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Regional Overview: Self-Inflicted Wounds by Ralph A. Cossa and Brad Glosserman

2013 ended with a series of self-inflicted wounds. President Obama, with a huge assist from the US Congress, reinforced apprehensions about the US commitment to the region by skipping both the East Asia Summit and the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting. Setting an unreachable yearend goal to finalize the Trans-Pacific Partnership was another in the series. So too was President Xi's decision to announce China's East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone. Not to be left out, Japanese Prime Minister Abe closed out the year by visiting Yasukuni Shrine, further alienating Beijing and Seoul while drawing a rare rebuke from Washington as well. How much this will impact his "go south" policy to build better relations with ASEAN remains unclear. North Korea's regent Jang Song Thaek saw his career go to the dogs – at least figuratively. Many fear that the prospect for Chinese-style reform in North Korea died with him.

US-Japan Relations: Big Steps, Big Surprises by Michael J. Green and Nicholas Szechenyi

Prime Minister Abe continued to focus on the economy but also introduced diplomatic and defense strategies as his first year in office came to a close. The US and Japanese governments participated in TPP trade negotiations and bilateral talks but could not resolve differences on agricultural liberalization and market access for automobiles. A meeting of the bilateral Security Consultative Committee set forth priorities for defense cooperation, and China's announcement of its East China Sea ADIZ put bilateral coordination to the test. The governor of Okinawa approved a landfill permit for the Futenma Replacement Facility on Okinawa, establishing some momentum for the realignment of US forces there. Prime Minister Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine disappointed the Obama administration and sparked major debate in the US, but was not expected to upend bilateral diplomacy.

US-China Relations: Biden Visits China amid ADIZ Fracas by Bonnie Glaser and Jacqueline Vitello

Bilateral interactions in the final months of 2013 were characteristically active. Secretary of State John Kerry attended the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting and the East Asia Summit in President Obama's place, and met President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang. There were several military exchanges, including the first-ever live drill involving members of the US and Chinese armed forces. A week after the Chinese military announced the establishment of its East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), Vice President Biden visited China along with Japan and South Korea. On the economic front, the 24th Joint Commission on

Commerce and Trade (JCCT) was held in Beijing. US and Chinese navy ships got within 100 yards of each other in yet another close call.

US-Korea Relations: The Demise of Jang Song Thaek by Victor Cha and Ellen Kim

The best news in the final months of the year was South Korea's announcement of its interest in joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Beyond that, we saw bad, ugly, and unpredictable developments. North Korea startled the world by purging and executing Jang Song Thaek, which was followed by Dennis Rodman's visit to the country. China's new ADIZ caused a momentary lapse in Seoul's good alliance management. The year ended with no progress on negotiations between the US and ROK on a range of issues, leaving 2014 with a great deal of unfinished business.

US-Southeast Asia Relations: Philippines - Obama Passes by Sheldon Simon and Carl Baker

Faced with a government shutdown and a debt default crisis, President Obama canceled an extended visit to Southeast Asia. While Secretary of State Kerry filled in for the president at these venues and most regional leaders expressed understanding, some expressed anxiety over Washington's ability to carry out a consistent policy toward Southeast Asia. The US rebalance toward Asia continued with financial commitments to enhance maritime security, announcements of military sales, deployment of an additional Littoral Combat Ship to Singapore, and calls for accelerated negotiations on the TPP agreement. The robust response by the US to Typhoon *Haiyan* in the Philippines was widely viewed as a concrete example of the ongoing US security commitment to its allies and partners.

China-Southeast Asia Relations: China Shifts to the Positive, Downplays Disputes by Robert Sutter and Chin-Hao Huang

Chinese policy and behavior toward Southeast Asian countries shifted with positive initiatives announced in carefully orchestrated moves. Beijing muted its tough stance on disputes in the South China Sea and curbed recent publicity regarding Chinese resolve to advance control in disputed maritime territory. However, there has been little evidence of substantive change in Chinese positions or ambitions. China muffled polemics with the Philippines, but strained Sino-Philippines relations seemed to explain China's initially meager response to calls for assistance in response to the Typhoon *Haiyan*. Meanwhile, Beijing's establishment of an ADIZ in the East China Sea raised angst about China taking similar action in Southeast Asia. The widely publicized deployment of China's aircraft carrier to the South China Sea in late November for several weeks prompted commentary suspicious of Chinese intentions.

[China-Taiwan Relations: Building Trust](#) by David G. Brown and Kevin Scott

Beijing is increasingly exploring ways to address cross-strait political issues and is promoting agreement on a “one China framework” as the way to build mutual trust. However, differences remain very apparent. The first formal exchange of visits by officials is being planned, raising important policy implications. Taipei’s participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization Assembly as a guest was a positive step while Beijing’s unilateral announcement of an East China Sea ADIZ overlapping in part Taiwan’s ADIZ has set back efforts to build trust.

[North Korea-South Korea Relations: Will a “Good Season” Ever Come?](#) by Aidan Foster-Carter

The sudden purge and dispatch of Jang Song Thaek, uncle-by-marriage and erstwhile mentor of Kim Jung Un, sent shock waves around the world, and doubtless inside the DPRK as well. By contrast, inter-Korean relations were mostly undramatic, if also not very satisfactory. In September, the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), the last remaining North-South joint venture, reopened after five months in limbo. Uneven progress since then raises doubts about the North’s sincerity and hence this project’s viability and long-term prospects. Hopes that the KIC’s reopening might usher in a wider thaw were dashed when the North canceled reunions of separated families. Meanwhile DPRK media subjected ROK President Park Geun-hye and her government to a barrage of often puerile, petty, and personal sniping. While Park and/or Kim may yet surprise us, the two Koreas seem to be back to first base and starting over – not for the first time.

[China-Korea Relations: Crying Uncle No More: Stark Choices for Relations](#) by Scott Snyder and See-won Byun

New strategic challenges have emerged in recent months that will influence China’s relations with both Koreas into the New Year. China’s declaration of an ADIZ that overlaps South Korean jurisdictional claims and developments inside North Korea emerged in November as two priority concerns in Sino-South Korean relations, obscuring more mundane areas of progress in implementing the June 2013 Park-Xi summit statement. Meanwhile, China-DPRK relations appeared to suffer a setback following the Dec. 13 execution of Jang Song Thaek, raising concern about policy changes that might result. Kim Jong Un’s strategy of simultaneous nuclear and economic development remains in conflict with Beijing’s priorities, reinforcing widespread pessimism over prospects for the renewal of talks on Korean denuclearization.

[Japan-China Relations: Can We Talk?](#) by James J. Przystup

China marked the first anniversary of Japan’s nationalization of the Senkaku Islands by reasserting its sovereignty claims to the islands and conducting Coast Guard patrols in the area, which continued on a regular basis through December. Tokyo called for dialogue with China without preconditions, while Beijing insisted that dialogue required Japan to admit the existence of a dispute over the islands. Meanwhile, business leaders continued to develop economic ties and Japanese companies in China began to recover from the profit doldrums that followed initial Chinese reaction to

the nationalization. In late November, Beijing announced its East China Sea ADIZ, which Tokyo found to be unacceptable and refused to recognize. Prime Minister Abe added more tension to the relationship when he visited Yasukuni Shrine.

[Japan-Korea Relations: More Naughty than Nice](#) by David Kang and Jiun Bang

The last four months of 2013 were uneventful for Korea-Japan relations. That is, disputes continued to simmer and both sides made moves that annoyed the other, but there was almost no substantive action. Significantly, South Korean President Park continued to refuse to meet Japanese Prime Minister Abe, and even some meetings between lower-level officials were called off. The biggest events were domestic issues that had implications for relations among the countries: the execution of Jang Song Thaek in North Korea and the release of the new National Security Strategy in Japan being the most notable. In all, relations remained frozen, with little evidence that 2014 would see any major changes in either attitudes or relations between Japan and the Koreans.

[China-Russia Relations: Putin’s Glory and Xi’s Dream](#) by Yu Bin

There was a dramatic turn in the Syria crisis and a potential light at the end of the “Iranian tunnel,” thanks to the persistent efforts of Russian President Putin. Meanwhile, President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang devoted themselves to economics by kicking off a new “Silk Road Economic Belt” strategy through the heartland of Asia. This does not mean Russian and Chinese leaders were on divergent paths. In fact, they met frequently in multilateral and bilateral settings: three times for Putin and Xi (G20 in St. Petersburg, SCO summit in Bishkek, and APEC forum in Bali) and twice for the prime ministers (Medvedev’s visit to Beijing and the SCO Prime Ministers Meeting). Despite their largely convergent outlook on global issues, Russia seemed more guarded about China’s new westward drive through Central Asia, which it still considered special, if not exclusively, for Russia even two decades after the Soviet breakup.

[India-US Relations: Seeking to Sustain the New Normal](#) by Satu Limaye

The tenor of US-India relations in 2013 was similar to that articulated by then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2012 when she spoke of the need for “daily, weekly, monthly collaboration” rather than dramatic breakthroughs. In a February 2013 visit to Washington, Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai echoed these comments. He argued that the bilateral relationship has reached a “new normal” in which consultation has become a habit. The Obama administration continued to hail the relationship as a defining partnership. There were about 60 official visits during the year and about 35 different dialogues, working and consultation mechanisms to move the relationship forward. The areas of discussion and action covered commercial ties including trade and investment, defense relations, a special focus on Afghanistan, and consultation on Asia-Pacific and global issues. A diplomatic tussle in December after the alleged mistreatment of an Indian diplomat in New York does raise questions about how the relationship can be buffeted by such an unexpected development and how quickly relations can adjust afterward.