



**US-Japan Relations:
Hiroshima to The Hague**

**Sheila Smith, Council on Foreign Relations
Charles McClean, University of California, San Diego**

After the May 25-27 [G7 meeting](#) in Ie-Shima, President Obama and Prime Minister Abe traveled to Hiroshima to commemorate the August 1945 dropping of the atomic bombs. As the first sitting US president to visit Hiroshima, Obama took the opportunity to not only address the survivors of that terrible day in Japan – the *hibakusha* – but also to [speak](#) to a global audience of the devastating consequences of war in the nuclear era.

The summer months that followed were full of politics, with an Upper House election in Japan in July and the Republican and Democratic Party conventions in the US kicking off the general election campaign for president. The Republican nominee, Donald Trump, continued to take aim at trade deals and US alliances, but the Democratic Party had its “anti-trade” moment when its convention took aim at the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the trade pact concluded by 12 Pacific nations. The Obama administration continued to work toward a [Congressional vote](#) in the lame duck session at the end of the year. With less political contention but growing skepticism over Washington’s ability to ratify the agreement, the Abe Cabinet decided that it would postpone Diet discussions until after its election.

Regional relations continue to shape the US-Japan alliance agenda. In July, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea Tribunal announced its [arbitration ruling](#) in a case brought by the Philippines on Chinese behavior in the South China Sea. Beijing was quick to [condemn the ruling](#), but its neighbors in Asia largely welcomed it. In August, Chinese fishing vessels inundated the waters near the Senkaku Islands, prompting Japan’s Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Sugiyama Shinsuke to call in Chinese Ambassador Cheng Yonghua for a harsh protest. A diplomatic opening came when Foreign Minister Wang Yi traveled to Tokyo on Aug. 24 for a trilateral meeting with the foreign ministers of Japan and the ROK, the first trilateral meeting held in Japan in 11 years. North Korea heralded this Japan-ROK-PRC meeting by testing a ballistic missile launch from a submarine. Pyongyang yet again interrupted regional diplomacy when it launched three missiles into the Sea of Japan during the G20 meeting hosted by Beijing, prompting renewed UN condemnation of North Korea and a hasty set of meetings between the leaders of Japan, South Korea, and the US. A full agenda of Asian multilateral meetings ended the summer, offering plenty of opportunity for diplomacy. For this summer, at least, there seems little reason to believe that diplomacy alone can bridge the growing differences over how to resolve the region’s growing security tensions.

This article is extracted from [Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations](#), Vol. 18, No. 2, September 2016. Preferred citation: Sheila Smith and Charles McClean, “US-Japan- Relations: Hiroshima to The Hague,” [Comparative Connections](#), Vol. 18, No. 2, September 2016, pp.15-24.

A historic visit to Hiroshima

On May 27, President Obama visited Hiroshima to lay a wreath at the Hiroshima memorial. This was the culmination of a series of visits to Hiroshima by US officials beginning with Ambassador John Roos in 2010, who was the first US ambassador to participate in the Aug. 6 ceremony to commemorate the loss of life after the first atomic bombing. The following year, Roos attended a similar ceremony in Nagasaki, the second Japanese city chosen for atomic bombing in 1945. Ambassador Caroline Kennedy continued the practice in 2014, and in August 2015 she was accompanied by Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller. Finally, Secretary of State John Kerry visited the Hiroshima Peace Park in April 2016 when he attended the foreign ministerial prelude to the G7 Summit. His host, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, is a Hiroshima native, and has been a powerful advocate for the Obama visit. In the press meeting that followed, Kerry [argued](#) that “everyone should visit Hiroshima, and everyone means everyone” suggesting that Obama would indeed extend his visit to Japan for the G7 to include a trip to Hiroshima to commemorate the atomic bombing. The White House announced the visit on May 10, and in an [interview with NHK](#) on May 22, the President discussed his historic visit to Hiroshima. Obama noted that he felt no need to apologize for past decisions made during wartime, but rather wanted to “emphasize how we can move forward, but also emphasize the fact that ... people suffer terribly in war, and we need to try to evolve our human responses and our human institutions in a way that emphasizes peace and diplomacy wherever we can.”

Anticipation of what might happen during the visit skyrocketed in Japan. Late on the day on May 27, the president and prime minister arrived at Hiroshima to each lay a wreath, and both spoke. Seated in the front row were some of the elderly victims who had been children at the time of the bombing. A [photo](#) of the president embracing one of the *hibakushu* became the headline image – in Japan and around the globe. In addition to these public events, President Obama also toured the peace museum, seeing first-hand the collection of photographs and chronicles of civilian deaths and leaving his own inscription and two origami cranes. After the president left the site, thousands of Japanese lined up to view the president’s wreath. Before the visit, there were some concerns over those who might want an “apology,” but not even the *hibakushu* seemed to press for one. In the days following the president’s visit, public opinion polls revealed a unanimously positive review of the president’s visit, with polls from virtually all Japanese newspapers showing a remarkable 90 percent+ of Japanese appreciated the visit. After the G7 and Hiroshima visit, Prime Minister Abe’s [approval rating](#) also showed a 7-point bump.

Japan’s election and the prospects for constitutional revision

On July 10, Japan’s Upper House election produced another victory for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner, the Komeito. The balance of the 242-seat Upper House now favors the ruling coalition, with 122 seats for the LDP and 25 for Komeito. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which governed from 2009 to 2012, reorganized itself and merged with the national Japan Innovation Party (*Ishin no Kai*) to create the Democratic Party (DP). DP President Okada Katsuya crafted an electoral coalition designed to defeat the LDP in the single member districts, but the inclusion of the Japan Communist Party rankled many. The DP now holds 50

seats – 10 less than the party had prior to the election – and the JCP has 14 seats. At the end of the day, the DP and its allies could not defeat Abe’s ruling coalition.

While the story of the 2016’s Upper House election has few electoral surprises, it will be remembered as the first postwar election to produce the requisite votes for a [Diet debate](#) on constitutional revision. Article 96 of the Japanese constitution requires a two-thirds majority in Japan’s Lower and Upper Houses of the Diet to propose revisions. Once Parliament has agreed, any proposed revisions must then be put forward in a national referendum for the approval of the Japanese people. In coming months, it is widely expected that deliberations within the Diet committee on the constitution will focus on how to proceed with this much-anticipated conversation on whether to tackle revising or amending Japan’s constitution. The LDP has long advocated for change, and today some in the party support consideration of a new amendment to facilitate a government response to a crisis. But other parties are skeptical, and it remains to be seen what the pace of these initial Diet committee discussions will be. Moreover, public opinion polling reveals some skepticism also of the Abe Cabinet’s ambitions. While there has been growing support for a debate over the constitution, Japanese remain deeply divided on what, if anything, needs to be revised. In the wake of the Abe Cabinet’s passage of new security legislation in 2015, [polling data](#) has revealed a decline in support for revision. Furthermore, the [announcement](#) by the Japanese Emperor of his desire to abdicate has complicated the constitutional debate, and will undoubtedly slow the Diet discussions as a new law will need to be presented and passed if Emperor Akihito’s wishes are to be respected.

America’s anti-trade politics and TPP

Ministers from the US, Japan, and 10 other Pacific nations officially signed the [Trans-Pacific Partnership \(TPP\)](#) agreement on Feb. 4, yet progress remains slow on ratification. The TPP will enter into force if it is ratified within two years by at least six countries making up a minimum of 85 percent of the partner nations’ GDP – this means that Japan and the US, which together make up about 80 percent of the total, must both approve the agreement. However, there remains great uncertainty, particularly in the US, about the likelihood of ratification within this timeframe.

In Japan, Diet deliberations on TPP began in April, but soon ran into roadblocks. The Abe administration faced strong resistance to TPP from the opposition DP and other smaller parties, and then two devastating earthquakes struck Kumamoto Prefecture on April 14 and 16, demanding the government’s attention. On April 20, LDP Diet Affairs Chief Sato Tsutomu and DP Diet Affairs Chief Azumi Jun agreed to postpone TPP [deliberations](#) until after the July Upper House election to allow sufficient time for debate.

Discussion is expected to begin anew in the fall extraordinary session of the Diet, which is set to open on Sept. 26 and last until mid-December. [Business leaders in Japan](#) continue to express strong support for TPP, and even met with Abe to urge speedy ratification just days before the July election. Nevertheless, opposition remains strong among many agricultural groups. For example, in the July election, the LDP performed poorly in Tohoku, where farmers wield significant influence, losing 5 out of 6 constituency contests there. Abe administration officials continue to [meet with agricultural groups](#) to build support, and on Aug. 24 the Cabinet approved a 4.11 trillion yen (\$39.5 billion) supplementary budget that includes 431.7 billion yen (\$4.2

billion) for [policies](#) aimed at strengthening Japan's agricultural sector ahead of TPP ratification. The Cabinet will present this supplementary budget to the Diet once it reconvenes on Sep. 26.

Despite some remaining pockets of opposition, Japanese officials are optimistic that they can secure ratification of the TPP this fall. The LDP controls a majority of seats in both chambers of the Diet, which should ease the passage of TPP-related bills. Several Cabinet ministers, including Economy, Trade, and Industry Minister Seko Hiroshige and Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Ishihara Nobuteru, are [calling](#) for Japan to take the lead and approve TPP before the US presidential election in November. The hope is that TPP's passage in Japan can provide a boost for President Obama and facilitate its ratification in the US. Japan's opposition DP will presumably resume its protest of TPP in the Diet this fall – especially given that [all three candidates](#) for the DP presidential contest in September have said that they oppose the deal.

In the US, TPP's future is much murkier, in part because a sense of anti-trade populism has taken hold in both parties. As the US presidential primaries came to a close in June, none of the remaining candidates softened their opposition to TPP. Republican candidate Donald Trump repeatedly called TPP a “[horrible deal](#),” one which he claims will be the “death blow for American manufacturing” while strengthening China's position in international trade. On the Democrat side, Bernie Sanders made opposition to TPP a focal point of his campaign throughout the primaries. In an [op-ed](#) published July 8, Sanders argued that the Democratic Party should include an amendment rejecting TPP in its platform at the national convention – although this effort was ultimately unsuccessful, viewers who tuned in to coverage of the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia could clearly see anti-TPP signs and pins throughout the crowd. Finally, Hillary Clinton, who originally supported TPP as secretary of state in the Obama administration, has since opposed TPP as a presidential candidate, saying that the final TPP agreement “[did not meet \[her\] high standards](#).” Since receiving the official Democratic nomination for president in July, Clinton's position on TPP has only hardened – on Aug. 11, in a [speech](#) outlining her economic policies in Warren, Michigan, Clinton said: “I oppose [TPP] now, I'll oppose it after the election, and I'll oppose it as president.”

The best hope for the TPP's ratification appears to be the lame-duck session of Congress that will convene after the presidential election in November. In a press conference on Aug. 2, President Obama [expressed hope](#) that Congress will ratify the agreement during this period, noting that failure to do so would open the door for China to take the lead in defining norms for trade and commerce in the Asia Pacific. Obama successfully received Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) from the Republican-controlled Congress last summer, which simplifies the ratification process by allowing for a straight up-or-down vote without amendments or filibuster. Members of Congress will have 90 legislative days to review TPP and call a vote once Obama decides to officially send it to them.

However, in the current political climate, building bipartisan support for TPP looks to be a tough sell. On Aug. 4, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan said that the Obama administration has a “[lot of work to do](#)” on the substance of TPP in order to secure the necessary votes for ratification. On Aug. 25, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell went a step further and said that the [Senate will not vote](#) on TPP before Obama leaves office adding that TPP can be “massaged, changed, [and] worked on during the next administration.” While Republican members of Congress have

traditionally been more favorable toward free trade agreements, the strength of anti-trade opposition from both Democrats and Trump supporters have [put Republicans on the defensive](#) in states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri. For example, Sen. Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania, who last year voted in favor of TPA but now faces a tough reelection race, announced on Aug. 18 that he would [switch to opposing TPP](#). As more and more Republicans distance themselves from TPP prior to the election, it remains to be seen whether the Obama administration can muster the necessary votes for ratification in the lame-duck period, or if TPP will be left on the agenda for the next president.

After the Hague decision, Asia's maritime pressures continue

Initiated by the Philippines, The Hague ruling produced a stern rendering of the UNCLOS on the geographic features of the islands claimed by China and others in the Spratly Islands, on the effort by China to establish an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) based on its claimed 9-dash line, and on Chinese behavior in the Philippine EEZ. Beijing has summarily rejected the ruling, claiming it has no basis under international law. Foreign Minister Kishida [responded](#) that Japan has “consistently advocated the importance of the rule of law and the use of peaceful means ... in seeking settlement of maritime disputes,” and urged both China and the Philippines to comply with the ruling, which is meant to be legally binding. Secretary of State John Kerry similarly [stated](#) that the US supports peaceful efforts to resolve maritime disputes and “expresses its hope and expectation that both parties will comply with their obligations.”

But the US and Japan faced some hurdles in their diplomatic efforts to support the Philippine claim. Chinese officials took aim at Japan for its role in the arbitration. Just a few days after the ruling, State Councilor Yang Jiechi singled out for criticism Yanai Shunji, then president of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, for his appointment of the arbitrators. Describing Yanai as a “right-wing Japanese intent on ridding Japan of postwar arrangements,” Yang claimed that the proceedings were lined up against China and full of “tricks.” The change in government in Manila also complicated diplomacy after the ruling. President Rodrigo Duterte began his term in office with contradictory statements about how he would handle the island dispute with China. Moreover, Duterte's views on the Philippine relationship with the US threatened to derail alliance diplomacy. For its part, Tokyo continued its coastal defense assistance to Manila. In August, 10 144-foot coast guard vessels (worth about \$188 million) were [delivered](#) to the Philippines, and discussions began on additional ships.

Moreover, Chinese activity in the East China Sea seemed to intensify in the weeks leading up to and following The Hague tribunal, upping the tensions between Japan and China and prompting Tokyo to lodge diplomatic protests with Beijing. In June, prior to The Hague ruling, a PLAN vessel entered into the contiguous waters of the Senkaku Islands. Tokyo had monitored Russian vessels returning from an exercise with Chinese forces just hours earlier. After the ruling, in August, [several hundred Chinese fishing vessels](#) arrived in the waters off of the Senkaku Islands, accompanied by 28 Chinese government law enforcement vessels, including armed coast guard vessels, maritime observation vessels, and a fisheries enforcement vessel. The opening of the fishing season regularly attracts foreign fishing vessels, but the scale of the Chinese fishing fleet as well as the unprecedented number of Chinese government vessels sent to accompany them raised concerns in Tokyo. On Aug. 10, a US State Department spokeswoman noted this unusual

Chinese behavior, and repeated President Obama's statement in April 2014 that the US-Japan security treaty's Article 5 protections extended to the Senkakus.

Both President Obama and Prime Minister Abe sought to discuss these maritime tensions with President Xi Jinping during their bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Hangzhou. Abe met Xi for their third meeting since both took office. On the East China Sea, Abe noted that the Japan-China relationship could not stabilize unless the situation in the East China Sea stabilized. They agreed to hold senior maritime talks in Hiroshima from Sept. 14 to resume negotiations on the 2008 joint energy development agreement. Moreover, Abe and Xi agreed to [accelerate](#) defense talks on a maritime-air communication mechanism. In addition, both Obama and Abe planned to meet Philippine President Duterte on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Vientiane. However, media reports of Duterte's offensive remarks about Obama derailed their meeting. Abe did meet Duterte, however, and announced additional sales of larger coast guard cutters to assist Manila in defending its waters.

More North Korean missiles...

Finally, Pyongyang continued to test the US and Japan in the final weeks of August. New missile tests seemed timed to punctuate the late summer diplomacy in Northeast Asia. As the foreign ministers of China and South Korea [traveled](#) to Japan for their trilateral on Aug. 24, Kim Jong Un decided to test missiles launched from a submarine. Unlike the failed test on July 9, this time the missile is estimated to have traveled over 300 miles into Japan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the Sea of Japan. Pyongyang launched three more missiles in Japan's direction as China hosted the G20, prompting a renewed UN Security Council discussion on this violation of sanctions. US, Japan, and ROK leaders also hastily met on the sidelines of the ASEAN meetings in Laos on Sept. 5 to coordinate a response to the missile launches.

Conclusion

For the remainder of this year, the US and Japan will work together to respond to regional tensions. The North Korean missile launches, timed as they are to regional diplomatic gatherings, will likely continue to bring US, Japanese, South Korean, and even Chinese leaders together in considering further sanctions. But US allies will also continue to ready their defenses in case of future provocations.

President Obama's final visit to Asia emphasized the regional priorities of his "pivot" to Asia: supporting strong multilateralism in the East Asia Summit, strengthening US relations with the ASEAN nations, and building an effective, cooperative relationship with China in solving regional problems. The US-Japan alliance remains central to the Obama "pivot," but the souring of relations between China and its neighbors have sorely tested the premise that the US and China can find common ground on the future of the Asia Pacific. Tokyo in particular has become a strong advocate for greater Chinese accountability in the East and South China Seas.

With a presidential transition ahead in the US, anxiety is growing in Tokyo about the future trajectory of alliance cooperation. Moreover, there is a short-term concern that Pyongyang or perhaps even Beijing might take advantage of the US election to test its alliances in Asia.

Undoubtedly, the future of TPP rests heavily on the minds of Japanese policymakers; the lame duck session of Congress seems now to be the only opportunity for ratification, and increasingly, confidence that TPP will be ratified by the US in these final months of the Obama administration seems to diminish.

Chronology of U.S.-Japan Relations **May – August 2016**

May 11-12, 2016: US and Japan hold the fourth annual Nonproliferation Dialogue in Tokyo.

May 21, 2016: US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter speaks by phone with Japanese Minister of Defense Nakatani Gen to convey his sadness and regret over the murder of a young woman in Okinawa. He pledges that the Department of Defense will cooperate with the investigation.

May 25-27, 2016: President Obama travels to Japan to attend the G7 Summit and visit Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

May 25, 2016: President Obama and Prime Minister Abe Shinzo meet on the sidelines of the G7 Summit. Obama expresses condolences for the crime committed by a US forces member in Okinawa. The two leaders discuss global economy, TPP, and North Korea.

May 26-27, 2016: Japan hosts the 42nd G7 Summit in Ise-Shima.

May 27, 2016: President Obama becomes the first sitting US president to visit Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, the site of the US atomic bombing on August 6, 1945. He gives a [speech](#).

June 1, 2016: Prime Minister Abe announces that he will delay a scheduled sales tax increase (from 8 percent to 10 percent) from April 2017 to October 2019.

June 2, 2016: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, clarifying earlier comments, says that he does not want Japan to go nuclear but to instead pay more for US military support.

June 4, 2016: Secretary Carter and Defense Minister Nakatani meet on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue to discuss regional security challenges and opportunities. South Korean Minister of National Defense Han Min-koo joins them later for a trilateral meeting.

June 10, 2016: Chinese PLA Navy vessel enters Japanese contiguous waters near the Senkakus.

June 13, 2016: US, Japan, and Korea hold a trilateral dialogue in Washington, DC.

June 14, 2016: Tokyo Gov. Masuzoe Yoichi announces resignation over expenses scandal.

June 17, 2016: The 27th Plenary Session of the US-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) convenes in Tokyo.

June 19-21, 2016: Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel and Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Biswal travel to Tokyo to co-lead the US delegation for the US-Japan-India Trilateral Dialogue and Ninth US-India Consultations on East Asia.

June 22, 2016: Official campaign period begins for the Upper House election on July 10.

June 27-July 1, 2016: Special Advisor for Children’s Issues, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, travels to Tokyo to participate in the “Asia Pacific Symposium on the 1980 Hague Convention.”

June 28-30, 2016: Assistant Secretary for Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance Frank Rose travels to Japan to co-chair the third plenary meeting of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV).

July 8, 2016: Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders publishes an op-ed arguing that the Democratic Party should include an amendment rejecting TPP in its platform at the national convention.

July 10, 2016: Election is held for Japan’s Upper House. The ruling LDP/Komeito coalition gains 10 seats, bringing their total to 146, a clear majority of the total 242 seats.

July 11-12, 2016: Japan and the US hold a bilateral Extended Deterrence Dialogue in Tokyo.

July 12, 2016: UNCLOS Arbitral Tribunal [issues an award](#) on the dispute between the Philippines and China over claimed rights and activity in the South China Sea. The tribunal concludes “there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the ‘nine-dash line’.”

July 12, 2016: Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio [releases a statement](#) on the tribunal’s South China Sea award, saying that Japan “has consistently advocated the importance of the rule of law.” He urges both China and the Philippines to comply with the ruling.

July 13, 2016: China’s Foreign Ministry [expresses strong opposition](#) to the tribunal’s ruling on the South China Sea, and reiterates that it will not abide by the case.

July 18-21, 2016: Republican National Convention is held in Cleveland.

July 24, 2016: Former Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) member Hirano Tatsuo joins the LDP, giving the LDP a majority in the Upper House for the first time in 27 years.

July 25, 2016: Secretary of State John Kerry, Minister for Foreign Affairs Kishida, and Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop meet in Vientiane, Laos for the sixth ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD).

July 25-28, 2016: Democratic National Convention is held in Philadelphia.

July 27, 2016: Fourth US-Japan Bilateral Cyber Dialogue is held in Washington.

July 30, 2016: Democratic Party (DP) leader Okada Katsuya announces he will not seek reelection in September, saying the party needs a fresh face to take on the Abe's administration.

July 31, 2016: Tokyo elects Yuriko Koike as city's first female governor.

Aug. 3, 2016: Prime Minister Abe reshuffles his Cabinet.

Aug. 4, 2016: Speaker of the House Paul Ryan says the Obama administration still has a lot to do if it hopes to secure the necessary votes to ratify TPP in the lame-duck session of Congress.

Aug. 5, 2016: Legal battle resumes in court between the central and Okinawa governments over the relocation of US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. A ruling in the case is set for Sept. 16.

Aug. 6, 2016: Group of 230 Chinese fishing boats and 6 coast guard vessels enter the contiguous zone in waters near the Senkaku Islands.

Aug. 6, 2016: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump criticizes US defense of Japan as one-sided, saying that if the US is attacked, Japan would "sit at home and watch Sony TV."

Aug. 8, 2016: Emperor Akihito releases a video message expressing concern about how his advanced age may be affecting the performance of his public duties. The speech is widely interpreted as the emperor intends to abdicate his position in the coming years.

Aug. 10, 2016: Japan Coast Guard rescues six members of a Chinese fishing boat near the Senkaku Islands after it collided with a Greek cargo ship and sank.

Aug. 10, 2016: State Department spokeswoman notes the unusual Chinese behavior near the Senkaku Islands in a press briefing, and reiterates that the islands fall within the scope of Article 5 of the US-Japan security treaty.

Aug. 11, 2016: Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton gives a speech saying, "I oppose [TPP] now, I'll oppose it after the election, and I'll oppose it as president."

Aug. 15, 2016: SEALDS, one of Japan's leading liberal youth political groups, announces that it has disbanded. The group is most known for helping to organize mass protests last summer against Prime Minister Abe's security legislation.

Aug. 16, 2016: Japan Coast Guard releases video showing Chinese intrusions into waters near the Senkaku Islands.

Aug. 18, 2016: Government of Japan announces that Prime Minister Abe will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sept. 2 in Vladivostok, Russia.

Aug. 24, 2016: North Korea launches a ballistic missile from a submarine, which travels over 300 miles and lands in the Sea of Japan.

Aug. 24, 2016: Japan, Korea, and China hold a trilateral foreign ministers meeting in Tokyo.

Aug. 24, 2016: Abe Cabinet approves a 4.11 trillion yen (\$39.5 billion) supplementary budget, which includes 431.7 billion yen (\$4.2 billion) intended to strengthen Japan's agricultural sector ahead of TPP ratification.

Aug. 25, 2016: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says that the Senate will not vote on TPP before Obama leaves office.