



Comparative Connections July 2003

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Regional Overview: Everything Is Going To Move Everywhere... But Not Just Yet! by Ralph A. Cossa

Washington's force realignment plans began to take shape this quarter. The long-term objectives: reducing footprints and increasing flexibility without reducing commitment or capabilities. Bad behavior by the region's twin despots - Kim Jong-il and Than Shwe - resulted in promotion of multilateral solutions and a willingness by members of the ASEAN Regional Forum to interfere, ever so slightly, in one another's internal affairs. Ad hoc multilateralism was the order of the day down under, as Australia puts together a coalition of the willing to intervene in the Solomons. Some unilateralist U.S. tendencies remain, especially regarding announced missile defense plans and nuclear weapons research efforts. In Iraq, winning the war has given way to the more daunting task of winning the peace while the world hopes that the worst of SARS is behind us.

U.S.-Japan: Still on a Roll by Brad Glosserman

U.S.-Japan relations just keep getting better. Tokyo continued to provide rock solid support for the U.S. in Iraq and North Korea, even though the Japanese public had doubts about the war on Baghdad. Prime Minister Koizumi was rewarded with a summit at President Bush's Crawford, Texas ranch, a privilege reserved for only a very few world leaders. The passage of "emergency legislation" and renewed enthusiasm for missile defense were more proof that Tokyo's efforts to modernize its national security policies have not slowed. The prospect of U.S. force redeployments worldwide only confirmed the significance of the alliance and its increasingly sturdy foundations. Even the fallout from crimes by U.S. servicemen on Okinawa was contained. Economic issues are still a problem, and dollar devaluation adds a new wrinkle.

U.S.-China: SARS, Summitry, and Sanctions by Bonnie S. Glaser

Although Beijing was distracted this quarter by the SARS epidemic, there was still progress in U.S.-Chinese relations. Dealing with North Korea's nuclear weapons programs continued to top the bilateral diplomatic agenda with China orchestrating and hosting trilateral talks in Beijing. Presidents Bush and Hu Jintao agreed to seek a peaceful solution to the nuclear weapons issue in a summit on the sidelines of the G-8 meeting in Evian and exchanged views on other international

U.S.-Korea: The Nuclear Issue Sputters Along by Donald G. Gross

The North Korea "nuclear issue" dominated U.S.-Korea relations this quarter. When China, the U.S., and North Korea met in April for their first "multilateral" dialogue, North Korea continued to make nuclear threats while offering to dismantle its nuclear facilities in exchange for U.S. concessions. The U.S. enlisted its allies to ratchet up diplomatic pressure on North Korea. The Bush-Roh summit aimed to strengthen the U.S.-Korea alliance, and while affirming the need for a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue, committed both countries to consider taking unspecified (and impliedly coercive) "further steps" against Pyongyang. Diplomats pushed for a new round of multilateral talks with North Korea, with the U.S. threatening to condemn Pyongyang at the UN Security Council if North Korea rejected U.S. demands. Meanwhile, Washington and Seoul agreed on redeployments of U.S. forces in South Korea. Finally, a trade conflict over Korean memory chips simmered.

U.S.-Russia: Partnership or Competition? by Joseph Ferguson

The war in Iraq brought to light fundamental differences between the U.S. and Russia, even as Moscow and Washington forged a partnership in the war against terrorism. Russian President Vladimir Putin has heeded advisors that have been warning him about being too accommodating with the U.S. In addition, the Russian public has voiced its opposition to the actions of the U.S. government. This was reflected in the coolness toward Washington during the Iraq war, and the official refusal to back U.S. actions in the Middle East. Washington has maintained its strategy of accommodation with Moscow, and has been eager to enlist Russian support in the Middle East and maintain the partnership in the war on terrorism. In return, the Russian government has reaffirmed its desire to maintain a constructive relationship with the U.S. The June summit between Presidents Bush and Putin in St. Petersburg smoothed over the tense spots.

U.S.-Southeast Asia: Southeast Asia Solidifies Antiterrorism Support, Lobbies for Postwar Iraq Reconstruction by Sheldon W. Simon

The past quarter has witnessed growing antiterrorist cooperation by core ASEAN states with the U.S. Although Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand were reticent about supporting the U.S. war in Iraq, these states as well as Singapore and the Philippines - openly enthusiastic about Washington's quick Iraq victory - are looking beyond the war to economic reconstruction opportunities there. American

plans to reduce and reposition forces in the Pacific may have a Philippine component if Manila agrees to prepositioning military supplies. The U.S. also expressed concern over Indonesia's military assault on Aceh province, Cambodian violence against Thai residents, and Burma's crackdown on the pro-democracy opposition.

China-Southeast Asia: SARS and a New Security Initiative from China by Lyall Breckon

The quarter began with escalating concern among ASEAN countries about SARS, which carried a death rate of up to 15 percent. ASEAN played a key role in persuading China to take more effective action to halt the spread of SARS, and can take satisfaction that its often-maligned low key and nonconfrontational approach was well suited to this particular crisis. In June, China proposed the establishment of a new Security Policy Conference, comprised of senior military as well as civilian officials from the 23 ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) countries and became the first major power to agree to sign ASEAN's 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. A nascent Asian Monetary Fund emerged, including China and the original ASEAN five countries, among other members.

China-Taiwan: The Shadow of SARS by David G. Brown

Throughout this quarter, Beijing and Taipei struggled to contain the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). SARS dramatically reduced cross-Strait travel; its effects on cross-Strait economic ties appear less severe but remain to be fully assessed. SARS intensified the battle over Taiwan's request for observer status at the World Health Organization. Although the World Health Assembly again rejected Taiwan, the real problems of a global health emergency led to the first contacts between the WHO and Taiwan. Beijing's handling of SARS embittered the atmosphere of cross-Strait relations and created a political issue in Taiwan that President Chen Shui-bian is moving to exploit in next year's elections.

North Korea-South Korea: Symbolic Links, Real Gaps

by Aidan Foster-Carter

While the nuclear shadow has by no means ended all North-South contact, it inevitably colors and inhibits dialogue. Both ministerial and economic talks spent much time discussing this - or rather, with the South raising it and the North refusing to discuss it. In a low-key ceremony to mark the third anniversary of the first North-South summit, the two sides reconnected railway tracks in two corridors across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). This relinking was only symbolic. On the Southern side, all is ready to roll, whereas north of the DMZ, large chunks of track have yet to be built. Pyongyang took strong exception to Roh Moo-hyun's harder line after the summit with Bush in mid-May. Inter-Korean meetings then witnessed a new sight: a tough-minded Seoul digging its heels in and demanding an apology before proceeding to business.

China-Korea: A Turning Point for China? by Scott Snyder

This quarter marked a period of transition and tumult in China-Korea relations. Beijing revealed its own diplomatic initiative to settle the North Korean nuclear problem with a surprise announcement that it would host representatives from Pyongyang and Washington in multilateral talks. But that effort was set back by an embarrassing North Korean threat during the talks, warning that it had nuclear weapons and might test them in the near future. The economic and health threat from SARS was a major concern at the beginning of the quarter, but dissipated by the end of the quarter with little apparent lasting effect. One can't help but feel that more volatility is on its way, and that tensions with North Korea will rise as events unfold in the second half of the year.

Japan-China: Political Breakthrough and the SARS Outbreak by James J. Przystup

Prime Minister Koizumi met with China's President Hu Jintao in St. Petersburg, Russia, during ceremonies marking the city's 300th anniversary. At ASEAN Regional Forum meetings in Phnom Penh, Foreign Minister Kawaguchi invited China's new Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing to visit Japan in August to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Japan-China Friendship Treaty. Japan also successfully lobbied China to support Japan's admission to the U.S.-China-North Korea talks that opened in April in Beijing. The SARS epidemic in China, however, dominated the relationship. It significantly affected Japanese business operations in China as well as in Japan. By the end of the quarter as the epidemic appeared to come under control, economic forecasts brightened.

Japan-Korea: "Containment Lite" by Victor D. Cha

The quarter saw Japan implement its own version of the Bush administration's "containment lite" policy toward North Korea, inspecting and detaining DPRK vessels. Pyongyang accused Tokyo of taking the first step to sanctions (which North Korea equates with war). Japan responded to the North's bluster not by cowering but by making serious steps toward a robust missile defense system as well as toward emergency security legislation that would give the government the power to respond to military crises. Meanwhile, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun did his own rendition of a Madison Avenue-type media blitz of Japan, leaving summit observers with some choice memories of his off-the-cuff style.

China-Russia: Party Time! by Yu Bin

As the war in Iraq was winding down, diplomacy quickened its pace. The pursuit of national interests yielded statecraft such as Russian President Vladimir Putin embracing the era of preemption with his Bismarckian shrewdness and Peter the Great style. With "three steps" - the Putin-Hu summit, the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO) summit, and the St. Petersburg extravaganza - Chinese leader Hu Jintao left SARS at home and vaulted onto the world stage at the G-8 summit in the French spa town of Evian.

U.S.-Australia: The U.S. and Australia in the Age of Terror by Hugh White

Some believe Sept. 11 marked a turning point in the U.S.-Australia relationship, with a much strengthened trend to a deeper and closer alliance. This view is often used to support a wider hypothesis: that Australia is undertaking a fundamental realignment away from Asia and toward the U.S. The Howard government has put less rhetorical weight on Australia's relationships in Asia than did its predecessor. Even so, relationships as old, deep, and complex as that between the U.S. and Australia have a tempo and a trajectory that are not easily transformed by individual events - even events as resonant as the terrorist attacks of Sept 11. It may be that the current phase of evolution of the U.S.-Australia alliance reflects the influence of longer-term, slower-acting, but in the end, more powerful forces.