



Comparative Connections April, 2001

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

This issue covers January 1-March 31 and features short analytical essays along with chronologies covering 12 key bilateral relationships in East Asia. We also have an Occasional Analysis on U.S.-India relations this quarter. As always, we invite comments and we can be contacted at pfejourn@lava.net. Below you will find brief article summaries. Double click on the summary to go to the complete article, or [view the entire journal](#).

[Regional Overview: Bush Asia Policy Off to a Rocky Start](#)

By Ralph A. Cossa,

The first quarter of 2001 began with hopes that North Korea would start acting more like China and ended with the reverse happening. The positive spin emanating from President Bush's first meeting with a senior Chinese representative quickly degenerated into a potential tailspin in Sino-U.S. relations after the mid-air collision between a Chinese jet fighter and a U.S. reconnaissance plane. In addition, mixed signals from Bush's summit meeting with ROK President Kim Dae-jung raised, rather than lowered, anxiety levels and even prompted the Europeans to offer to step in to help facilitate North-South relations in response to America's "hardline" approach. Reality, in the form both of a surfacing submarine and a sinking economy, also tested Bush's resolve to raise U.S.-Japan relations to a higher strategic level. Meanwhile, the rest of Asia eagerly awaits more information regarding Bush's policies toward regional multilateral initiatives.

[U.S.-Japan Relations: A False Start?](#)

by Brad Glosserman, Pacific Forum CSIS

The administration of President George W. Bush took office with high hopes to revitalize and rejuvenate the U.S.-Japan alliance. Unfortunately, those hopes immediately clashed with political and economic reality in Japan, while a series of incidents forced supporters of the alliance back on the defensive. The tragic accident involving the nuclear submarine USS *Greeneville* and the Japanese fisheries training vessel *Ehime Maru*, which claimed nine lives, shifted American and Japanese priorities. The security alliance will survive this tragedy, but it underscored the need for continuing efforts by governments and friends of the alliance to build support for the bilateral relationship among the public on both sides of the Pacific.

[U.S.-China Relations: First Contact: Qian Qichen Engages in Wide-ranging, Constructive Talks with President Bush and Senior U.S. Officials](#)

by Bonnie S. Glaser, Consultant on Asian Affairs

PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen's March visit provided an opportunity for the U.S. and China to exchange views on the bilateral relationship and discuss a broad range of issues. Both sides characterized the discussions in positive terms, acknowledging that differences were aired frankly, yet without rancor. Qian conveyed Chinese objections to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, especially Aegis destroyers, and Secretary of State Colin Powell explained that U.S. policy would be guided by both the three Sino-U.S. communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act. Progress toward China's entry into the WTO stalled over a major disagreement on Chinese agricultural subsidies. Military exchanges proceeded according to plan with a U.S. ship visit to Shanghai, several delegation exchanges, and a visit by U.S. Commander in Chief, Pacific Admiral Dennis Blair to China.

[U.S.-Korea Relations: Slow Start in U.S. Policy toward the DPRK](#)

by Donald G. Gross
Attorney, Kim & Chang

Until the Bush-Kim summit in early March, it appeared that both U.S.-South Korea relations and inter-Korean reconciliation were on track. The inconclusive outcome of the summit--lukewarm endorsement of President Kim's engagement policy and no resumption of U.S. missile negotiations with North Korea--put the future of inter-Korean reconciliation in doubt. In the absence of U.S. initiative, the European Union declared it would strive to foster inter-Korean reconciliation. The U.S. administration will now have to pay as much attention to managing the U.S.-South Korea relationship as it does to formulating policy toward North Korea. Any emerging differences between the U.S. and South Korea over North Korea policy are likely to exacerbate anti-U.S. sentiment in mainstream South Korean public opinion--and make it harder for the allies to achieve their mutual policy goals.

[U.S.-Russia Relations: Spy Mania and Familiar Rhetoric](#)

by Joseph Ferguson, Russian Academy of Sciences

On the eve of the inauguration of George W. Bush, there was speculation in Moscow that a Republican administration might be a better deal for Russia; Bush would toe a realist line with Russia, and would be less likely to micro-manage relations with Moscow. However, it did not take long to realize that the Bush administration would bring the harsh "rhetoric of the Reagan years," along with the Carter/Clinton penchant for criticizing Russia's internal policies. The first quarter witnessed the eruption of a new round of diplomatic expulsions and arrests, threatening to damage relations and push them back to the Cold War deep-freeze. Indeed, press in both countries frequently alludes to the current situation as a "new Cold War." In East Asia, Russian President Putin continues to search for a new role and hopes to find partners with whom he can revitalize Russia's marginalized status in the region.

[U.S.-ASEAN Relations:](#)

[New Military Cooperation but Continuing Political Tension](#)

by Sheldon W. Simon, Arizona State University

While the overall U.S. diplomatic profile remained low in the ASEAN region this past quarter as the Bush administration sorted out its foreign policy priorities and personnel, the U.S. Pacific Command continued to promote regional security cooperation as well as bilateral relations with planned exercises and visits. The political transition in the Philippines from President Estrada to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and continued turmoil in Indonesia complicated U.S. efforts to keep relations with both states on an even keel. Economic stagnation, persistent insurgencies, secession movements, and ongoing human rights concerns roiled Washington's relations with Jakarta. In Vietnam, violent demonstrations against the government in the central highlands led to accusations of U.S. support for the dissidents--a charge vigorously denied by the U.S.

[China-ASEAN Relations: Regional Rivalries and Bilateral Irritants](#)

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

This quarter, China sought to enhance relations with mainland Southeast Asia by dispatching Defense Minister Chi Haotian to visit Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Nepal. Chi's trip was a follow-up to PRC President Jiang Zemin's visit late last year and was designed to enhance bilateral military cooperation. Chi's visit had the unintended consequence of drawing attention to possible Sino-Vietnamese rivalry and highlighting bilateral irritants. In maritime Southeast Asia, conflicting territorial claims in the South China Sea surfaced once again as a major irritant in Sino-Philippines relations. Throughout the region, the activities of the Falun Gong religious movement attracted the ire of authorities in Beijing. Heavy-handed pressure by China, especially on the new government in Thailand, proved to be another irritant in bilateral relations.

[China-Taiwan Relations: Wooing Washington](#)

by David G. Brown,

The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

As the year opened, attention focused on President Chen Shui-bian's New Year's comments that cross-Strait economic integration could lay the ground for eventual "political integration." Despite this signal, Beijing remained wedded to its united front tactics against Chen. There was no progress toward resuming cross-Strait dialogue. Both Beijing and Taipei were focused on the new administration in Washington, with each side lobbying for its views in advance of the annual Taiwan arm sales meetings in April. The new administration has proceeded carefully on China-Taiwan issues, and its initial actions have reflected more continuity than change in U.S. policy.

[North Korea-South Korea Relations: Will All Things Go Well? Ups and Downs in the New Inter-Korean Normality](#)

by Aidan Foster-Carter, Leeds University

The overall mood in North-South Korea relations at the end of the quarter was more somber than at the start. North Korea began the year with strongly worded declarations of fidelity to the North-

South joint declaration, calls for its rapid implementation, and a flurry of specific proposals. Coinciding with Kim Jong-il's business-oriented visit to Shanghai, and aphorisms from the Dear Leader calling for new thinking, all this raised hopes in Seoul of moving swiftly to a new phase of more substantive agreements. Not for the first time that vista proved elusive. Cabinet-level talks, the main steering mechanism of dialogue, shifted from a near monthly to a quarterly schedule as it was expected that various substantive sub-dialogues would take off. However, North Korea's cancellation in March meant the quarter had no meetings at this level, while working-level talks failed to produce results.

[China-Korea Relations: The Winds of Change: Fresh Air or Pollution?](#)

by Scott Snyder, Asia Foundation/Korea

The only major diplomatic event in Sino-DPRK diplomatic relations this quarter was a visit to China by DPRK leader Kim Jong-il. Kim Jong-il's surprise visit holds potentially critical significance not only for the direction of North Korea's domestic policy, but also for China, which aims to strengthen its relationships with both Pyongyang and Seoul, and even for the future direction of U.S.-DPRK relations. Sino-ROK relations included a deepening of official cooperation and joint research to examine transnational environmental problems, renewed expressions of South Korean interest in Tumen River area development projects, and stepped up business cooperation in China's telecom sector as Korean firms seek advantages in China to avoid the economic downturns in the U.S. and Japan.

[Japan-China Relations: The Past is Always Present](#)

by James J. Przystup, The National Defense University

This quarter witnessed a major diplomatic success when Japanese and Chinese negotiators reached agreement on a prior notification mechanism for maritime research activities. Military-to-military confidence building also advanced with the visit to Japan of the PLA Air Force Chief of Staff. However, even as Chinese officials were expressing appreciation for and understanding of pending Japanese Overseas Development Assistance cuts, history, in the form of Japan's high-school history textbooks, and the remarks of the Chairman of the Diet's Lower House Budget Committee, again returned to bedevil the relationship. At the same time, commercial relations were troubled by a series of events. Meanwhile, as the quarter ended, sudden Chinese export surges resulted in calls for self-restraint on the part of China and the threat of safeguards from Tokyo.

[Japan-Korea Relations: History Haunts, Engagement Dilemmas](#)

by Victor D. Cha, Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

The name of the game in Japan-Korea relations this past quarter? History. This variable surfaced in the form of proposed revisions in a Japanese junior high school history textbook, souring Seoul-Tokyo diplomatic relations. It also surfaced with regard to revelations concerning DPRK atomic bomb victims. The major "non-event" was the absence of policy coordination among Japan, the ROK, and the United States as the transition process to the new Bush administration remained incomplete (in terms of the

Asia policy-team appointments) and Korea policy undergoes inter-agency review. While a trilateral coordination meeting took place at the end of the quarter to manage the modalities of DPRK policy, the larger dilemma for Japan and DPRK policy remains clear.

[China-Russia Relations: Crouching Missiles, Hidden Alliances](#)

by Yu Bin, Wittenberg University

No sooner did George W. Bush take office in January than China and Russia encountered Washington's uncompromising "moral imperative" to deploy missile defense systems. Meanwhile, in the areas of proliferation, human rights, and regional security, Bush's "humble realism" is creating a situation in which Russia and China are moving, though reluctantly, toward a major upgrade of their bilateral ties with a considerably expanded defense component for the next two decades. This, despite the fact that historical mutual distrust, domestic political systems, and external economic interests should have pulled each other away from such a hidden agenda.

[U.S.-India Relations: Stuck in a Nuclear Narrative](#)

by Satu P. Limaye, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

"The successful defusing of bombs," Michael Ondaatje writes in *The English Patient*, "ends novels." In the troubled saga of U.S.-India relations, however, attempts both at defusing and detonating nuclear bombs form an on-going narrative, one that overshadows and constrains the development of other plot lines. Though the nuclear narrative emerged early in the bilateral relationship, India's detonation of a nuclear device in 1974 increased its resonance. And India's 1998 nuclear detonations and self-proclamation as a nuclear weapons state brought this plot line to the forefront of the U.S.-India story. Media cooing about U.S.-India relations "coming in from the cold" following last year's summit created a generally upbeat mood and many pundits heralded substantially enhanced ties between the two "estranged democracies." Still, relations did not move markedly beyond the nuclear tension.