



Comparative Connections January, 2001

The [January 2001 issue of Comparative Connections](#), a quarterly electronic journal on East Asian bilateral relations, is now available online.

This issue covers October 1- December 31 2000 and features short analytical essays along with chronologies covering 12 key bilateral relationships in East Asia. Below you will find brief article summaries. Double click on the summary to go to the complete article, or view the [entire journal](#).

Comparative Connections is edited by Ralph A. Cossa and Eun Jung Cahill Che of Pacific Forum CSIS. For more information about the Pacific Forum and access to all of our products, please [visit our homepage](#).

Regional Overview: Democracy in Progress . . . or in Peril?

By Ralph A. Cossa,
Executive Director, Pacific Forum CSIS

This was not a great quarter for democracy in Asia. From attempts to remove sitting presidents in the Philippines and Taiwan to a ruling party near-coup in Japan to questions of eligibility in Thailand to disturbing instability in Indonesia, the democratic process seemed under attack. Events in Florida show that even after 200 plus years, kinks remain. One can argue, however, that this merely represents democracy-"the worst form of government, except all the others"-very much in progress. Despite this turmoil and a series of significant multilateral gatherings, most Asian capitals seemed fixated on Washington, amid growing anxiety as to what a new U.S. administration portends for them. The Chinese were concerned they would not be liked enough; the Japanese worried they would be liked too much; and the North Koreans feared that they would not be liked at all. Some suggestions are offered as to how best to address these regional anxieties.

U.S.-Japan Relations: Preparing for New Teams in Tokyo and Washington ..and a Muddy Field in Both Capitals

by Michael Jonathan Green
Olin Fellow for Asia Security Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

There was not much drama in the U.S.-Japan alliance this past quarter, but some bold (if old) faces re-appeared in both Tokyo and Washington as new cabinets were being formed. The eventual victory of George W. Bush brought to the fore a group of veteran security policy hands with a clear agenda to strengthen the strategic partnership with Japan. In Tokyo, Prime Minister Mori had a worse November than Al Gore, but somehow survived his numerous travails and formed a high-caliber new

cabinet that includes a score of political heavyweights. The new teams taking the field have proven records--but, oh, the field. In Washington, President-elect Bush takes power with the most divided electorate and Congress in a century and Mr. Mori is still hobbled by stunningly low approval ratings and an unwieldy coalition. Meanwhile, Tokyo and Washington will have to move the ball forward on some tough issues--ranging from Okinawan bases and Defense Guidelines implementation to trade and deregulation talks.

U.S.-China Relations: Bilateral Relations on Reasonably Sound Footing as 2000 and the Clinton Administration Come to a Close by Bonnie S. Glaser Consultant on Asian Affairs

The U.S. and China wrapped up the year with some small but important accomplishments, leaving the relationship on reasonably sound footing for the transition to the Bush administration. Presidents Jiang and Clinton held their final summit in Brunei on the sidelines of the APEC Leaders' Meeting and agreed "in principle" to resume bilateral human rights dialogue. The two sides cut a deal that holds out the promise of tighter controls on Chinese missile-related exports in exchange for a waiver of U.S. economic sanctions and resumption of commercial space cooperation. Progress toward securing China's entry into the WTO continued, but agreement on a multilateral accord in Geneva proved unattainable. High-level military delegations were exchanged and Defense Consultative Talks mapped out plans for military exchanges and cooperation that include high-level visits, confidence building measures, and Chinese participation in multinational events.

U.S.-Korea Relations: Progress on All Fronts by Donald G. Gross Attorney, Kim & Chang

This past quarter began with the signing of a U.S.-ROK missile deal and ended with a new Status of Forces Agreement, effectively resolving two highly contentious alliance issues. The U.S. and North Korea also achieved a major diplomatic breakthrough with an exchange of high-level visits. An ultimate agreement on missiles nevertheless eluded U.S. and North Korean negotiators, as the Clinton administration drew to a close. Meanwhile, despite doubts about the sustainability of North-South détente following the June 15 summit, Seoul and Pyongyang made significant progress on diplomatic, economic, and military issues. Looking ahead, the main question remains President-elect Bush's Korea policy: will his administration attempt to finalize an agreement on missiles with the DPRK and support the inter-Korean dialogue or take a harder line approach toward North Korea?

U.S.-Russia Relations: Return to Realism; Fewer Bear-hugs Expected

by Joseph Ferguson
Fulbright Fellow, Institute of World Economy and International
Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences

What a difference a year makes. A year ago, the question being asked in the U.S. was: who is Mr. Putin? Now, many in Russia are asking: who is Mr. Bush? Specifically, what does a Bush administration mean for Russia? A Bush administration will most likely entail a return to a pragmatic policy based on realism and on U.S. national interests. Rather than the chummy relationship of Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin; as one analyst wrote, "there will be fewer bear-hugs." Bush's new foreign policy team has already suggested that there will be a fundamental change in the way the U.S. formulates Russia policy. Coincidentally, when Putin became president a year ago, he also outlined a foreign policy based on the "real national interests" of Russia. This could herald an era of increased strain. However, a clear enunciation of policy could also enhance the possibility of progress in arms control and in economic relations.

U.S.-ASEAN Relations:
The United States and Southeast Asia: Blowing Hot and Cold

by Sheldon W. Simon
Professor of Political Science, Arizona State University

In his November valedictory visit to Southeast Asia, President Clinton was enthusiastically welcomed by the people of Vietnam. Clinton's message was that economic growth and political liberalization were inextricably linked. The Vietnam communist party and government leaders had a more jaundiced view, reminding their people of the history of "American imperialism" in Indochina and warning against political subversion of party authority. Indonesia's continued political and economic turmoil enveloped the U.S. diplomatic presence as U.S. Ambassador Gelbard's criticism of Jakarta's inaction in disarming West Timor's militias led to allegations of American interference in Indonesian affairs, making the U.S. a whipping boy for political infighting among contending Indonesian elite. Meanwhile, ASEAN defense chiefs took a tentative step toward greater cooperation with U.S. Pacific Command endorsement.

China-ASEAN Relations:
ASEAN Ten Plus Three: An Evolving East Asian Community?

by Carlyle A. Thayer
Professor, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

During the third quarter, China's President Jiang made state visits to Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei. China signed long-term cooperation agreements with Laos and Cambodia, thus completing bilateral framework agreements with all ten ASEAN members. Jiang also attended the APEC Leader's Meeting in Brunei. In November, Premier Zhu Rongji attended the ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, and South Korea) and the ASEAN-China summits in Singapore. The quarter ended on a high note with the visit to Beijing by Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong and the signing of an historic agreement demarcating maritime territory in the Gulf of Tonkin. China's diplomatic drive in Southeast Asia is aimed at shoring up neglected bilateral relations, and, more important, dispelling regional concerns that China's impending membership in the WTO would threaten regional economic interests.

China-Taiwan Relations: Dialogue in Neutral: Private Sector in Gear

by David Brown
Associate Director, Asian Studies,
The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

With Taipei domestic politics in turmoil and Beijing fixated on its version of the one-China principle, cross-Straits dialogue has gone nowhere this quarter. While this is regrettable, tensions have not risen and are unlikely to do so in the coming months. Taipei has taken some unilateral steps to increase cross-Straits contacts, the most important being the "mini three links" legalizing trade and travel between the off-shore islands and adjacent Mainland ports. Meanwhile cross-Straits trade and investments continue to expand rapidly with the private sector, as usual, pushing beyond the limits of official policy. In these circumstances, the new Bush administration will have time to carefully review U.S. policy on cross-Straits issues, reiterate abiding U.S. interests, and consider key decisions it will face this spring on Taiwan arms sales.

China-Korea Relations: Consummating "Full-Scale Cooperative Partnership"

by Scott Snyder
Asia Foundation, Korea

Beijing and Seoul effectively used several multilateral meetings this past quarter to consolidate economic, political, and strategic cooperation, establishing a strong foundation for the relationship after only eight years of normalized diplomatic ties. Regular leadership meetings and a projected record year for Sino-Korean trade and tourism have provided momentum for upgrading the relationship to a "full-scale cooperative partnership." The consolidated political momentum between Beijing and Seoul thwarted a planned visit by the Dalai Lama to Seoul and spotlighted Beijing's sensitivities over nascent moves to reestablish direct commercial air links between Seoul and Taipei. Meanwhile, Beijing did not neglect its relationship with Pyongyang, as Defense Minister Chi Haotian's Pyongyang visit to commemorate China's entry into the Korean War coincided with Secretary of State Albright's sudden tour of Pyongyang in late October.

Japan-China Relations: The Zhu Visit and After ... Efforts to Steady the Course

by James J. Przystup
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The National Defense University

The early October visit of China's Premier Zhu Rongji to Japan served as the quarter's political and diplomatic centerpiece, providing for an across the board review of outstanding issues. Zhu's agenda focused on pending cuts in Japan's development assistance budget, the efforts of both governments to develop a mutual prior notification system for maritime research activities, and the always politically sensitive issue of history. Meanwhile, economic relations continued to expand, with the Japanese private sector paying particular attention to Beijing's western development plan and China's growing interest in information technology. However, at the end of December, Beijing's finding against Japan's steel industry for dumping practices raised temperatures in Tokyo, along with the possibility of retaliation against China's textile industry.

Japan-Korea Relations: Ending 2000 with a Whimper, Not a Bang

by Victor D. Cha

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Georgetown University

Ever bang your head against a brick wall countless times? This must be how Japanese negotiators feel after another quarter of normalization talks with North Korea. Despite Tokyo's earnest efforts, a breakthrough in deadlocked talks was not achievable. While hope springs eternal that the new year may bring progress, the future path is far from clear, given a variety of factors in Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington that may suggest a new algorithm in bilateral relations with Pyongyang. Regarding Seoul-Tokyo relations, the quarter was a fairly quiet one. Trilateral coordination with the U.S. on North Korea continued functioning in the form of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group. Of most interest was the growth of Japan-South Korea-China links, suggesting initial steps toward greater institutionalization of the region.

China-Russia Relations: Putinism in Its First Year

by Yu Bin

Associate Professor, Wittenberg University

At the end of Putin's first year in office, Sino-Russian relations had clearly changed from a year before when the young and largely unknown former KGB colonel suddenly found himself in the Kremlin. After an initial hesitation in pushing forward with his predecessor's overtures to China, the Russian president pursued a balanced and pragmatic approach to Russia's largest Asian neighbor through the last quarter of the year. Bilateral relations were enhanced by regular and frequent contacts by both top leaders and bureaucratic functionaries across the diplomatic, economic, and military areas.

North Korea and the World: New Millennium, New North Korea?

by Aidan Foster-Carter

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The year 2000 was, by any standard, unprecedented in the annals of North Korean diplomacy. The first and last months of the year saw full relations established with two G-7 nations, Italy and the UK. In between came a dazzling array of activity with pride of place going to the first North-South summit in June and the wholly new phase of regular and substantive inter-Korean dialogue that has ensued. Diplomatically speaking, the DPRK blazed away on all barrels in all directions, both reviving old alliances and embarking on new ones. Startling spectacles came in quick succession; from DPRK Vice Marshall Jo Myong-rok taking tea at the White House to Secretary of State Albright in Pyongyang watching a mass display in praise of communist power. We are in a new phase, which has no pre-written script. The challenge in 2001 will be for the DPRK to show that its change is more than just cosmetic and tactical by imbuing its new formal ties with substantive content.

coverage this quarter and will make North Korea-South Korea Relations a regular feature, following this issue's review of the past year of DRPK activity. Significant Russo-Japanese developments will be addressed in the Regional Overview and in U.S.-Russia or Russia-China coverage, as appropriate.

Reader feedback is sincerely solicited, especially regarding the usefulness, style, format and contents of the journal. Please email us (ejournal@hawaii.rr.com) with any questions or comments. If you are unable to locate Comparative Connections on the World Wide Web, we will be glad to forward the journal, or selected articles, to you via email.

Editors' Note: In response to reader feedback and in keeping up with current events, we are dropping separate Japan-Russia