



Pacific Forum CSIS is pleased to announce the third issue of *Comparative Connections*, a quarterly electronic journal on East Asian bilateral relations, located on the web at <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/ccejournal.html>. This issue covers Oct. 1 - Dec. 31 and features short analytical essays along with chronologies covering key bilateral relationships in East Asia. Below you will find brief article summaries.

Regional Overview: Seattle Wake-Up Call: Will Washington Answer? by Ralph A. Cossa

The city of Seattle seems destined to go down in history as the site of one of President Clinton's finest hours in his administration's management of U.S. relations with Asia... and as the venue of one of America's worst moments as well. Unfortunately, the finest hour came more than six years ago, when Mr. Clinton hosted the first ever Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meetings. The smiles and kudos in abundance in Seattle in 1993 have been transformed into scowls and complaints in the wake of the ill-fated World Trade Organization meeting, which ended in disarray. Just as the U.S. Senate's earlier rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty had raised questions about America's desire and ability to lead the global non-proliferation movement, so to has Seattle raised questions about America's economic leadership.

U.S.-Japan: Not Bad for Auto-Pilot
by Michael Jonathan Green

The U.S.-Japan Alliance continues to hum along. During the last quarter there were irritants and problems, as usual, but also unexpected signs of strength. One surprising source of good news was the U.S. presidential primary campaigns. Usually Japanese diplomats brace for a shellacking from the new crop of contenders, but in the current contest, Japan has thus far heard nothing but sweet music. Things were still hot between the U.S. Trade Representative and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry over steel, dumping, telecommunications, and insurance. So far none of these issues has become a significant political problem however, largely due to the strength of the U.S. economy and Japan's difficulty restarting a sustainable recovery. It is hard to kick Japan when the economy is down – unless the U.S. economy is also down. That is one variable that could change.

U.S.-China: Progress Amidst Persisting Deep Suspicions
by Bonnie S. Glaser

The U.S. and China signed two important agreements in the final quarter of 1999 that will likely aid in stabilizing the bilateral relationship after a rocky period following the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade last May. The first, a bilateral accord on the terms under which China will enter the World Trade Organization, represents an important milestone for Sino-U.S. ties and signals a

reaffirmation of China's commitment to market liberalization and economic reform. The second, an agreement settling the issue of compensation for damage to their respective diplomatic property, constitutes an important step in the tortuous, unfinished process of restoring normalcy to the bilateral relationship, although strains continue over arms control and human rights as well as on the Taiwan issue.

U.S.-Republic of Korea: Never Better!... But Can It Last?
by David Brown

Washington and Seoul share a sense that their bilateral relations have never been better. Similar approaches toward North Korea have overcome their different priorities, and the Kim and Clinton administrations have found ways to manage many potentially contentious bilateral issues. While Seoul is looking for progress on North-South issues and Washington is focused on missile and nuclear issues, the two capitals are pursuing mutually compatible policies vis-à-vis Pyongyang that are sustained by effective coordination through the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), which also includes Japan. These compatible policies toward Pyongyang are a key component in the current excellent bilateral relations. But, if relations cannot get better, when will they come under strain again?

U.S.-Russia: Exit Yeltsin by Toby Trister Gati

True to his mercurial ways, Boris Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President of the Russian Federation on New Year's Eve. "Russia must enter the new millennium with new politicians, with new faces, with new, smart, strong, energetic people," Yeltsin said as he handed over all power to the Prime Minister and now Acting President, Vladimir Putin. The U.S. must now find a way to deal with a Russia without Yeltsin. This will likely mean the final end of bilateral relations based on personal rapport, as defined by the "Boris – Bill" relationship. It will mean handling a country that is tired of being told what to do and whose population cares little for U.S. warnings about Chechnya and other international issues. It will mean dealing with a leader whose popularity depends on asserting his authority and the power of the Kremlin in the international arena as well as at home.

U.S.-ASEAN: Riots in Seattle and Tensions Elsewhere
by Sheldon Simon

Many events signaled a downward slide in U.S. relations with ASEAN members this quarter including Southeast Asian accusations of U.S. mismanagement leading to the failure of the WTO Seattle summit and difficulties in important bilateral relationships. Philippine nationalist sensitivities brought about by a visit from a U.S. nuclear powered submarine and the prospect of joint exercises led to unsteady progress in Philippine-U.S. military relations. Indonesian-U.S. relations remained fraught with ambivalence in this quarter as the U.S.

warmly endorsed the democratic proclamations of President Abdurrahman Wahid's new government while expressing concern about the Indonesian military's (TNI) refusal to accept responsibility for the depredations in East Timor.

China-ASEAN: Consolidating Long-Term Regional Relations by Carlyle A. Thayer

China-ASEAN relations were dominated by four major events: a four-nation swing through Southeast Asia by Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, China's participation, alongside Japan and South Korea, in an informal summit with ASEAN (ASEAN Plus Three), a visit to Beijing by Abdurrahman Wahid, newly elected President of Indonesia, and the signing of a treaty on the land border between China and Vietnam. Also during this period China stepped up its military relations with Cambodia. China's diplomatic initiatives stand in contrast with the lack of strategic vision in U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia.

China-Taiwan: Across the Strait, Across the Years by Gerrit W. Gong and Ralph A. Cossa

Fortunately, the final quarter of the year lacked the major shocks that had featured so prominently in the previous quarter, which started with Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's controversial "special state to state" comment. Nonetheless, cross-Strait relations continue to struggle and the turnover of Macao to China seems to have stoked the flames. Reports of a Chinese missile build-up across the Strait added to the tensions, as did the possibility of Taiwan developing a counter-missile capability. The PRC has thus far refrained from employing heavy-handed attempts to influence the upcoming Taiwan Presidential election, but the Beijing leadership remains capable of overreacting to any new real or perceived Taiwan provocation as election day draws closer.

China-ROK: Deepening Intimacy and Increased Economic Exchange by Scott Snyder

The steadily deepening Sino-South Korean relationship in the last quarter of 1999 was marked by a relaxed and intimate round of "spa diplomacy" during the Chinese foreign minister's visit to South Korea. President Kim Dae-jung also joined Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji and Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi for an unprecedented three-way breakfast meeting at the ASEAN Plus Three meetings in Manila. With the South Korean economy in full recovery from its financial crisis, this quarter also saw renewed emphasis on South Korean investment in China, with a mixed but cautiously positive response in Seoul to near-term opportunities that may accrue from the successful conclusion of U.S.-China WTO negotiations.

Japan-China: A Search for Understanding by James Przystup

The last quarter of 1999 featured a series of high-level visits between Tokyo and Beijing, aimed at managing this critical, but difficult, bilateral relationship. Invariably, Chinese concerns over missile defense and the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines and Japan's focus on China's military modernization framed the official dialogue. Over the period, the Japanese press reported on China's foreign policy and national security objectives toward Japan and China's

suspected strategy of using Japan as a way of exerting leverage on the U.S. China's military modernization continued to receive attention – in particular the prominent display of military muscle at the PRC's 50th anniversary. Meanwhile, statements by the Parliamentary Vice Minister of Defense about nuclear weapons and remarks made by the Governor of Tokyo during a visit to Taiwan drew Beijing's ire.

Japan-ROK: DPRK Dialogue: A Little Luck the Fourth Time Around? by Victor D. Cha

Japan-South Korea relations remained on an even keel, still riding the waves of success from the past two Kim-Obuchi summits and from the trilateral cooperation precedents set by the Perry review. The most noteworthy activities were not in Japan-South Korea relations but on the Japan-DPRK dyad, which saw the first serious discussions on normalization since 1992. This dialogue, while preliminary, was welcomed by both Seoul and Washington, and falls in line with the comprehensive engagement strategy toward the DPRK outlined by the Perry process. The success of future Japan-DPRK normalization dialogue will depend on resolution of a number of issues, all of which are far from minor.

Japan-Russia: Weathering War, Elections, and Yeltsin's Resignation by Joseph Ferguson

The arrival in Moscow of Japan's new ambassador to Russia, former Deputy Foreign Minister Minoru Tamba, one of the chief architects of former Prime Minister Hashimoto's "Eurasian Diplomacy," is a clear sign that Tokyo is still intent on achieving some sort of peace agreement by the end of the year 2000. Though few believe that this goal is realistic, Tokyo appears determined. The arrival of Hashimoto on an unofficial visit to Moscow in November underscored this desire. However, the sudden resignation of Boris Yeltsin may put to rest all hope in Japan that a treaty can be signed during the upcoming year. Meanwhile, with a war on in Chechnya and the Duma elections in December, Russia's top leaders had more pressing matters on their mind than Japan.

Russia-China: Back to the Future by Yu Bin

On the eve of the new millennium, Moscow and Beijing continued to deepen their "strategic partnership." The last quarter of the year started with much fanfare to commemorate the twin 50th anniversaries of the PRC's founding and Russian (Soviet)-PRC diplomatic relations. This culminated with Boris Yeltsin's visit to Beijing – before his "grand exit" at the year's end – for another "informal" summit with his Chinese counterpart, where symbolism and substance interplayed against a backdrop of perceived Western pressure led by the United States.

Occasional Analysis: North Korea: Making up Lost Ground, Pyongyang Reaches Out by Aidan Foster-Carter

On January 4, 2000, Italy became the first G7 nation to establish full diplomatic relations with North Korea. This new year gift is the first fruit of a new bid to mend diplomatic fences and forge fresh partnerships. However, any gains must be seen in the context of the serious reverses, some self-inflicted, which the DPRK has experienced internationally. Pyongyang is mostly making up lost ground rather than charting new pastures. Moreover, the symbolic value of new

ties with lesser powers is no substitute for the need to make substantive progress with the countries that are central to North Korea's interests: the U.S., Japan, China, Russia, and South Korea. While this year may well see a few more countries recognizing the DPRK, most of the remaining holdouts will probably refrain unless and until Pyongyang shows itself more inclined towards peace and reform... and we have yet to see tangible signs that the Pyongyang leopard has changed its spots.

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