



**Regional Overview:**  
**Self-Inflicted Wounds**

**Ralph A. Cossa, Pacific Forum CSIS**  
**Brad Glosserman, Pacific Forum CSIS**

2013 ended with a series of self-inflicted wounds. President Obama, with a huge assist from the US Congress, reinforced apprehensions about the US commitment to the region – not to mention concerns about Washington’s inability to get its act together – by skipping both the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders Meeting. Setting an unreachable yearend goal to finalize the economic foundation of the pivot – the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) – was another in the series. So too was President Xi Jinping’s decision, just prior to Vice President Biden’s trip to China, Japan, and Korea, to announce China’s East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone encompassing territory claimed by both US allies. China’s promise of more ADIZs to come raised concerns (and increased calls for greater US involvement) from nations bordering the South China Sea as well. Not to be left out, Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo closed out the year by visiting Yasukuni Shrine, further alienating Beijing and Seoul while drawing a rare rebuke from Washington as well. How much this will impact his “go south” policy to build better relations with ASEAN remains unclear. North Korea’s regent Jang Song Thaek saw his career go to the dogs – at least figuratively – due to alleged greed and other criminal acts (like not applauding his nephew vigorously enough). However his final wound was inflicted, many fear that the prospect for Chinese-style reform in North Korea died with him.

**Pyongyang’s “smile offensive” quickly fades**

Let’s start with the most serious, indeed fatal, wound. We talked in our September issue of *Comparative Connections* about a possible North Korean “smile offensive.” It didn’t last long and clearly did not apply to the country’s presumed number two leader, Jang Song Thaek. His purge and subsequent quick execution – most likely by firing squad – proved once again the dangers associated with being next in line in an authoritarian society. Even being the top guy’s uncle (by marriage, not by birth) cannot save you.

What this means for the stability of the regime and its future policies is anyone’s guess, and it’s important to remember that when it comes to North Korea, we’re all guessing. The experts seem divided between those who think that Jang’s removal from power reflects Kim Jong Un’s total control – he is now secure enough to remove his father’s chosen mentor – and those who believe that it reflects just how unstable and vulnerable the young general really is. One thing is sure: the previously purged Jang won’t be making another comeback. Putting him to death – common for lower-ranking individuals but rare for senior leaders, especially if members of the ruling family – could show how insecure Kim is about his ability to truly neutralize his once-powerful uncle. This could indicate that more purges and instability will follow.

While much remains to be sorted out or understood, one suspects that “Chinese-style reform” has become increasingly unlikely for North Korea. Jang had long been seen as its chief advocate. When Jang visited Beijing in 2012, he reportedly assured the Chinese leadership that, in return for Chinese support for the new boy leader, Kim Jong Un would, with Jang’s encouragement and guidance, eventually take the North down the Chinese path.

In all likelihood, this line of thinking has been at least temporarily discredited. If reports that China received no advance warning of this event and that some Jang supporters are seeking asylum in China are true, this bodes ill not only for the China model, but perhaps for the overall China-North Korea relationship as well. The fact that Jang’s long list of sins included selling North Korean assets too cheaply to China must be additional salt in the Chinese wound.

In his 2014 New Year’s message, Kim Jong Un (in addition to boasting about ridding the Party of “factional filth”) continued to call for both economic development and a strong defense posture (read: nuclear weapons); Washington and Seoul (and more quietly even Beijing) have insisted Pyongyang can’t have both. Kim mentioned “nuclear war” six times in his speech, making it clear that a strong defensive capability was critical given the continued threat posed by “the US and south Korean war maniacs.” This does not bode well for the prospects of a resumption of denuclearization talks anytime soon.

As was the case in his 2013 address, Kim seemed to be waving a conditional olive branch toward the South, but only if Seoul changed its evil ways. As we were going to press, ROK President Park Guen-hye wisely called his bluff, calling for a resumption of the divided families program – cruelly scuttled this summer at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour by the North – as a sign of Pyongyang’s sincerity. Stay tuned! [See Aidan Foster-Carter’s North-South Korea Relations for more details].

### **Obama no show**

In his end of year commentary in *The Huffington Post* entitled “The Asia Rebalance is here to Stay,” Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific Daniel Russel boasted that his boss, Secretary of State John Kerry, had been to Asia four times in the last nine months. That’s the good news. What he did not say was that two of these trips were to fill in for President Obama, who was forced to cancel (for domestic political reasons you all know and we are personally embarrassed about) his scheduled Fall Asia visit to Bali (for the APEC meeting), Brunei (for the EAS), Malaysia, and the Philippines.

By all accounts, Kerry acquitted himself well. While his participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum meeting this past summer was literally a fly-by, this time he spent a full nine days in Asia attending the two summits with a side visit to Malaysia as well. He returned to Asia in December to amend for Obama’s missed trip to the Philippines, at which time he visited Vietnam as well.

Speaking on background, a senior administration official noted that Kerry received “very strong signals from all of the ASEAN countries about the US contributions to ASEAN as a key actor in both regional economic architecture and the regional security architecture” at the US-ASEAN Summit that took place along the sidelines of the EAS. The senior official also praised the EAS:

The East Asia Summit has really arrived at a point of a strategic dialogue among all of the member states in which they can address a variety of economic and security challenges facing the region in a very constructive way, in [a] way that facilitates practical cooperation, but in a way that also creates – allows a conversation that facilitates development of rules and norms on maritime security but also on nonproliferation, also on challenges like humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in a way that further confirms that the East Asia Summit has really arrived as the principal political and security institution in the region.

With all due respect to Secretary Kerry, this is all the more reason President Obama should have been there. His absence was not fatal to the “pivot’s” credibility, even though the international media had a field day declaring his absence as another big victory for China. If this is true (and we think this theme was grossly overplayed), Beijing managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory shortly thereafter with its ill-timed and ill-conceived ADIZ announcement.

### **Biden and China’s East China Sea ADIZ**

Details of the vice president’s trip to Japan, Korea, and China (and Kerry’s trips to Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam) are provided in the respective bilateral chapters that follow this overview. Here we will primarily address the atmospherics. Biden’s second trip to the region this year was initially aimed at reinforcing the US commitment both to its strong alliances and to the “new type of major country relations” being trumpeted by Chinese President Xi Jinping, with whom Biden had established a good personal relationship during exchange visits when Xi was vice president. Instead, it was mostly about the ADIZ. Biden (rightly) felt compelled to show strong support to Washington’s two close allies in the face of perceived Chinese assertiveness and it cast a pale on his visit to Beijing as well.

We say “perceived assertiveness” because no one denies China’s right to establish an ADIZ; the US, Japan, and South Korea, (among many others) have them, why not China? But the somewhat threatening manner in which it was announced, the ground rules (insisting on notification of aircraft passing through, even if not heading toward the Chinese mainland), the fact that it covered territory claimed and occupied by Japan and South Korea, and the timing (during increased tensions with Japan over the disputed islands and just before Biden’s visit) all magnified the problem, as did Beijing’s acknowledgment that additional ADIZ announcements covering the Yellow Sea and South China Sea were forthcoming at a time of Beijing’s choosing. The announcement stirred nationalist feelings in Japan and South Korea and made many in Seoul have second thoughts about what they thought was a growing special relationship with Beijing.

The announcement also prompted the Pentagon to remind folks in the region, and especially in China, who the real superpower still is. A *B-52* mission was deliberately flown through the newly declared ADIZ without prior warning or permission; the PLA Air Force did not respond. While the ADIZ announcement may have served the purpose of putting more pressure on Japan to acknowledge its territorial dispute with China, it clearly undercut Xi’s “good neighbor” policy pronouncements and made China’s neighbors further cheer on the US pivot.

## Discovering who ‘real friends’ are

The limits of China’s “good neighbor” policy were also evident in the aftermath of Typhoon *Haiyan*, the superstorm that walloped the Philippines on Nov. 8. *Haiyan*, known as Typhoon *Yolanda* in the Philippines is thought to be the strongest storm ever recorded, packing winds of 196 mph. Nearly 8,000 people died or were left missing in the storm and 11 million have been affected, many left homeless. In the wake of this catastrophe, Beijing’s first response was to offer \$100,000 in cash and additional humanitarian relief assistance, a miserly response by any standard, the reflected Chinese anger over Manila’s readiness to challenge its claims to territory in the South China Sea. After being roundly criticized in the international media, Beijing pledged an additional \$1.4 million in aid and dispatched a hospital ship.

In contrast, the US initially contributed \$20 million in aid, a figure that was subsequently increased to \$37 million. The US also dispatched *Osprey* helicopters and other equipment from Okinawa, along with the *USS George Washington* carrier strike group, amphibious ships and other vessels, and *C-130* cargo planes. In all, some 13,000 military personnel have been working on the relief effort. Equally impressive was Japan’s response. Tokyo initially offered \$10 million and then upped that sum to \$30 million in emergency grant aid, with another \$2 million worth of emergency relief goods and assistance via nongovernmental organizations. In addition to a total assistance package of \$52 million, 1,000 Self-Defense Forces personnel were dispatched to help out, the largest such overseas deployment.

## The “rebalance” lives on!

Secretary Russel’s commentary was not the only defense of the US rebalance. A more definitive statement came from National Security Advisor Susan Rice in an address about “America’s Future in Asia” at Georgetown University in late November, during which she announced President Obama’s April 2014 planned trip to Asia (reportedly to Malaysia, the Philippines, and Japan, although some are speculating that Abe’s Yakukuni visit may prompt a revision).

Following the theme laid out by Vice President Biden in his July speech (outlined in our last Regional Overview), Rice stressed the multidimensional nature of the rebalance, which she called “the cornerstone” of the Obama administration’s foreign policy: “No matter how many hotspots emerge elsewhere, we will continue to deepen our enduring commitment to this critical region. Our friends in Asia deserve and will continue to get our highest level attention.”

She outlined what the administration hoped to achieve over the next three years: “Ultimately, America’s purpose is to establish a more stable security environment in Asia, an open and transparent economic environment, and a liberal political environment that respects the universal rights and freedoms of all.”

In her comments on “enhancing security,” she focused on strengthening US alliances and building a constructive relationship with China: “When it comes to China, we seek to operationalize a new model of major power relations. That means managing inevitable competition while forging deeper cooperation on issues where our interests converge – in Asia and beyond.”

One area of deeper cooperation was the Korean Peninsula, where she reinforced the US argument that North Korea could not have both nuclear weapons and economic progress: “Pyongyang has a choice: on the one hand lies greater isolation and crippling economic privation; on the other, a true chance for peace, development and global integration.”

While identifying “fostering democratic values” and “advancing human dignity” as other important US goals, she paid particular attention to the importance of “expanding prosperity”; she identified “concluding negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership and achieving Congressional approval” as “our foremost economic goal in the region.”

### **Trade talks: timid and tepid**

*Trans-Pacific Partnership.* Concluding the TPP may be Washington’s “economic goal,” but that wasn’t enough to produce a final deal. The desire to wrap up talks by the end of 2013 outpaced reality. A four-day ministerial meeting in Singapore in December failed to produce an agreement despite “substantial progress” (the term used in the official statement released after the meeting). US Trade Representative Michael Froman characterized the talks as having “great momentum.”

It is easy to blame President Obama’s absence for the failure – his presence at the APEC meeting would have spurred negotiations and provided more “oomph” – but there is little indication that the sheer force of his personality would have resolved the complex difficulties that hold up a deal. The negotiations have been closely held, triggering considerable concern about the TPP’s terms among groups not at the table. Draft sections have been leaked to Wikileaks and several memos found their way to the *Huffington Post* website, one of which shows the US as the outlier on many issues. The difficulties have not dented the Obama administration’s enthusiasm for an early conclusion of the TPP talks, however. The next round of meetings is scheduled for January. Meanwhile, there are glimmers of interest in China, South Korea, and Taiwan about joining the negotiations. There is little prospect of that before a deal is finalized, but those comments indicate a positive assessment of the TPP prospects and its terms.

*Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.* The second round of RCEP talks took place in Australia in September, the third round is scheduled for January 2014 in Malaysia, and a final deal is still on track to conclude by the end of 2015. RCEP is considered by many to be the Asian counter to the TPP. It is an Asia-only deal that includes the 10 ASEAN states and six of their dialogue partners (China, Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India) and lowers its standards for the sake of greater inclusiveness. The official view is that TPP and RCEP are mutually reinforcing efforts to promote regional integration, although elements of competition are unmistakable.

*World Trade Organization talks.* TPP and RCEP are sub-optimal economic responses to the failure of the Doha round of World Trade Organization negotiations. Sub-optimal because global trade deals are always preferable to regional agreements and produce less distortion of trade. But both regional negotiations also have political purposes the WTO process does not address. (Some of those purposes are acknowledged – promotion of regional integration – while others are dark speculations – the TPP is an attempt to create a regional order that minimizes Chinese influence).

In the last month of 2013, WTO members agreed on a small package of trade measures that proved that Doha is not yet dead and stirred some hope for the larger negotiating framework. Representatives in Bali, Indonesia adopted measures to streamline trade, allow developing countries more options for ensuring food security, and boost developing countries' trade. The agreement was noteworthy for several reasons. First, it was the first ever from the WTO system, which was established in 1995. Second, it demonstrated important cracks among developing nations thought to be allied; the split between Brazil and India in particular is noteworthy.

### **Abe targets ASEAN**

Noteworthy last year was Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's aggressive Southeast Asia diplomacy. During his first year in office, Abe visited every ASEAN member state and in December hosted a Japan-ASEAN Summit. The summit commemorated 40 years of partnership between Japan and ASEAN, a reminder that Southeast Asia has long figured prominently on the Japanese diplomatic agenda. Nevertheless, the Abe strategy seems to herald a new approach, one with two interconnected strands. The first is the prioritization of Southeast Asia above Japan's neighbors in Northeast Asia. The failure to make progress in relations with Beijing and Seoul has disillusioned the prime minister and encouraged him to focus his time and energy elsewhere. Second, aggressive outreach to Southeast Asia, in both the bilateral and multilateral context, is an attempt to raise Japan's regional profile and counter the view that Tokyo is a spent diplomatic force, or at least one that is relegated to second place behind China. In other words, Southeast Asia has become an arena for diplomatic competition with China. One compelling example is the Dec. 15 announcement of a new "strategic partnership" between Japan and Cambodia, a government that was lambasted two years ago as the handmaiden of Chinese interests in ASEAN. The new relationship was lubricated by the announcement of nearly ¥14 billion in infrastructure loans to Cambodia. While there is great reluctance to call this outright competition and no regional government wants to pick sides between Tokyo and Beijing, the battle for regional affections gives Southeast Asian governments more leverage and room to maneuver.

### **A 'regret' addressed**

The success of Japanese attempts to raise its regional profile ultimately depends on how Tokyo is perceived by regional governments. That task became considerably harder on Dec. 26 when Prime Minister Abe made a surprise visit to Yasukuni Shrine, the site where the souls of those who fought for Japan – including convicted war criminals – are interred. The visit was a genuine surprise: there was no reason to go that day – it is no special occasion; Abe said he merely wanted to tell the souls of his accomplishments on the anniversary of his first year in office. Even close allies such as Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Ishiba Shigeru and Komei party head Yamaguchi Natsuo heard about it only when the prime minister was en route to the shrine. On the other hand, Abe has repeatedly said that his failure to visit Yasukuni during his first term in office was one of his greatest regrets.

To be fair to Abe (without in any way condoning the visit), he made it clear that the purpose of his visit – heated allegations by others notwithstanding – was not to glorify Japan's past but to commit his administration to peace: "There is criticism based on the misunderstanding that a visit to Yasukuni Shrine is an act of worshiping war criminals. I came to report before the souls

of the war dead how my administration has worked over the past year. I came today to express my determination and pledge to build an era in which people will not suffer from the horrors of war.” Abe noted that he also visited Chinreisha Shrine, dedicated to those killed by wars worldwide from all countries: “To those who lost their lives in wars, I placed my hands together to pray for the repose of their souls and vowed to renounce war, with the resolve of building an era in which the people will never again suffer the ravages of war.” The message was clearly lost due to the venue where it was delivered.

The visit triggered predictable, powerful criticism from China and Korea. Less anticipated was the expression of “disappointment” by the United States because the visit would “exacerbate tensions with Japan's neighbors.” Some reporting suggests that the prime minister may have thought that the prospect of progress on the long-stalled move of Futenma Air Station in Okinawa – a deal was announced the day before the visit – would secure US acquiescence to the visit; if so, he miscalculated.

The question now is how severe the repercussions will be. Economist Richard Katz has argued that Beijing has attempted to insulate the Japan-China economic relationship from political winds; an editorial in China’s famously nationalistic *Global Times*, which counseled against overreacting to the visit, suggests he may be right. Still, the visit indicates that Abe has lost patience with his neighbors and abandoned hope of finding common ground to forge a forward-looking relationship; at least, he figures the costs of not going are no longer worth paying. That may be a reasonable calculation from his perspective – at least as a conservative nationalist politician. Whether it serves Japan’s national interest is another matter. Plainly, however, it frustrates US attempts to promote cooperation between its two Northeast Asian allies and makes even more sensitive any divergence between Washington and Tokyo when it comes to dealing with China. Among the key questions for the first months of 2014 is how the damage will be contained and whether he has done real harm to the US-Japan relationship.

## **2014 economic outlook**

As always, much will depend on economic performance. The ability of regional governments to improve their citizens’ lives is the starting point for political legitimacy, but growth pays other dividends, too. A rejuvenated economy will shift perceptions of US strength and resilience relative to that of China, as well as give President Obama additional leverage in domestic political debates. Prime Minister Abe’s economic agenda is designed to provide a foundation for the reassertion of Japanese standing and influence. Growth also changes perceptions of the utility of trade deals.

The US outlook has brightened as a tepid recovery appears to take root. Unemployment has fallen to under 7 percent, and growth hit 4.1 percent in the third quarter of 2013. Final numbers aren’t yet available, but housing markets appear to be recovering, exports are growing in tandem with inventories, all of which puts the consensus forecast of 2.5 percent growth for the year within reach. A budget deal struck at the end of 2013 could eliminate debilitating uncertainty – a similar agreement on raising the debt ceiling cannot be assumed – allowing the IMF, among others, to forecast 2.6 percent growth in 2014.

Japan had a good year in 2013 as Abenomics and a steadily depreciating yen boosted growth. The economy expanded a blistering 3.8 percent in the second quarter, but that pace slowed (as was inevitable). By year's end, GDP was expected to register growth of 1.1 percent over the year, down from an initial forecast of 1.9 percent. (In contrast the OECD in November forecast 1.8 percent growth in 2013.) The big question for Japan is whether the projected increase of the consumption tax from 5 percent to 8 percent will strangle the recovery. Most economists believe that there is enough momentum to sustain the expansion, but some fear that part of the growth in 2013 resulted from early purchases to avoid the new tax rate. The Bank of Japan is anticipating 1.4 percent growth for 2014, while the OECD forecast is slightly brighter at 1.5 percent.

China continues to moderate its glide path, with most predicting that the country will hit the official target of 7.5 percent growth this year. The OECD forecast is 7.7 percent for 2013, and 8.2 percent in 2014. Questions remain about the reliability of Chinese statistics and the ability of the government to continue to check unbridled expansion, but the recovery in the US bodes well for an economy that remains heavily dependent on exports.

### **Regional Chronology September – December 2013\***

**Sept. 3, 2013:** The Philippines accuses China of constructing concrete structures within its territory in the Scarborough Shoal (Philippines: Panatag Shoal; Chinese: Huangyan Island).

**Sept. 3-6, 2013:** Tenth China-ASEAN Expo is held in Nanning. China's Premier Li Keqiang proposes an expanded version of the China-ASEAN FTA to enhance regional economic ties.

**Sept. 5-6, 2013:** G20 Leaders Summit is held in St. Petersburg.

**Sept. 7-11, 2013:** South Korea's President Park Geun-hye visits Vietnam and meets President Truong Tan Sang. They sign seven cooperation agreements strengthening bilateral trade.

**Sept. 9-13 2013:** US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Glyn Davies visits South Korea, China, and Japan to discuss China's proposal to restart Six-Party Talks.

**Sept. 9-13, 2013:** The ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Counter-Terrorism Exercise is held in Indonesia, involving 10 ASEAN members and eight partner nations.

**Sept. 11-13, 2013:** Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visits Vietnam and meets Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and President Truong Tan Sang. They advance bilateral relations to a strategic partnership.

**Sept. 14-15, 2013:** China and ASEAN hold Sixth Senior Officials Meeting on Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and discuss establishment of a formal code of conduct.

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\* Chronology compiled by Pacific Forum CSIS intern Heather Heffner



**Sept. 15-19, 2013:** Japanese Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori visits Vietnam and Thailand to discuss bilateral maritime security. He meets Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen and Thailand's Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

**Sept. 18, 2013:** Tony Abbott is sworn in as Australia's 28<sup>th</sup> prime minister.

**Sept. 18-20, 2013:** Singapore's President Tony Tan Keng Yam visits Malaysia and meets Prime Minister Najib Razak and Sultan Abdul Halim.

**Sept. 18-Oct. 9, 2013:** US and Philippines conduct the annual *Bilateral Amphibious Landing Exercise (PHIBLEX)* in and around the Philippines.

**Sept. 19-21, 2013:** China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi visits the US and meets Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State John Kerry, and other senior US officials.

**Sept. 21, 2013:** North Korea indefinitely postpones planned family reunions for those separated during the Korean War until "a normal atmosphere is created for dialogue and negotiations."

**Sept. 23-27, 2013:** Japan's Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visits Canada and the US. He meets Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper and attends the UN General Assembly.

**Sept. 23-28, 2013:** Annual general debate of the UN General Assembly is held in New York.

**Sept. 24, 2013:** Hun Sen is sworn in as Cambodia's prime minister for five more years despite opposition party boycott.

**Sept. 25, 2013:** Taiwan receives the first of 12 refurbished *P-3C Orion* anti-submarine aircraft from the US based on a 2007 agreement. The remaining aircraft will be delivered by 2015.

**Sept. 25-30, 2013:** Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits the US. He meets President Obama in Washington and addresses the UN General Assembly in New York.

**Sept. 28-Oct. 4, 2013:** US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel visits South Korea and Japan.

**Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 2013:** Australia's Prime Minister Tony Abbott visits Indonesia and meets President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. They agree to set up a bilateral framework to address the issue of asylum seekers.

**Oct. 1-2, 2013:** US and Philippines conduct fourth round of talks on increased rotational presence of the US military in the Philippines.

**Oct. 1-12, 2013:** US Secretary of State John Kerry visits Japan to participate in the US-Japan Security Consultative Meeting. He also visits Indonesia to attend APEC meetings and Brunei to attend ASEAN-related meetings, filling in at both stops for President Obama. He also visits Malaysia where he addresses the Global Entrepreneur Summit in place of Obama.

**Oct. 1-8, 2013:** Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)-related meetings including the Ministerial Meeting and Economic Leaders Meeting are held in Bali.

**Oct. 2-3, 2013:** US-Japan Security Consultative Meeting (2+2) is held in Tokyo.

**Oct. 2-6, 2013:** China's President Xi Jinping visits Southeast Asia for the first time since assuming office in March 2013, with stops in Malaysia for bilateral talks and Indonesia for the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting.

**Oct. 8, 2013:** South Korea's National Intelligence Service releases report stating North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear reactor was restarted in August 2013.

**Oct. 9-10, 2013:** US, South Korea, and Japan conduct a trilateral naval search and rescue exercise near the southern coast of Korea. North Korea condemns the exercise.

**Oct. 9-10, 2013:** ASEAN-related meetings including the 23<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit, the 16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN+3 Summit, and the 8<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit are held in Brunei.

**Oct. 9-15, 2013:** China's Premier Li visits Brunei, Thailand, and Vietnam.

**Oct. 10-12, 2013:** South Korean President Park visits Indonesia and meets President Yudhoyono. They agree to establish a special economic zone for South Korean firms.

**Oct. 14-20, 2013:** Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop visits Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. She meets Foreign Ministers Kishida Fumio and Yun Byung-se.

**Oct. 16-19, 2013:** ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh visits China and meets Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

**Oct. 17-18, 2013:** Philippine President Benigno Aquino visits South Korea and meets President Park. The defense ministers sign a Memorandum of Understanding on bilateral defense.

**Oct. 18-20, 2013:** Two Japanese Cabinet members visit Yasukuni Shrine during the Annual Autumn Festival. China and South Korea condemn the visits.

**Oct. 18-28, 2013:** Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy conducts *Maneuver 5* maritime exercise involving all three PLAN fleets in the Western Pacific.

**Oct. 20-24, 2013:** India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits Russia and China. He meets President Vladimir Putin and Premier Li. He signs nine bilateral agreements with China including the Border Defense Cooperation Agreement, which pledges neither side will use military means to attack patrols along the border.

**Oct. 21-23, 2013:** Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa visits North Korea and meets Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun. They agree to expand trade ties.

**Oct. 22-23, 2013:** Russia's Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev visits China and meets President Xi and Premier Li. They sign 21 bilateral cooperation agreements.

**Oct. 22-25, 2013:** Mongolian Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag visits China and meets President Xi and Premier Li. They agree to advance their strategic partnership.

**Oct. 26, 2013:** US Korean War veteran Merrill Edward Newman is arrested in North Korea for being a "war criminal" and "infringing upon the dignity and sovereignty of the DPRK and slandering its socialist system."

**Oct. 28, 2013:** New Zealand Defense Minister Jonathan Coleman meets Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in Washington. They agree to resume bilateral military cooperation, which has been suspended for nearly three decades.

**Oct. 29-30, 2013:** Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein visits China and meets Defense Minister Chang Wanquan. They vow to increase military ties.

**Oct. 30-31, 2013:** India's Army Chief General Bikram Singh visits Myanmar and meets President Thein Sein. They discuss border security and bilateral military cooperation.

**Oct. 31, 2013:** China claims that a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel interfered with a Chinese *Maneuver 5* naval exercise taking place in the West Pacific Ocean.

**Oct. 31-Nov 1, 2013:** Malaysia's Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussien visits Vietnam and meets Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh.

**Nov. 1-2, 2013:** Russian and Japanese foreign and defense ministers meet in Tokyo. They agree to vice-ministerial talks on the South Kuril Island/Northern Territories in January 2014.

**Nov. 4-8, 2013:** China's Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Affairs Wu Dawei visits North Korea to discuss possible resumption of Six-Party Talks.

**Nov. 4-29, 2013:** New Zealand hosts *Exercise Southern Katipo* involving air, maritime, and ground forces, from nine countries. The exercise includes the aerial-specific *Exercise Kiwi Flag 2013* (Nov. 6-29) with air forces from Singapore, US, France, Australia, and New Zealand.

**Nov. 5-11, 2013:** China-Indonesia bilateral military exercise *Sharp Knife Airborne 2013* is held in Bandung.

**Nov. 5-14, 2013:** China and India conduct bilateral *Hand-in-Hand 2013* army exercise in China's Sichuan Province.

**Nov. 7, 2013:** South Korea's Deputy Minister for Political Affairs Lee Kyung-soo, China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin, and Japan's Asia Bureau Director General Sugiyama Shinsuke meet in Seoul to promote trilateral cooperation.

**Nov. 7-21, 2013:** Five Power Defense Arrangements' *Exercise Bersama Lima 2013* is held in Malaysia, involving air and maritime drills with participants from Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

**Nov. 8, 2013:** Australia's Defense Minister David Johnston visits Indonesia and meets Defense Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro.

**Nov. 8-11, 2013:** Typhoon *Haiyan* moves through the Philippines, Vietnam, and Southern China.

**Nov. 10, 2013:** China, Russia, and India Foreign Ministers Meeting is held in New Delhi.

**Nov. 12-13, 2013:** Russian President Vladimir Putin visits Vietnam and South Korea and meets Presidents Truong Tan San and Park Geun-hye. South Korea agrees to participate in the joint-Rajin-Khasan railroad project with Russia and North Korea.

**Nov. 12-14, 2013:** China-US humanitarian assistance and disaster relief military exercise is held in Oahu, Hawaii.

**Nov. 15, 2013:** Caroline Kennedy begins her tenure as US ambassador to Japan.

**Nov. 15, 2013:** Myanmar releases 69 more political prisoners and promises the remainder of the estimated 80 such prisoners will be released by the end of the year.

**Nov. 15-17, 2013:** Japanese Prime Minister Abe visits Cambodia and Laos. He signs a military agreement with Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen to allow Japanese forces to train Cambodian personnel. He also meets Laos's Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong.

**Nov. 17-19, 2013:** Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi visits South Korea and meets National Security Advisor Kim Jang-soo to discuss regional security. He also meets President Park and Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se.

**Nov. 18-29, 2013:** Mongolian President Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj makes an extended visit to Southeast Asia with stops in Myanmar, Vietnam, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

**Nov. 19-24, 2013:** Negotiators from 12 members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) meet in Salt Lake City.

**Nov. 19-25, 2013:** US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Glyn Davies visits China, South Korea, and Japan to discuss resumption of Six-Party Talks.

**Nov. 20, 2013:** The 2013 Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) on strengthening bilateral defense and security cooperation is held in Washington.

**Nov. 23, 2013:** China announces establishment of its East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that includes the Diaoyu (Japan: Senkaku) Islands and Suyan Rock (Socotra Rock; South Korea: Ieo-do). Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and US lodge protests.

**Nov. 24-30, 2013:** New Zealand's Defense Minister Jonathan Coleman visits Vietnam and China to broaden and formalize bilateral defense cooperation.

**Nov. 26-29, 2013:** South Korea, China, and Japan hold third round of trilateral free trade agreement talks in Seoul.

**Nov. 26-Dec. 31, 2013:** Chinese aircraft carrier *Liaoning* accompanied by several escort ships conducts military exercises in the South China Sea.

**Nov. 30, 2013:** Japan asks the International Civil Aviation Organization to investigate the impact of China's East China Sea ADIZ on aviation safety.

**Dec. 1-8, 2013:** Vice President Joe Biden visits Asia. He stops in Japan, China, and South Korea.

**Dec. 4-6, 2013:** Myanmar President Thein Sein visits the Philippines and meets President Aquino.

**Dec. 5, 2013:** *USS Cowpens*, a guided missile cruiser, is forced to maneuver to avoid collision with a Chinese PLA Navy ship in the South China Sea.

**Dec. 5-7, 2013:** Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop visits Indonesia and China. Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa asks Australia to sign a "code of conduct" on intelligence practices. Bishop attends the China-Australia Foreign and Strategic Dialogue.

**Dec. 6, 2013:** North Korea releases US Korean War veteran Merrill Newman from custody.

**Dec. 6-7, 2013:** Annual China-Australia Foreign and Strategic Dialogue is held in Beijing.

**Dec. 7-10, 2013:** Trade ministers from the 12 countries negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal meet in Singapore, but fail to reach agreement on several issues.

**Dec. 8, 2013:** South Korea expands its KADIZ southward to include Mara-do, Hong-do, and Ieo-do to take effect Dec. 15. China "regrets" South Korea's decision.

**Dec. 8-9, 2013:** South Korea, the US, and UK conduct a trilateral naval exercise off Busan.

**Dec. 8-21, 2013:** Fourth China-Thailand antiterrorism military exercise *Strike-2013* involving Special Forces from both countries is held in Thailand.

**Dec. 9, 2013:** Prime Minister Shinawatra dissolves Thailand's Parliament and calls for new elections amid widespread antigovernment protests.

**Dec. 9, 2013:** Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) sign the power-sharing annex (the third of four) to the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro.

**Dec. 10-15, 2013:** Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong visits South Korea and Japan. He meets President Park and Prime Minister Abe.

**Dec. 12, 2013:** India's Deputy Consul General in New York Devyani Khobragade is arrested for making false declarations on a visa application for her Indian domestic worker and breaking US law by paying her employee below the minimum wage.

**Dec. 12-14, 2013:** The ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit and the fifth Mekong-Japan Summit are held in Tokyo. Japan announces \$20 billion in loans and grants to ASEAN countries that will be disbursed over five years. It also announces an expansion of the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund aimed at economic integration of Southeast Asian countries.

**Dec. 14-18, 2013:** US Secretary of State Kerry visits Vietnam and the Philippines.

**Dec. 26, 2013:** Japanese Prime Minister Abe visits Yasukuni Shrine, drawing immediate condemnation from China and South Korea. The US expresses disappointment with the visit.