



U.S.-China Relations:
Bilateral Stability, but Challenges on China's Borders

Bonnie Glaser
CSIS/Pacific Forum CSIS

Developments on China's domestic front were prominent this quarter with extreme winter weather coinciding with the Spring Festival, the annual convocation of the "two meetings" in Beijing, and protests in Tibet that spread to neighboring provinces with Tibetan populations. Key events in Sino-U.S. bilateral ties included the fifth Senior Dialogue in Guiyang, a brief visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to kick-start the Six-Party Talks, and a visit by FBI Director Robert Mueller to discuss security for the upcoming August Olympic Games. In the military sphere, the Commander of U.S. Pacific Command Adm. Timothy Keating traveled to China and the Defense Policy Coordination Talks produced several agreements. Stable and complicated were watchwords for the Sino-U.S. relationship.

Domestic events in China capture attention

For Chinese leaders, domestic concerns always take priority over foreign policy, and the opening quarter of 2008 was no exception. Extreme winter weather, the worst in five decades, hit China's central, southern, and eastern provinces in January and February, claiming 129 lives and destroying 485,000 houses and 90 million hectares of crops – \$22 billion in direct economic losses. The snowstorms occurred at the peak of the Spring Festival travel season, stranding millions of travelers at airports and train stations. To alleviate public suffering and underscore the government's responsiveness to the people's needs, the central government mobilized 300,000 soldiers, 325,000 armed police, and 1.85 million paramilitary to participate in disaster relief efforts. The U.S. government donated \$150,000 and the Department of Defense provided disaster relief materials worth about \$820,000. When Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met Chinese President Hu Jintao in late February, Hu thanked the U.S. people and government for their assistance.

In March, Chinese attention focused on the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the legislature's top noncommunist advisory body, and the National Party Congress (NPC), the nation's legislature. The NPC signed into law decisions made at the CCP Party Congress last November, appointed new Cabinet ministers and other top officials, approved a 17.6 percent increase in the military budget, and unveiled a bureaucratic reorganization that established "super-ministries" for industry, transport, housing, construction, and the environment to promote efficiency and end turf wars.

While the NPC was still in session, protests erupted in Tibet, posing a major challenge to the Chinese leadership just five months prior the Beijing Olympics. Peaceful demonstrations by monks at monasteries in Tibet on March 10, marking the 49th anniversary of the failed 1959 uprising against Communist rule, were followed by riots in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, and spread to Tibetan populations in neighboring Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces. The Chinese government first dispatched police to quell the violence and subsequently sent PLA units to assist. According to China's official *Xinhua* news agency, 18 civilians and one police officer died while 241 police officers and 382 civilians were injured. The Tibetan government-in-exile, based in India, disputed Beijing's casualty figures, saying at least 140 people died in demonstrations.

In a statement issued March 15, Secretary Rice voiced concern about "reports of a sharply increased police and military presence in and around Lhasa" and called on China to "exercise restraint" in dealing with the protests and urged all sides "to refrain from violence." Rice cited President Bush's consistent support for "substantive dialogue" between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama and his representatives "so that long-standing issues with regard to Tibet may be resolved." Rice also conveyed U.S. concern about the situation in Tibet in a phone call with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, who insisted that "the violent crimes were organized, premeditated, and masterminded by the Dalai Lama clique, with the collaboration of domestic and overseas separatist forces seeking 'Tibet independence.'" President Bush's silence on the events in Tibet was notable.

Administration officials maintained that Bush believed it would be more effective to communicate privately with Hu Jintao, with whom the president has a special rapport. They said Bush privately had counseled restraint, the admission of U.S. observers into Tibet, and the conduct of open trials of those who had been arrested. On March 26, Bush phoned Hu and urged the resumption of consultations with representatives of the Dalai Lama as part of a process that addresses the grievances of the people in Tibet. In reply, according to *Xinhua*, Hu reiterated Beijing's willingness to have a dialogue with the Dalai Lama "As long as the Dalai really gives up his proposal for "Tibet independence," stops his activity of splitting the motherland, particularly the criminal activities he instigated and planned in Tibet and other localities as well as the activity of undermining the Beijing Olympics, and recognizes that Tibet and Taiwan are inseparable parts of Chinese territory." The exchange did not suggest any new flexibility on the part of Beijing.

Senior dialogue and senior visits promote relations

Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte traveled to the city of Guiyang in Guizhou province with his counterpart Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo for the fifth U.S.-China Senior Dialogue Jan. 17-18. The agenda included regional security issues such as Burma, North Korea, Iran, and Taiwan as well as foreign assistance, energy security, and climate change. According to *Xinhua*, the two sides had a "frank, sincere, and in-depth exchange of views on the development and changes in the international situation, how to ensure the long-term healthy and steady development of China-U.S.

relations and strengthen coordination and cooperation on regional and international issues between the two countries, and other issues.” *Xinhua* cited Negroponte’s commitment to develop “constructive, long-term and stable relations of comprehensive cooperation with China.” The U.S. proposed launching a high-level dialogue on development assistance that would be headed on the U.S. side by Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance Henrietta Fore.

Breaking new ground, a Chinese military officer was included in the Senior Dialogue in Guiyang. This followed the first-time inclusion of a participant from the Pentagon in the prior round last June. At the Guiyang talks, Maj. Gen. Ding Jingong represented the PLA and Assistant Secretary of Defense James Shinn represented the Department of Defense.

After the Dec. 31 deadline passed for Pyongyang to provide a complete declaration of its nuclear programs and its past proliferation activities with no signs of progress, Secretary Rice headed to the region in late February in an attempt to break the logjam. North Korea was at the top of the agenda in Rice’s meetings in Beijing, her second stop after Seoul. The Chinese tabled some creative ideas during the discussions and Rice instructed Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill, the U.S. negotiator to the Six-Party Talks, to remain in Beijing for further talks. On her way to Tokyo, Rice told the press that she remained confident that the Chinese are using their influence with the North Koreans because they want to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. “They are meeting their obligations,” she added.

Although Rice’s stopover in Beijing was short, she covered a broad range of issues and held meetings with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, Premier Wen Jiabao, and President Hu Jintao. In addition to North Korea, the two sides discussed Darfur, Burma, Taiwan, foreign assistance, and human rights while providing an assessment of the overall development of the bilateral relationship. A major achievement of the visit was an agreement to resume the U.S.-China human rights dialogue, which was halted by Beijing in 2004 when the Bush administration sponsored a resolution before the UN Human Rights Commission to censure China.

According to the Chinese official media, in Rice’s meeting with Hu Jintao the two sides agreed to “step up bilateral constructive and cooperative relations and handle ties from a long-term and strategic perspective.” Hu applauded the progress in the bilateral relationship made in recent years, saying that “The cooperation keeps expanding and the strategic significance of the bilateral ties grow higher and higher.” Rice expressed her appreciation for Chinese efforts to resolve international issues, including North Korea and Darfur. Underscoring Chinese concern about the upcoming March elections in Taiwan, Hu stressed that China would “resolutely deter the adventurist activities of Taiwan independence separatist forces.” Perhaps in an effort to reassure the Bush administration that Beijing would not overreact to possible developments on Taiwan, Hu added that efforts would be made “to prudently handle the Taiwan issue.”

Speaking to the press alongside Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, Rice reiterated U.S. commitment to a one-China policy, U.S. opposition to unilateral changes in cross-Taiwan

Strait relations, and U.S. expectations that differences between Beijing and Taipei will be solved peacefully. In addition, she restated the Bush administration's opposition to the Democratic Progressive Party's referendum asking Taiwan voters whether they supported joining the United Nations under the title of Taiwan. Rice indicated that the referendum was "not constructive and would, in fact, serve no useful purpose." When the referendum was held in tandem with the Taiwan presidential elections on March 22, it did not pass because only 35 percent of eligible voters participated in the referendum, which was significantly less than the 50 percent that is required for it to be valid.

U.S. officials said Rice specifically discussed with Yang Jiechi the arrest of Hu Jia, among China's most prominent political dissidents, and the continued jailing of Jude Shao, a China-born U.S. businessman who is serving a 15-year sentence on tax evasion charges he and his supporters say were fabricated. Acknowledging to reporters that she had raised individual human rights cases with the Chinese, Rice maintained, "We do this with respect but these are issues that are very near and dear to American values."

FBI Director Mueller in Beijing for Olympic security talks

Cooperation between Chinese and U.S. intelligence and law-enforcement agencies gained attention in early January with the three-day visit of FBI Director Robert Mueller to Beijing. China's preparation for the Beijing Olympics was the main focus of the visit. Mueller toured Olympic venues in the Chinese capital and was briefed by the police, paramilitary, and counter-intelligence agencies in charge of security for the August games. In brief remarks to reporters, Mueller termed China's security preparations for the Olympics "impressive" and acknowledged that the FBI was lending its expertise on fending off possible terrorist attacks. In addition to Olympic security, he cited terrorism, computer crimes, and corruption as areas of Sino-U.S. cooperation. "Both countries face threats from terrorism, face threats from cyber-crime, hackers and the like and so my discussions with my counterparts here have discussed those areas where we have mutual concerns," Mueller said.

Taiwan's election relieves worries, raises new concerns

The election of Kuomintang (KMT) candidate Ma Ying-jeou as Taiwan's president and the defeat of the referendum that asked Taiwan voters if they wanted to join the United Nations under the name of Taiwan eliminated a potential crisis for Beijing and produced a new strategic opportunity to transform cross-Strait relations. In the March 26 phone call between Presidents Bush and Hu, Bush encouraged China to reach out to Taiwan and to try and resolve differences. According to *Xinhua*, Hu expressed his expectation that the Chinese mainland and Taiwan will make joint efforts and create preconditions to formally end their hostility through consultation, reach a peace agreement, construct a framework for peaceful development, and usher in a new situation of cross-Strait relations.

Even as Chinese fears about the dangers of Taiwan independence began to recede, new worries surfaced. Chinese scholars visiting Washington voiced concern that U.S.-

Chinese cooperation to manage Taiwan, which they viewed as bolstering trust between the two countries, would now come to an end. They feared a rapid improvement in U.S.-Taiwan relations, heralded by a possible visit to the U.S. by Ma Ying-jeou prior to his inauguration and potential approval of Taiwan's request to purchase 66 *F-16 C/D* fighter jets, could come at China's expense and cause Beijing to be cautious in responding to Ma's victory. Speaking at a conference held at The Brookings Institution, Yuan Peng, director of the American Studies Institute under the China Contemporary Institutes of International Relations, called for Washington and Taipei to avoid taking steps that would rouse Chinese suspicions and instead reassure China so as to promote positive-sum rather than zero-sum interactions among the U.S., China, and Taiwan in the future.

Headway in bilateral military ties

Adm. Timothy Keating made a four-day trip to China in mid-January, his second visit since assuming his post as commander of the U.S. Pacific Command in March 2007. In Beijing, Keating met with Central Military Commission Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong, PLA General Staff Chief Chen Bingde and his deputy Ma Xiaotian, Ding Jingong, deputy chief of the Ministry of Defense's Foreign Affairs Office, and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. Keating also visited the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences where he held a seminar with Chinese researchers.

Chinese media reporting on the visit was upbeat, reflecting the positive trends in recent months in the U.S.-Chinese military relationship. In an interview after Keating's meetings in Beijing, China's official news agency for overseas Chinese reported Ding Jingong's statement that the visit played a "positive role" in enhancing bilateral military cooperation. In a sign of Beijing's willingness to get beyond the issues that caused the November denial of the *USS Kitty Hawk* port visit to Hong Kong, *Xinhua* quoted Ding as saying that China welcomed suggestions Keating made for more mutual port visits, as well as for observation of multinational and bilateral military drills and exchange programs for commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

Chinese concerns about Taiwan independence activities and U.S. actions that allegedly encourage Taiwan independence were raised in every meeting. Using especially tough language, Guo Boxiong called for the U.S. to "stop its arms sales to Taiwan, stop its military connections with Taiwan, refrain from sending wrong signals to Taiwan, and jointly maintain the Taiwan Strait's peace and stability."

Keating also visited Shanghai and Guangzhou, where he toured PLA military institutions and bases. In Guangzhou, Keating was hosted by Lt. Gen. Zhang Qinsheng, formerly PLA deputy chief of staff, who is now commander of the Guangzhou Military Region. At the Navy Service Arms Command Academy, Keating delivered a speech in which he stressed the desire of the U.S. military to cooperate with all countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including China, to protect peace and stability in the region.

Talking with the press in Beijing, Keating highlighted trust, confidence, and transparency as the themes of the visit. He maintained that he is developing "an honest and true

friendship” with some of China’s senior officials, adding “I can pick up the phone and call some of these guys.” In response to a question about why the *USS Kitty Hawk* transited the Taiwan Strait after it was denied entry into Hong Kong and headed for its home port Yokosuka, Keating noted that there had been inclement weather on the leeward side of Taiwan. In addition, he bluntly stated that the Taiwan Strait is international water and the U.S. does not need China’s permission to sail through it. “We will exercise our free right of passage whenever and wherever we choose as we have done repeatedly in the past and we’ll do in the future,” Keating stated. These comments were strongly denounced by Chinese netizens on several popular mainstream and military enthusiast bulletin boards in China.

At the end of January, China permitted the *USS Blue Ridge*, an amphibious command ship and the flagship of the Seventh Fleet, along with its 700 crew members to make a port call in Hong Kong. Bilateral military ties took another step forward in February with the signing of an accord on providing access to military records that may yield information on the remains of U.S. military personnel missing from the 1950-53 Korean War and the finalizing of an agreement to install a hotline between the two militaries. Ambassador Charles A. Ray, deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/missing personnel affairs and Maj. Gen. Qian Lihua, director of the Ministry of National Defense Foreign Affairs Office, signed the accord on archive access in Shanghai. The hotline agreement was signed by Qian Lihua and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David Sedney, who was in Beijing for the fourth round of Sino-U.S. Defense Policy Coordination Talks. The Chinese also agreed to convene expert-level discussions on nuclear strategy and policy issues that will include active duty military officers from China’s Second Artillery and the U.S. Strategic Command. Presidents Bush and Hu agreed to launch a dialogue on nuclear matters in April 2006, but little progress has been made in the past two years. In the meantime, China’s ongoing modernization of its nuclear arsenal has raised U.S. concerns and prompted calls for greater transparency about the intentions behind the program.

Finally, Chinese and U.S. naval officers concluded an annual maritime safety meeting under the framework of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement. Since the MMCA was signed in 1997, there have been seven plenary meetings, 12 working group meetings, and one special meeting. According to China’s Defense Ministry, the two sides discussed holding a joint maritime exercise within the year. *Xinhua* reported “the mechanism has played an important role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust, promoting China-U.S. maritime military safety, and deepening exchanges and cooperation between the two navies.” In addition to the MMCA talks, the U.S. delegation, led by Maj. Gen. Thomas Conant, director for strategic planning and policy of the U.S. Pacific Command, met Rear Adm. Zhang Panhong, the deputy commander of the PLA North Sea Fleet, and visited the fleets of the Chinese navy.

In early March, the Pentagon released its annual assessment of Chinese military capabilities that is mandated by the U.S. Congress. As in previous years, the report highlighted Beijing’s lack of transparency, which “poses risks to stability by increasing the potential for misunderstanding and miscalculation” and leads to “hedging against the

unknown.” The report claimed that although the near-term focus of China’s military modernization is preparing for contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, analysis of China’s military acquisitions and strategic thinking suggests Beijing is also developing capabilities for use in other regional contingencies, such as conflict over resources or disputed territories. Chinese military programs generating concern include the development of cruise and ballistic missiles capable of striking aircraft carriers at sea, the test of an anti-satellite weapon, and the deployment of new intercontinental ballistic missiles.

China condemned the Pentagon’s report, saying it was a distortion of the facts, interfered in the country’s internal affairs, and demonstrated “Cold War thinking.” Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang declared “We are extremely dissatisfied,” and demanded that the U.S. “correctly recognize China and China’s development.” In a critique of the report published in *China Daily*, the head of Fudan University’s Center for American Studies, Shen Dingli, objected to the report’s premise that “China is only permitted to engage in coastal defense and protect itself at its front door.” Shen also contended that China had been compelled to develop space capabilities after years of unsuccessfully trying to persuade the U.S. not to militarize outer space.

Stable and Complicated

Chinese specialists on America remain cautiously upbeat about the development and prospects for Sino-U.S. relations. Writing in *Beijing Review*, People’s University Associate Dean Jin Canrong summed up Sino-American ties in 2007 as stable and complicated. He maintained that the attitudes of both sides toward the concept of “stakeholders” suggest that their relationship will head in a positive direction. In the future, Jin suggested, two factors will determine the stable development of future Sino-American ties: Whether the U.S. accepts China’s peaceful rise as a fact, and whether China accepts the existing world system under U.S. domination.

In an interview with *China Daily*, Chu Shulong, another leading America expert from Qinghua University, asserted that after many years of friction, relations between China and the U.S. have entered a period of strategic stability. “As long as the two sides can properly handle the Taiwan question and jointly deal with the threat posed by the Taiwan independence forces, bilateral ties will develop steadily in the coming years,” Chu said.

Looking ahead to the second quarter of 2008, the main event in Sino-U.S. relations will be the fourth session of the Strategic Economic Dialogue, scheduled to be held in Washington in June. This is likely to be the last SED meeting under the Bush administration. A visit by Wu Bangguo, Politburo Standing Committee member and chairman of the National People’s Congress, is also under discussion. Wu’s visit had been planned for October last year, but was canceled after Washington provided an unusually public and warm reception for the Dalai Lama and awarded him a medal. No chairman of the NPC has visited the U.S. since Wan Li in 1989, nearly two decades ago, and both countries hope to realize the visit in the coming months.

Chronology of U.S.-China Relations January-March 2008*

Jan. 12, 2008: Taiwan's opposition KMT party wins a landslide victory in the parliamentary polls, winning 81 seats in the legislature, while the DPP wins 27 seats.

Jan. 13-16, 2008: Adm. Timothy Keating, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, visits China.

Jan. 16-20, 2008: U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte visits China for the fifth round of the Senior Dialogue, which is held in Guiyang with his counterpart Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo.

Jan. 21, 2008: The World Bank appoints a Chinese economist as its chief economist.

Jan. 23, 2008: Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi meets Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the sidelines of the six-nation foreign ministers' meeting on the Iranian nuclear issue in Berlin.

Jan. 28, 2008: China approves a request for the U.S. Seventh Fleet command ship *USS Blue Ridge* to make port visit in Hong Kong, allowing its 700 sailors to remain a few days in Hong Kong.

Jan. 28, 2008: Adm. Keating says at a forum hosted by Asia Society that Beijing is developing weapons systems that exceed what the U.S. sees as necessary for self-defense.

Jan. 30-31, 2008: FBI Director Robert Mueller makes a three-day visit to Beijing and is briefed by the police, paramilitary, and counterintelligence agencies in charge of security for the August Olympic games.

Feb. 5, 2008: Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell presents the annual threat assessment to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, with China occupying a prominent portion of his statement.

Feb. 8, 2008: The Department of Defense provides disaster relief materials to China that includes 6,000 winter coats, 1,657 blankets and 87,552 military food ration packs, valued at \$820,000, to help alleviate the suffering of people in southern, central and eastern China from heavy snow.

* Chronology by CSIS intern Kingston Kwek

Feb. 11, 2008: The FBI arrests alleged spies for the Chinese government, including a Pentagon official who helped Beijing obtain secret information about U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan and U.S. military programs.

Feb. 12, 2008: Russia and China propose a new international treaty to ban the deployment or use of weapons in outer space, and the use or threat of force against satellites or other craft.

Feb. 13, 2008: U.S. film director Steven Spielberg withdraws as artistic adviser for the 2008 Olympics, accusing China of not doing enough to pressure Sudan to end the “continuing human suffering” in the troubled western Darfur region.

Feb. 13, 2008: Thomas Fingar, deputy director of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, warns that military confrontation in the Taiwan Strait is one of the most worrying potential threats facing the U.S. at a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

Feb. 18, 2008: Foreign Ministry Spokesman Liu Jianchao expresses concern about a U.S. plan to destroy a malfunctioning satellite and calls for the U.S. to fulfill its international obligations in earnest.

Feb. 19, 2008: Assistant Foreign Minister He Yafei holds talks with Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill to exchange views on the North Korean and Iranian nuclear issues, Myanmar, and anti-proliferation.

Feb. 20, 2008: The Chinese Ministry of Public Security says that China will send the fifth contingent of peacekeeping police to Kosovo in early March.

Feb. 21, 2008: Nine retired senior military officials from the U.S. and China, led by former Vice Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Bill Owens and former Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff Xiong Guangkai respectively, meet on the southern island of Hainan to discuss ways to reduce tensions between the two countries.

Feb. 25, 2008: The 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China kicks off its second plenary session to discuss the restructuring of government departments and candidates for state leaders.

Feb. 26, 2008: Secretary of State Rice visits Beijing as part of a tour of Northeast Asia.

Feb. 26, 2008: Representatives of China, U.S., Russia, U.K., France, and Germany meet in Washington to discuss the Iranian nuclear problem. China’s representative says that China supports negotiations as a means to resolve the problem.

Feb. 27, 2008: In testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency Lt. Gen. Michael Maples says China has deployed more than 1,000 ballistic missiles against Taiwan and has developed more powerful missiles with the range to cover the entire continental U.S. and its allies in the region.

Feb. 28, 2008: President Bush says that he will attend the Beijing Olympics in August as a sports fan, but vows not to be “shy” about pushing China on human rights as well as Darfur and Myanmar.

Feb. 28-March 1, 2008: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia David Sedney holds Defense Policy Consultative Talks in Shanghai with counterpart Gen. Qian Lihua.

March 3, 2008: The Pentagon releases its annual report on China’s military as mandated by Congress.

March 3, 2008: The Bush Administration delivers a report to Congress entitled “the 2008 Trade Policy Agenda,” which states that China has overtaken Japan to become the third largest export market for the U.S.

March 4, 2008: China says it plans to increase military spending by 17.6 percent this year, to 417.8 billion RMB, or \$59 billion.

March 4, 2008: The National People's Congress (NPC) opens in Beijing. The main agendas are controlling inflation, the Olympic games, and a governmental reorganization.

March 5, 2008: Two House subcommittees hold a hearing to explore the economic and security implications of “sovereign wealth funds,” including the activities of the China Investment Corporation, with assets of \$200 billion.

March 7, 2008: Washington seeks permission from Beijing for the *USS Kitty Hawk* Battle Group to visit Hong Kong in mid-April.

March 7, 2008: President Hu Jintao meets former President George H.W. Bush in Beijing.

March 10, 2008: Tibetan protests begin in conjunction with the anniversary of the 1959 rebellion against Chinese rule.

March 11, 2008: Department of State releases its annual report on human rights. Unlike previous years, China is not listed as among the top 10 most systematic human rights violators, but is described as an authoritarian regime that denies its people basic human rights and freedoms, tortures prisoners, and restricts the media.

March 13, 2008: China releases its annual report on human rights in the U.S., which calls the U.S. record “tattered and shocking,” and criticizes the U.S. for its high crime rates, large prison population, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

March 18, 2008: The U.S. Security and Economic Review Commission holds a hearing on China’s Expanding Global Influence: Foreign Policy Goals, Practices, and Tools.”

March 19, 2008: Secretary Rice telephones Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and urges restraint on the part of the Chinese government in its response to Tibetan protestors, and encouraging Beijing to talk with the Dalai Lama.

March 21, 2008: Vice Premier Wang Qishan meets U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab in Beijing and pledges China's constructive role as a bridge in the Doha round of negotiations on world trade.

March 22, 2008: Taiwan holds a presidential election. KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou wins with 58.45 percent of the vote against 41.55 percent for DPP candidate Hsieh Chang-ting.

March 25, 2008: U.S. Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne announces that in March 2005 the U.S. accidentally shipped four nose cone fuses for intercontinental ballistic missiles to Taiwan instead of the helicopter batteries that Taiwan ordered.

March 26, 2008: China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang voices concern about the mistaken U.S. shipment of fuses to Taiwan. Qin demands that the U.S. conduct an investigation and provide "truthful and detailed information to the Chinese side and eradicate the negative impact and evil consequences hence incurred."

March 26, 2008: China allows the first group of foreign journalists to visit Lhasa since the violence began in Tibet.

March 26, 2008: President Bush calls President Hu Jintao to discuss the opportunities created by the Taiwan elections, the situation in Tibet, Burma, and North Korea.

March 28, 2008: Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Secretary of State Rice talk by phone, discussing bilateral ties and the Six-Party Talks.