



Comparative Connections October 2002

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Regional Overview:

Regime Change / Preemption Vs. Disarmament / Multilateralism:
The U.S. Foreign Policy Debate Continues
by Ralph A. Cossa

Concerns and complaints about Washington's Iraq policy and its broader approach toward the war on terrorism, and speculation regarding North Korea's diplomacy dominated East Asia security dialogue during the last quarter. This time last year, the world had rallied behind the U.S. in the wake of Sept. 11. Much of that support and goodwill has dissipated. The reasons vary and are complex but two words are central to any explanation: Iraq and preemption; the latter being put forth not only in the Iraqi context but as the basis of a new national security strategy. Their long-term impact on America's East Asian relationships remains unclear; China-U.S. relations in particular could be challenged. Equally unclear is the impact of the DPRK's recent "smile diplomacy," which has seen an unprecedented effort by Pyongyang simultaneously to improve relations with Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington. Meanwhile, multilateralism seems to be thriving in East Asia, both with the U.S. and without.

U.S.-Japan Relations:
An Oasis of Stability
by Brad Glosserman

It has been another peaceful quarter for U.S.-Japan relations. That the bilateral relationship could be so calm despite the tumult in international diplomacy is testimony to the strength and stability of the alliance. Prime Minister Koizumi's surprise visit to Pyongyang and the U.S.'s full court press to get the world to take action against Iraq have provided ample opportunities for friction. Success could prove temporary, however. At the best of times, the U.S. and Japan have very different approaches to international problem solving. The Bush administration's muscular foreign policy and its fixation on "regime change" in Iraq threaten to put the alliance under serious strain. Fortunately, managing relations with Japan demands no more of Washington than that which the U.S. should provide the international community more generally: convincing evidence that underpins U.S. concerns and respect for the views of others.

U.S.-China Relations:
Playing up the Positive On the Eve of the Crawford Summit
by Bonnie S. Glaser

Preparation for the October summit between Presidents Bush and Jiang in Crawford, Texas proceeded smoothly this quarter. Washington endorsed China's claim that at least one separatist group in Xinjiang has links to the al-Qaeda terrorist network and announced that its assets in the U.S. would be frozen. The Chinese in turn released new rules on the export of missile

technology and a missile technology control list. Both countries signaled their growing satisfaction with bilateral cooperation in the counterterrorism arena. A crisis was averted over Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's Aug. 3 statement that there is "one country on each side" of the Taiwan Strait. Overall, relations improved as both Beijing and Washington advanced their respective interests by emphasizing the positive elements of their relationship.

U.S.-Korea Relations:
After the Koizumi-Kim Summit, Nothing is the Same
by Donald G. Gross

This quarter began with a serious naval confrontation between North and South Korean patrol vessels on Korea's West Sea. It ended with the surprising diplomatic breakthrough in Japan-North Korea relations at the Koizumi-Kim summit and the U.S. decision to send Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly to Pyongyang for consultations. Through it all, the Bush administration watched warily, postponing its special envoy's planned trip to Pyongyang in July, but cautiously welcoming the results of the summit meeting. Strategists now have to pay greater attention both to Japanese policy and South Korean public opinion, especially given growing anti-American sentiments in the ROK, stimulated by the death of two South Korean girls during a U.S. military training accident.

U.S.-Russia Relations:
A Trying Summer for the New Partnership
by Joseph Ferguson

At the beginning of the quarter, the U.S.-Russian antiterror coalition seemed in fine shape. Russian leaders continued to insist that their country stood firmly behind the United States and was committed to closer integration with the West. But as the summer wore on it became apparent that the partnership had its limits. Two issues became major irritants: Chechnya and Iraq. Meanwhile Russia's flirtations with Iran and North Korea seemed directly in contravention of the U.S. policy of isolating the "axis of evil." In Russia and the U.S. voices clamored for a realistic reassessment of the relationship between the erstwhile antiterror partners. As autumn began it was unclear where the relationship was headed and the partnership weathered a stormy first anniversary.

U.S.-Southeast Asia Relations:
A Challenging Strategic Landscape
by Marvin Ott

The U.S.-led war on terrorism continued to be the focus of attention. Several U.S. embassies in the region were closed on Sept. 11, underlining the emergence of the region as a major arena in the new global battleground. Long established political and economic issues also began to reassume their salience. In Burma opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi enjoyed freedom of

movement but was unable to initiate a serious political dialogue. In Indonesia Aceh produced a steady and depressing drumbeat of violence. The annual ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in Brunei along with the ASEAN Plus Three (China, Korea, and Japan) and ASEAN Regional Forum meetings restored the ASEAN process to center stage. This resulted in the Joint Communiqué calling for increased cooperation to counter international terrorism and an ASEAN-U.S. Joint Declaration for cooperation.

China-Southeast Asia Relations:
Beijing Pushes "Asia for the Asians"
by Lyall Breckon

The annual ASEAN Ministerial Meetings gave Beijing multiple opportunities to argue for its version of multilateral security and economic cooperation and to empathize with sensitivities bruised by superpower leadership. ASEAN's failure to agree on a code of conduct for the South China Sea permitted China to appear benign and forthcoming, without actually accepting any constraints on its activities. China's decision to award a large natural gas contract to Australia was a sharp disappointment to Jakarta, tempered by the offer of a less lucrative deal. The Indonesian military announced it would consider buying weapons from China to avoid U.S. embargoes. Hanoi resumed demarcating its border with China, but remains on the defensive about charges that it gave too much to Beijing in a 1999 boundary agreement. Taiwan exploited its economic leverage to try to upgrade contacts with several Southeast Asian governments. President Chen Shui-bian's Aug. 3 video conference remark that there was "one country on each side" of the Taiwan Strait caught Taiwan government officials, Washington, and Beijing by surprise. Taipei quickly sent out assurances that policy has not changed, Washington reiterated that it did not support independence, and Chen refrained from repeating this remark publicly. Chen's statements complicated prospects for progress on cross-Strait economic issues, although minor steps continue to ease restrictions. Beijing had other priorities this summer, with leadership transition maneuvering dominating the annual Beidaihe retreat amid preparations for the 16th Party Congress. There is no prospect of significant movement toward cross-Strait dialogue on economic issues until after the Party Congress in November.

North Korea-South Korea Relations:
No Turning Back?
by Aidan Foster-Carter

A quarter that began with the Northern navy sinking a Southern patrol boat - and Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy with it, or so it seemed - ended with soldiers from both sides clearing mines in the Demilitarized Zone to relink cross-border road and rail routes. On Sept. 29, athletes from both Koreas marched behind a unity flag to open the 14th Asian Games in Pusan: the first time the North has ever joined a sporting event in the South. But past precedent inevitably counsels caution. From next February, a new South Korean president may take a harder line; especially if claims that Seoul paid for the 2000 North-South summit poison the atmosphere. Or a U.S. attack on Iraq could spoil things. Against that, Japan's opting for engagement leaves Washington's tougher stance more isolated. Moves toward economic reform buttress hopes that the North really is trying to change, and progress may prove enduring.

China-Korea Relations:

Happy Tenth for PRC-ROK Relations! Celebrate While You Can,
Because Tough Times are Ahead
by Scott Snyder

China and the Republic of Korea celebrated a decade of normal relations on Aug. 24, with mutual commemorative events and academic workshops. Bilateral trade has grown from \$3 billion in 1991 to over \$30 billion in 2001 and social, cultural, and political ties have grown robustly. However, the dark clouds posed by the North Korean refugee issue, illegal drug imports, migrant workers, "yellow dust," and driven by China's direct challenge to Korea's global economic competitiveness are now being directly felt. It is time to post a warning to South Korea of impending damage from a Chinese economic typhoon that could be at least as unsettling to the economic and political landscape Asia as Typhoon Rusa, the worst typhoon to hit the Korean Peninsula in four decades.

Japan-China Relations:
Toward the 30th Anniversary
by James J. Przystup

The quarter ended with ceremonies in Beijing commemorating the 30th anniversary of the normalization of relations between Japan and China. Senior Foreign Ministry officials and over 50 political figures represented Japan. Conspicuously absent, however, was the prime minister. The past continued to intrude on the present. A Tokyo District Court ruled that Japan engaged in biological warfare in China during the war, while rejecting the Chinese plaintiffs' demand for compensation. Visits by members of Japan's Cabinet to Yasukuni Shrine Aug. 15 drew censure from Beijing. Japanese concerns with China's military modernization and its perceived lack of gratitude for Japan's development assistance foreshadowed a debate over official development assistance. Nevertheless, commerce continued to expand, and Japanese investment continued to flow into China.

Japan-Korea Relations:
Mr. Koizumi Goes to Pyongyang
by Victor Cha

The big news was Prime Minister Koizumi's meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il on Sept. 17. The discussions were described as "frank talks" on difficult issues of concern. The Japanese established up front that they wanted a satisfactory and definitive accounting on the unresolved claim of past abducted Japanese nationals. Tokyo also wanted the North to address security issues (including missiles, the 1994 Agreed Framework, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the North-South Basic Agreement), and moreover maintained that there would be no explicit in-kind compensation by Japan for this meeting. Koizumi's trip added to a regional momentum toward engagement, encouraging even the Bush skeptics to see whether there is really any substance behind the warm wind blowing from Pyongyang.

China-Russia Relations:
One Year Later: Geopolitics or Geoeconomics?
by Yu Bin

Two one-year anniversaries - the Russia-China friendship treaty and the Sept. 11 attacks - were very much in the minds of Russian and Chinese leaders during the third quarter. Both China and Russia publicly expressed satisfaction with the historic treaty that

"legalizes" bilateral interactions. Beyond that, Russian President Putin's diplomatic dexterity seemed to make Russia an eagerly sought member within the major power club, and to position it between the West and the so-called "axis of evil" states. China's strategic and diplomatic constraints were somewhat alleviated by its sustained economic growth. Between China and Russia, the much alluded to friendship treaty appeared only to offer another round of strategic maneuvering and mutual adjustment at the dawn of a new U.S. military doctrine of preemption.