

Comparative Connections

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Japan-Korea Relations: Sisyphus

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The most dramatic events affecting Japan-Korea relations in early 2012 concerned North Korea. The power transition appears to be proceeding smoothly, although mixed signals over the “Leap Day” agreement with the US followed by an attempted missile/satellite launch give signs that a clear foreign policy has not yet been worked out by the leadership in Pyongyang. While most attention was paid to North Korea’s apparently contradictory moves, relations between South Korea and Japan continued on their seemingly disconnected tracks of low and high politics. In economic relations and management of day-to-day issues, they continue to move closer together on a range of issues from dealing with tax evasion to joint disaster relief planning. Yet, territorial claims to islands or claims about history are a constant irritant in the relationship and threaten to derail relations at any time. This winter, both Japan and South Korea seemingly wanted relations to worsen by picking fights over Dokdo/Takeshima and making claims about history. One could dismiss the squabbling as peripheral to the main relationship, but these disputes hinder coordination and planning over important issues, divert diplomatic attention, and remain salient for domestic politics of both sides.

Crystal ball of public opinion polls

Like clockwork, the beginning of a new year heralds an irresistible urge to conduct polls in the hope of using them as blueprints for predictions about the future. One particular poll released by the *Asahi Shimbun* on Jan. 13 conducted in South Korea, Japan, and China was a joint collaboration by *DongA Ilbo* and *Channel A TV* of South Korea, and the *Asahi Shimbun* of Japan. Some 3,000 respondents from the three countries were asked: “Do you think your lives will be better five years from now, or worse, or unchanged?” The Chinese were the most optimistic with 71 percent claiming that their lives will be better, 48 percent of the South Koreans were equally optimistic, but only 7 percent of Japanese felt their lives would be better. A follow-up question sought to gauge the respondent’s views about the economic situation in the next five years, where once again, the Chinese showed the highest proportion of those with a favorable view at 64 percent, followed by the South Koreans at 51 percent, and only 12 percent of Japanese. On general sentiments regarding bilateral relations, the Japanese and the Chinese were the most negative, with 83 percent and 62 percent stating that the two did not have good ties, respectively. Similarly, 62 percent of South Koreans did not perceive ROK-Japan relations to be in good shape, with roughly 50 percent selecting China as the most important for the country’s economy in the future – unlike Japan, which pinpointed the United States as playing the vital role. Slightly more South Koreans dislike Japan than they dislike China (62 percent negative v. 57 percent negative). Even the proportion of South Koreans that perceived China in a positive light (31 percent) did not match those with a negative view (57 percent). To echo the somewhat grim

mood, a question about whether issues related to history have been resolved resulted in 88 percent of Koreans, 90 percent of Chinese, and 61 percent of Japanese claiming that problems remained. Nevertheless, even the skeptics had a favorable view of a possible trilateral free trade agreement (FTA) among South Korea, Japan, and China, with those either “very approving” or “relatively approving” of the FTA coming in at 55, 52, and 82 percent, respectively.

In a different poll on the economy, a survey of 368 companies by the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) showed that Korean exporters have been able to benefit from the disastrous 3/11 earthquake in Japan. A total of 32.1 percent of the respondents pointed to an increase in shipments to markets contested by Japanese rivals, 28 percent claiming an increase in exports due to the quake, with 21.2 percent attributing the natural disaster as facilitating more business investments from Japan. Furthermore, the survey showed that 23.9 percent of the companies expected increased exports to Japan in 2012, outweighing the 13 percent that foresaw a drop in shipments. Nevertheless, 32.6 percent of those polled viewed the unstable exchange rates as affecting exports in the future, with 32.2 percent expressing concerns about weak demand in Japan’s domestic economy. This is all in the context of an increase in South Korean exports to a record high of \$556.5 billion in 2011, a jump of 19.3 percent from the previous year. Specifically, product shipments to Japan increased 40.9 percent year-on-year in 2011, with the trade surplus shrinking to \$28 billion in 2011 from \$36.3 billion in 2010.

This advantage to Korean businesses since the disastrous earthquake in Japan was not lost on the Japanese media. The Jan. 9 *Asahi Shimbun* detailed the heightened sales pitch by South Korea to woo investment from Japanese manufacturers, especially those engaged in high-tech materials. According to the article, five Japanese companies have set up operations in South Chungcheong province in central South Korea, compared to zero in 2010. The South Korean Ministry of Knowledge Economy has stated that the investment value from Japanese companies totaled roughly \$1.43 billion (110 billion yen) between January and September 2011, an increase of about 40 percent from the same period in 2010.

Yet, despite the relatively and consistently optimistic economic relations captured by the KCCI survey, the underlying mood reflected in the general attitudinal survey was not too far off from the events involving South Korea and Japan during the first four months of 2012. In spite of Ambassador Shin Kak-soo’s emphasis in a Jan. 9 interview with *Yonhap News* on pursuing a “relationship of the 21st century in which both sides win and cooperate,” he singled out sexual slavery during World War II (or ‘comfort women’) as being the “most symbolic” issue for 2012. Accordingly, bilateral cooperation efforts dealt with issues having low impact or visibility, or those involving a third party.

The domination of low politics

Several initiatives involving Korea and Japan in 2011 carried over to 2012. For instance, cooperation on disaster management continued with the announcement in March by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) that it was launching a multi-year development program in conjunction with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), following bilateral consultations a month prior. Unlike similar existing programs, the Multi-year Joint Capacity Development Program or MJCD will conduct a needs assessment and feasibility study

in advance. The program will alternate forums between Myanmar and Azerbaijan each year. The decision marked the latest efforts in joint disaster management, following a March 8-9 Asian Developing Bank Institute (ADBI) conference on “Disaster Risk Management in Asia: Lessons and Challenges” in Tokyo and another international conference on “Lessons from Japan: Is Japan Korea’s Future?” held on March 12 by the ADBI and the North East Asian Research (NEAR) Foundation in Seoul. A few weeks prior, the Japan Foundation funded a symposium on “The Post-Disaster Paradigm Shift and ROK-Japan Relations” in Seoul, in the wake of the one-year anniversary of the March 11 disaster in Japan.

Other areas of bilateral cooperation included a meeting between ROK National Tax Service (NTS) Commissioner Lee Hyun-dong and Japanese counterpart Kawakita Chikara in April on tackling offshore tax evasion; a Korea-Japan symposium on March 28-29 aimed at protecting sea turtles, supported by the Ministry of Land, Transport, and Maritime Affairs and attended by Naoki Kamezaki, chairman of the Sea Turtle Association of Japan, and; a re-launch of the Korea-Japan exchange program for junior diplomats. The exchange program was conducted from 1998 to 2001, but was halted due to souring relations over the territorial and historical disputes. *Yonhap* quoted ROK Foreign Ministry spokesperson Cho Byung-jae as stating that the exchange program would help junior diplomats build a “human network and facilitate smooth communication” and accentuate the ‘future-oriented’ quality of the bilateral relations.

Third parties and opportunities for bilateral cooperation

To continue the momentum of ROK-China-Japan trilateralism generated in the latter part of 2011, ASEAN+3 agreed to expand their currency swap deal, known as the Chiang Mai Initiative, by doubling their reserve pool to \$240 billion to better deal with external shocks and the ongoing crisis in Europe. Moreover, the seventh round of ROK-China-Japan Senior Foreign Affairs Officials’ Consultation was held in Beijing, on March 5. The forum was chaired by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Fu Ying and attended by Japanese Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Bessho Koro, and ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Jae-shin. They discussed issues including disaster management, nuclear safety, the completion of a joint feasibility study on a trilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and increased exchanges in the areas of education, tourism, and culture. On the subject of the FTA, an editorial in the March 17 *Daily Yomiuri* voiced concerns about the impacts of the KORUS (Korea-US) FTA – which went into effect on March 15, 2012 – for Japanese automakers and electronics firms in the North American market. According to the editorial, observers in Japan were expecting an “uphill battle” while Tokyo tries its luck at the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement. The anxiety was probably magnified as Seoul has proceeded with separate bilateral negotiations on a Korea-China FTA. A high-level forum on the March 17 to mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between South Korea and China was followed by a Korea-China forum at the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, where experts agreed that delaying the bilateral FTA would be a disadvantage to South Korea.

Events in Indonesia also set the stage for collective action between Seoul and Tokyo. The *Jakarta Post* reported on Feb. 6 that the Japanese and South Korean emissaries along with representatives from Taiwan had filed complaints with the Indonesian government over its handling of a labor dispute, claiming negative repercussions for business. According to the

article, the three countries represent not only the largest investors in labor-intensive sectors (textiles, footwear, electronics) in Indonesia, but also have roughly 1,000, 1,600, and 12,000 companies operating in Indonesia, respectively. This amounts to roughly 1.8 million local workers being employed by such companies. Moreover, Japan and Korea are Indonesia's second and fifth largest foreign direct investors. The initial rally involved tens of thousands of Bekasi workers who took to the streets over wage issues on Jan. 27, which resulted in damages to property owned by the investors.

Closer to home, North Korea again bolstered traditional threat-driven cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo. In fact, Pyongyang's typical lambasting of Japan – the bylined commentary in the April 25 *Rodong Sinmun* in reaction to Japan's release of its Diplomatic Blue Book claiming sovereignty over the disputed islands as an example – could not garner enough sympathy from Seoul to downplay Tokyo as a partner. On the denuclearization front, South Korea's nuclear envoy, Lim Sung-nam, met Japanese counterpart, Sugiyama Shinsuke, in early January in Seoul prior to a trilateral meeting in mid-January among senior officials from South Korea, Japan, and the US on Jan. 16 in Washington, DC. The Six-Party Talks have been dormant since 2008, and the death of Kim Jong Il in December 2011 introducing more uncertainty about their future.

Attention shifted when North Korea announced its plans on March 16 for a satellite launch to coincide with Kim Il Sung's birthday on April 15. Despite assuring words from the spokesperson from the Korean Committee for Space Technology that North Korea will “strictly abide by relevant international regulations and usage concerning the launch of scientific and technological satellites for peaceful purposes,” many were unconvinced. Seoul and Tokyo held talks on March 23 to discuss steps in response Pyongyang's announcement. Similar issues were discussed at the April 8 trilateral meeting attended by ROK Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, and Japanese Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro. While the three agreed that Pyongyang's planned launch would be a violation of United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions, the Chinese representative called for “calm and restraint” rather than outright denunciation. This meeting was held against the background of recent Japanese efforts to extend sanctions against North Korea. Japan first levied sanctions in 2006 after North Korea's nuclear test, extending them each year. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu told reporters that “We decided to extend by one year a measure that prohibits North Korean ships from calling at Japanese ports and another measure that bans imports and exports with the North.” If there is any ‘satisfaction’ to be had by North Korea from its failed satellite launch, it may be that it reaffirmed in Tokyo's mind that its most vital partner remains the US. An editorial in the April 15 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, called for closer collaboration with the US on joint military exercises and programs for dealing with missile attacks.

One notable hint of progress in Japan-North Korea relations was a report in the March 15 *Sankei Shimbun* on Japan's plans to hold talks with North Korea on the return of Japanese women who had accompanied their Korean husbands to North Korea on a repatriation project from 1959-84. According to the article, some 93,000 Korean Japanese moved to North Korea during that period under the auspices of the Japanese government; roughly 1,800 of those were Japanese wives. Nakai Hiroshi, chief of the House Representatives Budget Committee and former chairman of the National Commission on Public Safety, was scheduled to visit Mongolia to meet Song Il Ho, the North's top negotiator on normalizing relations with Japan. According to *Yomiuri Shimbun*,

the unofficial talks took place on March 17, but between Song and Takushoku University professor Manabe Sadaki, a de facto proxy for Nakai. Professor Manabe is a key member of the investigation commission on missing Japanese. A similar homecoming program managed by Red Cross societies between 1997 and 2000 allowed 42 wives to visit Japan for reunions with their relatives. But in all likelihood, Pyongyang's attempted satellite launch snuffed out any chances of replicating such program in the near future.

The fate of Sisyphus and deterioration of ROK-Japan relations

According to statements released during a press briefing by the spokesperson and ROK Deputy Minister for Public Relations Cho Byung-jae on April 12, Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan had compared Korea-Japan relations to that of Sisyphus. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was cursed for eternity to repeatedly roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to have it roll back down. At the ROK-Japan-China Foreign Ministers Meeting in Ningbo, China in early April, Kim used the metaphor to describe how the territorial disputes and distortions of history work as gravity to pull ROK-Japan relations back to square one. Rightly so, as there was a string of contentious issues that significantly overshadowed the cooperative efforts described above.

In January, three notable events took place. First, the Jan. 8 *Asahi Shimbun* reported that a Chinese man claiming to have a grandmother that was forced into prostitution during WWII for the Japanese Imperial Army was arrested for a firebomb attack at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Later in the month, two women who were forced into sexual slavery during WWII met Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan, accusing him of “doing nothing” to resolve outstanding grievances on the issue. This came at a time when the weekly demonstrations outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul demanding compensation and an apology from Japan had reached their 1,000th protest in December 2011. At the end of January, relations became further strained following a policy speech by Japanese Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro in which he asserted that Takeshima (Dokdo) was a legitimate claim of Japan. Following standard operating procedure, the Korean Foreign Ministry called in the Japanese ambassador and made a formal complaint, but the statement was neither revised nor withdrawn.

The Dokdo/Takeshima territorial dispute figured prominently during the first months of 2012. In February, there were three notable incidents. First, the *Hankuk Ilbo* reported that a Japanese rightwing group, the Zaitokukai (the “Citizens against Special Privilege of Zainichi”), had applied to erect a monument in front of the Korean Embassy in Tokyo, just as the Koreans set up their own “peace monument” near the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in December 2011. The unifying slogan was that Takeshima belongs to Japan. Second, a ceremony for “Takeshima Day” was held in Matsue, Shimane prefecture on Feb. 22. The prefecture had designated “Takeshima Day” in 2005 to commemorate the centennial of the 1905 declaration that Japan was the rightful owner of the disputed islets. When asked by reporters why he did not attend the ceremony despite being sent an invitation, Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukimura was quick to point out that it was certainly not out of concern for diplomatic considerations. Third, the Korea media hit back with news of Korea's grand plans for solidifying sovereignty over Dokdo. In the wake of reports that Shimanae prefecture had requested a separate state agency to oversee the contentious islets and elevate “Takeshima Day” to a nation-wide event, the *Korea Times* reported on the extent to which Korea was committed to protecting its territorial integrity. According to a government

paper, the Prime Minister's Office is currently in charge of 28 different projects regarding Dokdo, with a budget of 1.1 trillion won (\$978 million). Roughly half of those are aimed at constructing residential and surveillance facilities on the island, with the latest being structural reinforcement of a police-owned helipad in September 2011. Furthermore, the National Police Agency has reinforced power and communications cables to increase response to emergency situations, while the Ministry of Land, Transport, and Maritime Affairs has earmarked roughly 407.4 billion won (\$353 million) to establish a giant breakwater to safeguard properties from violent waves. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has spent 280 million won (\$250,000) on monitoring the dispute and developing countermeasures to negative perceptions abroad.

The boulder continued to roll down the hill in March with a speech by ROK President Lee Myung-bak commemorating the 93rd anniversary of the March 1 uprising against Japan's colonial rule. Lee urged Japan to "resolve urgently" the compensation issue for those women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during WWII. In fact, one of the surviving victims ran for a proportional representation seat with the main opposition Democratic United Party (DUP) for the April parliamentary elections. According to *DongA Ilbo*, Lee Yong-su announced her bid in response to the weekly demonstrations at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, claiming that "Japan hasn't changed its stance a bit on the issue [of compensation and apology for forced prostitution during WWII] for the last 20-30 years. I want to make sure we get an official apology from them if I win a seat at the April parliament election." She has been spearheading efforts on the sexual slavery issue, having testified at the US House of Representatives in 2007, which adopted a resolution on so-called "comfort women."

The focus, however, quickly swung back to territorial issues, with reports by *Kyodo News* that Shimane Gov. Zembee Mizoguchi announced that the prefectural government had requested the central government to erect a Self-Defense Forces camp on the Okinoshima islets, which are nestled between the main Japanese island of Honshu and Dokdo/Takeshima. In late March, the Japanese government approved three new high school textbooks claiming Takeshima as Japan's territory, inciting protests from Korean counterparts.

The month of April began with more acrimony as Seoul lodged a protest over Japan's claims to the disputed islets in its 2012 Diplomatic Bluebook. According to *DongA Ilbo*, Japan had included an addendum to the 2012 version that Tokyo has been vehemently protesting Seoul's effective control of Dokdo/Takeshima. As standard operating procedure, Seoul summoned Matsuo Hirotaka, the minister for political affairs at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, and gave him a diplomatic letter outlining the Korean government's official stance on the issue. Also, the Korean Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry spokesperson Cho Byeong-jae stated that "As long as Japan claims territorial sovereignty over Dokdo as a captive of its ill-advised understanding of history, future-oriented Korea-Japan relations will only remain blank pledges, and Japan will have no chance to play a responsible role in the international community."

The debate over the Sea of Japan or the East Sea also reached a fever pitch, with a petition on the White House's website, *We the People*, calling for US government action on naming of the body of water. The website promises official response to any petition that receives more than 25,000 signatures within 30 days; the petition, which was started on March 22, reached more than the

required quota within 15 days of posting. The initial petition was started by a Korean-American association in Virginia, showing the transcendent nature of bilateral disputes and the role of immigrant communities. Shortly thereafter, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) convened for its general assembly meeting in Monaco – the sole significance of which for the Korean media being that the name of the Sea of Japan/East Sea was on the agenda. After initial triumphant reports that Japan had failed in its bid to convince the IHO General Assembly to adopt the single entry in a new edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* (the standard reference for map production), the IHO officials decided to postpone publication of the new edition until a decision is made at its next meeting in 2017. The North Korean delegation to the IHO was also South Korea's ally on the cause, calling the sole use of 'Sea of Japan' a "criminal act."

Months ahead

Late spring and summer promise to be interesting. The power transition in North Korea means that both Seoul and Tokyo will be paying close attention to any signs of instability or change. Given the coming presidential election in South Korea, a period of stability appears likely in ROK-Japan relations. Outgoing ROK President Lee Myung-bak is unlikely to pursue any major initiatives with Japan, opting instead to focus on economic issues or North Korea. For its part, the Japanese leadership remains more focused on domestic issues, most importantly recovery from the "triple disaster" of March 2011, and appears likely to make foreign policy overtures only in a reactive manner for the time being.

Chronology of Japan-Korea Relations January – April 2012

Jan. 8, 2012: *Asahi Shimbun* reports that a Chinese man was arrested for a firebomb attack at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The man reportedly said his grandmother was the victim of sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II.

Jan. 9, 2012: In an interview with *Yonhap News*, ROK Ambassador Shin Kak-soo states that Seoul and Tokyo must work toward finding a solution to the issue of compensation for Korean women forced into prostitution for the Japanese Imperial Army in World War II.

Jan. 12, 2012: South Korea's chief nuclear envoy Lim Sung-nam and Japanese counterpart Sugiyama Shinsuke meet in Seoul to discuss issues regarding North Korea.

Jan. 16, 2012: The first three-way talks among senior officials from South Korea, Japan, and the US since the death of Kim Jong Il take place in Washington.

Jan. 25, 2012: "Comfort women" receive media attention as the survivors of those forced into prostitution by the Japanese Imperial Army meet ROK Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan.

Jan. 26, 2012: *Mainichi Daily News* details the speech by Japanese Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro, asserting Japan as the legitimate owner of Takeshima. South Korea government immediately protests and lodges a formal complaint with the Japanese ambassador.

Feb. 2, 2012: *Hankuk Ilbo* reports that the Japanese right-wing group Zaitokukai (the “Citizens against Special Privilege of Zainichi”) has applied for a permit to erect a monument in front of the site of the new Korean Embassy, claiming Japan as the sole owner of Dokdo/Takeshima.

Feb. 6, 2012: *Jakarta Post* reports that the Japanese and South Korean ambassadors along with the Taiwanese representative have filed complaints to the Indonesian government over its handling of the recent labor unrest, claiming damages to their businesses in Indonesia.

Feb. 17, 2012: The Japan Foundation funds a symposium on “The Post-Disaster Paradigm Shift and ROK-Japan Relations” in Seoul.

Feb. 17, 2012: South Korea and Japan resume their exchange program for junior diplomats.

Feb. 21, 2012: In a press conference, Korean Ambassador to Japan Shin Gak-su states that the request made by Japanese Prime Minister Noda Yoshihoko in December to get rid of the “peace monument” near the Japanese Embassy in Seoul was inappropriate.

Feb. 21, 2012: *The Korea Times* reports that South Korea is quickly solidifying its hold on Dokdo, with 28 different projects either underway or completed on the rocky islets.

Feb. 22, 2012: Japan’s Shimane prefecture hosts a rally condemning Korea’s “illegal occupation” of Takeshima. The Shimane Prefectural Government has been hosting an exhibition of various records buttressing Japan’s claim to the disputed territory since January.

Feb. 22, 2012: *Kyodo News* reports that 11 Japanese lawmakers attended the annual “Takeshima Day” ceremony in Matsue, Shimane prefecture to promote Japan’s territorial claims to Takeshima.

Feb. 23, 2012: *Chosun Ilbo* covers the latest moves by Shimane prefecture officials and their request to elevate “Takeshima Day” into a national holiday.

March 1, 2012: In a speech during a ceremony to commemorate the 93rd anniversary of the March 1 uprising against Japanese colonial rule of Korea, President Lee Myung-bak urges Japan to “urgently resolve” the compensation issue for South Korean “comfort women.”

March 5, 2012: The seventh Korea-Japan-China Senior Foreign Affairs Officials’ Consultation and the first Asian Policy Dialogue are held in Beijing.

March 9, 2012: ROK Vice Foreign Minister Ahn Ho-young meets Japanese counterpart Sasae Kenichiro and calls on Japan to “take fundamental measures that are acceptable to the victims [of sex slavery] as the issue is one of the most important pending issues between the two nations.”

March 11, 2012: *Asahi Shimbun* publishes an op-ed by President Lee Myung-bak entitled “3/11 and Korea-Japan Relations: An Affirmation of Friendship.”

March 14, 2012: *Daily Yomiuri* quotes Gov. Mizoguchi Zembee as calling on the central government to build a Self-Defense Forces camp on part of the Okinoshima islets, which are located between Honshu and the disputed islets of Dokdo/Takeshima.

March 15, 2012: *Sankei Shimbun* reports on an unofficial meeting between Tokyo and Pyongyang to discuss repatriation of Japanese women who moved to North Korea with their Korean husbands.

March 16, 2012: North Korea announces its planned satellite launch to mark the centennial of state founder Kim Il Sung's birthday.

March 17, 2012: According to a *Daily Yomiuri* report, the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement will likely hurt Japanese automakers and electronic firms in the North American market.

March 19, 2012: Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) announces its decision to launch a multi-year development program with the Japan International Cooperation Agency on disaster management.

March 23, 2012: The top nuclear envoys from South Korea and Japan hold talks in Seoul to discuss the steps following North Korea's announcement of a planned rocket launch.

March 27, 2012: The Japanese government approves three new high school textbooks claiming Takeshima as Japanese territory, inciting protests from the Korean government.

March 28, 2012: *Kyodo* announces new plans by Korea, Japan, and China along with the 10 Southeast Asian countries to double their reserve pool to \$240 billion to better deal with the potential spillovers from the crisis in Europe.

March 28-29, 2012: A Korea-Japan symposium supported by the ROK Ministry of Land, Transport, and Maritime Affairs takes place on Jeju Island, aimed at protecting sea turtles.

April 3, 2012: Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu tells reporters that Japan will extend its sanctions against North Korea by a year.

April 5, 2012: *The Japan Times* announces that Japan has completed its deployment of its ground-based *Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3)* interceptors ahead of North Korea's planned rocket launch.

April 6, 2012: Japan releases its 2012 Diplomatic Bluebook, which garners severe protests from its Korean neighbor for reaffirming its territorial claims over the disputed islands.

April 8, 2012: The ROK-China-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting takes place in Ningbo, China. Bilateral meetings preceded the three-way talks the day before.

April 12, 2012: Roughly 800 Japanese gather at the constitutional government memorial near the National Diet Building to protest the issue of sovereignty over Dokdo/Takeshima. *JoongAng*

Daily reports that more than 60 Japanese lawmakers from both the ruling and opposition parties supported the rally and 49 personally attended.

Apr. 13, 2012: North Korea attempts to launch a satellite; the rocket carrying the satellite breaks apart within moments of launch.

April 18, 2012: ROK National Tax Service (NTS) Commissioner Lee Hyun-dong meets Japanese counterpart Kawakita Chikara to address the issue of offshore tax evasion.

April 20, 2012: A South Korean civic group holds a rally in downtown Paris to urge the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) to formally adopt the 'East Sea' name to the currently labeled 'Sea of Japan,' ahead of the IHO general assembly meeting in Monaco.

April 21, 2012: The petition site operated by the US White House shuts down due to a flurry of activity regarding a petition to change the naming of the Sea of Japan to the East Sea.

April 23-27, 2012: The general assembly of the IHO takes place in Monaco.