

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

President Bush's 2002 State Visits in Asia: Implications

March 11, 2002

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Summary

In late February 2002, President George W. Bush made his second visit to Asia in four months, stopping in Japan, South Korea, and the People's Republic of China. Although the fight against global terrorism was clearly at the top of the U.S. agenda in all three countries, the President also addressed other issues of particular concern in each relationship. In addition, the Administration was careful to portray the visits as opportunities for dialogue and discussion, without raising expectations that any dramatic breakthroughs would be achieved through the visits.

In Japan, the President took a low-key approach, deliberately refraining from putting public pressure on Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi about the country's ongoing economic problems, which U.S. officials increasingly view as matters of regional security concern to the United States. Other discussions in Tokyo were conducted under the broad format of a recently inaugurated Strategic Dialogue, and focused on further anti-terrorism cooperation, broader security cooperation, policy toward China, and regional threats to peace and stability, primarily by North Korea.

The President's South Korea visit was somewhat more troubled, particularly given the President's cool reception early in 2001 to President Kim Dae-jung's "sunshine policy" of dialogue and accommodation with North Korea. In addition, the President's January 2002 description of North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" seemed to emphasize the divisions between the two capitals. Still, the Administration concentrated on initiatives to stabilize the relationship, minimize the policy differences over North Korea, and gain further South Korean support for anti-terror initiatives.

The China visit was more notable for the subtle but decided change in the atmosphere of U.S.-China relations since the President first took office. Having begun their relations with a crisis in the South China Sea, both Bush Administration and Chinese officials now see the potential for Sino-U.S. cooperation against global terrorism as an opportunity to craft a more productive and less hostile relationship. Nonetheless, U.S. officials left without having made progress on resolving the "November 2000 agreement," in which the PRC made non-proliferation pledges and promised to put an export control regime in place, and the United States promised to lift existing restrictions against certain technology exports. The PRC is maintaining that it is legally obligated to follow through on missile sales agreements that pre-date the November 2000 agreement – the so-called "grand-fathering" issue – and that it is still working on an export control regime. U.S. officials interviewed by CRS claimed they had not expected the issue to be resolved during the Bush visit.

This report will not be updated.

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President Bush's 2002 State Visits in Asia: Implications

Overview

On February 16, 2002, President George W. Bush left on his fifth official overseas trip since he assumed office in January 2001. Having taken office with limited experience in foreign policy and overseas travel and an apparent preference for concentrating on domestic issues, the President has traveled on four previous out-of-country trips, including a state visit to Mexico in February 2001; a trip to Canada in April 2001; a trip to Europe in June 2001; and a trip to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) ministerial meeting in Shanghai, China in October 2001, where he participated in meetings with leaders of the 21 Asia-Pacific member economies. The President originally planned to make official summit visits to Japan, South Korea, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) after the APEC meeting, but these plans were postponed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the trip ultimately was re-scheduled for February 2002. The President spent two days each in Japan, South Korea, and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The President's state visits have been framed by contrasts. On the one hand, the President made the visits when he was in a strong position domestically, with extraordinarily high American approval for his performance in office in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11; conversely, leaders in Japan, South Korea, and China all have been facing mounting domestic criticism and other difficult challenges. On the other hand, the President's international position in the region has appeared more controversial, with increasing attention being focused on his recent description of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as an "axis of evil" – a view which he continued to espouse and defend in Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing.

The President's trips to Asia have coincided with significant shifts in policy emphasis. The Administration initially adopted a tougher, less accommodating approach toward the PRC that de-emphasized Sino-U.S. relations; a greater focus on Japan and other U.S. regional allies; and a cooler attitude toward South Korea's initiatives toward North Korea than had characterized the Clinton Administration. A collateral effect of these policy changes was the inclination to be more supportive of Taiwan, including a more robust arms sales policy toward Taiwan, despite the fact that the PRC considers Taiwan a breakaway province of China.

The September 11 terrorist attacks against the United States, combined with an ongoing global economic slowdown, have altered the conditions under which the initial Bush policy calculus toward Asia was made. But while the international circumstances had changed, some suggested that the Administration had not yet

crafted a new, comprehensive policy framework to meet those circumstances. Many observers looked to the President's February 2002 Asia trip for indications as to how U.S. policy toward Asia would proceed.

Japan

During his first stop in Japan, the President and senior Administration officials accentuated the positive, emphasizing the significant deepening of U.S.-Japan security cooperation since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and showing support for Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's efforts to address Japan's serious economic and financial problems. The President's performance generally was viewed favorably by the Japanese media and the visit appeared to give Koizumi a morale boost.

Because of the negative effect on the economies of U.S. friends and allies in East Asia, Japan's economic problems increasingly are viewed as matters of security concern to the Administration. U.S. officials worry that deflationary pressures in Japan, the possibility of a new banking crisis, and the weak yen could not only exacerbate the U.S.-Japan trade deficit and exert a drag on the global economy, but could also affect the international financial system and regional stability in Asia. One particular concern is that lower effective Japanese export prices caused by the weak yen might touch off another round of currency depreciation such as occurred in the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, this time also involving China. For these reasons, Japan's economic and financial problems were high on the White House's list of agenda items.

The President emphasized the positive in his address to the Japanese Diet (parliament), calling the U.S.-Japan relationship "one of the great and enduring alliances of modern times," and expressing strong confidence in and support for Koizumi's program for economic and structural reforms. Despite growing concerns over Japan's stumbling economy, President Bush deliberately refrained from offering specific economic remedies. Koizumi, for his part, was warmly complimentary of President Bush's leadership in the global anti-terrorism campaign, and he downplayed negative reaction to the President's characterization of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as an "axis of evil."

Officials on both sides appeared pleased at the apparent warm personal relationship that has developed between President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi. The visit included an impromptu tour by Bush of Koizumi's office, where the two talked baseball, and an evening dinner at a local restaurant where both walked among tables greeting diners.

The summit meeting took place under the broad format of a recently inaugurated Strategic Dialogue, focused on security cooperation, economic policy engagement, discussions of policies towards China, regional threats to peace and stability such as posed by North Korea's exports of missiles and other weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. Some specific security cooperation issues on the agenda reportedly included further intelligence and anti-terrorist cooperation, Japan's possible role in any next phase of the anti-terrorist campaign, missile defense cooperation, and the issue of the relocation of the Futenma Marine Air Station, which has generated demands in Okinawa for a fifteen year limit on U.S. use of the proposed new facility.

The President's low key approach has been attributed primarily to conclusion of Administration policymakers that despite disappointment at the pace of reform and some questions about the Koizumi government's approaches and priorities, nothing was to be gained by using "*gaiatsu*" (foreign pressure) to promote a U.S. solution. Whatever Koizumi's limitations, and despite a recent drop in his still high levels of popularity, the Administration appears to have concluded that he probably is a better hope for change than any alternatives. Prime Minister Koizumi suggested that in private, the President may have delivered pointed criticism regarding the need to tackle the bad loan problem more aggressively, as expressed recently by Treasury Secretary O'Neill and Glenn Hubbard, Chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisors.¹ In public, however, the President confined his comments on the Japanese economy to laying out in more general terms the Administration's judgment about the appropriate priorities: rapidly cleaning up the bad loan problem through a mechanism such as the Resolution Trust Administration employed by the United States to deal with the savings and loan scandal of the 1980s; reversing a deflationary trend that is causing prices and asset values to fall at a rate of about 4 percent per year; and implementing broad structural reforms.

Some in the United States, including Members of Congress from affected regions suffering from economic recession and job losses from imports, may be disappointed that the President did not reinforce the concerns of some senior U.S. officials that Japan is trying to export its way to economic recovery by following policies that weaken the yen against the dollar. This has been a particular concern to the automobile and steel industries, and their supporters in Congress. As in other areas, the President and his advisors appear to have calculated that showing support for Koizumi would better advance U.S. interests than confrontation. Moreover, the President decided on March 1, 2002, to impose "safeguard" tariffs on steel imports, including imports from Japan.

For his part, Prime Minister Koizumi also emphasized the positive and soft-pedaled concerns within his government that the Administration's hard line towards North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, would have destabilizing effects in the region. The current Japanese approach appears to have at least two rationales. First, the Japanese calculate that there is little chance of influencing the President's strongly held views or deflecting the Administration from whatever path it chooses as a follow-up to the military campaign in Afghanistan. If and when Japan is presented with new requests for support of U.S. anti-terrorist operations, Tokyo will have to respond as best it can to balance its interest in protecting the alliance relationship with other interests. In this respect, a senior Japanese foreign ministry official reportedly commented, seemingly only partly in jest, that in view of the possibility of U.S. military action against Iraq, on the one hand, and the possibility of a Japanese financial meltdown, on the other, the Bush visit might have come "just in time..." for each leader to show maximum support for the other.²

¹ Reportedly Koizumi told journalists that "President Bush was so candid [in private] that I was worried he might speak in the same manner publicly." The Daily Japan Digest, February 19, 2002.

² U.S. Presidential Visit: Economic Concern Hidden By Security Cooperation; Attack on Iraq Calculated. *Asahi Shimbun*, Feb. 20, 2002, p. 2.

Second, while Tokyo also appears to share the South Korean view that the current U.S. stance is unnecessarily provocative, the Japanese share many of the same concerns toward North Korea as the United States, and even have their own list of bilateral issues with Pyongyang. These include the fate of Japanese citizens believed kidnapped in the 1980s, North Korea's short-to-medium range Nodong missiles, and recent penetrations of Japanese waters by North Korean spy boats. The Japanese sometimes fear that their issues will be overlooked in some future US-North Korean agreement. For both of these reasons, comment on this issue by Tokyo was more muted than by officials in Seoul, whose priorities are much more affected by the hardline U.S. posture. In fact, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, a veteran LDP politician, said on a TV talk show that "Although there are some differences in relationships between the United States and North Korea and between Japan and North Korea, I think [Japan and the United States] basically share the same perception about North Korea...."³

South Korea

The Bush Administration viewed the President's summit meeting with South Korean (R.O.K.) President Kim Dae-jung as an exercise in stabilization of the U.S.-R.O.K. relationship following Bush's designation of North Korea as one of the "axis of evil" states. The Administration's objectives were two-fold: (1) to secure South Korea's support of the new U.S. definition of the war against terrorism that now includes elimination of weapons of mass destruction in North Korea; and (2) to prevent existing U.S.-R.O.K. differences over policy toward North Korea from becoming more visible. The Administration appears to have succeeded in realizing these goals. The two Presidents issued broad statements of common objectives. They expressed the common goal of eliminating North Korea's weapons of mass destruction. President Bush repeated the long-standing Administration statement that it would negotiate with North Korea "any time, any place." President Kim urged North Korea to respond affirmatively to the U.S. offer. President Bush also repeated another long-standing Administration statement that the Administration supports President Kim's "sunshine policy" of dialogue and accommodation with North Korea. President Kim summed up the general agreements on objectives by stating: "We were able to reconform that there was no difference of opinion between Korea and the United States."⁴

These general statements, however, did not reduce the divisions between Washington and Seoul. President Bush's designation of North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" clarified the Administration's policy toward North Korea that emerged after a U.S. policy statement of June 6, 2001, and was described in a number of Administration statements in November 2001. The policy is aimed at reducing and/or eliminating basic elements of North Korean military power, including weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), missiles, and conventional artillery and rocket launchers positioned on the demilitarized zone (DMZ). The Administration emphasis on WMDs has mounted since the Central Intelligence Agency gained documentary evidence in

³ Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe: Japan and the U.S. Basically Share the Same Views on North Korea. *Asahi Shimbun*, Feb. 18, 2002, p. 2.

⁴ Bumiller, Elisabeth. Damage Control. *New York Times*, February 24, 2002. P. NE6.

Afghanistan that al Qaeda seeks WMDs and has planned new attacks on the United States. This led the Bush Administration to broaden the definition of the war against terrorism to include states like North Korea that potentially could supply WMDs to al Qaeda.

The Administration's strategy is to employ public accusations and warnings to pressure North Korea to make policy changes regarding its military assets in line with U.S. objectives. Since July 2001, the Bush Administration has warned that it will suspend construction of the two light water nuclear reactors in North Korea (a provision of the 1994 U.S.-North Korean nuclear Agreed Framework) unless North Korea soon comes into compliance with its obligations to the International Atomic Energy Agency to allow full-scope inspections of nuclear facilities. The Bush Administration also had made a number of statements calling on North Korea to pull back artillery and rocket launchers from the DMZ. Secretary of State Colin Powell stated on February 1, 2002, that North Korea should do this as a goodwill gesture.⁵ Beginning with the November 2001 statements and dramatically in the State of the Union address and in subsequent pronouncements, the Bush Administration has set a demand that North Korea stop the export of missiles and weapons of mass destruction to the Middle East and eliminate these weapons from its arsenal. President Bush's repeated declarations that he would not stand by while this threat mounts constitute an implied warning to North Korea alongside the explicit warning of shutting down the light water reactors.

The Kim Dae-jung Administration has supported most U.S. goals, but it has urged the Bush Administration to make greater efforts to secure negotiations with North Korea on these issues. Between the State of the Union speech and the Bush visit, South Korean officials expressed misgivings about the new clarity of the Bush Administration's policy of public pressure on North Korea for unilateral policy changes. The Kim Administration's objectives at the summit reportedly focused on persuading the Bush Administration to put specific proposals into its general offer to negotiate "any time, any place;" send a U.S. envoy to North Korea to deliver the U.S. proposal to negotiate; and persuade the Bush Administration to offer North Korea compensation for concessions on its missile program.⁶ However, these objectives were voiced primarily by R.O.K. working level officials. President Kim did not raise them with President Bush. Secretary of State Powell stated that President Kim spoke to President Bush in general terms, emphasizing the need for Korean reunification and the feeling among Koreans "that they are one people, North and South," according to Powell. (Informed sources contacted by CRS have confirmed Secretary Powell's description of President Kim's remarks.)

The Kim Administration achieved little. President Bush did not put any specific proposals into his offer to negotiate. There was no mention of a willingness by the

⁵ Slevin, Peter. Powell Offers Reassurance to South Korea. *Washington Post*, February 2, 2002. P. A19.

⁶ Yonhap News Agency (Seoul) report, February 21, 2002. French, Howard W. Bush Has Much to Finesse in Trip to Japan and Korea. *New York Times*, February 16, 2002. P. A4. Chandler, Clay. Bush's Remarks Distress S. Korea. *Washington Post*, February 10, 2002. P. A20.

Bush Administration to offer North Korea reciprocal measures in return for desired North Korean policy changes. President Bush only issued a general offer to “welcome North Korea into the family of nations, and all the benefits, which would be trade, commerce and exchanges.”⁷ The Bush Administration reportedly believes that it does not have to offer reciprocal measures and rejects specifically any compensation to North Korea for concessions on the missile issue.⁸ Secretary of State Colin Powell apparently rejected any immediate effort to arrange a U.S. envoy visit to North Korea; but he did agree to have the State Department contact North Korean officials at the United Nations;⁹ the State Department has maintained periodic contacts with North Korea’s U.N. mission. President Bush did ask Chinese President Jiang Zemin to endorse the U.S. offer of negotiations in China’s contacts with North Korea. Nevertheless, President Bush maintained the policy of public pressure during his visits to South Korea and Japan. He repeated his warning that the United States would not allow North Korea to increase the threat of WMDs. He described the North Korean government as “evil” and “despotic.” He repeated the demand that North Korea withdraw forces from the DMZ.

There was a favorable South Korean reaction to President Bush’s statement that: “We have no intention of invading North Korea.”¹⁰ However, the Bush Administration’s decision to issue that statement (the video of President Bush making the statement shows him choosing his words deliberately) reflected the tensions between the Bush and Kim administrations. At past U.S.-R.O.K. summits, it was not considered important for the United States to make such a statement. Moreover, the use of the word “invading” leaves open other military options that the United States could adopt toward North Korea.

There appears to have been no agreement between U.S. and South Korean officials over future specific strategy toward North Korea. There apparently was no discussion of any joint initiatives that Washington and Seoul could make to North Korea. The Kim Dae-jung Administration reportedly is emphasizing the possibility of a resumption of North-South talks, which have been suspended since November 2001 North-South ministerial meetings at which the North Koreans demanded that South Korea accept several preconditions before substantive talks could take place.

China

Unlike past Sino-U.S. state visits, President Bush’s February 21-22, 2002 meeting with Jiang Zemin – his second meeting with the PRC leader in four months – took place without specific agreements having been hammered out behind the

⁷ Brooke, James. Tentatively, North Korea Solicits Foreign Investment and Tourism. *New York Times*, February 19, 2002. P. C1.

⁸ Bush N.K. Strategy Explained...thinks we now have the leverage. *The Nelson Report*, February 21, 2002. The Nelson Report is issued by Samuels International Associates, Inc.

⁹ Gedda, George. North Korea: U.S. Will Continue to Encourage Talks. *Washington Times*, February 23, 2002. P. A7.

¹⁰ Bumiller, Elisabeth. Bush Says the U.S. Plans No Attack on North Korea. *New York Times*, February 20, 2002. P. A1.

scenes for the two presidents to sign, as in the so-called “deliverables” approach of the Clinton Administration.¹¹ Consequently, few observers expected major policy breakthroughs as a result of the visit – a low level of expectation that was, in fact, met. Still, the atmosphere in which the visit took place marked a subtle but decided change in the atmosphere of U.S.-China relations since Bush had assumed office. Having begun their new relationship amid the tension of a collision between a Chinese fighter and an American reconnaissance plane over the South China Sea, both the Bush White House and the regime in Beijing now see the potential for Sino-U.S. cooperation against global terrorism as an opportunity to craft a more productive and less hostile relationship. Thus, the symbolic overtures in the visit were significant.

President Bush emphasized that he had arrived on the 30th anniversary of President Nixon’s historic visit to China in 1972. He invited President Jiang to visit the United States in October 2002 – an invitation that Jiang was pleased to accept. Jiang also indicated that prior to his October visit – perhaps in April 2002 – China’s heir-apparent to the senior leadership position, the little-traveled Vice-President Hu Jintao, would accept Vice President Cheney’s invitation, extended earlier, to make his first visit to the United States (expected in late April 2002). Bush and Jiang also agreed to expand and deepen the U.S.-China dialogue at all levels; to cooperate more closely on the global anti-terrorism campaign; and to actively cooperate in key areas such as health (particularly on HIV-Aids), economics and trade, energy, environmental protection, and science and technology.

Beijing in particular seemed anxious to capitalize on the new international environment to improve relations with Washington, keeping its rhetoric prior to the visit mild and at times even laudatory. One PRC press account referred to Sino-U.S. relations as “back on the healthy development track and...looking positive,”¹² while another spokesperson referred to the “enormous potential” for Sino-U.S. economic cooperation.¹³ Reportedly in response to U.S. pressure, on February 10, 2002, the PRC released a Hong Kong man sentenced just two weeks earlier to two years in prison for smuggling bibles into China. Beijing also reacted mildly on other issues that could have had a negative impact, such as the discovery that a new Boeing jet bought to use as Jiang’s presidential plane had been installed with sophisticated surveillance devices, apparently during the aircraft’s outfitting in the United States. But even so, apart from the anti-terrorism cooperation, several other long-standing and difficult issues on the table during the two days of discussions remained problematic.

Non-Proliferation. Despite U.S. assertions that China’s weapons sales to unstable Middle East regimes increase the prospects that weapons of mass destruction could fall into terrorists’ hands, little progress was made on the issue of arms-control and non-proliferation. As a result, the state visit concluded without further

¹¹ The first meeting between the two leaders was in mid-October 2001, at the Shanghai meeting of the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

¹² Ruan Zongze, “Sino-U.S. ties back on healthy track,” *Chung kuo jih pao (China Daily)*, February 11, 2002, p. 4.

¹³ *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political*, London, February 13, 2002. p. 1.

resolution of the stalemate over the Clinton/Jiang November 2000 non-proliferation agreement, which has yet to be implemented. In fact, few U.S. observers expected the state visit to end with consensus on the November 2000 agreement, although the U.S. National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, said that work on the agreement was continuing.¹⁴ In the November 2000 agreement, the PRC had pledged to halt its export of missiles and other advanced weapons technologies and to issue comprehensive export control regulations, while the United States had agreed in return to waive U.S. sanctions against China for past proliferation activities and resume processing licenses for U.S. satellites to be exported to China for launch on PRC launch vehicles. Reportedly, President Bush did leave Beijing with a PRC pledge that a regime of export control regulations will soon be issued.

Taiwan. PRC officials consistently describe Taiwan as the most important and most sensitive bilateral issue with the United States. As was expected, no apparent progress was made on the issue of Taiwan. President Bush reiterated the standard U.S. “one-China” position, pleasing Beijing, and stated that the U.S. position had been consistent since the 1979 communique established official relations with the PRC. According to U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, he also expressed hope that the recent entry of both China and Taiwan into the World Trade Organization (WTO) would pave the way for a resumption of cross-Strait dialogue, which has been suspended. But President Bush also emphasized U.S. expectations that the Taiwan issue be resolved peacefully and without provocation from either side, and the President maintained that he supported U.S. obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act, which provides for the sale of U.S. defense articles and services to Taiwan. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan have long been opposed by Beijing.¹⁵

North Korea. There did appear to be some movement at the Beijing discussions on the subject of North Korea. According to National Security Advisor Rice, President Bush repeated to President Jiang the statements he made in Seoul about the North Korean government – its lack of transparency and the fact that it starved its own people – but without specifically making public reference to the “axis of evil.” Bush also reiterated to Jiang his offer in Seoul to hold U.S. meetings with the North Korean regime. He asked President Jiang to carry that message to North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-il.

¹⁴ Since the November 2000 agreement, U.S. intelligence reports have alleged that China has proceeded with missile-technology related sales commitments it had made prior to the agreement – commitments that PRC officials claim they are obliged legally to keep and want “grand-fathered” into the agreement – and that the PRC has continued to make new missile-technology related sales to Pakistan, Iran, and other countries – allegations that PRC officials have denied. Consequently, the United States has continued to impose new sanctions on PRC companies found to be making these sales. In September 2001, for instance, the United States imposed sanctions on the China Metallurgical Equipment Corporation for making missile-technology sales to Pakistan.

¹⁵ On January 28, 2002, Richard Bush, Director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the unofficial U.S. representative office in Taiwan, stated in a speech to a Taiwan audience that the United States will not make concessions on Taiwan in order to win continued PRC support in the anti-terror campaign.

Human Rights. Human rights issues have been among the most sensitive in U.S.-China relations, and President Bush made it clear in advance that he would address the issues of human rights and religious freedom in his public comments.¹⁶ In his public comments, the President handled these issues by emphasizing his own religious beliefs and convictions, but without directly challenging or criticizing his host, Jiang Zemin. During the press conference the two leaders held after their talks on February 21, 2002, for instance, the President said, “All the world’s people, including the people of China, should be free to choose how they live, how they worship and how they work.” Jiang was put on the spot during the press conference by reporters, who asked him why the PRC government restricted religious worship and why it had imprisoned more than 50 Roman Catholic bishops. According to the translation, Jiang responded, “Whatever religion people believe in, they have to abide by the law. So some of the law breakers have been detained because of their violation of law, not because of their religious belief.”¹⁷ In addition, President Bush later gave a televised speech and answered questions at Qinghua University, in Beijing, where he also addressed American values and human rights.¹⁸

According to reports, the President’s private discussions with Chinese leaders on human rights and religious freedom were more forthright and described as “extensive.” He emphasized the importance of beginning a dialogue with various religious leaders, such as the Vatican and the Dalai Lama. In addition, U.S. officials did not appear to let the impending state visit of February 21 deter them from lodging a formal protest on February 20 over how the PRC government treated U.S.-based practitioners of Falun Gong, expelled from China the previous week.¹⁹ Moreover, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lorne Craner, traveling with the President, is said to have had extensive private meetings with PRC officials on specific detained individuals that are of interest to the United States, such as Uighur businesswoman Rebiya Kadeer.²⁰

Anti-Terrorism Campaign. In his Beijing press conference remarks, President Bush listed terrorism first on the extensive list of issues he discussed with President Jiang. He welcomed China’s cooperation in the anti-terror campaign to date and looked forward to that cooperation continuing. But many observers see limits as to how far the anti-terrorism campaign can go in serving as a new framework for U.S.-China relations. The Chinese are uneasy, for instance – particularly after the President’s “axis of evil” comment – about the possibility that the U.S. anti-terrorism

¹⁶ In a letter to President Bush on February 11, 2002, Senator Max Baucus and Congressman Doug Bereuter, Chair and Co-chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People’s Republic of China, urged the President to emphasize the importance of rule of law and human rights during his meetings with Jiang.

¹⁷ From the February 21, 2002 Bush/Jiang press conference in Beijing. See full text and video at: [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/02/20020221-7.html>]

¹⁸ Full text at: [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/02/print/20020222.html>]

¹⁹ After being expelled from China, the U.S. Falungong group had met with U.S. State Department officials claiming that they had been physically abused by Chinese police.

²⁰ Lorne Craner is Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

effort will expand beyond Afghanistan to Iraq or North Korea. According to the U.S. National Security Advisor, the President emphasized to Jiang that he viewed Iraq as a dangerous regime but that he had made no decision to expand the anti-terror campaign to Iraq, and that “he promised to consult” with the PRC, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, about future U.S. plans.²¹

Another problem is the differing view each government holds about what terrorism is. Beijing commonly makes no distinction between terrorists who perform violent acts and “separatists” – the Chinese term for advocates of Uighur, Tibetan, and Taiwan independence from or greater autonomy within China – even when those attitudes are peacefully expressed. While President Bush has welcomed PRC expressions of support for the global anti-terrorism campaign (in October 2001, he called the PRC an important partner in the global coalition against terrorists), in the past he also has warned Jiang Zemin and the Chinese leadership against using the war on terrorism as an excuse for ethnic persecution. He made no similar public comments during his visit to Beijing, but did remark that both the United States and the PRC had been the victims of terrorist attacks in the past.

Implications for U.S. Policy in Asia

While the President’s brief Asia visits yielded no apparent agreements or policy shifts, the meetings with leaders and opinion makers allowed a first-hand dialogue on issues about which both U.S. and Asian leaders may have had some mis-perceptions. Having begun his term of office with a strong ideological viewpoint for U.S. policy and values, the President’s policy approach has evolved into what some observers are dubbing a new “pragmatic realism,” in which ideology, although still figuring prominently, is tempered by the necessities of dealing with immediate challenges.

Within these parameters, then, the February 2002 Asia visits suggest some generalizations about the unfolding Bush approach to Asia. First, the Bush Administration’s emphasis in Asia, at least with respect to the three countries visited, indicates that a high value will be placed on regular and constructive dialogue regardless of whether that dialogue can be translated into politically attractive policy initiatives. Second, the White House appears to be putting a premium on a balanced approach – one that seeks to even out the bumps in U.S.-China relations while bolstering ties with traditional U.S. allies such as South Korea and Japan. At the same time, other aspects of the visit – the stress on the “axis of evil” despite South Korea’s “sunshine” policy, the importance placed on continuing economic reform in Japan, and the President’s speech on American values at Qinghua University in Beijing – suggest that Bush Administration policy toward Asia intends to be substantively true to its core ideological values, even while seeking to improve overall dialogue.

Although a range of issues was discussed during the trip, at the heart of the President’s visits was the subject that has preoccupied American policymakers since September 11 – combating global terrorism, and in particular, seeking to deny global

²¹ National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in her briefing for reporters in Beijing.

terrorists the opportunity to obtain and use weapons of mass destruction. Some observers suggest that the Administration's growing concern and focus on this latter point ultimately may lead to further changes in U.S. policy, putting increasing pressure on traditional U.S. alliances and friendships in Asia.