-law programs in China has opened up new opportunities to provide technical assistance for the development of China’s legal system. These and other opportunities to promote the rule of law should be taken full advantage of.

Work Jointly to Ensure a Successful APEC Summit and the Bush–Jiang Summit

Beijing’s chairmanship of APEC this year provides an opportunity for China to assume a regional leadership role and build on past achievements by APEC members. China should seek to revive the core APEC objectives of economic liberalization and trade expansion. Steps also could be taken to press for the reduction of barriers to information access. A successful APEC summit can provide a boost to regional economic cooperation as well as to Sino–American relations.

Preparations for a Bush–Jiang summit got off to a good start with Secretary Powell’s discussions in Beijing in July. Additional high-level and mid-level exchanges have been set for August and September to lay the groundwork for Bush’s October trip, including a visit to Washington, D.C., by Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and visits by Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to Beijing. For Chinese leaders who are eager to shine on the world stage, the mere fact of the U.S. president’s visit to China’s capital is a major accomplishment. The establishment of a personal rapport between the two presidents that could buffer the relationship from future shocks would be a welcome outcome. For President Bush, a successful summit requires signals from Chinese leaders that they are willing to move further toward joining the international community—which, in the words of Secretary Powell, includes a community of international economies, a community involving the international rule of law, and a community of international standards of human rights.

Although the emphasis should not be on producing “deliverables,” both sides should consider ways of advancing bilateral cooperation. Beijing should not wait for the United States to begin identifying areas where progress can be made and new agreements can be reached. Instead, China should seize the initiative and table constructive proposals. The United States should use the summit opportunity to reaffirm the importance of Sino–American relations to regional security and to reassure Chinese leaders of U.S. support for China’s emergence as a strong, prosperous power.
**Continue to Conduct Bilateral and Multilateral Military Exchanges**

Military-to-military exchanges between China and the United States play an important role in the overall relationship and should continue where they advance American interests. It is important that the United States maintain communication channels with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) as well as involve the Chinese military in multilateral activities in which our interests run parallel. The lack of a regularized military program will breed deeper misperceptions on the Chinese side about U.S. military power, U.S. political will, U.S. willingness to take casualties, and the U.S. decision-making calculus about the use of force. These misperceptions, in turn, will increase the likelihood of military conflict.

The annual Defense Consultative Talks, conducted by high-level representatives of the U.S. and Chinese military establishments, provide a valuable opportunity for the two sides to engage in a strategic dialogue about each other’s security concerns as well as regional and global hot spots or areas of potential instability. A yearly agenda of military exchanges and areas of cooperation is also agreed on. Visits by service or theater commanders enable both sides to acquire a more realistic image of the other and may contribute to reducing misperceptions and increasing the clarity of policy and perhaps intention. Educational exchanges between the Chinese and American military institutions (National Defense University exchanges and CAPSTONE programs) also afford useful channels for discussions of security issues. In additional, they enable the United States to tap into and perhaps even slightly influence the younger members of the PLA officer corps.

Operational military exchanges require greater scrutiny, but, on balance, I believe that the gains far outweigh the risks. Carefully prepared visits by Chinese military delegations to U.S. bases, for example, provide an opportunity for the United States to display its far superior military competence and capability. Such exchanges also open up relationships among officers that may have future value and allow the United States to continue to press for expanded access in China. Moreover, they demonstrate the American commitment to transparency and underscore China’s resistance.

Confidence-building measures can include a broad range of bilateral and multilateral activities designed to reduce tensions, enhance understanding, and manage crises. In this category are ship visits, exercise observation (RIMPAC, Cope Thunder, and so on), joint search and rescue maneuvers, the creation of mechanisms to establish “rules of the road” (e.g., the Military Maritime Commission), and direct communications channels (e.g., between the Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD] and the Central Military Commission [CMC] and between the U.S. Pacific Command [PACOM] and PLA regional commands). Again, the risks are small, and the potential benefits over time would be significant.

**Develop Close Coordination and Consultation on the Korean Peninsula**

Beijing and Washington have worked in parallel to achieve the shared objectives of (a) easing tensions between North and South Korea, (b) encouraging North Korea to invest in economic development rather than in destabilizing weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and (c) coaxing North Korea to emerge from its isolation and become a participating member of regional and international society. The recent thaw on the Korean Peninsula provides hope for an eventual peaceful solution, but the potential for failure still exists. The United States and China need to engage in close coordination to promote developments in a positive direction.

Following its review of policy toward North Korea, the Bush administration reaffirmed its support for President Kim Dae Jung’s sunshine policy and indicated its willingness to resume dis-
cussions with the North Koreans without any preconditions. Beijing and Washington should cooperate to restore and sustain the peace momentum on the peninsula. China should use its channels to North Korea’s leadership to urge Pyongyang to reengage with both South Korea and the United States. Chinese President Jiang Zemin can personally convey this message to North Korean President Kim Jong Il in September, when he is expected to visit Pyongyang. Jiang can also encourage Kim to make his promised visit to the South.

Restricting North Korea’s development and proliferation of WMD and conventional weapons technologies serves the interests of peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The United States and China should work together to ensure that North Korea does not abandon the moratorium on its nuclear program and long-range missile tests. Continued effective cooperation on the Korean Peninsula will serve as a reminder of the value of Sino–U.S. relations to skeptics in both China and the United States.

**The Need for Presidential Leadership**

It is not too late for President Bush to frame the discussion of China policy in the United States and to forge a new domestic consensus in support of good Sino–American relations. Before Bush’s departure for China, he should deliver a speech that sets out a clear vision of his administration’s priorities and goals in developing relations with China and embeds our relationship with China in a broader regional and global context. In the absence of such a vision, conflicting impulses within the administration could complicate U.S. policymaking toward Beijing and undermine the president’s ability to build the constructive relationship between the United States and China that he aspires to create.

It is in both U.S. and Chinese interests to create and preserve a healthy, normal bilateral relationship. As the Bush–Jiang summit approaches, the onus is on both governments to seek ways to stabilize bilateral relations by broadening and deepening areas of cooperation between the two countries while narrowing and managing persisting differences.

**About the Author**

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