

Comparative Connections

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Regional Overview

Déjà Vu All Over Again with North Korea

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The last quarter ended with the international community playing “will they, or won’t they” over North Korea’s threatened missile test; they did! This quarter it’s *déjà vu* all over again, this time concerning a threatened nuclear weapons test. Following the UN Security Council’s surprisingly tough response to the missile tests, efforts were made to jump-start the negotiation process at this summer’s ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting. This attempt proved fruitless, however, as North Korea’s foreign minister refused to come to an “informal” six-party meeting, despite the opportunity to meet face-to-face with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (who, despite genuine crises in the Middle East, made the extra effort to attend this year’s ministerial meeting). Elsewhere in Asia, ASEAN foreign ministers held their 39th annual Ministerial and numerous 10+1 post-ministerial talks (including a productive session with Secretary Rice), along with an ASEAN Plus Three meeting with their counterparts from China, Japan, and the ROK. Meanwhile, the democratic process continued to witness ups and (mostly) downs in Asia, as the military coup in Thailand reminds us of just how fragile the democratic process remains in Asia.

Five vs. one: finally, but for how long?

North Korea’s early July missile launches resulted in a rare instance of the international community speaking with one voice in condemning North Korea’s provocative behavior. It had long been Washington’s hope that the Six-Party Talks would provide a five vs. one forum in which it could bring pressure against Pyongyang. In truth, it seldom worked that way, with the U.S., perhaps more often than North Korea, being seen as the one (or, at best, two, with Japan normally by its side) as China, South Korea, and Russia kept calling for more “flexibility” from Washington.

All this changed, at least temporarily, in the wake of the missile tests. Pyongyang’s actions helped to accomplish in 10 days what U.S. officials had failed to accomplish in almost four years of diplomacy: a unanimous United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that condemned the July 5 (Fourth of July in the U.S.) missile launches and demanded that North Korea “suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programs.”

UNSCR 1695 was no watered-down resolution. In addition to demanding an end to all ballistic missile activities, the resolution also “requires” all member states to prevent missile-related goods and technology from being transferred to the North and also “requires” all member states to “prevent the procurement” of such goods from North Korea, while banning the “transfer of any financial resources in relation to DPRK’s missile or WMD [weapons of mass destruction] programmes.” While the terms “embargo” or “sanctions” were not used, the intent is crystal clear: no sales of missiles or missile-related technology to North Korea and no purchases of such weapon systems from them as well.

While the missile launches provided the catalyst for UNSC Resolution 1695, its reach was more comprehensive. It specifically addressed North Korea’s nuclear weapons ambitions, “deploring . . . its stated pursuit of nuclear weapons in spite of its Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT] and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguard obligations.” It also reaffirms the May 2004 UNSC Resolution 1540, which obligates all member states, under Chapter 7 which makes measures enforceable by armed action if necessary, to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated delivery systems.

The resolution also expressed the UNSC’s “grave concern about DPRK’s indication of possible additional launches” and “underlined, in particular to the DPRK, the need to show restraint and refrain from any action that would aggravate tension.” It further noted that the UNSC “decides to remain seized of the matter,” suggesting that even stronger action could be forthcoming in the face of future acts of provocation by North Korea.

For its part, Pyongyang strongly denounced the UNSC resolution, calling the action “completely unreasonable and brigandish behavior.” Nonetheless, while an official Foreign Ministry statement defiantly stated that the DPRK “will not be bound to [UNSC 1695] in the least,” there has been no subsequent testing to date . . . at least, not yet!

Instead, Pyongyang found a new provocation – very visibly making preparations in mid-August for a suspected nuclear weapons test, according to U.S. and Russian intelligence sources. Despite a new round of warnings not to do so (and assurances to a friendly American interlocutor that it would not), Pyongyang launched another “will they or won’t they?” round of debate on Oct. 3, by announcing that it “will, in the future, conduct a nuclear test.” [The debate was short-lived; on Oct. 9 Pyongyang announced its first nuclear weapons test.]

UNSC Resolution 1695 also called for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and “strongly urges” the North to return to the talks “without preconditions.” This was not meant to be, despite strong endorsements of this dialogue process at virtually every international gathering during the past quarter and an attempt by Washington to convene an informal six-party session in Kuala Lumpur along the ARF sidelines.

Six minus one plus five

Previously in these pages, we have called for the setting of a date certain for the next round of Six-Party Talks, making it clear to Pyongyang that the other five would meet in “Six Minus One” talks if it refused to attend. This came close to happening at the July 28 ASEAN Regional Forum ministerial meeting in Malaysia when Washington proposed that the foreign ministers of all six countries, who would already be present in Kuala Lumpur, hold an “informal” session (so dubbed because the formal sessions are hosted by China in Beijing). Pyongyang promptly refused, with a Foreign Ministry spokesman telling the press “If the Americans want to see the Six-Party Talks quickly, then go tell them quickly to remove the financial sanctions” – a reference to the financial crackdown instituted by Washington against DPRK counterfeiting and money-laundering activities last fall.

The other five parties decided to meet anyway, but in a five plus five setting – with Washington inviting Australia, Canada, and ARF host Malaysia, and Beijing adding Indonesia and New Zealand – for a “general discussion of security issues in Northeast Asia,” reportedly after Seoul and Beijing made it clear that they would not participate in a “Six Minus One” session focused on North Korea *per se*. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill described the Five Plus Five (5+5) meeting as “sort of general discussion of what can be done to develop security structures in Northeast Asia,” noting that “it’s not intended to reach any conclusion; it’s intended to be a good discussion.” Hill said that there was no fixed agenda but noted that “if somebody raises the [DPRK] missile launches, and I can assure you that someone will mention the missile launches, that will be discussed.”

All parties agreed that this new forum was not a substitute for the Six-Party Talks, which Secretary Rice said the U.S. was ready to resume “at any time, at any place, and without any conditions.” However, she also saw a need for “robust dialogue” on Northeast Asia security issues and hoped this new grouping could “begin the basis for such cooperation,” calling for “a new regional dialogue that can help us overcome historical tensions, help us to increase security, and help us to lay a better basis for enhanced prosperity throughout the region.”

Five plus five minus a few

Secretary Rice noted in Kuala Lumpur that the annual September UN General Assembly meetings in New York might provide the setting for another round of 5+5 Talks and Washington set out to make this happen. Not surprisingly, North Korea again opted out, with its Deputy Foreign Minister Choe Su-hon choosing instead to use his General Assembly bully pulpit to condemn Washington’s “vicious, hostile policy,” in a performance rivaling his fellow “axis of evil” compatriot, Iran President Mahmood Ahmadinejad (although both fell short of the new standard set by Venezuela President Hugo Chavez, who appeared to be auditioning for Saddam Hussein’s old spot in the club). Of note, the official North Korean version of Choe’s speech referred to his own

nation as the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) but reverted to its old form by referring to the Republic of Korea exclusively as south Korea (with a lower case “s”).

Meanwhile, Secretary Hill quipped that the New York second round of Five Plus Five dialogue “turned out to be the Six Minus One Plus Two Plus Three Minus Two” talks as China and Russia elected not to participate this time. (Malaysia also skipped the meeting, with the Philippines joining Indonesia as the other ASEAN representative.) China’s absence was particularly unfortunate, as Hill noted that “several [unnamed] participants commented that they thought China should be doing more” to pressure Pyongyang to come back to the Six-Party Talks.

As in Kuala Lumpur, Hill stressed that the objective was “not to have an immediate sort of actionable outcome or something; it’s simply to have information exchange.” Among the pieces of information exchanged were details on the sanctions recently imposed by Australia and Japan on North Korea in accordance with UNSCR 1695; Washington has prepared its own new package of sanctions but is looking to others to lead the way on this issue. Secretary Rice reportedly suggested that the next 5+5 session take place in Hanoi in mid-November, along the sidelines of the annual Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting. It will be interesting to see if China and Russia return to the group; North Korea is not an APEC participant.

Meanwhile, back at the ARF

Many hoped that there would at least be an opportunity for some one-on-one diplomacy between Secretary Rice and DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun along the sidelines of the ARF, but Assistant Secretary Hill made it clear that this was not in the cards: “We have zero plans to meet with the North Koreans,” Hill asserted, saying the opportunity for a meeting was there, but only in the six-party context, which Pyongyang had refused. “We do not have any intention of engaging them bilaterally until they are back in the [six-party] diplomatic game,” Hill firmly stated, since this would allow Pyongyang “essentially to jettison the six-party process.”

The ARF Chairman’s Statement called on the six parties to resume their dialogue “without preconditions.” All ministers “emphasized that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is essential” and reaffirmed support for the Sept. 19, 2005 Joint Statement on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Most ministers “expressed concern over the test-firing of missiles by the DPRK on July 5, 2006 and believed that such tests could have adverse repercussions on peace, stability, and security in the region.” In this regard, the ministers also “urged” Pyongyang to “reestablish its moratorium on missile testing.” Minister Paek argued strenuously against any reference to the missile tests, reportedly threatening that “we may reconsider whether to stay in ARF” if such a statement appeared.

It's not all about Korea!

The focus on Korea and the side meetings caused the 13th annual ASEAN Regional Forum meeting itself to be largely overshadowed. In truth, nothing very newsworthy occurred. The ministers “reaffirmed the importance” of ASEAN’s Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and welcomed Australia’s accession and France’s decision to accede – the U.S. remains one of the few remaining holdouts. They “condemned all acts of terror, violence, and destruction” with some ministers also expressing concern over the “disproportionate, indiscriminate, and excessive use of force” in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The ARF Chairman’s Statement also repeated, essentially verbatim, the comments contained in the July 25 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Joint Communiqué regarding Myanmar, expressing “concern on the pace of the national reconciliation process and hope to see tangible progress that would lead to peaceful transition to democracy in the near future.” The ministers also “reiterated their calls for the early release of those placed under detention and effective dialogue with all parties concerned.” On the other hand, they also noted that Myanmar “needs both time and political space to deal with its many and complex challenges.” While this statement was a bit meeker than some earlier ones regarding Myanmar, Secretary Rice applauded it as “an important evolution of the ASEAN position.”

In other news, Bangladesh was admitted as the ARF’s 26th participant and the ministers agreed to the admission of Sri Lanka as the 27th participant, effective at next year’s ministerial in the Philippines.

A (very) few words on the EAS

The ARF and 5+5 sessions were preceded by the 39th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM), which noted the “progress made in moving toward the realization of the ASEAN Community by the year 2020.” The ministers “reaffirmed the roles of ASEAN as the primary driving force of the ARF process and the ARF as the primary forum in enhancing political and security dialogue and cooperation in the wide Asia-Pacific region.” The latter admission was significant in that some have argued that the East Asia Summit (EAS) was now destined to play that role.

In the Joint Communiqué, the EAS was identified as “an open, inclusive, transparent and outward-looking forum [that] would serve as a platform for dialogue on broad strategic, political, and economic issues of common interest to promote peace and economic prosperity in East Asia.” This “Leaders-led Summit” was heralded as “an important event of historical significance” that would promote community building and be “an integral part of the evolving regional architecture.”

ASEAN remains in the driver's seat

At the AMM and ASEAN Plus Three (A+3) meeting that followed, it was made clear that A+3 would remain the “main vehicle” for East Asia community building and that ASEAN would remain “the driving force” behind the A+3. Discussions are already underway for a Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation, and an accompanying Work Plan, to be issued at the 2007 commemoration of the 10th anniversary of A+3 cooperation.

The ASEAN ministers also called on the United Nations to support the ASEAN candidate, Thai Deputy Prime Minister Surakiat Sathirathai, for the post of United Nations Secretary General. Even before the Thai coup, however, it appeared that another Asian candidate, ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon had the inside track for the job.

Finally, as expected, the Philippines was elected as the incoming Chair of the 40th ASEAN Standing Committee with Singapore as the vice chair. Alphabetically speaking, it was supposed to have been Myanmar's turn but recall at last year's AMM Yangon agreed to skip its turn so it could “focus its full attention on the ongoing national reconciliation and democratization process.” Clearly, more “focus” is needed.

ASEM stumbles into a second decade

While Myanmar remains the odd man out in Asia, it was permitted to be the odd man in when the Europeans and Asians met for their sixth biannual summit in Helsinki in September, marking the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) 10th anniversary. ASEM was intended to strengthen the third leg of global relations – the Asia-Europe axis – but it has had marginal political utility despite growing economic ties between the two regions and the group's claim to represent 38 countries. The primary culprit has been Myanmar: European leaders object to the ruling junta's reprehensible human rights policies and refuse to meet its representatives, while Asians are troubled by the idea of Europeans dictating who can speak for the region.

This year, Finland, the European chair, broke with precedent and extended visas to Myanmar's representatives, arguing that a face-to-face meeting would allow Europe to send a clear and unambiguous message. The results were unimpressive: Myanmar's Foreign Minister U Nyan Win parried complaints about his government's human rights policies and indifference to democratic governance by demanding time to reform in a way that is compatible with his country's particular circumstances.

After that bracing exchange, the meeting agenda covered common threats ranging from globalization to terrorism. More substantively, discussion focused on energy issues, and specifically, on ways to promote energy efficiency and how to prevent global warming; the governments agreed in theory to extend the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 when it is scheduled to expire. The ASEM Chairman's Statement called for “the widest possible cooperation” to fight climate change; ASEM members are “committed to enhancing energy efficiency and scaling up new and renewable energy, adapted to local

circumstances.” That must be balanced against developing countries’ “legitimate priority needs” to use economic growth to better the lives of their citizens and to reduce poverty. In other words, while Asia’s developing nations acknowledged the global threat posed by climate change, they remain reluctant to make commitments that might slow their development. In their view, global warming is a problem created by developed nations, and one for which they bear the primary responsibility to respond.

The Chairman’s Statement called on Pyongyang to return to the Six-Party Talks, criticized the July missile tests, and urged the country to address “humanitarian concerns,” including the kidnapping of Japanese and South Korean citizens. Iran was told to suspend its uranium enrichment program and to resume negotiations on a permanent solution to that nuclear standoff. More generally, the statement “emphasized the importance of multilateral efforts for strengthening disarmament and the nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. [Members] stressed the importance of universalization, implementation and compliance with the international disarmament and nonproliferation treaties, including the need to implement UNSC Resolution 1540/2004.”

The Chairman’s Statement also “took note of the EU’s intention to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and looked forward to the EU’s participation in the rapidly evolving regional cooperation...” While Asian nations no doubt appreciate the support for the document that serves as the cornerstone for regional integration, the real meaning of this move is unclear. In theory, it opens the door to European participation in the East Asia Summit; in fact, the twice-yearly EU summit is held at the same time, so EU leaders won’t be heading to Asia for the meeting. It may increase pressure on Washington to accede to TAC (if anyone in the U.S. is paying attention), but U.S. and European military interests in the region diverge significantly enough to dismiss the EU move. We continue to believe that is a mistake.

APEC, active as ever

There was the usual lengthy list of meetings associated with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Among the highlights was the 13th APEC finance ministers’ meeting, which was held in Hanoi, Sept. 7-8. The joint ministerial statement included the usual boilerplate: the elimination of global imbalances, to be achieved by higher consumption in Asia and greater savings in the U.S., more exchange rate flexibility, and continuing reforms to promote liberalization.

APEC senior officials met 10 days later to hammer out the agenda for the 8th APEC Joint Ministerial Meeting and the 13th APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting, which will be held Nov. 15-16 and Nov. 18-19, respectively. Topping their concerns were the collapse of the Doha Round of world trade talks, the role of regional trade agreements (RTAs) – in particular, their consistency with global trade rules and the development of model measures to guide future negotiations of RTAs – and a draft action program on trade facilitation to reduce transaction costs by 5 percent between 2006-2010.

After the meeting, Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister and SOM III Chairman Le Cong Phung told reporters that members had reached a consensus on the need to reform APEC to make it more effective and flexible. He also underscored continuing divisions among the group, noting that several issues had not been resolved at the meeting and would be taken up at the next SOM, scheduled for Nov. 12-13, and by the leaders, if necessary, when they meet Nov. 18-19.

Democracy in action and undermined

Democracy was both at work and undermined this quarter. In Tokyo, there was a peaceful leadership transition. In Thailand it occurred by force, even if no shots were fired. In between, democratically elected leaders in Taiwan and the Philippines found themselves under increasing political fire; in the latter case the possibility of future coup attempts is ever-present. Myanmar, as already discussed, has experienced no movement in its "democratization process." On the other hand, the first rumblings of democracy are being felt in Vietnam.

Abe seeks better relations with China. In Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro stepped down (as planned) as president of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo won the election to succeed him – as anticipated. After prevailing in the party ballot, he was selected prime minister by the government coalition that is headed by the LDP.

Abe has an impressive political lineage. His father was a foreign minister, his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke served as prime minister and was a strong supporter of the alliance with the U.S. The new prime minister is said to have learned his politics on his grandfather's knee. He is a conservative nationalist, but a pragmatic and principled politician. In his first policy speech, he called on Japan to be a "country that is trusted and loved" by the entire world. He pledged to pursue "assertive diplomacy," and vowed to improve ties with Japan's neighbors, China in particular. As the quarter ended, the new prime minister was scheduled to meet ROK President Roh Moo-hyun in early October and negotiations were under way for a similar meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. The prospect of visits to Yasukuni continue to throw a shadow over both relationships, but Abe appears committed to finding some resolution to this problem that does not look like a concession to Beijing or Seoul.

Chen remains under fire. In Taiwan, extraparliamentary practices got the most attention. President Chen Shui-bian's problems have intensified this quarter. Allegations of corruption continue to swirl around his family. Prosecutors cleared his wife of receiving department store vouchers in exchange for favors, but son-in-law Chao Chien-ming was indicted on charges of insider trading. While there is no indication that President Chen is involved in either of those scandals, allegations of mishandling presidential funds have come considerably closer to scoring hits. In response to the tawdry atmosphere, Shih Ming-teh, a former Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) activist with considerable credibility within and beyond the ruling party – a result of the more than 25 years he spent in jail when Taiwan was under martial law – organized street

protests to force Chen to resign. He launched demonstrations Sept. 9 with a sit-in in front of the Presidential Palace. Tens of thousands of people later took to the streets at his urging, demanding the president's resignation. On Sept 15, at least 300,000 people rallied in Taipei to demand Chen's resignation. Shih has continued his drive to force the president's resignation, even embarking on an island-wide bus tour to rally support.

While the protests are unlikely to have the desired effect, they will add to the fervent in Taiwan politics. More troubling still, the pressure on President Chen could prod him to take provocative action vis-a-vis cross-Strait relations to regain the initiative in domestic politics. His most recent attempt to do just this – a Sept. 28 declaration that “Taiwan is Taiwan, China is China, and Taiwan and China are two totally different countries,” drew only the most perfunctory of complaints from Washington and Beijing, showing just how marginalized the Taiwan president has become.

Thaksin's 'interim' government ousted. Uncertainties about Thailand's political future were swept away – or compounded, depending on the point of view – by a coup on Sept. 19, when Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin overthrew the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thailand had been rudderless after April 2 election results were overturned by the country's supreme court. A new vote was scheduled for Oct 15, but leading military figures – enjoying, it is rumored, the support of King Bhumipol Adulyadej – had grown frustrated with Thaksin's rule, in particular corruption surrounding his immediate circle. Reports that the prime minister planned to promote cronies in the military, allegedly to help him remain in power, may have been the last straw, prompting Sonthi “to end democracy in order to save it.”

Within two weeks, the junta named a highly regarded former general and member of the King's advisory Privy Council, Surayud Chulanont, as prime minister and unveiled an interim constitution that solidified the military's role in national politics, despite promising that its intervention in national politics would be short and a quick return to civilian rule. Investigations into the former prime minister's business deals were under way – in particular the sale of Shin Corporation, a telecommunications company owned by Thaksin's family, to a Singapore investment company – and his Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais) political party was dissolving.

The U.S. government immediately condemned the coup, calling it “a step backward for democracy,” and a week later suspended \$24 million in military assistance to Thailand, invoking Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Act, which bars certain aid programs to governments that have taken power by force. Washington continues to demand “a swift return to democratic rule ... [and] a handover to civilian authorities as quickly as possible.” Note that it has not insisted on Thaksin's reinstatement!

Neighborhood reactions. Other Asian governments lamented the turn the events, while maintaining their traditional reluctance to be seen as intervening in domestic affairs. In truth, few lamented Thaksin's departure. Thailand's Muslim neighbors, in particular, hoped that the new leaders would be more forthcoming in dealing with domestic problems in Thailand's predominantly Islamic south (and there are preliminary

indications that this will, in fact, be the case). Meanwhile, in Manila, there was some speculation about the coup encouraging military officials there to deal with a similarly nettlesome government, but President Gloria Magapagal-Arroyo has dismissed any concern and there have been no echoes or portents since the coup.

‘Bloc 8406’ calls for democratic reform. While the democratic process has taken a (hopefully temporary) step backward in Thailand and shown no movement at all in Myanmar, there have been some encouraging signs of late in Vietnam. On Aug. 22, a group calling itself Bloc 8406 publicly declared a four-phase proposal for Vietnam’s democratization, including demands for the restoration of civil liberties, the establishment of political parties, the drafting of a new constitution and, finally, democratic elections for a new representative National Assembly.

Bloc 8406 emerged earlier in the year, on April 8, 2006 (hence its name), when 118 aspiring democrats boldly signed their name to a “Manifesto on Freedom and Democracy,” coincident with the Vietnamese Communist Party’s 10th National Congress. While many of the original signatories have been harassed (or worse) – several of its leaders have been arrested with whereabouts currently unknown and a planned online policy magazine, entitled “Freedom and Democracy” was shut down prior to publication – thousands of sympathizers have signed the Manifesto and the group has gained some international recognition and support.

Bloc 8406 is currently focusing on two major upcoming events, the APEC summit to be held in Hanoi in November and the Vietnamese National Assembly elections scheduled for July 2007. Bloc 8406 has initiated a campaign to boycott next year’s elections unless there are reforms to ensure a free and fair vote – independent political parties are currently prohibited and there are strict limitations on the ability of non-Communist Party endorsed individuals to stand for election.

All eyes will be on Hanoi to see how it handles this nascent democratic movement during the lead-up to the APEC Summit and during (and after) the event itself.

In the next quarter

The quarter ended with all eyes firmly focused on North Korea. Pyongyang’s brinkmanship poses severe challenges for the U.S. and all the governments of Northeast Asia, as well as the UN and key pillars of the global nonproliferation order. A North Korean test will rattle relations among the states of East Asia and shake the foundations of the regional security order. It is hard to tell when the aftershocks will end. We will soon know whether the parties understand the stakes. The fallout from Pyongyang’s declared nuclear weapons test will be a hot topic in the new quarter.

Meanwhile, the international community will continue to closely monitor how quickly and seriously the Thai generals honor their pledge to restore Thai democracy and how maturely Vietnam’s leadership handles its own nascent democratic movement when the spotlight shifts to Southeast Asia in mid-November for the APEC Leaders’ meeting – and

presumed next round of 5+5 (give or take a few) Talks, followed by the second East Asia Summit in the Philippines in December.

Regional Chronology

July-September 2006

June 26-July 28, 2006: Eight nations including Japan and South Korea participate in the 20th U.S. *Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2006* exercises.

July 1, 2006: Two U.S. Navy ships dock at Ho Chi Minh City, the fourth U.S. Navy visit to Vietnam since the war ended in 1975.

July 3-8, 2006: President Ozawa Ichiro leads a Democratic Party of Japan delegation to China at the invitation of the Communist Party of China. On July 4, Ozawa meets Chinese President Hu Jintao.

July 5, 2006: North Korea launches seven ballistic missiles – six *Nodong* and *Scud* missiles tests were successful; the one *Taepodong-2* missile launch failed.

July 6, 2006: President Bush consults with Japanese PM Koizumi and Chinese President Hu regarding North Korea missile tests.

July 6, 2006: China and India reopen Nathu La Pass, which has been closed for 44 years, as part of their Expanding Border Trade Agreement from 2003.

July 7, 2006: U.S. and Japan submit a resolution for binding sanctions against North Korea for its missile tests, along with a moratorium on missile tests and a return to Six-Party Talks.

July 7-12, 2006: Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill travels to the region to consult with Six-Party Talk negotiators in Beijing, Seoul, and Tokyo.

July 8-9, 2006: Sixth round of China-Japan consultation on the East China Sea is held in Beijing.

July 10, 2006: Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe says Japan should consider whether Japan's constitution allows Japan to attack North Korea missile bases as an act of self-defense.

July 10-13, 2006: Second round of Korea-U.S. FTA negotiations held in Seoul. The meeting ends a day early after the parties are unable to come to an agreement over pharmaceutical sector.

July 10-15, 2006: PRC Vice Premier Hui Liangyu visits North Korea as head of the goodwill delegation commemorating 45th anniversary of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei is one of the delegates.

July 11-15, 2006: DPRK delegation led by Supreme People's Assembly Vice Chairman Yang Hyong-sop arrives in Beijing for friendship treaty celebrations.

July 11-19, 2006: Indonesian and U.S. Navies began their annual *CARAT* exercises to enhance bilateral cooperation. The 2006 *CARAT* exercises began in Singapore in June and were followed by Thailand and then Indonesia. Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines will follow before the exercises conclude in August.

July 12, 2006: Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe clarifies his comment on a preemptive strike, saying that he was thinking about a scenario in which missiles had already been fired at Japan.

July 12, 2006: During Japan visit, Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou urges Koizumi to take a broader view of history and reconsider visits to Yasukuni.

July 12, 2006: China and Russia introduce UN resolution that condemns the missile tests and calls for a moratorium on missile testing and a return to the Six-Party Talks, but does not call for binding sanctions.

July 12-13, 2006: The 19th Inter-Korean Ministerial talks held in Busan, South Korea.

July 13, 2006: U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. William Fallon begins a four-day visit to Vietnam for military and security discussions, his first in his current post.

July 13-14, 2006: South Korea and the U.S. hold ninth Security Policy Initiative talks.

July 13-16, 2006: Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Namhong pays official visit to China.

July 15, 2006: UN Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 1695 to impose limited sanctions on North Korea. North Korea rejects resolution 45 minutes after vote.

July 15-17, 2006: Group of Eight (G-8) summit held in St. Petersburg, Russia. The U.S. and China have side-meetings to discuss the North Korea nuclear crisis.

July 16, 2006: PRC, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, and the Republic of Congo meet along G-8 sidelines to discuss energy security, epidemic diseases, education, African development, etc.

July 17, 2006: China, Russia, and India hold summit in St. Petersburg.

July 17, 2006: U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. William Fallon pays introductory visit to Cambodia.

July 18-19, 2006: Stuart Levey, U.S. undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, briefs officials in Hanoi on illicit North Korean banking activities in Vietnam.

July 19, 2006: North Korea notifies South Korea that it would stop inter-Korean family reunions in response to the ROK halt of humanitarian aid.

July 19, 2006: Six North Koreans will be granted permanent residency in U.S. for fiscal year 2007 as part of the 2007 Diversity Visa Lottery.

July 23, 2006: ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

July 24, 2006: U.S. and Malaysian navies begin a 10-day *CARAT* exercise involving some 3,000 personnel. The exercise includes land and sea combat and rescue.

July 24, 2006: The Doha Development Agenda negotiations are suspended because gaps between key players remain too wide. WTO Director General Pascal Lamy does not suggest how long the talks would be suspended.

July 24-25, 2006: The 39th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting is held in Kuala Lumpur.

July 24-28, 2006: Secretary of State Rice travels to Asia to attend the ARF in Malaysia.

July 26, 2006: *Yonhap News* reports since February North Korea has asked Asan Hyundai to pay tour fees in euros rather than U.S. dollars.

July 26, 2006: ASEAN Plus Three Senior Officials and Foreign Ministers meetings held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

July 26, 2006: Ad hoc consultations among East Asia Summit senior officials take place in Kuala Lumpur.

July 27, 2006: ASEAN Plus Ones (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Russia, EU, U.S., etc.) are held in Kuala Lumpur. Secretary Rice signs Framework Agreement for Plan of Action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership.

July 28, 2006: Thirteenth ASEAN Regional Forum is held in Kuala Lumpur. Secretary Rice attends.

July 28, 2006: South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, the U.S., Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, and New Zealand hold 5+5 Talks in Kuala Lumpur to discuss North Korea as well as other broader regional security concerns.

Aug. 5, 2006: Chad switches diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing.

Aug. 9, 2006: A *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll shows that half of respondents do not want the next prime minister to visit Yasukuni, marking the first time in three surveys since February that those opposed exceed those in favor.

Aug. 9-10, 2006: Undersecretary of State Paula Dobriansky leads U.S. delegation to the second U.S-China Global Issues Forum in Beijing. On the agenda is clean energy, public health, humanitarian assistance, human trafficking, and other sustainable development issues.

Aug. 10, 2006: Taipei's allies submit annual resolution to UN on Taiwan participation.

Aug. 10-11, 2006: Japan PM Koizumi visits Mongolia.

Aug. 11-26, 2006: Mongolian-U.S. military exercise *Khaan Quest 2006* held in Mongolia is the capstone event for the Global Peace Operations Initiative, which is to address gaps in international peace operations.

Aug. 14, 2006: Ambassador Vershbow says that transferring operation control of armed forces during wartime to South Korea will strengthen the U.S.-Korea alliance.

Aug. 14-21, 2006: The Philippine and U.S. Navies engage in a *CARAT* exercise involving 8,000 Philippine marines and 2,000 U.S. personnel. The exercise includes counterterror and transnational crime scenarios.

Aug. 15, 2006: Japan PM Koizumi visits Yasukuni Shrine and elicits outrage from China and South Korea.

Aug. 16, 2006: Russian coast guard forces fire on a Japanese fishing boat operating in disputed waters, killing one Japanese crewmember. The three other crewmembers are arrested and detained on Sakhalin.

Aug. 17, 2006: *ABC News* reports that U.S. intelligence believes that a North Korea nuclear test is a "real possibility."

Aug. 21-Sept. 1, 2006: U.S. and South Korea hold *Ulchi Focus Lens* exercises across the Korean Peninsula.

Aug. 22, 2006: North Korea threatens to quit the armistice that ended the Korean War over the *Ulchi Focus Lens* exercise and considers the exercise an "act of war."

Aug. 22, 2006: Four-member U.S. team arrives in the Philippines to assist in the cleanup of an oil spill Aug. 11 at the request of the Philippine government.

Aug. 22, 2006: General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party Nong Duc Manh starts an official five-day visit to China. It is agreed to make 2008 the deadline to settle all border disputes between Vietnam and China.

Aug. 22, 2006: Bloc 8406 reform group outlines four-phase plan for Vietnam's democratization.

Aug. 23, 2006: Ninth ROK-Australia Political-Military Dialogue held in Seoul.

Aug. 23, 2006: Thai police arrest some 175 North Korea asylum seekers in Bangkok. None will be repatriated to North Korea without their signed consent.

Aug. 24, 2006: Taiwan Army's commander-in-chief Gen. Hu Chen-pu on a visit to Japan as a tourist attends live-fire drills by the Japanese Self-Defense Force.

Aug. 26, 2006: Kim Jong-il is reported by Japan's *Kyodo News* as having called China and Russia "unreliable," saying that North Korea should overcome the international standoff over its nuclear and missile programs on its own.

Aug. 27, 2006: Some 39 Japanese fishing boats enter Russian-claimed territorial waters near Hokkaido and are chased out by Russian border guard ships after an hour. The Russian Foreign Ministry lodges a complaint with the Japanese Embassy in Moscow.

Aug. 28-31, 2006: PM Koizumi visits Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to seek energy deals.

Aug. 30-31, 2006: ROK chief delegate to the Six-Party Talks Chun Young-woo meets U.S. chief delegate, Assistant Secretary Hill in Washington, D.C.

Sept. 4, 2006: Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian signs the Palau Declaration with six Pacific allies at the conclusion of the first Taiwan-Pacific allies summit in Koror, Palau. The declaration sets up a framework for future cooperation.

Sept. 4-5, 2006: Sixth round of talks on the demarcation of the exclusive economic zone and to set up a reliable system on early notification to conduct maritime mapping between Japan and South Korea held in Seoul.

Sept. 4-12, 2006: Assistant Secretary Hill visits Japan, China, and South Korea to discuss regional and global issues with senior government officials in the three countries. He will also meet with the six-party negotiators to get North Korea back to the table.

Sept. 6, 2006: Two Chinese naval vessels arrive in Pearl Harbor to participate in bilateral communications and passing exercises; later the Chinese ships will travel to California for search and rescue exercises Sept. 20.

Sept. 6, 2006: Taiwan's Executive Yuan adopts act to rename Chiang Kai-shek International Airport as "Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport."

Sept. 6-9, 2006: Third round of ROK-U.S. free trade agreement negotiations take place in Seattle, Washington.

Sept. 7, 2006: Third round of the ROK-Japan Vice Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue held in Seoul to express views on territorial disputes, the North Korea nuclear issue, and the international situation.

Sept. 7, 2006: China appoints new ambassador to DPRK, Liu Xiaoming, a United States expert.

Sept. 7-8, 2006: The 13th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation finance ministers' meeting held in Hanoi.

Sept. 8, 2006: South Korea and Japan agree in principle to a joint survey in the East Sea on radioactive pollution from waste dumped by the former Soviet Union off of Vladivostok.

Sept. 8, 2006: Five Central Asian countries sign a Central Asia nuclear weapons free area treaty in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan.

Sept. 9, 2006: Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement is signed by Japan PM Koizumi and Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Helsinki. The agreement takes effect in 2007 to liberalize flow of goods and services between the two countries.

Sept. 9, 2006: Tens of thousands of protesters gather in front of the Presidential Office for an open-ended sit-in campaign to oust President Chen.

Sept. 10, 2006: *The Daily Telegraph* reports that Kim Jong-il has made known to Russian and Chinese diplomats his plan to conduct an underground nuclear test.

Sept. 10-11, 2006: Sixth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) held in Helsinki, Finland.

Sept. 12, 2006: UN decides not to consider Taiwan's UN bid.

Sept. 13, 2006: U.S. and China hold second round of U.S.-China Energy Policy Dialogue in Hangzhou, China to promote global energy security, protect the environment, and encourage bilateral economic growth and trade.

Sept. 14, 2006: U.S.-ROK Summit held in Washington, D.C.

Sept. 15, 2006: At a UN Security Council procedural meeting, China votes against a U.S.-backed proposal to include Myanmar's deteriorating situation in the Council's agenda. As this was a procedural vote, China could not use their veto to block the decision.

Sept. 15, 2006: DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly Vice Presidents Yang Hyong-sop and Kim Yong-dae meet with Chinese Ambassador Liu.

Sept. 15, 2006: The fifth meeting of the SCO's prime ministers held in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe, focusing on energy, transport, and telecommunications as priorities.

Sept. 15, 2006: Some 300,000 protesters call for President Chen's resignation as they march in front of the president's office and home.

Sept. 17, 2006: APEC Senior Officials' Meeting is held in Hanoi to draft agenda for the larger APEC gathering in November.

Sept. 19, 2006: Thai military carries out bloodless coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra while he is attending the UN General Assembly opening.

Sept. 19, 2006: Japan and Australia adopt new financial sanctions against North Korea for July missile tests in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1695.

Sept. 19-22, 2006: U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson visits China; first Economic Strategic Dialogue held on Sept. 20.

Sept. 19-27, 2006: United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is held in New York City.

Sept. 20, 2006: Abe Shinzo is elected the new president of the Japanese Liberal Party with 66 percent of the vote.

Sept. 20, 2006: The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson issues a brief statement commenting on the military coup in Bangkok as Thailand's internal affair.

Sept. 20, 2006: U.S. and Chinese navies hold a *Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX)* off the coast of Southern California. The second-half of the exercise is scheduled to be held off the coast of China.

Sept. 20, 2006: U.S. and ROK chief nuclear delegates discuss the six-party process in New York.

Sept. 21, 2006: Second 5+5 (minus a few) meeting held in New York along UNGA sidelines.

Sept. 21, 2006: U.S. Ambassador to Korea Alexander Vershbow tells *Yonhap News* that Assistant Secretary Hill, could visit Pyongyang if the DPRK returns to the table.

Sept. 22, 2006: The joint U.S.-Russian Nuclear Cities Initiative (NCI), part of the Nunn-Lugar nonproliferation program, expires.

Sept. 23-24, 2006: Sixth round of China-Japan Strategic Dialogue held in Tokyo.

Sept. 23-28, 2006: NASA Administrator Michael Griffin visits China to gain an overview of the Chinese civilian space program.

Sept. 24, 2006: President Chen calls for reconsideration of territory defined in constitution.

Sept. 25, 2006: Shanghai Communist Party chief and Politburo member Chen Liangyu arrested on corruption charges.

Sept. 25-26, 2006: U.S. and 19 other nations attend the third government-industry Proliferation Security Initiative workshop in London, UK.

Sept. 26, 2006: Abe Shinzo succeeds Koizumi Junichiro as Japan's new prime minister.

Sept. 26, 2006: In a speech in Los Angeles, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov tells his American audience that the United States will have to get used to a strong Russia.

Sept. 27, 2006: Prime Minister Abe and President Bush in a telephone call agree to maintain close ties and to meet in November at APEC meeting in Hanoi.

Sept. 27, 2006: A delegation from the Russian government arrives in Washington, D.C. to discuss Russia's remaining obstacles to joining the WTO.

Sept. 28, 2006: Japanese PM Abe and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun agree by telephone call to hold a summit as early as possible.

Sept. 28, 2006: President Chen declares that "Taiwan is Taiwan, China is China, and Taiwan and China are totally different countries," drawing protests from Beijing and a reminder that Washington expects Chen to honor his previous commitments.

Sept. 28, 2006: Washington suspends \$24 million in military assistance to Thailand.

Sept. 29, 2006: Mid-Autumn festival cross-Strait charter flights begin between the PRC and Taiwan.

Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2006: Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei visits Seoul to exchange views on how to jumpstart the six-party process.

Oct. 1, 2006: Surayud Chulanont, a former general and member of the Thai Privy Council, is sworn in as Thailand's interim prime minister.

Oct. 3, 2006: North Korea announces that it "will, in the future, conduct a nuclear test."