



The January 2010 issue of *Comparative Connections* is available at <http://csis.org/program/comparative-connections>.

Regional Overview: More of the Same, Times Three
by Ralph A. Cossa and Brad Glosserman

The US profile in Asia continued rising as China's image continued falling, while more questions arose about change in North Korea. President Obama made a high-profile, four-country visit to Asia, while Secretary of State Clinton gave a major address in Honolulu (co-hosted by the Pacific Forum CSIS) before her sixth trip to Asia. She linked up with Secretary of Defense Gates in Australia for a 2+2 meeting. Gates also visited Vietnam and Malaysia. The *USS George Washington* returned to the Yellow Sea before participating in *Keen Edge 2010* near Okinawa. Beijing appeared to back off its aggressive stance in the East China Sea and South China Sea and said little in response to the US aircraft carrier operations off Korea's west coast. It did, however, continue to protect and essentially enable Pyongyang's bad behavior. Most economies bounced back in 2010. It was not a good year politically for Obama, although he did get the Senate to ratify the New START Treaty with the Russians.

US-Japan Relations: Tempering Expectations
by Michael J. Green and Nicholas Szechenyi

Prime Minister Kan promised the government would deliver on domestic and foreign policy, but public opinion polls indicated he was failing on both fronts. The US and Japan continued a pattern of coordination at senior levels and North Korea's bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island furthered trilateral diplomacy and military exchanges with South Korea. President Obama met Kan on the margins of the APEC meeting, though a joint declaration on the alliance did not materialize and the meeting appeared designed to lower expectations. A survey on US-Japan relations captured the current dynamic with Futenma contributing to less sanguine views but convergence in threat perception and appreciation for the role of the alliance in maintaining regional security.

US-China Relations: Friction and Cooperation in Run-up to Hu's US Visit
by Bonnie Glaser and Brittany Billingsley

China-US relations were marked by the familiar pattern of friction and cooperation. Tensions spiked over North Korea, but a crisis was averted. President Obama's 10-day Asia tour, Secretary of State Clinton's two-week Asia trip, and US-ROK military exercises further intensified Chinese concerns that the administration's "return to Asia" strategy is aimed at counterbalancing or containing China. In preparation for President Hu Jintao's state visit to the US, Clinton stopped in Hainan for consultations and Deputy Secretary Steinberg visited Beijing. Progress toward resumption of the military-to-military relationship was made with the convening of a

plenary session under the US-China Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) and the 11th meeting of the Defense Consultative Talks. Differences over human rights were accentuated by the awarding of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.

US-Korea Relations: A Tumultuous Ending of Year 2010
by Victor Cha and Ellen Kim

US-Korea relations centered around two major events. On the economic front, even though Presidents Barack Obama and Lee Myung-bak failed to seal a deal on the KORUS FTA during their meeting on the margins of the G20 in Seoul, the two countries reached final agreement a few weeks later, potentially opening a new era in bilateral relations. Meanwhile, North Korea's revelation of its uranium enrichment facility and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island raised tensions on the peninsula. South Korea and the US demonstrated their strong security alliance even at the risk of a military conflict. North Korea's artillery attack quelled diplomatic efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks, as the prospect for early resumption vanished.

US-Southeast Asia Relations: Full Court Press by Sheldon Simon

High-level visits found President Obama in Indonesia, Secretary Gates in Malaysia and Vietnam, and Secretary Clinton in several Southeast Asian states. Obama insisted that multifaceted relations with Jakarta demonstrate Washington is concerned with much more than counterterrorism in the Muslim world. In Vietnam, Clinton and Gates reiterated that the South China Sea disputes be resolved through diplomacy led by ASEAN. Clinton expressed appreciation that China and ASEAN are talking about formalizing a Code of Conduct on the South China Sea. In all her Southeast Asian stops, she emphasized the importance of human rights. While deploring the faulty election in Burma, the US welcomed Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest and the prospect for more openness in Burmese politics.

China-Southeast Asia Relations: China Reassures Neighbors, Wary of US Intentions
by Robert Sutter and Chin-Hao Huang

Chinese leaders and commentary reverted to a reassuring message of good neighborliness and cooperation this quarter. Wariness of US policies and practices was registered in lower-level commentaries as Chinese interacted diplomatically with US counterparts. China consulted with ASEAN seeking to implement a code of conduct in the disputed South China Sea. This contrasted with China's confrontational approach over fishing and other rights in disputed waters in the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea. Nevertheless, even reassurances underlined a determination to rebuff violations of China's "core interest" in protecting territorial claims. Some military

exercises and enhanced patrols by Chinese ships also were noted in the South China Sea. Positive reaction to the November elections in Myanmar was in line with China's longstanding support for the authoritarian military leadership.

China-Taiwan Relations: Looking ahead to 2012

by David G. Brown

The pace of progress in cross-strait relations has slowed as agreement continues to take longer than anticipated. A medical and healthcare agreement was signed, but consensus on an investment protection agreement was not reached and establishment of the Cross-strait Economic Cooperation Committee was delayed. The mayoral elections in November saw the opposition Democratic Progressive Party receiving more votes than the ruling Kuomintang. Both parties are now gearing up for the presidential election in March 2012. Campaign politics in Taiwan and jockeying in preparation for the 18th Party Congress in Beijing will dominate the way Beijing, President Ma Ying-jeou, and the opposition in Taiwan approach cross-strait issues in the year ahead.

North Korea-South Korea Relations: Playing with Fire

by Aidan Foster-Carter

It is hard to recall a quarter that ended so abysmally after beginning more optimistically. Despite serious tensions over the sinking of the *Cheonan*, by early October both Koreas appeared to be seeking a way to mend fences. In late October, family reunions were held at Mt. Kumgang for only the second time since 2008. The North's revelation of a sophisticated uranium enrichment facility in mid-November and its shelling of South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island on Nov. 23 turned the mood sour. The ROK responded by showing its military muscle with strong support from the US and Japan. The DPRK, in turn, warned of dire consequences as China sought to revive the Six-Party Talks. By the end of the year, the worst seemed to have passed as both sides resumed making cautious overtures of peace.

China-Korea Relations: DPRK Provocations Test China's Regional Role

by Scott Snyder and See-won Byun

China and North Korea took unprecedented steps to consolidate political ties through historic high-level party and military exchanges in October. North Korea's artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island focused attention on the Korean Peninsula and on China as Beijing mobilized a remarkably swift diplomatic effort in response. Chinese calls for regional dialogue intensified with South Korean efforts to deter North Korea through joint naval exercises with the US in the Yellow Sea and live-fire artillery drills. Beijing's persistent calls for both Koreas to return to dialogue and Seoul's apparent support for inter-Korean dialogue and Six-Party Talks at yearend may open the way for a return to negotiations.

Japan-China Relations: Troubled Waters: Part II

by James J. Przystup

Reactions to the Senkaku fishing boat incident continued to buffet the relationship. Both the East China Sea and the Senkaku Islands remain flashpoints in both countries. Anti-Japanese protests spread through China in mid-October and were followed by smaller-scale anti-Chinese protests in Japan. Efforts to restart the mutually beneficial strategic relationship

ran into strong political headwinds, which hit gale force with the uploading of the Japan Coast Guard's video of the Senkaku collisions on *YouTube*. Prime Minister Kan did meet China's political leadership, but the meetings were brief encounters, with the Chinese emphasizing their informal nature. In Japan, public opinion on relations with China went from bad in October to worse in December.

Japan-Korea Relations: The New Cold War in Asia?

by David Kang and Ji-Young Lee

The year ended with heightened tensions resulting from Pyongyang's shelling of Yeonpyeong Island and the subsequent show of force by South Korea, the US, and Japan. Yet, the risk of all-out war on the Korean Peninsula is less than it has been any time in the past four decades. Rather, the events of the past year point to something else – a potential new cold war. The most notable response to the attack on Yeonpyeong was that a Seoul-Washington-Tokyo coalition came to the fore, while Beijing called for restraint and ignored calls to put pressure on North Korea. Japan-North Korea relations moved backward, while Japan-South Korea relations have grown closer. Tokyo's new defense strategy places a great emphasis on defense cooperation and perhaps even a military alliance with South Korea and Australia in addition to the US to deal with China's rising military power and the threat from Pyongyang.

China-Russia Relations: Coping with Korea

by Yu Bin

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula preoccupied both Russia and China as the two Koreas edged toward war. Unlike 60 years ago when both Beijing and Moscow backed Pyongyang, their efforts focused on keeping the delicate peace. The worsening security situation in Northeast Asia, however, was not China's only concern as Russia was dancing closer with NATO while its "reset" with the US appeared to have yielded some substance. Against this backdrop, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao traveled to Moscow for the 15th Prime Ministers Meeting with his counterpart Vladimir Putin and the ninth SCO Prime Ministers Meeting in Dushanbe. By yearend, Russia's oil finally started flowing to China, 15 years after President Yeltsin first raised the idea.

India-US and India-East Asia: Better Atmospherics, Similar Substance

by Satu Limaye

High-profile visits and meetings characterized Indian relations with both the US and East Asia in 2010. While there were no major "breakthroughs" or departures as a result, the ongoing evolution of the relations suggests they are now a fixed part of the US-Asia dynamic. President Obama opened his speech to the joint session of India's Parliament by declaring that "[i]t's no coincidence that India is my first stop on a visit to Asia..." The joint statement noted a "shared vision for peace, stability and prosperity ... [and] agreed "to deepen existing regular strategic consultations on developments in East Asia..." Including India in an Asia itinerary is a recent innovation in US policy and indications suggest that it will stick. While Sino-Indian tensions persisted in 2010, further economic integration was the central feature of India's relations with East Asian countries. There was also low-level bilateral and multilateral security engagement.