

# Comparative Connections

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## U.S.-Japan Relations: Looking toward Elections

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The debate in the Japanese Diet remained contentious this quarter as opposition parties challenged the Fukuda government on several legislative issues including the gasoline tax, a new health insurance program for the elderly, and host nation support for U.S. forces. Fukuda's approval rating fell suddenly due to public dissatisfaction with his domestic policy agenda but later rebounded enough to quell rumors of a Cabinet reshuffle prior to the Hokkaido G8 Summit in July. The arrest in early April of a U.S. serviceman charged with murdering a taxi driver in Yokosuka brought negative publicity for U.S. forces.

Japanese anxieties also continued to mount as the U.S. prepared to lift terrorism-related sanctions on North Korea as part of the Six-Party Talks, despite earlier pledges that this would not be done without progress on the abductee issue. President Bush did announce his intention to lift those sanctions on June 26, but his strong reaffirmation of support for Japan on the abductee issue helped to assuage some of the concerns in Tokyo. It also helped that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed during the G8 foreign ministers meeting in Kyoto that the U.S. actions would be reversed if North Korea's claims could not be verified; a message of reassurance Bush would likely echo and broaden during his visit to Japan in July. All of this took place as the Japanese public paid close attention to the U.S. presidential race and as the candidates took their debate into the pages of Japanese newspapers. Speculation also persisted about possible dissolution of the Diet and new elections in Japan sometime in the next year.

### **Rancor in Japanese domestic politics**

The opposition parties continued to exploit their majority in the Upper House to slow down the Fukuda government's legislative agenda. The ruling coalition had to utilize its super majority in the Lower House to reinstate a controversial gasoline tax in May after the opposition refused to extend related legislation citing wasteful spending (proceeds were typically earmarked for pork barrel spending in the form of road construction) and the need to provide relief for consumers. The opposition also refused to pass a special measures agreement renewing host nation support for U.S. forces in Japan, the first time an international agreement or treaty had been rejected by the Upper House under the current constitution. The government was able to pass the legislation by taking advantage of its two-thirds majority and a constitutional provision allowing the Lower House to override results in the weaker chamber.

Prime Minister Fukuda was then blamed for a confusing new health insurance program for the elderly instituted April 1 – even though the plan was proposed and passed under the Koizumi administration back in 2006 – and also came under fire repeatedly for his failure to address pension reform in the wake of a scandal that surfaced in 2007 during the Abe administration when the government acknowledged having lost 50 million pension records. The only hint at bipartisanship came in the form of the Basic Law for Space Activities, a bill authorizing the military use of space for defensive purposes which passed easily in both houses. The legislation dictates the creation of a new Cabinet post dedicated to space policy – placing policy planning directly under the control of the prime minister – and emphasizes a shift away from research and development toward utilization and defense, with a possible focus on communications satellites or support for missile defense systems. The government has already staffed the new space policy headquarters in the Prime Minister’s Office and expects to complete a draft master plan for development of new space systems by the end of the year.

### **Fukuda soldiers on**

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) pressured Prime Minister Fukuda relentlessly and generated momentum with victories in an April by-election in Yamaguchi Prefecture and in Okinawa Prefectural Assembly elections in June. (The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost its majority in that chamber.) The DPJ then upped the ante by passing a largely symbolic censure motion against Fukuda in the Upper House, though the government ignored the nonbinding measure and got a boost from a subsequent vote of confidence in the Lower House. DPJ President Ozawa Ichiro continued his confident rhetoric in a June 1 interview with the *Financial Times*, stating that the “opposition party will take over power, which means the LDP will collapse and dissolve.” (Ozawa’s poll ratings are below Fukuda’s, but his party’s are higher.)

Fukuda stood firm despite an approval rating that dipped below 20 percent at one point but hovered around 25 percent at the end of the quarter based in large part on an ambitious diplomatic agenda that featured summit meetings with the leaders of South Korea, China, and Australia; trips to Europe for consultations with G8 member countries; the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which included delegations from 51 African countries; and the upcoming G8 Summit where he hopes to gain consensus on climate change, rising commodity prices, development aid, and political issues including North Korea. In June, Fukuda publicly dismissed the notion of a snap election and vowed to press on. Speculation on the future persists but some pundits suggest that Fukuda could stay in power until constitutionally mandated elections in fall 2009, though a Cabinet reshuffle before the next Diet session in September is possible.

### **Concerns about the U.S.-Japan alliance but reassurance too**

The arrest of a U.S. serviceman in April for allegedly murdering a taxi driver in Yokosuka renewed public concerns about the presence of the U.S. military in Japan and prompted the U.S. Navy to introduce a curfew at Yokosuka naval base and conduct background checks on all 20,000 personnel stationed in Japan. The U.S. Navy also published a comic book to ease concerns about the impending arrival of the *USS George Washington*, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, in Yokosuka later this summer. Increased scrutiny of alliance matters also pertained to a

2006 agreement concerning the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, designed to reduce the burden on the Japanese public but held up by disputes over cost and the desire of local governments to revise it. Former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Asia-Pacific Affairs Richard Lawless, in a May 22 interview with *Asahi Shimbun*, focused on the realignment issue to express concern about drift in the alliance. U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer called on Japan to increase defense spending that same week in a speech to the Foreign Press Club in Tokyo, perhaps signaling consternation in Washington after the prolonged debate over host nation support. Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Defense Minister Ishiba Shigeru accentuated the positive in respective speeches at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore at the end of May and confirmed in a meeting there that the two governments would work toward the steady implementation of the realignment plan. Gates also thanked Japan for its renewed participation in *Operation Enduring Freedom*, though the mission is scheduled to expire in January 2009 and could be a subject of heated debate in the Diet this fall.

The question of what Japan should do next on security quietly consumed officials in Tokyo this quarter. U.S. and coalition governments hope for a new Japanese contribution in Afghanistan that has operational and not just symbolic significance. That probably means helicopters or boots on the ground – both of which the coalition desperately needs even in noncombat roles that Japanese forces could constitutionally fill. However, the political impasse in Tokyo would make the necessary legislation for such a high risk deployment difficult at best. Some leading Japanese politicians hoped that it would be enough to transfer the *C-130s* now operating in Iraq to Afghanistan, but that would be seen as a net loss in capabilities by the coalition, since the transport need in Afghanistan is not for fixed wing aircraft. Nor is the expectations game likely to get any easier for Japan after the U.S. election, since both John McCain and Barack Obama have been clear about the need to increase overall efforts in Afghanistan. The Fukuda government appears ready to use its two-thirds majority again next year to reauthorize the deployment of refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, since the government succeeded in doing so this year. However, some political observers worry that the LDP's coalition partner Komeito (Clean Government Party) might lose its nerve since its members will be going into local elections in Tokyo next summer where the support of pacifist grass roots organizations is critical.

In the face of new doubts about Japanese political will, the Fukuda government did take some steps that show continued readiness to step up in international crises despite the political challenges at home. Japan dispatched disaster relief teams to Burma and China in response to natural disasters; announced it would consider sending Self Defense Force (SDF) troops to Afghanistan; and agreed to send SDF forces to Sudan later this year in support of UN peacekeeping efforts. Japan was also ready to send the SDF to China in response to the earthquake, but the Chinese side pulled back. (See the Japan-China section of this quarter's report for details.)

### **The wild card: North Korea policy**

Much of the diplomacy between the two governments this quarter was dedicated to the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear programs. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns, Deputy Secretary of State John

Negroponte, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice all visited Japan over the course of the quarter to engage in strategic dialogue on North Korea and reiterate concern about the fate of Japanese abductees. When North Korea finally delivered a declaration concerning its nuclear program on June 26, media coverage in Japan pointed largely to questions of U.S. credibility rather than a breakthrough in multilateral diplomacy. President Bush's decision to take steps toward removing North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and remove some sanctions under the spirit of "action for action" in the Six-Party Talks was viewed widely in Japan as a policy shift away from a commitment to Japan on the abductees in favor of a bad deal. The narrow focus on plutonium production and the exclusion of key factors including the number of nuclear weapons in North Korea's possession, details on the highly enriched uranium program, and information on proliferation activities were deemed worrisome in Japanese commentary on the decision.

The Japanese government's response was reserved, emphasizing the verification of North Korean claims and close coordination with the U.S. on the abduction issue. Japanese media editorials expressed a general sense of frustration with the deal ranging from factual to emotional; a *Nikkei Shimbun* editorial on June 27 declared a crisis that could possibly break the foundation of the U.S.-Japan alliance and also noted that without shared threat perception the bilateral security treaty is close to a scrap of paper. Secretary Rice tried to allay concerns by arguing repeatedly during her visit to Kyoto for the G8 foreign ministers meeting that the U.S. would reverse its decision if North Korean claims could not be verified, but it appeared President Bush would travel to Japan in July with his work cut out for him. Bush's press conference on the sanctions-lifting helped at least reassure the Japanese public of his strong personal commitment to standing with Japan on the abductee issue, particularly after his 2006 meeting in the Oval Office with the family of Megumi Yokota, the most famous of the innocent people taken by North Korea.

### **Looking toward elections**

While various developments this quarter tested the two governments and raised public awareness of critical issues facing the alliance, persistent rumors of a snap election in Japan and an intensifying U.S. presidential election also focused attention on what might lie ahead. As noted above, Fukuda survived a barrage of attacks by the DPJ and vowed to stay in power beyond the G8 Summit in July. Talk of a snap election later this year has died down; a Cabinet reshuffle, perhaps with a new prime minister, might occur over the summer. It is equally likely that Fukuda will remain in office through next year to greet the new U.S. president. DPJ President Ozawa spoke frequently of the need for a more "equal" alliance, though the concept remained largely undefined.

A *Pew Global Attitudes* survey released in June found that 83 percent of the Japanese public was following the U.S. presidential campaign somewhat or very closely (compared to 82 percent of Americans!!). Sen. McCain and Sen. Joseph Lieberman articulated a vision for the U.S.-Japan alliance in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece reprinted in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on May 28 entitled, "Putting our Allies First." The article listed several priorities such as coordination on North Korea policy including the abduction issue, the North Korean ballistic missile program, and its human rights record; continued engagement with China; support for free trade; and an

alliance based on common values. The Obama campaign followed suit with an article by Richard Danzig and Joseph Nye entitled, "Barack Obama and U.S.-Japan Relations", published in the *Asahi Shimbun* on June 28. This article also noted common values and interests and listed priorities including support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan; continued diplomacy with North Korea through the Six-Party Talks; cooperation in humanitarian relief efforts, climate change policy, and health issues such as avian flu; and bilateral and regional trade. Both candidates responded to the North Korean nuclear declaration with caution, citing the importance of verification and the need to re-impose sanctions should that process prove unsatisfactory.

### **The next three months**

Prime Minister Fukuda will hope for a productive G8 Summit to bolster his leadership credentials, particularly in the area of climate change. The Bush-Fukuda meeting on the margins of the G8 Summit will prove important in light of Japanese concerns about North Korea policy and the potential for drift as the U.S. presidential campaign heats up in the coming months. Both governments will pay close attention to how China handles the Olympics in August. Acrimony in Japanese domestic politics should resurface in September as a special Diet session grapples with domestic policy and the fate of legislation authorizing Japan's support for Operation Enduring Freedom. The Six-Party Talks will likely continue to top the diplomatic agenda for both governments.

## **Chronology of U.S.-Japan Relations April-June 2008**

**April 1, 2008:** A new health insurance program for the elderly in Japan takes effect, requiring some senior citizens to pay higher premiums.

**April 1, 2008:** The Upper House of the Diet rejects a new bill covering host nation support for U.S. forces in Japan.

**April 2, 2008:** A *BBC World Service* poll, which surveyed over 17,000 people in 34 countries, indicates Japan is the second most positively viewed country behind Germany.

**April 2, 2008:** The U.S. Navy in Japan decides to impose a nighttime curfew in response to the alleged murder of a taxi driver by a U.S. sailor on March 19.

**April 3, 2008:** The Lower House of the Diet passes a new bill covering host nation support for U.S. forces in Japan.

**April 3, 2008:** The leaders of Japan's three opposition parties meet separately with Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura and Foreign Minister Komura to demand a revision of the Status of Forces Agreement with the United States.

**April 3, 2008:** U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer and Rear Adm. James Kelly, commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Japan, apologize to the mayor of Yokosuka for a March 2008

incident in which a taxi driver was allegedly murdered by a U.S. serviceman. The suspect is arrested later in the day.

**April 4, 2008:** The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that Japan ranks fifth in official development assistance.

**April 8, 2008:** A *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll reveals that 43.1 percent of the Japanese public is against revising the constitution, with 42.5 percent in favor.

**April 8, 2008:** U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill meets North Korean counterpart Kim Kye Gwan in Singapore to discuss the elements of an overdue declaration of the North's nuclear programs under the rubric of the Six-Party Talks.

**April 9, 2008:** Christopher Hill meets with his Japanese counterpart, Saiki Akitaka, in Beijing to explain the results of the April 8 meeting in Singapore.

**April 9, 2008:** Masaaki Shirakawa is appointed governor of the Bank of Japan after opposition parties rejected two other candidates put forth by the government.

**April 9-10, 2008:** Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Yabunaka Mitoji meets Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England, and other U.S. officials to discuss Tibet.

**April 11, 2008:** The Japanese government extends for six months economic sanctions first imposed on North Korea after it tested a nuclear weapon in 2006, citing the North's failure to produce a complete declaration of its nuclear programs and make progress on the abduction issue.

**April 17, 2008:** The Nagoya High Court rules that the dispatch of the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) to Iraq includes activities that violate Article 9 of the Constitution.

**April 21, 2008:** Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak hold a summit in Tokyo and agree to cooperate together with the U.S. on the North Korean nuclear issue, resume discussions on a bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and hold a trilateral meeting with China within this year.

**April 21, 2008:** A poll by *Asahi Shimbun* shows a 25 percent approval rating for the Fukuda Cabinet.

**April 22, 2008:** The Japanese government states in an annual report on the labor force that the working population will decrease by more than one-third by 2050, citing as causes a declining birth rate, an aging population, and a failure to increase the participation of women and the elderly in the work place.

**April 23, 2008:** Japanese government announces that backbone, which is one of the banned specified-risk materials (SRMs) said to increase the risk of BSE, or mad cow disease, was found in a beef shipment from the U.S.

**April 24, 2008:** U. S. government reveals North Korea's support for Syrian construction of a nuclear reactor.

**April 25, 2008:** New arrangement for host nation support is ruled out in an Upper House plenary session.

**April 27, 2008:** Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) wins Lower House by-election in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

**April 30, 2008:** The U.S. Navy announces it will conduct background checks for the 20,000 U.S. Navy personnel stationed in Japan.

**May 1, 2008:** The Japanese government restores a gasoline tax of 25 yen per liter one month after previous legislation authorizing the tax had expired.

**May 2, 2008:** A group representing Japanese abductees meets with Christopher Hill in Washington to urge the U.S. not to delist North Korea until the abduction issue is resolved.

**May 2, 2008:** The Fukuda Cabinet's approval is 18 percent according to a *Mainichi Shimbun* poll.

**May 4, 2008:** The Japanese government releases a report stating that children's share of the general population was 13.5 percent, the lowest ever recorded.

**May 5, 2008:** A poll released by *Asahi Shimbun* shows that 66 percent of the Japanese public opposes the revision of Article 9 of the constitution, while 23 percent support it.

**May 7, 2008:** President Hu Jintao and PM Fukuda conclude the first Sino-Japanese summit in Japan in 10 years and issue a joint statement promoting a "mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests."

**May 9, 2008:** Japan's Diet passes a bill that permits military use of outer space for defensive purposes.

**May 16, 2008:** A U.S. military court sentences a U.S. Marine to at least three years in prison for sexually abusing a 14-year-old Japanese girl, in a case that triggered mass protests in Okinawa.

**May 19, 2008:** Fukuda Cabinet's approval rating drops to 19 percent with a disapproval rating of 65 percent, according to a poll by *Asahi Shimbun*. Another poll issued by *Yomiuri Shimbun* indicates an approval rating of 26 percent.

**May 19, 2008:** The Japanese government announces that the Philippines requested the release of 200,000 tons of Japan's imported rice.

**May 20, 2008:** In a speech to the Foreign Press Club in Tokyo, U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer calls on Japan to increase defense spending.

**May 20, 2008:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture announces a proposed rule to ban all non-ambulatory cattle from slaughter.

**May 21, 2008:** The Basic Law for Space Activities passes through the Upper House and becomes law.

**May 22, 2008:** In an interview published by *Asahi Shimbun*, Richard Lawless, former deputy under secretary of defense for Asia-Pacific affairs, expresses concern about drift in the U.S.-Japan alliance on the implementation of agreements concerning the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma on Okinawa and the transfer of U.S. Marines to Guam.

**May 23, 2008:** The Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy, an advisory panel, recommends an overhaul of the Government Pension Investment Fund to improve transparency and investment returns.

**May 24, 2008:** U.S. and Japanese officials meet in Washington and agree to the release of surplus rice imported from the U.S.

**May 25, 2008:** A poll by *Nikkei Shimbun* shows a 24 percent approval rating for the Fukuda Cabinet.

**May 28, 2008:** The *USS Kitty Hawk* aircraft carrier, stationed in Japan for nearly 10 years, departs Yokosuka to be decommissioned.

**May 28-30, 2008:** PM Fukuda hosts the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development and pledges to double Japan's ODA to Africa by 2012; provide \$4 billion in loans for infrastructure development; and offer \$2.5 billion in support for an African investment facility managed by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

**May 29, 2008:** A Japanese medical team is dispatched to Burma to assist with cyclone relief efforts.

**May 30, 2008:** The Japanese government defers a decision on the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces to China and announces that civilian aircraft will be used to transport aid supplies for earthquake relief.

**May 31, 2008:** U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, in an address at the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore, states that the U.S. is a Pacific nation with an enduring role in Asia and that U.S. alliance relationships are the foundation of the U.S. security presence in the region.



**May 31, 2008:** Defense Minister Ishiba Shigeru, in an address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, reaffirms the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and lists issues Japanese parliamentarians should address in any future deliberations over a permanent law for the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces and Japan's right to exercise collective self-defense.

**June 1, 2008:** PM Fukuda states that the dispatch of Ground Self-Defense Forces (GSDF) to Afghanistan is under consideration.

**June 1, 2008:** PM Fukuda departs for Europe for consultations with leaders of Germany, the UK, Italy and France.

**June 1, 2008:** In an interview in the *Financial Times*, Ozawa Ichiro, head of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), expresses confidence in his party's ability to unseat the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and create a two-party system.

**June 3, 2008:** In an address to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome, PM Fukuda announces Japan's decision to release 300,000 tons of surplus rice.

**June 6, 2008:** The Upper House approves a bill to abolish by March 2009 the national health insurance system covering elderly 75 and over.

**June 8, 2008:** The LDP loses its majority in elections for the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly.

**June 8, 2008:** The U.S. Navy in Japan distributes the comic book "CVN 73", produced to allay public concerns about the impending arrival of the *USS George Washington*, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.

**June 8, 2008:** A team of Japanese government officials departs for Afghanistan to explore the possibility of dispatching SDF troops.

**June 9, 2008:** PM Fukuda announces initiative on climate change including emissions trading on a trial basis beginning fall 2008 and a pledge to cut Japan's greenhouse gas emissions 60-80 percent by 2050.

**June 9, 2008:** U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Sasae Kenichiro participate in a U.S.-Japan Strategic Dialogue in Tokyo. The two also participate in a U.S.-Japan-Australia Strategic Dialogue.

**June 9, 2008:** During a press conference, PM Fukuda dismisses calls for a snap election and vows to continue working on pressing policy issues.

**June 11, 2008:** The Upper House passes a censure motion against PM Fukuda, the first against a prime minister in postwar Japan.

**June 11-12, 2008:** Bilateral talks between Japan and DPRK are held in Beijing under the rubric of the Six-Party Talks.

**June 12, 2008:** Alexander Arvizu, deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, testifies on U.S.-Japan relations before the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

**June 12, 2008:** PM Fukuda wins a confidence vote in the Lower House of the Diet.

**June 12, 2008:** PM Fukuda meets with Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in Tokyo and the two governments issue a joint statement highlighting the security, strategic, and economic partnership between the two countries.

**June 12, 2008:** The government of Japan announces a plan to improve the health care system for the elderly and PM Fukuda apologizes to senior citizens for the confusion surrounding the new rules instituted on April 1.

**June 13, 2008:** Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura Nobutaka announces that North Korea agreed to reopen an investigation into past abductions of Japanese citizens, and that Japan in turn agreed to a partial lifting of sanctions imposed after North Korea's nuclear test of 2006.

**June 13, 2008:** A poll by *Kyodo News* shows a 25 percent approval rating for Fukuda Cabinet.

**June 13, 2008:** Japanese Minister of Finance Nukaga and U.S. Secretary of Treasury Paulson meet in Osaka and agree to deal with the inflation caused by escalating food and oil prices.

**June 14, 2008:** An earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale inflicts heavy damage in Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures in northern Japan, leaving nine dead, eight missing and about 300 injured.

**June 15, 2008:** A poll released by *Asahi Shimbun* shows a 23 percent approval rating for the Fukuda Cabinet and a disapproval rating of 59 percent.

**June 17, 2008:** PM Fukuda states that an agreement at the G8 Summit regarding a medium-term greenhouse gas emissions target is unlikely. He also hints at an increase in the consumption tax.

**June 17, 2008:** *Mainichi Shimbun* poll shows public considers Fukuda a more favorable prime minister than Ozawa by 19 to 15 percent, while 57 percent says neither figure is favorable. When asked which party should win the next Lower House election, 46 percent supports the DPJ and 25 percent the LDP.

**June 19, 2008:** Christopher Hill confers in Tokyo with his Japanese counterpart Saiki Akitaka, director general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and South Korean chief nuclear negotiator Kim Sook regarding the Six-Party Talks.

**June 23, 2008:** PM Fukuda states that an increase in the consumption tax is unlikely in the near term.

**June 23, 2008:** At a ceremony marking the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa, PM Fukuda pledges to reduce the burden of the U.S. troop presence on the residents of the island.

**June 24, 2008:** A government panel on national security submits to PM Fukuda a report recommending that the government reinterpret Article 9 of the constitution to allow Japan's self defense forces to exercise the right of collective self defense.

**June 24, 2008:** PM Fukuda says he welcomes the U.S. intention to take steps toward removing North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list if that will resolve the nuclear issue but also stresses the importance of the U.S. and Japan coordinating closely to resolve the abduction issue.

**June 25, 2008:** President Bush telephones PM Fukuda to discuss Six-Party Talks and the abductee issue.

**June 26, 2008:** North Korea submits a declaration concerning plutonium production pursuant to an October 2007 agreement in the Six-Party Talks.

**June 26, 2008:** President Bush announces U.S. steps to remove North Korea from a list of state sponsors of terrorism and remove some sanctions in response to North Korea's submission of the nuclear declaration.

**June 26, 2008:** DPJ President Ozawa holds a press conference in Naha, Okinawa, and criticizes the U.S. actions on North Korea and the ruling LDP.

**June 26-27, 2008:** G8 foreign ministers convene in Kyoto, Japan, and issue separate joint statements on Zimbabwe and Afghanistan.

**June 27, 2008:** Foreign Minister Komura and U.S. Secretary of State Rice meet in Kyoto to discuss the way forward in the Six-Party Talks.

**June 30, 2008:** The Japanese government announces a decision to dispatch SDF personnel to Sudan as early as September to participate in UN peacekeeping operations.

**June 30, 2008:** The Fukuda Cabinet's approval rating rises to 26 percent with a disapproval rating of 63 percent, according to a poll by *Nikkei Shimbun*.