



**Regional Overview:**

**Multilateral Progress Pending on Multiple Fronts**

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

Multilateralism was the order of the day in the Asia-Pacific this quarter. Two sessions of the Six-Party Talks and a number of associated bilateral and multilateral working group sessions were held, culminating in a “breakthrough” at quarter’s end, at least in terms of the disablement of North Korea’s nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and associated 10+X ministerial meetings took place amid reports of steady progress on the development of ASEAN’s first Charter. The annual Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting resulted in rhetorical commitments to combat global warming and move the Doha round of trade talks forward, while President George W. Bush met for the third time in a summit with assembled ASEAN leaders along the APEC sidelines. The failure of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to attend the ARF meeting (her second miss in three attempts) and the cancellation of Bush’s follow-on visit to Singapore (for what would have been his first full summit meeting with ASEAN leaders) renewed concerns about the U.S. commitment to the region, despite the deepening of the U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership. Multilateral military cooperation included major exercises in the Indian Ocean and Central Asia by what some portray (inaccurately?) as emerging rival blocs. Democracy watchers continued to keep a close eye on Bangkok’s slow return to democracy and election dynamics in Seoul and Taipei, even while expressing revulsion over the latest giant step backward taken by the military junta in Rangoon.

**Six-Party Talks breakthrough**

With the delays over the release of frozen North Korean funds finally behind them (and 50,000 tons of fuel oil from South Korea firmly in hand), the First Session of the Sixth Round of Six-Party Talks resumed July 18-20 in Beijing. Recall that this session was originally convened March 19-22, 2007 after Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill announced that the issue of the frozen funds in Macao’s Banco Delta Asia had been “resolved.” Unfortunately, the DPRK definition of the term was not the release of funds but their delivery into Pyongyang’s hands – the delivery process consumed most of the previous quarter, resulting in a four-month “recess.”

With Pyongyang’s announcement in early July that its Yongbyon facilities had been shut down – subsequently confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – the talks resumed, but with little apparent progress. While the commitment to

denuclearization was reaffirmed, no time lines for completing the first phase of the Feb. 13, 2007 denuclearization agreement were set. Instead, all agreed to another round of Working Group meetings: there are five such groups, dealing with Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Normalization of DPRK-U.S. Relations, Normalization of DPRK-Japan Relations, Economy and Energy Cooperation, and the examination of a possible future Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism. They did agree to meet again in September, to hear the Working Group reports and to “work out a roadmap for the implementation of the general consensus.”

To remind our readers, the first phase of the Feb. 13 agreement consisted of a 60-day action plan which called on the DPRK to: shut down and seal for the purpose of eventual abandonment the Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility; invite back IAEA personnel to conduct all necessary monitoring and verifications as agreed between the IAEA and the DPRK; discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs; and start bilateral talks respectively with the U.S. and Japan aimed at normalizing relations. In return, the parties would provide “emergency energy assistance” to Pyongyang, with the equivalent of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil to be provided during the initial phase. The next stage includes “provision by the DPRK of a complete declaration of all nuclear programs and disablement of all existing nuclear facilities” in return for “economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance up to the equivalent of 1 million tons of heavy fuel oil.”

The various Working Groups met during August and early September – the pivotal U.S.-DPRK meeting took place between Secretary Hill and his DPRK counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-Gwan, Sept. 1-2 in Geneva – setting the stage for the Second Session of the Sixth Round of Six-Party Talks. This round was first scheduled to begin Sept. 19 but delayed at the last minute, presumably because a promised delivery of the next tranche of heavy fuel oil, this time from China, had been delayed. The oil was delivered the next week and the talks resumed Sept. 27-30. Participants agreed at the meeting that the 60-day action plan finally had been accomplished.

The meeting ended with a sense of anxiety as the participants reported that they needed to bring the proposed agreement on “Second Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement” back home for final review and approval. The promised “breakthrough” was subsequently confirmed Oct. 3, when the Chinese released the declaration that restated Pyongyang’s Feb. 13 commitment to “disable all existing nuclear facilities” during phase two, with the already shut down facilities at Yongbyon – the 5MW reactor, reprocessing plant, and fuel rod fabrication facility – scheduled for disablement by the end of 2007. The U.S. will lead (and fund) the disablement activities. While not specifically defined in the agreement, a team of experts that had previously traveled to Yongbyon to examine the facilities indicated that “disable” meant render inoperable for at least three years, if not forever (in contrast to the 1994 “freeze” which resulted in Pyongyang bringing the Yongbyon reactor back on line within a few months after the original Agreed Framework broke down in 2003).

This is no small accomplishment. With the disabling of the Yongbyon facilities, the DPRK will no longer be able to produce more weapons-grade plutonium. This is a major step forward. Also required under the Oct. 3 implementation plan is a “complete and correct declaration of all [North Korean] nuclear programs” by the end of the year. While the term “uranium” appears nowhere in the declaration, State Department sources assert that the DPRK also agreed “to address concerns related to any uranium enrichment programs and activities” at the Geneva bilateral meeting.

Of equal importance (but largely overlooked in reporting on the implementation plan), the DPRK “reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how.” The reaffirmation addresses one of Washington’s primary concerns: that Pyongyang would export its weapons, fissile materials, or nuclear knowledge to third parties. It implies, as Pyongyang has already asserted – and press speculation surrounding the recent Israeli air strike notwithstanding – that it has not provided nuclear-related assistance to Syria (or anyone else). Proof of any past or future nuclear-related assistance by Pyongyang to third parties will undermine (if not scuttle) the six-party process.

The implementation plan also recalls Washington’s earlier commitment to “begin the process” of removing the DPRK from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism and Trading with the Enemy Act restrictions and states that the U.S. will fulfill this commitment “in parallel with the DPRK’s actions based on a consensus reached at [U.S.-DPRK Working Group] meetings.” There does not appear to be a consensus on what this consensus is, however. Kim Kye-Gwan has said that Washington has promised to remove the North from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list by the end of this year; Washington has been much more circumspect about the timing, indicating that it is contingent on the DPRK’s “fulfillment of its commitments on providing a declaration and disabling its nuclear facilities.” Since only the Yongbyon facilities are scheduled for disablement by Dec. 31, 2007, this provides Washington some wiggle room. However, it is not too difficult to imagine Pyongyang again walking away from the process until it is removed from the list.

Intertwined in all of this is the North Korea-Japan normalization process. A dispute over “full accounting” regarding Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea in the 1970s/80s has resulted in a bilateral stalemate. Pyongyang acknowledged the kidnappings in 2002 but claims the issue is now settled (with the return of five abductees and the announcement that eight others had died). Tokyo disagrees: it refutes both the accounting of how the eight died and believes there are more abductees not acknowledged or accounted for.

More importantly for Washington, Tokyo believes it has a commitment from President Bush that the U.S. will not remove North Korea from the terrorist sponsors list until there has been “progress” in resolving this dispute. With a change in government in Tokyo, there may be more flexibility on this issue; former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo epitomized the hardline approach toward the DPRK and new Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo does not carry this baggage. But it will require some movement by Pyongyang as well, at least as far as Tokyo is concerned. Washington’s position seems less clear. While

Secretary Hill appears well aware of Tokyo's concerns, suspicions in Japan about his perceived over-eagerness to accommodate Pyongyang continue to make this a sensitive issue.

This will be a moot point, however, if Pyongyang fails to come clean on the full extent of its nuclear activities. As a result, all eyes will now be on Pyongyang's "complete and correct" declaration of "all" its nuclear programs. Washington is looking for "full accounting," not just in regard to uranium enrichment activities, but of plutonium stockpiles and bomb-making facilities as well. Actually dealing with Pyongyang's inventory of fissile material (and any explosive devices) is not likely before 2008 and will likely require additional negotiations.

In short, the disabling of Yongbyon's nuclear facilities and resulting end to North Korea's plutonium production capabilities will prevent matters from getting worse. True denuclearization will not begin, however, until all of Pyongyang's fissile material is put on the table. There are still miles to go before we put this issue to rest.

### **ARF meets, sans Condi . . . .**

The largest headline from this year's ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) ministerial meeting focused not on what happened – not much – but on who was not there to witness it. For the second time (out of three opportunities – she did attend in 2006) – Secretary of State Rice was a no-show, due to compelling business back home (read: Iraq, Iraq, and Iraq . . . plus Iran). She was represented instead, quite ably one might add, by her new deputy and old Asia hand (former U.S. ambassador to the Philippines), John Negroponte.

During their Aug. 2 meeting, the assembled ministers reaffirmed the importance of the ARF as "the main multilateral political and security forum in the region" and agreed to further strengthen this organization. Then they admitted Sri Lanka as its 27<sup>th</sup> member, although how including more South Asian countries enhances the ARF is yet to be demonstrated. They also "reaffirmed the importance of the principles and purposes of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation" and welcomed the accession to the TAC of almost all the remaining hold-outs (except the United States, which has yet to see the wisdom of getting on board).

The assembled ministers also adopted the terms of reference creating an ad hoc "Friends of the Chair" group, demonstrating their commitment to "further advancing the ARF process towards the preventive diplomacy stage and beyond." The group will be comprised of the foreign ministers of the incoming and immediate past ARF chairing countries plus a non-ASEAN ARF country. It will be called into action "when the situation warrants, including times of emergency, crisis, and situations likely to disturb regional peace and stability." However, it will be "primarily focused on confidence-building and shall not be intervention-oriented." A headline in the *Bangkok Post* best summed it up: "ARF Gives Itself Teeth - But May Not Bite." Nonetheless, it is a welcome step down the road toward transitioning the ARF in the direction of preventive diplomacy. [Note: The Pacific Forum CSIS, in its role as secretariat for the U.S.

committee of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific, will host a meeting on the future of the ARF in Brunei Oct 30-31, aimed at contributing to this process.]

### **. . . Amid ministerial meetings galore**

Negroponte also met separately with his ASEAN colleagues, where he applauded their effort to develop a Charter that “strengthened democratic values, good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and freedom.” (More on this below) He also marked the 30th anniversary of U.S.-ASEAN relations by further refining and strengthening the Enhanced Partnership Plan of Action signed by Secretary Rice and her ASEAN counterparts during the July 2006 ARF meeting. The action plan guides cooperation as ASEAN advances toward its goal of political, economic, and social integration while enhancing cooperation on critical transnational challenges such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, infectious diseases, and protecting the environment.

This 10+1 meeting was just one of a myriad of meetings held among the assembled foreign ministers in Manila – ASEAN now has 17 dialogue partners. In addition to the various bilaterals (if a meeting with 11 participants can be called that), the 8th annual ASEAN Plus Three (APT) multilateral (involving China, Japan, and South Korea) July 31 resulted in a Chairman’s Press Statement reaffirming the APT process, supporting Korean Peninsula denuclearization, and appealing for the immediate release of the Korean citizens being held hostage at the time by the Taliban in Afghanistan. While the press reported that the group also voiced support for a Thai proposal to set up a mechanism to prevent regional currency volatility, this did not make it into the Chairman’s Statement. Japanese attempts to get a reference to the abductees issue in this (or any other) statement also failed, reportedly due to South Korea objections that this would upset the North. Just prior to the APT meeting, the 13 ministers met with their three other East Asia Summit (EAS) counterparts (Australia, New Zealand, and India) over lunch to discuss the upcoming third EAS in Singapore in November.

Meanwhile, the ASEAN ministers in-house ministerial July 29-30 resulted in a joint communiqué touting “One Caring and Sharing Community,” which proclaimed Aug. 8 as ASEAN Day, in commemoration of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It reviewed the progress of the implementation of the Treaty of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), which prohibits the development, testing, or basing of nuclear weapons within its territories, while permitting nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and welcomed the adoption of a “Plan of Action” to further enhance this 10-year old agreement. Particular attention was paid to the first draft of the ASEAN Charter submitted to the ministers for their review by the ASEAN High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on the Drafting of the ASEAN Charter.

### **Is ASEAN coming of age?**

The creation of an ASEAN Charter to manage “the key challenges of regional integration, globalization, economic growth, and new technologies” provides an

encouraging sign that ASEAN, in its 40<sup>th</sup> year, finally may be coming of age. According to ASEAN officials, a formal Charter would add a “legal personality” and a greater degree of cohesiveness and clarity to earlier efforts to build an ASEAN Community.

Recall that ASEAN’s Eminent Persons Group (EPG) had provided a draft Charter at the 2006 annual ASEAN Summit (which was weather-delayed until January 2007) in Cebu, Philippines. Since then, the HLTF has been hard at work, refining (read: toning down) some of the more dramatic suggestions – the controversial section recommending sanctions (including expulsion from ASEAN) for those violating the Charter did not make the first cut. The EPG had also recommended that ASEAN relax its style of decision making by full consensus; it remains to be seen if this suggestion, and one opposing “extra-constitutional” methods of changing government, will make the final cut.

One controversial provision that apparently did make the cut when ASEAN’s foreign ministers reviewed the HLTF’s work at the July 30 ministerial was the establishment of a Human Rights Commission, over initial objections by Burma, among others. The final version of the Charter is scheduled to be unveiled and approved at the November 2007 ASEAN Summit in Singapore and is expected to “accelerate ASEAN integration” while making it a more “rules-based” organization. As one ASEAN senior official noted, the Charter “would also help put into place a system in which more ASEAN agreements would be effectively implemented and enforced long after the symbolic signing ceremonies.” To those who have long accused ASEAN of valuing form over substance, this will be a welcome development.

More good news came in the naming of former Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan as ASEAN’s next secretary general, effective Jan. 1, 2008. Dr. Surin, a Muslim, is seen as a proactive supporter of greater “constructive engagement” both within ASEAN and between ASEAN and its neighbors. He will, according to incumbent Secretary General Ong Keng Yong, “have a clear direction and more of a mandate” as a result of the Charter. There is no questioning his energy, enthusiasm, and commitment – what remains to be seen is how much of a collective voice he will be able to employ, and to what end.

### **APEC: More hot air in the fight against warming**

Australian Prime Minister John Howard hosted this year’s APEC Leaders Meeting, held Sept. 8-9 in Sydney. APEC is much more than the heads of state meeting, however, and Sydney was in virtual lockdown for nearly a week (security was penetrable, though, as Australian pranksters discovered when they managed to get a comedian dressed as Osama Bin Laden through the security checks).

Howard had pledged to put climate change on the top of this year’s agenda and his determination produced “the Sydney Leaders Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development.” The statement acknowledged the growing threat caused by global warming but endorsed only nonbinding targets to slow the growth of carbon emissions. The climate statement adopted two “aspirational goals”: a reduction in energy intensity of at least 25 percent by 2030 (with 2005 as the base year) and

increasing forest cover in the region by at least 20 million hectares by 2020, which would store approximately 1.4 billion tons of carbon, equivalent to some 11 percent of annual global emissions (in 2004).

Howard applauded the effort, saying it “charted a new international consensus for the region and the world,” and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer noted that it was the first time that China “has agreed to any notion of targets at all for developing countries . . . .” Environmentalists dismissed the statement as business as usual.

In a separate declaration, the leaders said a successful Doha round of international trade negotiations “is our first priority,” and pledged “the political will, flexibility and ambition to ensure the Doha Round negotiations enter their final phase this year.” Given that many of these same participants have not shown the requisite energy thus far in the actual negotiations, it is hard to see what has changed in Sydney.

On other economic issues – APEC’s *raison d’être* – the leaders said they would accelerate regional economic integration and “examine the options and prospects for a Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific.” They welcomed the APEC Trade Facilitation Action Plan, which is intended to reduce transaction costs by 5 percent by 2010, called for greater protection of intellectual property rights, deeper and more liquid capital markets, and reaffirmed their commitment to good governance and fighting corruption.

Curiously, there is no mention of terrorism until the fourth page of the five-page declaration, and then it is in the context of human security, equating it with pandemic diseases, illicit drug trafficking, and natural disasters. Given the rising tide of hysteria in the wake of the discovery of tainted products from China, the leaders also “agreed on the need to develop a more robust approach to strengthening food and consumer product safety standards and practices in the region.”

If the document reflected the usual rhetoric, considerable work was accomplished in the side meetings that are perhaps the life blood of APEC. In his meeting with host John Howard, President Bush agreed to new arrangements to facilitate defense cooperation and make it easier for Australian companies to purchase U.S. defense technology; they also agreed to enhance joint military training capabilities and the sharing of information. Bush met Chinese President Hu Jintao and the two men surveyed the international environment and promised to work together on key issues. Sparks flew at the press conference with Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun when Roh pressed Bush to make a strong statement about his readiness to conclude a peace treaty with North Korea. Bush appeared to get testy, saying he was not prepared to move forward until Pyongyang denuclearized. Afterward, press handlers blamed bad translations for the exchange.

Bush also met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Indonesian President Yudhoyono, Prime Minister Abe of Japan, and the seven ASEAN leaders (less Burma, Cambodia, and Laos) whose countries belong to APEC. Bush was originally scheduled to go to Singapore after APEC and hold his first ever full U.S.-ASEAN Summit but had to cancel (and cut his APEC visit somewhat short) to return home to defend his Iraqi surge plan

before an increasingly skeptical Congress. As a result, President Bush's third summit with the "ASEAN Seven" appeared to be a consolation prize, rather than another significant step forward. The cancellation of the Singapore trip, in the wake of Secretary Rice's ARF snub, added to growing accusations that Washington is "neglecting" Southeast Asia, despite some significant advancements in bilateral relations (as outlined in Sheldon Simon's chapter). To compensate for his cancelled visit, Bush said he would welcome ASEAN leaders to his Crawford, Texas ranch to continue the "constructive conversation on – whether it be democracy, or fighting terror, or expanding trade, or avian flu, or climate change." He also announced that the U.S. would be naming an ambassador for ASEAN affairs.

Bush wasn't the only leader doing business. Putin announced that Russia would give Indonesia a \$1 billion loan that would be used to buy Russian weapons. After meeting Howard, the two men announced that they had struck an agreement for the export of uranium for use in Russia's civilian nuclear program.

The summit also witnessed the first-ever trilateral summit among Australia, Japan, and the U.S. While top foreign affairs and security officials had met before, this marked the first meeting by the heads of state. The three men focused on security issues and agreed to develop dialogues with other nations, including China.

### **Peace through strength**

#### *Peace Mission 2007*

This quarter witnessed *Peace Mission 2007*, the highest profile military exercise ever carried out by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the first to include forces from all six member countries. (For more details, see Yu Bin's chapter in this volume.) The drill was stretched out through August, and included about 7,000 troops (the bulk from Russia and China), some 500 combat vehicles, and about 80 aircraft. The drill was a counter-terrorism exercise, based on a scenario in which a town was overrun by militants. The drill coincided with the SCO summit and the assembled grandees, along with nearly 80 observers from other countries and several hundred journalists, decamped to the site of the exercise in the Ural Mountains. Reportedly, the U.S. was not invited to observe because the drill concerned only the six member states. Some military attachés accredited to Moscow were invited, but the guest list was limited because the testing ground was not large enough to accommodate many observers.

#### *Malabar*

On Sept. 4, navy ships from five countries – Australia, India, Japan, Singapore and the U.S. – participated in *Malabar 07-02*, six days of naval war games that were held in the Bay of Bengal. More than 20,000 naval personnel on 28 ships and 150 aircraft joined air defense drills, air strikes, interdiction, interceptions and anti-submarine drills designed to promote cooperation in the fight against piracy and terrorism, the proliferation of



weapons of mass destruction, and other transnational dangers, such as pandemic disease and natural disasters.

*Malabar* is a long-running series of U.S.-India bilateral drills. This year, three other countries were invited to join. The U.S. sent 13 warships, including the *USS Kitty Hawk* and the *USS Nimitz* Carrier Strike Groups and their associated air wings. Seven Indian warships participated, Japan sent two, Australia two, and Singapore dispatched a frigate.

The timing of the two exercises and their scale prompted considerable speculation about the emergence of rival military blocs. Rhetoric from SCO participants about the principles guiding their cooperation serving as a model for other countries and talk of an alliance of democracies, fueled by Japanese Prime Minister Abe's visit to India and his remarks to that country's Parliament, added to the fervor. Officials on both sides tried to dampen such dark imaginings. Russian President Putin was blunt: "The comparison of the SCO to NATO does not correspond to reality, and is improper either in content or form." On the other side, the head of the U.S. Pacific Command Adm. Timothy Keating responded to the specific charge that the exercises portended an effort to contain China, saying, "there are interests shared by the United States, Japan, Australia, India and others all throughout this region. There's no – let me emphasize no – effort on our part or any of those other countries' parts I'm sure to isolate China, to put them in the closet."

## **Democracy wobbles**

### *Burma (a.k.a. Myanmar)*

The big story this quarter has been the swell of protest in Burma. Demonstrations began in August when the government imposed 500 percent increases in the price of fuel. Ordinary citizens and students took to the streets and were quickly beaten or arrested by the military junta's goons. Then, it is reported, soldiers fired over the heads of protesting monks (some reports say they were also beaten and arrested); the monks demanded an apology which was not delivered. They then took to the streets.

There are an estimated 400,000 monks in Burma, and they enjoy considerable prestige and influence in a society that is predominately Buddhist. The protests grew – originally the monks asked lay persons not to join – until thousands, if not tens of thousands, of demonstrators were clogging the streets throughout the country. One group even made it down the normally blocked off street to the home where Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. She met briefly with the protestors, thus linking the spiritual movement with the pro-democracy advocates. It is reported that 100,000 marched in Rangoon after that.

That seemed to snap the government out of its torpor. It warned of harsh reprisals if the protests did not stop and brought in seasoned troops to repress the activists. Daw Suu Kyi was reportedly taken to Insein Prison. The government announced a night-time curfew, and surrounded the monasteries in an attempt to keep the monks from protesting. That led to clashes and yet harsher reprisals by the government. Monks were then arrested and

beaten, their immunity ended. After several days of violence, the streets are again quiet. The governments says about a dozen people were killed; the unofficial death toll could be in the hundreds.

The brutal suppression was condemned worldwide. President Bush demanded action by the world, but apart from shared outrage, little was done. ASEAN expressed “revulsion” at the violence and called for the release of political detainees. The UN Security Council has not acted on the matter but the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution that “strongly deplores” the actions taken by the junta. UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari visited Burma for four days, during which he met Daw Suu Kyi twice, but apparently was stiff-armed by the junta during his meetings with government officials in Rangoon.

International leverage is weak. Burma has been largely isolated so sanctions will have little bite. The three actors with the most leverage are India, China, and ASEAN, but each appears so worried about ceding influence to the other two that none seems inclined to adopt tough measures. Perhaps we should hope the Buddhists have it right and that these brutal acts will be paid for in the next life.

### *Taiwan*

In Taiwan, direct democracy was the issue, specifically a referendum on whether to apply for United Nations membership as “Taiwan” rather than the Republic of China, the name by which Taipei held a UN seat until it was taken by the PRC. Seen from afar, attempts to apply for a UN seat under any name appear quixotic: China has a veto as a permanent member of the Security Council and few if any member states seem willing to court Beijing’s anger by backing Taipei. Even friends of Taiwan are reluctant to back Taipei given what seems like unnecessary provocation and Beijing’s potential to over-react and create a crisis.

Most Taiwanese would like a UN seat – and most accept that it isn’t going to happen. But political leaders, in particular President Chen Shui-bian and other independence-minded types in his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), see the promotion of Taiwan identity and independence as a wedge issue in domestic politics and the best way to advance their party’s interests in parliamentary and presidential elections to be held next year. The DPP hosted large rallies to wind up supporters and force less dedicated advocates in their own party to embrace the independence agenda and push the opposition Koumintang (KMT) closer to the DPP position.

As expected, the UN rejected Taiwan’s application, keeping it off the UN General Assembly agenda. And as expected, the move riled Beijing, which saw it as a further sign of Taiwan’s determination to declare independence. It even muddied the waters of U.S.-Taiwan relations, as several U.S. officials argued against the move, prompting fierce responses from Taipei. (More details are available in David Brown’s chapter.) Identity politics are a vital issue in Taiwan today – as in many countries – but the potential for this question to destabilize cross-strait relations means that politicians on both sides of the

strait should be responsible about how they use this issue to advance their own agendas. Don't hold your breath.

### *South Korea*

Domestic politics and international relations were equally entwined in South Korea as that country headed into the campaign home stretch for the presidential ballot that will be held in December. With President Roh's support levels flagging, he was eager to find ways to boost the progressive left's prospects in the upcoming election. He received it when North Korean leader Kim Jong-il agreed to a second inter-Korean summit. The meeting was not without risks for Roh. By agreeing to go to Pyongyang, despite Kim's failure to return Kim Dae-jung's historic 2000 visit (and honor a pledge to do so), the ROK president looked overeager for a meeting and could be seen to be paying tribute to the North Korea leader. Many South Koreans (and most international observers) saw the summit as a crude attempt to influence ROK politics and the election. (For more, see Donald Gross's chapter in this volume.)

### *Thailand*

Aug. 19, Thai voters approved a new constitution – the 18<sup>th</sup> since 1932 – to replace the 1997 “people's constitution” that was discarded when a military coup tossed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra out of office in September 2006. The new charter takes considerable power from the people and puts it into the hands of unelected bodies, such as courts, and increases the number of senators appointed rather than elected. It is generally thought to confer a behind the scenes role on the military.

As expected, the constitution was approved, with some 58 percent of voters backing the new charter. That majority is even smaller than it looks: turnout was only 57 percent of eligible voters (in contrast to 70 percent in the last two general elections.) Moreover, approval was the least bad option. If the document had been rejected, the government would have been able to use any of the previous 17 constitutions and amend it as they wished.

Passage of the constitution means the government can go ahead with parliamentary elections, currently scheduled for Dec. 23. That is the real message of the referendum: the Thai people want to reclaim their political system from the military. Unfortunately, this new constitution means that their say about politics is considerably reduced.

Equally troubling is evidence the military is proving to be no less tainted than the predecessor government. In September, five ministers in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont were forced to resign as a result of a scandal. On Oct. 2, coup leader Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin was named deputy prime minister – two days after he was forced to retire from the army – leading to speculation that he intends to stay in power, perhaps even taking the prime minister's post after the elections. He denied the charge.

## Looking ahead

Next quarter will witness the third annual EAS, scheduled for Singapore Nov. 20, in concert with the ASEAN, ASEAN Plus Three, and various ASEAN Plus One summits. ASEAN remains in the EAS driver's seat, but many are still eager to see the direction in which it plans to steer (and if there will be more feet on the accelerator than on the brakes). ASEAN leaders are expected to formally adopt the ASEAN Charter at their summit. While the Charter reportedly contains no specific punishments for non-compliance, some within ASEAN are calling for Burma's expulsion from ASEAN (see for example "ASEAN: Time to Suspend Myanmar" by Barry Desker, [PacNet 39A](#)) if, as expected, the ruling junta holds firm to its repressive policies.

Given the fact that President Bush has yet to make his first trip to Asia this year, we suggest that serious consideration be given by the White House to arranging a Bush visit to Asia around the time of the EAS, in order to hold his "postponed" first full summit with the leaders of ASEAN. This would underscore Washington's support for ASEAN's coming of age process. It would also permit Bush to be invited as a special guest to the EAS (while skirting tricky membership questions), thus showing support for East Asia community building as well. There is precedent for this; Russian President Putin was an invited guest at the first EAS in Kuala Lumpur. The odds of this happening, regrettably, are about as low as they are for Burma being expelled from ASEAN.

The odds are somewhat better for Pyongyang moving forward with some form of Yongbyon disablement (in return for more fuel oil and incentives) but roughly 50-50 when it comes to the completeness of its "complete and correct declaration" of all its nuclear programs, facilities, and activities.

## Regional Chronology July-Sept. 2007

**July 1-2, 2007:** President Vladimir Putin visits President George Bush at the Bush family home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

**July 2, 2007:** Thailand announces it will extend a state of emergency in its southern provinces from July 19, 2007 to Oct. 18, 2007.

**July 2-4, 2007:** Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visits Pyongyang.

**July 3, 2007:** Japan Defense Minister Kyuma Fumio resigns over comments suggesting the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were inevitable.

**July 4, 2007:** Koike Yuriko is sworn in as Japan's defense minister.

**July 5-6, 2007:** APEC trade ministers meet in Queensland, Australia.

**July 5-6, 2007:** Chinese FM Yang visits Jakarta and meets President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

**July 6, 2007:** A military panel in Thailand approves the final draft of a new constitution which severely limits the power of future prime ministers.

**July 6, 2007:** In conjunction with a visit by Prime Minister Nguyen Tang Dun, India and Vietnam sign a joint declaration on establishing a bilateral strategic relationship that envisages establishing a joint anti-terror mechanism and closer defense cooperation.

**July 9, 2007:** IAEA meets in Geneva and approves the return of its inspectors to North Korea where they will monitor the shutdown of the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon.

**July 9, 2007:** Thailand Supreme Court accepts the first criminal corruption charges against former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

**July 10, 2007:** China executes the former head of the Food and Drug Administration Zheng Xiaoyu for taking bribes to approve untested medicine.

**July 10, 2007:** North Korea extends an official invitation to IAEA inspectors to monitor the shutdown of nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, DPRK.

**July 12, 2007:** First shipment (6,200 tons) of 50,000 metric ton heavy fuel oil as required by the Feb. 13 six-party agreement leaves South Korea for North Korea.

**July 12-18, 2007:** Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill travels to Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing for consultations on Six-Party Talks and bilateral issues.

**July 13, 2007:** Indonesian and Philippine foreign ministers sign agreements to improve cooperation in broad range of areas including security, trade, education and energy.

**July 15, 2007:** North Korea states that it has shut down its Yongbyon nuclear facility after receiving the first shipment of heavy fuel oil on July 13.

**July 16, 2007:** IAEA confirms that the DPRK has shut down its Yongbyon reactor.

**July 16, 2007:** U.S. announces that President Bush will attend the APEC meeting in Sydney in September, but will not attend a meeting with ASEAN leaders in Singapore afterward.

**July 16, 2007:** A magnitude 6.8 earthquake in northwestern Japan causes a fire and radioactive water leak at Kashiwazaki, the world's largest nuclear plant.

**July 18-20, 2007:** First Session of the Sixth Round of Six-Party Talks resumes in Beijing after a four month recess.

**July 23, 2007:** The UN announces that its legal affairs office rejected Taiwan's application for entry.

**July 23-26, 2007:** Indonesian President Yudhoyono visits Seoul.

**July 24, 2007:** State Department announces that Secretary of State Rice will not attend the ARF meeting in Manila Aug. 1-2, drawing criticism from the region.

**July 24-26, 2007:** A sixth round of general-level military talks at Panmunjom ends in rancor when the North walks out over the South's refusal to countenance redrawing the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the *de facto* western sea border between the Koreans.

**July 26, 2007:** Military to military talks between South and North Korea break down over a disagreement about the sea boundary between the countries.

**July 27-28, 2007:** ASEAN Senior Officials meet in Manila.

**July 28, 2007:** According to the Singaporean *Straits Times*, a group of Vietnamese boats fishing in waters near the Spratly Islands came under fire from Chinese naval vessels in July. One fisherman was killed and several others hurt.

**July 29, 2007:** The Democratic Party of Japan wins 60 of the 121 contested seats in elections putting the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in a minority in the Upper House.

**July 29, 2007:** 40<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in Manila.

**July 30, 2007:** U.S. House of Representatives passes a nonbinding resolution urging Japan to formally apologize for coercing thousands of young women into sexual slavery during World War II.

**July 31, 2007:** ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers Meeting held in Manila.

**Aug. 2, 2007:** 14<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum meeting held in Manila.

**Aug. 2, 2007:** Foreign ministers of South Korean and North Korea meet for the first time since July 2005 in Manila.

**Aug. 2, 2007:** South Korea stops shipments of U.S. beef to retail stores after bone fragments are found in a recent shipment.

**Aug. 2, 2007:** Former Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan named next secretary general of ASEAN. He will succeed Singapore's Ong Keng Yong Jan. 1, 2008.

**Aug. 2, 2007:** Tokyo and Seoul reach an open skies agreement.

**Aug. 2-3, 2007:** APEC finance ministers meet in Coolom, Australia.

**Aug. 4, 2007:** U.S. signs into law the visa waiver program with South Korea.

**Aug. 4, 2007:** China temporarily bans aquatic products from Indonesia after finding excessive amounts of bacteria and chemicals in some imports.

**Aug. 7-8, 2007:** Economic and Energy Working Group of the Six-Party Talks meets in Panmunjom.

**Aug. 7, 2007:** Violence in Timor Leste following the announcement that Xanana Gusmao will be appointed prime minister.

**Aug. 8, 2007:** South and North Korea simultaneously announce that Kim Jong-il and Roh Moo-hyun will hold a summit meeting Aug. 28-30, 2007 in Pyongyang.

**Aug. 8, 2007:** Independence hero Xanana Gusmao sworn in as prime minister of Timor Leste.

**Aug. 9-10, 2007:** Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visits the Philippines.

**Aug. 9-17, 2007:** Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conducts a joint antiterrorism exercise, *Peace Mission 2007*, in Russia.

**Aug. 11-15, 2007:** PACOM Commander Adm. Timothy Keating visits China to meet with senior military and civilian leaders.

**Aug. 13, 2007:** Papua New Guinea's Parliament elects Michael Somare as prime minister for a second consecutive term following nationwide polls that began on June 30, 2007. This is the fourth time he has been chosen for the post.

**Aug. 14-15, 2007:** Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visits Burma where he meets Senior Gen. Than Shwe.

**Aug. 16-17, 2007:** The Six-Party Talks working group on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula meets in Shenyang, China.

**Aug. 16, 2007:** SCO meets in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Leaders of the six member nations (China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan) are joined by Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinijad as invited guests. Representatives of India, Pakistan, Mongolia and Turkmenistan are also present as observers.

**Aug. 17-23, 2007:** Navies from the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the United States conduct the sixth annual edition of Southeast Asia Cooperation against Terrorism (SEACAT).

**Aug. 18, 2007:** South and North Korea announce that the summit between the two countries will be delayed due to heavy flood damage in the North, which reportedly killed more than 300 people and left about 300,000 homeless.

**Aug. 19, 2007:** A referendum to approve a new constitution for Thailand, which paves the way for elections in December, is passed with 57.8 percent of the votes in favor.

**Aug. 20-21, 2007:** The Six-Party Talks working group on peace and security in Northeast Asia meets in Moscow.

**Aug. 20-22, 2007:** PACOM Commander Adm. Keating visits Cambodia and meets Prime Minister Hun Sen and senior defense leaders.

**Aug. 20-24, 2007:** Japanese PM Abe visits Indonesia, India, and Malaysia.

**Aug. 20-31, 2007:** The U.S. and South Korea conduct 33<sup>rd</sup> annual *Ulchi Focus Lens* command post exercise.

**Aug. 21, 2007:** Taiwan President Chen transits Anchorage on his way to Central America, stays on plane to express discontent with the U.S.

**Aug. 21-23, 2007:** Public protests by democracy advocates occur in Rangoon over large increases in fuel prices despite the arrest and detention of several protesters.

**Aug. 22-24, 2007:** PACOM Commander Adm. Keating visits India to meet military leaders and Defense Secretary Vijay Singh.

**Aug. 23, 2007:** South Korea starts shipping \$7.1 million in relief aid to North Korea.

**Aug. 24, 2007:** South Korea announces it will send an additional \$40 million in emergency flood assistance aid in response to a request from North Korea.

**Aug. 24, 2007:** ASEAN economic ministers meet in Manila and finalize the blueprint for establishing a free trade zone in the region by 2015.

**Aug. 25, 2007:** Japan and ASEAN agree to a preliminary free trade agreement that could be signed as early as November 2007 and cut tariffs on 90 percent of ASEAN products.

**Aug. 26, 2007:** The UN appeals for \$14 million worth of emergency relief funds to assist nearly 1 million North Koreans affected by recent floods.

**Aug. 27, 2007:** In an interview with *Phoenix TV*, Deputy Secretary Negroponte urges Taipei to act in a responsible manner and avoid provocative actions that would raise tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

**Aug. 27, 2007:** Thailand's election commission sets Dec. 23, 2007 for elections.



**Aug. 27, 2007:** Fifty pro-democracy advocates protesting increased fuel prices are arrested in Rangoon.

**Aug. 28, 2007:** South Korea and Taliban insurgents reach agreement on the release of 19 Koreans held hostage in Afghanistan. The agreement calls for the release of all hostages beginning Aug. 29 in return for removal of all South Korean military forces by the end of 2007, ending all missionary work in Afghanistan, and banning all travel by Koreans to the country.

**Aug. 29, 2007:** President Chen transits Anchorage on his return to Taiwan from Central America.

**Aug. 29-Sept. 6, 2007:** Chinese DM Cao Gangchuan visits Japan and the Philippines.

**Aug. 30-31, 2007:** Malaysia celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence.

**Aug. 31, 2007:** An aircraft with relief goods chartered by U.S. aid organization, Samaritan's Purse, lands in Pyongyang, the first direct flight from the U.S. to North Korea since the end of the Korean War.

**Sept. 1-2, 2007:** Six-Party Talks Working Group on U.S.-North Korea bilateral relations meets in Geneva.

**Sept. 4-9, 2007:** The 13<sup>th</sup> annual *Malabar* naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal is conducted with participation by the U.S., India, Australia, Japan, and Singapore.

**Sept. 5, 2007:** The U.S. House of Representatives passes H.R. 508 "recognizing the strong security alliance between the Government of Japan and the United States and expressing appreciation to Japan for its role in enhancing stability in the Asia-Pacific region and its efforts in the global war against terrorism."

**Sept. 5-6, 2007:** The Six-Party Talks Working Group on Japan-North Korea bilateral relations meets in Ulaanbaatar.

**Sept. 6, 2007:** Russian President Putin visits Indonesia and signs an agreement to extend a \$1 billion credit for the purchase of military equipment.

**Sept. 8-9, 2007:** Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum senior leaders meet in Sydney. Side meetings include Bush, Howard, Abe trilateral, plus Bush bilaterals with Abe, Roh, Putin, Hu, and ASEAN leaders.

**Sept. 11-15, 2007:** Nuclear experts from Russia, China, and the U.S. visit North Korea to survey nuclear facilities and recommend ways to disable them.

**Sept. 12, 2007:** Former Philippine President Joseph Estrada is convicted of plunder.

**Sept. 12, 2007:** Japan PM Abe resigns.

**Sept. 15, 2007:** Large demonstrations in Kaohsiung, Taiwan back a referendum to approve a proposal to apply for entry into the United Nations under the name of Taiwan.

**Sept. 17, 2007:** Several news sources report that a Sept. 6 Israeli attack inside Syria was on what Israeli intelligence believes was a nuclear-related facility that North Korea was helping to equip.

**Sept. 17, 2007:** China announces that the Six-Party Talks scheduled to start Sept. 19 would be delayed indefinitely. Reports reveal the delay was requested by North Korea.

**Sept. 19, 2007:** Nuon Chea, former deputy to Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot from 1975-1979, is arrested and charged with crimes against humanity as part of UN-sponsored genocide investigation in Cambodia.

**Sept. 19, 2007:** UN General Assembly's general committee officially rejects Taiwan's application to join the United Nations.

**Sept. 21, 2007:** China announces Six-Party Talks will resume in Beijing on Sept. 27.

**Sept. 21, 2007:** The Alliance of All Burmese Monks issues a statement saying they will continue peaceful protests until the military government collapses.

**Sept. 23, 2007:** Fukuda Yasuo is chosen as the new leader of the LDP in Japan.

**Sept. 24, 2007:** At least 30,000 (with some estimates as high as 100,000) protesters including 15,000 monks march through Rangoon in an anti-junta rally. The junta warns the government would respond militarily if senior monks did not restrain the protesters.

**Sept. 25, 2007:** Fukuda is installed as the new prime minister in Japan.

**Sept. 25, 2007:** President Bush announces in an address to the UN General Assembly new economic and diplomatic sanctions against Burma's military junta and its financial supporters. He also calls on others to join the U.S. in forcing change in Burma.

**Sept. 25, 2007:** The UN hosts a one-day summit attended by leaders from 150 countries on climate change.

**Sept. 25, 2007:** Japanese observers attend military exercises in northeast China as guests of the Chinese military.

**Sept. 25, 2007:** Indonesia's top court rejects final appeals by Islamic militants convicted of the 2002 Bali bombings.

**Sept. 25, 2007:** Kim Kye Gwan denounced reports of North Korean nuclear assistance to Syria as “baseless allegations fabricated by lunatics.”

**Sept. 26, 2007:** The U.S. hosts a one-day summit in Washington DC on climate change attended at the ministerial level by the 16 largest polluting nations.

**Sept. 26, 2007:** Japan’s PM Fukuda appoints a new Cabinet including Komura Masashiko as foreign minister and Ishiba Shigeru as defense minister.

**Sept. 26-29, 2007:** Myanmar government violently responds to ongoing protests. The government reports nine casualties, others report hundreds of casualties.

**Sept. 27-30, 2007:** Second Session of the Sixth Round of the Six Party Talks is held in Beijing. Delegates agree to a joint statement that requires North Korea to report and disable three nuclear facilities by Dec. 31, 2007.

**Sept. 28, 2007:** President Bush approves \$25 million to send 50,000 metric tons of heavy fuel oil to North Korea.

**Sept 29, 2007:** UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari arrives in Burma on what the UN secretary general calls an “urgent mission” to broker negotiations between the military government and the pro-democracy opposition.

**Sept. 30, 2007:** Japan announces that economic sanctions on North Korea will be extended for six months to mid-April 2008 because there has been no progress made on the abduction of Japanese by North Korean agents.

**Sept. 30, 2007:** Thailand Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratglin retires from the military and steps down as head of the junta, but two days later was appointed as Deputy PM. Air Chief Marshal Chalit Pukbhasuk is named as his successor.