

Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



Japan-Korea Relations:

How (Juicy) Tabloid News Subsumed Relations

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Despite continued political bickering between Japan and its neighbors, tourism to Japan reached record heights in 2014. Between January and November 2014, South Korean tourism to Japan increased 9.3 percent, and Chinese [tourism](#) to Japan increased an astonishing 82.2 percent. Evidently disagreement over political stances hasn't stopped vacations. While the increase in tourism can be partly attributed to the plunging value of the yen, it also emphasizes one fact: the people of Northeast Asia are deeply interconnected in a number of ways. It is ironic that while both Japan and South Korea use the same characters and pronunciation for both “past (過去)” and “future (未來),” there is little to suggest a consensus on either the past or the future. Nevertheless, the process of seeking some accord dominated the relationship in the final months of 2014, as evidenced by occasional meetings and brief encounters on the sidelines of multilateral conferences. To an optimist, there was no single dispute that consumed the bilateral relationship; to a cynic, there was no observable progress resulting from the meetings (unless one sees formalized interaction as a feat in and of itself).

Game of thrones (but mostly political intrigue)

Before we discuss any (relatively) new developments in the relationship, we should revisit something that was first brought up in the [last assessment of Japan-Korea relations](#) (*Comparative Connections* Vol. 16, no. 2). Recall that Kato Tatsuya, *Sankei Shimbun*'s Seoul bureau chief, had just become the defendant in a defamation suit – of which criminal libel is punishable by up to seven years in jail – for an article in the paper that picked up rumors that South Korean President Park Geun-hye was partly inaccessible on the day of the sinking of the ferry (*Sewol*) in April, because she had been meeting a man (Mr. X). South Korean prosecutors indicted Kato in October, thereafter extending a travel ban on him, with preliminary hearings in November where Kato pleaded not guilty to the charges. At this point, there were two frames transposed onto the incident: the first was to interpret the issue as a potential violation of freedom of press (e.g., Anna Fifield, “[In South Korea, Journalists Fear a Government Clampdown on the Press](#),” *The Washington Post*, Dec. 10, 2014), while the second centered on the anti-Japanese angle. A frequent question was why only Kato was being judged despite the fact that he extensively quoted an initial column by Choi Bo-sik in the (Korean) *Chosun Ilbo*. During the first court hearing on Dec. 15, an argument (from the plaintiff) was that while Choi's tone was mainly one of advice in suggesting ways to effectively manage state affairs, Kato's piece supposedly relied on rumors in highlighting the vulgar nature of the incident. As for the anti-Japanese sentiment, there was definitely plenty as evidenced by the demonstrations by the rightist Hankyoreh Youth Organization (not to be confused with the left-leaning newspaper), which was founded in

October 2014 to fight for North Korean human rights, denuclearization, and reunification, but which was also clearly happy to demonstrate against this particular Japanese.

The rather simplistic veneer, however, quickly wears off when the incident is put into the context of a domestic investigation involving much fanfare (probably more so than the Kato trial) and intrigue. The Mr. X referenced above is suspected to be Jeong Yun-hoe, an ex-aide of President Park, who is scheduled to testify in the Kato hearing in January. Jeong is involved in a larger case where he is accused of wielding disproportionate influence in state affairs; he has already been interrogated by prosecutors. He has also filed a defamation suit against *Segye Ilbo* for a story based on a classified document leaked from the presidential office that accuses him of having such a role in decision-making. So, the domestic scandal has led to increased attention to the Kato, at least in South Korea, which may actually be a good for Japan-Korea relations since they attract less scrutiny overall. But it could also be a distraction in that the focus on Jeong may hinder any serious discussion of freedom of press or anti-Japanese sentiments and bias.

A rough parallel occurred regarding what seemed on the surface to be [hate speech](#) and anti-Korean sentiments in Japan. Soon after the Cabinet reshuffle in September, photos emerged of certain Cabinet members posing alongside individuals affiliated with the ultra-right *Zaitokukai*, which is known for its anti-Korean platform (this also spawned theorizing on the connection between [politicians and the Yakuza](#)). Interest swelled when the media noted that one of those officials was Yamatani Eriko, the chairwoman of the National Public Safety Commission, who later denied her association with *Zaitokukai* but also stopped short of passing any judgment about the group itself. The atmosphere was already tense as the United Nations Human Rights Committee in August had urged Japan to deal with hate speech in anti-Korea demonstrations in Japan. By September, President of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Kaieda Banri (who resigned after losing his seat at the general elections to the House of Representatives on Dec. 14) [called on](#) Prime Minister Abe Shinzo to publicly denounce such demonstrations.

Then came the [debate](#) (clip courtesy of *YouTube*) where Osaka Mayor Hashimoto Toru and the president of *Zaitokukai*, Sakurai Makoto, had an “exchange of ideas” on Oct. 20 at Osaka City Hall. For South Koreans who know Hashimoto for his remarks in 2013 in which he said comfort women/sex slaves during World War II were a necessary component in maintaining military discipline, it may be odd to see him on that side of the argument. Of course, not many likely heard Hashimoto given the conspicuous lack of coverage of the October debate by the Korean media. Nevertheless, the Osaka mayor had been critical of *Zaitokukai*'s actions and this was his chance to cement his position. Unfortunately, the debate only lasted 8-10 minutes rather than the scheduled 30; the [media](#) used words like “ugly,” “insults,” “bickering” to describe the encounter. In the exchange, Sakurai reportedly criticized the mayor for “rejecting freedom of speech.” The more interesting parallel, however, comes with what Sakurai yelled at Hashimoto: “Go back to *Tobita Shinchi*!” This was a reference to the red-light district in Osaka and Hashimoto's role of legal adviser for the *Tobita Shinchi* Association prior to becoming mayor in 2011. Hashimoto has reportedly sued *Bungeisha*, which publishes weekly magazines/tabloids, for defamation over an article that accused him of frequenting “bathhouses” from the payment by the *Tobita Shinchi* Association. For both Korea and Japan, developments indicated an overall lack of transparency and public distrust behind contentions of freedom of press, hate speech, and defamation suits.

Tough circumstances

There were notable bilateral meetings that occurred in the final months of the year. South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se met Japan's Ambassador to Korea Bessho Koro for the first time in mid-September to discuss bilateral relations on the sidelines of a Japan-Korea cultural event in Seoul (Shin Hyon-hee, "[Hopes for Korea-Japan Thaw Grow](#)," *The Korea Herald*, Sept. 15, 2014). Shortly thereafter, the two countries held their 16th meeting between directors general for cultural affairs in Tokyo, attended by delegations led by Korean Director General for Cultural Affairs Kim Dong-gi and Japanese counterpart Shimmi Jun. Items on the agenda included plans for information sharing on hosting Olympics (given that Korea will host the 2018 Winter Olympics and Japan the 2020 Summer Olympics) and preparations for commemorating the 50th anniversary of the normalization of relations in 2015. A day later, Prime Minister Abe's goodwill envoy, former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro, delivered President Park a message calling for a Japan-Korea summit. While this call went unheeded, the two leaders did meet on the sidelines of the November APEC Leaders Meeting in Beijing.

The foreign ministers also met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in late September, the vice-foreign ministers held a strategic dialogue in Tokyo in early October, the bilateral finance ministers meeting followed in mid-October, and South Korea's National Security Adviser Kim Kwan-jin met Japanese counterpart Yachi Shotaro in late October. Perhaps the development that attracted the most attention was a set of consultations regarding comfort women/sex slaves. The first round of talks for this particular period (the fourth overall since starting in April) occurred in September in Tokyo; the second round was in late November in Seoul. It was not entirely clear what the outcome of these talks was beyond reclarifying issues for each side. For example, [The Korea Times](#) reported that according to a Korean official, Tokyo had insisted that the "comfort girl" statue (also known as the "peace statue") located in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul, be removed.

The challenge, of course, is reconciling the (mis)perception that the topic is narrow and singular with the fact that there are actually multiple battle fronts: nomenclature (comfort women vs. sex slaves), compensation, commemorative statues/monuments, the overall narrative (the direct or indirect role of the Japanese military, coercion vs. non-coercion etc.), and the matter of an apology (what does a sincere apology look like and has the Tokyo government already performed such an act?), to name just a few. Meanwhile, there were multiple incidents that detracted from the spirit of the consultations. As an example, the Japanese government requested that Radhika Coomaraswamy, former UN special rapporteur on violence against women (1994-2003), revise her [1996 report](#) that cited Yoshida Seiji, who had recounted his stories from the wartime where he would go on "slave raids" and round-up women for "comfort women" duties. As early as 1992, the authenticity of Yoshida's accounts were contested (see David E. Sanger, "[Japanese Veteran Presses Wartime-Brothel Issue](#)," *The New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1992) but it was only recently that the *Asahi Shimbun* retracted an article on the issue that relied on Yoshida's testimony (see [Comparative Connections, Vol. 16, no. 2](#)).

To make matters more complicated, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* released an [editorial](#) carrying an apology for using the nomenclature of "sex slave" and "other inappropriate expressions" in "a total of 97 articles from February 1992 to January 2013" in the *Daily Yomiuri* (DY, now *The*

Japan News). The following is an excerpt from the apology, which would make for an awkward ice-breaker at a cocktail party:

The expression “comfort women” was difficult to understand for non-Japanese who did not have knowledge of the subject. Therefore the DY, based on an inaccurate perception and using foreign news agencies’ reports as reference, added such explanations as “women who were forced into sexual slavery” that did not appear in The Yomiuri Shimbun’s original stories... There were also 12 articles that did not use “sex slave” or other words with that meaning, but defined comfort women in such terms as “forced into prostitution by the military,” as if coercion by the Japanese government or the army was an objective fact.

Awkward, because the statement contains certain assumptions that are contestable: for one, the idea that the differing levels of understanding of the expression is determined by nationality (Japanese and non-Japanese). It is not only dangerous to assume that all Japanese are naturally attuned to foreign policy issues, but also that Koreans, Chinese, and those from the Philippines (which would all fall under the non-Japanese category) would not be as aware, especially considering their status of “victimhood.” One could also argue that there is an undeniable hubris in treating the line separating “facts” from mere “perception” as so obvious. The meticulous listing of all the publications that contain the “inappropriate expressions” crowding the bottom of the posting creates the notion that settling on what is truth is as easy as the expunging that comes with routine “archival cleaning/re-alignment.”

In the end, one cannot help but recall the image of a typical cinematic police-room interrogation with this incident – the suspect (DY) being forced into a confession (apology) by the police (government?) after being pressured by some threats to X. Perhaps what this X entails and why *Yomiuri* buckled if/when it did is the more interesting piece of the story than the fact that this happened at all. In the ideal world, one is tempted to interpret this action as simply part of a larger and much more clever performance to actually invite more international attention (which it may have already accomplished) and poke fun at the irony of the situation – much like *The Onion* – but given that Japan’s new state secrets protection law kicked-in on Dec. 10 amid concerns from both within and outside Japan, the ideal world remains just that: ideal.

A sucker’s payoff?

In game theory, there the “sucker’s payoff,” a term used to describe a situation where cooperation by a participant coincides with defection by the other player(s). Scholars have identified this fear of exploitation as a cause for low contributions to public goods. When it comes to North Korea, however, it is not clear how to determine what constitutes a bad bet – unless you stubbornly insist that any game (negotiation) is a bad bet. Hence, when dealing with the North there is always the risk of becoming the “sucker.” Japan may soon find itself on this path of self-doubt.

There was a sense of progress in relations between Japan and North Korea given the multiple opportunities for interaction between Tokyo and Pyongyang during the past months. Recall in the previous edition (*Comparative Connections* Vol. 16, no. 2) we noted that Japan had made inroads with North Korea on talks regarding the abduction of Japanese citizens, and that not only had Japan eased sanctions in response to the North’s cooperation, but had also been promised a

report on the abduction cases to be released in September. When September came and Song Il Ho, the North's chief negotiator for normalization of talks with Japan, sat across from Japanese counterpart Ihara Junichi, it was [reported](#) that Song declared that the release date was undecided.

Soon after, Ho Jong Man, the head of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Chongryon*) returned from a one-month stay in Pyongyang. His visit garnered much media attention since it was his first trip to the North in eight years – facilitated by Japan's easing of travel restrictions in July – and it was also during a period of speculation regarding the whereabouts of the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who had been off-the-radar for more than a month. Only later did it become clear that there was no meeting between Ho and Kim Jong Un, but also that Kim had not met any disastrous fate. A report by the South Korean National Intelligence Service (NIS) attributed the conspicuous absence of Kim to ankle surgery.

In late October, a Japanese delegation led by Ihara Junichi traveled to Pyongyang for a four-day visit in the hopes of receiving an update on the investigation into the abductions, but again came back empty-handed. By November, Japan cosponsored a UN resolution ([A/RES/68/183](#)) condemning North Korea's violation of human rights violations and seeking to refer the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was approved by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on Nov. 18. The resolution includes a paragraph dedicated to the abduction issue, which clearly shows Japan's expectations for some tangible outcome from the initial consultations in May and thereafter. In response, North Korea submitted a [letter](#) to the UN Security Council (UNSC) that includes an annex with a statement by the spokesperson for the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which accuses Japan (and the EU) of being “servants for adopting the resolution, disclosing themselves that their much touted efforts for human rights were not for a genuine improvement of human rights but for the pursuance of the United States hostile policy towards the DPRK and the sycophancy towards it.” This is relatively toned-down language compared to the [statement](#) released by the DPRK National Defense Commission (NDC), which states that “Japan should bear in mind that if it continues behaving as now, it will disappear from the world map for good, not just remaining a near yet distant country.” As of December, Japan is still waiting on the abduction report.

Fishery disputes

An interesting [article](#) appeared in the Nov. 27 *Asahi Shimbun* about squid poaching by North Korean fishing vessels in Japanese waters. According to the report, the Japanese Fisheries Agency and the Coast Guard confirmed that the number of incidents tripled in 2014, with 400 boats in Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) between January and November, up from approximately 15 in 2011, 80 in 2012, and 110 in 2013. There is no fisheries agreement between Tokyo and Pyongyang and North Korea is not yet a party to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which complicates issues of jurisdiction.

Japan and South Korea also experienced disputes regarding fisheries. Ever since South Korea announced a ban in September 2013 on roughly 50 fishery products from multiple Japanese prefectures due to concerns about radiation contamination, Japan has repeatedly called for the ban to be lifted. On top of releasing [provisional translations](#) of reports that detail the contamination of fishery products from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, Japan has

allowed a team of South Korean radiation experts and food safety inspectors to collect data in Japan and review the lifting of current restrictions on food imports.

Tis the season for Korean FTAs (except with Japan)

Amid [reports](#) that bilateral trade between Seoul and Tokyo decreased for the third consecutive year due to “frosty relations” and the weak Japanese yen against the Korean won, Seoul has been looking elsewhere for trade partners. In November, Seoul announced a *de facto* final deal in its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks with China and a separate deal with New Zealand. In December, it concluded FTA negotiations with Vietnam at a signing ceremony in Busan; the same month, Columbia’s Congress approved the FTA that it signed with Seoul back in 2013, the Korea-Canada FTA was ratified, and the Korea-Australia FTA came into effect. Reserving judgment for the time being about Seoul’s objectives, it was clear that engagement with Japan was not particularly high on its list of priorities, with the exception of punitive actions like import bans on fish products or duties of up to 21.79 percent on ethanalamine imports (levied against the US, Japan, Malaysia, and Thailand) that was announced by Seoul’s trade commission in September. Meanwhile, talks on the region’s trilateral trade framework continued: the fifth round of the China-Japan-Korea FTA negotiations were held in Beijing in early September, with the sixth such meeting in November in Tokyo. With that said, nothing substantive (to the extent that it would really push the talks forward) came out of those meetings.

Some thoughts on early 2015

In the coming year, and in particular the first four months, we are likely to see continued sparring over a number of issues between Japan and South Korea. The issue of comfort women/sex slaves, commemorative statues, maritime disputes, and the overall poor tenor of Japan-ROK relations is not going away anytime soon. This is especially so given Prime Minister Abe’s resounding victory in the December elections. As Abe continues his attempts to revive the Japanese economy while simultaneously ending all doubts about Japan’s international ambitions and to reassert its status as a “first tier nation,” it is quite likely that he will bump heads with South Korean leaders who view his attempts in a different light. Whether both countries can find a *modus vivendi* that involves moving past these issues and focusing on the future remains a laudable, if as yet unlikely, goal.

Chronology of Japan-Korea Relations September – December 2014

Sept. 1-5, 2014: Fifth round of negotiations on a China-Japan-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) are held in Beijing.

Sept. 11, 2014: South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Lee Kyung-soo, Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Sugiyama Shinsuke, and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin meet in Seoul to discuss the state of trilateral relationship.

Sept. 14, 2014: South Korea's Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se meets Japanese Ambassador to Seoul Bessho Koro. Yun also meets officials from the Japan-Korea Cultural Foundation a few days later to discuss ways to promote cultural exchange between the two countries.

Sept. 16, 2014: Japan, China, and South Korean finance ministers meet for first time in two years on sidelines of G-20 in Australia.

Sept. 18, 2014: The 16th bilateral meeting of the directors general for cultural affairs takes place in Tokyo. This is the first such meeting in four years.

Sept. 19, 2014: Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's goodwill envoy Mori Yoshiro delivers a personal message to President Park Geun-hye, urging the leader to engage in top-level talks.

Sept. 19, 2014: Ihara Junichi, director general of Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau at Japan's Foreign Ministry, meets Lee Sang-deok, director general of Northeast Asian Affairs Bureau of the Korean Foreign Ministry to resume talks on the comfort women/sex slaves issue in Tokyo. The first round of talks began April (Seoul) with the second and third rounds occurring in May (Tokyo) and July (Seoul), respectively.

Sept. 20-21, 2014: Finance ministers of China, Japan, and South Korea meet and agree to greater trilateral cooperation on the sidelines of the G-20 Finance and Central Bank Governors meeting in Cairns, Australia.

Sept. 23, 2014: Ultra-right wing group, *Zaitokukai*, clashes with anti-racism groups in Tokyo.

Sept. 24, 2014: US Congressional Research Service (CRS) releases a [report](#) on US-Japan relations, containing a grim assessment of Japan's ties with South Korea.

Sept. 24, 2014: South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yong meets Japanese counterpart Saiki Akitaka in Tokyo for a strategic dialogue for the first time in nearly two years.

Sept. 25, 2014: South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio meet on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Sept. 26, 2014: South Korea's trade commission announces that it will levy punitive duties of up to 21.79 percent on ethanalamine imports from four countries including Japan.

Sept. 29, 2014: Japan and North Korea hold talks in Shenyang as part of the negotiations over the abduction of Japanese nationals.

Sept. 30, 2014: Leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Kaieda Banri urges Prime Minister Abe to denounce demonstrations, particularly by ultra-nationalists groups in Japan.

Oct. 1, 2014: Tokyo and Seoul hold a strategic dialogue in Tokyo to discuss issues including the denuclearization of North Korea.

Oct. 6, 2014: Coalition of the Korean Federation for Environmental Movements and the South Korean chapter of the Friends of the Earth International urge the South Korean government to maintain its import ban on Japanese fishery products due to concerns of contamination.

Oct. 7, 2014: *Japan Times* reports that Ho Jong Man, head of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Chongryon*), has concluded a one-month trip to Pyongyang.

Oct. 8, 2014: South Korea's prosecutors indict Kato Tatsuya, the head of the Seoul bureau of Japan's *Sankei Shimbun*, on charges of defamation.

Oct. 10, 2014: Japan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Aso Taro, meets South Korea's Finance Minister Choi Kyung-hwan on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) meeting in Washington. This marks the first such bilateral meeting in almost two years.

Oct. 14, 2014: Seoul announces that it has extended a travel ban on Kato Tatsuya.

Oct. 16, 2014: Japanese government calls for revisions to the 1996 UN report condemning the comfort women/sex slaves issues in light of the recent retraction by *Asahi Shimbun* that relied on questionable wartime accounts by Yoshida Seiji.

Oct. 17, 2014: ROK Foreign Ministry denounces PM Abe's ritual offering to Yasukuni Shrine.

Oct. 21, 2014: South Korea's National Security Advisor Kim Kwan-jin meets Japanese counterpart Yachi Shotaro in Seoul.

Oct. 21, 2014: Mayor of Osaka Hashimoto Toru and Sakurai Makoto, leader of *Zaitokukai*, meet for an "exchange of ideas" at Osaka city hall amidst concerns of rising hate speech.

Oct. 21, 2014: Representatives from China, Japan, and South Korea gather in Beijing to discuss issues of cyber security.

Oct. 24, 2014: President Park greets a Japanese delegation headed by Nukaga Fukushima at the presidential office in Seoul.

Oct. 27, 2014: PM Abe meets South Korea's National Assembly speaker Chung Ui-hwa in Tokyo. According to *Kyodo News*, Abe expresses hopes for a one-on-one meeting with President Park in the near future.

Oct. 29-31, 2014: 2014 Seoul Defense Dialogue (SDD) is held in Seoul. *Yonhap News* reports that South Korea's Vice Defense Minister Baek Seung-joo meets Tokuchi Hideshi, Japan's vice defense minister for international affairs, and expresses concern over Japan's assertions of the right to collective self-defense and exercising its rights in situations on the Korean Peninsula.

Oct. 29, 2014: Japanese delegation headed by Ihara Junichi, director general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, travels to Pyongyang in hopes of receiving an update from the North about progress on the abduction issue.

Oct. 30, 2014: Seoul court rules that Japanese company Nichi-Fujikoshi Corp. must pay 80-100 million won (\$75,800-94,800) to 31 former laborers and their family members as compensation for forced labor during World War II.

Nov. 2, 2014: *Yonhap* reports that Japanese lenders represent more than half the market (56.2 percent) for small private lending in South Korea, despite their higher interest rates.

Nov. 3, 2014: Group of family members of Koreans drafted into the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II file a lawsuit with the South Korean government for compensation.

Nov. 4, 2014: South Korean government [announces](#) cancellation of plans to establish a safety support center on Dokdo, claiming “a further review is necessary in terms of safety management, environment, and the scenery of the cultural property.” The decision incurs a backlash from Korean public amid concerns of its ramifications for Japan-Korea diplomatic relations.

Nov. 5, 2014: Figures released by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) show that Japan-South Korea bilateral trade has decreased for three consecutive years.

Nov. 6, 2014: *JoongAng Daily* reports that the South Korean Foreign Ministry has rejected remarks by Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide in response to Seoul’s decision to scrap plans of a safety support center on Dokdo/Takeshima, which he claimed reflected Japan’s continued sovereignty of the island.

Nov. 6, 2014: Prime Minister Abe delivers a message through Ambassador to Korea Bessho Koro urging President Park to agree to a bilateral summit.

Nov. 7, 2014: *Reuters* quotes Korean central bank chief that South Korea will take action to reduce the impact of the falling yen, which is undercutting South Korean exports.

Nov. 10, 2014: Japan denies entry to Lee Seung-chul, a well-known South Korean singer, in retaliation for his performance on Dokdo/Takeshima in August, according to a release by the singer’s management.

Nov. 10, 2014: Prime Minister Abe and President Park talk when they sit beside one another at the APEC dinner hosted by China’s President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Nov. 23, 2014: *The Japan Times* reports that North Korea has denounced a recent UN resolution that condemns Pyongyang for human rights violations, claiming that it will retaliate against Japan, one of the bill’s sponsors.

Nov. 23, 2014: Japan, China, and South Korea health ministers meet in Beijing.

Nov. 24, 2014: Tokyo lodges protest against Seoul for military drill carried out by the South Korean military near the waters of Dokdo/Takeshima.

Nov. 24, 2014: Sixth round of China, Japan, and South Korea FTA talks are held in Tokyo.

Nov. 27, 2014: Preliminary hearings begin for Kato Tatsuya, head of the Seoul bureau of the *Sankei Shimbun*, who was indicted over article about President Park's whereabouts on the day the *Sewol* ferry sank.

Nov. 27, 2014: Lee Sang-deok, director general for Northeast Asia affairs at the South Korean Foreign Ministry, and Japanese counterpart Ihara Junichi meet in Seoul for consultations.

Nov. 27, 2014: *Asahi Shimbun* reports that figures for North Korean squid poaching in Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has increased by three-fold in 2014.

Nov. 28, 2014: *Yomiuri Shimbun* releases an apology for using the term "sex slaves" for women who were forced to work in brothels operated by the Japanese military during World War II.

Nov. 28, 2014: Japan, China, and South Korea trade ministers meet in Tokyo.

Dec. 3, 2014: *The Japan Times* announces that Japan's National Police Agency describes the anti-Korean group, *Zaitokukai*, as a potential threat to law and order in its annual security report, claiming the group is "one of the rightist civic groups operating based on radical nationalistic and anti-foreigner assertions."

Dec. 9, 2014: Supreme Court in Japan dismisses appeal by *Zaitokukai* of ruling that it engaged in hate speech against a Korean school in Kyoto, which finalizes a ruling that banned the group from demonstrating near the school and ordered it to pay compensation to the school's operator.

Dec. 10, 2014: Japan urges North Korea to release an update of its investigation into the abduction of Japanese citizens.

Dec. 15, 2014: Court hearing for Kato Tatsuya begins.

Dec. 15, 2014: South Korean experts arrive in Japan to start investigation into food safety.

Dec. 17, 2014: South Korea's Vice Defense Minister Baek Seung-joo and Japanese counterpart Tokuchi Hideshi meet for talks in Seoul.

Dec. 20, 2014: Japan's *NHK* reports on the findings of the annual poll conducted by the Japanese government on views of the Japanese people toward their neighbors. A total of 66.4 percent reported no affinity toward South Koreans, an increase of 8.4 percent from 2013.

Dec. 29, 2014: United States, Japan, and South Korea sign a trilateral agreement on intelligence sharing about North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.