

USAPC Washington Report
Interview with Prof. Joseph S. Nye, Jr.
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USAPC: The 1995 East Asia Strategy Report stated that U.S. security strategy for Asia rests on three pillars: our alliances, particularly with Japan and South Korea; our forward military presence; and our participation in multilateral dialogue. With respect to the second pillar, will the recent U.S.-Japan force realignment plan keep the U.S. military appropriately deployed in Asia?

Nye: The U.S. military presence in Asia remains important, but the posture had to be updated. The May 2006 agreement between the United States and Japan to implement a plan to realign the U.S. and Japanese force presence in Japan is important, particularly the decision to move about 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam. We contemplated moving U.S. troops from Okinawa ten years ago when I served as assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs. I am glad that both governments finally got that on track.

USAPC: How about U.S. participation in multilateral dialogues? Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was notably absent from last year's meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum and, for various reasons, the United States was not invited to attend the inaugural East Asian Summit last December. Has Washington been neglecting important opportunities to support regional dialogue and institution-building in Asia?

Nye: Yes, I believe we could do more in that area, although it is sometimes not entirely ours to decide. Nevertheless, I think in recent years we should have been more engaged in multilateral dialogues in Asia. It probably would have been useful to participate in the East Asia Summit. I also think the idea of developing a Northeast Asia security dialogue makes a lot of sense. The security dialogue basically would expand the current Six-Party Talks aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons program. It is unfortunate the United States has not pursued development of a Northeast Asia security dialogue more rigorously.

USAPC: Some Bush administration officials have said that development of a Northeast Asia Security dialogue cannot proceed until there is progress in the Six-Party Talks. Is there another approach the Bush administration might use to break the stalemate in the talks?

Nye: To be fair to the Bush administration, North Korea is a large part of the problem. The North Koreans want direct negotiations with the United States to ensure their status while giving away as little as possible. That is one of the reasons why we want to keep other countries involved in the negotiations. The administration's recent hint that it might talk to the North Koreans in a broader context about a larger settlement on the Korean peninsula conceivably could form the basis on which to create a broader security framework not unlike the Northeast Asia Security dialogue. But at this stage there are just a lot of press leaks. It is hard to know exactly how the administration will proceed.

USAPC: Even when the Six Party Talks were on track, the North Koreans continued their nuclear weapons development program. Will the United States and other participants in the Six Party process ultimately have accept North Korea's status as a member of the "nuclear club" in order to engage that country in a constructive diplomatic process?

Nye: In reality, we have had a nuclear North Korea for at least the past 10 years. The United States does not appear to have a larger strategy to deal with this prospect, but at some stage, we must think this through carefully.

USAPC: Could China, South Korea, and other participants in the Six-Party Talks do more to encourage North Korea to negotiate responsibly?

Nye: Yes, they could do more to press the North Koreans to participate in a constructive manner. However, the Chinese are torn between their twin desires to keep the Korean peninsula non-nuclear but at the same time ensure that North Korea does not collapse and cause instability at their border. They never have given enough priority to the first goal and pressured North Korea accordingly. If the Chinese remain committed to not allowing the North Korean regime of Kim Jong-il to collapse, then we simply will not have much progress in the Six-Party Talks.

USAPC: At press time, there were reports that North Korea was planning to test-launch the *Taepodong* long-range missile. If Pyongyang goes through with the launch, how do we sanction North Korea for such provocative behavior while keeping the prospect of diplomacy alive? Even if North Korea does not launch the missile, this episode suggests that North Korea has little interest or intention to resume the Six-Party process. Where does this leave us?

Nye: I believe that North Korea raised the prospect of a missile launch now as a way to reclaim attention that recently has focused on Iran. As of now, the net effect has been to intensify U.S.-Japan ballistic missile defense efforts as well as diplomatic efforts. But the long-term question of what sort of a deal to propose to North Korea still has not been thought through, and is complicated by how such a deal would relate to the difficult case of Iran. We still lack an effective policy for North Korea.

USAPC: Turning to the "alliance pillar" of U.S. security strategy for Asia, what is your view of U.S. and Japanese plans to overhaul bilateral security cooperation to address new regional and global challenges? In some of your writing, you note the advice of the Greek historian Thucydides, who wrote that fearful behavior can create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Are U.S. and Japanese defense planners mistaking "theories" about the implications of China's military buildup rise for reality?

Nye: No. It is important to keep a strong U.S.-Japan defense relationship as a hedge against a China that potentially could become aggressive. But this should be combined with an approach that welcomes China and encourages it to become a "responsible stakeholder,"

to use the term originated by former Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick. The two approaches are not contradictory.

In an op-ed in the *Boston Globe* earlier this year, I described U.S. policy toward China as “embrace but hedge.” This means that stability in East Asia requires, if you will, a triangular relationship between the United States, Japan, and China. All three legs of the triangle are important for stability, which enables economic growth and, in turn, political reforms. Maintaining a strong U.S.-Japan security relationship does not work at cross-purposes with the larger challenge of dealing with the rise of Chinese power.

What worries me is that the Sino-Japanese relationship has gotten off track for domestic political reasons—not because of the U.S.-Japan security relationship. These tensions are a product of nationalism in China and Japan.

USAPC: You also have written extensively about a nation’s use of soft power. Is Japan squandering its soft power in Asia by allowing tensions with China to build? In particular, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine [where Japan’s war dead, including World War II Class A war criminals, are interred] have inflamed Tokyo’s relations with both Beijing and Seoul.

Nye: Yes, I do. When I visited Japan not long ago I told my Japanese colleagues, including a number of Diet members, that Japan has a great deal of soft power in China and South Korea arising from its popular culture. But every time a Japanese prime minister visits the Yasukuni Shrine, this symbolic act recalls the 1930s. The last thing Japan needs right now is to turn people’s minds away from the appeal of anime and current popular singers, but that is exactly the effect of the Yasukuni visits. That is a good way for a nation to squander its soft power.

I also told them that in the United States there is not much concern about the Prime Minister Koizumi’s Yasukuni visits. But as friends of Japan, Americans have an obligation to tell Japanese friends when they are making a mistake that is hurting themselves.

USAPC: Rep. Henry Hyde (R., Illinois), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, sent a controversial letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R., Illinois) in May. It reportedly stated that if Prime Minister Koizumi were invited to address a joint session of Congress when he comes here in late July to meet President Bush, this might appear that Washington endorsed his anticipated visit to the Yasukuni Shrine the following month. The letter can be read as suggesting that the Japanese leader not be invited to formally address Congress in a joint session. Is that an appropriate response?

Nye: No, I would not go that far. But we should speak frankly to the Japanese and say, “We’re friends. We have an interest in your soft power being accepted in the rest of Asia. You are now doing things that are undercutting your own soft power.”

USAPC: Has the United States used its soft power to positive effect in Asia?

Nye: In some ways, yes, but in some ways, no. U.S. assistance to Asian countries devastated by the December 2004 tsunami boosted our soft power a great deal. But the U.S. role in the Iraq War has hurt our soft power in Asia and elsewhere. Our decreased

participation in multilateral initiatives or forums also has hurt our soft power. The United States definitely has a mixed record. But U.S. soft power in Asia certainly has not suffered the same degree of damage as it has in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East.

USAPC: In 2000, you co-authored with former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, “The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership.” The report set forth goals aimed at modernizing the bilateral security relationship. Mr. Armitage maintains that in the intervening six years Japan has exceeded these goals by allowing the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces to support coalition forces in Iraq, among other things. What is your take?

Nye: I agree. I think Japan sees itself as obliged to help produce global public goods. I do not think that anyone wants to see Japan re-militarize, become a nuclear weapons state, or act in a way that recalls the 1930s. But I do not think that is likely. The kinds of steps Japan has taken need not create fears among their Asia neighbors, particularly when combined with a somewhat more subtle use of Japanese soft power.

USAPC: Earlier we discussed Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick’s call on China to become a “responsible stakeholder” in regional and global affairs. Is Japan a responsible stakeholder? Some commentators question that. They point to Japan’s unwillingness to endorse a United Nations proposal linking economic aid to Burma in exchange for democratizing measures and its apparent reluctance to cooperate with the United States on Iran, for example.

Nye: With respect to Burma, I think Tokyo is beginning to realize that engagement with Burma has not produced what it had hoped and perhaps Japan should speak out more clearly about that. You can engage and speak out at the same time.

On Iran, Japan will have to realize that its investments designed to assure preferential access to Iranian oil will not mean much if there is a crisis in the Persian Gulf, and that they have a larger interest in assisting the multilateral diplomacy that is designed to avert a crisis brought on by Iran’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

USAPC: This fall, Prime Minister Koizumi will step down, and in January 2009 we will have a new U.S. president. Much has been written and said about the special relationship between the two leaders. To what extent has the development and maturation of U.S.-Japan relations been driven solely by the force of their personalities? Is there sufficient institutional support to implement recent changes in the defense relationship, in particular, regardless of who succeeds Prime Minister Koizumi and President Bush?

Nye: As the recent Koizumi visit, complete with a trip to Graceland, demonstrated, the Bush-Koizumi relationship certainly has been good on a personal level, but yes, there is deeper institutional support for important changes that have been made in U.S.-Japan defense relations.

I would argue that since 1996 the U.S.-Japan relationship really has been stronger than the personalities of individual leaders. In April of that year, former President Clinton and the late Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto issued the groundbreaking U.S.-Japan Joint

Declaration on Security. That declaration reconfirmed that the U.S.-Japan security relationship remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment in the Asia Pacific region.

If former Vice President Al Gore had been elected president in 2000 or Senator John Kerry in 2004—or if Prime Minister Koizumi had stepped down earlier—I do not think those developments would have altered the trajectory of bilateral relations very much.

USAPC: What would you advise the next U.S. president about East Asian security strategy?

Nye: I would advise the new American leader to regard East Asia as central to U.S. foreign policy. The rise of Asia, in general, and China, in particular, are crucial issues for the 21st century. It is important to create a structure of stability in East Asia so that change can occur, but not so radical as to cause the United States to become fearful and pull out of the region.

As I said earlier, I would summarize future U.S. policy toward East Asia as “hedge but embrace.” I would encourage the new U.S. president to pursue a strategy aimed at maintaining the triangle of stability, which in turn fuels prosperity that will benefit all.

USAPC: From your current vantage point, do you perceive a fairly high degree of bipartisan support for the approach you just articulated?

Nye: Yes. If you look at the foreign policies of President Bush and former President Clinton, there are several obvious areas where the two administrations diverged. But with respect to U.S. policy toward East Asia policy, I would argue that there is a surprising degree of continuity.