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**Independent Information and Analysis from the USA**

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## Issue# 13 of 2006 (#171), 04/05/2006

### UN 30-Day Deadline Unable to Soften Iran's Stance

by [Yan Li](#) (An interview with Shaul Bakhash, an Iran expert at George Mason University, David Kay, senior fellow of Potomac Institute for Policy Studies and former head of the Iraq Survey Group, and James Dobbins, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the RAND Corp.).

The UN Security Council adopted a Presidential Statement on March 29, 2006, demanding Iran suspend all its uranium enrichment-related activities within 30 days. Iran has refused to comply with this demand. In an interview with *Washington Observer Weekly*, Shaul Bakhash explained his view that Iran's strategy is, on the one hand, to never give up its ability to develop uranium enrichment. On the other hand, Iran believes that Russia and China will support and help it in this crisis. "The state at greatest risk is Russia because it is presumed to have the greatest influence in Tehran. I fully expect the Chinese, while maintaining their position against sanctions and force as a method of resolving international disputes, to let the Russians take the lead and the heat from the United States and the Europeans," said David Kay. On March 31, Iran started a dangerous game by defying the United Nation's warning; but on the same day, Iran's foreign minister said his country would not use oil as an economic weapon against international pressure. However, political analysts think that Iran has already been making use of oil as a tool to win support from China. In addition to showing its reasonableness, Iran's statement is also useful in reminding anyone who may have forgotten that Iran has a tremendous economic weapon that it can choose to use if faced with U.S. military action or tough international sanctions. Nevertheless, Iran probably won't face any serious sanction in the coming months, as it will be a long process for the international community to discuss potential reaction and find a solution. As James Dobbins comments, the hoped-for resolution of the Iran nuclear issue might take a couple of years.

### Normalization of Vatican-China Relations: Ball in Whose Court?

by [Teresa Hsu](#) (An interview with Jeffrey Bader, director of the China Initiative at the Brookings Institution, Richard Madsen, a China expert from University of California, San Diego, Suzanne Ogden, a professor at Northeastern University, and Shelley Rigger of Davidson College).

Vatican Foreign Minister Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo's recent comment that the "time is ripe" for the Holy See and Beijing to resume formal ties has created much speculation about the possibility of normalization of the bilateral relationship. In light of a recent statement made by the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs that China is open to a visit from the Dalai Lama, Jeffrey Bader believes that China is showing a potentially flexible stance on the ever-sensitive issues of religion. Richard Madsen believes that the appointment of Chinese bishops is the most critical issue preventing China and the Vatican from resuming ties, and that China's insistence on the Vatican cutting ties with Taiwan has not been an obstacle for some time; the Vatican has been keeping a low profile in Taipei and reduced its fully-fledged diplomatic presence years ago. Shelley Rigger, on the other hand, argues that the right to appoint bishops is no longer the issue. Rigger added that underground Catholics who are critical of the Chinese government for the restricted ability to speak their minds are the main reason behind the negotiation stalemate, and that Vatican's stance toward them is the critical factor in determining whether the normalization of relations between the two parties can soon

be solidified.

### **Afghanistan: The Apostasy Case and Nation-Building Blues**

by Dejin Su (An interview with Cheryl Benard, senior political scientist at Rand Corp., Olga Oliker, senior research analyst at Rand Corp., Barnett Rubin, director of studies at the Center for International Cooperation, New York University, and James A. Phillips, research fellow at the Heritage Foundation).

The trial and release of Abdul Rahman, an Afghan facing the death penalty for converting to Christianity, provoked outcries both inside and outside of Afghanistan. At the center of the storm is the clash between the constitutionally mandated religious freedom and Islamic Law (shari'a), which stipulates the death penalty for the offense of apostasy. The constitution of Afghanistan, drafted with help from US experts and revised by the Afghans, contains a clause that states "no law shall contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam." While both Cheryl Benard, of Rand Corp., and James A. Phillips, of the Heritage Foundation, urged the West to take a strong stand against the apostasy rule, Barnett Rubin, director of studies at New York University's Center for International Cooperation, said the "law" against apostasy is a consensus of the ulama, which cannot be changed by any legislative process. Benard said that apostasy case illustrates perfectly the loopholes of the current U.S. nation-building model, which requires a great deal of compromise and avoidance of issues in setting up a structure of a democratic polity (constitution, election and parliament). The uproar caused by the apostasy case, along with the recent worsening of the security situation in Afghanistan, calls into question the effectiveness of the U.S. nation-building and democracy-promoting strategy. But Olga Oliker, a senior research at Rand, said that at this stage of Operation Enduring Freedom, there are bound to be ups and downs. She does not foresee any major shift of policy change in Afghanistan that would cause her to reverse her recommendations for a smaller military presence in Central Asia.

### **White House Shake-up Only a Cosmetic Change**

by Yan Li (An Interview with Rep. Tom Davis).

U.S. President George W. Bush chose his budget director Joshua Bolten to replace longtime Chief of Staff Andrew Card on March 28, 2006. This low key "shake-up" in the White House did not meet the demand of many Republicans, who had been calling for fresh faces and perspectives to be brought into the administration after months of troubled polls and political mishaps. "I think that Card for Bolton isn't any kind of shake-up at all... I mean, that's continuity, these people are all part of the inner circle," Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., told Washington Prism, the Farsi-language sister publication of *Washington Observer Weekly*. "A shake-up would be bringing somebody from the outside who is disengaged from the administration for a fresh view or something like that," he said. When stepping down, Card was applauded by Bush as a likable, hardworking, and loyal member of staff. Card held this tough position for more than five years. As Davis said, Card is the longest-serving White House chief of staff in history, and he is ready to do something else, although he did a good job for Bush. As far as his successor goes, Republicans have been speculating that Bolten might want Bush to replace Treasury Secretary John Snow.

### **Cloned Pigs Advantageous to Health?**

by Teresa Hsu (An Interview with Jing X. Kang, an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and Alexander Leaf, an emeritus professor of clinical medicine at Harvard Medical School).

A team of researchers led by a Chinese-born biochemist said recently that they have successfully cloned genetically altered pigs that make their own omega-3 fatty acids, which is commonly known to be beneficial to preventing heart disease and cancer in humans. Jing X. Kang, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and the lead author of the new research paper, said that cloned pigs are just one part of a bigger project, and that genetically engineered cows and chickens with the same

benefits are also under development. Alexander Leaf, emeritus professor of clinical medicine at Harvard Medical School, said that he is worried that fish like tuna and salmon that contain omega-3 fatty acids are too expensive for Americans to consume enough of, and that Kang's research may eventually solve the problem. Leaf cautioned, however, that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval process can take a long time before the genetically engineered products get onto market shelves.

**Book Review: American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century, by Kevin Phillips**

by [Dejin Su](#)

This book by veteran political commentator Kevin Phillips examines the risks to U.S. dominance posed by three threats: the rise of radical right-wing Christians, the U.S. dependence on oil, and the mounting foreign and domestic debt. According to Phillips, the Republican Party has become the first religious and fundamentalist party in U.S. history, with the right-wing Christian faction exerting growing political influence.

**Poll Story: Immigration under Hot Debate again, with Lawful Immigrants Strongly Supporting Illegal Entrants**

by [Yue Li](#)

The new immigration bill proposed in the House by Republican Rep. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin has caused more forceful protests and debate due to its stricter measures, as a vote on the same issue in the Senate approaches. Polling company Bendixen & Associates interviewed over the phone some 800 lawful immigrants between February and late March, and a majority of them held quite positive views on unauthorized immigrants. They recognized the active role of the immigrants in American society and economic development. However, the interviewees did not have high opinions of the U.S. government or the two political parties with regard to the immigration issue.

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