



Center for Strategic & International Studies
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Summary of
President Bush Goes to Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing
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Introduction: Kurt Campbell

For the first time in modern history, every major threat to peace and stability comes from Asia along with the delicate situation on the Korean peninsula and unresolved disputes between China and Taiwan and India and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the immediate aftermath of September 11 witnessed a shift in the Bush administration's focus from Asia to other parts of the world, namely Europe, Middle East, and the U.S. homeland itself.

For three reasons, the Bush administration has yet to produce a policy giving the US priorities in Asia. First, the administration suffers a general disinterest toward Asia, especially after September 11th. Second, the administration suffers a fundamental division of strategic outlook among its senior players. In addition, both Democratic and Republican parties are divided when it comes to Asia policy, in particular China to policy. Third, the Bush administration's efforts to distance itself from the Clinton administration have delayed the launch of its Asia policy statement (for example, the current administration, despite its desire to address the slowness of the Japanese economic recovery, has not done so, for it does not want to pressure Japan as the previous administration did).

Two issues may affect the administration's policy toward Asia. First, the "Axis of Evil" (AOE) speech has made Seoul the most difficult place to stop during Bush's trip to Asia. The tone of the speech, corresponding with that of the Reagan Doctrine, is expected to generate not criticisms but questions to clarify Bush's intentions. Second, the administration will continue to focus on Northeast Asia despite the recent events that may have shifted its focus to Southeast Asia. However, this may not be prudent in light of the challenges from Southeast Asia, most notably from the Islamic fundamentalist movements.

William Breer on Japan

The cornerstone of Bush's Asia policy will be alliances, thus Japan was, is, and will be the focus of the administration. Because two large powers meet periodically, Bush's trip to Japan is a matter of course. Therefore, no major policy announcement should be expected. Bush's trip to Japan will serve as an opportunity to review its global, regional, and bilateral issues. Bush will deliver a direct message to the leadership and the people of Japan when he addresses the Diet. Bush hopes to address some economic reforms that have been slow to be accomplished and to also clarify his intentions on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. Moreover, Bush will address two issues. First, he will speak on the issue of terrorism and global peace and stability. He is expected to thank the Japanese people for their support against terrorism. Although the Japanese cooperation with the US war against terrorism is *atarimae*, or natural, in light of the loss of Japanese lives at the hands of terrorists, Bush is expected to express the continuous Japanese cooperation and its possible international military role.

To differentiate from the previous administration, Bush will allow the Japanese people to determine their course of action. However, there is a growing concern in Washington about the lack of visible signs for an economic recovery. Treasury Secretary's concerns about the financial sector, especially about non-performing assets and loans, surely demonstrate the growing American desire for Japan to recover at a faster pace.

The president is expected to show support for Koizumi and his programs to avoid the image of *gaiatsu*, or foreign pressure. Koizumi, on the other hand, must vest on Bush's endorsement to bring about domestic improvements in a cautious manner to avoid being looked upon as being pressured by the US.

Victor Cha on Korea

Bush and Kim Dae-Jung will not announce a major policy or issue a joint communiqué. After the AOE speech, however, Bush is expected to clarify the US stance toward the security of Korea, and its intention that in the long-term the U.S. supports the Korean unification.

There are four observations about the AOE speech and the summit: First, Bush will stress the importance of the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral alliance. Second, Bush will assure that North Korea is not an enemy and will ease the US-Korea relations strained after the AOE speech. Third, Bush will address the compatibility of the AOE speech and the administration's continuous engagement policy. To give North Korea something to lose is important in order to extract its tolerable behavior. Fourth, the summit meeting may be unsuccessful due to the negative domestic mood in Korea. Poor economic performances, combined with the election year, may serve as a backlash against both Bush and Kim Dae-Jung. Bush praising of Kim Dae-Jung will belittle the Korean president in the eyes of the public, but if Bush criticizes the Korean president, it will lead to the public angry. Thus, the success of the summit may be hard to achieve.

Bates Gill on China

The Bush administration has stabilized the US-Sino relations. Despite having reached a better state of affairs than ever before, the underlying tensions can potentially weaken the fragile relationship. The reason China has remained quiet and tolerant has been a mystery. China's reaction toward the US withdrawal of the ABM Treaty and the AOE speech has been characterized by silence. One possible theory for the lack of Chinese reaction to the recent American developments may be that China is turning inward, paying more attention to its economy and domestic problems. Its entrance into the WTO and the renewed social challenges may have contributed to the less hostile reaction from China. There is a great gritting of teeth.

Bush administration's policy toward China is divided. The events on September 11th have put the question of how to deal with China on hold. However, Bush should address the followings during his visit: First, the president should offer reassuring words about the smooth Chinese transition to the WTO and the U.S. assistance for china to handle its internal problems. The US should also make sure that the missile defense is not aimed at China. Both sides are expected to talk about the US-Sino cooperation on the war against terrorism. The president is expected to comment on human rights, particularly religious freedom. He is expected to encourage an advance toward more pluralistic society and to urge Chinese to use the US as a model. The willingness of the administration to expand the military cooperation may be forthcoming, but it remains doubtful. The American promise to aid China in technological advancement may be forthcoming as well. President Jiang Zemin, who wishes to visit Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, will be regarded in a favorable manner if he secures an invitation from Bush.

Q & A

Will the president address the growing anti-American sentiments in China? How will the US-Sino relationship look like in 30 years?

Gill: I do not know if the president will address these issues, but I believe that his aides and experts want to get the message across that this trend is a problem, and that the administration should do a better job in dealing with this issue. Bush is better off reminding China that the US wants prosperous China and not threaten it and also reminding the Chinese people why they like the US. The US is a model of development, technological progress, and superpower status, which all Chinese people aspire to.

Is it appropriate to characterize three countries as evil when the US has more problems with other parts of the world, for example with the EU?

Gill: The United States has shared a long history with Europe but not with Northeast Asia. Thus, problems may become exaggerated and less easily managed, although substantially they are not as great.

Should the United States deny China the deterrence capability?

Gill: The United States has assured that the American missile defense is not aimed at China. The key is the Chinese perception of whether missile defense is symbolic or political. If Chinese view missile defense as a political tool to contain China, it could be problematic.

Campbell: Regarding Iraq, China must appear as if it is not giving a go ahead sign to Bush. China will most likely nuance its position in a way that will align itself with France and Russia and encourage the use of diplomacy to deal with Iraq.

Is the Bush administration prepared for this trip?

Cha: At the highest level, the administration has yet to fashion a policy, so perhaps it may not be well prepared.

Campbell: One of Bush's tendencies is to maintain flexibility and to avoid being tied down to joint statements. The meetings are planned well in advance to avoid surprises and will take on the look of business meetings.

Gill: This administration prefers business meetings to grand summits.

Breer: The administration has competent Japanese experts, thus Bush is well prepared for his visit to Japan.

Why has Bush rejected the expert opinions regarding Korea and adopted confrontation over dialogue on his policy toward Korea?

Cha: Due to the division within the administration, the United States has yet to engage North Korea despite Kim Dae-Jung's belief that the engagement may be possible.

Campbell: Early in the administration, Bush was informed about the number of people who starve to death in North Korea and about the percentage of North Korean budget that goes to the military industrial complex, and the report has had a profound effect on him. Additionally, George Tenet and daily CIA briefings have contributed to Bush's adoption of confrontation over dialogue.

What specific human rights issues will Bush bring up during the trip?

Gill: I suspect that the president will focus on religious freedom issues, for he himself is deeply religious, and genuinely concerned about the Chinese treatment of Christians and those who adhere to religions that China deems unfavorable.