

‘The Course We Must Maintain’

Vice President Cheney on Proliferation and Cooperation

In comments at Fudan University in Shanghai, China, on April 15, 2004, Vice President Dick Cheney spoke on the problem of weapons proliferation and the value of Sino-American cooperation.

The peace and stability that all civilized nations seek are under threat, as new and grave dangers continue to gather. In nations around the globe, terror networks have plotted against civilized people, and have grown bolder in their destructive ambitions. And in this age of rapid technological advance, we face the prospect that deadly weapons might fall into the hands of terrorists. The ultimate threat is that these problems—terrorism and proliferation—may one day come together in a sud-

den, catastrophic attack by terrorists armed with chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons...

China is ... accepting its responsibilities to join in stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The peoples of Asia are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of proliferation. Many countries that have the means to develop the deadliest weapons have refrained from doing so. Yet if governments perceive unchecked proliferation in the region, they might feel compelled to choose a very different course. And that could only heighten the dangers to this region and the likelihood that one day those terrible weapons would be used.

The dangers of proliferation have not

always been fully appreciated. In the past, the technologies that permit the development of sophisticated weapons and delivery systems were sometimes exported without much thought to the long-term consequences. The United States was therefore very pleased to see China declare new restrictions on the movement of those technologies. It is now essential that those restrictions be vigorously enforced.

President Bush and the American people are also greatly encouraged by the Chinese government's decision to take a leading role in the efforts of the international community to persuade North Korea to completely, verifiably, and irreversibly disman-

tle its nuclear programs. We must see this undertaking through to its conclusion. Because of the Pyongyang regime's past history of irresponsibility and deceit, the removal of all of its nuclear capabilities is absolutely essential to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia, and the world.

Controlling the spread of terrible weapons is one of the most urgent priorities of our new century. We have no alternative but to act with all the diligence, and more, of the rogue states and terrorists who wish to acquire such weapons for the threat they pose to innocent people. That is the course we are on—and the course we must maintain far into the future.