

Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



Regional Overview:

Continuity Prevails for Better and for Worse

Ralph A. Cossa, Pacific Forum CSIS
Brad Glosserman, Pacific Forum CSIS

During the first four months of the Year of the Snake, the “unpredictable” North Korean regime acted all too predictably, following through on its threat to conduct a third nuclear test and increasing tensions through fiery rhetoric. Those hoping for a change in policy toward Washington or especially toward the incoming Park Guen-hye administration in Seoul have been sorely disappointed; continuity unfortunately prevails here as well. Pyongyang also took steps to solidify its claim to be – and its desire to be treated as – a nuclear weapon state, a status the rest of the international community is (rightfully) no more willing to bestow on the Kim Jong Un regime than it was when his father ruled to roost. Meanwhile, new Secretary of State John Kerry made his first visit to Asia to underscore the second Obama administration’s – and his own personal – commitment to America’s rebalance to Asia. His major policy address while in Japan also tried to underscore a consistent – if still not widely accepted or understood – message that the so-called “pivot” is not just about security but has important economic and political dimensions as well. Fears of “death by sequestration” have also (thus far) proven to be overstated as the new leadership team in Washington has held true to the pledge by former Defense Secretary Panetta to shield Asia-based forces from the worst of the budget cuts. One change we were predicting was the transformation of “ultra-conservative” candidate Abe into a more pragmatic leader as he took the helm in Tokyo. The jury remains out on what the “real Abe” will look like (after Upper House elections in July) but Prime Minister Abe has demonstrated enough continuity by reinforcing candidate Abe’s nationalist rhetoric to make Japan’s neighbors, not to mention many in Washington, nervous. Finally, our hats are off to the people of Boston – “Boston strong” – but not without a closing warning to Pyongyang.

Kim Jong Un as Kim Jong II II

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has thus far taken page after page out of his father’s play book, following his December (successful) satellite launch with the DPRK’s third (successful?) nuclear test. Another favorite tactic has also been repeated throughout the early months of 2013: “if at first you don’t succeed (in getting Washington and Seoul to do what you want, start shouting; if that does not work, shout louder; if that still doesn’t work, shout even louder.)

Since the Feb 12 nuclear test and the largely perfunctory UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions that followed (after more than three weeks of debate), the shouts – and preposterous claims – have been coming fast and furious. The North, after (once again) declaring the Korean Armistice Agreement null and void, claimed that it now had the ability to strike anywhere in the United States with its nuclear weapon-equipped missiles – a threat that virtually no one believes – and that it would mercilessly attack both the US and ROK (or south Korea, as Pyongyang calls it)

with nuclear weapons if they dared to attack the North during then ongoing ROK-US military exercises – a safe threat since no one planned on attacking the North in the first place. While the US and ROK militaries kept a watchful eye (as they must), most South Koreans and Americans merely shrugged their shoulders; North Korea threat fatigue has clearly set in.

While most of the North's threats have been mere rhetoric, in one area Kim Jong Un has put his money (or, in this case, Seoul's money) where his mouth is. In early April, after ROK media analysts had “insulted” Pyongyang by arguing that the North, despite all its threats of war, protected the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) since it needed the hard currency – North Korean workers received some \$80-90 million dollars annually in wages, much of which went to the government and not the employees – the North pulled all of its 53,000+ workers out of the KIC until the South apologized for disparaging its leader. President Park, in return, citing the threat posed to the 700+ ROK managers at the complex, pulled all South Korean workers out (after paying a handsome \$13+ million ransom in “owed back wages and fees”). Each appeared to be calling the other's bluff: the South has invested over \$1 billion in building Kaesong; 123 ROK factories last year produced some \$470 million worth of textiles and other labor-intensive goods and the North may be expecting (hoping?) that Seoul blinks first.

This may represent more than just another bluff by Pyongyang, however. There are reports that Kim Jong Il told Park Guen-hye, when she visited Pyongyang as a National Assembly member in 2002, that the Korean People's Army (KPA) was strongly opposed to the Kaesong complex, which it saw as a security risk, but that he had moved forward with it nonetheless. It's possible that Kaesong's closure represents a gift to the military by Kim Jong Un – others might call it Kim's yielding to the KPA's “military first” demands – and that Kaesong will not reopen anytime soon. One thing certain is that the North will not be able to operate the industrial park without Seoul's assistance. For starters, the South provides the power to run the facility.

Toward the end of our reporting period, as the ROK-US exercises drew to a close and Secretary of State John Kerry traveled the region calling for a resumption of dialogue, the North seemed to lower its voice if ever so slightly. This did not deter Pyongyang, in late April, from announcing that Kenneth Bae, a Korean-American tour operator who had been arrested in the Rajin Sonbong special economic zone on Nov. 3 last year after entering the country with a group of tourists, was being brought to trial. His trial opened April 30; on May 3 he was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for unspecified crimes against the state. The official *KCNA* news agency took pains in announcing that this was not a “bargaining chip” situation; that remains to be seen.

Prospects for a return to dialogue: slim to none!

Some media analysts, especially in South Korea, were quick to see positive signs emanating from the North's willingness not to dismiss Secretary Kerry's overtures out of hand. We remain more suspect. Here's what Pyongyang actually said (in an April 16 *KCNA* statement attributed to a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman) in response to Kerry's “crafty ploy”:

The DPRK is not opposed to dialogue but has no idea of sitting at the humiliating negotiating table with the party brandishing a nuclear stick. Dialogue should be based on the principle of respecting sovereignty and equality – this is the DPRK's consistent

stand. Genuine dialogue is possible only at the phase where the DPRK has acquired nuclear deterrent enough to defuse the U.S. threat of nuclear war unless the U.S. rolls back its hostile policy and nuclear threat and blackmail against the former. The DPRK will escalate its military countermeasures for self-defence unless the U.S. ceases its nuclear war drills and withdraws all its war hardware for aggression.

The Korea Worker's Party newspaper, *Rodong Sinmun*, was more direct: "The North won't give up its nuclear program until the entire world is denuclearized." Pyongyang has long made it clear it is willing to enter into "arms control" talks with the US as one nuclear weapon state to another, but will not discuss denuclearization until all UNSC sanctions are lifted and the US refrains from conducting military exercises on the peninsula. While the other frequent demand – a complete US military withdrawal from the ROK and closing of the US nuclear umbrella – was not mentioned, such demands remain on the table.

Secretary Kerry dismissed Pyongyang's response as a "beginning gambit – not acceptable, obviously," further noting that the US will not return to past cycles of "here's a little food aid, here's a little of this, then we'll talk." In fact, Kerry's "overture" broke no new ground. During congressional testimony, he even gave his own version of the "we won't buy the same horse twice" bromide: "I have no desire and the President has no desire just to horse trade and go down the same old road." To reinforce this point, White House spokesman Josh Earnest made it clear that the US bargaining position had not changed: "We're open to credible negotiations with the North Koreans, but we also need to see some clear evidence that the North Koreans themselves are willing to live up to their international obligations." He added that the North Koreans must "demonstrate their commitment to ending the nuclear program, something they've promised in the past. And we haven't seen that thus far." We hasten to add that we are not likely to see this in the near future either.

Beijing's growing impatience . . . with everyone

In his strongest (yet still maddeningly indirect) criticism to date of Pyongyang, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on April 19 that no country "should be allowed to throw a region and even the whole world into chaos for selfish gain." China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi was (slightly) more direct: "we oppose provocative words and actions from any party in the region and do not allow trouble-making on China's doorstep." The April 11 *People's Daily Online* was even more direct, sending messages to Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo as well. To the DPRK it warned: "do not misjudge the situation," arguing that, "legitimate" national security concerns notwithstanding, "there is no reason to violate the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council to engage in nuclear testing and launch missile using ballistic missile technology, which cannot shirk its responsibility in upgrading tensions on the peninsula last year."

To Washington it warned: "do not add fuel to the flames," identifying US sanctions, pressure, and isolation against the DPRK as "one of the root causes of conflicts on the peninsula." The commentary told Seoul: "do not miss the focus," while urging the Park administration to "play the role to cool down the tensions on the Korean Peninsula, rather than be pushed by the DPRK or the United States." Finally, it could not resist taking a shot at Tokyo: "To Japan: do not fish in troubled water."

Kerry ‘pivots’ toward Asia

During Secretary Kerry’s visit to Korea, Japan, and China (covered in detail in their respective bilateral chapters), he gave a major foreign policy address in Tokyo, where he underscored his own (and the administration’s) commitment to the rebalance: “President Obama made a smart and a strategic commitment to rebalance our interests and investments in Asia. My commitment to you is that as a Pacific nation that takes our Pacific partnership seriously, we will continue to build on our active and enduring presence.” Kerry outlined four basic principles upon which US Asia policy is organized: “strong growth, fair growth, smart growth, and just growth.”

While identifying the US forward military presence and Asia-Pacific alliances – with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand – as the “fundamental platform” beneath the rebalance, he stressed the political and economic dimensions of the so-called “pivot”: “The collaborative region that I envision must enjoy sustainable economies, free trade, fast growth, but it must offer every nation, big and small, a seat at the table and a clear sense of what everybody’s responsibilities are.” Addressing the other misperception about the US Asia strategy, he stressed that “(I)n each of these efforts – growing strong, growing fair, growing smart and growing just – China is, of course, a critical partner.... We all have a stake in China’s success, just as China has a stake in ours.”

Kerry also spent considerable time in his speech laying out his own bona fides, reminding the audience (and Asians in general) that in 29 years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he had developed a good understanding of regional issues, not to mention his prior military service in Vietnam.

Sales pitches and the sequester

Other US policymakers continued their efforts to sell the rebalance to Asia to domestic and foreign audiences. In Congressional testimony in February, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and the Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun provided an overview of the rebalance, emphasizing, among other things, how the US strategy links the Indian and Pacific oceans, a point made clear in then Secretary Clinton’s 2011 *Foreign Policy* article. National Security Advisor Tom Donilon continued his advocacy work with a March speech that looked at the overall strategy, underscoring that it was a response to demand signals from the region and highlighting its scope, particularly when it comes to engaging regional governments. Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter (again) spelled out specifics of the rebalance, at least for the Department of Defense, in a March speech in Jakarta.

Asian audiences are of two minds about the policy. Allies and partners worry about its credibility and the durability of the commitment. In every dialogue and conversation, interlocutors seek more details about its meaning and content, demanding proof that it constitutes a genuine shift in policy and that it will endure beyond the next crisis elsewhere in the world. They are looking for signs of a real transition in US thinking. The problem is that the rebalance is more marketing than strategy. By that we don’t mean that the priority given to Asia isn’t real or that engagement with the region isn’t increasing. Rather, this policy was in place even before its articulation and

thus signs of a shift are hard to find. To our eyes, key components of the rebalance were in place during the Bush administration. We can trace its intellectual and policy roots as far back as the George H.W. Bush administration. The strengthening and modernization of US alliances in Northeast Asia has been a work in progress for nearly two decades.

The second complaint we hear from Asian audiences is that the rebalance is really a strategy to contain or check China. Yes, one of the five pillars of the rebalance directly addresses China – but as Secretary Kerry noted it seeks to engage China and encourage its assumption of the role of a responsible partner of the US. And yes, if China seeks to challenge the status quo or threaten the stability of the region, then the US, along with its allies and partners, will be ready to counter those tendencies. But China's fate is in China's hands. Beijing's behavior will determine how the rebalance affects China. The most honest answer to the question "Is the rebalance against China?" is "no, not yet."

Some worry that sequestration – the meat-cleaver approach to budgets that was designed to fail, and in a telling indication of the state of US politics, didn't – will undermine the rebalance. It won't. In April remarks to CSIS, Deputy Secretary Carter insisted that "we have the resources to accomplish the rebalance." While cuts may be required, he pledged that "wherever we have flexibility, we are favoring and protecting the rebalance." Carter concluded, "the U.S. defense rebalance to the Asia-Pacific is not in jeopardy." It is hard to be more explicit than that.

A new foreign policy team, same goals

As anticipated, there was significant turnover in the Obama administration's foreign policy team in the second term, with both Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta taking well-deserved retirements at the beginning of the year. Replacing them took a little longer than expected, however. Nomination of the first presumed replacement for Clinton, UN Ambassador Susan Rice, was preempted by a partisan fight over statements she made on Sunday talk shows in the aftermath of the killing of US Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens. After she withdrew from consideration, Obama nominated Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry. As chair of the Foreign Relations Committee and a periodic foreign policy trouble-shooter for presidents, Kerry was primed for the job. Comity and good will dominated his confirmation hearing and he was confirmed in a 94-3 vote. An election that might reduce the Democratic Party's Senate majority helped ease GOP objections.

Strangely, the prospect of a Republican taking the helm at the Pentagon didn't ease GOP concern about the nomination of former Sen. Chuck Hagel to lead the Department of Defense. The former Army enlistee who served in Vietnam faced fierce opposition from Sen. John McCain (among others), who took offense at Hagel's characterization of the surge in Iraq as "a historical blunder." Hagel squeaked through the confirmation process in a 58-41 vote. The contentious fight and the broadly partisan vote may diminish his stature at a time when the Pentagon will need tough leadership and Congressional support to deal with drawdowns from the Iraqi and Afghan wars, sequestration, and new strategic challenges.

Rounding out the foreign policy team, on May 1 Obama (belatedly) nominated Mike Froman as US Trade Representative and Penny Pritzker as secretary of Commerce. Froman has served as

the president's chief international economic affairs advisor since Obama took office in 2009 and was deeply involved in trade negotiations and global forums (the G8 and G20) during the first term. Pritzker is a member of the family that established the Hyatt Hotel chain, and a long-time Obama supporter. Both will be key players in the effort to stiffen the economic pillar of the "rebalance," and one of their first priorities will be finishing negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

In conversations throughout the region, we've been questioned about the new team's commitment to the rebalance. Asian observers note that during his confirmation hearings, Kerry said little about Asia in prepared remarks – his confirmation statement mentioned China once (in a generic fashion) and North Korea once; he was silent on Japan and South Korea – and has little experience in the region: in nearly 30 years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he visited China and Japan just five times each, and South Korea only once. In discussions early in the year, Chinese were quick to blame Secretary of State Clinton for virtually all the problems in the US-China relationship, suggesting (hoping?) that with her departure, Kerry would embrace the more traditional relationship and many of the frictions would go away. These Chinese hopes (or wishful thinking) reinforced Japanese fears. In meetings with Japanese, there was concern that the new secretary might be less supportive of the alliance and more ready to follow through on China's call for "a new type of great power relations."

As noted in our assessment of Kerry's Tokyo speech, we are confident that the new team will not falter in its commitment to the rebalance. Many Asians, and even some Americans, fail to appreciate that policy is set in the White House and the secretaries of State and Defense, while senior, still work to realize the president's strategic objectives. Cabinet secretaries don't take those jobs unless they share their president's world view. The rebalance reflects a strategy to protect US national interests and that has not wavered, even if individuals on point may change.

That said, we are concerned about the failure to fill the less senior but still critical Asia positions at State and DoD — the assistant secretaries who will replace Kurt Campbell and Mark Lippert at State and Defense, respectively. Campbell's replacement in particular will have big shoes to fill as he has been an indefatigable, oversized presence who has gone a long way to reassure Asian allies and partners about US commitment. There were anxieties in the region when he was named to the post in 2001, but they are long forgotten. (This is a source of no small amusement when we hear concern about the new team; many of our interlocutors forget they voiced the same worries four years ago when Clinton et. al. took office.) As we write, there are strong and persistent rumors that National Security Council Senior Director for Asia Danny Russel will take the East Asia and Pacific post at State, but that remains unconfirmed (and, if true, would then create a key Asia vacancy at the NSC). At the Pentagon, (after an extended vacancy) Mark Lippert took the Asia-Pacific slot after Chip Gregson's departure, but he is moving on to be Hagel's chief of staff. Peter Lavoy, principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Central Asian policy, will be the acting assistant secretary of defense for Asia and Pacific security affairs; Joseph Yun is his counterpart at Foggy Bottom. While both men are just "acting" assistant secretaries, those appointments are a reminder of the deep bench of more than capable professionals in the bureaucracies. Nevertheless, continuing vacancies in key senior Asia political positions suggests an inattention to Asia that is very much at odds with US policy and sends the wrong signal to all concerned.

One other item of note: It is not enough for the posts of secretary and assistant secretary to be filled with capable individuals. Equally, if not more, important is the relationship between those two. Little appreciated was how close Clinton and Campbell were and his ability to get the secretary to focus on his priorities. No matter how qualified their successors are, it will be very difficult for them to replicate that closeness and the results it produced.

Japan: out with the old, in with the ... old

The return of Abe Shinzo and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to power in Tokyo has proved more tumultuous than many expected. In our last volume, we wondered which Abe would show up: would it be the pragmatic politician determined to focus on economic issues and avoid controversy in the hope of taking the control of the Upper House in elections this summer, or would it be the conservative nationalist that many feared would stoke tensions with Japan's neighbors? We bet on the pragmatist and for the first month or so we were right as the new administration adopted the Clinton-era slogan, "It's the economy, stupid" and worked to lay the foundations of an economic recovery. Abe and crew talked down the yen to increase business competitiveness and engineered the selection of a new governor of the Bank of Japan who would back Abe's plan to induce inflation. Abe tried to smooth relations with China as the dispute over the Senkaku/Daiyu Islands festered, with only minimum success, but not for lack of trying. (Jim Przystup details that effort in his chapter on Japan-China relations in this volume of *Comparative Connections*.)

By March, however, conservative Abe seized the stage. While he never explicitly repudiated the "Kono Statement" about "comfort women" forced into sexual slavery during World War II, his comments about its validity were worrisome – as were subsequent remarks about whether Japanese actions in the 1930s and '40s could be considered an invasion. Abe himself didn't visit Yasukuni Shrine, but he did send an offering, and 168 legislators, including several Cabinet ministers (Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Aso Taro among them) called on the shrine during a spring festival. Equally troubling was the decision to hold the first national "Restoration of Sovereignty Day" on April 28, to mark the end of the US Occupation of Japan after World War II and signaled to many a worrisome nationalist impulse. (Regional reaction to those developments is detailed in various chapters of *Comparative Connections*.) Reports that Abe appeared miffed that his critics (at home but especially abroad) did not appreciate his great restraint in not personally going to Yasukuni show just how tone-deaf the prime minister can be on history issues.

While many Americans welcome a stable and capable government in Tokyo, and a smaller but still significant number applaud a more forward-leaning and security-minded administration, that does not mean the Abe administration has a blank check from Washington. There is considerable angst in the US about the destabilizing effects of a nationalist government and no desire to see Japan antagonize its neighbors merely to prove that Tokyo can flex its muscles. Japanese assertiveness should be principled, not petulant. The US has stood behind the commitments in the US-Japan Security Treaty (although Japanese continue to press for a more forthright statement on the legitimacy of its claim to sovereignty over the Senkakus) but it does not welcome confrontation with China. Moreover, the US wants trilateral cooperation among

Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul, and the Abe government's nationalist tendencies have made that increasingly difficult. In addition to having those security ambitions thwarted, we have heard accusations from regional analysts (not all of them Chinese) that the US is enabling Japanese conservatives and facilitating their revisionist agenda. In many ways, then, the Abe government is complicating, if not undermining, the US regional agenda. The question is how long the Obama administration will continue to avoid public statements of displeasure: a public repudiation of the Tokyo government could have powerful consequences.

Boston Strong!

As a native New Yorker and life-long NY Yankee fan, your lead author normally finds it difficult to say anything positive about the home town of the hated rival Red Sox, but we must give credit where credit is due. The people of Boston showed great strength and determination in the face of the Boston Marathon terrorist attack, quickly vowing to return the city to normal as a message it would not be cowered or made to live in fear.

What's this have to do with North Korea? Imagine if you would that there had been even trace amounts of radioactive material in the pressure cooker bomb. North Korea, with its boasts about its ability to attack the United States, would have been quickly added to the suspect list (instead of not even being considered, since no one really takes its threats seriously today). Americans might even have employed a "guilty until proven innocent" when it came to the one country that both has plutonium and has demonstrated a willingness to sell just about anything to anyone. A word to the boastful interlocutors in Pyongyang: be careful about making claims that could come back to haunt you.

Regional Chronology

January – April 2013

Jan. 2, 2013: Brunei's Ministry of Foreign Affairs says the promotion of human rights and negotiation of a binding code of conduct for claimants in the South China Sea would top the country's agenda as 2013 ASEAN chair.

Jan. 2, 2013: Myanmar government acknowledges that the military carried out air attacks against rebel fighters in the northern state of Kachin.

Jan. 3, 2013: South Korean court refuses to extradite a Chinese man who was accused of an arson attack at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo to Japan, ruling the attack was a "political crime."

Jan. 4, 2013: China makes a diplomatic complaint to Myanmar after three bombs land within its territory during air attacks on the northern Kachin state.

Jan 4. 2013: Indonesian Prime Minister Marty Natalegawa pledges \$1 million in humanitarian assistance to Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Jan. 7, 2013: Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa visits Myanmar's Rakhine state at the invitation of the Myanmar government. He says that trust must be rebuilt between the Rohingya and the ethnic Rakhine in the state.

Jan. 7-10, 2013: Former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and Google Chief Executive Officer Eric Schmidt travel to Pyongyang and meet several high-level Foreign Ministry officials. US State Department expresses displeasure over the visit.

Jan. 8, 2013: A Japanese opposition lawmaker urges Prime Minister Abe Shinzo to not alter the 1993 apology to World War II sex slaves and South Korean "comfort women."

Jan. 8, 2013: Prime Minister Abe calls for "resolute" action against North Korea over its nuclear weapons program in telephone call with United Nations leader Ban Ki-Moon.

Jan. 9, 2013: Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio visits the Philippines and meets President Benigno Aquino and Foreign Minister Albert del Rosario. Del Rosario says the Philippines plans to acquire 10 coast guard vessels from Japan.

Jan. 9, 2013: Le Luong Minh assumes the post of secretary general of ASEAN.

Jan. 9-11, 2013: Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun visits Seoul as an envoy for incoming Chinese leader Xi Jinping, meeting President-elect Park Geun-hye. Zhang acknowledges South Korean frustration toward China's North Korean policy.

Jan. 10, 2013: Foreign Secretary del Rosario warns that the Chinese nine-dash line territorial claim poses a threat to the Asian region's security.

Jan. 10, 2013: Two Chinese *J-10* fighters are sent in response to two Japanese *F-15* fighters following a Chinese *Y-8* aircraft at Japanese military radar north the Senkakus/Diaoyus.

Jan. 11, 2013: Japanese government releases \$226.5 billion stimulus plan that includes increased military spending.

Jan. 13, 2013: Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force carries out a drill to reclaim an island from enemy forces at the Narashino Garrison in Chiba.

Jan. 14-17, 2013: Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Mark Lippert and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Daniel Russel travel to South Korea and Japan to meet counterparts in Seoul and Tokyo.

Jan. 15-19, 2013: US and Japan conduct a five-day joint air exercise over the Pacific Ocean near Shikoku, which involves six US *F/A-18* fighters and four Japanese *F-4* jets.

Jan. 16-19, 2013: Prime Minister Abe visits Southeast Asia with stops in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia “to strengthen relations with countries that share universal values [with Japan] and for such ties to help Japan's growth.”

Jan. 17, 2013: The minesweeper, *USS Guardian*, runs aground causing extensive damage to Tubbataha Reef, a UNESCO world heritage site and Philippine national park located in the Sulu Sea near the island of Palawan.

Jan. 18, 2012: Myanmar’s Parliament approves a motion calling for a halt to fighting and the resumption of peace talks between the military and rebels in the northern state of Kachin.

Jan. 18, 2013: Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio visits the US and holds a joint press conference with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Jan. 18, 2013: After a meeting of the Mekong River Commission, Vietnam and Cambodia call on Laos to halt construction of a \$3.5 billion hydropower dam pending further study and consultation with downriver countries.

Jan. 19-20, 2013: Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army Qi Jianguo visits Myanmar to co-chair the first China-Myanmar Strategic Security Consultation with Commander-in-Chief of the Army Gen. Soe Win. He also meets President Thein Sein.

Jan. 21. 2013: Japanese Coast Guard reports that three Chinese maritime surveillance ships enter Japanese territorial waters near the Senkakus.

Jan. 22, 2013: Philippines announces it submitted its dispute with China over territorial claims in the South China to a UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) arbitration tribunal.

Jan. 22, 2013: United Nations Security Council unanimously adopts a resolution (UNSCR 2087) condemning North Korea’s recent rocket launch and expanding existing UN sanctions.

Jan. 23, 2013: President-designate Xi Jinping meets Kim Moo-sung, envoy of the Republic of Korea. Xi urges “a treatment of tensions” concerning the newly strengthened UN sanctions against North Korea.

Jan. 23-28, 2013: Chief US Envoy for Six-Party Talks Clifford Hart and US Special Envoy on DPRK Policy Glyn Davies visit South Korea, China, and Japan to discuss post-actions following the implementation of new UN sanctions against North Korea.

Jan. 24, 2013: Japanese and Taiwanese Coast Guard ships exchange water cannon volleys near the Senkakus/Diaoyus, discouraging a group of Taiwanese activists from landing on the islands to “maintain sovereignty.”

Jan. 25, 2013: The Paris Club of creditor nations cancels \$6 billion of Myanmar’s debt.

Jan. 25, 2013: North Korea calls the new UN sanctions a “declaration of war” and threatens “physical counter-measures” against the South.

Jan. 27, 2013: Japan launches a radar-equipped satellite to increase surveillance of the region.

Jan. 27, 2013: The US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University posts new satellite images of activity at North Korean atomic test site. The Institute estimates the facility could conduct a test “in a few weeks or less.”

Jan. 28, 2013: Twenty of the world’s largest creditors, including the US, agree to cut nearly 50 percent of Myanmar’s foreign debt and provide a seven-year grace period for the remainder.

Jan. 29, 2013: Sen. John Kerry assumes the position of US Secretary of State.

Jan. 29, 2013: Japan’s Cabinet approves a \$52 billion military budget.

Jan. 30, 2013: South Korea successfully launches its first satellite into space.

Feb. 4, 2013: Negotiators from the government of Myanmar and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) meet in Ruili, China to talk about reducing military tensions and opening lines of communication with the hope of achieving an eventual cease-fire.

Feb. 4-7, 2013: US and South Korea conduct a joint naval exercise in the East Sea.

Feb. 4-14, 2013: US Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, and the Royal Australian Air Force conduct *Cope North* military exercise in Guam. The South Korean Air Force participates as an observer for the first time.

Feb. 7, 2013: Japan claims two Russian fighter jets briefly entered Japanese airspace near Hokkaido, prompting Japan’s Air Self-Defense Force to scramble fighter jets.

Feb. 8, 2013: China’s Defense Ministry denies Japanese allegations that its navy ships locked radars on Japanese military vessels in late January, saying that Japan’s remarks “were against the facts,” and urging Japan to “stop stirring up tension in the East China Sea.”

Feb. 9, 2013: Japan suggests a “seaborne communication mechanism” be set up between military officials of Japan and China to prevent future miscommunications.

Feb. 11, 2013: Japanese business daily *Nikkei* reports that the Japanese Coast Guard will donate 10 patrol boats to the Philippines.

Feb. 11-21, 2013: The 32nd annual *Cobra Gold* exercise is held in Thailand involving 13,000 military personnel from a several Asian states plus observers from a dozen others.

Feb. 12, 2013: North Korea conducts a third underground nuclear test with an estimated yield of six to seven kilotons. The test is condemned worldwide.

Feb. 12, 2013: Some 180 Filipinos, calling themselves the “Royal Army of Sulu,” land at the village of Tanduo in Lahad Datu town in Sabah and claim the region as part of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo.

Feb. 14, 2013: Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa and Japanese counterpart Kishida, meet in Tokyo for the fourth Japan-Indonesia Strategic Dialogue on the sidelines of the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development.

Feb. 14, 2013: Members of the “Royal Army of Sulu” are cornered in Sabah, triggering a stand-off with the local police.

Feb. 15, 2013: Three Chinese Maritime Surveillance ships enter disputed waters around Diaoyus/Senkakus.

Feb. 19, 2013: China formally rejects a Philippine proposal to take their dispute regarding sovereignty issues in the South China Sea to the UN for arbitration.

Feb. 19, 2013: US computer security firm Mandiant releases a report stating Chinese state-sponsored hackers associated with PLA Unit 61398 have accessed information from numerous US government agencies and businesses.

Feb. 21-24, 2013: Prime Minister Abe visits the US and meets President Obama.

Feb. 24, 2013: Three Chinese Maritime Surveillance vessels and a fishing patrol boat are sighted within 12 nm of the Senkakus/Diaoyus.

Feb. 24-25, 2013: Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra visits South Korea and meets President Park Geun-hye.

Feb. 25, 2013: Park Geun-Hye is sworn in as president of South Korea.

Feb. 26-28, 2013: ASEAN and its six free trade partners held a meeting in Bali to discuss the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), focusing on tariff reduction, extending existing free trade agreements, and setting up a trade negotiation committee.

Feb. 28, 2013: Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra meets Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak and asks Malaysia to mediate peace talks between Thailand and southern separatists.

Feb. 28, 2013: Three Chinese Maritime Surveillance ships are spotted within 12 nm of Senkakus/Diaoyus. A Chinese *Y-12* aircraft heading toward the islands is intercepted by Japanese *F-4J* fighters.

March 1, 2013: Malaysian police engage in a firefight with the self-identified “Royal Army of Sulu” in Lahad Datu in Sabah, resulting in several deaths.

March 1-April 30, 2013: ROK and US conduct the annual *Foal Eagle* joint military tactical field training exercise, which involves over 200,000 ROK and 10,000 US forces.

March 4-13, 2013: The 16th round of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade negotiations are held in Singapore.

March 5, 2013: Malaysian fighter jets are used to attack the “Royal Army of Sulu” in the town of Tanduo on Borneo. Malaysian Embassy in the Philippines closes due to protesters.

March 7, 2013: UN Security Council unanimously passes Resolution 2094 which includes several new sanctions against North Korean entities, requires full inspections of vessels from North Korea, and requires closer scrutiny of activity by North Korean diplomats.

March 7, 2013: Malaysia rejects Sultan Jamalul Kiram III’s call for a ceasefire.

March 8, 2013: North Korea announces that it is withdrawing from all previous non-aggression agreements with South Korea.

March 9-12, 2013: Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah visits the US and meets President Obama.

March 11, 2013: North Korea announces that it no longer considers the 1953 Korea Armistice Agreement valid and cuts off the military hotline with Seoul.

March 11, 2013: The US announces sanctions that will apply to North Korea’s Foreign Trade Bank and four officials who have links to North Korean weapons production programs.

March 11-12, 2013: Myanmar officials and the Kachin rebels meet in the Chinese town Ruili to conduct peace talks. They agree to continue talks until a permanent ceasefire is reached.

March 11-25, 2013: ROK and US conduct the annual *Key Resolve* command post exercise, featuring the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff in the leading role for the first time.

March 12-14, 2013: Japan-ASEAN dialogue focusing on strengthening maritime security cooperation is held in Tokyo.

March 18, 2013: Japan orders a private warehouse to turn over five aluminum alloy rods seized from a ship that was traveling from North Korea to Myanmar last August 2012.

March 20, 2013: Vietnam accuses China of firing on one of four fishing boats in the Paracel/Xisha Islands. China denies the allegations and urges the Vietnamese government to combat illegal fishing in its territory.

March 20-21, 2013: Indonesia hosts third Jakarta International Defense Dialogue. Some 1,300 military officials from 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe attend.

March 20-24, 2013: Widespread riots in several Myanmar cities following a dispute between Muslims and Buddhists. Government declares emergency rule.

March 22, 2013: US and South Korean sign a new military plan that lays out their joint response to the “North’s local provocations, with the South taking the lead and the US in support.”

March 22-24, 2013: Chinese President Xi visits Russia and meets President Vladimir Putin. They agree to coordinate defense strategies and ratify the guidelines for the 2013-2016 China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

March 24, 2013: Four Chinese ships begin military drills at James Shoal, located near the coast of Malaysia in the southernmost part of the South China Sea.

March 26-27, 2012: Fifth BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) Summit is held in Durban, South Africa.

March 27, 2013: North Korea announces that it has cut the last military hotline with Seoul because there was no need for communications between the countries in a situation “where a war may break out at any moment.”

March 28, 2013: Representatives from the government of Thailand and Muslim rebel groups hold talks in Kuala Lumpur aimed at curbing violence in Southern Thailand.

April 1-4, 2013: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visits the US and meets President Obama.

April 2, 2013: North Korea states that it plans to reopen nuclear facilities at the Yongbyon complex, which houses a uranium enrichment plant and a 5MW graphite moderated reactor.

April 2, 2013: The attendees of the 19th China-ASEAN Senior Officials’ Consultation agree to fully execute the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and work toward completing a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea.

April 2-4, 2013: South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yun Byung-se visits the US and meets Secretary of State John Kerry. They reaffirm bilateral support and calls for North Korea to reenter the Six-Party Talks.

April 3, 2013: North Korea prevents South Korean workers from entering the Kaesong Industrial Zone. The ROK government maintains that the joint complex is still open.

April 4-7, 2013: Hassanal Bolkiah, the sultan of Brunei, visits China to meet President Xi Jinping and attend the Boao Forum, where he gives a keynote address.

April 5, 2013: Japan extends unilateral sanctions against North Korea for two more years.

April 5-17, 2013: The US and Philippines conduct the annual *Balikatan* military exercise, with approximately 8,000 troops participating.

April 6-8, 2013: The Boao Forum is held in Hainan Province.

April 9, 2013: Japan deploys *Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC)-3* missile interceptor in Tokyo in anticipation of a missile launch from North Korea.

April 12, 2013: The US approves Japan's entry into Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) talks.

April 12-15, 2013: US Secretary of State John Kerry visits Northeast Asia with stops in Seoul, Beijing, and Tokyo.

April 15-19, 2013: Cambodia and Thailand argue their claims to the disputed Preah Vihear Temple land at the International Court of Justice.

April 17, 2013: Indonesia hosts South-South Cooperation Forum.

April 20, 2013: Japan is formally invited by the other participants to join talks on the TPP.

April 20-21, 2013: Trade ministers of the APEC forum discuss free trade and ways to facilitate investment as their meeting held in Surabaya, Indonesia.

April 24-25, 2013: Brunei hosts 22nd ASEAN Summit. Leaders agree to work toward a binding code of conduct in the South China Sea and to resolve differences over the South China Sea through peaceful and diplomatic means.

April 25, 2013: Acting Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun testifies to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on "Security and Defense: Cooperation and Challenges."

April 26, 2013: North Korea rejects South Korea's offer to resume negotiations on reopening Kaesong Industrial Complex. South Korea orders pull-out of remaining workers.

April 30-May 1, 2013: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. They reaffirm bilateral ties and express their desire to coordinate on regional and international security issues.