
PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

EDITED BY
ROB YORK
BRAD GLOSSERMAN

MAY – AUGUST 2022
VOL. 24, NO. 2
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PACIFIC FORUM

Founded in 1975, the Pacific Forum is a non-profit, foreign policy research institute based in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic and business issues and works to help stimulate cooperative policies in the Asia Pacific region through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate areas.

The Forum collaborates with a network of more than 30 research institutes around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating its projects' findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and publics throughout the region. We regularly cosponsor conferences with institutes throughout Asia to facilitate nongovernmental institution building as well as to foster cross-fertilization of ideas.

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HONOLULU, HAWAII

COMPARATIVE CONNECTIONS

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Bilateral relationships in East Asia have long been important to regional peace and stability, but in the post-Cold War environment, these relationships have taken on a new strategic rationale as countries pursue multiple ties, beyond those with the US, to realize complex political, economic, and security interests. How one set of bilateral interests affects a country's other key relations is becoming more fluid and complex, and at the same time is becoming more central to the region's overall strategic compass. *Comparative Connections*, Pacific Forum's triannual e-journal of bilateral relations in the Indo-Pacific, edited by Rob York and Brad Glosserman, with Rob York as senior editor, was created in response to this unique environment. *Comparative Connections* provides timely and insightful analyses on key bilateral relationships in the region, including those involving the US.

We regularly cover the key bilateral relationships that are critical for the region. While we recognize the importance of other states in the region, our intention is to keep the core of the e-journal to a manageable and readable length. Because our project cannot give full attention to each of the relationships in Asia, coverage of US-Southeast Asia and China-Southeast Asia countries consists of a summary of individual bilateral relationships, and may shift focus from country to country as events warrant. Other bilateral relationships may be tracked periodically (such as various bilateral relationships with Australia, India, and Russia) as events dictate. Our Occasional Analyses also periodically cover functional areas of interest.

Our aim is to inform and interpret the significant issues driving political, economic, and security affairs of the US and East Asian relations by an ongoing analysis of events in each key bilateral relationship. The reports, written by a variety of experts in Asian affairs, focus on political/security developments, but economic issues are also addressed. Each essay is accompanied by a chronology of significant events occurring between the states in question during the reporting period. A regional overview section places bilateral relationships in a broader context of regional relations. By providing value-added interpretative analyses, as well as factual accounts of key events, the e-journal illuminates patterns in Asian bilateral relations that may appear as isolated events and better defines the impact bilateral relationships have upon one another and on regional security.

The online version of *Comparative Connections* is available at <https://cc.pacforum.org>.

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The Biden administration has rediscovered Asia. And, for better or worse, so has the US Congress. While the administration’s national security documents (or at least their unclassified sneak previews) have identified the Indo-Pacific as a priority theater vital to US national security and China as “our most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge,” Europe continues to steal headlines and the lion’s share of the administration’s (and international media’s) attention, thanks to Vladimir Putin and his unwarranted (and so far unsuccessful) invasion of Ukraine. While many eyes remain on Putin’s war (and NATO’s US-led solid support for Kyiv), this reporting period saw President Biden finally make his first trip to Asia to visit longstanding US allies and attend the second in-person Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“Quad”) Summit. Prior to his trip, Biden hosted his first US-ASEAN Summit in Washington. Meanwhile Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken were both in Southeast Asia, respectively for the Shangri-La Dialogue and for various ASEAN-driven ministerials. These administration trips were largely overshadowed, however, by US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s controversial trip to Taiwan, the first by a House Speaker in 25 years, which was sure to—and clearly did—draw Beijing’s ire.

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BY SHEILA A. SMITH, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS & CHARLES T. MCCLEAN,
YALE MACMILLAN CENTER

It was a busy summer for the United States and Japan. President Joe Biden visited Asia, stopping first in Seoul to meet new South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, and then spending two days in Tokyo for a bilateral summit with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and a follow-on meeting with the two other leaders of the Quad, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australia’s newly elected prime minister, Anthony Albanese. Biden announced his [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#) in Tokyo with Kishida by his side. Economic security legislation in both Japan and the United States revealed the unfolding strategic calculations for the alliance. National efforts to enhance economic productivity and resilience included efforts to ensure reliable supply chains for Japanese and US manufacturers as well as the desire for greater cooperation among the advanced industrial economies to dominate the next generation of technological innovation. State investment in attracting semiconductor suppliers to Japan and the United States demonstrate the urgency with which both governments seek to diminish reliance on critical technology imports.

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Nancy Pelosi's August visit to Taiwan—the first visit by a speaker of the US House of Representatives in 25 years—was met by a strong response from China that included provocative military exercises, punitive economic measures against Taiwan, and the suspension and cancellation of a series of dialogues with the United States. Just prior to Pelosi's visit, Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping held their fifth virtual conversation since Biden's inauguration. Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered a comprehensive speech on the administration's China strategy in late May. Biden officials debated whether to lift some of the tariffs imposed on China under the Trump administration, but as of the end of August, there was no decision to do so. Human rights remained on the US agenda, with statements issued on the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen massacre and on the 25th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC, and a ban imposed on imports into the US of products made by forced labor in Xinjiang. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held his first face-to-face meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

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MASON RICHEY, HANKUK UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN STUDIES & ROB YORK, PACIFIC FORUM

Lopsided: such was the state of US relations with the two Koreas during May-August 2022. The Washington-Seoul axis mostly flourished on the military/security, diplomatic, economic, and cultural fronts, while Washington and Pyongyang deepened doldrums whose depths had been plumbed in prior reporting periods. For the former, the most significant items included the May inauguration of conservative South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and quick follow-on summit with US President Joe Biden, increasing trilateral US-South Korea-Japan cooperation, a raft of announcements on US-South Korea economic and technology cooperation, the resumption of field maneuvers in US-South Korea joint military exercises, and South Korea's continuing growth as a serious middle power player in foreign policy, including stepped-up engagement with NATO. In US-North Korea relations, a COVID-19 outbreak failed to lead the Kim Jung Un regime to open up to outside humanitarian assistance, as Pyongyang remained content to keep borders mostly closed and allow the virus to course through the population with only basic prophylactic measures. On the positive side, Pyongyang's hyperactive missile testing in spring slowed during summer, and a feared (yet still expected) seventh nuclear test failed to materialize.

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Like the saying, “after the storm comes the calm,” US-India relations witnessed four months of productive talks, cooperation, and collaboration. This contrasted with the previous trimester, mired as it was by Cold-War era differences brought about by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. There were thriving Indo-Pacific synergies and the decline of Cold War-era differences. The US and India continued and expanded cooperation on a wide array of regional and global issues, such as climate change, supply chains, and the Sri Lankan crisis. They solidified their defense partnership from Hawaii to the Himalayas through navy and military exercises. The US turned down pressure on India over Russian oil purchases and recalibrated the dialogue to address other pressing challenges. They did not avoid tough conversations, however. India reinforced its view of the US and other Western nations' role in keeping the Indo-Pacific a safer and more open region.

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BY CATHARIN DALPINO, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

The Biden administration's diplomatic campaign in Southeast Asia kicked into high gear in the late spring and continued through the summer. On May 12-13 President Biden co-hosted, with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen as the 2022 ASEAN chair, the first-ever US-ASEAN Special Summit to be [held](#) in Washington, DC. US relations in the region were also boosted when the Biden administration [launched](#) the long-awaited Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) on May 23; seven Southeast Asian countries indicated interest in joining, although few are likely to accede to all four pillars of the framework in the near-term. Two Cabinet officials made [visits](#) to two US treaty allies: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Thailand in June and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to the Philippines in August. Notwithstanding continuing differences over human rights, the visits served to reaffirm the bilateral alliances. However, global and regional tensions remained high, over the persistent crisis in Ukraine; brinksmanship in the Taiwan Straits; and the internal conflict in Myanmar which has only deteriorated further. These pressures only divided ASEAN further as the region looks ahead to a trifecta of international meetings—APEC, East Asia Summit, and the G20—in the fall.

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Chinese enhanced activism in Southeast Asia in this reporting period focused on countering Biden administration efforts to enhance influence in the Indo-Pacific. The Chinese government intensified its depiction of the United States as disrupting regional order and portraying itself as the regional stabilizer. Beijing's effort faced complications and uncertain prospects as Chinese military forces in August launched large-scale provocative shows of force amid strident media warnings targeting the United States over Taiwan.

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**BY DAVID J. KEEGAN, JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
& KYLE CHURCHMAN, JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

Between May 1 and Sept. 1, tensions between Taiwan and China exploded in ways few anticipated but were in retrospect the culmination of well-established dynamics. The US once again was right in the middle. On Aug. 2, US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi arrived in Taiwan, which Taiwan’s government celebrated as the most important visit in at least 25 years by a US politician. She promised Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen that US support for Taiwan’s security would remain “ironclad.” On Aug. 4, the day after Pelosi departed Taiwan, China signaled its displeasure by conducting the most extensive military exercises ever conducted near Taiwan, closer to the island than any before, and launching ballistic missiles over Taiwan’s capital to land in waters east of the island. Throughout these exercises, the Chinese, Taiwan, and US militaries avoided any interactions that might have provoked confrontation. On Aug. 10, the Chinese military announced that the exercises had concluded, achieving their objectives, but that the military would continue its activities around Taiwan.

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On May 10 Yoon Suk Yeol took office as ROK president, and rapidly lost popularity. While talking tough on North Korea, he also offered aid to fight COVID-19—but was ignored. His “audacious plan,” wholly unoriginal, to reward Pyongyang materially if it denuclearizes, had very little detail. For months the DPRK did not even mention Yoon. In late July Kim Jong Un sharply warned him against any pre-emptive strike. In August, his sister Kim Yo Jong put the boot in: ludicrously blaming materials sent by ROK activists for bringing COVID-19 into the DPRK, savaging Yoon’s proposal as insulting and unoriginal, and saying the North will never talk to him. At home, meanwhile, the new government chose to reopen two contentious inter-Korean episodes from the recent past, seemingly to punish its predecessor’s policies. It was hard to see how good could come of that, or to hold out hope for any thaw on the peninsula.

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BY SCOTT SNYDER, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS & SEE-WON BYUN, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

Beijing and Seoul marked 30 years of diplomatic ties on Aug. 24 as South Korea transitioned to a new administration under President Yoon Suk Yeol, who took office in May. Although early high-level exchanges reaffirmed partnership, the two leaderships confront growing pressures from US-China competition, economic uncertainty, and public hostility. Domestic priorities in China in light of the 20th Party Congress and South Korea's shift to conservative rule amplify these concerns. The impact of US-China rivalry on the China-South Korea relationship extends from security to economic coordination, including approaches to THAAD and global supply chains, and export competition, especially in semiconductors, challenges new Xi Jinping-Yoon economic agreements. Moreover, public hostility is strongest among South Korea's younger generation, raising pessimistic prospects for future China-South Korea ties. Despite mixed signals, false starts, and the continued absence of leader-level meetings marking the recovery of economic ties between China and North Korea, geopolitical developments have pushed the two countries closer together. Such engagement features mutual reinforcement of each other's positions on issues of vital interest and solidarity in response to US policies.

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The tone of China-Japan relations became more alarmist on both sides with long-anticipated plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations still clouded with uncertainty. Several related events were canceled or postponed *sine die*. Internationally, Prime Minister Kishida was exceptionally active, attending meetings of the Quad, the G7, NATO, and Shangri-La Dialogue, where he [delivered](#) the keynote address. A common theme was attention to a Free and Open Pacific (FOIP) and the need for stability in the region, both of which Beijing sees as intended to constrain China. At NATO, Kishida met with US and South Korean representatives for their first trilateral meeting in nearly five years and suggested the possibility of joint military exercises. Meanwhile, China continued pressure on Taiwan and the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Although Foreign Minister Wang Yi and State Councillor Yang Jieqi were active internationally, Xi Jinping himself has not ventured outside the Chinese mainland since January 2020 save for a brief, tightly controlled visit to Hong Kong, which is unquestionably part of China.

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BY JI-YOUNG LEE, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY & ANDY LIM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

How might the passing of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo impact Tokyo's approach to Seoul? This unexpected turn of events loomed large in the minds of many who have been cautiously optimistic that Japan and South Korea would take steps toward a breakthrough in their stalled relations. In our [last issue](#), we discussed how this summer could provide good timing for Seoul and Tokyo to create momentum in this direction after Yoon Suk Yeol's inauguration as president in South Korea and the Upper House election in Japan. However, the results from this summer were mixed. Seoul and Tokyo have not yet announced whether Yoon and Kishida will hold a summit any time soon. Both leaders ended the summer juggling domestic politics amid declining approval ratings. However, there were some meaningful exchanges between the two governments, signaling that both sides were interested in improving relations.

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Unlike in 1914, the “guns of the August” in 2022 played out at the two ends of the Eurasian continent. In Europe, the war was grinding largely to a stagnant line of active skirmishes in eastern and southern Ukraine. In the east, rising tension in US-China relations regarding Taiwan led to an unprecedented use of force around Taiwan. Alongside Moscow's quick and strong support of China, Beijing carefully calibrated its strategic partnership with Russia with signals of symbolism and substance. Xi and Putin directly conversed only once (June 15). Bilateral trade and mil-mil ties, however, bounced back quickly thanks to, at least partially, the “Ukraine factor” and their respective delinking from the West. At the end of August, Mikhail Gorbachev's death meant both much and yet so little for a world moving rapidly toward a “[war with both Russia and China](#),” in the words of Henry Kissinger.

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GRAEME DOBELL, AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

Australia has changed government and the political war over climate change draws to a close after raging for 15 years. The new Labor government led by Anthony Albanese promises continuity on foreign and defense policy, delivered with a different tone. In the government’s first 100 days, it chipped some ice from the frosty relationship with China. Ending a Beijing ban on meetings with Australian ministers that was in its third year, Chinese ministers had face-to-face talks with Australia’s foreign minister and defense minister. Albanese’s observation that dealing with China will continue to be difficult was demonstrated by a diplomatic duel in the South Pacific, as Canberra pushed back at Beijing’s ambition for a greater security role in islands. Two major defense announcements are due in the first months of 2023: the plan for an Australian nuclear submarine, based on the AUKUS agreement with the US and UK, plus a re-set of Australia’s military and strategic posture because of the toughest security environment in decades. Labor says the alliance with the US should go “beyond interoperability to interchangeability” so the two militaries can “operate seamlessly together at speed.”

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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

WASHINGTON “PIVOTS” TO ASIA

RALPH A. COSSA, PACIFIC FORUM

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The Biden administration has rediscovered Asia. And, for better or worse, so has the US Congress. While the administration’s national security documents (or at least their unclassified sneak previews) have identified the Indo-Pacific as a priority theater vital to US national security and China as “our most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge,” Europe continues to steal headlines and the lion’s share of the administration’s (and international media’s) attention, thanks to Vladimir Putin and his unwarranted (and so far unsuccessful) invasion of Ukraine. While many eyes remain on Putin’s war (and NATO’s US-led solid support for Kyiv), this reporting period saw President Biden finally make his first trip to Asia to visit longstanding US allies and attend the second in-person Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“Quad”) Summit. Prior to his trip, Biden hosted his first US-ASEAN Summit in Washington. Meanwhile Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken were both in Southeast Asia, respectively for the Shangri-La Dialogue and for various ASEAN-driven ministerials. These administration trips were largely overshadowed, however, by US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s controversial trip to Taiwan, the first by a House Speaker in 25 years, which was sure to—and clearly did—draw Beijing’s ire.

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The US administration also (finally) put some meat on the bones of its Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, even though (like Obama's earlier pivot) the trade and economic dimension of the administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy remains the least developed. The military dimension of the strategy was much more in evidence, highlighted by the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise and a number of other multilateral training events throughout the region. Multilateralism will continue to capture the headlines as we move into the year's third trimester with the ASEAN-driven East Asia Summit and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting sharing pride of place with the Indonesia-hosted G20 Summit.

Restoring Alliance Credibility

President Biden's first trip to Asia on May 20-24, following three Europe visits, was aimed first and foremost at shoring up the traditional US alliances with Japan and Korea. While national security documents during the Trump administration continued to identify those Asia alliances as the foundation or linchpin for its Asian or Indo-Pacific strategy, the president's words and actions didn't always match or reinforce this view. Biden came to power pledging to "[reinvigorate](#)" Washington's alliance network and the symbolism of making his first Asia trip to Korea and Japan had this as a primary objective. We will leave it to our fellow authors of the US-Japan and US-Korea chapters to provide trip details, but alliance centrality was clearly the [primary theme](#) during both visits. In Korea, Biden and ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol [reaffirmed](#) that the US-ROK alliance remained "the linchpin for peace and prosperity in the region," further noting that "the Alliance has grown far beyond the Korean peninsula, reflecting the pivotal role of our countries as global leaders in democracy, economy, and technology." In Japan, Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio "[renewed their commitment](#)" to strengthening the deterrence and response capabilities of the Alliance" which remains the "cornerstone" of the relationship.

The Quad Continues to Impress

Seizing the opportunity, Prime Minister Kishida hosted a summit meeting of the Quad on May 24 while the US president was in Tokyo. In addition to Kishida, Biden, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Australia's newly elected Prime

Minister Anthony Albanese scrambled to make the meeting, arriving only hours after being sworn into office. His presence, along with that of his foreign minister, Penny Wong, is proof of the importance of the Quad.

In their [joint statement](#), the leaders renewed their "steadfast commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is inclusive and resilient." They declared strong support for "the principles of freedom, rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes without resorting to threat or use of force, any unilateral attempt to change the status quo, and freedom of navigation and overflight" and promised to "continue to act decisively together to advance these principles in the region and beyond." They then set out a series of actions ranging from COVID vaccines to infrastructure aid to advance that agenda. Apart from the absence of any specific reference to China or Russia—a nod to Indian sensitivities—it's a pretty impressive document.

Interestingly, the action agenda focuses more on what might be considered "soft security" items. The one exception is the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA), which will work with regional partners to respond to humanitarian and natural disasters, and combat illegal fishing. The shift in emphasis away from hard security concerns should quiet some of the controversy surrounding the Quad and its purpose; it increasingly looks like a mechanism to provide public goods, rather than directly challenge China. Reportedly, however, there is ample talk about China among the leaders.

As is the case during most Asia-related meetings, the leaders also reaffirmed "our unwavering support for ASEAN unity and centrality and for the practical implementation of [the] ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific."

US-ASEAN Summit: The Gang's (Not) All Here!

Prior to leaving for Northeast Asia, Biden met with many (but not all) of his Southeast Asian counterparts for the first-ever Washington DC US-ASEAN Summit on May 12-13. Outgoing Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte elected to send Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. to represent his country, given the election earlier that week of a new Philippine president,

Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (whose inauguration took place the following month). Meanwhile, as detailed in CSIS' [Southeast Asia blog](#), the Biden administration followed [ASEAN's lead](#) in refusing to invite Myanmar coup leader Min Aung Hlaing to the summit. Instead, it offered a spot to a "non-political representative" of Myanmar—an offer the junta was expected to, and did, refuse.

ASEAN foreign ministers also reportedly held an [unofficial meeting](#) in Washington the day before the summit "to discuss policy alternatives toward Myanmar." ASEAN leaders (and the rest of the world) are becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement toward ASEAN's April 2021 [Five-Point Consensus](#). Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah was [reportedly](#) planning to call for ASEAN's unofficial engagement with Myanmar's parallel civilian National Unity Government.

In his [speech](#) to the assembled leaders, Biden proclaimed "a new era in US-ASEAN relations." While China was not referenced in the speech or in the White House [Fact Sheet](#) issued before the Summit began, it was no doubt on Biden's mind when he stated "We're committed to a future where the rules and norms that have made possible so much growth and prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific are upheld and strengthened, including respect for the rule of law and for human rights." This year's ASEAN Chair, Cambodia's President Hun Sen, was no doubt squirming in his chair as well.

Austin/Blinken Further Promote the Rule of Law

Respect for the rule of law was a constant theme in Defense Secretary Austin's June 11 [speech](#) at the Shangri-La Dialogue, which convened in person in Singapore after a two-year COVID-driven hiatus. Austin mentioned the rule of law or rules-based order more than a half-dozen times. While condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine he noted that "rules-based international order matters just as much in the Indo-Pacific as it does in Europe," further noting that "this region has already cast its vote on what kind of future it seeks. It's an interconnected and optimistic future—one rooted in the rule of law, and a profound commitment to freedom and openness." Nor did he mince words about China; he noted that Beijing has adopted "a more coercive and

aggressive approach to its territorial claims," while further noting that "we've seen an alarming increase in the number of unsafe aerial intercepts and confrontations at sea by PLA aircraft and vessels." In another not-so-veiled poke at Beijing, he argued that "Indo-Pacific countries shouldn't face political intimidation, economic coercion, or harassment by maritime militias."

Meanwhile, Secretary Blinken visited Phnom Penh on Aug. 3–5 for a series of ASEAN-hosted foreign minister meetings (the annual US-ASEAN Ministerial plus the 12th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the 29th ASEAN Regional Forum) that were overshadowed by the major PLA military exercise around (and over) Taiwan. Blinken spoke out forcefully about this Chinese violation of the cross-Straits status quo.

Surprisingly, especially given the Cambodian host, there were direct references to both the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits in the [ARF Chairman's Statement](#); recall in 2012, the last time Cambodia hosted the ARF, it initially [failed to produce](#) a Chairman's Statement (for the first time in ASEAN's then-45 year history) due to Chinese pressure over references to the South China Sea. This time, the ministers "discussed the situation in the South China Sea and took note of concerns expressed by some countries on the land reclamations and activities, and serious incidents in the area which have eroded trust and confidence, increased tensions and may undermine peace, security and stability in the region." The meeting also "reaffirmed the need to enhance mutual trust and confidence, exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities and avoid actions that would complicate the situation, and pursue peaceful resolution of disputes..."

Even more surprising, the Chairman's Statement "expressed concerns over the recent cross-Straits development, which could destabilize the region and eventually could lead to miscalculation and serious confrontation." In a sop to Beijing, it noted that "many countries reiterated the One-China Policy," but then "underlined the importance of maximum restraint, refrain from provocative action and adherence to the principles enshrined in United Nations Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), so as to avoid open conflicts among the major powers

and prevent unpredictable consequences.” For ASEAN, this was a bold statement indeed.

The Statement was equally direct in discussing developments in Myanmar, expressing “concerns over the prolonged political crisis in the country, including the [execution](#) of four opposition activists” and underscoring “the absolute necessity to implement, immediately and in full, the Five-Point Consensus agreed at the ASEAN Leaders’ Meeting on 24 April 2021 to support Myanmar’s return to normalcy and the path of democracy.”

While Blinken’s remarks at the meeting have yet to appear on the State Department’s website, the pre-trip [Fact Sheet](#) outlining the broader US-ASEAN relationship noted that “the United States and ASEAN are working together to address pressing regional and global challenges. The United States supports the international rules-based order in the South China Sea, and in close cooperation with our allies and partners, the United States promotes a free and open Indo-Pacific in which the freedoms of navigation and overflight are enjoyed and respected by all states in accordance with international law.”

Pelosi Makes Her Mark

The most important event of this reporting period is the visit of US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan. As virtually every chapter in this edition of *Comparative Connections* attests, that trip roiled every relationship in the Indo-Pacific region. Pelosi, a longtime supporter of human rights and critic of the Chinese government, visited Taiwan after postponing a previously scheduled trip because of COVID-19. She went to support Taiwan’s democracy. Her trip was not unprecedented—Speaker Newt Gingrich visited the island 25 years ago—but this visit occurred amidst rising tension between the United States and China and in the Taiwan Strait. President Biden said that the trip occurred against the advice of the military, a comment that is thought to have reflected his own feelings. Whatever the White House may have thought, Chinese sentiment was crystal clear: As Bonnie Glaser writes in her chapter on US-China relations, Beijing considered the trip a deliberate attempt to change the status quo to its disadvantage.



Figure 1 Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi visits Taiwan. Photo: Sam Yeh/AFP

Reaction was swift. Regional governments were troubled by the trip, deeming it provocative and destabilizing and without strategic purpose or reward. One indication of the unease was Pelosi’s inability to arrange an in-person meeting with South Korean President Yoon during her stop in Seoul, despite his pro-US leanings and desire to coordinate as closely as possible with the US administration. That unease did not prevent many of those same governments from denouncing the Chinese reaction—days of military exercises that targeted the island and an acceleration of sorties, drone flights, air and ship incursions, and missile firings over Taiwan into Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone—as excessive and dangerous, however. While Taiwan officials welcomed the visit as a show of support for Taiwan democracy, others on the island had [mixed views](#); some worried about the consequences while others wondered what the real benefit was to Taiwan. As is all too frequently the case, when Beijing is angered by US actions vis-à-vis Taiwan, it takes out its frustration on the people of Taiwan. Meanwhile, Congressional [delegations](#) keep coming; at last count some 28 members of Congress have visited Taiwan already this year.

IPEF is Half a Glass

One of the loudest and most enduring complaints about US policy toward the Indo-Pacific has been the absence of a credible economic component. Since successive administrations turned their back on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (now known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on

Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP), the US government has struggled to engage in an arena that is central to Indo-Pacific concerns. China, with its Belt and Road Initiative and Global Development Initiative, has seized the initiative and the US, its allies, and partners are struggling to close the gap.

The launch in May of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) was supposed to do just that. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo [called](#) IPEF “the most significant international economic engagement that the United States has ever had in this region.” Its launch “marks an important turning point in restoring US economic leadership in the region and presenting Indo-Pacific countries an alternative to China’s approach to these critical issues.” Her optimism was reinforced by the roster. The initial group consisted of 13 members—Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and the US; Fiji joined soon after. Together, they account for about 40% of global wealth. Especially encouraging was India’s desire to join, given Delhi’s rejection of other regional economic agreements. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [noted](#) the roster included major economies, emerging economies, economies with which the US has already negotiated free trade agreements and those for which this is the first set of talks.

Yet after months of negotiations, the unveiling revealed a skeletal agreement—far more potential than pact. IPEF has four pillars—supply chain resiliency, clean energy and decarbonization, tax and anti-corruption, and trade—but they have no content. Raimondo explained the day before the framework was revealed, “Tomorrow we begin the negotiations... We will in the weeks and months ahead, define...exactly what’s in each pillar and what each country will be committing to and signing up for.” While members have a menu—they can pick and choose among pillars—they have to agree to all the contents of the items that they select. That explains Delhi’s decision to opt out of the trade pillar; it [fears](#) that it will have to accept labor and environmental standards that the government isn’t ready to meet.

One “carrot” that isn’t on the menu is increased access to the US market. US officials argue that such incentives aren’t needed. The IPEF is a 21st century economic agreement whose

enticements are rule-making, standard setting, and inclusion in supply chain and innovation networks. The participating countries will “develop a high-standard and inclusive economic framework that will fuel economic activity and investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth and benefit workers and consumers across the region,” [explained](#) the Office of the US Trade Representative. Negotiations among IPEF are expected to wind up in late 2023, when the US hosts the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting.

Supply Chains are Sexy

This reporting period was also marked by the steady expansion of “national security” to encompass more elements of “economic security.” The most pointed expression of this phenomenon is the focus on “supply chain resilience,” a concern made real by China’s embargo on rare earths exports to Japan during the 2010 crisis over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands and kicked into high gear during the early days of the COVID pandemic when the world became aware of its reliance on China for personal protective equipment.

Since then, there has been a flurry of initiatives to promote supply chain resilience, such as the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (snappy name, eh?), launched by Australia, India, and Japan in 2021. The White House Fact Sheet for the second Quad leaders summit in Tokyo in May 2022 [noted](#) that “Quad partners have mapped collective capacity and vulnerabilities in global semiconductor supply chains, and launched the Common Statement of Principles on Critical Technology Supply Chains, which will provide a cooperative foundation for enhancing supply-chain resilience in the region.” The US hosted 18 other countries for the [Supply Chain Ministerial](#) meeting in July; this was not a purely Indo-Pacific affair, although 11 countries—Australia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and the United States—are in the region. That effort aims to build “collective, long-term resilient supply chains based on international partnerships.”



Figure 2 Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pose for photo before QUAD leaders meeting at the prime minister's office in Tokyo on May 24, 2022. Photo: Masanori Genko/The Yomiuri Shimbun/Reuters

As we [pointed out](#) previously, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework also has a supply chain pillar. A little after the formal end of our reporting period, IPEF ministers met in Los Angeles to discuss that issue. According to the [joint statement](#) released after the meeting, members agreed to establish criteria for critical sectors and goods; increase resilience and investment in those sectors and goods; establish an information sharing and crisis management mechanism; strengthen supply chain logistics; enhance the role of workers; and enhance supply chain transparency. Again, as in the original IPEF announcement, those are the goals: specifics are to be filled in.

Predictably, for some countries, concern about such vulnerabilities is an excuse to engage in old-style economic nationalism, as governments promote self-sufficiency. One [report](#) notes that governments so far have pledged hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies for building local semiconductor supply chains. There is the US CHIPS Act (\$52 billion), the EU's European Chips Act €45 billion (\$46 billion), Japan's effort (¥600 billion or under \$5 billion at current exchange rates; check daily) and that of India (\$30 billion). Far more efficient, and likely effective, are collective efforts, or "friend-shoring," as US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen [explained](#) in a speech in Seoul during her three-country visit to the region. "Friend-shoring is about deepening relationships and diversifying our supply chains with a greater number of trusted partners to lower risks for our economy and theirs," she

said. She pulled no punches to defend those efforts. "We cannot allow countries like China to use their market positions in key raw materials, technologies or products to disrupt our economy or exercise unwanted geopolitical leverage," she added.

China too is promoting supply chain resilience and self-reliance in semiconductors. In 2014, Beijing launched the first phase of the China Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund, the so-called Big Fund, with Rmb138.7 billion (\$20.03 billion). A second round followed with central government funding of Rmb204 billion, which is anticipated to trigger an addition Rmb1 trillion in local government and private sector investment.

While these ideas sound good—and, perhaps more importantly, have gotten the attention of governments and their money—many experts question their effectiveness. They note that there are multiple bottlenecks throughout supply chains, and the charting of vulnerabilities is likely to be far more extensive and include more partners than anticipated. It takes years to build new facilities and the industry continues its evolution. By one [estimate](#), a national semiconductor supply chain could cost about \$1 trillion. Focusing on semiconductors one expert was pessimistic, [concluding](#) that 70 to 80% self-reliance is "extremely tough...It could be extremely challenging for any country or region to get all the fronts covered." Similarly, as the bruising trade talks of the '90s have made plain, [even friends fall out](#). Vulnerability is a relative concept and concerns can shift.

Military Exercises Resume Post-COVID

As the year progressed, military exercises that had been in limbo during COVID, started resuming (even though COVID is far from over and some national restrictions remain). Most prominent among them was the 28th iteration of the US-hosted [Rim of the Pacific](#) or RIMPAC naval exercise. Billed as "the world's largest international maritime exercise," this year's event involved 26 nations, 38 surface ships, three submarines, nine national land forces, more than 30 unmanned systems, approximately 170 aircraft and over 25,000 personnel. RIMPAC concluded on Aug. 4 "following more than a month of realistic, relevant combined operations training

conducted in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California.”

As RIMPAC was concluding, the US began cohosting, with Indonesia, [Super Garuda Shield 2022](#), an annual joint exercise (first established in 2009) and this year involving 14 participating countries (the largest ever), including first-time participants Australia, Japan, and Singapore. The exercise, involving more than 4,000 combined forces personnel, “showcases multinational partnership and joint interoperability” and featured field and maritime training events including an amphibious exercise, maritime security training, military operations in an urban terrain training, an air defense exercise, airborne operations, and an airfield seizure exercise. Command post exercises allowed participating troops to practice their ability to plan, command, and communicate with each other in a simulated operational environment.

The big news in Northeast Asia was the resumption of US-ROK military exercises, initially put on hold by then-President Trump after his first summit with Kim Jong Un. [Ulchi Freedom Shield](#), which ran from mid-August to early September, included both field maneuvers and command-post training. Other US joint and combined military training with like-minded friends and allies this year included [Balikatan 2022](#), [Pacific Vanguard](#), [Fortune Guard](#), [SEACAT 2022](#), [Pacific Partnership 2022](#), and [Pacific Dragon](#), to list but a few.

We must also take note of the [Falcon Strike 2022](#) joint air force exercise between China and Thailand, which ran from August 14–25, shortly after China’s live-fire exercises around Taiwan. As the CSIS Southeast Asia blog [noted](#), the timing of the exercise “highlights the increasingly tenuous balancing act Bangkok seeks to maintain between nominal ally Washington and major partner Beijing. The Thai military continues to pursue [closer security ties](#) with China even as Thailand and the United States [reaffirm their commitment](#) to a strategic alliance.”



Figure 3 Thai and Chinese air force personnel are seen gathered before taking part in the 12-day Falcon Strike 2022 joint military exercise in Udon Thani. Photo: Bangkok Post

G20: Should He or Shouldn't He be Invited?

Indonesian President Joko Widodo (aka Jokowi) is the chair of the G20 this year, with the unenviable task of corralling its members to reach consensus on vital issues—inflation, rising energy prices, and food security, to name the most pressing—as those same members grapple with the fallout of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (the trigger for some of those problems). In the face of pushback from Western nations that Russian President Vladimir Putin not be invited to the meeting, Jokowi insisted that he does not have the power to blackball members. He invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the meeting and in July visited both countries to make the case that they should attend the fall summit for talks.

The scale of the challenge—and a foreshadowing of the likely result—was evident at various G20 ministerial meetings held during this reporting period. The [foreign ministers meeting](#) in July produced neither a statement nor a group photo. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov walked out of the meeting over indignation at Western ministers’ “frenzied” condemnations of his country’s behavior as that of “aggressors, invaders, occupiers.” Climate officials could not reach agreement on a [climate statement](#) because of differences about language, including the war on Ukraine. The energy transition meeting also [failed](#) to reach consensus and could not produce a communique.

In our humble opinion, President Putin should indeed be invited to the Nov. 15–16 G20 Summit

in Bali. He should also be immediately arrested when he steps off his plane and put before a UN Tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

RIP Abe Shinzo

Finally, we cannot conclude this trimester's report without acknowledging the tragic shooting of former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Japan is still grappling with the effects of that horrific event: the head of the National Police Agency [announced](#) his resignation as a result of the killing and the political world is trying to understand the significance of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's links, hitherto unknown to the public, to the Unification Church.



Figure 4 Abe Shinzo campaigning in Yokohama on July 8, 2022. Photo: Yoshio Tsunoda/AFLO

But it is Abe's absence from the political scene that will evidence his significance. While he had stepped down as prime minister and two other men have followed him, he remained a powerful influence behind the scenes. Abe was the leading voice for the conservative movement, capable of articulating positions with a credibility that other, like-minded politicians did not have. He provided the current government a steady push to the right, while simultaneously providing cover for Prime Minister Kishida if he didn't go as far as some conservatives might have preferred. Abe's stamp of approval silenced much of the dissent. His departure from the political scene has deprived the right of a unifying figure, and will trigger a competition to assume his position as its leader.

This will have consequences for Japan's foreign policy. Abe provided credibility too for the administration. He was its progenitor, providing a framework and basic policy outline. It is not clear how committed Kishida is to the Abe

agenda, which will impact debates over defense budgets, defense policy, new strategic documents and relations with partners and allies. That is one of the questions that will be intensely debated in the final months of 2022 and the year to come.

REGIONAL CHRONOLOGY

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 2, 2022: South Korea's foreign minister nominee [stresses](#) the need for “in-depth” deliberations on whether to deploy additional US-made THAAD missile defense systems.

May 3, 2022: Myanmar's junta [vows](#) to defend China-backed copper mine after threats from the opposition People's Defense Force (PDF). The PDF says the income from the project will support the junta's repression of the people.

May 3, 2022: US Trade Representative [commences](#) statutory four-year review of actions taken under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 in the investigation of China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation.

May 4, 2022: South Korea and Japan [hold](#) their first working-level diplomatic consultations in six months, a week ahead of the launch of the Yoon administration.

May 4, 2022: North Korea [launches](#) ballistic missile into the East Sea. Some experts say it could have been a *Hwasong-17* intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) or a completely new missile.

May 5, 2022: India's central bank [raises](#) its benchmark interest rate for the first time in two years in an effort to rein in high consumer prices.

May 5, 2022: US Senate [votes](#) unanimously to approve the nomination of Philip Goldberg, a career diplomat, as new US ambassador to South Korea.

May 5, 2022: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, meeting with Japanese counterpart Kishi Nobuo, [reiterates](#) the US commitment to defend the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

May 5, 2022: State Department [updates](#) “US Relations With Taiwan” page, [removing](#) phrases such as the United States “does not support Taiwan independence” and “opposes unilateral changes to the status quo by either side” and replaces them with the United States’ “longstanding one China policy, which is guided

by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three US-China Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.”

May 6, 2022: China's foreign ministry [accuses](#) Japan of exaggerating a perceived threat from Beijing as an excuse to boost its own military might.

May 7, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) a short-range ballistic missile into Sea of Japan.

May 7, 2022: *New York Times* [reports](#) that the Biden administration is rebuffing some of Taiwan's requests for larger and more expensive weapons, instead urging Taiwan to buy other equipment that it believes will better deter and defend against China.

May 8, 2022: *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that a Department of Defense study found China is exploiting the Small Business Innovation Research program that funds innovation among small US companies.

May 8, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) a submarine-launched ballistic missile four days after conducting a ballistic missile test.

May 9, 2022: General elections are [held](#) in the Philippines, with victories for Ferdinand “Bong-Bong” Marcos, Jr., as president and Sara Duterte as vice president, both by sizable margins.

May 9, 2022: Laos [reopens](#) to tourists and other visitors from abroad.

May 9, 2022: Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [underscores](#) need to resolve his country's longstanding diplomatic standoffs with South Korea as his foreign minister arrived in Seoul for the inauguration of President Yoon Suk Yeol.

May 10, 2022: Yoon Suk Yeol [takes](#) office as the 20th president of the Republic of Korea.

May 10, 2022: Singapore's President Halimah Yacob and South Korea's President Yoon [agree](#) to strengthen cooperation following inauguration.

May 10, 2022: USS Port Royal (CG 73) of the 7th Fleet [conducts](#) a Taiwan Strait transit.

May 11, 2022: UNSC [convenes](#) an emergency meeting to discuss North Korea's recent missile provocations but fails to produce a tangible outcome due to opposition from China and Russia.

May 11, 2022: Spurred by concerns over China and Russia, Japan [passes](#) a law strengthening supply chains to procure semiconductors and other vital products and facilitate development of artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies through public-private partnerships.

May 12–13, 2022: ASEAN leaders and the White House [have](#) a key summit amid increasing rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. During the meeting, US President Biden [promises](#) Southeast Asian leaders \$150 million in spending on their infrastructure, security, pandemic preparedness, and other efforts aimed at countering the influence of China.

May 13, 2022: President Biden signs a law directing the US government to develop a strategy to help Taiwan regain observer status in the World Health Organization and the World Health Assembly.

May 13, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) three short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, its first missile launch since the inauguration of the Yoon administration.

May 13, 2022: A day after the DPRK [admits](#) an outbreak of COVID-19, President Yoon [offers](#) to send COVID-19 vaccines. Three days later, MOU [says](#) Pyongyang has been “unresponsive.”

May 14, 2022: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [says](#) the spread of COVID-19 has thrust his country into “great turmoil” and calls for an all-out battle to overcome the outbreak.

May 15, 2022: Malaysia Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah [meets](#) his counterpart from Myanmar's National Unity Government, the opposition government opposing the military junta.

May 16, 2022: China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian [rejects](#) G7 Foreign Ministers' Communiqué issued May 14, which

[urged](#) China to not support Russia in the war, not undermine sanctions imposed on Russia, and “desist from engaging in information manipulation, disinformation and other means to legitimize Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.”

May 17, 2022: Myanmar's shadow government defense chief [calls](#) for international help to arm its resistance forces fighting the ruling military.

May 18, 2022: Philippines President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr [says](#) his country's ties with China will expand and “shift to a higher gear” when he takes power.

May 18, 2022: Justice Department [charges](#) US citizen and four officials from China's Ministry of State Security with spying on prominent dissidents, human rights leaders, and pro-democracy activists.

May 19, 2022: BRICS holds annual foreign ministerial meeting via video. A joint statement is [released](#) calling for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. It did not use the term “invasion.” Chinese FM Wang Yi [criticizes](#) the West's “absolute” and “unilateral” security policies, as well as arms supply to Ukraine. He also proposed to explore the potential and procedure for BRICS expansion, including mechanism such as BRICS-plus.

May 20, 2022: North Korea [says](#) it is achieving “good results” in its fight against its first confirmed COVID-19 outbreak.

May 20, 2022: Biden [visits](#) South Korea and Japan to strengthen Indo-Pacific alliances amid China's rise and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

May 21, 2022: Labor Party wins Australia's national election, ending nine years of rule by the Liberal-National coalition government. Labor leader Anthony Albanese becomes the new prime minister.

May 21, 2022: President Joe Biden and South Korean counterpart Yoon [agree](#) to hold bigger military drills and deploy more US weapons if necessary to deter North Korea.

May 22, 2022: South Korea's Hyundai Motor Group [says](#) it will invest an additional \$5 billion in the United States for robotics and autonomous driving software development, just

a day after announcing a similar size investment to build an electric vehicle plant in the US.

May 22, 2022: Labor Party [wins](#) Australia's general election, making Anthony Albanese the nation's 31st prime minister.

May 23, 2022: On a visit to Tokyo, Biden [launches](#) the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) with a dozen initial partners: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

May 23, 2022: At a press conference in Tokyo, Biden [says](#) that the US is willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if China attacked Taiwan by force while insisting that the US abides by the "one China" policy.

May 24, 2022: Russian and Chinese bombers [fly](#) joint patrols near Japanese and South Korea air defense zones.

May 24, 2022: Quad summit in Tokyo involving the leaders of Australia, Japan, India, and the US [takes place](#). The leaders [launch](#) the Quad Fellowship to encourage research and innovation among young minds in the four countries.

May 25, 2022: China [announces](#) it will seek a region-wide deal with almost a dozen Pacific island countries covering policing, security and data communication cooperation.

May 25, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) three ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, including an apparent ICBM, just a day after Biden wrapped up an Asia trip highlighting the US security commitment to Seoul and Tokyo.

May 26, 2022: Singapore and Japan [ink](#) agreements on promoting start-ups and digital transformation for governments.

May 26, 2022: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative [reports](#) three separate incidents in the last two months in which Chinese law enforcement vessels challenge Philippine marine research and hydrocarbon exploration ships in the Philippines' exclusive economic zone.

May 27, 2022: Kiribati [focuses](#) on trade and tourism opportunities with China and not security during China's visit to remote Pacific islands.

May 27, 2022: China and Russia [veto](#) a US-drafted UNSC resolution to strengthen sanctions on North Korea over a spate of missile launches, the first time that the five permanent members of the Council have been divided on the issue since they began punishing Pyongyang in 2006.

May 30, 2022: Taiwan jets [scramble](#) as China air force enters air defense zone.

May 30, 2022: South Korea [approves](#) a 750 billion won (\$605 million) project to upgrade its Patriot missile defense system by 2027, according to the state arms procurement agency, in the wake of North Korea's recent missile provocations.

May 31, 2022: China [urges](#) UN rights chief to look into school shootings in US.

June 1, 2022: US [launches](#) trade talks with Taiwan, days after the Biden administration excluded the island from its Asia-focused economic plan designed to counter China's growing influence.

June 2, 2022: US Department of State [releases](#) the "2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: China," which concludes that the Chinese government "continued to assert control over religion and to restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents."

June 3, 2022: Australia's recently elected PM Albanese [meets](#) Indonesian President Joko Widodo to discuss the AUKUS pact, making good on a pledge to make relations with his country's largest neighbor a foreign policy priority.

June 3, 2022: Philip Goldberg [is sworn in](#) as US ambassador to South Korea.

June 3, 2022: Japan announces [plans](#) to develop drones to support fighter aircraft, and is considering equipping drones with missiles that would intercept enemy-launched missiles.

June 4, 2022: Japan announces that for the first time it will send an active-duty military officer to serve as Japan's defense attaché in Taipei.

June 4, 2022: In response to strong concerns from the LDP, Japan's government [revises](#) a draft document with a timeline of five years for comprehensive strengthening of Japan's defense.

June 5, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) eight short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, a day after South Korea and the US wrapped up joint drills near the peninsula involving a US aircraft carrier, according to the South's military.

June 6, 2022: US and South Korea [fire](#) eight missiles in response to launches by North Korea, demonstrating "the capability and readiness to carry out [a] precision strike" against the source of North Korea's missile launches or the command and support centers, according to the South Korean military.

June 6, 2022: Canada and Australia [accuse](#) Chinese military planes of nearly causing collisions during separate aerial encounters, with China rejecting said charges.

June 7, 2022: Sri Lanka's prime minister [states](#) that the country will need \$5 billion over the next six months to ensure basic living standards, and that the state intended to renegotiate the terms of a yuan-denominated swap worth \$1.5 billion with China so as to fund essential imports.

June 8, 2022: US [approves](#) a possible \$120 million sale of parts to help Taiwan maintain its warships, which the island's defense ministry said would help ensure combat readiness in the face of China's "frequent activities" near the island.

June 8, 2022: South Korea and the United States [fire](#) eight ballistic missiles into the East Sea in response to North Korea's missile launches the previous day, according to the South's military.

June 9, 2022: Indonesia [shifts](#) G20 focus to energy security, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent sanctions imposed on Russia exacerbated an increase in global energy prices.

June 10, 2022: Beijing [continues](#) to "harden its position" along the border that it shares with India, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin said.

June 10, 2022: Chinese military officials [hit back](#) at US attempts to draw parallels between cross-strait tensions and the war in Ukraine, describing the comparison as very aggressive.

June 11, 2022: Japan and Singapore [launch](#) talks on a defense equipment transfer pact.

June 11, 2022: Secretary of Defense Austin, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup and Japanese Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo [hold](#) trilateral ministerial meeting at the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. The three nations also [resume](#) joint exercises as North Korea picks up the pace of its missile tests.

June 12, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) artillery shots, presumably from multiple rocket launchers, according to the South Korea's military, in another show of force by the reclusive regime.

June 14, 2022: Dozens of countries [call out](#) China at UN over Xinjiang abuse allegations. A joint statement from 47 nations also calls for the release of a long-delayed report by UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet.

June 14, 2022: United States [backs](#) Taiwan's assertion that the strait dividing the island from the Chinese mainland is an international waterway, a rebuff to Beijing's claim to exercise sovereignty over the strategic passage.

June 14, 2022: UN ambassadors from the Quad [meet](#) in New York to discuss ways to strengthen the rules-based international order and reinforce efforts at the UN.

June 14, 2022: Department of State's Educational and Cultural Affairs team [announces](#) the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative, a new exchange program in partnership with the University of Alabama to inspire young leaders in the US and India to advance civil rights and inclusion.

June 15, 2022: PM Kishida that he will attend the NATO summit, becoming the first Japanese leader to do so.

June 15, 2022: Opposition parties in the Thai Parliament [enter](#) a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and several of his Cabinet members.

June 16, 2022: Justice Department [charges](#) former University of Arkansas professor with making a false statement to the FBI about the existence of patents for his inventions in the People's Republic of China.

June 16, 2022: Australia [updates](#) its commitment to the United Nations convention on climate change, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% below 2005 levels by 2030, putting Australia on track to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

June 16, 2022: Japan and Australia [pledge](#) to expand defense ties, citing concerns about regional order. Both countries also pledged to work more closely with each other in the Southeast Asia region and the Pacific Islands.

June 16, 2022: Taiwan [admits](#) to paying US lobbyists to help establish closer US ties amid rising pressure from Beijing.

June 17, 2022: State Department [releases](#) a statement in support of the Philippines, calling on the PRC to end its provocative actions, to uphold freedom of navigation and to respect international law in the South China Sea.

June 17, 2022: Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare [assures](#) Australia that there will be no regular Chinese military presence in the country, following the signing of a controversial security pact between China and the South Pacific island nation.

June 17, 2022: Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) introduce the Taiwan Policy Act of 2022, which they billed as the “most comprehensive restructuring of US policy towards Taiwan since the Taiwan Relations Act.”

June 18, 2022: Protests [intensify](#) over India's new military recruitment policy. Demonstrators say the plan will cut opportunities for permanent defense force jobs and demand the government reverse course.

June 19, 2022: Sara Duterte-Carpio, daughter of outgoing Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, [is sworn in](#) as the country's 15th vice president, calling for national unity following a divisive election campaign.

June 20, 2022: A US law broadly [banning](#) imports from China's Xinjiang region goes into effect—a move aimed at adding pressure over Beijing's alleged use of forced labor among the Uyghur minority, and which could pose supply chain challenges.

June 20, 2022: Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand [eye](#) four-way anti-China summit on the sidelines of the NATO summit.

June 21, 2022: South Korea successfully [fires](#) Nuri, its first domestically developed rocket, into space as part of the country's goals to establish an independent space program.

June 21, 2022: State Department [announces](#) that US Customs and Border Protection will begin to implement the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act's provisions to ban imports of products made by forced labor in Xinjiang into the US.

June 22, 2022: South Korea will establish a mission to NATO in Brussels, officials [say](#).

June 22, 2022: Indonesian President Joko Widodo will [fly](#) to Ukraine and Russia to meet with each country's respective leader later this month, Indonesia's foreign minister confirms.

June 22, 2022: ASEAN defense ministers express concern over an escalating US-China confrontation involving the South China Sea, calling on all parties involved to cooperate constructively and peacefully.

June 23-24, 2022: Xi Jinping [chairs](#) the BRICS 14th summit in Beijing via video. The summit's Beijing Declaration was adopted and released at the event. Both Xi and Putin joined the event via video. Membership expansion was a key issue for the summit.

June 24, 2022: President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte [orders](#) an end to talks with China over joint oil and gas exploration in the South China Sea.

June 25, 2022: US, Japan, Australia, Britain, and New Zealand [launch](#) the [Partners in the Blue Pacific Initiative](#) to step up engagement with Pacific Island countries, as China seeks to boost economic and defense cooperation with them.

June 27, 2022: India Prime Minister Narendra Modi [holds](#) first in-person bilateral meeting

with Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau in over four years on sidelines of G7 summit in Germany.

June 27, 2022: India and the European Union formally [relaunch](#) negotiations toward a free trade agreement, hoping to overcome sticking points as they aim to reduce their reliance on China.

June 27-30, 2022: Indonesian President Joko Widodo [visits](#) Ukraine and Russia, the first Asian leader to do so since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February.

June 28, 2022: Biden administration [adds](#) five companies in China to a trade blacklist on Tuesday for allegedly supporting Russia's military and defense industrial base, flexing its muscle to enforce sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

June 29, 2022: President Biden, South Korean President Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida [hold](#) a trilateral summit on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid.

June 29, 2022: *Nikkei* investigation [finds](#) North Korea is likely shipping coal directly to Chinese ports, activity that is banned from international trade under UNSC sanctions.

June 29, 2022: NATO [releases](#) "NATO Strategic Concept 2022" which mentions China for the first time. China is described as presenting "systemic challenges" to Euro-Atlantic security.

June 30, 2022: Hong Kong [marks](#) 25 years since the handover to China. US State Department [issues](#) a statement which highlights the dismantling of Hong Kong's democratic institutions and calls on the PRC to reinstate the freedoms promised to the Hong Kong people.

June 30, 2022: Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., [inaugurated](#) as president of the Philippines and Sara Duterte as vice president.

June 30, 2022: Commerce Department's BIS [adds](#) 23 entities to the Entity List under the destination of China on the basis that they are determined to be acting against US national security or foreign policy interests.

July 1, 2022: Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates [sign](#) a free trade agreement, strengthening economic ties between Southeast Asia's largest economy and the major oil producing Gulf state.

July 1, 2022: Pew Research Center [releases](#) new global public opinion poll showing that concerns about China's human rights record has grown, with increasing unfavorable views of China among survey respondents in North America and Europe.

July 2, 2022: North Korea [criticizes](#) the US, South Korea, and Japan's recent agreement on strengthening military cooperation as a means to create a US plan for a NATO in the region.

July 4-6, 2022: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi [arrives](#) in Myanmar and becomes the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit the country since the coup in February 2021.

July 5, 2022: US [expands](#) export bans on China over security and human rights, to try to limit China's military and technological advances.

July 5, 2022: Philippine President Marcos [says](#) Manila's relationship with Beijing is "not only one dimension" and should be about more than just their South China Sea row

July 7, 2022: Foreign ministers of G20 states [kick off](#) a two-day meeting in Bali. looming over the gathering: Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its consequences, including global inflation.

July 8, 2022: Japan's former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo is fatally [shot](#) by a lone gunman, prompting an outpouring of condolences from around the world.

July 8, 2022: Paying [his respects](#) to Abe while speaking at a memorial lecture, India's PM Modi [states](#) that it is a day of great loss and unbearable pain for him as he had lost a close friend.

July 8, 2022: Japan PM Kishida has a telephone [conversation](#) with President Biden, with Biden expressing his condolences after former Prime Minister Abe's death.

July 8, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, Secretary of State Blinken, and Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi

Yoshimasa [hold](#) tripartite meeting to bolster cooperation on North Korea and pursue “future-oriented cooperation” to promote regional prosperity.

July 8, 2022: China's President Xi Jinping [expresses](#) condolences over the death of former Prime Minister Abe, whom Xi said had worked hard to improve relations between the neighbors.

July 9, 2022: Sri Lanka's PM [summons](#) party leaders after protesters stormed the president's house in Colombo amid growing anger over the government's handling of an economic crisis.

July 9, 2022: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi [urges](#) Australian counterpart Penny Wong to treat China as a partner, not an opponent, and to accumulate "positive energy" to improve ties.

July 10, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken [offers](#) his government's condolences to Prime Minister Kishida in Tokyo over former Prime Minister Abe's death.

July 10, 2022: According to South Korea's military, North Korea [fires](#) artillery shots from multiple rocket launchers.

July 10, 2022: Japan [holds](#) Upper House election. The ruling LDP-Komeito coalition increase their majority from 57 % of the seats to 60%.

July 11, 2022: Attendance by four Asia-Pacific leaders at the NATO summit [reflects](#) a "consequential shift" in the US transatlantic security partnership which Washington seeks to expand to better counter China, a senior US diplomat tells *Reuters*.

July 11-14, 2022: South Korea and the US [conduct](#) their first combined air drills, officials say, in an apparent show of force against North Korea's growing military threats.

July 12, 2022: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa [flees](#) to the Maldives, hours before he was due to submit his resignation.

July 12, 2022: G20 finance leaders [meet](#) in Bali for talks to include issues like global food security and soaring inflation, as host Indonesia tries to ensure frictions over the war in Ukraine do not blow discussions off course.

July 12, 2022: Commercial satellite imagery of North Korea's Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Center [shows](#) the 5 MWe Reactor continues to produce plutonium for the country's nuclear weapons program.

July 12, 2022: South Korea's MOU [publishes](#) hitherto unseen photographs of the repatriation of two DPRK fishermen at Panmunjom in November 2019. Though heavily pixelated, the graphic [images](#) show the men bound and blindfolded; one tries to resist as they are handed over. [Video](#) footage is released on July 18. A day later, Yoon Suk Yeol's presidential office [condemns](#) its predecessor's repatriation of the fishermen as a potential “crime against humanity,” and vows a full investigation.

July 13-14, 2022: 13-members of IPEF hold first senior officials [meeting](#) in Singapore.

July 14, 2022: Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa [submits](#) letter of resignation, says a spokesperson for the parliament speaker, hours after fleeing the country following protests over economic meltdown.

July 16, 2022: Finance ministers and central bankers of the G20 nations [fail](#) to find common ground regarding Russia's war in Ukraine and its repercussions on global inflation, casting uncertainty over the forum's prospects.

July 18, 2022: Japan and South Korea foreign ministers [agree](#) to improve ties, with Park Jin becoming the first South Korean foreign minister to visit Tokyo since 2019.

July 18, 2022: EU and China [hold](#) high-level economic and trade dialogue amidst tensions over issues including the war in Ukraine, Xinjiang and an as yet unratified investment agreement.

July 19, 2022: China [agrees](#) to coordinate economic policies with the EU, liberalize trade and investment, and further open its financial sector but was silent on an investment deal frozen by disputes over human rights, geopolitics, and the war in Ukraine.

July 20, 2022: President Biden [plans](#) to speak with Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, by the end of the month at a moment of simmering tensions between the countries over Taiwan and trade.

July 20, 2022: Asian Development Bank [says](#) that developing Asia is expected to grow more slowly than predicted this year, as the war in Ukraine pushes commodity prices higher and triggers monetary tightening.

July 21, 2022: President Biden [states](#) the US military thinks that Speaker of the House of Representatives Pelosi's trip to Taiwan is "not a good idea" as China promises to take "strong measures" in response.

July 21, 2022: A Chinese navy ship [sails](#) through Japanese territorial waters, the sixth such intrusion of the year and the first since April.

July 22, 2022: Chinese President Jinping [offers](#) Sri Lanka's new president his support, CCTV reported, as the Indian Ocean island grapples with its worst economic crisis in decades.

July 23, 2022: Thai PM Chan-ocha [survives](#) the 4th no-confidence vote against him.

July 24, 2022: China [launches](#) the second of three modules to its permanent space station, in one of the final missions needed to complete the orbiting outpost by year's end.

July 25, 2022: Chinese President Xi [meets](#) visiting Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo in Beijing.

July 25, 2022: US and Australia [co-host](#) 2022 Indo-Pacific Chiefs of Defense conference in Sydney.

July 25, 2022: Military regime in Myanmar [executes](#) four pro-democracy activists it had convicted on charges of "terrorism" because of their political activities in secret trials.

July 26, 2022: China and Indonesia [pledge](#) to scale up trade and expand cooperation in areas such as agriculture and food security, following a rare visit to China by a foreign head of state.

July 27, 2022: Defense chiefs from across the Indo-Pacific [gathered](#) to bolster connections against a backdrop of China's campaign to expand its influence and military presence in the region.

July 27, 2022: In a [speech](#) on what the DPRK celebrates as "the 69th anniversary of the great victory in the [Korean] War," otherwise known

as the 1953 Armistice, Kim Jong Un for the first time mentions his ROK counterpart by name: "We can no longer sit around seeing Yoon Suk Yeol and his military gangsters' misdemeanors."

July 28, 2022: Korean President Yoon and Indonesian President Joko Widodo hold [summit](#) in Seoul and agree to work together to stabilize supply chains of key minerals and strengthen cooperation on economic security issues.

July 28-29, 2022: Shanghai Cooperation Organization [holds](#) annual foreign ministerial meeting in Uzbekistan.

July 29, 2022: Cabinet officials from Japan and the US [agree](#) to pursue free trade and stronger, more transparent supply chains during first "two-plus-two" meeting focused on economic policy.

July 30, 2022: Korean President Yoon [stresses](#) the strategic importance of Southeast Asia to Korea at a summit with Indonesian President Widodo in Seoul.

July 31, 2022: A Japanese man [is detained](#) by authorities in Myanmar after filming a protest in the country's biggest city of Yangon

Aug. 1, 2022: White House [says](#) it expects China to escalate its response to a potential visit by Speaker Pelosi to Taiwan and said the United States would not be intimidated.

Aug. 2, 2022: House Speaker Pelosi and several members of Congress [land](#) in Taipei for a much-anticipated visit that prompted China's military to announce "targeted" military operations in the seas and airspace surrounding the island. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng [summons](#) US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns for an emergency meeting and lodges "stern representations and strong protests with the US side" against Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

Aug. 3, 2022: Russian FM Lavrov [says](#), regarding Pelosi's Taiwan visit, that he did not see any other "reason to create such an irritant literally out of nowhere," one day after the Kremlin spokesperson [describes](#) Pelosi's visit to Taiwan as "purely provocative."

Aug. 3, 2022: Japan's government [protests](#) after five Chinese missiles shot in retaliation against

Taiwan hosting US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi land in Japan's EEZ.

Aug. 3, 2022: Cambodian PM Hun Sen [says](#) that ASEAN will be forced to reconsider a peace plan agreed with Myanmar if its military rulers execute more prisoners.

Aug. 4, 2022: Japan and the United States [agree](#) to work together on maintaining peace in the increasingly tense Taiwan Strait, amid unprecedented military drills by China including five missiles that landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Aug. 4, 2022: President Yoon [calls](#) Speaker Pelosi to reaffirm his efforts to deepen the bilateral alliance and states that Pelosi's visit is a sign of deterrence against North Korea.

Aug. 5, 2022: Asian carriers [halt and reroute](#) flights in and around Taiwan because of Chinese drills near the island, raising fears that Beijing's military exercise could disrupt regional supply chains.

Aug. 5, 2022: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [announces](#) cancellation of several planned US-China military dialogues as well as cooperation with the US on the repatriation of illegal immigrants, legal assistance in criminal matters, transnational crimes, and counternarcotics, and talks on climate change.

Aug. 5, 2022: China [imposes](#) sanctions on Nancy Pelosi and her immediate family members.

Aug. 6, 2022: Secretary of Antony Blinken [assures](#) the Philippines that the US would come to its defense if attacked in the South China Sea, seeking to allay concerns about the extent of the US commitment to a mutual defense treaty.

Aug. 7, 2022: Japan and the US [vow](#) to enhance ties with Solomon Islands amid increasing Chinese influence.

Aug. 7, 2022: Lithuania's Vice Minister of Transportation and Communications Agne Vaiciukeviciute leads a delegation to Taiwan to exchange views on 5G communications and electric buses.

Aug. 8, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin [departs](#) for China to hold talks with his

counterpart on issues related to supply chains, North Korea and regional security.

Aug. 8-14, 2022: South Korea, Japan, and the US [participate](#) in a trilateral ballistic missile defense exercise during the multinational *Pacific Dragon* exercise in Hawaii. This was the first trilateral drill since 2017.

Aug. 9, 2022: President Biden [signs](#) the CHIPS Act into law, including a spending package that allocates \$52 billion to bolstering domestic chip manufacturing, finalizing what is seen as the nation's boldest industrial legislation in decades.

Aug. 10, 2022: China's Taiwan Affairs Office [issues](#) China's third White Paper on Taiwan, titled "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era."

Aug. 10, 2022: Senior Indian army officer [confirms](#) "Yudh Abhyas" joint exercise with the US, first held in 2002, will take place in Himalayas in October near the disputed border with China.

Aug. 11, 2022: Former Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa [arrives](#) in Thailand, according to *Reuters*, seeking temporary shelter after fleeing his island nation last month amid mass protests.

Aug. 12, 2022: China and South Korea [clash](#) over a US missile defense shield, threatening to undermine efforts by the new government in Seoul to overcome security differences.

Aug. 13-27, 2022: China participates in 8th annual International Army Games in Russia (main site) with 11 other countries.

Aug. 14, 2022: Japan [joins](#) US-Indonesian military drill for first time, alongside Australia. *Garuda Shield* is a joint drill between the US and Indonesia started in 2007 that aimed to build partnerships and deter Chinese aggression.

Aug. 15, 2022: Myanmar's deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi [is sentenced](#) to six more years in prison.

Aug. 15, 2022: China's military [carries out](#) more exercises near Taiwan on Monday as a group of US lawmakers visited the Chinese-claimed island and met President Tsai Ing-wen, who

said her government was committed to maintaining stability.

Aug. 15, 2022: In his [speech](#) for Liberation Day, President Yoon fleshes out his “audacious plan” to aid North Korea in exchange for denuclearization. On Aug. 18 Kim Yo Jong issues a [statement](#) rejecting this plan, titled “Don’t have an absurd dream.”

Aug. 16, 2022: A senior UN official [meets](#) with Myanmar’s military leadership, in a rare, high-profile visit that comes amid growing political chaos and violence in the country.

Aug. 16, 2022: Poll by the Pew Research Center [finds](#) that nine out of 10 South Koreans hold a favorable view of the US and that 89% of South Koreans think the US is a “reliable partner.”

Aug. 17, 2022: Talks with North Korea should not be for political show but contribute to establishing peace, South Korean President Yoon [says](#), hours after the North test fired two cruise missiles into the sea.

Aug. 18, 2022: Myanmar’s junta [states](#) it will import Russian gasoline and fuel oil to ease supply concerns and rising prices, the latest developing country to do so amid a global energy crisis.

Aug. 19, 2022: Japanese FM Hayashi [states](#) in an interview that Japan will look into holding a summit meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and Chinese President Xi.

Aug. 22, 2022: Opposition parties in Thai Parliament [submit](#) petition to the Constitutional Court of Thailand requesting that it remove PM Chan-ocha from office because he has exhausted his 8-year term limit. On Aug. 24 the Court accepts the petition and suspends him from his responsibilities as prime minister until a decision on the petition is reached.

Aug. 22, 2022: South Korea and the US [launch](#) *Ulchi Freedom Shield* (UFS): their first large field-training military exercises for four years.

Aug. 22, 2022: Taiwan wants to ensure partners have reliable supplies of semiconductors, or “democracy chips,” President Tsai [tells](#) the governor of Indiana, also stating that China’s threats mean fellow democracies have to cooperate.

Aug. 23, 2022: Thailand’s constitutional court [orders](#) Prime Minister Chan-o-cha to halt official duties pending the result of a legal review of his eight-year term limit, local media reported.

Aug. 23, 2022: Former Malaysian Prime Minister Razak Najib fails to win appeal in his criminal case and [begins](#) 12-year prison sentence for involvement in the 1MDB scandal.

Aug. 25, 2022: Japan’s National Police Agency Chief Itaru Nakamura [announces](#) his resignation over Abe’s death following release of a report blaming flaws in police protection—from planning to guarding at the scene—that led to Abe’s assassination.

Aug. 25, 2022: Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Tennessee Republican who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, [arrives](#) in Taiwan for a three-day visit.

Aug. 26, 2022: Japan will spend \$1.83 million on a state funeral for slain former leader Abe, the government [announces](#), despite growing opposition from a public angered by revelations of the ruling party’s ties to the Unification Church.

Aug. 27, 2022: Prime Minister Kishida [pledges](#) \$30 billion over the next three years for African development, with a focus on investing in human capital and fostering quality growth in a continent where China and Russia are exerting their influence.

Aug. 29, 2022: Authorities in Shenzhen temporarily [close](#) the world’s largest electronics market and suspended service at 24 subway stations in a bid to curb an outbreak of Covid-19.

Aug. 30, 2022: State media [announces](#) that ruling Communist Party of China will hold a twice-in-a decade congress beginning Oct 16. Chinese President Xi is widely expected to seek an unprecedented third term during the meeting.

Aug. 30, 2022: Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey [arrives](#) in Taipei, with the aim of boosting collaborations in semiconductors and other technology and security.

Aug. 30, 2022: Mikhail Gorbachev dies in Moscow.

Aug. 30-Sept. 5, 2022: Russia [conducts](#) its “Vostok” (East)-2022” exercises involving 50,000 military personnel, more than 5,000 pieces of military equipment, including 140 aircraft, 60 warships, boats and support vessels. China, Algeria, India, Belarus, Tajikistan and Mongolia participated.

Aug. 31, 2022: A long-awaited UN report [states](#) that the actions of the Chinese government in Xinjiang, including the detention and persecution of Uyghurs and other ethnic Muslim groups, “may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.”

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COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

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RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-JAPAN RELATIONS

ABE'S LEGACY AND THE ALLIANCE AGENDA

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It was a busy summer for the United States and Japan. President Joe Biden visited Asia, stopping first in Seoul to meet new South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, and then spending two days in Tokyo for a bilateral summit with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and a follow-on meeting with the two other leaders of the Quad, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australia's newly elected prime minister, Anthony Albanese. Biden announced his [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#) in Tokyo with Kishida by his side. Economic security legislation in both Japan and the United States revealed the unfolding strategic calculations for the alliance. National efforts to enhance economic productivity and resilience included efforts to ensure reliable supply chains for Japanese and US manufacturers as well as the desire for greater cooperation among the advanced industrial economies to dominate the next generation of technological innovation. State investment in attracting semiconductor suppliers to Japan and the United States demonstrate the urgency with which both governments seek to diminish reliance on critical technology imports.

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Despite all the diplomatic planning that accompanied these developments, the summer was not without surprises. In Japan, the sudden death of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, at the hand of a lone gunman, shocked a nation known for its relatively low rate of gun violence. Across the globe, leaders praised Abe's statesmanship and his strategic vision—his ability to meet Japan's moment of challenge as the rules-based order was under threat.

Only weeks later, the United States and China found themselves in a high-stakes military standoff over Taiwan. US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi rescheduled her Asia tour after having to cancel it in April due to COVID-19. Her itinerary leaked, and her intention to visit Taiwan drew China's ire. A top commentator for the *Global Times* tweeted that China's People Liberation Army (PLA) had the right to [shoot down](#) Pelosi's plane if she did. And a highly charged demonstration of Chinese military power ensued. The PLA exercises conducted after her departure directly involved Japan as missiles landed in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). The United States ensured that its military was close at hand to dissuade miscalculation.

Biden Visits Asia

The visit of President Joe Biden to Asia had been [much anticipated](#). Biden's first stop was in Seoul, where he met with President Yoon Suk Yeol, who had only been in office for 11 days. The remainder of Biden's time in Asia was spent in Japan. Prime Minister Kishida greeted Biden in Tokyo for their first in-person meeting, and the two leaders spent much of their time discussing a considerable range of issues related to their bilateral alliance.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the tensions across the Taiwan Strait provided two focal points. In their [joint statement](#), Biden and Kishida referred to Russia's "brutal, unprovoked, and unjustified aggression against Ukraine" as the "greatest immediate challenge" to international law and order. The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to providing support for Ukraine and imposing punishing sanctions against Russia. They also discussed the potentially far-reaching implications of the Ukraine crisis for the Indo-Pacific region. For instance, Biden and Kishida noted the recent joint military exercises by China and Russia, and reiterated that they "[strongly oppose](#)" any

attempt by either country to change the status quo by force.



Figure 1 US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio shake hands as they attend a bilateral meeting at Akasaka Palace in Tokyo, Japan, May 23, 2022. Photo: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

While the [joint statement](#) did not directly tackle how the United States and Japan would cooperate should a crisis emerge across the Taiwan Strait, the [press conference](#) held after their meetings produced a clear signal from Biden on how he thought about the US role. When Biden was asked by a reporter if the United States would be [willing to use force](#) to defend Taiwan, Biden unequivocally said, "yes." This became the headline for the bilateral visit even though there were other quotes from that press conference that could have been headlines. Kishida, for example, made it expressly clear that his Cabinet would increase Japan's defense spending within the next five years to a level equivalent to the NATO target of 2% of GDP. He also clearly stated that his government was considering the acquisition of its own (albeit conventional) retaliatory capability.

Tokyo has long expressed its desire to see Washington return to an economic leadership role in Asia. The Biden administration's new [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework \(IPEF\)](#) was thus announced during this visit. The ASEAN Leaders Summit held the week before in Washington provided ample opportunity for the Biden administration to garner regional support. When, alongside Kishida, Biden announced the IPEF, he could claim a dozen Indo-Pacific nations had signed on to his new economic initiative—Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam—which together [represent 40% of the world's GDP](#). Four pillars constitute the aims of

the IPEF: trade; supply chains; clean energy, decarbonization, and infrastructure; and effective tax, anti-money laundering, and anti-bribery regimes.

The last meeting for President Biden in Tokyo was with [leaders of the Quad](#). Hosted by Japan, this summit brought together the leaders of the United States, India, and Australia to continue their effort to define the principles that should underpin the Indo-Pacific region: freedom of navigation, peaceful resolution of disputes, and a rules-based approach to regional problem-solving. This meeting was ambitious, [announcing](#) what had already been accomplished since they came together in early 2021 on COVID relief as well as two new initiatives to develop Quad cooperation. First, a new fellowship in STEM for younger members of Quad countries to build the next generation of leadership. Second, the Quad leaders announced the creation of the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, a significant effort to contribute technology and expertise to ensure oversight and lawful activity in the region. The list of shared Quad projects was long, including cooperation in space, on climate change, and on a host of economic resiliency goals.



Figure 2 Leaders of the Quad meet in Tokyo, May 24, 2022. Photo: Prime Minister's Office of Japan

Domestic political change in Japan and Australia has not dimmed their leaders' enthusiasm for the Quad, and the mood in Tokyo was optimistic and demonstrably warm. India's unwillingness to join in condemning Russia had not altered the other members' enthusiasm for the summit. But it was obvious that Russia and China are unsettled by the Quad. On May 18, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi [cautioned](#) his Japanese counterpart, Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa, not to be drawn into the US strategy

in ways that could "undermine China's sovereignty, security, and development interests." On the day of the Quad gathering, Chinese and Russian strategic bombers together circled the Japanese islands to communicate their displeasure.

The Economic 2+2

On May 11, Japan's Upper House [passed](#) a new law for promoting economic security. Despite the approaching Upper House election in July, the bill [faced little opposition](#) in the Diet. The legislation had been a priority for Kishida, who last October announced the creation of a new Economic Security Minister in his Cabinet. He appointed Kobayashi Takayuki to the post. As Kobayashi shepherded the legislation through the Diet, he made sure to incorporate advice from the [private sector](#) and Japan's major business associations, the [Keidanren](#) and [Keizai Doyukai](#). The final law, like the US-led IPEF that followed it, is defined by [four pillars](#): supply chains; security of basic infrastructure; public-private sector research into innovation and technology development; and classifying patents to protect critical technologies. The law provides a mandate for government action, though it will ultimately be up to various ministries to turn these goals into concrete executive actions over the next several years.

The Biden administration too began to pursue a legislative agenda that would strengthen US competitiveness. On Aug. 9, Biden signed into law the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, which seeks to strengthen US supply chains and economic security. The law sets aside \$52 billion in [tax credits and subsidies](#) to help grow chip manufacturing in the United States, as well as more than \$200 billion toward research in areas such as artificial intelligence.

The United States and Japan will coordinate economic security policies through the newly established US-Japan Economic Policy Consultative Committee (i.e., the "Economic 2+2"). First [announced](#) back in January as a counterpart to the 2+2 meetings between US and Japanese defense and foreign ministers, the Economic 2+2 convened on July 29 in Washington. Japan's delegation was led by Foreign Minister Hayashi and METI Minister Hagiuda Koichi, who [met](#) with their US hosts Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.

The Economic 2+2 meeting [laid out an action plan](#) for the alliance. Acknowledging that “recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic remains incomplete,” the two sides nevertheless pledged to present a “positive economic vision that highlights the benefits of a rules-based international economic order.” In doing so, they highlighted a shared commitment to addressing challenges such as supply chain resilience, joint R&D on critical and emerging technologies, and countering attempts by third parties at economic coercion.

The Shocking Death of Abe Shinzo

On July 8, while campaigning for candidates in the Upper House election, former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo was shot by a lone gunman. The assailant, Yamagami Tetsuya, it was later revealed, had a personal grievance against Abe related to his mother’s association with the Unification Church (whose official name is the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification). Abe’s grandfather, former Prime Minister Kishi Nobosuke, had been responsible for [supporting the establishment](#) of the Korean mass-based new religion in Japan, and Abe like many other conservative politicians had spoken at their gatherings in recent years.

Abe’s murder raised serious questions about public safety in Japan. In a nation with a remarkably successful policy on restricting access to guns, Abe’s death by gunshot was a deep shock. In 2021, [only 10 cases of gun violence](#) had been recorded by the country’s [National Policy Agency](#). Guns are typically associated with violence between groups of organized crime, but this gun had been handmade. In addition, the failure of the police to protect Abe revealed flaws in state security planning. A subsequent review by the National Policy Agency held both national and local police responsible for a [failure to coordinate](#), and the National Policy Agency chief resigned as a result.

This violence came only two days before national elections for the Upper House. Prime Minister Kishida halted campaigning on the day of Abe’s death, but a day later on Saturday, Japan’s politicians were back on the campaign trail for a final day. Kishida called the attack a “[cowardly and barbaric act](#) committed in the middle of an election, which is the basis of democracy.” Despite Kishida’s worry that the violence would deter Japanese voters, the Upper

House election on July 10 occurred without incident. Voter turnout was [roughly as expected](#), suggesting that Abe’s death did not have a huge impact on electoral outcomes.

As predicted, the Upper House results were a [win for a somber LDP](#), and bolstered Kishida’s leadership of the party. The LDP won 63 seats, giving the party and its coalition partner Komeito a majority in the chamber with control of 146 of 248 seats. Opposition parties fared badly, with a setback for the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan with a loss of 6 seats, bringing their total to 39 seats. The Osaka regional-based party, Ishin, fared better and increased its seat share by 5 to 21 seats. But unlike in the Lower House election of 2021, the opposition parties did not craft an electoral coalition and thus presented a divided front at the polls. Japan’s economy seemed to be utmost in the minds of voters as inflation rose and the conflict in Ukraine shook the global economy.

The most striking political impact of Abe’s death may be within the LDP itself. As [head of the party’s largest faction](#), with over 90 members, Abe held considerable sway over the party platform, and it was anticipated over the future leadership of the country. His faction has yet to name a successor and instead has chosen [collective leadership](#) with Shionoya Ryu and Hakubun Shimomura at the helm.



Figure 3 A public tribute to Abe Shinzo, Japan’s longest-serving prime minister. Photo: Kimimasa Mayama/EPA via Shutterstock

Kishida was attentive to these dynamics as he reshuffled his Cabinet on Aug. 10. Hoping to unify the party, Kishida was careful to consult with all factions and appoint a Cabinet that showed the unity of the party. Members who retained their posts included Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu, Foreign Minister

Hayashi, and Finance Minister Suzuki Shunichi. Kishida brought Takaichi Sanae into the Cabinet as Minister for Economic Security and Kono Taro as Digital Minister. Party leadership positions also reflected Kishida's desire for unity. Secretary General Motegi Toshimitsu remained, but new faces emerged as METI Minister Hagiuda was appointed chairman of the Policy Research Council and election chief Endo Toshiaki became chairman of the General Council.

This fresh start for Kishida, however, has [not improved his support ratings](#). Two issues have stimulated public disapproval in the wake of Abe's death. First, Kishida's decision to host a state funeral for Abe has prompted considerable opposition within Japan. Slated for Sept. 27, the Japanese media report that [over half of the public](#) are against this use of public funds. Demonstrators [gathered](#) outside the Kantei to scold Kishida for his effort to honor publicly the former prime minister.



Figure 4 Protesters in front of the Diet building in Tokyo on Aug. 31, 2022 demand the government drop its plan to hold a state funeral for former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Photo: Tetsuro Takehana/Asahi Shimbun

Second, and perhaps more damaging to the LDP, the public has been deeply concerned about the way Japan's politicians have encouraged the Unification Church over the years. According to Abe's murderer, his mother had been convinced by the church in the wake of his father's death to donate most of the family's assets to the group, a practice that many in Japan see as part of the Unification Church's predatory practices. Despite complaints to the government about their activities, many in the LDP and some in opposition parties had Unification Church members campaigning for them and donating to their election coffers. Kishida seemed slow to respond to this public skepticism but as

revelations continued to emerge, LDP Secretary General Motegi ordered a party-wide survey of all Diet members' interactions with the Unification Church. The results found that [over half of the LDP's members](#) had some ties to the church. Some opposition parties have also reviewed their members' affiliation with the church.

Taiwan Tensions

President Biden faced his own challenge this summer. US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi planned to visit the Indo-Pacific in August when Congress was in recess, a trip rescheduled from the spring when Pelosi contracted COVID-19. On July 18, *Financial Times* broke the story that her itinerary [included a stop in Taiwan](#). Beijing responded immediately and with ominous warning of a "[forceful reply](#)." For the next several weeks, China upped its threatening rhetoric, prompting a video call between President Biden and President Xi Jinping on July 28 to [attempt to lower tensions](#).

Would she, or wouldn't she? Even when Pelosi's plane took off on July 31, it was unclear whether her plane would head to Taiwan or not. Her first stop was in Singapore followed by a visit to Malaysia. Throughout the hours after her departure from Kuala Lumpur, the web-based flight tracker FlightRadar24 [attracted hundreds of thousands of viewers](#) trying to determine where Pelosi was going. She did [land in Taipei](#) in the evening of August 2. Accompanying her were five senior Democratic Congressmen: Gregory Meeks (chairman of the Armed Services Committee), Mark Takano (chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee), Suzan DelBene (vice chair of the Ways and Means Committee), Raja Krishnamoorthi (member of the Intelligence Committee), and Andy Kim (member of the Foreign Affairs and Armed Services Committees). Pelosi spoke to lawmakers, activist and of course to President Tsai Ing-wen, who [welcomed](#) her support for Taiwan's democracy.

Japan watched this with some concern. The military forces deployed by China and the United States around Taiwan was significant. China deployed considerable firepower around Taiwan to demonstrate its displeasures. Moreover, flights of PLA fighter jets repeatedly crossed the median line between Chinese and Taiwanese airspace. In military exercises begun after Pelosi left the area, live fire missile launches [continued](#)

for six days, with five missiles [landing within Japan's EEZ](#). The United States [sent](#) four warships, including the aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan* (homeported in Yokosuka). Fighters from *USS Ronald Reagan* escorted Pelosi's plane during its southern approach to Taiwan and US Air Force fighters from Kadena Air Base in Okinawa ensured her safety as she left. As the PLA exercises got underway, both US and Japanese forces got to see how the Chinese military would fare in a joint operation like one that could be used against Taiwan.

The Pelosi visit ratcheted up tensions between the US and China, and yet the two powers were careful to communicate their intentions. To be sure, China was unhappy with the visit, the highest-ranking visit of a US elected representative to Taiwan in 25 years. The question remains, however, what the visit changed. Afterwards, delegation after delegation of US Congressional representatives [visited](#) Taiwan. Just prior to Pelosi's visit, Japanese Diet members, including former Minister of Defense Ishiba Shigeru and Hamada Yasukazu (who later became minister of defense in the August 10 Cabinet reshuffle), had also made a point of [demonstrating their interest in and support for Taiwan](#).

After a visit to South Korea, Pelosi's delegation [ended their Asia tour in Tokyo](#), where they met with Prime Minister Kishida and Japan's House of Representatives Speaker Hosoda Hiroyuki.



Figure 5 Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio poses for a picture with US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and members of her congressional delegation. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

Conclusion

Domestic politics remain tricky for both Kishida and Biden. By the end of the summer, Kishida's

support rating had [dipped](#) 16 points to 36% according to *Mainichi Shimbun*. Kishida's July electoral win has been overshadowed by these political tensions, but he has time to recover public confidence before the next election, which is likely years away. Biden, in contrast, has the midterm elections ahead of him this November. Biden's support rating [rebounded](#) 5 points to 43% at the end of the summer after hitting a low of 38% in July. Inflation will likely be the defining factor in the upcoming Congressional election, but the Supreme Court decisions on gun control and abortion have complicated predictions for a straight-up win in the US legislature for the Republican opposition. This makes for an [uneasy fall](#) as midterms approach.

The Russian war in Ukraine continues with widespread global consequences. The United States and Japan remain closely coordinated in their responses and the G7 has emerged as the primary vehicle for policy coordination with Europe. The Biden administration continues to offer lethal assistance to Ukraine, while Japan focuses on nonlethal aid. Over the summer, Washington and Tokyo had ample opportunity to align their global diplomacy to define this war as a violation of international norms and a challenge to the "rules-based order." NATO allies [invited](#) their Indo-Pacific allies to join them at the Madrid Summit, producing yet another venue for demonstrating shared purpose vis-à-vis Russia. This winter's fuel and food crisis looms, however, and Japan and the United States will need to do more to mitigate the adverse impact of these scarcities on Europe's economies as well as on the world's poorer nations.

The US-Japan alliance continues to adapt to rising tensions across the Taiwan Strait. More than anything, the prospect of a military conflict there will shape Tokyo and Washington's agenda. Kishida and his Cabinet continue Japan's strategic review, and by the end of 2022, Kishida's much anticipated promise of considerably larger defense spending and a decision on retaliatory counterstrike capability will be revealed. The United States, too, will seek to ensure that it has the requisite capabilities forward deployed in the region to deter Chinese aggression. Both the United States and Japan will also continue to prepare for the economic disruptions that could result should Indo-Pacific tensions increase.

CHRONOLOGY OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 3, 2022: Former Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori and LDP Foreign Affairs Chief Sato Masahisa [present](#) the conclusions of the LDP's strategic review at CSIS.

May 4, 2022: Defense Minister Kishi and Secretary of Defense Austin [meet](#) in Washington, DC.

May 4, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken and National Security Advisor Akiba Takeo [meet](#) in Washington, DC.

May 6, 2022: The vice-ministerial meeting of the US-Japan Economic Policy Consultative Committee (“Economic 2+2”) is [held](#) in Washington, DC.

May 9, 2022: G7 Foreign Ministers [release](#) a joint statement on the Hong Kong Chief Executive selection.

May 9, 2022: Governor of Hawaii David Ige and Speaker Scott Saiki of the Hawaii House of Representatives [meet](#) with Prime Minister Kishida in Tokyo.

May 11, 2022: Japan's Upper House [passes](#) a new law promoting economic security.

May 23, 2022: President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida [meet](#) in Tokyo. [Joint Statement](#).

May 23, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken and Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa [meet](#) in Tokyo.

May 24, 2022: Prime Minister Kishida, President Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [hold](#) Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo. [Joint Statement](#).

May 25, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken and Foreign Minister Hayashi [speak](#) by telephone.

May 25, 2022: Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, Vice Foreign Minister Mori Takeo, and

Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong [speak](#) by telephone.

June 1, 2022: US-Japan Southeast Asia Policy Dialogue is [held](#) via videoconference.

June 2, 2022: US Congressional Study Group on Japan [meets](#) Prime Minister Kishida in Tokyo.

June 3, 2022: Special Representative for the DPRK Sung Kim, Director General for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Funakoshi Takehiro, and Korean Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Kim Gunn [meet](#) in Seoul.

June 8, 2022: Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mori Takeo, Deputy Secretary of State Sherman, and Korean First Vice Minister Cho Hyundong [hold](#) a Japan-US-Korea Trilateral Vice Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Seoul. [Joint Statement](#).

June 8, 2022: Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeo and Deputy Secretary of State Sherman [hold](#) Vice Ministers' Meeting on sidelines of Japan-US-ROK Vice Ministers' Meeting in Seoul.

June 11, 2022: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Minister of Defense Kishi Nobuo, and Korean Minister of National Defense Lee Jong-sup [hold](#) a Trilateral Ministerial Meeting in Singapore.

June 21-22, 2022: Japan-US Extended Deterrence Dialogue is [held](#) at King's Bay Naval Base in Georgia.

June 27, 2022: President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida [meet](#) on the sidelines of the G7 Elmau Summit in Germany.

July 8, 2022: Former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo is [assassinated](#).

July 8, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken, Foreign Minister Hayashi, and Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin [meet](#) in Bali, Indonesia.

July 8, 2022: Special Representative for the DPRK Sung Kim, Director General for Asian and

Oceanian Affairs Funakoshi, and Korean Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Kim Gunn [meet](#) to discuss trilateral cooperation on North Korea.

July 9, 2022: Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden [speak](#) by telephone.

July 10, 2022: Japan [holds](#) an election for the Upper House.

July 11, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken and Prime Minister Kishida [meet](#) in Tokyo.

July 14, 2022: Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink and Director-General of the North American Affairs Bureau Ichikawa Keiichi [meet](#) in Tokyo.

July 19, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken and Foreign Minister Hayashi [co-host](#) virtual COVID-19 Global Action Plan (GAP) Foreign Ministerial Meeting.

July 25, 2022: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mori Takeo [meet](#) in Tokyo.

July 25, 2022: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nuland and Senior Deputy Foreign Minister Yamada Shigeo [meet](#) in Tokyo.

July 27, 2022: Japan-US Director-General Level Consultation on Africa is [held](#) via videoconference.

July 28, 2022: Foreign Minister Hayashi [meets](#) members of Congress for dinner during his trip to Washington, DC.

July 29, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Foreign Minister Hayashi, and METI Minister Hagiuda Koichi [hold](#) the first US-Japan Economic Policy Consultative Committee (“Economic 2+2”) in Washington, DC. [Joint Statement](#).

July 29, 2022: Foreign Minister Hayashi and Secretary of State Blinken [meet](#) in Washington, DC.

July 29, 2022: Foreign Minister Hayashi gives a [speech](#) at the Center for Strategic & International Studies during his trip to Washington, DC.

Aug. 2-3, 2022: Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi [leads](#) delegation to Taiwan.

Aug. 3, 2022: Speaker Pelosi and Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen [meet](#) in Taipei.

Aug. 3, 2022: G7 Foreign Ministers release a [joint statement](#) on preserving peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Aug. 3, 2022: The G7 Foreign Ministers release a [joint statement](#) on energy security.

Aug. 4, 2022: Defense Minister Kishi [announces](#) that five ballistic missiles fired by China landed in Japan’s exclusive economic zone.

Aug. 5, 2022: Speaker Pelosi and Prime Minister Kishida [meet](#) in Tokyo.

Aug. 5, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken, Foreign Minister Hayashi, and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong [hold](#) a US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue.

Aug. 9, 2022: President Biden [signs](#) the CHIPS and Science Act into law.

Aug. 10, 2022: Prime Minister Kishida [reshuffles](#) his Cabinet.

Aug. 31, 2022: Chairman of the US-Japan Business Council Douglas Peterson, a delegation from the US Chamber of Commerce, and Foreign Minister Hayashi [meet](#) in Tokyo.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-CHINA RELATIONS

US-CHINA RELATIONS SINK FURTHER AMID ANOTHER TAIWAN STRAIT CRISIS

BONNIE S. GLASER, GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE US

Nancy Pelosi's August visit to Taiwan—the first visit by a speaker of the US House of Representatives in 25 years—was met by a strong response from China that included provocative military exercises, punitive economic measures against Taiwan, and the suspension and cancellation of a series of dialogues with the United States. Just prior to Pelosi's visit, Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping held their fifth virtual conversation since Biden's inauguration. Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered a comprehensive speech on the administration's China strategy in late May. Biden officials debated whether to lift some of the tariffs imposed on China under the Trump administration, but as of the end of August, there was no decision to do so. Human rights remained on the US agenda, with statements issued on the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen massacre and on the 25th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC, and a ban imposed on imports into the US of products made by forced labor in Xinjiang. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held his first face-to-face meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

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Key Speeches Elucidate the US Approach to China

In late May, the long-awaited China strategy [speech](#) was delivered by Secretary of State Antony Blinken at George Washington University. He described China as “the only country with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to do it.” Moreover, he charged that “Under Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party has become more repressive at home and more aggressive abroad.” Noting that Beijing is unlikely to change its trajectory, Blinken said that the US would “shape the strategic environment around Beijing to advance our vision for an open, inclusive, international system.”

The strategy was summed up in the catch phrase “invest, align, and compete”: Invest in America to strengthen competitiveness, innovation, and democracy; align with allies and partners and act with common purpose; and compete with China to defend US and allied interests.



Figure 1 US Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivers a speech on the Biden administration's policy toward China during an event hosted by the Asia Society Policy Institute at the George Washington University. Photo: Alex Wong/Getty Images

Alongside intense competition, Blinken stated that the US remains committed to intense diplomacy and has prioritized crisis communications and risk reduction measures. In an effort to provide reassurances to Beijing, Blinken insisted that the US is determined to avoid conflict and a new Cold War. He also maintained that the US does not seek to transform China's political system or prevent China from developing economically or advancing its interests. And he reaffirmed that the US seeks to coexist and cooperate with China, pledging that the US would “engage constructively with China wherever we can.”

Just over one week later, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin gave a [speech](#) at the Shangri-La Dialogue. Although it focused on the US approach to the broader Indo-Pacific region, a portion was devoted to China and the challenges that it poses to regional security. Austin detailed what he termed Beijing's “more coercive and aggressive approach to its territorial claims.” This included China's illegal operations in the territorial waters of other Indo-Pacific countries, its pressure on India along their shared border, and its use of maritime militia, economic coercion and political intimidation against its neighbors. Austin described what he called “an alarming increase in the number of unsafe aerial intercepts and confrontations at sea by PLA aircraft and vessels.” He also criticized China's “steady increase in provocative and destabilizing military activity near Taiwan.”

Prelude to the Crisis in the Taiwan Strait

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi had planned to visit Taiwan in April but was forced to postpone the trip after contracting COVID-19. Her April plan was never officially announced; it was reported in media in both Taiwan and Japan. At the time, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian [said](#) that the visit should not be postponed, but instead should be “canceled immediately.”

Almost four months went by before Speaker Pelosi arrived in Taiwan. During that period, there were notable developments concerning US policy toward Taiwan. In early May, the Department of State inexplicably updated its online fact sheet on US-Taiwan relations. The changes made included removal of the sentence “The United States does not support Taiwan independence” and deletion of the reference to the language contained in two US-China joint communiques that the US acknowledged the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China. The new version posted on May 5 simply noted that the US “one China policy” is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three US-China Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances.” A new sentence was added saying that although the US does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, “we have a robust unofficial relationship as well as an abiding interest in the maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.”

China's MFA spokesman Zhao Lijian accused the US of political manipulation on the Taiwan question, calling the changing of the fact sheet “a

petty act of fictionalizing and hollowing out the one-China principle.” US State Department spokesman Ned Price admitted that some changes in wording were made but emphasized that “our underlying policy has not changed.”

On May 28, without fanfare or explanation, the State Department fact sheet was revised again. The new version echoed points from Secretary Blinken’s speech. It states that “We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side; we do not support Taiwan independence; and we expect cross-Strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means.”

President Biden visited Tokyo in mid-May and gave a press conference on May 23 alongside Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio. Asked by a reporter whether he was willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if it were attacked by China, President Biden said, “Yes, that’s the commitment we made.” Since the Taiwan Relations Act does not contain a commitment by the US to defend Taiwan, Biden’s comments created uncertainty and confusion, which some believed strengthened deterrence but others believed could provoke greater PRC pressure on Taiwan. It marked the third time that Biden had publicly stated that he would defend Taiwan. A few hours later, a White House official said that there had been no change in US policy toward Taiwan. China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin slammed Biden’s remarks, warning that no country should underestimate China’s firm resolve, staunch will, and strong ability to protect its sovereign and territorial interests.

Also in May, Biden signed into law a bill to help Taiwan regain observer status at the World Health Assembly (WHA). On the eve of the 75th WHA meeting in Geneva, Secretary Blinken issued a [statement](#) calling for the World Health Organization to invite Taiwan to participate in the WHA as an observer. The statement argued that “Taiwan’s isolation from the preeminent global health forum is unwarranted and undermines inclusive global public health cooperation.”

The Biden administration asked the Congress to approve two pending arms sales to Taiwan, one in June and one in July. The first included unclassified spare and repair parts for ships and ship systems at an estimated cost of \$120 million. The second approval was for unclassified spare and repair parts and assembly for tanks and combat vehicles at an estimated total cost of \$108 million.

US Navy Taiwan Strait transits continued at the routine pace of one transit each month. The May transit was conducted by *Ticonderoga*-class guided-missile cruiser USS *Port Royal*. According to the 7th Fleet [spokesman](#), “the ship transited through a corridor in the Strait that is beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state.” In late June, a US Navy *P-8A Poseidon* reconnaissance plane flew over the Taiwan Strait. Almost one month later, Destroyer USS *Benfold* transited the Strait after conducting freedom of navigation operations near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

Pelosi Visits Taiwan in August

On July 19, the *Financial Times* [reported](#) that Nancy Pelosi would visit Taiwan the following month. Chinese MFA spokesman Zhao Lijian said China “will have to take determined and forceful measures to firmly safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity” if the visit takes place. On July 26, China’s Ministry of National Defense [warned](#) that “China’s military will absolutely not stand idly by.” Two days later, when Xi Jinping held a phone call with Joe Biden, he [reportedly](#) asked the US president to find a way to prevent Pelosi from making the trip. A senior White House official told *The Washington Post* that Biden told Xi that Congress was an independent branch of government and therefore he would not intervene. Pelosi would make her own decision about the visit. Biden also reportedly advised Xi not to take provocative actions if the visit took place.

Biden administration officials met quietly with Pelosi and her staff to discuss the potential risks involved in the trip. On July 20, President Biden told reporters that “The military thinks it’s not a good idea right now” to make the visit, though it was likely that the military provided briefings laying out the risks without making recommendations.



Figure 2 Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi poses for photographs with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen at the president's office on

August 03, 2022 in Taipei, Taiwan. Photo: Chien Chih-Hung/Office of The President via Getty Images

Pelosi and other members of her congressional delegation landed in Taipei on Aug. 2. Her visit marked the first time that a House speaker visited Taiwan in 25 years. Upon their arrival, the delegation issued a [statement](#) which said that their visit “honors America’s unwavering commitment to supporting Taiwan’s vibrant democracy.” It also noted that “America’s solidarity with the 23 million people of Taiwan is more important today than ever, as the world faces a choice between autocracy and democracy.”

Late that night, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng summoned US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns to the ministry to [deliver](#) “stern representations and strong protests.” Xie Feng described Pelosi’s action as “a deliberate provocation” and warned that the US was “playing with fire.” He insisted her visit was a “serious violation” of the one-China principle and the three US-China joint communiques, seriously infringes on China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, gravely undermines peace and stability in the Strait, sends a wrong signal to the separatist forces on Taiwan, and has a “severe impact” on the political foundation of US-China relations.

The PLA announced that it would hold live-fire drills around Taiwan and begin a series of joint military operations. “These operations are meant as a stern deterrent against the severe increase of negative moves from the US regarding the Taiwan question and a severe warning against ‘Taiwan independence’ forces to conspire for ‘independence,’” the PLA said.

The drills began in earnest after Pelosi departed Taiwan. China fired at least 5 ballistic missiles high into the atmosphere over Taiwan and splashed into six closure zones east of the island that bracketed the island and its key ports. Dozens of Chinese warplanes and naval ships crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. China also flew drones over Taiwan’s outlying Kinmen island and military helicopters flew past Pingtan island, one of mainland China’s closest points to Taiwan.

Beijing took other punitive actions against Taiwan and the United States. More than 2,000 of Taiwan’s food products were suspended from being imported by China’s Customs Administration due to what it claimed was Taipei’s failure to complete registration under new rules. China suspended exports of natural sand to

Taiwan. Taiwan’s representative to the United States, Bi-khim Hsiao, five legislators, and an activist were barred from traveling to mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao, and from having any financial or personnel connections with people and entities on the mainland. Actions taken against the United States included the cancellation of three military-to-military meetings that were planned for the second half of 2022, and the suspension of several bilateral dialogues including talks on climate change, counternarcotics cooperation, and the repatriation of illegal immigrants.

In the weeks following Pelosi’s visit, China’s military activity around Taiwan remained elevated. PLA aircraft and naval ships continued to fly and sail in the vicinity of the island and cross the median line of the Taiwan Strait. Beijing’s decision to continue a higher level of military pressure on Taiwan was partly due to the cascade of US politicians that visited Taiwan in the weeks that followed. On Aug. 14-15, a congressional delegation led by Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Ed Markey arrived in Taiwan. Indiana’s Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb traveled to Taiwan on Aug. 21. Republican Sen. Marsha Blackburn (Tenn.) landed in Taiwan on Aug. 25. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey arrived in Taiwan on August 30.

Even after these visits taper off, it is unlikely that Beijing will return to the status quo ante. The increased frequency of PLA aircraft and ships sailing north of the Taiwan Strait centerline indicates that China will no longer tacitly respect it, which may increase the risk of accident, especially if Chinese military assets operate much closer to Taiwan. If China perceives that its redlines are being ignored, it may send aircraft or navy ships into Taiwan’s contiguous zone or even its territorial waters/air space, which extend 24 nautical miles and 12 nautical miles from Taiwan, respectively.

While some US allies believed that Pelosi’s visit was an unwelcome and even unnecessary catalyst of cross-Strait tensions, China’s strong military response was widely viewed as dangerous and provocative. On Aug. 3, foreign ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) countries issued a [statement](#) expressing concern about China’s “threatening action,” which it said “risks unnecessary escalation.” The statement asserted that “There is no justification to use a visit as a pretext for aggressive military activity in the Taiwan Strait.”

On Aug. 10, China unveiled its first white paper on Taiwan in over two decades. The paper reiterated China's preference for "peaceful reunification," but emphasized that the country would not renounce the use of force to achieve that goal. The "one country, two systems" framework that Beijing has espoused for decades was reaffirmed, but it was made clear that "two systems is subordinate to and derives from one country." After reunification, the white paper maintained that "Taiwan's social system and its way of life would be fully respected, and the private property, religious beliefs, and lawful rights and interests of the people in Taiwan will be fully protected," though this was contingent on China's sovereignty, security, and development interests being guaranteed. Prior White Papers in 1993 and 2000 had specified that China would not send troops or administrative personnel to be stationed in Taiwan after reunification. Those pledges were absent from the 2022 White Paper, though the change had been foreshadowed in Xi Jinping's Jan. 2, 2019 speech marking the 40th anniversary of the Message to Taiwan Compatriots.

The Biden administration weighed carefully how it should respond to what it [characterized](#) as China's decision to "overreact" and use Speaker Pelosi's visit as a "pretext" to increase provocative military activity in and around the Taiwan Strait. Although some officials favored a robust military exercise or operation near Taiwan, the aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* returned to its base in Yokosuka, Japan on the morning of Aug. 18. Commander of the US 7th Fleet, Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, was among those who pushed for a stronger US response. "It's very important that we contest this type of thing," he [told](#) reporters in Singapore, referring to China's large-scale military drills around Taiwan, adding "If we just allow that to happen, and we don't context that, that'll be the next norm."

The US Navy sailed two *Ticonderoga*-class guided-missile cruisers through the Taiwan Strait on Aug. 28. It was the first time that two cruisers conducted the routine operation, at least since the US started regularly announcing Taiwan Strait transits in mid-2018.

Biden Officials Debate Lifting Some Tariffs

In May a debate in the Biden administration over the Trump-era tariffs on China spilled into the media. As inflation began to rise in the United States, some officials, including Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Commerce Secretary

Gina Raimondo, pushed for at least partly lifting the tariffs to reduce pressure on prices for companies and consumers. Other officials argued that unilaterally removing tariffs would provide the wrong signal to Beijing, since China hasn't taken steps to address the problems that led to the imposition of the tariffs nor has it met the terms of the 2019 Phase One trade deal.

At a Senate hearing in June, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai maintained that US tariffs on \$370 billion of Chinese goods provide significant leverage that would be useful in future negotiations. Other senior officials opposing tariff removal included Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan. Politics was also a factor in the debate. With the mid-term elections only months away, some administration officials worried that lifting tariffs could harm the election prospects of Democratic candidates.

President Biden weighed in on the debate several times. In mid-May, Biden [said](#) that he was considering removing some of the China tariffs, noting that they were imposed by the previous administration. A month later, Biden [said](#) that he was in the process of making up his mind about the tariffs. In July, after a meeting with White House economic officials to discuss whether to lift some of the duties, Biden again [told](#) reporters that he hadn't yet made a decision and that the review process was ongoing. In the meantime, the Biden administration quietly [probed](#) Chinese willingness to take reciprocal actions to remove tariffs on US goods and were reportedly rebuffed.

Media reports [suggested](#) that the administration was considering lifting tariffs on a small percentage of goods—around \$10 billion—while allowing more exclusions and opening a new tariff investigation into China's industrial subsidies. The Office of the US Trade Representative started a mandatory review of the China Section 301 tariffs in May. They were set to automatically expire after four years, and deadlines for requesting extensions for products on the tariff lists passed in July and August. US labor groups actively pushed for renewal of all duties.

China's increased military pressure on Taiwan in response to Speaker Pelosi's visit apparently influenced Biden administration thinking about the tariffs. In the aftermath of China's military drills, the US was wary not to be seen as weak, while at the same time avoiding taking potentially escalatory actions. White House spokesman Saloni

Sharma [said](#) that a decision on the tariffs had not been “put on hold,” and insisted that “all options remain on the table.” According to Commerce Secretary Raimondo, President Biden was [trying](#) to “balance” the potential benefit of easing inflation from reducing the tariffs against possible harm to US labor, and remained undecided.

Bilateral High-Level Meetings

In accord with the shared assessment of both countries’ leaders and officials that it is essential to keep lines of bilateral communication open, numerous high-level discussions were held in the four-month period covering May through August. Most of these meetings were conducted by phone or video link, but a few took place in person.

The most important of these interactions was the phone call between Biden and Xi on July 28, their fifth virtual conversation since President Biden came into office. The call lasted almost 2-and-a-half hours. In a background briefing on the meeting, a senior US official [described](#) their conversation as “substantive, in-depth, and candid.” The leaders exchanged views on Russia’s war in Ukraine and the global impacts of the conflict. They had a lengthy discussion about Taiwan, and talked about potential areas of cooperation, including climate change, health security, and counternarcotics. President Biden also raised human rights concerns and the cases of US citizens who are being wrongfully detained or subject to exit bans in China.

Beijing’s [readout](#) of the call noted that the conversation between the two presidents was “candid.” Xi Jinping’s messages to Biden included that the US was misguided in defining the bilateral relations in terms of strategic competition and regarding China as its primary rival. He stressed the need to coordinate respective macroeconomic policies, keep global supply chains stable, and protect energy and food security. On Taiwan, Xi reaffirmed China’s position that “both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same China” and reiterated the warning that he made to Biden last November that “those who play with fire will get burned.” For his part, Biden restated that US policy toward Taiwan has not changed, and that the US “strongly opposes” unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

NSA Jake Sullivan met with his counterpart, Chinese Director of Office of the Foreign Affairs

Commissioner Yang Jiechi on May 18 and June 13. The May meeting was virtual and focused on regional security issues, Russia’s war in Ukraine, and bilateral US-China issues. China’s [readout](#) of the call portrayed Yang as sharply criticizing US policies, including “a series of erroneous words and deeds that interfere in China’s internal affairs and harm China’s interests.” He characterized US actions on Taiwan as “widely distant” from its statements and warned against playing the “Taiwan card.” In June, Sullivan and Yang met in Luxembourg to discuss bilateral, regional, and global issues. Sullivan [emphasized](#) the importance of maintaining open lines of communication to manage bilateral competition. Yang [complained](#) that the US was “stepping up all-round containment and repression against China.” He detailed Chinese positions on Taiwan, Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Tibet, the South China Sea, human rights, religion, and other issues.

US Secretary of Defense and Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe had their first ever in-person meeting on June 10 on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. Topics discussed included Taiwan, North Korea, Russia’s war in Ukraine, the South China Sea, and crisis communication between the US and Chinese militaries. The Chinese Ministry of Defense [readout](#) of the meeting said that “both sides agreed that the two militaries should implement the important consensus reached by the heads of two states, maintain high-level strategic communication, promote strategic mutual trust, and well manage contradictions and divergences, so as not to escalate them into conflicts and confrontation.”

Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and his Chinese counterpart Gen. Li Zuocheng held video talks on July 7. Milley [discussed](#) the need to “responsibly manage competition and maintain open lines of communication.” He also underscored “the importance of the People’s Liberation Army engaging in substantive dialogue on improving crisis communications and reducing strategic risk.” Li [said](#) that China has no room for compromise or concession on issues pertaining to China’s core interests and warned that “If anyone wantonly provokes, he will surely meet the firm countermeasures of the Chinese people.”

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held more than five hours of talks with Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on July 9 on the sidelines of the G20 foreign ministers

meeting in Bali, Indonesia. Blinken focused on the Ukraine war and reiterated US concerns about the PRC's alignment with Russia. Wang Yi [repeated](#) China's position on Taiwan and warned the US against sending the wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces and against underestimating the resolve of the Chinese people to defend their nation's territorial sovereignty. He also refuted US statements about Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and maritime issues.

Wang Yi revealed that the Chinese side had delivered four lists to the US side: the list of US wrongdoings that must stop, the list of key individual cases that the US must resolve, the list of Acts in the 117th Congress of high concern to China, and the list of cooperation proposals in eight areas. The two sides reached agreement on seeking more achievements in their bilateral joint working group consultations; stepping up cooperation on climate change and public health; creating better conditions for their diplomatic and consular personal to perform their functions; and resuming exchanges and consultation on people-to-people and cultural matters.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held a virtual meeting with PRC Vice Premier Liu He on July 4 to discuss macroeconomic and financial developments in both countries and the global economic outlook amid rising commodity prices and food security challenges. On July 15, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo met in person with China's Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu to discuss environmental trends in China and the potential to bring innovative solutions from US companies to address the shared challenge of climate change. Minister Huang Runqiu detailed Chinese environmental policies and achievements, and maintained that China is willing to work with the US to strengthen cooperation in areas such as marine plastic waste management, protect the marine ecological environment, and promote the building of a community with a shared future for the ocean. Acting Director of the US Environmental Protection Agency McCabe and California Gov. Gavin Newsom joined the discussions.

Human Rights Concerns Remain a Priority

In his China strategy speech, Blinken emphasized human rights as an area of alignment for the US and its allies and partners. He highlighted concerns about Chinese human rights violations in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong. These

concerns were also raised at other opportunities. In late May, Blinken issued a press [statement](#) in which he criticized China's efforts to restrict and manipulate the visit to the PRC by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and her team which prevented them from conducting a complete and independent assessment of the human rights situation in Xinjiang. When the report was finally released on Aug. 31, Blinken welcomed its findings, which, he [said](#), "deepens and reaffirms our grave concern regarding the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity that PRC government authorities are perpetrating against Uyghurs...and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang."



Figure 3 Supporters of the East Turkistan National Awakening Movement rally in front of the British Embassy ahead of an April 22 vote in the British House of Commons on whether or not to declare that a genocide is underway in Xinjiang province and China's treatment of the Uyghur Muslims on April 16, 2021 in Washington, DC. Photo: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

On June 2, the State Department released its 2021 [Report](#) on International Religious Freedom. The section on China covered Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau. It documented in detail the PRC's efforts to restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents that were deemed threatening to CCP or state interests and China's campaign to "Sinicize" religion. In another statement issued by the State Department on June 3, the US commemorated the 33rd anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing, which, it noted, began with a peaceful protest calling for democracy and ended with a "brutal assault" by the PLA. The statement maintained that the US would continue to "speak out and promote accountability for PRC atrocities and human rights abuses" and that the US would "not forget June 4."

Later that month, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) began to implement the Uyghur Force Labor Prevent Act's provisions to ban imports into the US of products made by forced labor in Xinjiang. The State Department's press [statement](#) noted that Washington is "rallying our allies and partners to make global supply chains free from the use of forced labor" as well as publicly voicing concerns about the atrocities in Xinjiang.

The US marked the 25th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC by issuing a [statement](#) that condemned Beijing for undermining freedoms in Hong Kong by dismantling democratic institutions, stifling academic, cultural, and press freedoms, and banning dozens of civil society groups and news outlets. The statement called on the PRC to act in accordance with its international obligations, including ensure that Hong Kong's leadership "respects the protected rights and freedoms of people in Hong Kong, as provided for in the Basic Law."

Potential Agreement on Requirements of PRC Companies Listed on US Stock Exchanges

On Aug. 26, the US and China reached agreement that could resolve a 15-year conflict over what information Chinese companies listed on US stock exchanges are required to share with US regulators. For over two decades, the US has had rules that permit regulators to review the work of auditing firms that examine the finances of publicly listed companies. In 2013 the US and China agreed on how to enforce the auditing oversight law, but Chinese regulators have refused to allow US authorities full access. In 2020, Congress passed legislation that ordered companies removed from public trading unless regulators were able to have access to their complete financial information over three years.

Inspections of Chinese companies' audit documents is slated to begin in Hong Kong in mid-September and an assessment of China's compliance is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Observers warned, however, that the agreement between the US and China is only a first step and could fall apart. Previous attempts by the two sides to resolve their differences have failed. In 2016, a pilot inspection by US regulators was abandoned because Chinese officials withheld information. If the deal falls through, it is possible that more than 250 Chinese companies which account for \$1.3 trillion of market value will be

forced to leave US stock exchanges beginning in 2024.

Looking Forward to the Final Months of 2022

Both the United States and China are entering into a crucial political season. On Oct. 16, the Chinese Communist Party will hold its 20th Party Congress at which Xi Jinping is expected to get another five-year term in power. Observers will watch closely the domestic and foreign policies that Xi pursues after he crosses this major milestone for which he has been preparing over the past decade. On Nov. 8, Americans go to the polls for the mid-term elections that will decide who controls the House of Representatives and the Senate for the next two years of Biden's presidency.

Tensions over Taiwan could spike again if the Taiwan Policy Act is passed by Congress. In its current form, the bill would designate Taiwan a major non-NATO ally, require Senate confirmation of the US representative in Taipei, and rename Taiwan's office in DC the "Taiwan Representative Office." It would also provide \$4.5 billion in security assistance for Taiwan over four years, a provision that has significant bipartisan support. If the TPA is held back, does not pass, or is vetoed by President Biden, some of its provisions are likely to make their way into the National Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 2023.

Although prospects for halting the seemingly endless slide in US-China relations are dim, the planned meeting between Presidents Biden and Xi on the fringes of the Nov. 15-16 G20 Heads of State and Government Summit in Bali, Indonesia will provide an opportunity to do so. If the meeting goes forward, it will be the first face-to-face encounter between Biden and Xi as leaders of their respective countries. Xi will almost certainly be in a very strong position having just been crowned Chinese Communist Party general secretary for an unprecedented third term. Whether Biden is delivered a setback or a boost in the US midterms remains to be seen.

CHRONOLOGY OF US-CHINA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 3, 2022: In a speech at the Lockheed Martin plant in Alabama, President Joe Biden [says](#) that the Chinese Communist Party has been lobbying to oppose the CHIPS Act.

May 3, 2022: US Trade Representative [commences](#) statutory four-year review of actions taken under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 in the investigation of China's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Technology Transfer, Intellectual Property, and Innovation.

May 5, 2022: State Department [updates](#) its "US Relations With Taiwan" page, [removing](#) phrases such as the United States "does not support Taiwan independence" and "opposes unilateral changes to the status quo by either side" and replaced them with the United States' "longstanding one China policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three US-China Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances."

May 7, 2022: *New York Times* [reports](#) that the Biden administration is rebuffing some of Taiwan's requests for larger and more expensive weapons, instead urging Taiwan to buy other equipment that it believes will better deter and defend against China.

May 8, 2022: *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that a Department of Defense study found China is exploiting the Small Business Innovation Research program that funds innovation among small US companies.

May 10, 2022: *USS Port Royal* (CG 73) of the 7th Fleet [conducts](#) a Taiwan Strait transit.

May 12, 2022: US-China Economic and Security Commission [holds](#) a hearing titled "China's Activities and Influence in South and Central Asia."

May 13, 2022: President Biden [signs](#) into law S. 812, which directs "the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to regain observer status for Taiwan in the World Health Organization."

May 18, 2022: Secretary of State Antony Blinken [issues](#) a statement advocating for the World Health

Organization to invite Taiwan to participate as an observer at the 75th World Health Assembly (WHA) from May 22–28.

May 18, 2022: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [holds](#) a phone call with Chinese Director of Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi and discusses "regional security issues and nonproliferation" as well as "Russia's war against Ukraine and specific issues in US-China relations."

May 18, 2022: Justice Department [charges](#) a US citizen and four officials from China's Ministry of State Security with spying on prominent dissidents, human rights leaders, and pro-democracy activists.

May 19, 2022: Justice Department [releases](#) statement that two research scientists for a major US pharmaceutical company, Chenyan Wu and Lianchun Chen, pleaded guilty to "illegally importing potentially toxic lab chemicals" and "forward confidential mRNA Vaccine research to China."

May 19, 2022: House Foreign Affairs Committee [holds](#) a hearing on "The Ukraine Crisis: Implications for US Policy in the Indo-Pacific."

May 23, 2022: On a visit to Tokyo, Biden [launches](#) the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) with a dozen initial partners: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

May 23, 2022: At a press conference in Tokyo, Biden [says](#) that the US is willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan if China attacked Taiwan by force while insisting that the US abides by the "one China" policy.

May 23, 2022: China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson [delivers](#) remarks on the decision of the 75th Session of WHA to reject the proposal of "inviting Taiwan to participate in the WHA as an observer."

May 24, 2022: China's Ministry of National Defense [announces](#) that Chinese and Russian militaries conducted a joint aerial strategic patrol in airspace over the waters of the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea, and the western Pacific Ocean.

May 26, 2022: Secretary Blinken [delivers](#) speech on the administration's approach to the PRC at George Washington University.

May 27, 2022: US Trade Representative [announces](#) the extension of COVID -19 related medical-care product exclusions from China Section 301 Tariffs for an additional six months, through Nov. 30, 2022.

May 28, 2022: Secretary Blinken [expresses](#) concerns about the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and her team's visit to Xinjiang and PRC efforts to manipulate her visit.

May 31, 2022: Office of the Director of National Intelligence [releases](#) report, "Best Practices to Protect Privacy, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights of Americans of Chinese Descent in the Conduct of US Intelligence Activities."

June 1, 2022: US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control [publishes](#) three new Frequently Asked Questions related to the Chinese Military-Industrial Complex Sanctions.

June 2, 2022: US Department of State [releases](#) the "2021 Report on International Religious Freedom: China," which concludes that the Chinese government "continued to assert control over religion and to restrict the activities and personal freedom of religious adherents."

June 3, 2022: Secretary Blinken [issues](#) a statement to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing.

June 7, 2022: USAID Administrator Samantha Power [delivers](#) a policy address, "A Global Revolution of Dignity" at the National Press Club and highlights how the current moment presents a pivotal opportunity to reverse the trends of democratic decline.

June 8, 2022: Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) [issues](#) a Temporary Denial Order (TDO) that suspends export privileges of three US-based companies, Quicksilver Manufacturing Inc., Rapid Cut LLC,

and US Prototype Inc., for 180 days for the unauthorized export to China of technical drawings and blueprints used to 3-D print satellite, rocket, and defense-related prototypes.

June 8, 2022: State Department [approves](#) a Foreign Military Sale of Ship Spare Parts and related equipment to Taiwan for an estimated cost of \$120 million.

June 8, 2022: US-China Economic and Security Commission [holds](#) a hearing on "China's Position on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine."

June 9, 2022: US-China Economic and Security Commission [holds](#) a hearing on "US-China Competition in Global Supply Chains."

June 10, 2022: Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III [meets](#) Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe in person for the first time on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

June 11, 2022: Secretary of Defense Austin [underscores](#) US commitment to the longstanding one-China policy and under the Taiwan Relations Act and warns against the "increase in the number of unsafe aerial intercepts and confrontations at sea by PLA aircraft and vessels" in his remarks at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

June 12, 2022: China's Defense Minister Wei Fenghe [delivers](#) speech on China's vision of regional order at the 19th Shangri-La Dialogue.

June 13, 2022: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Chinese Communist Party Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi [meet](#) in Luxembourg for 4.5-hours.

June 15, 2022: Congressional-Executive Commission on China [holds](#) a hearing on "The Threat of Transnational Repression from China and the US Response."

June 16, 2022: Justice Department [charges](#) a former University of Arkansas professor with making a false statement to the FBI about the existence of patents for his inventions in the People's Republic of China.

June 17, 2022: State Department [releases](#) a statement in support of the Philippines, calling on the PRC to end its provocative actions, to uphold freedom of navigation and to respect international law in the South China Sea.

June 21, 2022: State Department [announces](#) that US Customs and Border Protection will begin to implement the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act's provisions to ban imports of products made by forced labor in Xinjiang into the US.

June 23, 2022: Justice Department [releases](#) statement that a former US Army helicopter pilot-turned-civilian-contractor pleaded guilty in federal court to acting as an unregistered agent of China and accepting thousands of dollars to provide the Chinese government with aviation-related information from his defense-contractor employers.

June 23, 2022: Congressional-Executive Commission on China [holds](#) a hearing on "Tibet: Barriers to Settling an Unresolved Conflict."

June 24, 2022: US Indo-Pacific Command [states](#) that "A US Navy P-8A Poseidon transited the Taiwan Strait in international airspace...The aircraft's transit of the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

June 28, 2022: Commerce Department [adds](#) 31 firms, five of which are Chinese, (Connec Electronic, King Pai Technology, Sinno Electronics, Winninc Electronic and World Jetta Logistics) to an export blacklist for violating sanctions against Russia, which effectively bars US companies from exporting to them.

June 28, 2022: G7 [releases](#) a Leaders Communique that expresses concern about many Chinese policies, including its expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea, its failure to honor its commitments regarding Hong Kong, its non-market policies and practices which distort the global economy, and its human rights policies.

June 29, 2022: NATO [releases](#) "NATO Strategic Concept 2022" which mentions China for the first time. China is described as presenting "systemic challenges" to Euro-Atlantic security.

June 30, 2022: Commerce Department's BIS [adds](#) 23 entities to the Entity List under the destination of China on the basis that they are determined to be acting against US national security or foreign policy interests.

June 30, 2022: US State Department [issues](#) a statement marking "Hong Kong 25 Years After Handover" which highlights the dismantling of

Hong Kong's democratic institutions and calls on the PRC to reinstate the freedoms promised to the Hong Kong people.

July 4, 2022: Chinese Vice Premier Liu He [holds](#) video conversation with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen at the latter's request. Yellen raised issues of concern including the impact of the Russia's war against Ukraine on the global economy and unfair, non-market PRC economic practices.

July 7, 2022: US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley [speaks](#) with China's Chief of the Joint Staff Department, General Li Zuo Cheng by video teleconference.

July 7, 2022: US Federal Court [indicts](#) five men, including one current federal law enforcement officer and one retired federal law enforcement officer, for crimes pertaining to a transnational repression scheme to silence critics orchestrated on behalf of the government of the PRC.

July 9, 2022: Secretary Blinken and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi [hold](#) talks after the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and [have](#) "in-depth exchange of views on Ukraine, the Korean Peninsula and other issues."

July 11, 2022: State Department [issues](#) a statement on the "Sixth Anniversary of the Arbitral Tribunal Ruling on the South China Sea" which reaffirms its July 13, 2020 policy regarding maritime claims in the South China Sea and calls on the PRC to abide by its obligations under international law.

July 11, 2022: President Biden [announces](#) he will extend for one year the National Emergency with Respect to Hong Kong in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 USC. 1622(d)) in effect beyond July 14, 2022.

July 11, 2022: US Consul General Hanscom Smith Farewell [issues](#) farewell remarks, in which he expresses consistent US government support for One Country, Two Systems and Hong Kong's autonomy, stresses the damage of the National Security Law to the rule of law, and concerns about "Beijing's wholesale abandonment of democratic processes in its overhaul of Hong Kong's electoral system."

July 12, 2022: Congressional-Executive Commission on China [holds](#) a hearing on "The Dismantling of Hong Kong's Civil Society."

July 13, 2022: Guided-missile destroyer USS *Benfold* (DDG-65) [conducts](#) a FONOP around the Paracel Islands, challenging restrictions on innocent passage imposed by the PRC, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and challenging China's claim to straight baselines enclosing the Paracel Islands.

July 15, 2022: State Department [approves](#) a possible sale to Taiwan of Blanket Order Contractor Technical Assistance Support consisting of unclassified spare and repair parts and assembly for tanks and combat vehicles and logistical technical assistance for an estimated \$108 million.

July 16, 2022: USS *Benfold* (DDG 65) [conducts](#) Freedom of Navigation Operation in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands.

July 18, 2022: China's Minister of Ecology and Environment Huang Runqiu [holds](#) bilateral meetings in Washington DC with Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, deputy administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Janet McCabe, and Gavin Newsom, governor of California, in an attempt to push green cooperation.

July 19, 2022: USS *Benfold* (DDG-65) [transits](#) the Taiwan Strait three days after it sails near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea as part of a freedom of navigation operation.

July 26, 2022: Commenting on the reported planned visit to Taiwan by Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, Chinese Defense Ministry Spokesperson Sr. Col. Tan Kefei [states](#) that "the Chinese military will absolutely never sit idle by, and will certainly take strong and resolute measures to thwart any interference by external forces and secessionist attempts for 'Taiwan independence.'"

July 28, 2022: President Biden [holds](#) a virtual call with Xi Jinping. Biden underscores that US policy on Taiwan has not changed and that the United States "strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait." On the Taiwan issue, Xi [warns](#) that "those who play with fire will perish by it."

July 28, 2022: US House Foreign Affairs Committee [holds](#) a hearing on "Countering Gray Zone Coercion in the Indo-Pacific."

Aug. 1, 2022: US House Foreign Affairs Committee [holds](#) a hearing on Taiwan with officials from Department of Defense and Department of State.

Aug. 2, 2022: Speaker Nancy Pelosi and five other members of Congress [arrive](#) in Taiwan, marking the first official visit to Taiwan by a speaker of the House of Representatives in 25 years.

Aug. 2, 2022: Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Xie Feng [summons](#) US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns for an emergency meeting and lodges "stern representations and strong protests with the US side" against Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

Aug. 2-10, 2022: Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese PLA [organizes](#) joint combat training exercises in the northern, southwestern and southeastern waters and airspace off Taiwan.

Aug. 3, 2022: US-China Economic and Security Commission [holds](#) a hearing on "Challenges from Chinese Policy in 2022: Zero-COVID, Ukraine, and Pacific Diplomacy."

Aug. 3, 2022: G7 Foreign Ministers [issue](#) a statement on "Preserving Peace and Stability Across the Taiwan Strait" which expresses concern about "recent and announced threatening actions by the People's Republic of China, particularly live-fire exercises and economic coercion, which risk unnecessary escalation."

Aug. 4, 2022: US Senate Subcommittee on Near East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and Counterterrorism [holds](#) a hearing on "China's Role in the Middle East."

Aug. 4, 2022: Biden administration [postpones](#) a routine test launch of an Air Force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile to avoid escalating tensions with Beijing.

Aug. 5, 2022: China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [announces](#) cancellation of several planned US-China military dialogues as well as cooperation with the US on the repatriation of illegal immigrants, legal assistance in criminal matters, transnational crimes, and counternarcotics, and talks on climate change.

Aug. 5, 2022: China [imposes](#) sanctions on Nancy Pelosi and her immediate family members.

Aug. 9, 2022: President Biden [signs](#) into law the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, in which funds will ensure that “recipients do not build certain facilities in China and other countries of concern.”

Aug. 10, 2022: China [releases](#) a white paper titled “The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era” to emphasize “the position and policies of the CPC and the Chinese government in the new era.”

Aug. 14-15, 2022: Sen. Edward J. Markey, Reps. John Garamendi, Don Beyer, Alan Lowenthal, and Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen [visit](#) Taiwan as part of Congressional Delegation travel in Asia.

Aug. 21, 2022: Indiana Gov. Eric J. Holcomb arrives in Taiwan for a four-day visit, marking the first visit by a US governor to Taiwan since the start of the COVID pandemic.

Aug. 23, 2022: United States [adds](#) seven China-related entities, mostly related to aerospace, to its export control list, citing national security and foreign policy concerns.

Aug. 24, 2022: Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman meets Chinese Ambassador to the US Qin Gang. They reportedly discussed Taiwan, US and China embassy diplomatic operations, COVID-19 restrictions, and the recently-ended UN travel ban on Taliban officials.

Aug. 25, 2022: US Sen. Marsha Blackburn, a Tennessee Republican who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, [arrives](#) in Taiwan for a three-day visit.

Aug. 26, 2022: US and Chinese financial regulators [announce](#) they have reached an agreement to allow accounting firms in China to share more information with US regulators about the finances of Chinese companies listed on US stock exchanges.

Aug. 28, 2022: Two US Navy *Ticonderoga*-class guided-missile cruisers, USS *Antietam* and USS *Chancellorsville*, [conducted](#) a Taiwan Strait transit.

Aug. 31, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken issues [statement](#) welcoming the release by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Xinjiang.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-KOREA RELATIONS

SPLIT IMAGES

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Lopsided: such was the state of US relations with the two Koreas during May-August 2022. The Washington-Seoul axis mostly flourished on the military/security, diplomatic, economic, and cultural fronts, while Washington and Pyongyang deepened doldrums whose depths had been plumbed in prior reporting periods. For the former, the most significant items included the May inauguration of conservative South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and quick follow-on summit with US President Joe Biden, increasing trilateral US-South Korea-Japan cooperation, a raft of announcements on US-South Korea economic and technology cooperation, the resumption of field maneuvers in US-South Korea joint military exercises, and South Korea's continuing growth as a serious middle power player in foreign policy, including stepped-up engagement with NATO. In US-North Korea relations, a COVID-19 outbreak failed to lead the Kim Jung Un regime to open up to outside humanitarian assistance, as Pyongyang remained content to keep borders mostly closed and allow the virus to course through the population with only basic prophylactic measures. On the positive side, Pyongyang's hyperactive missile testing in spring slowed during summer, and a feared (yet still expected) seventh nuclear test failed to materialize.

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US–South Korea: The Yoon also Rises

Following his March 2022 general election victory over progressive Lee Jae-myung, President Yoon Suk Yeol [assumed office](#) on May 10. An [unusually rocky](#) transition period marked the caesura between election victory and inauguration, and was especially worrisome due to a speedily scheduled May summit between Yoon and US President Joe Biden, who was in the Indo-Pacific region soon after Yoon took office. [Planning and logistical challenges](#) were overcome, and the summit was widely considered a success, as was the 2021 summit between Biden and Yoon's progressive predecessor, Moon Jae-in.



Figure 1 South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol of the People Power Party celebrates with supporters at the party's headquarters in Seoul on March 10, 2022. Photo: Chung Sung-jun/Getty Images

To begin, the [summit joint statement](#) contained all the standard US–South Korea alliance boilerplate about Washington–Seoul relations as a “linchpin” for the East Asia region and an important bilateral partnership upholding the rules-based international order. Biden and Yoon underlined the traditional role the alliance plays in both deterring North Korea and warfighting if necessary. To those ends, the US and South Korea announced the re-start (after a pause under the Moon administration) of the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group (EDSCG) and of live-action field maneuvers during annual late summer combined military exercises (also suspended for several years, partially due to COVID-19 and partially due to disinterest by both Presidents Moon and Donald Trump). Also reiterated were typical statements signaling openness to dialogue with Pyongyang regarding North Korean denuclearization, supporting international sanctions against the Kim regime (absent said denuclearization), and

promising better diplomatic relations and economic opportunities if Pyongyang denuclearizes. North Korea's horrific human rights situation received mention as well.

The Biden–Yoon summit also delivered both real change vis-à-vis the proclivities of Moon and important groundwork on nascent, future areas of US–South Korea cooperation, notably in the economic and technology domains. Concerning the former, Yoon's new foreign and security policy team—Foreign Minister Park Jin, National Security Advisor Kim Sung-han, Deputy National Security Advisor Kim Tae-hyo, and Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup—carried through on Yoon's campaign promise to improve relations with Japan, not only as a part of the effort to check North Korea, but also as a part of trilateral US–South Korea–Japan alignment to shore up allied strength against an increasingly powerful China and [support](#) a rules-based, like-minded order regionally in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

The Biden–Yoon summit joint statement featured a lengthy description of a growing US–South Korea economic and technology partnership in semiconductors, electric vehicle (EV) batteries, artificial intelligence and quantum computing, advanced robotics, and biotechnology. Some of this cooperation—indeed the underlying technology—is clearly aspirational, but the US is motivated to make it happen as part of strengthening supply-chain security and resilience in sectors critical to Washington's efforts to outcompete China. A cornerstone of this effort is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which received a boost at the Biden–Yoon summit, as South Korea [indicated willingness to join](#) as a [founding member](#) despite the unclear nature of its four pillars. Yoon [joined virtually](#) the IPEF leader-level launch in Japan, immediately following Biden's trip to South Korea. Advances in cooperative space exploration, cybersecurity, and the balance of nuclear power export commercialization and nonproliferation found their way into the summit readout.

The Yoon campaign centered its foreign policy on the intent to become a “[global pivotal state](#),” with one of its chief tasks the upgrading of the US–South Korea relationship to a “global, comprehensive” alliance that looks beyond the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. This was underway during the Moon administration, but the May 2022 summit language underlined the

Yoon administration's commitment to its campaign rhetoric. There were the typical bromides on the alliance's support for freedom, prosperity, peace, and democratic values, but also practical follow-up on institutionalization of COVID-19 vaccination cooperation as well as commitment to climate change goals. On the diplomatic front, hard cases such as support for Taiwan and human rights in Myanmar were evoked. Seoul and Washington vowed greater coordination on the "free and open Indo-Pacific" concept (with Seoul's [forthcoming](#) Indo-Pacific Strategy a potential litmus test), although Washington merely "acknowledged" Seoul's interest in an expanded Quad, [indicating](#) US hesitance to grow the minilateral, Japan's reluctance to institutionalize security cooperation with South Korea, and South Korea's caution in proactively pushing to work with the Quad in a Quad+ arrangement.

Finally, the Biden-Yoon summit marked a departure—even if invisible at first—from the Moon administration vis-à-vis the Russia-Ukraine war. To be sure, the joint statement condemned Russian aggression and violation of Ukrainian sovereignty, and called both for continued punitive measures against Moscow and humanitarian and diplomatic support for Kyiv. None of this was different from the approach taken by the Moon administration in coordination with Washington. Behind the scenes, however, Biden and Yoon security and defense officials were negotiating (even prior to the summit) the possibility of South Korea backfilling Poland with lethal weapons as a way of replenishing and modernizing Warsaw's armaments as it continued (and continues) to supply Ukraine with arms to counter Russia. The Moon administration, by contrast, had assiduously avoided becoming involved in lethal arms sales connected with the Russia-Ukraine war. As the summer continued, the Seoul-Warsaw [lethal weapons deal](#) grew into a major arms agreement covering tanks, artillery, and light combat aircraft potentially worth \$14.5 billion to be fully delivered by 2026 (with a technology transfer component and Poland-located production for some systems).

The Biden-Yoon summit was not the only meaningful engagement between the two leaders. In a first, South Korea was invited to—[and participated in](#)—the 2022 NATO summit in Madrid, where Yoon again met Biden both formally and on the sidelines. Beyond the [symbolic importance](#) of South Korea—an Indo-

Pacific US ally—joining a NATO meeting due to increasing recognition that countering Russian and Chinese revisionism requires a global response from like-minded democracies, Seoul's attendance at the NATO summit was important because (a) it occurred in coordination with other US Indo-Pacific allies, and (b) it marked a first chance for an anticipated trilateral meeting among Presidents Biden and Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio.



Figure 2 Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol pose for a group photograph at the Ifema congress center in Madrid on June 29, 2022. Photo: Pierre-Philippe Marco/AFP

South Korea was a part of the so-called [Asia-Pacific Four \(AP4\)](#)—along with New Zealand, Japan, and Australia—invited to the Madrid NATO summit on the strength of their longstanding status as NATO “global partners” and potential to contribute to inter-regional security challenges, notably those involving China and Russia. Time will tell if this minilateral grouping will survive and become meaningful, but prior to the NATO summit, Seoul, Wellington, Tokyo, and Canberra were in discussion about potential value that they can provide NATO and vice-versa. South Korea seems serious about ramped up NATO engagement, as it has [announced](#) that it will establish a permanent mission to NATO. The trilateral, leader-level meeting among the US, South Korea, and Japan was the first in nearly five years (since one at the September 2017 United Nations General Assembly), partly because of the indifference of President Trump to such niceties as alliances and partly because of abysmal Seoul-Tokyo relations under Moon and Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. As such, merely holding the Madrid trilateral was an important

accomplishment for the Biden administration. Even if [the readout](#) was short and mostly focused on generalities of regional Indo-Pacific trilateral cooperation and defense and deterrence against North Korea, the meeting capped a June with substantive Washington-Seoul-Tokyo defense cooperation and [set the tone](#) for the rest of the summer.

In part as a response to a spate of North Korean missile launches, the defense ministers of the US, South Korea, and Japan [announced](#) “combined security exercises, including missile warning drills,” which the South Korean defense minister later [reiterated separately](#) in calling for trilateral cooperation to deal with North Korea’s missile and nuclear programs. In July, the G20 foreign ministers meeting provided another occasion for Washington-Seoul-Tokyo relations to grow, as Foreign Ministers Tony Blinken, Park Jin, and Hayashi Yoshimasa [discussed issues](#) ranging from North Korea to trilateral cooperation on security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. South Korea’s presidential office [hinted](#) in July at South Korea’s nascent coordination with Washington and Japan (as well as Taiwan) on semiconductors, which by early August morphed into South Korea’s [expressed intent](#) to join the “Chip 4 alliance.” August continued the torrid pace of Washington-Seoul-Tokyo relations, as South Korea joined Japan (and other states) at the [RIMPAC](#), [Pacific Vanguard](#), [Fortune Guard](#), and [Pacific Dragon](#) military and security exercises, the latter of which included trilateral missile defense exercises (a small step toward breaching one of China’s “Three Nos” promulgated during the Moon administration). The month wrapped up with the US [announcing a trilateral meeting](#) of US, South Korean, and Japanese national security advisors slated for early September.

Beyond focus on trilateral security and defense cooperation, the US and South Korea also fortified their military alliance during spring and summer. The Biden-Yoon summit in May [occasioned talk](#) of a return to suspended US-South Korea live-fire, field-maneuver joint military exercises, and that idea [percolated in June and July](#) before [definitive announcement](#) in late July. This was increasingly seen as necessary in Washington, USINDOPACOM, and Seoul, as several years of suspended/cancelled/downsized exercises had eroded combined forces warfighting readiness, with negative knock-on effects regarding

deterrence of Pyongyang as the Kim regime was ramping up missile testing and possibly [preparing](#) for a seventh nuclear test. The [Ulchi Freedom Shield](#) joint exercises—from mid-August to early September—included live-action field maneuvers, command-post training, and civil society resilience components responding to scenarios of both blunting North Korean invasion and mounting a counterattack. Ulchi Freedom Shield also contained scenarios designed to allow South Korea to [test Full Operational Control during wartime](#), the successful achievement of which is one of the criteria for re-taking wartime Operational Control (wartime OPCON transfer). As a part of that, a South Korean general—Ahn Byung-seok—commanded major US-South Korea joint military field exercises for the first time.



Figure 3 US Forces Korea commander Gen. Paul LaCamera, center, talks with South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup, right, during the 11-day Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise at Command Post Tango in Seongnam, South Korea on Aug. 23, 2022. Photo: South Korean Ministry of National Defense

Beyond the capstone return to live-fire, combined forces field maneuvers during Ulchi Freedom Shield, other, less flashy US-South Korea military cooperation was in evidence during the May-July period. The US and South Korea held combined [air power drills](#)—including F35s—over the Yellow Sea, as well as [coordinated missile launches](#) into the East Sea/Sea of Japan, both as responses to North Korea’s continued missile testing in June. Additional air power demonstrations took place in [June](#) and [July](#) (also involving F35s), while USFK [reported](#) live-fire combined US-South Korea special commando training in the Pilsung range in August. Washington and Seoul laid foundations for future military cooperation as well, including South Korean [approval](#) of the procurement of upgraded *Patriot* (PAC-3) interceptors and launchers worth \$605 million (with delivery by 2027). Meanwhile, South Korean aerospace firm KAI [signed an agreement](#)

with Lockheed Martin to increase sales of Korea-produced FA-50 fighter trainer sales in the US. Washington and Seoul also [held the regular](#) Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue in mid-August, and [announced](#) the resumption of the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group slated for September.

Arguably the most consistent element of US-South Korea relations in spring and summer was the drumbeat of news related to (mostly) cooperation on economic security, technology security, and supply chain resilience, especially for critical industrial goods/commodities, semiconductors, and emerging high-tech. IPEF featured at the May Biden-Yoon summit, as did a [Biden tour](#) of a Samsung chip fabrication plant in Pyongtaek and repeated mention of the launch of US-South Korea [ministerial-level dialogue](#) on supply chains. During the summit Hyundai [announced](#) \$10 billion investment in the US for production of EVs and development of robotics and autonomous driving capabilities.

From May to June there were no less than 15 major discussions—most in the form of official delegation visits, with some video calls—between US and South Korea business and government parties related to economic security, technological security, and supply chain cooperation. In a sign of how important these issues have become, these meetings included at various points both the US and [South Korean](#) presidents; South Korea's prime minister; US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; [delegations of senior US senators](#); [foreign, finance, and trade/commerce](#) ministers and [representatives](#) from both Washington and Seoul; the [leadership of major Korean conglomerates](#); and the [heads of both US and South Korea business groups](#). Meanwhile the aforementioned Chip 4 alliance marked an area in which Washington brought together Seoul and Tokyo (along with Taiwan) in a nascent effort at tighter semiconductor manufacturing security and cooperation. South Korea [approached the issue cautiously](#), and only signed on after going through significant rhetorical gymnastics stating that the Chip 4 alliance is not designed to exclude China—whether Beijing believes this is another matter.

Washington-Seoul diplomatic coordination went well beyond economic concerns during the May-August reporting period, with the tone being set by the long-awaited May [Senate confirmation](#) of Philip Goldberg as US

Ambassador to South Korea. Ambassador Goldberg arrived on station in July, just a few weeks after his South Korean counterpart, Cho Tae-yong, [arrived](#) in Washington to take his post. Lockstep US-South Korea response to various North Korean risks was a focus of [senior officials](#) with [foreign](#), security, [defense](#), [intelligence](#), and [area/region](#) policy portfolios. US and South Korean [foreign ministry officials](#) ran point on [diplomatic statements](#) condemning Pyongyang's missile and nuclear programs and [human rights abuses](#) (and [offering incentives](#) for [better behavior](#) by the Kim regime), while [defense and security officials](#) worked out details of [re-starting](#) the EDSCG.



Figure 4 Ambassador Philip Goldberg is officially sworn in at the US Department of State. Photo: Twitter/@USEmbassySeoul

Consistent with the Yoon administration's emphasis on a more "comprehensive, global," outward-facing alliance, which Yoon's foreign policy team hopes to use as springboard to making South Korea a more influential middle power, Seoul engaged Washington on issues outside the traditional scope of the alliance. COVID-19 vaccine development was on the agenda, along with a broader discussion of cooperation in several areas of biotechnology/biopharmaceuticals and global public health. Senior officials also met on numerous occasions to [discuss regional](#) Indo-Pacific security issues (often code for problematic issues related to China), and signed a [joint statement](#) condemning Myanmar's human rights situation. Finally, the Russia-Ukraine war occasioned significant Washington-Seoul [discussion](#) on the role that South Korea could/should take both rhetorically/diplomatically as well as more practically in terms of [weapons deals](#) to support Ukraine (like the previously mentioned Seoul-Warsaw arms deal).

Not everything in the US-South Korea alliance was easy—or positive—during the May-August

period. Seoul's tricky position between Washington and Beijing was evident. The return of [Chinese pressure over THAAD](#) was a test of the Yoon administration's claim to take a clearer and more pro-US-South Korea alliance position than that of its predecessor. Yoon's foreign, security, and defense policy team largely stood up to China's [mildly threatening rhetoric](#), essentially [arguing](#) that Yoon is not bound to honor the Moon administration's agreement to the "[Three Nos](#)" demanded by Beijing, and will instead do what is in South Korea's national interest. As a pro-alliance president, Yoon broadcast his intent to tilt further toward the US on security and defense, but China will surely test this line again, perhaps with more than threatening rhetoric to make painful South Korea's move away from hedging.

US-China regional rivalry presented South Korea with a dilemma on the occasion of the visit to Taiwan of US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi. Pelosi followed her Taiwan visit—which enraged Beijing—with a [stopover](#) in Seoul, leading to speculation as to whether Yoon would meet her. Doing so was assumed to indicate support for the Taiwan visit, potentially drawing further ire from China; not doing so was assumed to indicate acquiescence to Chinese pressure, which would undermine US-South Korea relations on a key regional issue. During the days prior to Pelosi's arrival in Seoul, South Korea's presidential office gave confusing and conflicting reports of Yoon's intentions, and finally settled on a half-measure—a [phone call](#) between Yoon and Pelosi—ostensibly because Yoon was on vacation. This "reason" looked absurd since Yoon was "staycationing" in Seoul and was the only leader not to meet Pelosi personally during her swing through the region. Moreover South Korea was the only major US ally [not to publish a statement criticizing](#) China for its aggression against Taiwan following Pelosi's visit. The South Korean president was [duly criticized](#) both in South Korea and [abroad](#) for indecision, incompetence, and perhaps subservience to China ahead of a China-South Korea foreign ministers meeting in Beijing.

Finally, during the final weeks of the May-August period, a potentially significant rift opened in the US-South Korea economic relationship. The Inflation Reduction Act—major US legislation passed in August—contains discriminatory subsidies for EV batteries, and Hyundai is one of the primary automobile

manufacturers that will have EV sales negatively affected. Reaction from the South Korea [business community](#) was [sharp and immediate](#), and put the onus on the Yoon administration to [convince the US](#) to [find solutions](#) that will restore a level playing field. If this does not happen, there is potential for real discord in the alliance. As the discriminatory EV battery subsidies do not conform with the KORUS FTA and are likely a violation of WTO rules, South Korea has indicated willingness to bring its case [before the WTO](#). Regardless of the outcome, some damage has been done: in off-the-record comments, Yoon administration officials referred to US discrimination on the EV batteries as a "[betrayal](#)," especially after South Korea took economic risks vis-à-vis China to sign on to IPEF and the "Chip 4" alliance.

US-North Korea: The Electric Yoon Aid Acid Test

No one following recent trimesters in US-Korea relations will be surprised at the lack of diplomatic interaction between Washington and Pyongyang during the May-August period. As has been essentially the case since Donald Trump met Kim Jong Un at Panmunjom in 2019, there were no official meetings between the US and North Korea, and mutual recriminations in public statements were the extent of "discussions."

Despite North Korea's continued misbehavior, the Yoon administration did make an effort at persuading Pyongyang to re-enter a diplomatic pathway, promising an "audacious" economic aid and support package for the North in exchange for denuclearization. Washington chimed in with full-throated support for the offer, but the Kim regime responded predictably, most notably via a fiery, contemptuous [dismissal](#) of the proposal by Kim Yo Jong. All this leaves the US and regional partners in a holding pattern regarding the North—"committed" (in their own words) to engaging with North Korea in serious dialogue toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and [supportive](#) of the Yoon administration's outreach, yet aware that such statements have not impressed Pyongyang, given Kim Jong Un's continued [calls](#) for stronger "self-defense" measures and [lambasting](#) of South Korean, Japanese, and US efforts at boosting trilateral cooperation on defense matters. Humanitarian assistance based on COVID-19 response has also gone nowhere, as

the regime has chosen to [handle](#) the virus in its own way (although the country seemingly admitted between the lines that Kim Jong Un contracted the virus at some point this year).

On the bright side, Pyongyang, for unknown reasons, did not take advantage of the US' and its allies' preoccupation with Ukraine—and, to a lesser extent, Taiwan—by escalating its missile tests or carrying out a seventh nuclear test (which would have been its first in five years). However, activity at nuclear sites suggests that North Korea is prepared for a nuclear test at any time, remarks coming out of Pyongyang indicate that it is in no mood to negotiate with the US or South Korea, and nothing short of a new nuclear test (or other major provocation) will turn the US focus away from other domestic and foreign policy matters.

The reporting period began with Washington, and its new partners in the Yoon administration, dealing with the (figurative) fallout from the [spring](#), when the North probably failed to launch a *Hwasong-17*, then probably did successfully launch a *Hwasong-15* disguised as a *Hwasong-17*, then seemingly test-fired a tactical guided weapon. In early May, the US [announced](#) plans for a draft UN Security Council resolution condemning North Korea's missile activities, as well as [plans](#) to boost deterrence against Pyongyang (and Beijing), partly by increasing its “prepositioned stocks” of military supplies in the Indo-Pacific.

Then, on May 4, North Korea continued its trend by [launching](#) a ballistic missile into the East Sea. The missile's especially high apogee of 484 miles (780 km) led some observers to speculate that the missile could have been a *Hwasong-17*, although also possibly a completely new missile. The [firing](#) of what South Korean military experts believe was a mini-submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) came just four days later. With this launch, North Korea's fifteenth of the year, the US [called](#) an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, but as in spring ultimately [failed](#) to overcome the veto of fellow P-5 members Beijing and Moscow, and thus failed to produce any concrete international measures. This was followed on May 25 by the test launch of [three ballistic missiles](#) toward the East Sea. One bore resemblance to the much-discussed *Hwasong-17*, yet South Korea's military [said](#) it traveled just 224 miles, and that the Pyongyang authorities may have intentionally undershot its range given

President Biden's presence in the region at the time.

By recent standards, the rest of the period was relatively calm on the testing front: on June 5 the North [fired](#) another eight ballistic missiles, all of them short-range, toward the East Sea just one day after South Korea and the US wrapped up their joint drills near the peninsula. Additional artillery shots followed on [June 12](#) and on [July 10](#), with the [test-firing](#) of two cruise missiles in the direction of the Yellow Sea in August (as President Yoon marked his 100th day in office). All of these missile tests and demonstrations occasioned the usual diplomatic meetings and statements by officials in Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo. North Korea is likely continuing to make steady progress on missiles, although the head of the US Missile Defense Agency [said](#) that the North likely does not have hypersonic capability yet. Nonetheless, Pyongyang's tests to acquire such capability (see the January–April chapter) are worrying. It is also worth noting that activity at the North's Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Center [shows](#) signs of continuing plutonium production.



Figure 5 A news program reports on a North Korean missile launch at a railway station in Seoul, January 2022. Photo: Ahn Young-joon/AP

North Korean cyber activities remain an area of concern, with US federal investigators stating that Pyongyang's [ever-evolving efforts](#) to acquire illicit revenue include [stealing](#) billions from cryptocurrency exchanges, and that the regime has planted operatives in tech jobs throughout the industry. It is no surprise then that the US is leading a multinational exercise on cyber operations in October, and that South Korea, frequently the target of such actions, is expected to [join](#). Any slim chance of North Korea engaging in dialogue is made slimmer by their success in keeping the regime's inner circle

happy by funding their lifestyles through illicitly acquired currency.

Conclusion: Cold Comfort Farm

There is little to suggest change in the Washington-Pyongyang dynamic, as the North appears uninterested in, and at points disdainful toward, US and South Korean efforts to break the ice. North Korea has had only [critical things](#) to say about the good working relationship between the Yoon and Biden administrations, increasing US-South Korea trilateralism, and the US [role](#) in the region's other contest for legitimacy (in the Taiwan Strait). The North also remains largely shut off from the rest of the world due to COVID-19. However, there is perhaps some cold comfort: whatever has prevented a seventh nuclear test so far—Beijing's disapproval, internal matters such as COVID-19, or technical issues related to the testing site at Punggye-ri—*may* continue to do so between September and January. No matter which party holds power in US Congress after the November 2022 elections, there appears little appetite for risking political capital on rapprochement with the North, and only a major provocation that focuses minds in Washington is likely to change that.

Interactions between the US and South Korea are expected to continue apace and at multiple levels/forums in coming months, despite challenges such as Seoul's navigating between Washington and Beijing, and the need for the US to do right by South Korea on EV batteries. Yoon's approval ratings have dropped precipitously since his inauguration due to self-inflicted political wounds, but his party's strong performance in the June local elections and the South Korean public's continued [warm feelings](#) for the United are strong foundations for cooperation. Doubts could creep in should the November midterm elections suggest a return to the "America First" politics that tested the alliance before Biden's election, but that outcome is [far from assured](#).

CHRONOLOGY OF US-KOREA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 2, 2022: US-South Korea alliance is an incredibly important relationship that is vital to many issues in the region and around the world, a White House spokesperson [says](#) regarding President Joe Biden's planned trip to Seoul.

May 3, 2022: President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol [meets](#) with Australia's ambassador to Seoul and asks for his country's support for cooperation between South Korea and working groups under the Quad security partnership, says his spokesperson.

May 3, 2022: US plans to move forward with a US-drafted UN Security Council resolution condemning North Korea's recent missile activities, [says](#) US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

May 3, 2022: US [plans](#) to boost deterrence against China and North Korea, partly by increasing "prepositioned stocks" of military supplies in the Indo-Pacific according to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

May 4, 2022: North Korea [launches](#) a ballistic missile into the East Sea. Some experts say it could have been a *Hwasong-17* intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) or a completely new missile.

May 5, 2022: US Senate [votes](#) unanimously to approve the nomination of Philip Goldberg, a career diplomat, as new US ambassador to South Korea.

May 6, 2022: US [imposes](#) sanctions on virtual currency mixer Blender for helping North Korea launder stolen virtual currency, the first time the US has imposed sanctions on a virtual currency mixer, according to the Treasury department.

May 7, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) a submarine-launched ballistic missile four days after conducting a ballistic missile test.

May 9, 2022: Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [underscores](#) need to resolve his country's longstanding diplomatic standoffs with South Korea as his foreign minister arrived in Seoul for the inauguration of Yoon Suk Yeol. He emphasizes the importance of cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo as well as trilateral partnerships involving Washington, citing Russia's invasion of Ukraine that "could shake up the foundation of an international order."

May 10, 2022: US [calls](#) for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to discuss North Korea's latest missile provocation.

May 10, 2022: President Yoon [says](#) the alliance between South Korea and the US is a "linchpin" of regional peace and prosperity, during a meeting with US second gentleman Douglas Emhoff and other members of a delegation sent by Biden to attend Yoon's inauguration ceremony.

May 11, 2022: UNSC [convenes](#) an emergency meeting to discuss North Korea's recent missile provocations but fails to produce a tangible outcome due to opposition from China and Russia.

May 13, 2022: Top diplomats of South Korea and the United States [express](#) concerns over recent COVID-19 outbreaks in North Korea and agree to continue consultations on humanitarian aid to the reclusive country during video talks.

May 13, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) three short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, its first missile launch since the inauguration of the Yoon administration.

May 18, 2022: North Korea does not appear to have developed a hypersonic missile, but its tests to develop such a system warrant US concerns, [says](#) the head of the US Missile Defense Agency.

May 19, 2022: US military has flown a reconnaissance plane toward the East Sea, an aviation tracker [says](#), amid concerns about the possibility of another ICBM launch by North Korea.

May 19, 2022: US [commits](#) to engaging with North Korea in serious dialogue and is willing to take "action for action" with North Korea toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, says National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

May 19, 2022: Chief nuclear envoys of South Korea and Russia [hold](#) phone talks to discuss the security situation on the Korean Peninsula following North Korea's COVID-19 outbreak and missile tests.

May 20, 2022: North Korea [reports](#) over 260,000 new suspected COVID-19 cases, with the total number of such cases surpassing 2 million, eight days after it first confirmed the virus outbreak.

May 20, 2022: Presidents Yoon and Biden [tour](#) a Samsung Electronics chip plant, demonstrating their commitment to expanding their alliance beyond the security sphere to global supply chains and other key areas.

May 21, 2022: South Korea and the United States [agree](#) to launch a ministerial-level dialogue to discuss cooperation on supply chains of key industry items and other economic security issues.

May 21, 2022: Presidents Yoon Biden [agree](#) to begin discussions on expanding joint military exercises between the two countries amid growing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea.

May 22, 2022: South Korea's Hyundai Motor Group [says](#) it will invest an additional \$5 billion in the United States for robotics and autonomous driving software development, just a day after announcing a similar size investment to build an electric vehicle plant in the US.

May 22, 2022: US [is not considering](#) adding South Korea to Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, says a senior US official.

May 23, 2022: Yoon [says](#) South Korea will contribute to the newly launched Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) across all sectors

and propose ways to cooperate on supply chain resilience, the transition to a digital economy, and clean energy and decarbonization.

May 25, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) three ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, including an apparent ICBM, just a day after Biden wrapped up an Asia trip highlighting the US security commitment to Seoul and Tokyo.

May 25, 2022: Chinese and Russian warplanes [enter](#) South Korea's air defense identification zone (Kadiz) on two separate occasions without notice, prompting the Air Force to scramble fighters to the scene, according to the Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

May 27, 2022: China and Russia [veto](#) a US-drafted UNSC resolution to strengthen sanctions on North Korea over a spate of missile launches, the first time that the five permanent members of the Council have been divided on the issue since they began punishing Pyongyang in 2006.

May 27, 2022: South Korean government [expresses](#) "deep regret" about an unprecedented rejection of a proposed UNSC resolution imposing sanctions on North Korea for its provocation.

May 30, 2022: South Korea [approves](#) a 750 billion won (\$605 million) project to upgrade its Patriot missile defense system by 2027, according to the state arms procurement agency, in the wake of North Korea's recent missile provocations.

May 30, 2022: South Korea's foreign ministry [launches](#) in-house economic security center to better handle global supply chain issues following months of preparatory work.

June 1, 2022: South Korean supergroup BTS [highlights](#) the need to respect one another as they made their first visit to the White House for a rare meeting with President Biden.

June 3, 2022: Philip Goldberg [is sworn in](#) as US ambassador to South Korea.

June 3, 2022: US [says](#) it is set to adjust its military posture to counter North Korea's continued provocations and threats.

June 3, 2022: South Korean Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun [drums](#) up support from the US Congress to expand bilateral trade and

investment. Ahn made the request during a meeting with Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), where the two noted the achievements of the May summit between Yoon and Biden, and discussed ways to deepen their economic ties.

June 5, 2022: Top South Korean and US nuclear envoys [hold](#) an emergency meeting in Seoul, hours after North Korea test-fired another salvo of ballistic missiles into the East Sea.

June 5, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) eight short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, a day after South Korea and the US wrapped up joint drills near the peninsula involving a US aircraft carrier, according to the South's military.

June 6, 2022: South Korea and the United States [fire](#) eight ballistic missiles into the East Sea in response to North Korea's missile launches the previous day, according to the South's military.

June 7, 2022: South Korea and the United States [conduct](#) a combined air power demonstration involving 20 warplanes, including F-35A stealth fighters, over the Yellow Sea, Seoul officials said, in another display of readiness following North Korea's weekend missile launches.

June 10, 2022: Yoon [gives](#) credentials to new ambassador to the United States Cho Tae-yong. Cho says he will focus on expanding the scope of the bilateral alliance to entail broad elements for economic security by facilitating strategic communication efforts.

June 11, 2022: North Korean state media reports that leader Kim Jong Un [calls](#) for stronger "self-defense" measures to tackle "very serious" security challenges while presiding over a key ruling party session earlier in the week.

June 11, 2022: Defense Secretary Austin [reaffirms](#) US commitment to reinforcing "extended deterrence" against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats during the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

June 11, 2022: Defense chiefs of South Korea, the United States, and Japan [agrees](#) to step up cooperation to counter North Korea's missile threats through combined regular security exercises, including missile warning drills.

June 12, 2022: Korea Aerospace Industries Co., South Korea's sole aircraft manufacturer, [says](#) it has signed an agreement with the US defense firm Lockheed Martin to boost sales of advanced trainer jets in the United States.

June 12, 2022: South Korea [seeks](#) to "normalize" security cooperation with Japan and strengthen trilateral collaboration involving the United States to address North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, according to the Seoul's defense minister.

June 12, 2022: North Korea [fires](#) artillery shots, presumably from multiple rocket launchers, according to the South Korea's military, in another show of force by the reclusive regime.

June 12, 2022: In response to North Korea's recent ballistic missile launches, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup and US and Japanese counterparts Lloyd Austin and Kishi Nobuo [agree](#) to hold tripartite military exercises on a [consistent](#) and more public basis.

June 13, 2022: Secretary Antony Blinken and South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin [hold](#) a joint press conference. Park [states](#) that any North Korean provocations will be met with a "united and firm response" from the bilateral alliance and the international community.

June 15, 2022: South Korean Second Vice Foreign Minister Lee Do-hoon and US Undersecretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose W. Fernandez [meet](#) on the sidelines of the Minerals Security Partnership (MSP). They agree to bolster coordination for economic security issues and in industries such as semiconductors and batteries.

June 16, 2022: After meeting with US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin [states](#) that South Korea and the United States will continue to hold ministerial-level dialogue to implement the outcome of their leaders' summit last month.

June 16, 2022: South Korea's Vice Defense Minister Shin Beom-chul [attends](#) a US-led forum on support for Ukraine.

June 17, 2022: South Korea's top nuclear envoy Kim Gunn [meets](#) senior State Department officials for updates on North Korea policies amid concerns of a DPRK nuclear test.

June 17, 2022: South Korea's Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [meets](#) members of the American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC) to discuss regional security, the US-ROK alliance, and strengthening security coordination.

June 20, 2022: South Korea and the US tentatively [agree](#) to hold biannual Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD) in July. Agenda items include Seoul's push to strengthen the enforceability of US extended deterrence and expansion of combined military exercises.

June 21, 2022: South Korea successfully [fires](#) Nuri, its first domestically developed rocket, into space as part of the country's goals to establish an independent space program. Nuri is [topped](#) with five satellites that will carry out Earth observation missions for up to two years.

June 22, 2022: North Korean state media [publishes](#) photo of Kim Jong Un directing a meeting of military officials. A photo in the background, of South Korea's east coast, triggers concerns of tactical nuclear weapons deployment.

June 22, 2022: South Korea will establish a mission to NATO in Brussels, officials [say](#), and President Yoon will focus on three purposes: strengthening the "value alliance" with NATO states and partner nations, building a foundation for a "comprehensive security network" with NATO, and holding a series of bilateral summits to focus on economic and security issues.

June 22, 2022: South Korean satellite [makes](#) two-way communication with ground station at the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), confirming Nuri's satellite deployment capability.

June 23, 2022: During a major party meeting, Kim Jong Un and top officials [discussed](#) adding missions and revising organizational and operational plans of front-line military units of the Korean People's Army (KPA).

June 23, 2022: South Korea [establishes](#) a task force composed of key industry sectors such as semiconductors, cars, steel, and renewable energy resources for discussion with experts and the private sector on its strategy on the newly launched, US-led IPEF.

June 23, 2022: Delegation of South Korean businessmen, led by chief of Korea International Trade Association (KITA) Koo Ja-yeol, [meets](#) US members of Congress and White House officials to discuss bilateral economic cooperation.

June 23, 2022: In a show of readiness against North Korea security threats, South Korea and the US [conduct](#) a combined patrol flight over key former battle sites.

June 23, 2022: Top military officers of South Korea and the US, Won In-choul and Gen. Mark Milley, [hold](#) virtual talks on North Korea's military threats and agreed that the allies' combined defense posture is "more solid than at any other time."

June 24, 2022: US House Armed Services Committee [endorses](#) annual defense policy bill for fiscal year 2023 that will maintain the current level of around 28,500 US troops in South Korea.

June 27, 2022: South Korea's top nuclear envoy Kim Gunn [meets](#) senior Treasury Department official Brian Nelson to discuss North Korea's development of a nuclear and missile program. Both sides agreed that the North will face tougher international sanctions and isolation if it "refuses to accept dialogue offers and continues provocative acts."

June 27, 2022: Amid growing security threats from North Korea, South Korea's military [plans](#) to participate in a Cyber Flag exercise, a US-led multinational exercise on cyber operations, in October, officials say.

June 28, 2022: President Yoon [talks](#) briefly with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio during a gala dinner for NATO summit participants and expressed hope for future-oriented development of bilateral relations.

June 28, 2022: JCS Chairman Gen. Won In-choul and US Indo-Pacific Command Chief Adm. John Aquilino [hold](#) virtual talks to discuss stepping up security cooperation amid concerns about the possibility of North Korea carrying out its seventh nuclear test.

June 29, 2022: President Yoon, President Biden, and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [hold](#) a trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the NATO summit, largely to [discuss](#) security

cooperation against the evolving threat posed by the DPRK.

June 30, 2022: During an address at the NATO summit, Yoon [calls](#) on the international community to show resolve to denuclearize North Korea and stated that ROK will fulfill a bigger role and responsibility, especially in economic and cyber security areas.

July 3, 2022: In response to trilateral talks held on the sidelines of the NATO summit last month, North Korea [criticizes](#) South Korea, Japan, and the United States for pushing to boost trilateral military cooperation targeting the North.

July 4, 2022: South Korea and the US [hold](#) first session of their economic security dialogue, a channel established as part of a summit agreement between Presidents Yoon and Biden in May. South Korean Presidential Secretary for Economic Security Wang Yun-jong will soon meet with senior director for technology and national security on the White House NSC Tarun Chhabra.

July 4, 2022: South Korea Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [discuss](#) issues related to regional security and the bilateral alliance with Sen. Rick Scott. Lee asked for US Congress' support for the development of a "global comprehensive strategic alliance."

July 8, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin, Secretary of State Blinken, and Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa [hold](#) tripartite meeting to bolster cooperation on North Korea and pursue "future-oriented cooperation" to promote regional prosperity.

July 8, 2022: During a G20 meeting in Indonesia, South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin [calls](#) for efforts to strengthen "rules-based multilateralism" and shared South Korea's vision to play a greater role for global freedom. Park encouraged G-20 members to cooperate to assist Ukraine.

July 10, 2022: According to South Korea's military, North Korea [fires](#) artillery shots from multiple rocket launchers.

July 10, 2022: At a G20 meeting, chief nuclear envoys of South Korea, Japan, and the US [reaffirm](#) their commitment to stronger trilateral

cooperation against North Korea security threats.

July 10, 2022: North Korean government-based hackers have [stolen](#) billions of dollars by raiding cryptocurrency exchanges and have also been planting operatives in tech jobs throughout the industry, as part of an evolving effort by the DPRK to gain revenue.

July 10, 2022: Philip Goldberg, new US ambassador to South Korea, [arrives](#) in Seoul to fill a position that has been vacant for one and a half years.

July 11, 2022: Amid concerns that North Korea may conduct its seventh nuclear test, Department of State Counselor Derek Chollet [visits](#) Seoul to discuss ways to strengthen the US-ROK alliance.

July 11, 2022: South Korea and the US [consider](#) the resumption of combined field training during their regular military exercise set for the next month.

July 12, 2022: Commercial satellite imagery of North Korea's Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Center [shows](#) the 5 MWe Reactor continues to produce plutonium for the country's nuclear weapons program.

July 13, 2022: Ambassador to South Korea Goldberg [speaks](#) on evolving the bilateral relationship into a "comprehensive strategic one."

July 14, 2022: Ambassador Goldberg [stresses](#) expanding bilateral relations in the face of global challenges such as interrupted supply chains, COVID-19, and Russia's war in Ukraine.

July 14, 2022: South Korea presidential official [says](#) Seoul and the US are using various channels to strengthen cooperation on semiconductors. This endeavor would also involve Japan and Taiwan.

July 11-14, 2022: South Korea and the US [conduct](#) their first combined air drills, officials say, in an apparent show of force against North Korea's growing military threats.

July 16, 2022: In a recently passed defense budget bill, the US House of Representatives

[stresses](#) the need to maintain and possibly strengthen US military presence in South Korea.

July 16, 2022: C.S. Eliot Kang, assistant secretary at the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, [warns](#) industry and government officials of North Korean IT workers posing as third-country citizens.

July 19, 2022: President Yoon [meets](#) Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to discuss rising inflation, stabilizing global energy prices, resolving supply chain disruptions, and strengthening the economic security alliance. Yellen [advocated](#) for bilateral “friend-shoring” to build more stable supply chains to reduce economic dependence on China.

July 20, 2022: South Korea’s National Intelligence Service Director Kim Kyou-hyun [makes](#) an unannounced visit to the US amid concerns over the possibility of a North Korean nuclear test.

July 20, 2022: In its annual human trafficking report, US State Department [downgrades](#) South Korea to Tier 2 from its position of Tier 1 which it has held since 2002. South Korea’s foreign ministry vowed more efforts to combat human trafficking.

July 20, 2022: South Korean National Security Advisor Kim Sung-han [meets](#) US Ambassador Goldberg to discuss the global comprehensive strategic alliance agreed by both presidents.

July 20, 2022: South Korean Foreign and Trade Ministers Park Jin and Ahn Duk-geun [participate](#) in a virtual two-day Supply Chain Ministerial Forum co-hosted by Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. Participants discuss ways to reduce short-term bottlenecks and solutions to longer-term supply chain challenges.

July 20, 2022: South Korean ICT Minister Lee Jong-ho [states](#) that South Korea should be cautious in deciding whether to participate in a US-proposed chip alliance known as Chip 4 or Fab 4. The proposal puts South Korea in a delicate balancing act between the US and China.

July 21, 2022: South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [discusses](#) regional security with US Ambassador Goldberg.

July 22, 2022: To better handle North Korea’s missile threats, South Korea and the US [plan](#) to establish the Counter Missile Working Group (CMWG) and resume regiment-level or larger-scale combined field training programs, which were suspended in 2018. The summer allied training set for Aug. 22 to Sept. 1 will be [called](#) Ulchi Freedom Shield and will stage 11 combined field training sessions. In the first half of next year, both nations plan to conduct 21 combined training programs.

July 22, 2022: During a policy briefing to President Yoon, Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [outlines](#) defense priorities, including resuming larger-scale ROK-US field training and accelerating efforts to build the “[three-axis](#)” system against North Korea.

July 23, 2022: Kim Gunn, Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs, and Sung Kim, US Special Representative for North Korea, [meet](#) in Indonesia to craft a North Korea policy road map that will include economic incentives and security guarantees.

July 25, 2022: A 14-member delegation from the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea (AMCHAM) [meets](#) more than 25 senior officials of the Biden administration to discuss the new US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). The delegation [prioritizes](#) South Korea as a key ally in the IPEF, identifies supply chains as important for US-ROK dialogue, and states that AMCHAM plans to create an IPEF working group to work on bilateral relations. AMCHAM proposes “concrete and strategic ways” that the US could deepen its economic ties with Seoul.

July 25, 2022: South Korea [seeks](#) to coordinate with the US and other countries before announcing details of its “audacious plan” to revive North Korea’s economy in the event it accepts denuclearization.

July 26, 2022: President Biden [talks](#) virtually with Chey Tae-won, chairman of South Korea’s SK Group, and Gina Raimondo, US secretary of Commerce. They [discuss](#) SK Group’s investments in US manufacturing and jobs. This meeting is part of Biden’s goal to boost foreign investment in the US, especially in the semiconductor industry.

July 26, 2022: South Korea [issues](#) a joint statement with the US and seven other countries

condemning the recent [executions](#) of pro-democracy leaders in Myanmar.

July 26, 2022: Around 800 bereaved family members [visit](#) the [Wall of Remembrance](#), a new Korean War monument in Washington D.C. The monument is open to family members of troops who went missing or were killed during the Korean War before its official unveiling this week.

July 27, 2022: President Biden [calls](#) on Americans to honor those who sacrificed “everything to defend freedom and democracy” during the Korean War.

July 27, 2022: NSC coordinator for strategic communications John Kirby [states](#) that the US and allies will take appropriate steps to hold North Korea accountable should it conduct a nuclear test.

July 27, 2022: US military [discloses](#) photos of last week’s combined Marine Exercise Program (KMEP) drills with South Korean troops. This disclosure marks a shift from the allies’ low-key stance on the drills during the Moon administration.

July 27, 2022: A ceremony for the Wall of Remembrance, a new Korean War monument in Washington, [hosts](#) around 3,000 people, including government [officials](#), Korean War veterans and families, and other South Korean and US citizens. President Yoon [celebrates](#) the unveiling of this monument, saying that it represents the “firmness of the South Korea-US alliance.”

July 27, 2022: US Undersecretary of State for Politics Affairs Victoria Nuland and First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong [discuss](#) the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group ([EDSCG](#)). Nuland also meets South Korea’s top nuclear envoy Kim Gunn, Second Vice Foreign Minister Lee Do-hoon, and Foreign Minister Park Jin to discuss North Korea policy, global supply chain disruptions, and the war in Ukraine.

July 28, 2022: President Biden [receives](#) honorary Korean name of Bae Ji-sung by the ROK-US Alliance Friendship Association, as part of a weeklong commemoration to mark the end of the Korean War.

July 28, 2022: Poland [buys](#) almost 100 [tanks](#), more than 600 pieces of artillery, and dozens of fighter [jets](#) from South Korea in part to replace equipment donated to Ukraine. This reflects South Korea’s vision of taking a greater role in sharing the “burden for defense of the international order.”

July 28, 2022: Anne Neuberger, US Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies, [visits](#) Seoul to discuss ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in countering [cybercrimes](#), particularly those committed by North Korea.

July 28, 2022: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [warns](#) that the Yoon administration and its “military gangsters” will face annihilation should it make any “dangerous attempt” like a preemptive strike. Kim stresses that his regime is “fully prepared” for any military confrontation with the US, referencing to the increasing frequency of US-ROK joint military exercises. This is the first time that Kim officially launched his position on the Yoon government.

July 29, 2022: In response to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s warning, State Department spokesperson Ned Price [reaffirms](#) that the US is firmly committed to the defense of South Korea and dismisses Kim’s threat as nothing new.

July 29, 2022: President Yoon [receives](#) credentials of Philip Goldberg, newly appointed US Ambassador to Seoul.

July 29, 2022: US Forces Korea (USFK) Commander Gen. Paul LaCamera [stresses](#) importance of strengthening the US-ROK alliance and notes that the Korean War has not ended and DPRK continues to be a threat.

July 31, 2022: South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup and US counterpart Austin [decide](#) to restart the allies’ Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group (EDSCG) in September and strengthen the Table Top Exercise (TTX).

July 31, 2022: South Korean Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Lee Jong-ho [visits](#) US to discuss how to bolster military cooperation and ocean security with Secretary of Navy Carlos del Toro, Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command

John Aquilino, and other senior military officials. A Korean fleet of warships, maritime aircraft, and around 1000 troops [join](#) the US-led Rim of Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC).

Aug. 1, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin [affirms](#) that the US-led [Chip 4](#) alliance “is not designed to exclude China.” Jin states that the US has noted the importance of close economic ties between South Korea and China.

Aug. 2, 2022: South Korean Minister of Science and ICT Lee Jong-ho [meets](#) Alondra Nelson, acting director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, to discuss ways to strengthen the countries’ technology alliance, such as through semiconductor and space exploration.

Aug. 2, 2022: Amid fears of a potential North Korean nuclear test, Secretary of State Blinken [highlights](#) the importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty during his address at the 10th NPT Review Conference at UN headquarters.

Aug. 2, 2022: South Korea’s foreign ministry [refuses](#) to comment on Nancy Pelosi’s expected visit to Taiwan but reaffirms position on the importance of “stability and peace” in the Taiwan Strait.

Aug. 3, 2022: North Korea strongly [denounces](#) US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan and calls it an “impudent interference of the US in internal affairs of other countries” and that Washington is the root cause of “harassed peace and security in the region.”

Aug. 4, 2022: South Korea [participates](#) in the [Global Sentinel](#) exercise, a US-led multinational space security exercise.

Aug. 4, 2022: National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo [meets](#) Speaker Pelosi. Kim and Pelosi agree to support efforts to denuclearize North Korea and expand ties between the allies in other areas such as defense security, the economy, and technology. Rep. Kweon Seong-dong of the ruling People Power Party and Rep. Park Hong-geun of the main opposition Democratic Party also [attend](#) the meeting.

Aug. 4, 2022: President Yoon [calls](#) Speaker Pelosi to reaffirm his efforts to deepen the bilateral alliance and states that Pelosi’s visit is a sign of deterrence against North Korea.

Aug. 5, 2022: Pelosi [states](#) that her visit to South Korea reaffirmed the “strong bond formed for security and forged by decades of warm friendship” between the two countries. Pelosi also [visited](#) the DMZ/JSA and Osan Air Base.

Aug. 5, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and Secretary Blinken [discuss](#) Indo-Pacific strategy on the sidelines of ASEAN-hosted annual sessions.

Aug. 5, 2022: US Ambassador Goldberg [calls](#) on North Korea to respond to Washington’s dialogue offers and stresses the firm goal of denuclearizing Korea through diplomacy.

Aug. 5, 2022: Unification Minister Kwon Young-se [meets](#) Ambassador Goldberg to discuss North Korea. Kwon also discusses ways to improve human rights in North Korea with Damon Wilson, president of the US-based National Endowment for Democracy.

Aug. 8, 2022: South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [visits](#) a US military base south of Seoul to highlight the “solid” US-ROK alliance and the need for thorough preparations for the upcoming Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS) exercise.

Aug. 8, 2022: US Forces Korea (USFK) [reveals](#) that South Korean and US special commandos conducted combined military drills at Pilsung Range in an apparent show of firepower against evolving North Korean threats.

Aug. 9, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi [agree](#) that disputes over the US THAAD system should no longer hamper Seoul-Beijing relations. The ministers also discuss the supply chain issue and Park notifies Wang of Seoul’s decision to join the US-led Chip 4 alliance “purely” in consideration of national interest.

Aug. 9, 2022: US [imposes](#) sanctions on virtual currency mixer Tornado Cash for its involvement in laundering over \$455 million in virtual currency stolen by North Korea’s state-sponsored hacking group known as the Lazarus Group.

Aug. 9, 2022: South Korea, the US, and 19 other countries [conduct](#) five-day, US-hosted Fortune Guard 22 [exercise](#) in Hawaii with an aim to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This exercise is part of the

Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Asia-Pacific Exercise Rotation [series](#).

Aug. 11, 2022: Yoon's presidential office [states](#) that deployment of the US THAAD anti-missile system is not subject to negotiation after China [claims](#) Seoul promised to limit its operation during the Moon administration.

Aug. 11, 2022: President Yoon [hosts](#) a dinner for US Ambassador Goldberg and US Forces Korea Commander Gen. Paul LaCamera to welcome the new ambassador to Korea and evaluate the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

Aug. 11, 2022: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [declares](#) victory over COVID-19 at a national meeting where his sister, Kim Yo Jong, gives a speech stating her brother suffered a fever and blames the North Korean COVID-19 outbreak on leaflets flown across the border from South Korea.

Aug. 12, 2022: President Yoon [meets](#) with Sen. Ed Markey to discuss strengthening the bilateral alliance. Markey expresses confidence the relationship will grow stronger with the [CHIPS and Science Act](#), which focuses on the semiconductor industry.

Aug. 12, 2022: Korea Automobile Manufacturers Association [sends](#) letter to the US House of Representatives with concerns regarding the tax breaks in the recently passed [Inflation Reduction Act](#) and requests changes in proposed tax credits for EV purchases.

Aug. 12, 2022: Defense officials Park Nam-hee and Kelly Fletcher of South Korea and the US respectively, [discuss](#) cooperation in the area of defense-related information and communication technologies (ICT). Park and Fletcher exchange assessments of current trends regarding 5G networks and cloud computing.

Aug. 16, 2022: South Korea, Japan, Australia, Canada, and the US [finish](#) biennial Pacific Dragon exercise, [reflecting](#) desires to step up security cooperation amid tensions caused by North Korea's recent missile launches.

Aug. 16, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken [highlights](#) the importance of the US-South Korea alliance on South Korea's Liberation Day.

Aug. 16, 2022: Poll by the Pew Research Center [finds](#) that nine out of 10 South Koreans hold a favorable view of the US and that 89% of South Koreans think the US is a "reliable partner."

Aug. 16, 2022: President Yoon [meets](#) with Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates to discuss cooperation on vaccine development and other health issues. The South Korean government and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation sign a memorandum of understanding to expand international health partnerships and to enhance biotechnology manpower in low- and middle-income countries.

Aug. 17, 2022: North Korea [test-fires](#) two cruise missiles toward the Yellow Sea as President Yoon holds a press conference to mark the 100th day since taking office.

Aug. 17, 2022: Principal deputy spokesperson for the State Department [states](#) the US is concerned by North Korea's "strengthened rhetoric" and is preparing for all contingencies amid signs North Korea is preparing for its seventh nuclear test. He also expresses concerns over the health of North Korean people during the pandemic.

Aug. 17, 2022: South Korea and the US [hold](#) regular defense talks on North Korea and a range of alliance issues such as THAAD during two-day Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD). They agree to expand the size and scope of the combined Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise.

Aug. 18, 2022: In light of North Korea's recent [firing](#) of cruise missiles, State Department Press Secretary Price [reaffirms](#) the US commitment to the defense of South Korea and the maintenance of strong sanctions against North Korea. Price states the US [supports](#) President Yoon's initiative to engage with North Korea.

Aug. 18, 2022: South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [meets](#) Gen. Paul Nakasone, commander of the US Cyber Command, to discuss cyber threats and ways to bolster the allies' response capabilities.

Aug. 18, 2022: Major South Korean automakers, including Hyundai Motor Co. and Kia Corp. [voice](#) concerns over the newly implemented Inflation reduction Act in Washington, which would provide tax incentives for electric vehicles solely manufactured in North America.

Aug. 19, 2022: South Korea's People Power Party (PPP) [calls](#) on the government to negotiate with the US to get South Korean-made electric vehicles eligible for tax benefits under the newly legislated Inflation Reduction Act. The PPP argues that Korea-made electric cars should receive equal tax benefits as those produced in the States in accordance with the free trade agreement between the two countries.

Aug. 19, 2022: South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and US counterpart Blinken [discuss](#) the dismissal from Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, of President Yoon's "audacious" initiative as the "height of absurdity." They "expressed regret" over her statement.

Aug. 19, 2022: First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong [conducts](#) separate phone conversations with US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley and EU mediator Enrique Mora to share the latest progress in negotiations to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is aimed at restoring a 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Aug. 19, 2022: South Korean National Assembly speaker Kim Jin-pyo [meets](#) US Ambassador Goldberg to discuss ROK-US relations.

Aug. 19, 2022: Department Press Secretary Price states that the US [sees](#) the need to take "incremental steps" with North Korea to completely denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

Aug. 22, 2022: South Korea and the US [begin](#) Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS) exercise. The first segment involves drills on repelling North Korean attacks and deafening the greater Seoul area while the second focuses on counterattack operations. The exercise also includes operational capability (FOC) assessment, a procedure for the envisioned transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from Washington to Seoul.

Aug. 22, 2022: South Korea [reviews](#) whether to file a complaint with the World Trade Organization over the Inflation Reduction Act.

Aug. 23, 2022: US State Department spokesperson Price [urges](#) Pyongyang to respond positively to Seoul's offer to help North Korea in exchange for denuclearization. The remarks come after Kim Yo Jong, North Korean leader

Kim Jong Un's sister, rejected South Korea's offers.

Aug. 24, 2022: South Korea [leads](#) Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise for the first time, a sign of progress in the plan for the transition of wartime operational control (OPCON). South Korean Gen. Ahn Byung-Seok takes the commanding role as the two countries conduct the full operational capability (FOC) assessment, the second part of the three-stage program to assess the South's capabilities to lead combined forces.

Aug. 25, 2022: Korea Automobile Manufacturers Association [seeks](#) a joint response with the European Union over the US Inflation Reduction Act that excludes electric vehicles assembled outside of North America from tax incentives.

Aug. 25, 2022: Seoul [pushes](#) for discussion with Washington over its new Chips and Science Act. South Korea's industry ministry sets up a joint response team with private firms to review related trade regulations, boost communications with the US, and enhance monitoring of major nations' moves regarding the law. Industry Minister Lee Chang-yang meets with related firms in the semiconductor, car, and battery sectors including Samsung, SK, LG, Hyundai, and Kia.

Aug. 25, 2022: Vedant Patel, US Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the State Department, [reaffirms](#) US commitment to the defense of South Korea and Japan.

Aug. 26, 2022: South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [meets](#) troops at the Ground Component command, a wartime unit formed to conduct South Korea and the US's Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise.

Aug. 26, 2022: Daniel Kritenbrink, US assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, [meets](#) South Korean counterpart Yeo Seung-bae and makes courtesy calls on Foreign Minister Park Jin and Second Vice Foreign Minister Lee Do-hoon. Park raises concerns of Washington's discriminatory treatment of Korean companies under the Inflation Reduction Act and Kritenbrink states that Washington is well aware of Seoul's concerns and will continue consultations between the two governments. Kritenbrink reaffirms Washington's "strong support" for Seoul's "audacious" plan.

Aug. 29, 2022: South Korea [launches](#) government-civilian body tasked with an environmental impact assessment of the THAAD battery unit in Seongju. It consists of officials from provincial governments, environment and defense ministries, representatives of local residents, and experts in relevant private sectors. The Yoon administration has been pushing normalization of the battery.

Aug. 30, 2022: Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesperson for the State Department, [insists](#) that THAAD is a “purely defensive measure to protect ROK” from North Korea threats. Criticism or pressure on South Korea to abandon its self-defense is inappropriate, states Patel.

Aug. 30, 2022: Washington [agrees](#) to launch formal talks with Seoul to minimize the adverse effects of the Inflation Reduction Act on South Korean electric vehicles.

Aug. 30, 2022: South Korea [participates](#) in Pacific Vanguard exercise, a US-led multinational maritime exercise, involving Australia, Canada, and Japan.

Aug. 30, 2022: South Korea [waits](#) for a ruling from the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes on the multibillion dollar damages suit that US private equity firm Lone Star filed against the country more than a decade ago.

Aug. 30, 2022: Seoul’s armed forces [reveal](#) that the ROK Navy joined a US-led multinational maritime exercise in waters off Guam earlier in August to enhance combined operational capabilities.

Aug. 31, 2022: Seoul [announces](#) that the national security advisors of South Korea, Japan, and the United States will meet in Hawaii to discuss North Korea’s nuclear program and other issues of potential cooperation. The meeting [takes place](#) Sept. 1 at the US Indo-Pacific Command in Honolulu.

Chronology prepared by Pacific Forum research interns Su Hyun Lee and Kaylin Kim

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C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-INDIA RELATIONS

RELATIONS AT 75: HAWAII TO THE HIMALAYAS

AKHIL RAMESH, PACIFIC FORUM

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Like the saying, “after the storm comes the calm,” US-India relations witnessed four months of productive talks, cooperation, and collaboration. This contrasted with the previous trimester, mired as it was by Cold-War era differences brought about by the Russia-Ukraine conflict. There were thriving Indo-Pacific synergies and the decline of Cold War-era differences. The US and India continued and expanded cooperation on a wide array of regional and global issues, such as climate change, supply chains, and the Sri Lankan crisis. They solidified their defense partnership from Hawaii to the Himalayas through navy and military exercises. The US turned down pressure on India over Russian oil purchases and recalibrated the dialogue to address other pressing challenges. They did not avoid tough conversations, however. India reinforced its view of the US and other Western nations' role in keeping the Indo-Pacific a safer and more open region.

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While minor differences remain, the two democracies found common ground in addressing what they both consider to be the most pressing challenges: China's belligerent actions and the existential threat of climate change. Their targeted actions to address the two issues became more overt and coordinated. Through the launch of initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), the Biden administration reentered the Asian economic architecture—though not through a trade agreement—bringing otherwise-hesitant economies, including India, into the fold.



Figure 1 US President Joe Biden and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold a bilateral meeting alongside the Quad Summit at Kantei Palace in Tokyo, Japan, May 24, 2022. Photo: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Domestically, Biden and Modi were both preoccupied with amending historic injustices and preparing their societies and economies for 21st century challenges.

Home is Where the History Is

Both President Biden and Prime Minister Modi have advertised their humble beginnings to connect with the electorate and push ambitious foreign policies; domestic undercurrents drive much of their recent cooperation. President Biden's ascent to the Oval Office was a product of his election campaign that promised a "foreign policy for the middle class," including a revival of US manufacturing, tackling of climate change, and promotion of diversity. Acting on those promises, Biden nominated Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first African-American woman to serve on the Supreme Court bench. Modi demonstrated similar priorities when he [nominated](#) Draupadi Murmu, a woman belonging to the [scheduled tribal community](#)—among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India—to the office of India's 15th president. For

nations with histories plagued by discrimination, both Jackson and Murmu's ascent to the highest offices in the land would seem to support their governments' commitment to righting historic wrongs. These developments occur against the backdrop of the US and Indian government's [launching](#) of the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative in June, which aims to advance civil rights and inclusion around the world.

Other measures addressed the policy missteps of the 20th and early 21st century. Biden, along with his predecessor, has evoked the idea of reshoring manufacturing to the United States, addressing its hollowing-out since the 1980s. The Biden administration's recent legislative successes, the CHIPS Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, seek to revive semiconductor chip manufacturing and increase the share of renewable energy. The Modi administration has a similar agenda. Modi is the first Indian prime minister to [use](#) the term "license raj," one often used by leaders of global corporations to describe the bureaucracy and rent-seeking practices prevalent in India pre-1990. He has not shied away from critiquing practices prevalent in quasi-socialist India in the 1970s and 1980s and his legacy includes that of being the first Indian leader to improve its ease of doing business ranking and his determination to see India participate in the unfolding industrial revolution.

Domestic reforms often have a strong foreign policy undercurrent. For instance, through several supply chain related initiatives, the US has sought to redesign the trade architecture and reduce overreliance on China. While the CHIPS Act and the Inflation Reduction Act target that objective, the Biden administration has included India in its supply chain diversification initiatives in sectors such as renewable energy and critical technology. Moreover, through groupings such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the newly formed I2U2—a new partnership between the governments of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States—the administration has expanded the discussion on resilient supply chains and India's role in those discussions.

To that end, subnational diplomacy and public diplomacy are drivers of the relationship. Both Biden and Modi have emphasized Middle America and rural India in their policy proposals, respectively, and a flourishing US-India relationship will need Middle America's and rural India's cooperation. Over the four months, the

Indian mission in the US traveled across the country, meeting with manufacturers and state representatives in the Midwest to increase cooperation between India and US states in manufacturing and services sector.

Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu's [meetings](#) with manufacturing and technology companies in middle America, such as in Indiana and Ohio, along with his trips to Hawaii, suggest that India and Indians have a significant role to play in the Biden administration's plans for the Midwest and in the evolving security sphere of the Pacific. Indian human capital has played a significant role in elevating the US tech sector. Given the dearth in engineers and highly skilled technological talent in parts of the US, the Biden administration's hi-tech manufacturing push could be complemented by Indian talent, especially through initiatives like the [Quad Fellowship](#). Similarly, the Indian consul general in San Francisco, Nagendra Prasad Rao had a busy summer, traveling and [meeting](#) with governors and representatives from states such as Utah and [Nevada](#). Their counterpart in Chennai, US Consul General Judith Ravin, [joined](#) the director of the National Science Foundation, Sethuraman Panchanathan in announcing awards that will connect researchers from universities across the US with scientists and engineers at several technology innovation hubs.



Figure 2 Indian Consul General Nagendra Prasad meeting with Utah Gov. Spencer Cox. Photo: Twitter/@nagenTV

These domestic measures will find foreign policy convergence through broader trade initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

No to Agreement but Yes to Framework

As anticipated in the last *Comparative Connections* [chapter](#) on US-India relations, the Biden

administration unveiled its plan for re-entry into Asia's economic architecture through the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in Tokyo in late May. IPEF [includes](#) 12 partners: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, comprising 40% of world GDP. This will be the first multilateral trade grouping in the region that India has joined. In 2019 it withdrew from RCEP, frustrating other partners. With the US out of CPTPP, and India out of RCEP, the two had an unprecedented urgency to re-enter the Asian economic architecture and not give up ground to China, which is a signatory to RCEP and which has played a leading role in infrastructure-building through the Belt and Road Initiative.

IPEF has four pillars that complement key parts of the US-India relationship:

Pillar 1 - Connected Economy: The US envisions engaging collectively with partners in establishing high-standard rules of the road in the digital economy, including standards on cross-border flows and data localization. This pillar could be a sticking point for India's participation in the framework. The Modi administration has insisted on data localization and US enterprises have resisted abiding by the localization mandates. This pillar also focuses on strong labor and environmental standards. The Modi administration's reforms of India's archaic labor laws are intended to consolidate them and make it easier for businesses to invest and operate in the country. However, tightening standards on labor and the environment may prove an impediment for more cooperation for a developing country like India.

Pillar 2 - Resilient Economy: This pillar seeks to garner supply chain commitments that can assist in anticipating and preventing disruptions in supply chains, creating a more resilient economy and guard against price increases. The Biden administration has proposed establishing an early warning system, mapping critical mineral supply chains, improving traceability in key sectors and coordinating on diversification efforts. In the near future, this will be the crucial pillar that provides the foundation for diversification efforts in the Indo-Pacific region such as the China+1 and for instilling confidence in measures such as "[friend-shoring](#)." Over the last two years, India has [acted](#) as the pharmacy of the world, providing vaccines to countries in need, and the US and other Quad

members had leveraged India's expertise to manufacture a billion vaccines for Southeast Asia. Whether or not such initiatives and other broader supply chain diversification efforts succeed will be the litmus test of the Biden administration's efforts at reviving manufacturing at home and building the pillar of a resilient economy.

Pillar 3 - Clean Economy: The US seeks a first-of-its-kind commitment on clean energy, decarbonization, and infrastructure. This pillar is supported by Biden's Inflation Reduction Bill (which will quadruple renewable energy consumption in the US) at home and through partnerships with India such as First Solar's [announcement](#) of photovoltaic manufacturing in southern India. India's support for solar energy (through the International Solar Alliance) and the Modi administration's support for clean energy transition will find resonance in this pillar. USAID Chief Administrator Samantha Power, in her recent trip to India, referred to the world as "one family," a phrase used by the Indian prime minister when referring to the challenge of climate change. This is one sphere where the two administrations share values and can work toward common goals.

Pillar 4 - Fair Economy: The fourth and last pillar seeks commitments from partners to enact and enforce effective tax, anti-money laundering, and anti-bribery regimes in line with existing multilateral obligations. This pillar may not impact the bilateral relationship as much as it would affect the partnership's efforts in third countries. Several nations who are part of the framework are also party to China's BRI, which has caused debt distress in some countries, most recently in Sri Lanka. By strengthening the fourth pillar, IPEF would bring about more transparency in projects supported by China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in participant countries and limit diversification efforts from indirectly supporting Chinese SOEs.

While these pillars are timely and directed toward addressing both the existential challenge of climate change and competition with China, they have limitations. As the name suggests, IPEF is a framework and not an agreement. The recurring criticism of the IPEF is that it does not provide [market access](#), the most enticing component of any trade deal.

Still, like the Quad, IPEF has earned buy-in from otherwise skeptical nations, including India. The complementary nature of the four pillars of the

IPEF coupled with the bilateral relationship and the domestic policies of US and India give reasons to be optimistic. Moreover, as Singaporean diplomat Kishore Mahbubani [put](#) it, "submarines are stealthy but trade agreements are stealthier." Since Donald Trump's presidency, it has become clear that free trade agreements that move manufacturing to Asia are not politically viable. In India's case, free trade agreements with Asian neighbors have ballooned its trade deficits and any agreement that has China or even ASEAN countries as participants will exacerbate this—an issue Delhi is working to address.

Trade cooperation was not limited to addressing the China challenge. In the first iteration of the I2U2 group ("the West Asian Quad"), leaders of the US, UAE, Israel, and India came together to [address](#) food security and clean energy transition. The group plans to advance a hybrid renewable energy project in India's Gujarat consisting of 300 megawatts of wind and solar capacity complemented by a battery storage system. This is another group alongside the Quad and IPEF, through which the US is supporting India's transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. The US Trade and Development Agency funded a feasibility study for the \$330 million project.

Not an Alliance, but Moving That Way

Over the past few years, a recurring question posed to India experts in Washington is "Will India become a US ally?" When former ambassador Lisa Curtis, was asked this question at an event organized by CNAS, she [responded](#) that "the relationship will grow significantly, but just short of an alliance."

The 28th iteration of the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022 maritime exercises organized by the US Navy were held around the Hawaiian Islands between June 29 and Aug. 4. [This year, RIMPAC](#) included around 25,000 personnel, 170 aircraft, three submarines, over 30 uncrewed systems, 38 surface ships, and nine national land forces from across 26 countries. Indian Navy's frigate INS *Satpura* and P8I aircraft were deployed for the exercise. India first participated in 2014 (the year Modi became prime minister) by [sending](#) its indigenously built *Shivalik*-class stealth frigate INS *Sahyadri*. Since then, there have been several exercises in the Pacific and Indian oceans such as the *Malabar*, *Milan*, and others. Besides navy exercises, the Indian army and even special forces have trained alongside US forces to increase interoperability. In 2021, Indian soldiers from the

7th Battalion, Madras Regiment [trained](#) with US soldiers in Alaska under Arctic conditions. US-India security and defense cooperation has been steadily increasing across the board.

Ever since the Indian and Chinese troops clashed in the Galwan valley in 2020, the training locations of US and Indian troops have been noteworthy, such as in Alaska and, [Vajra Prahar](#) by the India-China border in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, where special forces concluded recent Indo-US joint exercises.



Figure 3 US-India joint military exercise. Photo: Yudh Abhyas/Facebook

Furthermore, neither India nor the US shy away from calling out China. [Speaking](#) at a seminar organized by Heritage Foundation, US Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday termed India an important ally that would play a “significant role” in countering China. He went to say that “China faces a two-front challenge from India. They now force China to not only look east, toward the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, but they now have to look over their shoulder at India.”

The most significant symbolic development in this sphere was the Department of Defense decision to provide the Indian defense attaché with unescorted access to the Pentagon; as news outlets pointed out, this is a privilege not offered even to the US Air Force.

In mid-May it was announced that the Biden administration was preparing a military aid package [worth](#) \$500 million, putting India alongside Israel and Egypt amongst US military aid recipients. With India sending frigates to Hawaii and for the first time with the US [sending](#) warships for repairs and maintenance to the Kattupalli port near Chennai, the relationship is truly evolving into an “Indo-Pacific” partnership.

On India, Everyone Swipes Right

India’s cozying up to the US caused some anxiety in China and Russia. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attempted rapprochement in response. In late June, he called on the Indian envoy, and according to the press readout from their meeting [said](#) that China and India’s common interests “far outweigh” their differences, adding that the two sides should support rather than undermine each other, “strengthen cooperation rather than guard against each other, and enhance mutual trust rather than be suspicious of each other.”

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made it clear that there was no interest on the Indian side to dial back relations to pre-Galwan without settling the border dispute. Furthermore, in a first, the minister, [speaking](#) at an event organized by Asia Society Policy Institute sold the Quad grouping as an effective alternative to ASEAN, as there were challenges beyond the remit of ASEAN’s institutions and platforms, aggravated by anachronistic multilateralism. To effectively address deficits, he said, would best be accomplished by plurilateral groups such as the Quad. Elsewhere he stated that, “From time to time, there is also talk about Asia for Asians. Such thinking needs to be carefully analyzed, both from a national interest perspective as well as the implications of the proposition itself. ...Asia for Asians is also a sentiment that was encouraged in the past, even in our own country, by political romanticism. The Bandung spirit, however, got its reality check within its first decade. Indeed, the experience of the past affirms that Asians are second to none when it comes to realpolitik. ...India espouses a cooperative, inclusive, and consultative approach to international relations.”



Figure 4 External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar delivered a lecture on 'India's Vision of the Indo-Pacific'

at the prestigious Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. Photo: Twitter/@DrSJaishankar

That did not stop China and Russia. Both nations [expressed](#) interest in expanding the BRICS group to include several nations from the Global South, capitalizing on their sense of being left out of major decisions such as sanctions on Russia that had an impact on their economies. Nations like Argentina and Iran, which have disputes with Western nations, were the first to express interest in joining the group. Concluding the virtual BRICS leaders' summit, Putin called for a toast in honor of this emerging anti-Western coalition. Modi was the only leader who did [not](#) raise his mug. The prime minister's restraint shows the limit of India's multi-alignment.

India does not view the world in bipolar terms as West vs the rest. Time and again, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has batted for multipolarity—and as an extension, issue-based coalitions. With regards to the China challenge, events of the last four months indicate that India and the US are on the same page.

Jaishankar, in his recent trip to Thailand, [referred](#) to the Quad as the “most prominent plurilateral platform that addresses contemporary challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific.” Even a couple of years ago, this would have been unfathomable.

On Russia, on economic interests or security matters pertaining to India's immediate neighborhood (think Pakistan), the US and India may not see eye to eye. Regardless, India's relations with the US and nations such as France, Japan, Israel, and Australia are on an upward trajectory. The same cannot be said of its relations with nations such as the UK. India does not club Western nations into groups such as “West.” Rather, it tends to different bilateral relationships on their own merit.

For example, during his trip to Argentina in late August the external affairs minister expressed support for Argentina's membership in the BRICS and reiterated support for resuming talks over the territorial dispute [surrounding](#) the Islas Malvinas, also known as the Falkland Islands. While referring to Falklands as Malvinas was a significant development, the British High Commission in India's response that “the United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and surrounding maritime

areas, nor about the principle and the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination as enshrined in the UN Charter...” demonstrates that India continues to have feet in both worlds—the Global South (as a post-colonial society) and the North; but shakes hands with those with whom its interests align with most. As India's *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (“self-reliant India”) and Make in India plans take flight, markets such as Argentina will be important—especially for its defense exports. A case in point is its plans to [sell](#) its indigenously manufactured *Tejas* fighter aircraft to Argentina.

Coming to Terms

A month prior to celebrating 75 years of independence, Modi unveiled a giant sculpture of India's national emblem—the four lions—in front of the new Parliament building. In contrast to the benevolent lions that appear in most government insignia, these looked aggressive and ferocious. A portion of the India media [termed](#) this another nationalistic turn under the Modi administration. But it is more than just a changed sculpture. The Modi administration is active in its decolonizing efforts, and in asserting its identity on the world stage. When India commissioned its first indigenous aircraft carrier INS *Vikrant* in early September, the prime minister also unveiled a new ensign for the flag of the Indian Navy. The St. George cross that was part of the flag was dropped and the ensign was changed to one inspired by that of Indian ruler Chhatrapathi Shivaji. Modi, in his address, [said](#) “India has removed a badge of slavery from its chest” and tweeted that “INS *Vikrant* is an example of Government's thrust to making India's defense sector self-reliant.”

This development captures India's interest in decolonizing while building indigenous industries to produce and export to the world. India wrestles with these multiple identities—as a post-colonial society that has to undo centuries of humiliation and as a 21st century power that requires capital to develop its economy and foreign markets to export its goods. The events of the last four months indicate that the US is beginning to grasp the complexities associated with India's multiple identities and the decisions that come with it. White House spokesperson John Kirby's comments on India continuing to purchase Russian oil—that sovereign nations have a right to make their own decisions, and that the US has made clear its concerns about business as usual with Russia—sum it up well: Contrasting this statement to the war of words the world witnessed

in the previous quarter, there has definitely been a change in attitudes.

India for its part is no longer diffident about the multifarious challenges posed by China and has welcomed an active US role in the Indo-Pacific region.

With the [scheduled](#) military exercise in Auli near the India-China border in early October, the US-India partnership will continue to expand from the shores of Hawaii to the foothills of the Himalayas.

CHRONOLOGY OF US-INDIA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 3, 2022: India's Secretary of the Department of Defense R&D and Chairman of India's Defense Research and Development Organization Dr. G Satheesh Reddy and Indian embassy officials in Washington DC [meet](#) US Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering Heido Shyu and Acting Director of Defense Research and Engineering for Advanced Capabilities Terry Emmert to discuss bilateral defense R&D cooperation.

May 10, 2022: US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman [speaks](#) with India's new Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra to congratulate him on the new role. They reaffirm the strength of the bilateral partnership and a shared commitment to a prosperous, free, and open Indo-Pacific.

May 12, 2022: US [hosts](#) Second Global COVID-19 Summit and [reaffirms](#) that it will continue to work with partners to expand the manufacture and distribution of vaccines and therapeutics globally. Prime Minister Narendra Modi [delivers](#) virtual remarks at the invitation of US President Joe Biden, and the summit reaffirms that bilateral cooperation to address COVID-19 builds on 75 years of successful partnership in health and biomedical research.

May 12, 2022: US Consul General to Kolkata Melinda Pavek and US Agricultural Minister-Counselor Ron Verdonk [visit](#) Pepsi in Kolkata to celebrate the efforts of women farmers participating in the Women Economic Empowerment Program led by USAID India and Pepsi.

May 23, 2022: Director General of the US Foreign Service Carol Perez and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Dean Thompson [visit](#) US Consulate General in Chennai to commemorate the 75th anniversary of US-India ties.

May 23, 2022: CEO of the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) Scott Nathan and Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra [sign](#) the Investment Incentive Agreement between DFC and the government of India. The agreement allows DFC to continue to support

India's private sector and invest in climate, health, food security, and more.

May 23, 2022: Alongside Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and Indian PM Modi, President Biden [launches](#) the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity in Tokyo. The launch [is](#) attended virtually by representatives from 12 initial partners representing 40% of world GDP: Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. At the event, Biden [reaffirms](#) the US' long-term investment in the Indo-Pacific.

May 24, 2022: Leaders of the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, and the US) [meet](#) in Tokyo. They [release](#) a Quad Joint Leaders Statement. Among their announcements is a new initiative to improve maritime domain awareness across the Indo-Pacific. On the margins of the summit, Secretary Blinken [meets](#) Indian Foreign Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar to reinforce bilateral cooperation on global economic challenges to strengthen security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. They also discuss the Ukraine conflict.

May 24, 2022: Biden and Modi [meet](#) bilaterally to reaffirm the commitment to work together for a more prosperous, free, connected, and secure world, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific as the future of the 21st century economy.

May 24, 2022: Quad leaders [launch](#) the Quad Fellowship to encourage research and innovation among young minds in the four countries.

May 25, 2022: Indian Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs & Food & Public Distribution and Textiles Piyush Goyal [meets](#) Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. They discuss expansion of bilateral trade and investment to cement the bilateral global strategic partnership.

May 25, 2022: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar [publishes](#) an article on the establishment of the Quad as one of India's major diplomatic accomplishments.

May 26, 2022: Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu [meets](#) Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb to discuss deepening the bilateral partnership in healthcare, digital technology, and education.

May 27, 2022: Ambassador Sandhu [meets](#) former CEO of Google Eric Schmidt to discuss collaboration in technology, innovation and education. Sandhu thanks him for administering the Quad STEM fellowships.

May 28, 2022: Ambassador Sandhu [meets](#) Sen. Todd Young in Indiana. They discuss strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership. Sandhu also [meets](#) with elected representatives from Indiana and Ohio to discuss bilateral ties through partnerships with local governments.

May 30, 2022: US Congressional staff delegation [calls](#) on Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra to discuss bipartisan support for deepening bilateral ties, regional developments and growing partnership for global issues.

June 7, 2022: Chargé D’Affaires of the US Embassy Patricia Lacina [meets](#) Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra to discuss ways to advance the bilateral strategic partnership and shared regional and global goals.

June 7, 2022: Commanding General of the US Army Pacific (USARPAC) Charles A. Flynn [visits](#) Indian Army Headquarters, hosted by Indian Vice Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Baggavalli Somashekar Raju. Flynn also [visits](#) the National War Memorial.

June 7, 2022: General Flynn [calls](#) on Indian Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Manoj Pande to discuss aspects of bilateral defense cooperation.

June 8, 2022: Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nancy Izzo Jackson [arrives](#) in Delhi to meet business, civil society, and government leaders to discuss US-India regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

June 9, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) Virginia’s Secretary of Commerce and Trade Caren Merrick, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr, and the CEO of Fairfax County EDA Victor Hoskins to celebrate India-Virginia ties.

June 13, 2022: INS Satpura, indigenous frigate of the Indian Navy, [arrives](#) in Guam ahead of RIMPAC. The Rim of the Pacific Exercise

(RIMPAC) is the world’s largest international maritime warfare exercise.

June 14, 2022: UN ambassadors from the Quad [meet](#) in New York to discuss ways to strengthen the rules-based international order and reinforce efforts at the UN.

June 14, 2022: Department of State’s Educational and Cultural Affairs team [announces](#) the Gandhi-King Scholarly Exchange Initiative, a new exchange program in partnership with the University of Alabama to inspire young leaders in the US and India to advance civil rights and inclusion. On June 21 program participants [meet](#) Deputy Assistant Secretary of the State Department’s Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Nancy Jackson.

June 16, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) Sen. Jon Ossoff at India House to discuss the bilateral partnership in healthcare, higher education, skills development, and clean energy and technology. They discuss the bilateral trade and economic partnership and deepening it.

June 22, 2022: Biological E. Limited of India [obtains](#) World Health Organization approval as an additional manufacturing site for the Janssen/Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. The US Embassy in India calls this “great progress for the Quad Vaccine and US-India health partnerships through US technical support and US International Development Finance Corporation financing.”

July 26, 2022: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo [host](#) a virtual meeting of economic ministers and officials from 14 countries that have joined the IPEF,. They discuss trade, supply chains, clean energy, infrastructure, taxes and corruption.

July 26, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) White House Director of National Drug Control Policy Dr. Rahul Gupta to discuss bilateral cooperation in counter-narcotics, affordable vaccines, and medicines.

July 26, 2022: Sandhu [delivers](#) keynote address at the 40th Annual Convention Gala of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin. He [compliments](#) the role of Indian American doctors during COVID-19 and in shaping and steering bilateral healthcare cooperation. He [meets](#) Rep. Tony Gonzales to discuss bilateral strategic and healthcare ties.

July 27, 2022: PM Modi [participates](#) in the G7 leaders' summit in Germany. He meets President Biden at the summit.

July 27, 2022: Ambassador Sandhu [meets](#) Sen. Ron Johnson, Reps. Bryan Stiel and Glenn Grothman, and Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos at a Sadbhavana event in Chicago.

July 27, 2022: INS Satpura and one P8I maritime patrol aircraft from the Indian Navy [enters](#) Pearl Harbor to participate in the US Navy-led biennial RIMPAC.

June 28, 2022: Sandhu [hosts](#) Chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers Cecilia Rouse, Governors Asa Hutchinson and Tom Wolf, Lt. Governors Eleni Kounalakis and Garlin Gilchrist II, and Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Global Markets Arun Venkataraman.

June 29, 2022: Sandhu [hosts](#) Quad Fellowship Advisory Board at India House in Washington DC. The event was attended by senior officials and diplomats from Quad countries, including the US National Security Council, the Department of State, the Department of Energy, Schmidt Futures, among others.

July 3, 2022: Marking the 75th anniversary of India's independence, Ambassador Sandhu [hosts](#) veterans of the Indian Armed Forces in the US and their families, thanking them for their devotion and dedication which shaped India's defense and security and partnership with the US.

July 4, 2022: Modi [delivers](#) greetings and congratulations to Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and the people of the US on the 246th US Independence Day. Jaishankar [extends](#) the same greetings to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and expresses anticipation of further cooperation to strengthen the bilateral Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

July 5, 2022: As part of the celebration of 35 years of the US-India Vaccine Action Program, the National Institutes of Health, the Ministry of Science and Technology's Department of Biotechnology, and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council [announce](#) the Clinical Research Bioethics Program to engage early-career scientists in the bioethics of clinical research and advance the US-India health partnership.

July 5, 2022: Indian Navy's P8I LRMASW aircraft [arrives](#) in Hawaii to participate in the 28th edition of RIMPAC.

July 8, 2022: Japan's former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo [is](#) assassinated, while delivering a speech for a political candidate. Modi [announces](#) a one-day national mourning on July 9 and [writes](#) a heartfelt tribute. He expresses condolences and respect for Abe and commends his contributions to elevating India-Japan relations to the level of a Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

July 8, 2022: Jaishankar [meets](#) Blinken on the margins of the G20 Finance Ministers Meeting. They [discuss](#) enhancing regional economic stability and security, including global efforts to reduce the effects of crisis in Ukraine, and expanding bilateral ties.

July 9, 2022: Sandhu [visits](#) Indian frigate INS Satpura at Pearl Harbor, as part of a visit to Hawaii for RIMPAC.

July 10, 2022: Department of State's Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs Dilawar Syed [visits](#) Chennai to celebrate the 75th year of US-India relations. He meets startups, students, US and Indian companies, and Tamil Nadu officials to discuss the expansion of the bilateral economic partnership.

July 11, 2022: Sandhu [pays](#) tribute to Mahatma Gandhi as part of his visit to Hawaii for RIMPAC.

July 11, 2022: US [orders](#) 3.2 million doses of the Novavax COVID vaccine, the initial doses of which will be manufactured by Novavax's partner, Serum Institute of India.

July 11, 2022: INS Satpura [participates](#) in the sea phase of RIMPAC. Ambassador Sandhu [hosts](#) a reception on board Ins Satpura, in attendance including US INDOPAC Commander Adm. John Aquilino, Commander of US 3rd Fleet V Adm. Michael Boyle, Indian V. Adm. Sanjay Mahindru and other senior officials and sailors of 26 navies. Sandhu highlights PM Modi's SAGAR vision (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and reaffirms India's commitment to the Indo-Pacific and bilateral defense ties. Sandhu also [meets](#) US Rep Ed Case.

July 12, 2022: Sandhu [visits](#) USS Illinois (a Virginia class nuclear-powered submarine at RIMPAC) and

meets Commander of the Submarine Force Pacific R. Adm. Jeffrey T. Jablon.

July 12, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) US Indo-Pacific Commander Aquilino at Command headquarters in Hawaii to exchange views on bilateral defense cooperation, strategic partnership, and other global developments.

July 12, 2022: Sandhu [hosts](#) a virtual roundtable of select US universities with the International Financial Services Centres Authority and GIFT City to seek opportunities for strengthening bilateral education ties.

July 13, 2022: Sandhu [visits](#) USS Abraham Lincoln to cultivate bilateral maritime ties. He observes flight operations and interacts with the aircraft carrier's leadership and crew.

July 13, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) Hawaii Gov. David Ige to discuss strengthening bilateral ties through enhanced connections with Hawaii. Areas of cooperation include trade, information technology and investment, sustainable tourism and environment, and expanding educational and people-to-people ties.

July 14, 2022: Leaders of India, Israel, UAE, and the United States virtually [convene](#) first leaders' summit of the I2U2 Group. They [discuss](#) joint projects within the I2U2 framework and other common areas of mutual interest, including strengthening economic partnerships.

July 15, 2022: US Food and Drug Administration [authorizes](#) emergency use of Novavax COVID-19 vaccine for adults in the US, the first authorized vaccine in the US that is manufactured in India.

July 19, 2022: Indian Secretary of Economic Relations of the Ministry of External Affairs Dammu Ravi [participates](#) in COVID-19 Global Action Plan Foreign Ministerial Meeting co-hosted by Foreign Minister of Japan Yoshimasa Hayashi and Secretary Blinken.

July 19, 2022: Cultural and Educational Affairs counselor at the US Embassy in New Delhi Anthony Miranda [meets](#) Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar of the University Grants Commission of India to discuss collaboration between Indian and US universities for twinning, joint and double degrees, and establishing US university campuses in India.

July 20, 2022: USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia Anjali Kaur [joins](#) US-India Strategic Partnership Forum to discuss women's economic advancement, the critical role of the private sector, and USAID's partnership in the US-India Alliance for Women's Economic Empowerment.

July 21, 2022: Sandhu [hosts](#) Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-New York) and Cory Booker (D-New Jersey) at India House to discuss deepening the bilateral partnership in health, clean energy, education, defense, and technology.

July 21, 2022: US [announces](#) partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry to organize a speaker series on bilateral cooperation on renewable energy to combat climate change and foster economic innovation.

July 21, 2022: State Department Spokesperson Ned Price [congratulates](#) Draupadi Murmu on her election as the 15th President of India and looks forward to deepening the bilateral partnership.

July 22, 2022: Sandhu [joins](#) Ambassador Tomita Koji of Japan and Ambassador Arthur Sinodinos of Australia at a discussion on advancing a shared vision for the Indo-Pacific.

July 22, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) US Rep. Ro Khanna (D-California), Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Illinois) and other representatives from industry, academia, and think tanks at an event hosted by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum.

July 25, 2022: USAID Administrator Samantha Power [arrives](#) in India to advance the bilateral state partnership and address the global food security crisis. She meets food security and climate experts, civil society groups, and officials about the bilateral development partnership.

July 26, 2022: Jaishankar [meets](#) USAID Administrator Power to discuss global development prospects in the context of food, energy, and debt challenges. They [exchange](#) views on expanding the bilateral partnership, climate change, and the situation in Sri Lanka. She [visits](#) a Water ATM near Sarojini Market, a US-India collaboration that provides safe and affordable drinking water 24/7 to the local community.

July 26, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) Senator and Member of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees Mike Rounds (R-South

Dakota). They discuss cooperation in the Quad and Indo-Pacific and working together in areas such as healthcare, technology, and energy.

July 27, 2022: In celebration of 75 years of bilateral ties, USAID Administrator Power [delivers](#) a keynote address entitled “The World is One Family,” stating that the US-India relationship can be a model for today’s development partnerships. She [meets](#) Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra to discuss the bilateral development partnership and working together to respond to climate change, tackle the digital divide, develop resilient infrastructure, address global food security and more. She also [promotes](#) equity and equality for women in sports by joining young Indian women players for a cricket lesson.

July 27, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) US Senator and Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Jack Reed to discuss the deepening of bilateral strategic ties and working with like-minded partners in the Quad and Indo-Pacific. They discuss bilateral cooperation in new and emerging technologies, supply chains, healthcare, climate change and clean energy.

July 28, 2022: Sandhu [meets](#) US Rep. and member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Brad Schneider to discuss the Quad, I2U2, and bilateral cooperation to address global challenges.

July 28, 2022: A first tranche of MH60R Multi Role helicopters [are](#) received by the Indian Navy at Cochin International Airport, delivered by the US Air Force Special Air Assignment Mission Flight. Ambassador Sandhu [commends](#) this as deepening bilateral defense ties and attends a handing over ceremony in San Diego with Commander of the US Naval Air Forces V. Adm. Kennedy Whitesell and Indian Naval Group DCNS Vice Admiral Ravneet Singh.

July 28, 2022: Counsellor of the Indian Embassy in Washington [attends](#) a Space Foundation event to highlight India’s space program and bilateral ties in the sector. Also in attendance are US representatives from several international space agencies and congressional staff.

Aug. 2, 2022: USS *Frank Cable* of the US Pacific Fleet’s Submarine Force Pacific [visits](#) Indian city Visakhapatnam/Vizag while on patrol in the 7th Fleet Area of operations in support of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Aug. 4, 2022: Jaishankar [attends](#) ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Phnom Penh, on the sidelines of which he [meets](#) with Blinken. They [discuss](#) food insecurity exacerbated by Russia’s war against Ukraine and shared support for Sri Lanka’s return to economic and political stability.

Aug. 5, 2022: Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Ambassador Michele Sison [meets](#) Additional Secretary of Indian Ministry of External Affairs’ Americas Division Vani Rao to discuss US-India cooperation in the UN system and opportunities to strengthen the bilateral partnership on multilateral priorities. Sison also [meets](#) UN Resident Coordinator and think tanks in India—RIS, United Service Institution of India, Manohar Parrikar IDSA—to discuss cooperation at the UN to address development and peacebuilding, health and food security, and peacekeeping challenges.

Aug. 5, 2022: US Patent and Trademark Office [renews](#) partnership with the National Research Development Corporation, an enterprise of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research under the Indian Ministry of Science and Technology. They sign an MoU to strengthen technical cooperation and exchange information on the acquisition, utilization, transfer and protection of intellectual property rights.

Aug. 7, 2022: US Consul General in Chennai Judith Ravin and Department of Defense Attaché R. Adm. Michael Baker [visit](#) USNS *Charles Drew* (T-AKE-10), a US Navy and Military Sealift Command sealift dry cargo ship at Kattupalli Port in India. USNS *Charles Drew* [becomes](#) the first US navy vessel to use maintenance, repair, and overhaul facilities in India.

Aug. 8, 2022: 13th edition of India-US Joint Special Forces Exercise Vajra Prahar [commences](#) at Special Forces Training School in India. The exercise aims to share experiences and best practices in mission planning and operational tactics of Special Forces operations.

Aug. 8, 2022: Director of the US National Science Foundation Sethuraman Panchanathan [visits](#) India to deepen science and technology collaboration with Indian partners. At a lecture at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, Panchanathan [announces](#) new awards to connect researchers from universities across the US with scientists and engineers at several Technology

Innovation Hubs of the Indian Department of Science and Technology.

Aug. 9, 2022: Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser of the Government of India [hosts](#) a high-level meeting with Indian Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh and US National Science Foundation director Panchanathan to strengthen bilateral scientific cooperation through robust institutional framework and people-to-people connections. Areas of mutual priorities [include](#) clean energy, one health, emerging technologies, and STI statistics.

Aug. 10, 2022: Biological E's Corbevax vaccine [is](#) approved as an adult booster for Covaxin or Covishield, demonstrating the impact of the US-India partnership on affordable healthcare.

Aug. 10, 2022: Indian Embassy in the US [organizes](#) a roundtable with US universities, wherein the International Financial Services Centers Authority shared opportunities in GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City).

Aug. 11, 2022: Chargé D'Affaires Lacina, US Consul General in Chennai Judith Ravin, Director of the US National Science Foundation Panchanathan, and Indian Minister for Higher Education Dr. Ashwathnarayan C. N. [meet](#) industry leaders in Bengaluru to celebrate the 75th anniversary of bilateral innovation and technology partnerships.

Aug. 14, 2022: Representatives from Congress, academia, the private sector, and other organizations in the US share messages on the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

Aug. 15, 2022: Biden [issues](#) statement commemorating the 75th anniversary of India's independence and in honor of India's democratic journey.

Aug. 15, 2022: Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall [announces](#) that the Indian attaché team has unescorted access in the Pentagon.

Aug. 16, 2022: Special forces troops of the Indian and US armies [practice](#) a series of tactical drills during the joint exercise *Vajra Prahar*.

Aug. 16, 2022: Chargé D'Affaires Lacina and Consul General Mike Hankey [visit](#) John Deere factory in Pune, which manufactures tractors and is a symbol of US-India trade and investment.

Aug. 17, 2022: Chargé D'Affaires Lacina and Consul General Hankey [visit](#) the Aga Khan Palace to commemorate India's 75 years of independence and learn about Mahatma Gandhi's imprisonment and the Quit India campaign. They [highlight](#) US-India health collaboration in global immunization efforts with the support of the US Department of Health and Human Services and the manufacturing partnership between Novavax and Serum Institute in India.

Aug. 17, 2022: Sandhu [hosts](#) US guests on board INS Satpura—including Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro and representatives from industry, academia, and the Indian diaspora in the US—to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Indian independence and US-India ties.

Aug. 18, 2022: Jaishankar [addresses](#) Chulalongkorn University and discusses India's vision of the Indo-Pacific in the context of a changing landscape, updated capabilities of players, and the importance of safeguarding the global commons.

Aug. 22, 2022: Sandhu and US Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro [discuss](#) deepening the bilateral defense partnership and enhancing navy-to-navy cooperation.

Aug. 22, 2022: Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), co-chaired by the US and India, [signs](#) a headquarter agreement with the Government of India in New Delhi, according to the status of an independent and international legal entity. The CDRI is a partnership of national governments, UN agencies, multilateral banks, private sector and academia.

Aug. 26, 2022: Sitharaman [meets](#) US Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo in New Delhi to exchange views on global economic and financial sector issues.

Aug. 26, 2022: Speaker of the 27th Lok Sabha, Parliament of India, Om Birla [meets](#) US political representatives, academics and students, healthcare experts, and community leaders in Boston.

Aug. 27, 2022: At a seminar hosted by the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC, US Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday [says](#) that India plays a key role in countering China.

Aug. 28, 2022: India-US joint special forces exercise *Vajra Prahar* [culminates](#) in Bakloh with an indigenously developed weapon and equipment display to showcase Aatmanirbhar Bharat prowess of India.

Aug. 29, 2022: Jaishankar [addresses](#) launch of the Asia Society Policy Institute in New Delhi, where he sells the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue as an effective alternative to problems “beyond the remit” of ASEAN.

*Chronology prepared by Pacific Forum Non-resident
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PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATIONS

WASHINGTON REVS UP DIPLOMACY WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA

CATHARIN DALPINO, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

The Biden administration's diplomatic campaign in Southeast Asia kicked into high gear in the late spring and continued through the summer. On May 12–13 President Biden co-hosted, with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen as the 2022 ASEAN chair, the first-ever US-ASEAN Special Summit to be [held](#) in Washington, DC. US relations in the region were also boosted when the Biden administration [launched](#) the long-awaited Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) on May 23; seven Southeast Asian countries indicated interest in joining, although few are likely to accede to all four pillars of the framework in the near-term. Two Cabinet officials made [visits](#) to two US treaty allies: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to Thailand in June and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to the Philippines in August. Notwithstanding continuing differences over human rights, the visits served to reaffirm the bilateral alliances. However, global and regional tensions remained high, over the persistent crisis in Ukraine; brinksmanship in the Taiwan Straits; and the internal conflict in Myanmar which has only deteriorated further. These pressures only divided ASEAN further as the region looks ahead to a trifecta of international meetings—APEC, East Asia Summit, and the G20—in the fall.

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Political activity was also at high levels, with elections in the Philippines; a surprise move by the Constitutional Court of Thailand to [suspend](#) Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha; and a prison sentence for former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak. In Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia and possibly Myanmar, current political dynamics will help set the stage for elections in 2023 and 2024.

Political Transitions and Trials

The results of the presidential and vice-presidential contests in the May 9 elections in the Philippines came as no surprise, to Filipinos or the international community. Prior to the official launch of the campaign in February, polls predicted that Ferdinand “Bong Bong” Marcos, Jr., would win the presidential race and Sara Duterte-Carpio, daughter of former President Rodrigo Duterte, the separate vice-presidential election. The margin of victory for each closely followed the polls: Marcos won with 31 million votes, 58.7% of the vote with his main rival, current Vice President Leni Robredo, winning 27.94%. In the vice-presidential race, Sara Duterte took 61.13% of the vote; the next-highest [vote getter](#), Francis Panrilyn, received 17.82%.

The 2022 elections were notable, drawing a record turnout of 82.6% of registered voters, even more remarkable because it took place during a pandemic. Marcos and Duterte were the first presidential and vice-presidential candidates to be elected by a majority since 1986 (when Cory Aquino defeated Bong Bong’s father, Ferdinand Sr.) and the first presidential ticket to win together since 2004.

Equally historic is the union of two powerful political dynasties at the top of the new administration. The need to protect these legacies will likely influence some of Marcos’ policies. In his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on June 25, he outlined his domestic policy plans but avoided mention of the anti-drug [campaign](#) of his predecessor which, by the government’s count, has led to the deaths of over 6,000 people, although the estimates of human rights groups are much higher. However, the International Criminal Court will likely force a policy statement from Marcos: on June 24 the Court announced its intention to resume investigation into the killings.

The immediate challenge, however, is for Marcos to translate a strong mandate at the polls to approval for his administration’s early performance. His victory was due largely to his construction on social media of a “golden era” in the Philippines during his father’s rule, which often misrepresented the country’s economic state at the time. To transition to present reality, he has assembled a Cabinet, some of whom are veterans from pre-Duterte administrations. In economic policy, he has relied upon “technocrats” with experience in both government and the private sector.



Figure 1 US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during their meeting in Malacañang on Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022. Photo: Facebook/Bongbong Marcos

Thailand

When Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha [survived](#) his fourth no-confidence vote in Parliament in July, he was assumed to have cleared the last hurdle posed by the opposition before the next general elections, which must be held by May 2023. However, on Aug. 22 the opposition made a last stand with a petition to the Constitutional Court, arguing that Prayuth had exhausted his term limit and should be removed immediately.

Section 158 of the charter, crafted by the military regime arising from the 2014 coup, holds that a prime minister can serve eight years total and that terms need not be consecutive. The opposition petition counts back to 2014, when the coup was launched and Prayuth became the appointed prime minister. He argued that his term began in 2019, when he was selected in general elections, the first polls to be held under the new constitution. Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan has suggested that Prayuth’s term cannot be considered to have begun before 2017, when the constitution was promulgated. However, it was assumed that the

Constitutional Court would dismiss the petition out of hand.

On Aug. 24, however, the Court accepted the petition and relieved Prayuth of his responsibilities as prime minister pending a final decision. Prawit, Prayuth's fellow coup-leader and his strongest political ally, has been appointed as caretaker prime minister but Prayuth remains in the Cabinet, since he held the position of defense minister concurrently.

Prayuth's only hope of salvaging his political career is a court decision that finds his tenure as prime minister began in 2019, which would enable him to finish his current term and serve a second four-year term, if he were re-elected. If the Court adheres to the 2014 date, he will be removed permanently and Parliament will appoint a caretaker prime minister to organize new elections. If the court uses 2017 as the base, Prayuth can serve another three years, which would get him only halfway to a second term and make him a doubtful candidate in the next election.

The Court's acceptance of the petition for consideration is undeniably a victory for the opposition; however, even if Prayuth is removed immediately the result could well be another military-backed prime minister rather than the leader of an opposition party. Under the current constitution, the Senate, which is dominated by military appointees, must concur in the selection of a prime minister. However, even if the Court accepts 2019 as Prayuth's start date, he may lose the support of the military-influenced political establishment. For several months, polls have shown him to be deeply unpopular; in late August, after the opposition had submitted its petition, a survey conducted by the National Institute for Development Administration (NIDA) showed that two-thirds of respondents believed he should be removed from office immediately.

Malaysia

If Prayuth was placed in limbo in August, former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak's fate was more clearly defined. Najib's [appeals](#) in the criminal trial against him for embezzlement of 1MDB funds were exhausted and he was ordered to begin serving a 12-year prison term. He announced that he would seek a royal pardon, although that appears doubtful.

Najib's imprisonment complicates dynamics within the UMNO party and could influence general elections, which Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob must call by the spring of 2023. Although UMNO has been restored as the leading political party in Malaysia, its continued dominance depends upon its ability to rehabilitate its image after the 1MDB scandal. The UMNO party leader, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, is himself under a cloud of suspicion of corruption and has urged party members to support Najib's petition for a pardon. Still a member of Parliament after he was charged, Najib was active on the campaign trail this year, promoting UMNO in state elections, and his faction was gaining strength within the party. His motivation was likely the hope that by rebuilding his political base he could persuade the court to drop charges against him. With that hope now dashed, UMNO will likely go into general elections a divided party, which would hand the flagging opposition—and Anwar Ibrahim in particular—an unexpected advantage.

Great Power Competition Steps Up as Southeast Asia Attempts to Step Aside

As the war in Ukraine dragged on, Southeast Asian countries held fast to their original response: deploring the continuing violence and calling on both sides to exercise restraint. Few have been willing to call out—or even mention—Russia for the February invasion and are wary of antagonizing China over the issue as well. That said, the spectrum within ASEAN ranges from Myanmar, which has strengthened relations with both China and Russia since the invasion, to the Philippines, which was the only ASEAN member to vote for the UN resolution to exclude Russia from the Human Rights Council. Also on that end of the spectrum is Singapore, which has explicitly condemned Moscow and even imposed some sanctions on Russia.

States in the middle of the ASEAN spectrum are more conflicted. In recent years, Vietnam had rekindled its relationship with Russia in part to help reduce the threat of China to energy exploration and extraction activities in the Vietnamese Exclusive Economic Zone. Russia is also Vietnam's primary arms supplier. More broadly, Russia has traditionally been one of Southeast Asia's top arms vendors.

Indonesia exemplifies the dilemma that the Ukraine war presents to the economies of

Southeast Asia. Indonesia buys most of its imported wheat from Ukraine, for production of noodles and cereal, and is dependent upon both Ukraine and Russia for imports of cooking oil. Jakarta's reluctance to criticize Russia publicly is due not only to the economic costs but also because there is a high degree of support for Russia in the Indonesian public. However, in salvaging economic relations with Moscow, Southeast Asian countries worry that they could be subject to Western sanctions against Russia.

Beyond domestic economic and political issues, Indonesia's image as a leader on the global stage is also impacted by the war. Jakarta has resisted pressure from the West to refuse an invitation to Vladimir Putin to [attend](#) the G20 Summit in Bali in November but has issued a special invitation to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Both Putin and Zelensky have said they will attend, as has Chinese President Xi Jinping. The economic and diplomatic impact of the Ukraine crisis led President Joko Widodo to [visit](#) Ukraine and Russia in late June, to propose a "grain corridor" to ease food shipments and to stabilize other key commodities such as fertilizer.

Southeast Asian leaders faced an equally complex, but more lethal, balancing act in their response to the heightened tensions in the Taiwan Straits in August. The ASEAN Regional Forum in Phnom Penh coincided with the [visit](#) to Taipei of the US Congressional delegation led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. On Aug. 3 the ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement on the situation which called upon all parties to exercise restraint and avoid provocation, and which expressed member states' support for the One-China Policy.

However, the region is bracing for intensified US-China rivalry. In August China and Thailand [conducted](#) an iteration of the *Falcon Strike* air force exercises, while officers from Indonesia and the United States and a dozen other armed forces—including Japan for the first time—participated in *Super Garuda Shield* [exercises](#). Military training exercises in Southeast Asia that include the US military are increasingly multilateral, while those involving China tend to be bilateral. Although Southeast Asian countries will continue to balance relations with the US and with China, insisting that bloc behavior raises the threat level in the region, on an informal basis some states appear to see greater safety in numbers in balancing against the China threat.

Big Deliverables: Summit and The Framework

The US-ASEAN Special Summit in May in Washington did not produce notable new "deliverables," other than the Summit itself. Nine ASEAN member states attended—Myanmar declined to send a "politically neutral" representative and so did not participate—although only 8 leaders were present. Then-President Rodrigo Duterte begged off, insisting that a lame duck president should not attend, and Manila was represented by Teodoro Locsin, Jr., foreign secretary at the time. Some leaders complained that the summit lacked the retreat atmosphere of the Sunnylands US-ASEAN Summit with then-President Barack Obama in 2016; however, they benefitted from the Washington location and met Vice President Kamala Harris and other Cabinet officials, as well as members of Congress.

The Special Summit created greater pressure upon the administration to [release](#) the long-promised Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). On May 23 the IPEF was unveiled, although in the preceding weeks informal discussions with target countries had lined up an initial slate of members. IPEF is a complex but opaque undertaking, designed to address short-term issues such as supply chain shortages but also billed as a far-reaching "rules of the road" for trade, investment and other economic relations.

The Framework is comprised of four "pillars"—trade (which includes digital trade); supply chain coordination; infrastructure and clean energy; and tax and anti-corruption issues. The pillars are stand-alone: members may choose those in which they will participate, but they must sign onto all the provisions of that pillar. IPEF is not a comprehensive agreement, although most of the advanced countries will doubtless participate in all four pillars. IPEF is expected to contain a digital trade agreement within the trade pillar; the administration resisted pressure to negotiate one outside the framework, despite the growing importance of the digital economy. Negotiations among IPEF began this summer and are estimated to wind up in late 2023.

At the launch, the IPEF included seven Southeast Asian entrants: Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Brunei. If these members have a common complaint, it is that IPEF will not be a

multilateral trade agreement and so will not offer greater market access. The IPEF therefore lacks a major “carrot” to soften the “sticks” of demands for structural reforms that the trade pillar will likely contain. As a result, some Southeast Asian countries—such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia—will likely sign up for the supply chain and infrastructure pillars first. Regional leaders have also expressed nervousness that the IPEF is grounded only in executive action and lacks the guarantees of law that a formal trade agreement requiring Congressional approval would offer. They fear that the framework could be easily abandoned by the next administration. Despite these drawbacks, the IPEF offers the prospect of deeper economic engagement with the United States in a more systematic way than has been the case in recent years.

Rebooting the Alliances

Within the Biden administration’s current outreach to Southeast Asia is a particular focus on shoring up relations with the two US treaty allies in the region, the Philippines and Thailand. This is in keeping with the administration’s focus on relations with allies, but it also addresses perceptions in some quarters in Manila and Bangkok that Washington lavished more attention on more recent security partners in the region, particularly Singapore and Vietnam, than on its traditional allies.

Washington has multiple reasons for stepping up attention to the Philippines. The return of the Marcos dynasty to power brings added complications to the relationship, a hurdle that the administration seemed determined to clear as quickly as possible. President Biden was the first leader to make a congratulatory phone call to Marcos following his election. When she visited Manila in June, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman reassured Marcos that his status as head of state [gave](#) him immunity, and that he would be “welcome” to enter the United States as a result. (In 2012 the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit issued a contempt judgement against Marcos and his mother Imelda for violating an injunction that barred them from dissipating assets of the estate of Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., that had been earmarked to pay damages to human rights victims of martial law during his administration. The judgement also prohibited both Marcos’ from entering US territory.)

Apart from fence-mending, the administration seeks to clarify Marcos’ policy on China, an issue he scarcely mentioned during the campaign and one he neglected to mention in his first State of the Nation Address in July. Marcos was believed to favor a close relationship with China, but one that was more balanced with Philippines relations with the United States. However, concern over China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea and growing concern in the Philippine public over the government’s response will make such balance elusive. Just days before leaving office President Duterte implicitly acknowledged this when he ended talks with Beijing on joint exploration of oil and gas in the South China Sea, [negotiations](#) that had been ongoing since 2018.

Mounting tensions in the Taiwan Straits will give the Philippines greater salience in US security policy in the region. Marcos himself referenced this when he met with Secretary of State Blinken in Manila in early August and remarked that the “volatile” situation “points to the...importance of the relationship between the United States and the Philippines.” If conflict in the Straits intensifies and spreads, there is little chance that the Philippines will not be affected, with refugee flows; the rapid return of overseas workers; and even the spread of conflict to Philippine territorial waters. Moreover, the United States could look to the Philippines for access if it mounts a military response to a mainland attack on Taiwan.

Apart from the risk of conflict in Taiwan, China’s maritime actions in the South China Sea against Philippine vessels are unlikely to abate. During his visit, Blinken reaffirmed the US commitment to the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty and to working with Manila on “shared challenges.”

Thailand

Remedial attention from Washington to Bangkok, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, is no less necessary, although unlike the Philippines it is not driven by a direct security threat to Thailand. The US-Thailand alliance has been adrift for decades, initially because the end of the Vietnam War dismantled the nine joint bases on Thai territory, and more recently because military coups in Bangkok—in 1991, 2006, and 2014—required the US to restrict security assistance by law.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [visited](#) Bangkok in mid-June, following the Shangri-La Security Dialogue in Singapore, followed by a visit from Secretary of State Blinken in July. Both met with Prime Minister Prayuth. During his visit Austin announced that the *Cobra Gold* exercises, co-hosted by the United States and Thailand, would return to full strength in 2023, having been downgraded after the 2014 coup, and that space and cyber cooperation would be introduced into the exercises. Blinken signed a US-Thailand Communiqué on Strategic Alliance and Partnership which covered cooperation over a sweeping range of issues, from [combatting](#) trafficking to fighting climate change, although it was silent on conventional security threats. However, it is likely those threats and Thailand's growing security relations with China through the expansion of joint exercises and large-scale purchases such as submarines, have prompted the administration to revitalize the alliance.



Figure 2 Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin meets Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha during his visit to Bangkok on June 12-13, 2022. Photo: US Indo-Pacific Command

The “Other” Southeast Asia

The current IPEF membership begins and ends with the seven Southeast Asian countries that have the deepest relations with the United States. Despite a robust attempt to increase engagement, US influence is uneven across the region, particularly in mainland Southeast Asia. China views mainland Southeast Asia as its geostrategic “backyard,” and Beijing’s influence in three countries in particular—Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar—has grown in recent years. The poorest and least developed countries in Southeast Asia, all three are Mekong countries and two share land borders with China. Moreover, the human rights

situations in each country have created political distance from the West, particularly in Myanmar following the February 2021 coup. Although the internal conflict arising from the coup poses a threat to Chinese interests, particularly the safety and function of its energy pipelines, both Beijing and Moscow have moved into the vacuum created by Western withdrawal and sanctions.

In Myanmar there continues to be no sign of softening on either the military or the opposition side, much less the political will to seek a resolution to the internal conflict. The opposition National Unity Government (NUG) maintains that it controls over 50% of Myanmar’s territory and that the Tatmadaw has less than 20%, with the remainder in contention; these figures cannot be verified. The junta has control of the state apparatus but is unable to gain recognition from the international community, except for Russia and, indirectly, China. The NUG as well does not have diplomatic recognition, although Western countries are increasing contact with the opposition group.

ASEAN continues to be divided over Myanmar. The ASEAN Five-Point Consensus Plan, developed in the spring of 2021, has made little, if any, dent in the conflict. Malaysia continues to advocate for greater engagement with—but not necessarily official recognition—of the NUG. Cambodia, the current ASEAN chair, is pressing to mobilize humanitarian assistance that has arrived in the country but remains in warehouses. Phnom Penh favors distributing this assistance through the military but there is no consensus on that.

The junta appears ready to push the issue of legitimacy by promising elections in August 2023. By then Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior NLD leaders in detention should be safely sidelined with long prison sentences following multiple secret trials each: to date, the 77-year-old former State Counselor has been sentenced to a total of 20 years (three of which come with hard labor) and will likely receive additional time. The regime has announced new regulations that forbid political parties to have contact with foreigners or international organizations without prior permission from the Union Election Commission (UEC) or risk having the party dissolved. But the most sobering sign that the military has no intention of yielding power to another civilian democratic

order was the execution in July of 4 pro-democracy activists who had been convicted of “treason” because of political [activities](#). The government indicated that it may execute as many as 40 more activists in the coming months; over 100 activists are presently on death row.

While Myanmar has been in a downward spiral, Laos has suffered an economic one. In June Moody’s Investment Service [downgraded](#) Vientiane’s rating as a currency issuer from Caa2 to Caa3, referencing Laos’ “very high debt burden and insufficient coverage of external debt maturities by foreign exchange reserves.” The World Bank reported that Laos’ total public and publicly guaranteed debt reached 88% of GDP in 2021 at \$14.5 billion, roughly half of which was owed to China for large-scale infrastructure projects. Laos is at risk for default, although the government is determined to avoid that through various strategies, foremost of which is negotiation of its debt with China. Beijing is historically averse to lowering interest rates and other forms of debt relief, but Beijing may do so to prevent its competitors in the region, who fear Laos falling into a “debt trap” with China like that in Sri Lanka, from stepping in.

Although China is an increasingly central player in the Laotian economy, it is not Laos’ most important economic partner. That top slot goes to Thailand. In 2021, Laos-Thailand trade amounted to \$5.18 billion, against \$3.47 billion in trade with China. Bilateral trade with Vietnam was \$1.71 billion. Moreover, Laos’ two most important economic partners in Southeast Asia have additional advantages over China. Thailand has strong cultural, linguistic, and religious ties with Laos and, because of the similarities in language, is an important destination for Lao migrant labor and education. Vietnam has strong party-to-party relations, although those are fading as the revolutionary generations in both countries die out.

US-Laos economic relations have expanded since the Bilateral Trade Act of 2004 went into effect, raising the level of trade from \$14 million in 2004 to \$251 million in 2021. Washington included Laos in the circuit of high-level diplomatic travel this summer when Deputy Secretary of State Sherman [visited](#) in June. However, barriers such as transportation costs make it unlikely that trade with the United States will be a major driver in the Laotian

economy: in the near-term the race for influence in Laos will remain with Thailand, China, and Vietnam.



Figure 3 Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman helps to complete a mural at the US Embassy in Vientiane during her visit to Laos on June 10, 2022. Photo: US Department of State/Public Domain

Looking Ahead

There is little to suggest that the external and regional tensions that erode ASEAN unity and challenge the economies of individual Southeast Asian states will ease in the remainder of 2022. On the contrary, with three high-profile summits in region in November, these tensions will likely increase, if only because rhetorical battles between China and Russia on one hand and the West on the other will continue. However, the mid-term fundamentals are more encouraging: possibility of closer US-Southeast Asian trade relations through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework; negotiation of a US-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership; and closer cooperation on clean energy through bilateral mechanisms and through multilateral means such as the Quad and the G7. When Jakarta assumes the ASEAN chair for 2023 it will build upon its history as a strong ASEAN leader, although Myanmar’s continued political and economic deterioration will present ASEAN with the challenge of having a failed state within its membership.

The course of US-Philippine relations will have particular significance as a test case for balancing growing security concerns with issues of human rights and good governance, a situation Washington will likely face with several Southeast Asian partners in the near future. Moreover, as the administration seeks to strengthen relations with countries in the region, it may find that they are turning

increasingly inward with internal politics, particularly in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

CHRONOLOGY OF US-SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 9, 2022: General elections are [held](#) in the Philippines, with victories for Ferdinand “Bong-Bong” Marcos, Jr., as president and Sara Duterte as vice president, both by sizable margins.

May 12–13, 2022: US–ASEAN Special Summit is held in Washington, DC., [bringing](#) together 9 of the 10 ASEAN states, with Myanmar not invited. It is the first US bilateral summit with ASEAN to be held in the capital.

May 15, 2022: Indonesian President Joko Widodo, in the United States for the US–ASEAN Special Summit, [visits](#) Texas to meet Elon Musk at the SpaceX Launch Center. Indonesia hopes to attract investment from Tesla for its aerospace program. Jokowi invites Musk to visit Indonesia in November.

May 22, 2022: Elections in Thailand are held for the governor of Bangkok, the first gubernatorial race since 2013. Chadehart Sittipunt, a former transportation minister in the administration of Yingluck Shinawatra, [runs](#) as an independent candidate and wins.

May 23, 2022: President Biden [launches](#) the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in Tokyo, on the heels of the G7.

June 5, 2022: Cambodia [holds](#) communal elections, the first polls in a political cycle that will culminate in national elections in 2023. Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) wins, but by a margin—80%—that was lower than expected.

June 5–14, 2022: Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman [travels](#) to the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Philippines, Vietnam and Laos.

June 10–12, 2022: Shangri-La Dialogue [reconvenes](#) in Singapore, after a hiatus of three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

June 12–13, 2022: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [visits](#) Thailand, his first trip to the country in his current role.

June 14, 2022: Moody’s Investment Service downgrades the Laotian Government’s long-term local and foreign currency issuer ratings from Caa2 to Caa3, [changing](#) the outlook from stable to negative. The shift is based on Laos’ high level of debt, nearly half of which is owed to China, and institutional and governmental weaknesses that compound the situation.

June 15, 2022: Opposition parties in the Thai Parliament [enter](#) a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and several of his Cabinet members. This is the 4th attempt by the opposition to remove Prayuth in the current legislative term.

June 24, 2022: President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte [orders](#) an end to talks with China over joint oil and gas explorations in the South China Sea. Negotiations under a 2018 agreement with Beijing had failed to temper China’s actions in the Philippines’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

June 24, 2022: Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court [signals](#) that he will reopen the investigation into the killings and other suspected human rights violations connection to Philippines President Duterte’s anti-drug campaign. The court had suspended the investigation in December 2021, responding to a request from the Philippine government, which maintained that its own investigation into the killings would suffice.

June 27–30, 2022: Indonesian President Joko Widodo [visits](#) Ukraine and Russia, the first Asian leader to do so since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February.

June 30, 2022: Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., is [inaugurated](#) as president of the Philippines and Sara Duterte as vice president.

July 10, 2022: On the heels of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bali, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken [visits](#) Thailand and meets Prime Minister Chan-ocha as well as his counterpart, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai.

July 13-14, 2022: 13-member group of nations in IPEF hold first senior officials [meeting](#) in Singapore.

July 20, 2022: State Department releases 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP). Vietnam, Cambodia, and Brunei are placed in Tier-3, the lowest category, [joining](#) Malaysia and Myanmar in the tier. In Southeast Asia, only the Philippines and Singapore receive a Tier 1 rating.

July 22, 2022: International Court of Justice [determines](#) that it has jurisdiction over a petition brought by The Gambia against Myanmar for genocide against Muslim Rohingya, and that it will try the case.

July 23, 2022: Thai PM Chan-ocha [survives](#) the 4th no-confidence vote against him.

July 25, 2022: Military regime in Myanmar [executes](#) four pro-democracy activists it had convicted on charges of “terrorism” because of their political activities in secret trials. Regime officials indicate they are prepared to execute as many as 40 more activists in the near future; more than 100 activists under detention have been sentenced to death.

July 30, 2022: Ministerial Regulation 5 goes into effect in Indonesia, which requires social media platforms and other internet entities to [register](#) with the government and to remove user data at the government’s request.

Aug. 5, 2022: ASEAN [holds](#) 29th ASEAN Regional Forum in Phnom Penh, which gives rise to the US-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and other bilateral ministerial between ASEAN and its external partners.

Aug. 5-6, 2022: Secretary of State Blinken [visits](#) the Philippines following the ASEAN Regional Forum in Cambodia and meets with President Marcos.

Aug. 11, 2022: Military regime in Myanmar [announces](#) that political parties will not be permitted to have contact with foreigners or international organizations without prior permission from the Union Election Commission (UEC).

Aug. 11-15, 2022: Adm. John C. Aquilino, commander of US Indo-Pacific Command, visits Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In Indonesia he [attends](#) *Super Garuda Shield 22* exercises.

Aug. 14, 2022: Thailand and China [open](#) 10-day *Falcon Strike* air force exercises based at Udorn Royal Thai Air Base.

Aug. 15, 2022: Vietnam issues Decree 53/2022/ND-CP which requires internet companies to [store](#) data onshore; open representative offices in-country; and remove data from the internet that the government deems harmful.

Aug. 22, 2022: Opposition parties in the Thai Parliament [submit](#) petition to the Constitutional Court of Thailand requesting that the court remove PM Chan-ocha from office because he has exhausted his 8-year term limit. On Aug. 24 the Court accepts the petition and suspends Prayuth from his responsibilities as prime minister until a decision on the petition is reached. Prayuth remains in the Cabinet, however, as defense minister.

Aug. 23, 2022: Former Malaysian Prime Minister Razak Najib fails to win appeal in his criminal case and [begins](#) 12-year prison sentence for involvement in the 1MDB scandal. Najib announces his intention to seek a royal pardon.

Aug. 30, 2022: United States and Vietnam [hold](#) 9th Asia-Pacific Dialogue in Washington, DC, co-chaired by State Department Assistant Secretary for East Asia Daniel Krittenbrink and Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Minh Vu.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

CHINA- SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATIONS

COUNTERING US INITIATIVES, TAIWAN CRISIS COMPLICATIONS

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Chinese enhanced activism in Southeast Asia in this reporting period focused on countering Biden administration efforts to enhance influence in the Indo-Pacific. The Chinese government intensified its depiction of the United States as disrupting regional order and portraying itself as the regional stabilizer. Beijing's effort faced complications and uncertain prospects as Chinese military forces in August launched large-scale provocative shows of force amid strident media warnings targeting the United States over Taiwan.

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Countering US Initiatives

Beijing's activism in Southeast Asia in mid-2022 featured strong diplomatic efforts led by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and backed by authoritative media and included a summit meeting with Indonesia's president in China. Beijing strengthened regional ties through proposals for greater security involvement along with extensive economic and diplomatic involvement. These proposals were in line with Xi Jinping's new Global Security Initiative complementing his Global Development Initiative, both of which are especially appealing to developing countries.

As shown in the [previous](#) *Comparative Connections*, China maintained a focus on depicting the United States in Southeast Asia as a disruptive force at odds with regional interests in cooperative economic development led by China as regional stabilizer. The focus was complicated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's siding with Russia against US sanctions and US military support for Ukrainian resistance. Chinese diplomacy and supporting publicity for several months was preoccupied with Russia-Ukraine-US issues and gave top priority in the region to lobby for opposition to US actions against Russia. The anti-US [message](#) aimed to condemn what was seen as an emerging US-led regional military alliance in the Indo-Pacific and to warn Asian countries against bandwagoning with the United States on Russia-Ukraine and regional matters. The results of China's effort were mixed. Regional governments carefully avoided major controversy associated with choosing sides in UN votes and other policies regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

- Chinese Initiatives

At the same time, China moved forward with important initiatives reflecting Beijing's expanding influence in Southeast Asia and nearby areas. In line with Xi Jinping's global objective of a shared destiny of mutually beneficial development and peace, Beijing has long argued that its vision of Chinese-ASEAN ties stands in contrast with the disruptive policies of US leaders. The United States is portrayed as creating divisive blocs to compete with China for leadership in Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region. Xi launched his Global Security Initiative in a keynote [speech](#) to the annual Boao Forum for Asia in April; he

depicted the Initiative as upholding "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security" and opposing the US "Cold War mentality." According to subsequent explanations, Xi's initiative was in line with new types of security relations that are said to replace confrontation, alliances, and zero-sum competition with dialogue, partnerships, and win-win cooperation. When married with Xi's Global Development Initiative, the Asia Society [concluded](#) that the new security proposal reinforces China's image as "an empathetic friend of the global south, including Southeast Asia, and fellow developing countries seeking to advance 'greener and more balanced development through open and inclusive partnerships.'" Xi subsequently highlighted his new security initiative among other regional groups and China [lobbied](#) Southeast Asian and other developing countries to explicitly endorse the proposal.

The substance of Chinese enhanced security involvement has come in usually incremental but sometimes dramatic efforts to advance security ties in line with robust Chinese economic and diplomatic relations throughout the region and in regional organizations. Beijing's ambitions showed notably in China's security agreement with the Solomon Islands in May and a concurrent proposed security and development pact with 10 Pacific Island nations, discussed at the end of this chapter.

- US Initiatives and China's Responses

This section explains how Beijing developed and intensified its argument that the United States was the main disrupter and threat to regional peace and development and China was the leading regional stabilizer and benefactor. And it assesses how China's shows of force and threats targeting Taiwan, the United States, and allies complicated and compromised China's purported image as a regional stabilizer.

As President Biden and senior administration leaders increased involvement in the Indo-Pacific region with a series of initiatives beginning with the US-ASEAN summit in May, Beijing stepped up diplomatic lobbying and media warnings in response.

Biden Summit with ASEAN Leaders, May 12-13.

Critical Chinese media [focused](#) on perceived shortcomings of the summit and depicted the president as trying to keep pace with Beijing's much more active and substantive diplomatic and economic relations with the region. Biden's pledge of \$150 million to aid regional countries and the appointment of an ambassador to ASEAN were offset by much larger Chinese aid pledges to the region and the absence of a US proposal to compete with the China-ASEAN Trade agreement and the China-backed and ASEAN-led Regional Cooperation Economic Partnership (RCEP). Chinese [commentary](#) of the summit noted that ASEAN leaders tried to avoid alignment with the United States, notably by resisting US efforts to get them to support Washington in criticizing Russia in Ukraine.

Biden Visits Korea, Japan: Quad Summit, Economic Framework May 20-24.

Heightened Chinese concern over US advances in Southeast Asia showed in critical Chinese media and commentary by the foreign minister and ministry spokespersons targeting the Quad summit (of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) and the announcement of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF). The latter agreement included seven of the 10 ASEAN members, along with the Quad powers, South Korea, and New Zealand.

Widely seen as targeting China's expansionism and bullying, the Quad summit supported "a rules-based order," affirmed that disputes should be settled without the threat of force, opposed attempts to unilaterally change the regional status quo and stated that the regional order should be free from all forms of coercion. The four powers advocated the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, long criticized by China. China sharply attacked the Quad meeting, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi [advising](#) on May 22 that the US-backed Indo-Pacific Strategy is causing more concern in the region and "is bound to fail."

One result of the Quad meeting of particular [concern](#) to China was the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA). This effort was seen as likely to be carried out expeditiously with existing US and partner capacities and targeted at China's use of fishing boats for illegal fishing—(China accounts for the bulk of illegal fishing in the

Indo-Pacific, a source of major friction with most of its maritime neighbors and many Pacific Island nations).



Figure 1 Chinese fishing fleet operating in North Korean waters. Photo: The Outlaw Ocean Project via CBC News

The IPEF was viewed with greater Chinese concern. Chinese [rhetoric](#) depicted the pact as designed to "box in China" by restricting its regional "sphere of economic influence." Official Chinese media cited expert opinion that the US-proposed IPEF is really a trade defensive measure involving export controls, import screening, secure supply chains, and other defensive measures targeting China. In response, Wang Yi [announced](#) Beijing's plan to advance China's accession to the other major Indo-Pacific trade agreement, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, as well as advance accession to the Digital Economic Partnership Agreement.

Shangri-La Dialogue: New Emphasis on Taiwan, US "Confrontational" Indo-Pacific Strategy, June 2022

Defense Minister Wei Fenghe's [speech](#) at the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 12 gave a robust defense of China's position on the Taiwan issue, while supporting Chinese [commentary](#) took aim at US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's speech critical of China's aggressive policy and provocative behavior regarding Taiwan and other regional disputes. Chinese [media](#) repeated indictments of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy that was now depicted as facing China with constant political intimidation, economic coercion, and harassment by the US and "the cliques" of countries it supports. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on June 13 strongly [attacked](#) US policy on the Taiwan issue and what was seen as its "militarization" in the Indo-Pacific region, viewing both as major threats to regional peace.



Figure 2 Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister General Wei Fenghe delivers a speech on "China's Vision for Regional Order" at the 19th Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 12, 2022. Photo: Li Xiaowei/Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China News

G7 Summit, June 26; NATO Summit, June 30.

Chinese commentary about the G7 summit [focused](#) on the announcement of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) as a vehicle for geopolitical competition to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The PGII pledged to raise \$600 billion in private and public funds over five years to finance infrastructure in developing countries. Though casting doubt on the viability of PGII, Chinese [media](#) viewed this challenge more seriously than an earlier failed Biden-supported Build Back Better World infrastructure initiative in 2021. In particular, the PGII was seen as part of the negative turn against China by NATO, the European Union, and Europe's major powers.

Chinese coverage of the NATO summit on June 30 concluded with the judgment that NATO was focused not just on Russia and Ukraine but also on an eastward expansion designed to contain China's development. The commentary highlighted the participation of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand in supporting the shift of the alliance now directed against China. A *China Daily* [commentary](#) on July 6 listed US gains in competing with China and judged that America's "biggest gain" is "the new-found transatlantic unity that has consolidated its grip on NATO."

Wang Yi Regional Tour, G20 Meetings: Solidify Relations, Challenge the United States

In a trip widely seen as directly [challenging](#) the United States, China's foreign minister visited Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia July 4-14. During the trip, Wang attended the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Foreign Ministers Meeting in Bagan, Myanmar, a controversial visit that signaled the legitimization of the military junta and possibly undercut ASEAN's efforts to incentivize change in the junta's behavior. Wang gave speeches at the G20 Foreign Ministers meeting on July 7-8, met many regional counterparts at the G20 meeting, held a five-hour session with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on July 9, and offered an assessment of US policy on Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and related issues at ASEAN headquarters in Jakarta on July 11. Wang's rhetoric at the G20 sessions was moderate in dealing with the United States but his later [comments](#) at the ASEAN Headquarters were sharply critical. There, Wang warned against the United States "playing the Taiwan card" to disrupt and contain China. He alerted Southeast Asian countries about being used as chess pieces by the United States as they faced US coercion and bullying.

Chinese treatment of the session with Blinken implicitly rebuked US policy by disclosing the Chinese envoy gave Blinken four [lists](#) of Chinese requirements for the United States to follow to correct "mistakes" in its policies toward China and advance cooperation. At the ASEAN headquarters meeting, Wang went further in [disclosing](#) a thinly disguised reprimand of US policy. He said that he told the US leader to join China to "jointly uphold open regionalism...support ASEAN centrality, uphold the existing regional cooperation framework, and respect each other's legitimate interest in the Indo-Pacific instead of aiming to antagonize or contain the other side." He added that "If China and the US can have sound interaction in the Indo-Pacific, it could help release positive energy and also meet the expectations of all regional countries." Wang concluded that "we look forward to the feedback of the US side to the Chinese proposal," adding that the Chinese offer was a "test" of whether the United States can rise above its "hegemonic mentality" and "zero-sum logic" and play a constructive role in the region.

Subsequent harsh Chinese criticism of the United States left little doubt that Beijing had no expectation of a positive response to its tendentious offer. Brief public remarks by US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley at a meeting of Indo-Pacific military leaders in Australia in late July prompted strident Chinese [commentaries](#) warning that the US Indo-Pacific strategy was a recipe for “regional disaster.”

Threats over Taiwan Mar ASEAN Foreign Minister Meetings, Aug. 3-5

As discussed in detail in the US-China relations chapter and other parts of this *Comparative Connections*, it became clear in July that Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi was determined to stop in Taiwan with her congressional delegation during an Asian trip that had been postponed because of illness. Chinese ministry officials and official media warned in no uncertain terms of major consequences for this violation of China's sovereignty. The visit took place on Aug. 2 as Chinese warnings reached a high point. Then there were more than four days of unprecedented Chinese shows of force surrounding Taiwan with naval and air power in maneuvers demonstrating an ability to blockade the island, along with ballistic missile firings, with some crossing over the island and some landing in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Wang Yi's [participation](#) at the ASEAN Regional Forum and other ASEAN led foreign ministry meetings in Phnom Penh during Aug. 3-5 focused on the Taiwan crisis, which dominated the discussions. The Chinese foreign minister—supported by other Chinese officials and official media—was forthright in asserting China's justification for its reaction to the Pelosi visit. They [condemned](#) US complaints that China was overreacting, a G7 statement supporting the US position, and a statement by the United States, Japan, and Australia calling on China to stop military demonstrations around Taiwan. The Chinese Foreign Ministry [summoned](#) diplomatic envoys from G7 countries and the European Union to protest the G7 statement. Wang [cancelled](#) a scheduled meeting with the Japanese foreign minister and walked out of an ASEAN meeting during the Japanese foreign minister's speech in [protest](#) over his criticism of China's military provocations. Wang had no scheduled meeting with Secretary Blinken.

Wang pressed regional countries to support China's position, joining broad Chinese efforts to muster support against the United States. Chinese spokespersons and official media repeatedly [exaggerated](#) the support China was receiving. In Southeast Asia, most governments [avoided](#) condemning the United States as they and an official ASEAN statement on the crisis reaffirmed their various “one-China” policies and stressed the need to restore calm. Without referring to either the United States or China, the ASEAN statement called for “maximum restraint” and urged all sides engaged in the intensifying conflict to “refrain from provocative action.” While not explicitly calling out Beijing for engaging in disruptive live-fire military exercises, the statement added that there is an urgent need to “uphold multilateralism” and to use all existing channels of diplomacy and dialogue to de-escalate tension.

Beijing repeatedly [emphasized](#) that the United States caused the crisis. There was little recognition in Chinese commentary during the ASEAN meetings that China's actions in the crisis challenged its image as regional stabilizer and distracted attention from China's positive contributions to the region through policies and actions in line with Xi Jinping's various initiatives.

Chinese commentary after the military shows of force ended endeavored to show some empathy with regional countries concerned about China's use of military force and the future of US-China relations. Official Chinese [media](#) on Aug. 9 disclosed that Wang Yi had assured his hosts during the ASEAN meetings and other stops in Southeast Asia that “Beijing is making every effort to preserve regional peace and stability. So while inflicting pain on the violators, Beijing has also shown that it wants to neither upend the China-US relationship nor disrupt the regional security landscape.”

An [editorial](#) in *China Daily* on Aug. 12 tried to reassure Southeast Asian countries that were surprised and “caught unawareness” by the “unprecedented” largescale PLA exercises targeting Taiwan. It acknowledged that these countries remained “reluctant to take sides” between the United States and China on the Taiwan crisis, as stability in US-China relations is important for regional stability and development. More broadly, it advised that “The whole world knows how important China-US

relations are for the peace and development of the world economy and for the concerted efforts of the international community to tackle common challenges humanity faces.” It added, “And the whole world knows that China has tried hard to mend its relations with the US.”

Economic Progress, South China Sea Disputes

Beijing continued offering the usual positive outlook on China-ASEAN economic relations. ASEAN was highlighted as China’s largest trading partner, with [reports](#) in August forecasting double-digit growth for the year as China-ASEAN trade grew by 13% in the first seven months of 2022. The RCEP was depicted as an important impetus for the increasing trade. Meanwhile, China’s Global Development Initiative was repeatedly [cited](#) as providing guidance for China-ASEAN cooperation seeking solutions to development challenges.

In the South China Sea, China continued unilateral and coercive practices seeking its interests at the expense of other claimants. China again [announced](#) in May the annual three-and-a-half month ban on fishing in Chinese-claimed South China Sea waters disputed by other claimants. The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) [reported](#) on May 26 three separate incidents over the previous two months where Chinese law enforcement vessels challenged marine research and hydrocarbon exploration carried out by Philippine vessels in the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea. AMTI on July 27 showed Chinese Coast Guard ships in June blocking Philippine supply ships seeking to reach the Philippine outpost at Second Thomas Shoal. On June 17, Secretary of State Blinken issued a statement criticizing China coercion against the Philippines in the South China Sea. Blinken’s statement in July on the anniversary of the International Law of the Sea Tribunal 2016 ruling that rejected China’s South China Sea claims and supported the Philippines and other claimants was strongly [rebuked](#) by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

On June 7, the Australian government made public a [complaint](#) about a Chinese fighter aircraft that on May 26 intercepted an Australian aircraft carrying out “routine surveillance activity in international airspace in the South China Sea region.” It disclosed that the Chinese plane’s dangerous maneuvers including releasing a bundle of chaff to foul the

surveillance plane’s engines, which it said threatened the safety of the Australian plane and its crew. The Australian prime minister publicly denounced the Chinese action. Concurrently, Canada’s prime minister [condemned](#) Chinese fighter aircraft harassing in “irresponsible and provocative” ways Canadian surveillance aircraft operating in the Pacific in support of UN sanctions against North Korea. Chinese spokespersons [rebutted](#) the charges, accusing the Australian plane of intruding into China’s airspace over the Paracel Islands and ignoring Chinese warnings.

On June 28, China [condemned](#) the US “militarization of the Pacific” in the massive 26-nation, 25,000 personnel RIMPAC exercises running from June 29 to Aug. 4 as a US-led effort contain China and sow discord between China and its neighbors. The *US Ronald Reagan* Carrier Strike Group exercised in the South China Sea in July. One of the Group’s [destroyers](#) carried out freedom of navigation operations against Chinese holdings in the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands and then transited the Taiwan Strait. The actions were duly criticized by China. Significantly, after RIMPAC ended, the *Ronald Reagan* Strike Group [remained](#) in the Philippines Sea to the east of Taiwan during China’s unprecedented shows of force targeting Taiwan in early August. The strike group was joined by two US big deck amphibious ships armed with F-35B jet fighters.

Meanwhile, Wang Yi used [remarks](#) on July 25 marking the 20th anniversary of the China-ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea to warn against outside interference and to urge forward movement in the protracted talks on reaching a code of conduct in the South China Sea.

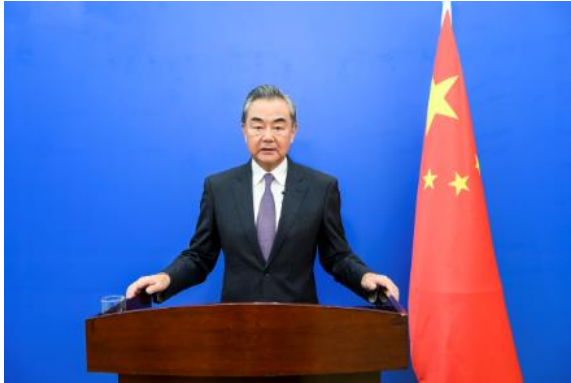


Figure 3 Wang Yi delivers remarks via video for the 20th anniversary of the China-ASEAN Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. Photo: Xinhua

China-Indonesia: Widodo Visits China

President Joko Widodo visited China on July 25-26, the Indonesian leader's fifth trip to the country. He was the first foreign head of state to visit Beijing since the Winter Olympics in February. Xi Jinping and supporting Chinese commentary [emphasized](#) close cooperation between the two countries under the rubric of the Belt and Road Initiative, and they highlighted several Chinese-supported infrastructure projects in the country, notably the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway. Indonesia was a focal point of Chinese supported vaccine production. Xi told Widodo that China provided Indonesia with 290 million doses of COVID vaccines, more than any other country. Total China-Indonesian trade reached \$66 billion for the first half of 2022, an increase of 28% from the same period in 2021.

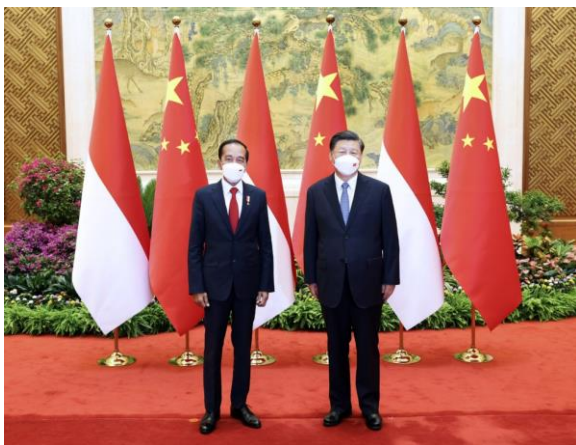


Figure 4 Chinese President Xi Jinping holds talks with visiting Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on July 26, 2022. Photo: Xinhua

Xi highlighted Widodo's international importance, pledged China's support to Indonesia in hosting the G20 summit in November and welcomed Indonesia becoming the chair of ASEAN in 2023. Widodo accepted China's offer to assist in the development of Indonesia's new capital and in building an ambitious industrial park in North Kalimantan Province.

Chinese media [acknowledged](#) Chinese competition with the United States in noting that Indonesia was one of the ASEAN countries to join the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. They also noted Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Milley's visit to Indonesia in July, where he warned of the "aggressive" Chinese military. "[Super Garuda Shield](#)," the large-scale (5,000 personnel) US-Indonesia military exercise that also involved Australia and Japan among other countries, took place in Indonesia Aug. 1-14, coincident with the Chinese military deployments and operations threatening Taiwan. Foreign media asserted Chinese concern over the exercise, but specific Chinese actions or statements were absent.

China-Philippines: Emphasizing Positives amid Uncertainties

Xi Jinping was in the lead in [welcoming](#) incoming President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. with letters, messages, and a phone conversation forecasting positive relations. Vice President Wang Qishan led the Chinese delegation to the inauguration ceremony on June 30. Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Marcos during his July 5-6 stay in the Philippines, when Marcos was viewed very positively by Chinese [media](#) as "lifting" China ties.

It isn't clear how far China is prepared to go in supporting infrastructure construction in the country. Outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte was disappointed with Chinese follow through on pledges of large-scale assistance that never materialized. Richard Heydarian [reported](#) on July 19 that the Marcos government scrapped three major railway projects promised to Duterte because Beijing failed to provide promised financing. Heydarian and some foreign [specialists](#) anticipate Marcos will follow a more balanced approach to China and the United States than did Duterte, who had a strong bias against the US. They [aver](#) that Marcos has voiced a tougher stance than Duterte on South China Sea disputes with China, and that public

opinion and the Philippines security and foreign policy bureaucracy are more distrustful of China than they were at the start of Duterte's term six years ago. Other observers see Marcos more positively inclined toward China. On Aug. 22, *China Daily* [reported](#) in apparent reference to rail projects earlier reported ended by Marcos that "the Philippines has resumed negotiations with China on the funding of three railway projects."



Figure 5 Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos meets with visiting Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Manila on July 6, 2022. Photo: Xinhua

China-Pacific Islands: Advances and Set-backs

Chinese [commentary](#) strongly defended Beijing's security agreement with the Solomon Islands against criticism from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and others concerned about its security forces gaining military access to the strategically located nation. That the secret agreement signed in April represented only part of China's rapidly expanding ambitions in the Pacific Islands became clear when the president of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) released a [letter](#) on May 20 along with copies of two documents China had sent to all Pacific Island states having diplomatic relations with China. The documents were for consideration and proposed adoption at the second China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers meeting on May 30. Others in the region released the documents to the media.



Figure 6 State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with Solomon Islands' Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele in Honiara, capital of the Solomon Islands, on May 26, 2022. Photo: Xinhua

The FSM president, an advocate of good relations with China and an honored guest in Beijing, nonetheless came down hard against the Chinese plan. The proposed agreement would have allowed China to train local police, become involved in cybersecurity, expand political ties, conduct sensitive marine mapping, and gain greater access to natural resources on land and in the water. It was viewed as deceptive in hiding China's ambitions to bring the Pacific Island states into China's orbit and to control security, infrastructure, fisheries, and other assets in ways that would challenge the regional states and their traditional international supporters, notably Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. The latter were sure to resist, leading to great power confrontation with the Island countries losing control of their sovereignty and independence while suffering negative consequences in the middle of the struggle. Other regional leaders also voiced reservations about the rushed consideration and potentially wide-ranging implications of China's proposed regional plan.

The China-Pacific Island States Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Fiji was the highlight of Foreign Minister Wang Yi's 10-day [trip](#) to seven Pacific Island countries and virtual meetings with officials of three other Pacific Island countries. The Pacific Island foreign ministers did [not approve](#) the Chinese plan. They did agree on cooperation with China on five areas including health, disaster management and agriculture. But Wang said more discussion was needed on the Chinese proposal.



Figure 7 State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi co-hosts the second China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Fijian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Voreqe Bainimarama in Suva, Fiji on May 30, 2022. Photo: Xinhua

The Chinese foreign ministry quickly [reacted](#) to the setback with a Position Paper on Mutual Respect and Common Development with Pacific Island Countries, which offered 15 “visions and proposals” for deepening engagement with the region. Notably, the paper focused largely on political and economic issues, with only brief mention of the security issues that had sparked the most controversy.

Chinese media offered a positive assessment of Wang’s [trip](#) where he met with 17 “leaders,” and more than 30 ministers of all 10 Pacific Island states having relations with China. In an interview on June 5, Wang said China had no intention of competing for influence or engaging in geopolitical competition. He supported the longstanding triparty—Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Island states—cooperation and said China was open to joining as a fourth party in this endeavour.

Chinese [media](#) said all 10 Pacific Island nations have signed Belt and Road cooperation documents with Beijing and all expressed readiness to join China’s Global Development Initiative. Wang signed several bilateral agreements at each of his stops, with some reportedly having the potential to cause controversy, as in the case of the April China-Solomon Islands agreement. China’s trade with the region was valued at \$5.3 billion in 2021. Up to now, Beijing has implemented over 100 aid projects in the region, delivered more than 200 batches of in-kind assistance, and trained 10,000 people in various fields. China has provided the countries with about 600,000 doses of COVID vaccine.

Other Chinese media and the Foreign Ministry spokesman criticized the United States and its partners seen seeking to counter Chinese advances in the Pacific Islands. Special criticism [focused](#) on the US-New Zealand agreement between President Biden and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern that focused on challenges posed by China but particularly in the Pacific Islands. Beijing also [denounced](#) the late June announcement of an alliance of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States to boost economic and security ties with Pacific Island states.

After the conclusion of Wang’s trip, Chinese coverage of Pacific Island matters became infrequent and low key, focusing on development projects in the region, notably the China Pacific Island Countries Poverty Alleviation and Cooperation Development Center established in Fujian Province in July. [Global Times](#) criticized reported US and Australian government concern with the Solomon Islands’ institution in late August of a moratorium on foreign military ships visiting the country, pending a review of policy and procedures. The moratorium followed the Solomon Islands government’s prolonged non-response to separate requests by a US Coast Guard ship and a British Navy ship to visit the country to refuel and resupply.

Outlook

It remains to be seen whether and how China will try to reduce regional anxiety over its use of force targeting Taiwan, the United States, and US allies. The impact of the Taiwan crisis on the Chinese image and influence in competition with the United States remains uncertain. More definite is the most important development in Chinese foreign relations in several years: Xi Jinping is slated to resume travelling abroad after almost three years of COVID restrictions. Xi is widely anticipated to become an even more powerful leader after the Chinese Communist Party Congress to be held in October. The attention he will show to Southeast Asia among many Chinese foreign policy priorities will send important signals to regional states and foreign competitors. Xi routinely attends the annual APEC leaders meeting which is set for November 2022 in Thailand, and is expected to attend the G20 summit in Indonesia shortly thereafter where a possible meeting on the sidelines with Joe Biden will be highly anticipated.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 12–13, 2022: US President Joe Biden [hosts](#) the leaders of Southeast Asia in Washington, DC. The US–Southeast Asia summit [focuses](#) on cooperation, including regional trade, human rights, and climate change. The summit seeks to counter China’s increasing influence in Asia, with the White House announced new investments of about \$150 million in its partnership with Southeast Asia, and the deployment of additional maritime assets, led by US Coast Guard, to help enforce maritime laws in the region.

May 26, 2022: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative [reports](#) three separate incidents in the last two months in which Chinese law enforcement vessels challenge Philippine marine research and hydrocarbon exploration ships in the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone.

June 8, 2022: Chinese embassy in Cambodia [confirms](#) that Beijing has provided aid for the renovation project for Cambodia’s Ream Naval Base. China maintains that its military will boost bilateral cooperation as it helps modernize and build the capacity of Cambodia’s navy. The Cambodian government reiterates that it does not allow foreign military bases in the country, countering reports that China is developing the naval base for the People’s Liberation Army Navy’s use.

July 1, 2022: Pew Research Center [releases](#) new global public opinion poll showing that concerns about China’s human rights record has grown, with increasing unfavorable views of China among survey respondents in North America and Europe.

July 4–6, 2022: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi [arrives](#) in Myanmar and becomes the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit the country since the coup in February 2021. Wang meets with foreign ministers from the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Group in Bagan, Myanmar. In the meeting, Wang pledges that China will share more data on the Mekong River with the group amid growing concerns and criticisms that China’s activities upstream are causing flooding and drought in downstream countries and affecting nearly 70 million people in the lower basin of the Mekong River.

July 6, 2022: FM Wang Yi [visits](#) Thailand and meets with Thai counterpart Don Pramudwinai. They exchange views on regional security and agree to deepen bilateral economic ties. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership between Thailand and China.

July 6, 2022: FM Wang Yi continues his Southeast Asia tour and [meets](#) senior leaders in the Philippines, including President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. They discuss bilateral political, security, and economic relations.

July 15, 2022: China and Vietnam [agree](#) to speed up establishment of a hotline to respond to marine fisheries incidents and to cooperate in search and rescue missions at sea.

July 25, 2022: Chinese President Xi Jinping [meets](#) visiting Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo in Beijing. They pledge to deepen bilateral ties through China’s Belt and Road Initiative and Indonesia’s Global Maritime Fulcrum. Widodo personally extends an invitation to Xi to attend November’s G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia.

Aug. 4, 2022: FM Wang Yi visits Cambodia and [meets](#) ASEAN foreign ministers. In a multilateral meeting with regional diplomats, Wang maintains that China will continue to invest in and promote regional development for ASEAN countries.

Aug. 4, 2022: ASEAN issues a statement following meeting of the group's regional foreign ministers in Phnom Penh. It [calls](#) for "maximum restraint" in the Taiwan Strait, urging against any "provocative action" following US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. The statement is released as China announces the start of a four-day, live-fire drill around Taiwan.

Aug. 13, 2022: Chinese Defense Ministry [announces](#) that it is sending fighter jets and bombers to Thailand for a joint exercise with the Royal Thai Armed Forces. The exercise will include training for air support, strikes on ground targets, and troop deployment.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

CHINA- TAIWAN RELATIONS

PELOSI'S "IRONCLAD COMMITMENT" OR "POLITICAL STUNT" LEADS TO CRISIS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

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Between May 1 and Sept. 1, tensions between Taiwan and China exploded in ways few anticipated but were in retrospect the culmination of well-established dynamics. The US once again was right in the middle. On Aug. 2, US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi arrived in Taiwan, which Taiwan's government celebrated as the most important visit in at least 25 years by a US politician. She promised Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen that US support for Taiwan's security would remain "ironclad." On Aug. 4, the day after Pelosi departed Taiwan, China signaled its displeasure by conducting the most extensive military exercises ever conducted near Taiwan, closer to the island than any before, and launching ballistic missiles over Taiwan's capital to land in waters east of the island. Throughout these exercises, the Chinese, Taiwan, and US militaries avoided any interactions that might have provoked confrontation. On Aug. 10, the Chinese military announced that the exercises had concluded, achieving their objectives, but that the military would continue its activities around Taiwan.

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This crisis occurred three months after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered a long-awaited speech on US China policy, claiming that policy toward Taiwan and China, and the US commitment to peaceful resolution of any disputes between them, remained unchanged. China rejected Blinken's claims of US consistency and insisted that Washington was hollowing out its commitment to respect Beijing's position as the only legal government of China, including Taiwan. China expressed particular anger at President Biden's pledges to defend Taiwan and at the continuing series of high-level US officials visiting Taiwan. Beijing warned it would react harshly if Pelosi visited Taiwan, as she had promised to do. She visited, and China reacted, [calling her visit](#) a "political stunt." China laid out its familiar claims to Taiwan in a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the 1992 consensus and again in its third White Paper on cross-Straits relations. All this comes as Chinese commentators repeat expectations that the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, scheduled for this fall, will reaffirm the party's tough Taiwan policy.

Largely obscured by these dramatic developments, Taiwan continued to expand its legitimacy as a constructive international actor, attracting more public support from major international actors beyond the US, such as the G7, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

Taiwan as seen from the US and China

The stage for the confrontation over Speaker Pelosi's visit was set by the competing visions that the US and China laid out. On May 26, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [presented](#) the Biden administration's China policy. Many complained that there was nothing new in what Blinken said, and that perhaps was Blinken's intended message: the Biden policy toward Taiwan-China relations continues policy that has been laid out over the previous nine presidential administrations since 1972. The US welcomes China's rise provided it honors the rules of the global order that facilitated its rise. The US policy toward Taiwan and China is only one element of its overall China policy, and in Blinken's presentation Taiwan was mentioned only briefly near the end of the speech.



Figure 1 US Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivers a speech on the Biden administration's policy toward China during an event hosted by the Asia Society Policy Institute at the George Washington University. Photo: Alex Wong/Getty Images

China's foreign ministry spokesman [said](#) that in Blinken's presentation "[t]he US has acted faithlessly, kept regressing from its own commitments and the consensus it reached with China, and attempted to weaken and undermine the one-China principle and use Taiwan to contain China." While Taiwan was a subordinate element in Blinken's presentation of US policy, it was the core of Beijing's rebuttal, premised on the claim that the US had committed itself to accepting the one-China principle as China defines it. In a mid-August press briefing, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink repeated the US insistence that it had never accepted Beijing's one-China principle but instead "remain[s] committed to our 'one China' policy...We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side. We do not support Taiwan independence, and we expect cross-[S]trait differences to be resolved by peaceful means." While the foundation of Beijing's policy is reunification, the basis of US policy is peaceful means in pursuit of what it calls "peaceful resolution."

US President Biden also issued a much more terse and much more noticed statement on US policy, insisting once again that the US would defend Taiwan and that this commitment did not change US policy, implying that such steps would only be called for if China initiated military action against Taiwan. And, in what seemed a curious bureaucratic misstep, the State Department issued two new summaries of US cross-Straits policy on its website in May. The first new version removed the longstanding US opposition to Taiwan independence; the second version, [issued after Blinken's speech](#),

reinstated that opposition to Taiwan independence, and balanced it with the insertion of a familiar statement from the Taiwan Relations Act, that “the United States makes available defense articles and services as necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability—and maintains our capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of Taiwan.”

China’s counter to Blinken’s presentation came in two parts. The first was Wang Yang’s speech on the 30th anniversary of the 1992 meeting, which yielded what KMT Chairman [Eric Chu so aptly called](#) a “no-consensus consensus.” Wang reminded Taipei and Washington of Beijing’s insistence that they accept China’s claim that in 1992 Taiwan and China both agreed that they were part of one China, the so-called “1992 Consensus” -- China equates with the “one-China Principle” that China must be unified under Beijing’s rule.

China’s second response to Blinken’s presentation was the issuance on Aug. 10 of [its third White Paper on Taiwan](#), entitled “The Taiwan Issue and China’s Reunification Undertaking in the New Era.” The new era is the era of Xi Jinping, and the White Paper lauds at length Xi’s leadership in advancing China’s objective of reunification, peacefully if possible. While analysts parsed differences between the 2022 White Paper and its predecessors, issued in 2000 and 1993, those changes were minor. The dominant theme of the White Paper is the importance of Xi’s leadership, and in that vein it paralleled the nearly dozen publications on the importance of Xi Jinping thought and leadership in every aspect of Chinese policy and society. The white paper stresses that the reunification of Taiwan with China is the shared aspiration of all Chinese and an essential part of China’s great rejuvenation. The only obstacles to this goal are Taiwan independence “splittists” led by President Tsai Ing-wen and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and supported by US efforts to use Taiwan to contain China.

China’s confrontational posture was also reflected in a series of tense bilateral meetings—between US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and China’s Director of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi by phone on May 18 and then in Luxembourg on June 13; between Secretary of State Blinken and

Foreign Minister Wang Yi on July 9; and between Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Minister of National Defense Gen. Wei Fenghe on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. In each case according to the official readouts from the two sides, the US cast the bilateral relationship in terms of a broad series of issues important to both sides, while China insisted that Taiwan was the inescapable prerequisite to any improvement in bilateral relations or progress on other issues.

In late July after media broke the story of Pelosi’s decision to visit Taiwan, [President Biden said](#) that the US military thought her trip was a bad idea, but he stopped short of expressing his own opposition. Pelosi said only a request from the president would stop her, which the White House clearly concluded would be too politically costly.

On July 28, four days before Pelosi’s arrival in Taiwan, Biden and Xi spoke by phone for two-and-a-half hours. Once again, the [US readout emphasized](#) the need to “manage our differences and work together where our interests align.” Biden restated the US opposition to “unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.” According to the Chinese readout, [Xi acknowledged](#) the need for the two countries to cooperate on global issues, but insisted that “the one-China principle is the political foundation for China-US relations” and warned that cooperation would only be possible if the US ceased “viewing China as the primary rival and the most serious long-term challenge.” [The Wall Street Journal reported](#) that Xi warned Biden of unspecified consequences if Pelosi visited Taiwan, but “he also indicated that he had no intention of going to war with the US.”

Amid these repeated confrontational exchanges between the US and China on Taiwan policy, Taiwan said almost nothing. [President Tsai Ing-wen welcomed](#) Speaker Pelosi without mentioning China directly, simply saying that Taiwan “fac[es] continued, deliberately heightened military threats.. Taiwan is committed to maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and we will make Taiwan a key stabilizing force for regional security.” After China issued its White Paper, [Tsai told the DPP](#) that it was “full of wishful thinking...ignoring reality on the other side of the Taiwan Strait and not renouncing the use of force against

Taiwan," While remaining low-key, [Taiwan's foreign ministry said](#) that Taiwan had been briefed by the US beforehand about Blinken's speech on China policy and [about Blinken's July 9 meeting](#) with Wang Yi in Bali, suggesting a strengthening of US-Taiwan policy coordination.



Figure 2 US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi attends a meeting with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen at the presidential office in Taipei, Taiwan Aug. 3, 2022. Photo: Taiwan Presidential Office via Reuters

Internally Divided KMT Searches for US-China Equilibrium

In June, KMT chairman Eric Chu embarked on a 12-day visit to the United States promising to dispel the party's "pro-China" image. In Washington, Chu presided over the reopening of the KMT's representative office. The party had maintained a DC office during its wilderness years of 2000-08 but shuttered it during the 2008-16 presidency of Ma Ying-jeou.

At the Brookings Institution, Chu proclaimed the KMT will remain "pro-US forever" but also promised that the party would also seek "principled dialogue" with the PRC to avoid conflict. Chu committed the party to the buildup of Taiwan's asymmetric defenses should it reclaim the presidency. In responding to an audience question about the 1992 Consensus, Chu referred to it as "no-consensus consensus" with continued utility as the foundation of cross-Straits interactions. While noncontroversial for a US audience, Chu's answer satisfied neither reformist elements in the KMT, which want to move further away from the 1992 consensus, nor Beijing, which has reframed the 1992 Consensus as its rigid "one-China principle."



Figure 3 KMT Chair Eric Chu speaks at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC on June 6, 2022. Photo: Facebook/朱立倫

The KMT broadly supported Pelosi's visit to Taiwan and condemned China's exercises around the island. But, in a contrary move, KMT Vice Chairman Andrew Hsia, who accompanied Chu to Washington, undertook a 17-day trip to the Mainland on Aug. 11, just as the PLA's live-fire drills wrapped up. Hsia billed his trip as a listening tour to assist Taiwan businesspeople on the mainland (*Taishang*). Hsia met senior CCP officials responsible for Taiwan policy, including ARATS Chairman Zhang Zhijun and TAO Deputy Director Chen Yuanfeng, during his stay. The timing of Hsia's trip and his meetings with CCP officials generated considerable controversy in Taiwan, especially in the DPP. Chairman Eric Chu, struggling to retain support from the deep-blue wing of the party attempted to put a positive spin on Hsia's trip, calling it "brave."

Chinese Military Intimidation Continues to Grow

Chinese military exercises near Taiwan continued unabated from May through August, even before Pelosi's visit. According to China's Eastern Theater Command, People's Liberation Army (PLA) [combat aircraft conducted exercises](#) off Taiwan's eastern and southwestern coasts, apparently operating off the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier. It also continued its practice of portraying these activities as necessary political signals. The Eastern Theater Command [described the sorties](#) of 30 aircraft near Taiwan during the visit by US Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Illinois) on May 30-June 1 visit as "necessary means against US-Taiwan collusion." Intrusions of multiple PLA aircraft, sometimes including drones, into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) occurred

nearly every other day through June and July. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense [condemned](#) China's sorties for "intentionally breaching" the Taiwan Strait median line. This median line has never been officially recognized by China, but China had until recently honored it in practice.



Figure 4 A soldier looks through binoculars during combat exercises of the navy of the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army in the waters around the Taiwan, Aug. 5, 2022. Photo: Lin Jian/Xinhua

Washington Responds Calmly to "Unprecedented" PLA Activity

Once Pelosi arrived in Taiwan on Aug. 2 the Biden administration shifted from soft opposition to her trip to a full-throated defense of it, [saying](#) that she had every right to visit. In the days preceding Pelosi's visit, the carrier *Ronald Reagan* swiftly traversed the South China Sea and positioned itself in waters east of Taiwan, where it met the amphibious assault ship *Tripoli* as the Speaker landed in Taiwan. The two ships [remained](#) on station in the Philippine Sea over the next several days to monitor PLA activity.

Once the live-fire drills concluded, NSC Coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell [briefed](#) the media on Aug. 12, where he described the administration's response as "responsible, steady, and resolute" in the face of Beijing's "provocative, destabilizing, and unprecedented" actions. Anticipating an extended PRC pressure campaign against Taiwan, Campbell said Washington would take "calm and resolute steps" in the coming months. He enumerated four specific steps: freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS), continued arms sales, the pursuit of deeper US-Taiwan ties especially in trade, and a

recalibration of the US force posture in the region.

A US Navy cruiser sailed through the Taiwan Strait in [May](#) as did a US destroyer in [July](#). Given heightened PLA activity around Taiwan well after Pelosi's visit, observers speculated whether the next transit might go beyond the routine. Campbell and White House officials declared that a ship transit would occur "in the coming weeks" but did not give specifics. On Aug. 28, the US Seventh Fleet [announced](#) that two cruisers were in the process of transiting the Taiwan Strait.

Chinese Military Response to Pelosi Visit, Dramatic but Contained

As Pelosi's arrival on Taiwan grew near, China's hyper-nationalist [Global Times](#) [began speculating](#) that PLA aircraft might respond by flying for the first time over Taiwan and perhaps even "escorting" Pelosi's US Air Force plane as it approached the island. No Chinese official media or spokesmen ever suggested the PLA was considering such a provocative step, but Chinese social media lit up with angry disappointment when it was reported that Pelosi had landed without any PLA action.

As Pelosi visited Taiwan, China's spokespeople and official media launched a barrage of criticism against Pelosi and the United States. The spokesman for [China's Ministry of National Defense](#) [warned](#) that "[t]he Chinese People's Liberation Army is on high alert and will take a series of targeted military operations in response to resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and resolutely thwart the interference by external forces and the separatist schemes for 'Taiwan independence.'" On the day Pelosi arrived in Taiwan, the PLA announced six maritime exclusion zones for exercises scheduled to commence at noon on Aug. 4, the day after Pelosi's departure from Taiwan.

The PLA [launched 11 missiles](#) on Aug. 4, including at least two that flew over northern Taiwan at high altitude and landed within Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone. Over the next several days, PLA units conducted a variety of exercises. Taiwan military units observed live-fire exercises near the offshore islands of Matsu and Kinmen on Aug. 4. On the following day, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense ([MND](#))

[reported](#) 66 PLA aircraft sorties and 13 naval vessels operating near Taiwan, some crossing the Taiwan Strait median line. On Aug. 9, [Taiwan's MND reported](#) 10 PLA naval vessels and 45 aircraft were operating around Taiwan. On Aug. 10, [China's Eastern Theater Command announced](#) that it had achieved all the objectives of its "joint military operations carried out recently in the waters and airspace around the Taiwan Island." It added however that the PLA would "continue to carry out military training for war preparedness and organize normalized combat-readiness security patrol in the Taiwan Strait."

Despite the intensity of these PLA exercises and the coverage and commentary by all sides, two judgments stand out. The first was by the Chinese leadership: The exercises should be carefully timed and designed to avoid any accidents that might spark a conflict while setting the precedent for more intensive, more intimidating PLA maneuvers closer to Taiwan. Pelosi's visit gave the PLA an opportunity to exercise capabilities, particularly joint capabilities it had wanted to practice during the summer exercise season, while also sending a political signal, but any risk of escalation must be avoided. The second judgment was made by the Taiwan public and business community, which concluded that the exercises did not immediately threaten them. The American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan surveyed its members, and [77% of those responding said](#) that they had not been significantly affected by the exercise.

Beijing's Aggressiveness Provokes Global Rebuke

The foreign ministers of the G7 and EU issued a [joint statement](#) on Aug. 3 expressing concern with Beijing's announcement of live-fire exercises. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi immediately [denounced](#) the statement for conflating "right and wrong" and defended China's measures as "reasonable and legitimate." Also on Aug. 3, ASEAN foreign ministers issued a [joint statement](#) urging "maximum restraint" without mentioning China by name. In much more pointed language, the foreign ministers of the US, Japan, and Australia condemned the PRC's missile launches in a [joint statement](#) on Aug. 5.

Uncowed by Beijing's saber rattling and sanctions against Pelosi, foreign

parliamentarians lined up to show support for Taiwan through visits to the island. A five-member Congressional delegation (CODEL) led by Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) was the first to arrive in Taiwan in Pelosi's wake. [China insisted](#) that it had the right to respond to this "infringement on its sovereignty" with further military exercises. The following week, a delegation of influential Japanese Diet members closely involved in Taiwan policy landed in Taipei for meetings with President Tsai. Parliamentary delegations from Germany and Canada announced plans to visit the island in October, drawing Beijing's ire.

Japan Caught in Cross-Strait Tensions

Taiwan Vice President William Lai traveled to Tokyo on July 11 to attend the private funeral of assassinated former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. According to the Japanese and Taiwan governments, Lai traveled as a private citizen. Regardless, Lai became the most senior Taiwan official to set foot in Japan in five decades, prompting Beijing to lodge a strong complaint with Tokyo. Notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances surrounding Lai's invitation, his trip underscores the affinity Abe had for Taiwan and the closeness of Japan-Taiwan ties.

Five ballistic missiles landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) east of Taiwan during the PLA's first day of drills on Aug. 4. To many observers, this was a deliberate warning to Tokyo as it contemplates involvement in a cross-Strait military contingency alongside the United States. In late July, Japan's Ministry of Defense published a defense white paper with expanded coverage of Taiwan compared with the previous report, elucidating Japan's defense strategy and military deployments in the region. Similar to the 2021 white paper, this year's report ties Japan's security with that of Taiwan.

Beijing Says: No Median Line, No International Waters

In the longer term, China poses two serious challenges to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait as it has been understood by all sides. The first is China's renewed promise to ignore the median line of the Taiwan Strait, which it had long treated as a restraint on its military operations. In the wake of the Pelosi visit and the repeated flights of PLA aircraft over the median line, [China's Taiwan Affairs Office](#)

[stated](#) that “the so-called median line is non-existent.” It should be noted, however, that most of the PLA sorties seemed to very carefully cross the median line from west to east and immediately make a U-turn and fly back toward the Chinese mainland, almost emphasizing rather than ignoring the line. We do not know if or how that might change.

The second challenge is potentially more perilous. Foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on June 13 that “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory. . . . China has sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait...It is a false claim when certain countries call the Taiwan Strait ‘international waters’ in order to find a pretext for manipulating issues related to Taiwan and threatening China’s sovereignty and security.” According to reports, Chinese diplomats had already been making this point to US counterparts.

US State Department spokesman [Ned Price](#) [replied](#) a few days later: “The Taiwan Strait is an international waterway, meaning that the Taiwan Strait is an area where high-seas freedoms, including freedom of navigation and overflight, are guaranteed under international law.” Assistant Secretary [Kritenbrink](#) [underscored this point](#) in his Aug. 17 press briefing: “[I]t would be deeply destabilizing and irresponsible if China were to try to take steps designed to control or restrict the ability of the United States or others to transit the strait or were to take steps that would threaten the ability of shipping and commerce to go through the strait.” There is no indication that China has taken or contemplates taking any concrete steps to enforce its claim, or that it has defined what the legal status of the Taiwan Strait is if it is not international waters, or that it has explained how such a claim might be justified under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which sets out specific rules for a country laying claim to control or benefit exclusively from a body of water.

A New US Arms Sales Policy?

The Biden administration authorized two small arms sales to Taiwan, [one](#) in June involving spare parts for navy ships valued at \$120 million, and [another](#) in July to replenish parts for combat vehicles and tanks valued at \$108 million. These sustainment sales, together with the rejection of Taipei’s request for anti-

submarine helicopters and early warning aircraft in the spring, underscore an apparent shift in US arms sales policy in which only “asymmetric” weapons will be approved. Defense experts see Taiwan’s adoption of numerous, mobile, and survivable systems as its best defense against an all-out invasion instead of heavier and more expensive platforms that could be quickly neutralized.

The US-Taiwan Business Council and AmCham Taiwan brought to light this policy change in an open [letter](#) to Biden administration officials in May. The two business groups, which include US arms manufacturers in their membership ranks, argue against a singular focus on asymmetric weapons because it would undermine Taiwan’s capabilities to counter more immediate gray-zone challenges. A balance should be struck to ensure Taiwan has capabilities for the full spectrum of conflict, the associations argue.

The PLA’s destabilizing pressure campaign against Taiwan this August and efforts to change the status quo below the threshold of war could trigger a reassessment within the Biden administration toward a more flexible policy. Washington and Taipei [intend to compare](#) intelligence assessments of Beijing’s live exercises. But a far more difficult assessment involves the likelihood of a Chinese invasion and gauging Xi Jinping’s intentions, with many in the US perceiving the threat to be far more acute than the Taiwan military.

Taiwan’s Military Faces the Challenge, but How?

Since Russia invaded Ukraine, Taiwan has moved to strengthen its military capabilities. It has begun moving toward reinstituting a longer conscription period and perhaps expanding the role and capabilities of its reserves. On Aug. 25, [Taiwan announced that its military budget](#) would be increased for 2023 by 12.9%, its military operations budget would increase by just over 25.4%, and its overall military budget would account for 2.4% of GDP. Taiwan’s budget ministry tied these increases directly to “recent developments in cross-Strait relations.”

While almost all Taiwan and US officials and analysts welcome these efforts to expand Taiwan’s defense capabilities, Taiwanese experts, like their US counterparts, had significant disagreement about how these

personnel and budget increases should be directed. Taiwan's former chief of the general staff [Lee Hsi-min has argued](#) that Taiwan must concentrate on asymmetric close-in defense and rely on the US for longer-range defense. Asymmetric capabilities by themselves are not sufficient, [others have argued](#), and must be complemented with the construction of larger naval vessels and purchases of additional combat aircraft to counter the gray-zone intimidation China has conducted over the past months. It remains unclear however what such larger platforms would have or could have done to deter Chinese actions without risking inadvertent conflict.

New Congressional Bill Seeks to Strengthen Taiwan's Security

In June, Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) introduced the [Taiwan Policy Act of 2022](#), which the two lawmakers billed as the “most comprehensive restructuring of US policy towards Taiwan since the Taiwan Relations Act.” The bill would, *inter alia*, provide Taiwan \$4.5 billion in arms sales financing, fast-track deliveries of arms to the island, designate Taipei as a major non-NATO ally, and impose sanctions on PRC individuals and entities that coerce the island's government and citizens. The bill would also direct the secretary of State to negotiate the renaming of Taiwan's diplomatic office in the United States from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office to the “Taiwan Representative Office.” In the theology of cross-Straits nomenclature, the change from “Taipei” to “Taiwan” would be regarded as a major acknowledgment of Taiwan's claim to sovereignty and statehood. The Biden administration has reportedly expressed [reservations](#) about some of the provisions for fear that they would antagonize Beijing. The bill has several procedural steps to pass in coming months, and refinements are likely.

A Quick Start to a New US-Taiwan Trade Dialogue

The US and 12 nations launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in late May without Taiwan. But USTR unveiled a [framework](#) for a new trade dialogue with Taiwan modeled on the IPEF the following week. In fact, the US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade is likely to yield more meaningful bilateral outcomes for

the US and Taiwan than the multi-nation IPEF with its common denominator commitments.

Negotiators in Washington and Taipei quickly achieved consensus on [negotiating objectives](#) and launched formal negotiations on Aug. 17, ahead of the IPEF bloc. Agreements in 11 trade areas are to be explored including in digital trade, agriculture, and trade facilitation. While robust in scope, this trade initiative does not constitute a bilateral trade agreement (BTA), as the commitments are not legally binding and key components of a BTA, such as tariff elimination and IP provisions, are left out.

There is strong will in both Taipei and Washington to be ambitious and move expeditiously over the next 12-18 months. Taipei's clear desire is for the dialogue to be upgraded into a full-fledged trade agreement. In the meantime, the initiative buttresses Taiwan's CPTPP bid and pursuit of bilateral trade agreements with other countries. The US is eager to show support for Taiwan in creative ways to strengthen deterrence, as Kurt Campbell noted in his Aug. 12 remarks.

Looking Ahead

In the wake of the Pelosi visit to Taiwan, analysts have debated whether it and the subsequent Chinese military exercises have provoked a fourth cross-Straits Crisis or created a “new normal.” At a minimum, these and other events over the past four months have changed the old normal. Taiwan's relations with the US and other foreign partners have grown stronger and more visible, though it is not clear to what extent that will strengthen Taiwan's security in the face of Chinese intimidation and coercion. China has established precedents for it to expand its military activity closer to Taiwan and in a larger, more threatening scale.

In the short term, all three sides can claim a short term “win” from the Pelosi visit. Xi Jinping looks tough but measured. Taiwan gets US reassurance and a way to argue for additional defense sales even given the competing US commitment to supply Ukraine's military. The US looks tough, and Biden, Pelosi, and the Democrats have prevented any Republican Party use of the Taiwan issue for domestic political advantage.

Over the next few months, political events in China and Taiwan will likely limit any destabilizing cross-Strait initiatives. In advance of the 12th Chinese Communist Party Congress in mid-October and its confirmation of Xi for a third term as party general secretary, Xi will want to appear tough toward Taiwan and the US, but he will not want to risk cross-Strait instability he cannot control. Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party will be focused on the island-wide series of local elections in late November. The last round of local elections in 2018 forced Tsai to resign as DPP chair and seemed for a time to endanger her reelection. She will not want any provocative steps toward greater Taiwan independence before these elections that might prompt truly painful Chinese economic sanctions, which would erode her image as a steady, reliable, disciplined leader whom Taiwan's swing independent voters can trust. The US will welcome any lull in cross-Strait tensions that would make it possible to refocus the US-China relationship onto issues like trade and investment and the environment which will enhance President Biden's stature as he considers running for a second term.

Once past these short-term stabilizing factors, Xi may decide the time has come to take concrete steps to coerce Taiwan to move toward at least somewhat peaceful reunification. Tsai may want to wave the anti-China banner to help her DPP successor win the 2024 presidential election. She may even welcome Chinese threats that will strengthen the DPP's claim to be the party that can be tough against China. And US political pressures may cause Biden and his Republican adversaries to compete to show who can be the strongest supporter of Taiwan and opponent of China.

Reunification would fulfill China's historical mission

On Oct. 9, Xi Jinping celebrated the 110th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution. Xi's remarks [depicted](#) the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the sole and faithful heir of the vision of Sun Yat-sen, who led the revolution and established the Republic of China (ROC). Central to Sun's vision, Xi insisted, was the unification of China. Therefore, the reunification of Taiwan with China is central to China achieving Xi's goal of rejuvenation and avoiding chaos. This statement raised reunification from being merely a policy goal of the Chinese government

to the definition of China's inevitable historical greatness.

A month later, on Nov. 11, the CCP [released](#) with great fanfare its third history of the Party, highlighting the central importance of Xi Jinping. This new resolution on Party history proclaimed that "[r]esolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Party." While both Xi's Xinhai anniversary remarks and the new history were dramatic in tone, neither announced changes in policy or an accelerated timeline for reunification. In both statements, discussion of Taiwan remained near the end, its standard place in major speeches and Party and government work reports, signaling that the Party sees no reason to raise the profile of this issue above other challenges it faces.

In his yearend press conference, China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Ma Xiaoguang [offered](#) a sober forecast for 2022: "cross-Strait relations will be complicated and severe, and the situation in the Taiwan Strait will face a new round of tension."

Taiwan seeks to lead as a democratic beacon

In her speech celebrating the national day of the Republic of China on Oct. 10, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen [offered](#) a very different vision. She too warned that cross-Strait relations face "a situation that is more complex and fluid than at any other point in the past 72 years" but blamed that directly on Chinese threats. She did not mention the Xinhai revolution, which the ROC national day commemorates. Instead, she said that she is the president of the ROC as it has existed since Chiang Kai-shek arrived in Taiwan, clearly implying that this is something different from the ROC that previously existed on the mainland. She pledged to lead this ROC in accordance with the will of the Taiwanese people and without subordinating it to the People's Republic of China.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 2, 2022: Taiwan media report that the US has informed Taiwan it cannot supply M109A6 howitzers as planned because of the need to supply the artillery to Ukraine.

May 3, 2022: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Milley [tells](#) the Senate Appropriations Committee that China aims to be capable of invading Taiwan by 2027.

May 3, 2022: Secretary of State Antony Blinken [says](#) on Press Freedom Day that Taiwan is "quite literally on the front lines of the PRC's hybrid warfare, including disinformation and cyberattacks."

May 13, 2022: President Biden signs a law directing the US government to develop a strategy to help Taiwan regain observer status in the World Health Organization and the World Health Assembly.

May 20, 2022: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai [meets](#) Taiwan's Minister without Portfolio and chief trade negotiator James Deng during APEC trade ministerial meetings in Bangkok.

May 23, 2022: President Biden and 12 Asian leaders officially launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework in Tokyo without Taiwan.

May 26, 2022: Secretary Blinken delivers a long-awaited speech on US China policy, reiterating the US commitment to the US One-China Policy based on the Three Joint Communiques, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

June 4, 2022: Japan announces that for the first time it will send an active-duty military officer to serve as Japan's defense attaché in Taipei.

June 11, 2022: US secretary of Defense together with Japanese and South Korean defense ministers [addresses](#) cross-strait stability in a joint statement after they meet in Singapore: "They expressed strong opposition to any unilateral actions that seek to alter the status

quo and increase tensions in the region. They emphasized the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

June 13, 2022: PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Wang Wenbin [asserts](#) that China has "sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait."

June 17, 2022: US Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC) introduce the Taiwan Policy Act of 2022, which they billed as the "most comprehensive restructuring of US policy towards Taiwan since the Taiwan Relations Act." The bill would, *inter alia*, provide Taiwan \$4.5 billion in arms sales financing, fast-track deliveries of arms to the island, designate Taipei as a major non-NATO ally, and impose sanctions on PRC individuals and entities that coerce the island's government and citizens.

June 23, 2022: China [expands](#) its ban on fish imported from Taiwan, claiming the imported fish had traces of COVID virus.

June 26, 2022: Taiwan sends its largest ever delegation of 265 participants to the SelectUSA investment summit in Maryland.

July 2, 2022: Macao [bans](#) mangoes imported from Taiwan, claiming that inspectors found COVID virus traces on the fruit.

July 4, 2022: Taiwan's Council on Agriculture [publishes](#) data showing that China has remained Taiwan's largest market for agricultural exports since 2016 when Tsai Ing-wen became president.

July 13, 2022: A spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office [states](#) "the so-called median line of the Taiwan Strait" does not exist.

July 19, 2022: European Parliament Vice President Nicola Beer arrives in Taiwan.

Aug. 2, 2022: US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi arrives in Taiwan for a two-day visit.

Aug. 4, 2022: White House spokesman John Kirby [says](#) that Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin had directed that the aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* and its strike group remain on station to monitor the situation as Speaker Pelosi visits Taiwan.

Aug. 7, 2022: Lithuania's Vice Minister of Transportation and Communications Agne Vaiciukeviciute leads a delegation to Taiwan to exchange views on 5G communications and electric buses. Beijing sanctions Vaiciukeviciute on Aug. 12 for "bad and provocative behavior."

Aug. 9, 2022: President Biden signs the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. It provides \$52.7 billion in subsidies for semiconductor manufacturing within the United States, with TSMC seeking to receive a slice of the funding.

Aug. 10, 2022: China's Taiwan Affairs Office issues China's third White Paper on Taiwan, titled "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era."

Aug. 10, 2022: China's Eastern Theater Command announces that the People Liberation Army has achieved all its objectives and concluded its exercises near Taiwan.

Aug. 17, 2022: 40th anniversary of the third Joint Communiqué between China and the US on arms sales to Taiwan goes virtually unmentioned. This is a stark contrast to most anniversaries of major cross-Straits events and documents, which are celebrated by one side or another.

Aug. 21, 2022: Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb arrives in Taipei and signs two MOUs to strengthen Indiana's economic and trade ties with Taiwan.

Aug. 25, 2022: US Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tennessee) arrives in Taiwan for a three-day visit.

Aug. 30, 2022: Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey arrives in Taiwan for a three-day visit during which he touts the progress of the \$12 billion TSMC fab being erected in Phoenix.

Aug. 30, 2022: Taiwan's military [publishes](#) a four-step process for responding to Chinese

drones flying over offshore islands Taiwan controls: "firing warning flares, reporting the incursion, expelling the drone, and ultimately shooting it down."

Aug. 31, 2022: Taiwan troops on Kinmen, an island near the Chinese coast, [fire](#) live rounds at a Chinese drone flying over one of the Kinmen islands.

Aug. 31, 2022: Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense [indicates](#) in its 2023 budget that it plans to build eight light frigates instead of eight larger frigates as originally planned.

Aug. 31, 2022: Vice President of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party Aso Taro [warns](#) Japan is likely to become involved in any military clash between Taiwan and China.

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

NORTH KOREA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

AN INAUSPICIOUS START

AIDAN FOSTER-CARTER, LEEDS UNIVERSITY, UK

On May 10 Yoon Suk Yeol took office as ROK president, and rapidly lost popularity. While talking tough on North Korea, he also offered aid to fight COVID-19—but was ignored. His “audacious plan,” wholly unoriginal, to reward Pyongyang materially if it denuclearizes, had very little detail. For months the DPRK did not even mention Yoon. In late July Kim Jong Un sharply warned him against any pre-emptive strike. In August, his sister Kim Yo Jong put the boot in: ludicrously blaming materials sent by ROK activists for bringing COVID-19 into the DPRK, savaging Yoon’s proposal as insulting and unoriginal, and saying the North will never talk to him. At home, meanwhile, the new government chose to reopen two contentious inter-Korean episodes from the recent past, seemingly to punish its predecessor’s policies. It was hard to see how good could come of that, or to hold out hope for any thaw on the peninsula.

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Out With the Old, In With the New

While that particular shift was not revealed until May 30, the change of tone was evident as early as May 12, when North Korea conducted its first missile test of the Yoon era. As noted in our last issue, Pyongyang has been launching missiles at an unprecedented rate. Perhaps unexpectedly, since Yoon's accession the North has [slowed](#) the pace. After climaxing on June 5 with the largest ever volley in a single day—eight missiles, fired from four different locations—it has gone quiet since, other than a cruise missile test on Aug. 17.

Early in the Moon era, Seoul reacted to Northern missile tests by expressing vague “regret” about DPRK “projectiles,” avoiding the term “ballistic missile,” presumably because under UN Security Council resolutions Pyongyang is banned from any BM activity. One noted security specialist [quipped](#) that such obfuscation was a case of “projectile dysfunction.” To be fair, by the end the Moon administration was calling a BM a BM. Yoon's team went further. His National Security Office (NSO) not only “strongly [condemned](#)” the May 12 and subsequent missile launches, but also “deplore[d] North Korea's two-faced actions” of continuing BM provocations while neglecting its people's lives and safety amid a coronavirus outbreak. “Provocation” was another term Seoul had eschewed under Moon; no longer. Many in the ROK military, which as elsewhere tends to conservatism, no doubt welcome this more robust approach. (They may take longer to forgive Yoon the gratuitous hassle he caused them by pointlessly and expensively quitting the Blue House, South Korea's long-time presidential office and residence in northern Seoul, for more central premises in Yongsan district—in the MND compound, which entailed evicting part of the defense ministry at short notice.)

A week later, on May 19, the quasi-official news agency *Yonhap* reported that MND will reinstate the original “hawkish names” (its phrase) for two parts of South Korea's “three-axis” defense system against Northern WMD: Kill Chain, Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR; the third element is Korea Air and Missile Defense). Under Moon Jae-in these were renamed, more anodyne, as “strategic target strike” and “overwhelming response,” respectively. A spokesman claimed that reviving the old names adds “clarity.” (Whatever language is used, some observers [argue](#) that this strategy actually makes South Korea less safe.)



반종빈기자 20220503

Figure 1 Graphic depicting South Korea's “three-axis” defense system against North Korean WMD. Photo: Yonhap

So much for words; what about deeds? Yoon insists that his overall stance that (as he told CNN on May 28) “the age of appeasing North Korea is over” does not preclude humanitarian aid. Our last issue reported Yoon's offer, in his inauguration speech, of an “audacious plan” to aid North Korea if it gave up nuclear weapons. Unoriginal as a concept, this was also vague on detail and has largely remained so; the North's eventual splenetic reaction is discussed below. Meanwhile, the North's outbreak—or belated admission—of COVID-19 gave Yoon an opportunity to offer concrete assistance. He took it, just as Moon Jae-in before him had repeatedly offered medical aid, for instance when both Koreas were hit by [swine fever](#) in 2019. In every case Pyongyang looked the ROK gift-horse in the mouth, mostly not even deigning to reply.

Permission to Speak, Comrade?

Yoon's efforts threw incidental light on the peculiarities and limits of inter-Korean telecoms. It is a small mercy that hotlines still exist in working order—although place your

bets now that sooner or later Pyongyang will pull the plug, temporarily at least, as oft times before. Seoul's efforts to use this channel for anything substantive, beyond the formal line checks at 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day, were thwarted in at least two separate cases. First with its offer of coronavirus aid, and later when it wished to formally remind the North of its obligation (routinely ignored) under inter-Korean accords to give notice before releasing water from its dams on the Imjin river which flows into the ROK, the same farce occurred. The South gave notice that it wished to fax a formal letter on the matter—but the North, as the Ministry of Unification (MOU) put it, gave no clear answer as to whether it would accept the message. This of course is tantamount to rejection, without actually doing so.

Reframing the Past

One notable and unexpected feature of the period under review was the Yoon administration's decision to revisit two macabre episodes from the recent past. There seemed no suggestion in either case that new facts had emerged, nor was Pyongyang involved, though it growled from the sidelines. Rather, this looked to be a domestic political ploy: South Korea's new government accusing its predecessor of wrongdoing as it sought to appease the North.

Regular readers of this journal will recall both incidents, which we covered fully at the time. First to be disinterred was the sad, odd case of Lee Dae-jun, a major topic of our January 2021 [article](#) (please refer for fuller details). Lee, who worked for the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF), mysteriously went missing from a survey vessel off the west coast. Floating to the DPRK shore, he was questioned and then shot in the water; his body was incinerated.

On June 16, out of the blue, the ROK Coast Guard—reversing its original stance—said that “no evidence was found to confirm his intention to defect”; it apologized for imputing that motive at the time. MND reassessed the case similarly. Meanwhile the NSO withdrew its appeal, filed under Moon Jae-in, against a court order to disclose classified information about Lee's death to his family. The latter on June 22 filed criminal complaints against three of Moon's former presidential secretaries, including ex-National Security Advisor (NSA) Suh Hoon, accusing them of dereliction of duty and obstruction.

Five days later the other shoe dropped. On Jun. 21, at the impromptu daily press conference when he arrives for work which Yoon has made a [feature](#) of his presidency, he brought up a second incident: the unprecedented repatriation at Panmunjom in November 2019 of two North Korean fishermen, who had allegedly killed 16 of their crewmates. “Haven't the people had many questions about it?” the President asked.

Here again we [covered](#) the event at the time, briefly enough to reprise here:

On Nov. 7, for the first time ever, South Korea [repatriated](#) two would-be North Korean defectors—squid fishermen, whose boat had entered Southern waters—against their will. Bound and blindfolded, they were handed over at Panmunjom to almost certain death. No one might ever have known, had not a journalist photographed a text message on the phone of a senior Blue House aide. Facing fierce criticism from the opposition as well as human rights groups, the government defended its decision, saying both men were “heinous criminals” who confessed separately to murdering the captain and no fewer than 15 fellow crewmen. Even so, critics argued, they should have faced justice in the South, there being none in the North. As it was, they were denied due process: access to lawyers, a court hearing, or any right of appeal. Even if the facts are as stated, this leaves a bad taste and sets a worrying precedent.



Figure 2 Images released by the MOU show captured North Korean fishermen resisting repatriation at Panmunjom in November 2019. Photo: Yonhap

Following up Yoon's hint, on July 12 MOU published previously unreleased photographs of the repatriation. Though heavily pixelated, the images were graphic: both men bound and blindfolded, with one slumping in an effort to resist as they are handed over. Video footage

followed a week later. On July 13 Yoon's office denounced this as a potential "crime against humanity," vowing a full investigation. Next day both MOU and the Justice Ministry (MOJ) opined that there was no legal basis for the handover (this appears to be correct).

By then a full-scale campaign had swung into action over both issues. On July 6, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) took the extraordinary step of filing criminal [complaints](#) against two of its former chiefs, charging them with abuse of power. Suh Hoon, who headed the spy agency for Moon's first three years (2017–20) before his transfer to the Blue House as NSA, is accused of cutting short a probe into the two fishermen so they could be deported; his successor Park Jie-won allegedly destroyed documents relating to the Lee Dae-jun case. On July 13 prosecutors [raided](#) the NIS: the plaintiff, but also the likely site of any evidence. This was followed on Aug. 16 by raids on both men's homes, along with that of former defense minister Suh Wook (no relation).

The accused vigorously [deny](#) the charges, claiming a political [conspiracy](#). This writer shares that [view](#). Regular readers know we hold no brief for Moon; we often criticized the nostalgic delusions of his *Nordpolitik*, after the hopes briefly raised by 2018's summits evaporated. But his administration's handling of these two tough cases is arguably defensible. A propos Lee Dae-jun, as interim Democratic Party (DP) leader Woo Sang-ho pointed out when refusing to support a PPP task force to probe Lee's death, Moon protested vigorously to Pyongyang; he even received a very rare apology from Kim Jong Un. As Woo said, this is "a case where we brought North Korea to its knees, not where we pussyfooted around it."

The fishermen's case is no less vexed. There seems no serious doubt as to the facts. Any ROK government (of whatever stripe) had no good options, given South Korean courts' reluctance to convict on the basis of confessions alone, the sole evidence in this case. While the attempt to deport them in secret was sneaky and probably illegal, imagine the uproar if these cold-blooded mass murderers, still young, had ended up walking free in South Korea.

[Debate](#) will continue to rage. We shall see if these cases come to court, and what ensues. Four aspects are worth pondering. First, since most if not all inter-Korean dealings are

technically illegal under the National Security Act (NSA), strict legal considerations alone hardly suffice. Second, ROK *Nordpolitik* has long been hobbled by a lack of bipartisanship. The new MOU, Kwon Young-se, recognized this on June 15 when he promised policies that would blend the best from past liberal and conservative administrations. Yet by going after its predecessors, Yoon's government is sending the opposite signal. Third, this kind of fracas will not improve inter-Korea relations—although those may now be broken beyond repair.

The fourth factor is national security. While it is natural for Lee's family to seek the full facts regarding his death, to reveal state secrets in this case may also risk informing North Korea exactly how, and how much, Southern military intelligence listens to their communications. The fear is that overall these proceedings may generate more heat than light.

Think You're the Doctor? Hell, You're the Disease!

Having briefly [reported](#) his election without comment in March, North Korea then ignored Yoon Suk Yeol for over four months—including his inauguration. That changed on July 27. In a speech marking what the DPRK celebrates as "the 69th anniversary of the great victory in the [Korean] War"—known to the rest of the world as the 1953 Armistice, and more properly seen as a draw or stalemate rather than either sides' triumph—Kim Jong Un for the first time mentioned his Southern counterpart by name. He was not complimentary: "We can no longer sit around seeing Yoon Suk Yeol and his military gangsters' misdemeanors." And he warned that, should the "military ruffians" venture a pre-emptive strike, the "Yoon Suk Yeol regime and its army will be annihilated."

Worse was to come. On Aug. 10, less than three months after first admitting an outbreak of COVID-19, North Korea convened a special meeting to declare the virus "eradicated." With this whole episode, indeed as so often with the DPRK, the real truth is hard to fathom. In particular, claimed death rates are impossibly low. Given that just a month later Kim Jong Un [announced](#) a fresh mask mandate from November, and suggested that people will for the first time be vaccinated, the war hardly seems over. The 'victory' proclaimed in August must be partial at best. Still, that was the message. And the messenger? None other than

Kim's sister Kim Yo Jong, familiar for her scabrous if quirky [commentaries](#), but this time making her first known public speech.



Figure 3 North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shakes hands with a health official in Pyongyang on Aug. 10, 2022 after declaring victory over COVID-19 and ordering an easing of preventive measures. Photo: KCNA/KNS via AP

And what a speech it was, in content and tone alike. That was not fully conveyed by KCNA's English translation, which not only omitted important details of substance—notably, that Kim Jong Un himself caught a “high fever” (presumably COVID-19) while toiling tirelessly for the people—but also toned down her obscenities. Fortunately, the indispensable *NK News* published a full and unexpurgated [version](#), for subscribers. Bear in mind, then, that the official translation reproduced below as Appendix II, which pulls no punches, is milder than what Kim actually said.

The gist, and its pertinence here, is as simple as it is stunningly perverse. Whom did the First Sister blame for the virus entering North Korea? Not the obvious source, China: the one nation with which the DPRK has maintained interaction (though much reduced), and whose “zero COVID” policy has not prevented outbreaks in border areas like Dandong. Instead, she castigated the “puppet conservative gangsters” in South Korea for their “farce of scattering leaflets, bank notes, dirty booklets and other shit over our territory.” Seriously. This really has to be read in full to be believed—or rather disbelieved, since it is altogether implausible. The wider political message could not be clearer, and Kim hammered it home. South Korea is an eternal enemy; no one must have any illusions about that.



Figure 4 Activist group Fighters for a Free North Korea (FFNK) claims that on June 5 it sent 20 balloons carrying COVID-19 related supplies—20,000 masks, 30,000 vitamin C pills and 15,000 pain-killers—across the DMZ. It also sent posters denouncing Kim Jong Un as a hypocrite for blaming the spread of COVID-19 on leaflets from South Korea. Photo: Yonhap

In the circumstances, it was perhaps unwise for Yoon Suk Yeol in his Liberation Day speech to renew his “audacious plan,” still almost wholly devoid of detail, though in July MOU [fleshed](#) it out a bit in a new Work Plan). And it was definitely foolhardy, days after Kim Yo Jong had told the South exactly what she thought of them, for Seoul to press Pyongyang for a response. Be careful what you wish for. Kim swiftly riposted, firing the other barrel in her more familiar format of a press statement (Appendix III). This time the language was less vulgar, but just as rude: her contempt was undimmed. Once again the message was clear-cut, and unremittingly negative. Again this deserves perusal in full. Bottom line: “We don't like Yoon Suk Yeol...Though he may knock at the door with [whatever] large plan in the future as his ‘bold plan’ does not work, we make it clear that we will not sit face to face with him.”

Exports: A Northern Year is a Southern Hour (Almost)

The DPRK stopped publishing regular statistics in the 1960s, when its initially rapid postwar economic growth began to slow down. Since 1991 the Bank of Korea (BOK), South Korea's central bank, has tried to fill the gap by issuing annual estimates of the North's gross domestic product (GDP) and other data. This exercise has its [critics](#): methodology and data sources are both unclear. But it is arguably better than nothing, and suggestive of trends over time.

BOK's latest [report](#), published on July 27, reckons that in 2021 North Korean GDP fell 0.1% compared to 2020. That is progress, given that

in three of the four preceding years (2017–20) it had shrunk by between 3.5 and 4.5%. While sectoral details are beyond our scope, the inter-Korean differences in industrial structure are striking. Agriculture, which in South Korea like most advanced economies has become minuscule—a mere 2% of GDP in 2021—in North Korea still constitutes almost a quarter of the economy (23.8%). Conversely, the service sector comprises 62.5% in the South, but barely half as much in the North (32.9%).

The economic chasm between the Koreas just keeps widening. BOK tallied North Korea's total GDP in 2021 at 36.3 trillion Southern won (KRW). It eschews a dollar figure, but this is equivalent to \$31.7 billion. South Korea's figure was fully 58 times higher. Granted the South has more than twice as many people, but even on a per capita basis the ratio was 28:1.

In trade, the gulf is astronomical. Here BOK is on more solid factual ground thanks to partner countries' statistics, even if some transactions are doubtless hidden. The double whammy of sanctions and COVID restrictions—the DPRK all but closed its borders to trade, as well as people—has wrought huge harm. Though nowhere near ROK levels, by 2014 North Korea's total trade had reached \$7.6 billion. Seven years later it had plunged to less than a tenth of that (\$710 million), almost all imports. Recorded exports were a paltry \$80 million. South Korea's exports in 2021, by contrast, were worth \$644.4 billion: almost 8,000 times more. Put another way, what the North exported in a year was barely more than the South managed in one hour.

Budget Ups and (Mostly) Downs

On Aug. 30, South Korea's Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF) published its proposed [budget](#) for 2023: the first of Yoon's administration. This is subject to approval by the National Assembly, which remains controlled by the liberal opposition Democrats (DPK). For the first time in 13 years, total spending is set to [fall](#) rather than rise: from 679.5 trillion won this year (including two supplementary budgets) to 639 trillion won (\$473.5 billion), a drop of 6%. Within this, for the first time since 2018 MOU's rather small allocation is also set to fall, from 1.5 to 1.45 trillion won. However, the humanitarian aid component is set to rise 15.1% to 751 billion won (\$558 million), to finance Yoon's "audacious

initiative." As under Moon Jae-in, the prospect of such funds being disbursed is remote. Meanwhile defense spending is slated to rise 4.6% to 57.1 trillion won (\$42.3 billion), a sum larger than North Korea's entire GDP.

Conclusion: New/Old Blocs + New Nuclear Doctrine = Less Risk?

Prospects for inter-Korean relations could hardly be bleaker. Even so, "never say never" is a salutary watchword. North Korea excoriated past rightwing ROK leaders even more viciously, depicting Lee Myung-bak (president 2008–13) as a rat being bloodily murdered, and calling Park Geun-hye (2013–17) a whore. Some North-South contacts, not always public, continued in both cases.

That said, the current conjuncture is more than just a matter of routine ups and downs, or swings from left to right. The peninsula is entering a new phase, driven by wider geopolitics and North Korea's choices. Worsening US-China tensions and Russia's invasion of Ukraine are creating a new Cold War line-up of blocs. Interestingly, Kim Jong Un has embraced this. A state which under his father and grandfather shrilly proclaimed its autonomy (*Juche*) now emphasizes instead its unstinting support for both its big brothers in Beijing and Moscow. In the latter case, this has gone as far as officially recognizing the so-called "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk. In Korean terms, that looks a lot like [flunkeyism](#) (*sadaejuui*). It is a striking change from Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, who tried to balance the DPRK's relations between different powers. Kim Jong Un may reckon these are different times, and he could be right. Another change is that as a nuclear power North Korea can no longer be pushed around.

If this analysis is correct, then nothing any ROK government—left or right—may do is going to impress Kim or change his mind. This is the lesson of the last four years, and maybe the next four as well. A canny leader in Seoul should however be vigilant for any opportunity, while keeping his powder dry. Further down the line, Kim may chafe at being in thrall to the dragon and the bear. But after so many betrayals, rebuilding trust will be hard.

Even the latest ominous development may be tempered by this new context. In September the

DPRK [unveiled](#), indeed codified as [law](#), an alarming new nuclear doctrine, whose thrust is to expand the contexts in which Pyongyang reserves the right to use its weapons. This must surely [kill](#) any last faint hopes of denuclearization. On this issue, as with his embrace of neo-blocism (forgive the phrase), Kim has made a clear and firm choice which he will not reverse.

What will be interesting is how these two aspects interact. Paradoxically, despite the danger posed by North Korea's ever-expanding arsenal, Kim's embrace of China and Russia may be a restraining influence. Whatever their own nefarious purposes, neither Beijing nor Moscow wants to be distracted by irresponsible adventurism in Korea—as happened in 1950. At all events, for the foreseeable future inter-Korean relations will be largely driven by these wider trends and alignments. Yoon's "audacious plan" has scant chance of coming to fruition.

Appendix:

I. Extract from President Yoon Suk Yeol's Liberation Day [address](#), Aug. 15

Freedom—the spirit of our independence movement—builds peace, and peace defends freedom.

Peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia is an important prerequisite for global peace and serves as the foundation for protecting and expanding our freedom and that of global citizens.

Denuclearization of North Korea is essential for sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula, in Northeast Asia and around the world.

The audacious initiative that I envision will significantly improve North Korea's economy and its people's livelihoods in stages if the North ceases the development of its nuclear program and embarks on a genuine and substantive process for denuclearization.

We will implement a large-scale food program; provide assistance for power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure; and carry out projects to modernize ports and airports for international trade. We will also help enhance North Korea's agricultural productivity, offer assistance to modernize hospitals and medical infrastructure, and implement international investment and financial support initiatives.

[continues]

II. Kim Yo Jong's speech, Aug. 10

Official KCNA [translation](#). In fact, this is both shortened and considerably toned down. For a full and unexpurgated translation by Jeongmin Kim, see [NK News](#).

Pyeongyang, August 11 (KCNA) -- Kim Yo Jong, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, made a speech at the national meeting of reviewing the emergency anti-epidemic work.

During the days of the extremely stern anti-epidemic campaign, the respected Comrade Kim

Jong Un convened a series of meetings of the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee to protect the lives of our dear people, in which he personally came up with packages of various measures and ways, and visited anti-epidemic theatres day and night to teach clear-cut methods, she recalled, noting that during the 91 days-long arduous campaign reminiscent of a war, the respected General Secretary scrutinized more than 1 772 documents of 22 956 pages to guide the anti-epidemic campaign of the country.

Under his energetic and meticulous guidance the Party information field has concentrated all its information and motivational forces on letting all the people harden their faith in sure victory and renew their will to boldly tide over the pandemic-brought health crisis, and gained new experience and set fresh examples to fulfill its role as a powerful loudspeaker and noiseless amplifier absolutely faithful to the Party Central Committee, she stressed.

Saying that our country and people brought about an epoch-making miracle of defusing the unprecedented health crisis within the shortest period in the face of the worst difficulties under the outstanding guidance of the great leader, she went on:

Today's proud success proves once again that we can remain unfazed by any disaster and overcome it without fail as long as we are under the wise guidance of the Party Central Committee, and more clearly shows the tremendous might of our country in which the Party and the people are united in one mind.

Pointing out that the recent national hardship sustained by us was definitely attributable to the hysteric farce kicked off by the enemy to escalate the confrontation with our Republic with the global health crisis as a momentum, she said:

Now that many countries in the world are taking more effective anti-epidemic measures, realizing once again the danger of the spread of the malignant pandemic disease through contact with the objects infected with the malicious virus, it is a matter of grave concern that the disgusting ones in south Korea stage a farce of scattering leaflets, bank notes, awful booklets and things over our territory.

It is the universally accepted opinion of the international community that it is necessary to thoroughly disinfect the surface of objects as the malignant virus spreads via objects.

Such scientific clarification can never change no matter how desperately anyone may deny.

As we explained the root cause of the spread of the malignant disease not long ago, its first outbreak was reported in an area near the front. This fact aroused our deep concern and pushed us to suspect the despicable ones in south Korea. As all things concerned indicate a place too clearly in the light of background and circumstances, it is quite natural for us to consider strange objects as vehicles of the malignant pandemic disease.

It is an undeniable fact that a single person or a single object infected with the highly contagious virus may infect many other people in a moment and cause a grave health crisis.

From this scientific view, we come to draw a conclusion that we can no longer overlook the uninterrupted influx of rubbish from south Korea.

This is just an unethical crime.

What matters is the fact that the south Korean puppets are still thrusting leaflets and dirty objects into our territory.

We must counter it toughly.

We have already considered various counteraction plans but our countermeasure must be a deadly retaliatory one.

If the enemy persists in such dangerous deeds as fomenting the inroads of virus into our Republic, we will respond to it by not only exterminating the virus but also wiping out the south Korean authorities.

The south Korean puppets are, indeed, the invariable principal enemy of us and the fundamental factor that determines victory and failure of the revolutionary struggle is class consciousness.

We, officials in the Party information field, will conduct class education more intensively and offensively to further fuel the soaring anger and

burning wrath of all the people and thus firmly defend this land by turning it into the invincible class fortress and dear home for the people's happiness and good health.

She in her speech pledged to make the priceless successes gained in the anti-epidemic campaign a new turning occasion for further consolidating the political and ideological might of the Party and the revolutionary ranks and more vigorously advancing our revolutionary cause.

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III. "Don't have an absurd dream": Kim Yo Jong's Press Statement, Aug. 18

Official KCNA [translation](#)

Pyeongyang, August 19 (KCNA) -- Kim Yo Jong, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), released the following press statement "Don't have an absurd dream" on August 18:

It would have been more favorable for his image to shut his mouth, rather than talking nonsense as he had nothing better to say.

I am talking about Yoon Suk Yeol's "commemorative speech marking August 15."

In his situation where he is losing the public support, it would have been better if he had never presented himself on that occasion.

I'm only saying this today because the south seems to be very eager to know of our reaction and not because I'm concerned of Yoon's situation, as even a mere child would know.

If he had really wanted to take the platform, I'm curious to know how much effort he had put in to his speech to be unable to say anything that would save his dignity.

This time, Yoon focused on clamoring about "a course of building a free country by fighting against communist forces" and "defending the free world by facing against communist invasion" and inciting confrontation between systems.

Although I'm sorry to say this, dogs will always bark, as a pup or an adult, and the same goes for the one with the title of "president."

The most repulsive point was when he recited absurd words impertinently of proposing us a "bold and broad-based plan" to radically improve the economy and public welfare if we would stop nuclear development and turn towards substantial denuclearization.

With the person who had at one time pretended to be "driver," questioning the public, gone, another who also lives in his own world has appeared to sit upon the throne.

Although he seemed to have gone through a lot of troubles after pretending to have a plan on improving the north-south relations during his "inaugural address" in May and then explaining it to the U.S. and neighboring countries to explain himself and asking for understanding and support for it, the "plan" he had laid down this time is truly absurd.

All the ridiculous remarks uttered by the so-called "president" really make the south look marvelous only.

Is a certain Yoon the only person who could be elected as "president"?

"Bold plan?"

In a word, I can explain why it is absurd.

His "bold plan" is the height of absurdity as it is an impracticable one to create mulberry fields in the dark blue ocean.

He disregarded the other party's attitude towards the plan and the comments which will be made on it by those grasping the situation of the inter-Korean ties. I could not but be stunned by his "bravery" and excessive ignorance

I'd love to give some advices.

The "bold plan" is not a new one, but a replica of "denuclearization, opening and 3 000" raised by traitor Lee Myung Bak 10-odd years ago only to be forsaken as a product of the confrontation with fellow countrymen, far from attracting the attention of world people.

The fact that he copied the policy towards the north, thrown into the dustbin of history, and called it "bold plan" shows that he is really foolish.

I'm not sure that he knows his assumption "if the north took a measure for denuclearization" was a wrong prerequisite.

All the predecessors in the south and even their master the U.S. failed to "make the north abandon nukes," but he uttered pipedream-like remarks, which made him look so miserable as we wondered why he quickly read the text that must be wrongly written, not knowing what it means.

All can not be bartered. To think that the plan to barter "economic cooperation" for our honor, nukes, is the great dream, hope and plan of Yoon, we came to realize that he is really simple and still childish.

He, who came to power, would take two or three years to know well the law of the world and the situation while working hard.

No one barter its destiny for corn cake.

Bitter contempt is what we will only show those spinning a pipedream to succeed in making us abandon our nukes if they pay more stakes.

It would be advisable to mind their own business if they can find time to spare, not talking about the north-south issue.

They would have no time to talk about someone's "economy" and improvement of "people's livelihood" since they may be ousted anytime for their spoiled economy and public welfare.

Those villains seriously encroaching on our security circumstance by continuing to infiltrate dirty wastes into our territory talk about "food supply" and "medical assistance" to inhabitants in the north. Such deeds will only incite our people's surging hatred and wrath.

A knave who talks about "bold plan" today and stages anti-north war exercises tomorrow is none other than "mastermind" Yoon Suk Yeol.

It is our earnest desire to live without awareness of each other.

Before evaluating the south Korean authorities' "policy toward the north," we don't like Yoon Suk Yeol himself.

Though he may knock at the door with what large plan in the future as his "bold plan" does not work, we make it clear that we will not sit face to face with him.

It would be good for Yoon Suk Yeol to ponder over what serious threat the reckless confrontational remarks his hirelings have made irregularly and ignorantly will bring.

Yoon should not forget our advice even a moment that it would be good never to stand face to face with us.

In addition, we made it clear that the previous day's weapon test was conducted on the "Kumsong Bridge" in Anju City of South Phyongan Province, not the Onchon area the south Korean authorities announced rashly and talkatively.

I am curious to know why those always talking about the pursuit surveillance and full preparedness under the close cooperation between south Korea and U.S. could not indicate the launching time and place properly and why they do not open to the public data on the weapon system.

If the data and flight trajectory are known, the south will be so bewildered and afraid. And it will be a thing worthy of seeing how they will explain about it before their people. -o-

CHRONOLOGY OF NORTH KOREA-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 4, 2022: Both the outgoing and soon-to-be ROK governments condemn the DPRK's latest missile [launch](#) today, its 14th this year. The presidential National Security Council (NSC) [calls on](#) Pyongyang "to stop its actions that pose serious threats." President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol's transition team [promises](#) "more fundamental deterrence measures."

May 4, 2022: Lee Jong-sup, the former three-star general who is Yoon's nominee to be minister of National Defense (MND), [tells](#) his parliamentary confirmation hearing that South Korea could be a nuclear target for North Korea. (See also May 8.)

May 7, 2022: In North Korea's 15th missile launch this year, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) [report](#) an apparent submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) test in waters near the east coast city of Sinpo. This flew 600 km, reaching 60km in altitude. (The DPRK's last SLBM test was in October.) The JCS says it is "maintaining a full readiness posture." Incoming National Security Adviser (NSA) Kim Sung-han [says](#) the Yoon administration will reassess the DPRK's WMD threat, to "come up with fundamental measures against North Korea's provocations and actual deterrence capabilities against its nuclear missile threats."

May 8, 2022: Incoming MND Lee Jong-sup [tells](#) his National Assembly confirmation hearing that North Korea is an "evident" enemy, given its nuclear and missile threats.

May 10, 2022: Yoon Suk Yeol of the People Power Party (PPP) is [inaugurated](#) president of South Korea for a single five-year term, succeeding Moon Jae-in (2017–2022). Moon's Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) still [controls](#) the National Assembly.

May 11, 2022: Yoon [picks](#) Kim Kyou-hyun, a career diplomat and onetime deputy national security adviser, as head of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), succeeding Park Jie-won.

Kwon Chun-taek, a former NIS official and diplomat, will be first deputy director, a job largely focused on North Korea. Kim must undergo a parliamentary confirmation hearing; he is duly [approved](#) on May 26.

May 12, 2022: Sources [tell](#) the quasi-official news agency *Yonhap* that, by order of Defense Minister Lee, the ROK military will revert to calling DPRK missile tests "provocations," a term avoided under Moon. Seoul will also refer to "unidentified ballistic missiles" rather than "unidentified projectiles." In a similar hardening of tone, the presidential National Security Office (NSO) "strongly [condemns](#)" Pyongyang's latest missile launch today, and "deplore[s] North Korea's two-faced actions" of continuing ballistic missile provocations while neglecting its people's lives and safety amid a coronavirus outbreak.

May 13, 2022: A day after the DPRK [admits](#) an outbreak of COVID-19, Yoon [offers](#) to send COVID-19 vaccines. His spokesperson says: "We will hold discussions with the North Korean side about details." The North today [reports](#) six deaths, and that a total of 350,000 people "got fever in a short span of time," with 18,000 new cases on May 12 alone; 187,8000 "are being isolated and treated." One of Yoon's officials tells reporters on background: "We know more than what was announced. It's more serious than thought."

May 16, 2022: Yoon [repeats](#) offer of aid to fight COVID-19: "We must not hold back...we will not spare any necessary support." While that offer is unconditional, he notes that the security situation is worsening and calls for "a sustainable peace under which the process of North Korea's denuclearization and inter-Korean trust building form a virtuous cycle."

May 16, 2022: MOU [says](#) Pyongyang has been "unresponsive" to its offer to cooperate against COVID-19. At the regular daily 9 a.m. test call on the liaison office communication line, Seoul

conveys its wish to fax a letter signed by Minister Kwon Young-se at 11 a.m. The second daily call at 5 p.m. passes without the North clarifying whether it would accept this message. The ROK Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) says the South has ample stocks of vaccine to share; adding that the North's outbreak is "probably much more serious than what has been announced."

May 18, 2022: Kim Tae-hyo, first deputy chief of the ROK's presidential National Security Office (NSO), [says](#) a North Korean ICBM test looks "imminent."

May 19, 2022: According to South Korean lawmakers after a confidential briefing—promptly leaked to the media, as usual in Seoul—the NIS [reckons](#) North Korea has completed preparations for a nuclear test, "and they're gauging the timing." NIS also [assesses](#) that Kim Jong Un is unlikely to have been vaccinated against COVID-19.

May 19, 2022: *Yonhap* [reports](#) that MND will reinstate the original "hawkish names" for two elements of South Korea's "three-axis" defense system against Northern WMD: Kill Chain, and Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR. The third is Korea Air and Missile Defense). Under Moon Jae-in these were renamed as "strategic target strike" and "overwhelming response," respectively. A spokesman says reviving the old names adds "clarity."

May 19, 2022: Three Southern NGOs [offer](#) medical aid worth 12 billion won (\$10 million) to help North Korea fight COVID-19. Urging Pyongyang to accept, they say they will reach out via "all [possible] routes." Meanwhile, MOU [notes](#) that for a fourth day the North has stayed silent regarding the South's bid to send a formal offer of assistance.

May 20, 2022: According to a poll by *Gallup Korea*, 72% of South Koreans [support](#) helping North Korea tackle COVID-19, while 22% are opposed. Those in their 20s are evenly split.

May 20, 2022: ROK Ministry of Unification (MOU) [says](#) it is trying to confirm media reports that five DPRK border crossers have been arrested in Dandong, China. MOU restates South Korea's position: "North Korean defectors living

abroad can go to any place they desire of their own free will."

May 24, 2022: On the 12th anniversary of the "May 24 measures," whereby Seoul banned almost all inter-Korean trade (except at the then Kaesong Industrial Complex) in retaliation for the sinking of the ROKN frigate *Cheonan*, MOU [says](#) these sanctions "can be reviewed in accordance with a principles-based and practical approach"—but will remain in effect for now. Meanwhile, at a press conference outside the ministry, entrepreneurs who pioneered North-South commerce protest at the loss of their livelihood: "Over 1,000 businessmen are living miserably, with several having gone bankrupt or turned into delinquent borrowers."

May 25, 2022: Hours after President Biden leaves the region, North Korea [launches](#) three missiles – including a suspected ICBM—off its east coast. Shortly afterward, the US and South Korea fire two missiles: their first such joint response since 2017

May 28, 2022: In his first media interview since taking office, Yoon [tells](#) CNN that, as they headline it, the "age of appeasing North Korea is over." He adds: "I think the ball is in Chairman Kim [Jong Un]'s court—it is his choice to start a dialogue with us."

May 30, 2022: On his first visit to the defense ministry and the JCS, President Yoon [says](#) he appreciates their dedication and calls for "a firm military readiness posture [to] be maintained."

May 30, 2022: Unnamed officials [tell](#) *Yonhap* that on May 9 (before Yoon took office) MND began distributing new troop instruction materials referring to the North Korean military and regime as "our enemy," after incoming minister Lee Jong-sup called for "clear education" on this point. Under Moon Jae-in the E-word was eschewed, in favor of "real military threats." MND is canvassing opinion on whether its next defense White Paper should also revert to naming the North as an enemy.

June 4, 2022: JCS [announces](#) that on June 2-4 the ROK and US held their first joint exercises including a US aircraft carrier for over four years, in international waters off Okinawa. The drills involved air defense, anti-ship, anti-submarine, and maritime interdiction operations.

June 5, 2022: A day after the US–ROK navy drill ends, North Korea [fires](#) eight short-range missiles (SRBMs) from four different locations into the East Sea/Sea of Japan. Distances flown range between 110 and 670 km, with altitude varying from 25 to 90 km. This is the DPRK’s 18th missile launch this year, its third since Yoon took office, and the largest batch of missiles Pyongyang has launched on one day.

June 6, 2022: US and South Korea [riposte](#) by firing eight missiles—ground-to-ground Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) —in a 10-minute pre-dawn burst from a single location in Gangwon-do on the east coast.

June 7, 2022: In a further reaction, the US and South Korea [stage](#) a combined demonstration of air power involving 20 planes over the Yellow Sea. Four USAF F-16 fighters join 16 ROKAF combat aircraft, including F-35A stealth fighters, F-15Ks and KF-16s.

June 7, 2022: Activist group Fighters for a Free North Korea (FFNK) [claims](#) that on June 5 it sent 20 balloons carrying COVID-19 related supplies—20,000 masks, 30,000 vitamin C pills and 15,000 pain-killers—across the DMZ. In a change of tone but not message from the Moon era, MOU says that while “we fully understand the group’s efforts to help North Koreans,” such actions are unhelpful—and illegal under the Development of Inter-Korean Relations Act. A police investigation is launched.

June 8–10, 2022: North Korea’s ruling Workers’ Party (WPK) holds Fifth Enlarged Plenary Meeting of its Eighth Central Committee (their capitals). A wide-ranging agenda includes personnel reshuffles. Choe Son Hui, a seasoned negotiator with the US, becomes the DPRK’s first female minister of foreign affairs, replacing Ri Son Gwon, who takes charge of inter-Korean relations as head of the United Front Department (UFD).

June 12, 2022: Following media reports that North Korea test-fired multiple rocket launchers (MRLs) earlier today, the JCS belatedly [says](#) it observed “trails” consistent with that.

June 13, 2022: ROK presidential office [adds](#) that the NSO met yesterday, while the suspected MRL test was ongoing, and discussed it. President Yoon did not attend.

June 14, 2022: Commenting (on background) on the new DPRK foreign minister, an MOU official [cautions](#): “It is difficult to construe the replacement of a particular official as being necessarily related to any change in North Korea’s external policy.” The Sejong Institute’s Cheong Seong-chang notes Ri Son Gwon’s past [hawkishness](#), and even [rudeness](#), toward Seoul. His reassignment may presage a renewed anti-South offensive.

June 14, 2022: Lee Young-hoon, senior pastor of Yoido Full Gospel Church (YFGC), the largest Pentecostal denomination in Korea, [says](#) the DPRK has asked the church to build ‘people’s hospitals’ in all its 260 counties. He offers no details. YFGC began constructing a cardiac hospital in Pyongyang in 2007, but work stopped after 2010’s [Cheonan incident](#). In November YFGC obtained a UN sanctions waiver to send some 1,500 medical and related items to North Korea; this has yet to take place.

June 15, 2022: On the 22nd anniversary of the Joint [Declaration](#), adopted at the first North-South summit in Pyongyang in June 2000 by then-leaders Kim Jong Il and Kim Dae-jung, MOU Kwon Young-se [pledges](#) a consistent stance: “[Our] policy on North Korea will open a new path that embraces the flexibility shown by the previous liberal administrations, as well as a stable stance kept by conservative administrations in the past.” He calls on Pyongyang to respect inter-Korean agreements and desist from military provocations.

June 15, 2022: North Korea’s Committee to Uphold the June 15 Joint Declaration [sends](#) a message to its Southern counterpart: “The conservative force that newly took power in the South has taken itself as an assault force for the realization of the US’ hostile policy.”

June 16, 2022: Unexpectedly resurrecting the case of Lee Dae-jun (see [here](#) for details), the ROK Coast Guard now [says](#) “no evidence was found to confirm his intention to defect.” It apologizes for imputing that motive at the time. MND reassesses the case similarly. The (NSO) withdraws an appeal, filed under Moon Jae-in, against a court order to disclose classified information about Lee’s death to his family.

June 17, 2022: PPP says it will launch a task force into Lee Dae-jun’s death, and calls for Moon Jae-in to be investigated. Refusing to cooperate,

opposition leader Woo Sang-ho says Moon “strongly protested” to the North and got “a rare apology” from Kim Jong Un: “It is a case where we brought North Korea to its knees, not where we pussyfooted around it.”

June 21, 2022: Reviving a second inter-Korean incident considered closed, Yoon strongly [hints](#) that his administration may investigate his predecessor Moon Jae-in’s repatriation in 2019 of two North Korean fishermen, who had allegedly killed 16 of their crewmates: “Haven’t the people had many questions about it?” (See also July 12 and thereafter.)

June 21, 2022: In his first press conference, MOU Kwon Young-se [says](#): “I will try harder to shift the currently chilled inter-Korean ties into a phase of dialogue...I am willing to meet with the head of [North Korea’s] UFD, Ri Son Gwon, any time in any format.”

June 22, 2022: ROK Coast Guard’s head again [apologizes](#) for “causing misunderstanding” regarding the 2020 death of fisheries official Lee Dae-jun. Lee’s family [lodges](#) criminal complaints against three of ex-President Moon’s secretaries, including former National Security Advisor Suh Hoon, accusing them of dereliction of duty and obstruction.

June 24, 2022: ROK Prime Minister Han Duck-soo [tells](#) the Korean Peninsula Peace Symposium that (in *Yonhap*’s summary) “Seoul intends to normalize inter-Korean relations through a bold plan for substantial denuclearization and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula, while upholding the principles of its relations with Pyongyang.”

June 28, 2022: Seoul [says](#) it has not succeeded in sending an official message asking to be notified before Pyongyang discharges water from its dams, as seems to have happened after recent heavy rains. This morning the inter-Korean hotline was not working, possibly due to flood damage. It was restored by the afternoon, but the North did not agree to accept the message – which was instead conveyed informally and verbally, via a separate military hotline. After six South Koreans [drowned](#) in flash floods in 2009 caused by such a discharge, the two Koreas agreed to notify each other in future before doing this.

June 29, 2022: MOU [says](#) that although the inter-Korean liaison hotline is operational, the North is still unresponsive to efforts to fax a formal request to be notified before dam waters are released.

June 30, 2022: MOU [confirms](#) “it is presumed that North Korea has recently opened the flood-gates of Hwanggang Dam.” However, water levels on the Imjin River remain stable.

July 4, 2022: ROK JCS [says](#) it is “paying keen attention” and watching out for any sign of Korean Peoples’ Army (KPA) summer drills, usually held in July. So far it has only seen small-scale “related maneuvers,” perhaps due to recent torrential rain.

July 4, 2022: In a speech marking the 50th anniversary of the first South-North Joint Statement, MOU Kwon [says](#) his government will seek a “new structure” of inter-Korean dialogue, including nuclear talks: “We cannot just sit on our hands and leave nuclear negotiations to the international community.”

July 4, 2022: Marking the same anniversary, DPRK Today [says](#): “Until this day, a vicious cycle of confrontation and tension has repeated itself on the Korean Peninsula.” It blames “the South Korean authorities who have neglected the three principles for national unification of autonomy, peace, and solidarity of the Korean nation, and failed to faithfully implement the inter-Korean agreement.”

July 5, 2022: ROK’s new JCS Chairman, army Gen. Kim Seung-kyum, [warns](#): “If North Korea provokes, our military will definitely have it pay a hefty price...through unsparing retaliation....(We) will inscribe even onto its bones (the message) that there’s nothing to gain from provocations.”

July 6, 2022: In similar tough-talking vein, at his first meeting with top military commanders (Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, plus the MND and JCS chairman), President Yoon [orders](#) them “to swiftly and firmly punish North Korea [if] it carries out a provocation.”

July 7, 2022: FFKK [says](#) it has again sent balloons carrying supplies to fight the pandemic across the DMZ. Besides 70,000 painkillers, 30,000 vitamin C tablets, and 20,000 masks, it also includes posters saying “We denounce Kim

Jong Un, a hypocrite who let the vicious infectious disease from China spread and put the blame on anti-North leaflets.” MOU again urges FFNK to cease such activities.

July 12, 2022: MOU [publishes](#) unseen photographs of the repatriation of DPRK fishermen at Panmunjom in Nov. 2019. Though heavily pixelated, the [images](#) show the men bound and blindfolded; one tries to resist as they are handed over. [Video](#) footage is released on July 18.

July 13, 2022: Yoon’s presidential office [condemns](#) its predecessor’s repatriation of the fishermen as a potential “crime against humanity,” and vows a full investigation.

July 14, 2022: Both MOU and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) [say](#) there was no legal basis for Moon Jae-in’s government to repatriate the two fishermen to North Korea.

July 19, 2022: South Korea [reopens](#) Panmunjom to journalists and tourists, after a six-month hiatus due to COVID-19. UN Command (UNC) guides note that for two years since the pandemic began, DPRK troops have hardly emerged from their buildings. The Northern side, formerly well maintained and neat, is overgrown with weeds and unkempt.

July 19, 2022: Ministry of Foreign Affairs [names](#) Lee Shin-hwa, professor at Korea University, as the ROK’s first ambassador for North Korean human rights since 2017. Moon Jae-in’s government left the position vacant, as part of its drive to engage Pyongyang.

July 22, 2022: MOU issues a fresh 2022 [Work Plan](#), reflecting the new government’s stance. While claiming to address North Korea’s security concerns, the official summary—to “pursue peaceful unification based on the basic free and democratic order to realize a denuclearized, peaceful and prosperous Korean Peninsula”—can hardly appeal to Pyongyang. Nor will plans for a new foundation on DPRK human rights. More interesting is a tentative [proposal](#) to [unban](#) DPRK media in the ROK, supposedly in hopes that the North might follow suit.

July 25, 2022: MND Lee [tells](#) Parliament that since the 2018 North-South accords, when Kim Jong Un committed to denuclearization, North Korea is reckoned to have grown its stockpile of

fissile materials (plutonium and highly enriched uranium) by 10%.

July 27, 2022: Bank of Korea (BoK), South Korea’s central bank, publishes annual [estimates](#) of North Korea’s economy. It reckons Northern GDP fell by 0.1% last year: an improvement on 2020’s minus 4.5%. The inter-Korean trade gap – actual, not estimated – is now unimaginably wide. In 2021 South Korea exported almost as much every hour as North Korea managed in the entire year.

July 27, 2022: In a [speech](#) on what the DPRK celebrates as “the 69th anniversary of the great victory in the [Korean] War,” otherwise known as the 1953 Armistice, Kim Jong Un for the first time mentions his ROK counterpart by name: “We can no longer sit around seeing Yoon Suk Yeol and his military gangsters’ misdemeanors.” Should the “military ruffians” venture a pre-emptive strike, the “Yoon [Suk Yeol] regime and its army will be annihilated.”

July 28, 2022: ROK NSO [responds](#), with notable restraint: “We express deep regret that Chairman Kim Jong Un made threatening remarks at our government while mentioning the president by name.”

Aug. 1, 2022: Amid renewed controversy regarding the Moon administration’s deportation of two DPRK fishermen, MOU Kwon [says](#) the ROK should be clear on the principle that it accepts “all” defectors. Kwon calls the 2019 incident a “forced repatriation.”

Aug. 1, 2022: South Korea’s arms procurement agency, the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA), [tells](#) the National Assembly it is working on almost 200—197, to be exact—separate projects to beef up defenses against North Korea’s evolving WMD threats.

Aug. 8, 2022: An MOU official [notes](#): “As rain has fallen heavily in North Korea, the North is repeatedly opening and closing the floodgates of Hwanggang Dam,” upstream on the Imjin river which flows into South Korea. As before Pyongyang did not notify Seoul. With northern South Korea [pounded](#) by the heaviest rain in 80 years, officials in ROK’s Gyeonggi province [warn](#) that the Imjin has risen dangerously.

Aug. 10, 2022: At a specially convened “national meeting of reviewing the emergency anti-epidemic work,” North Korea proclaims (as [KCNA headlines](#) it) a “Brilliant Victory Gained by Great People of DPRK.” Kim Jong Un declares the coronavirus “[eradicated](#).” In her first known public [speech](#) (as opposed to written commentary), his sister Kim Yo Jong praises her brother’s dedication, implying he too was infected. But she savages South Korea, in absurd and [obscene](#) terms, accusing the “puppet conservative gangsters” of infecting the North by “a farce of scattering leaflets, bank notes, dirty booklets and other shit over our territory.”

Aug. 11, 2022: Seoul [rebuffs](#) Pyongyang. MOU “expresses strong regret over North Korea’s insolent and threatening remarks based on repeated groundless claims regarding the inflow of the coronavirus.”

Aug. 15, 2022: In his [speech](#) for Liberation Day—from Japan in 1945; a public holiday in both Koreas—Yoon fleshes out his “audacious plan” to aid North Korea, slightly. (Appendix I contains his remarks in full.)

Aug. 16, 2022: MOU [says](#) it “urges and hopes” North Korea will respond to “our...sincere proposal for peace on the Korean Peninsula and the common prosperity of the South and the North.” But it has no plans to request working-level contact specifically about this.

Aug. 17, 2022: At a press conference marking his first 100 days in office, Yoon [clarifies](#) that his ‘audacious offer’ does not require North Korea’s complete denuclearization right away: “As long as they demonstrate firm commitment, we will do what we can do to help them.” He denies hostile intent: “[N]either I nor the Republic of Korea government wants the status quo changed unreasonably or by force in North Korea.”

Aug. 17, 2022: In its first missile test for over two months, North Korea [fires](#) two cruise missiles into the Yellow Sea. South Korea says these were launched from Onchon; Kim Yo Jong, mocking their inaccuracy, [corrects](#) this to Anju.

Aug. 18, 2022: MOU Kwon says his government will, as *Yonhap* [puts](#) it, “strive to create a condition for North Korea to embrace” President Yoon’s “audacious initiative.” Seoul plans to “to send more specific messages to the North, going forward.”

Aug. 18, 2022: Kim Yo Jong issues a further [statement](#), titled “Don’t have an absurd dream.” KCNA publishes this on Aug. 19. Contemptuously rejecting Yoon’s “bold plan” as a rehash of equally unacceptable past offers by “traitor Lee Myung-bak,” she adds: “We don’t like Yoon Suk Yeol...Though he may knock at the door with [whatever] large plan in the future as his ‘bold plan’ does not work, we make it clear that we will not sit face to face with him.”

Aug. 19, 2022: Responding to Kim Yo Jong’s broadside, South Korea’s presidential office [says](#): “We consider it very regrettable that North Korea continues to use rude language while mentioning the president by name, and continued to express its nuclear development intentions while distorting our ‘audacious plan.’”

Aug. 22, 2022: South Korea and the US [launch Ulchi Freedom Shield](#) (UFS): their first large field-training military exercises in four years. Normally annual, such maneuvers were scaled back or suspended for four years (2018–21) under Donald Trump and Moon Jae-in, partly for diplomatic reasons and also due to COVID-19. The exercise concludes on Sept. 1.

Aug. 24, 2022: Seoul Central District Court [finds](#) in favor of seven veterans and one widow, who in 2020 sued Kim Jong Un and the DPRK government over injuries and losses suffered during an inter-Korean naval [skirmish](#) off Yeonpyeong island in 2002. The defendants are ordered to pay 20 million won (\$14,886) to each complainant, plus 5% annual interest for the past 20 years. Like similar [cases](#) in the US, this is largely symbolic. (By an earlier Supreme Court ruling, North Korea, constitutionally defined as an anti-government organization, is regarded as a “juridical person” under the ROK Civil Procedure Act.)

Aug. 25, 2022: South Korea’s official [Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirms](#) that in Yeongam county in South Jeolla province, “local leftists and North Korean partisans” killed 133 civilians between August and November 1950, during the Korean War. According to *Yonhap*, the targets “were mostly police, civil servants, members of a right-wing youth group and other people classified as right-wingers and their families...Some people known to be wealthy and Christians were also sacrificed.” 41% of victims were female; 36% were children aged under 15.

Aug. 29, 2022: ROK DM Lee tells the National Assembly that, as *Yonhap*'s [headline](#) summarizes it: "N. Korea set for nuke test, but no sign of action yet."

Aug. 30, 2022: South Korea [reveals](#) its budget for 2023, the first under Yoon. Amid the first [fall](#) in overall spending for 13 years, MOU's budget suffers its first [cut](#) since 2018: down from 1.5 to 1.45 trillion won. Within this, the humanitarian [aid](#) component is set to rise 15.1% to 751 billion won (\$558 million), to finance Yoon's "audacious initiative." (As under Moon Jae-in, the prospect of such funds being disbursed is remote.) [Defense](#) spending is slated to rise 4.6% to 57.1 trillion won (\$42.3 billion): a sum larger than North Korea's entire GDP.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

CHINA- KOREA RELATIONS

A MUTED 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

SCOTT SNYDER, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
SEE-WON BYUN, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

Beijing and Seoul marked 30 years of diplomatic ties on Aug. 24 as South Korea transitioned to a new administration under President Yoon Suk Yeol, who took office in May. Although early high-level exchanges reaffirmed partnership, the two leaderships confront growing pressures from US-China competition, economic uncertainty, and public hostility. Domestic priorities in China in light of the 20th Party Congress and South Korea's shift to conservative rule amplify these concerns. The impact of US-China rivalry on the China-South Korea relationship extends from security to economic coordination, including approaches to THAAD and global supply chains, and export competition, especially in semiconductors, challenges new Xi Jinping-Yoon economic agreements. Moreover, public hostility is strongest among South Korea's younger generation, raising pessimistic prospects for future China-South Korea ties. Despite mixed signals, false starts, and the continued absence of leader-level meetings marking the recovery of economic ties between China and North Korea, geopolitical developments have pushed the two countries closer together. Such engagement features mutual reinforcement of each other's positions on issues of vital interest and solidarity in response to US policies.

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Beijing and Seoul Mark 30 Years of Diplomatic Ties under New Korean Leadership

Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan's visit to Seoul as the highest-ranking Chinese official to attend a South Korean president's inauguration signaled China's prioritization of relations with the new Yoon government. Talks between Yoon and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on May 10 outlined the partnership's goals and strategies, including strategic communication, economic and other functional fields of cooperation, cultural exchange, and multilateral and regional cooperation. These priorities were reaffirmed in virtual meetings between foreign ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin on May 16, and [telephone talks](#) between China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi and South Korea's National Security Advisor Kim Sung-han on June 2. The two leaderships [commemorated](#) the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties on Aug. 24 by virtually linking their ceremonies in Beijing and Seoul, where Wang and Park [exchanged](#) messages from President Xi and President Yoon.



Figure 1 Foreign Minister Park Jin and Chinese Ambassador to Korea Xing Haiming celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Korea and China in Seoul. Photo: Yonhap

Trust-building efforts characterized Wang Yi's earliest [proposals](#) for advancing relations as "close neighbors and inseparable partners," backing Yoon's vision of bilateral ties "based on the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation." Wang and Park held two face-to-face meetings during this period, on the G20 sidelines on [July 7](#) and in Qingdao on Aug. 9. Defense ministers Wei Fenghe and Lee Jong-sup also [resumed](#) in-person defense ministerial talks at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 10, where they announced the expansion of bilateral military hotlines. In July, Chinese veterans affairs official Li Jingxian and South Korean Defense Ministry's International Policy Director-General Kim

Sang-jin agreed to hold a ceremony in September to return the remains of Chinese troops killed in the Korean War. China's National Development and Reform Commission Minister He Lifeng and South Korea's Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho led the virtual 17th Meeting on Economic Cooperation on Aug. 27, where Wang and Park joined an online session reviewing policy proposals by the Committee for Future-Oriented Development of China-South Korea Relations. Created last year in light of the 30th anniversary, the committee called for "multilayered" dialogue including two-plus-two talks between foreign and defense ministries.

High-level exchanges in the early phase of the Xi-Yoon leadership era supported joint efforts to build trust through dialogue. Optimistic media [projections](#) of "pragmatic diplomacy" identified economic cooperation as "most important." But active Xi-Yoon diplomacy also pointed to significant challenges, most notably US-China competition, economic uncertainty, and public hostility. As South Korea's Ambassador to China Chung Jae-ho [indicates](#), the 30-year relationship is impacted by the rising importance of traditional security issues involving third parties, namely North Korea and the United States. While debates over history triggered a downturn in South Korean perceptions of China starting in the 2000s, hostility toward China is strongest among the younger "MZ generation," raising pessimistic prospects for future relations. In his first exchange with his new counterpart Park in May, Wang Yi [encouraged](#) the younger generation of both countries to drive the effort "to enhance friendship and reduce misunderstandings." The "five-point commitment" Wang later [presented](#) in Qingdao included pledges of "independence regardless of external interference," to uphold good neighborliness and friendship while accommodating each other's concerns, to openness and "stable and unimpeded industrial and supply chains," to "equality, mutual respect, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs; and to multilateralism based on the UN Charter. Defense ministerial dialogues affirmed willingness on both sides to cooperate on North Korea and regional security, but they also revealed ongoing gaps in perception over the implications of the THAAD missile defense system for regional security.

The Yoon Administration Addresses US-China Rivalry

Yoon's summit with US President Joe Biden on May 21, 11 days after taking office, produced a [joint statement](#) and [press conference](#) renewing South Korean [views](#) of a "precarious balance between Washington and Beijing." In anticipation of Biden's visit, optimists [pointed to](#) a "new era of alliance" cooperation extending "from security to economy and technology." Local elections soon [drove](#) a struggle between Yoon's People Power Party and main opposition Democratic Party over the risks of friction with China. Competing interpretations of the Moon administration's "3 Noes," Yoon's participation in the NATO summit, and US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Asia visit that included Taiwan intensified South Korea's domestic polarization.



Figure 2 South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol speaks in a meeting with US President Joe Biden, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during a NATO summit in Madrid, Spain. Photo: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

The THAAD controversy loomed over President Yoon's May inauguration, when visiting Vice President Wang Qishan's "discourteous and undiplomatic" remarks on the issue [drew](#) Korean public criticism. It resurfaced during the foreign ministerial talks in August, focusing on the previous Moon Jae-in administration's "three noes" (no additional THAAD deployment, no participation in US-led missile defense, and no trilateral military alliance with the United States and Japan)—which the Yoon leadership treats as a non-binding agreement. Anticipating rising frictions with Beijing, media commentators [urged](#) the Yoon administration to say "No to Three Noes" and pursue "principled and proud diplomacy," [pointing](#) to Beijing's "double standard" on sovereignty. Others [pushed](#) South Korea to "keep close ties with China" through "pragmatic diplomacy" after Yoon became the first South Korean president to

attend the NATO Summit in June, where he expressed solidarity with the Biden administration on universal values. Pelosi's trip to Asia in August triggered similar [calls](#) that an upgraded US-South Korea alliance "should not hurt ties with China," as ministers Wang and Park joined ASEAN meetings amid heightened tensions over her Taiwan visit. Calling Taiwan a "symbol of the US-China conflict," conservative voices [criticized](#) the absence of a Yoon-Pelosi meeting in Seoul for "sending the wrong signal to both the US and China."

China Defends North Korea at the United Nations . . .

In response to North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches in early 2022 that included six intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launches, the United States [led](#) a push for an additional UN sanctions resolution against North Korea for the first time since 2017. But that effort was blocked on May 26 by permanent Security Council members China and Russia, both of which vetoed the draft UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions resolution that had won support from all other UNSC members. Although the resolution failed, the holding of the vote generated formal statements from several Security Council members including Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun. Zhang justified China's veto by stating that "the Council should play a positive and constructive role, and its actions should help de-escalate the situation and prevent it from deteriorating or even getting out of control."

Subsequently, Zhang [implied](#) that a presidential statement from the UNSC might have won China's support if the United States had not in Zhang's view deliberately sought to create confrontation and "a showdown in the Council." Zhang held up the Donald Trump administration's pursuit of dialogue and negotiations as constructive while criticizing the Biden administration for failing to "reciprocate the DPRK's positive initiatives in accordance with the action-for-action principle." Zhang further argued that Security Council sanctions "are a means, not an end," arguing for a political settlement rather than measures likely to escalate tension and have negative humanitarian consequences. Despite North Korea's continuous rejection of US offers to return to dialogue, he concluded by calling on the US side to "take meaningful actions to respond to the legitimate and reasonable

concerns of the DPRK, and create conditions for the de-escalation of the situation and the resumption of dialogue and negotiations.”

In talks with Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk in Seoul on May 3, China’s Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Korean Peninsula Affairs Liu Xiaoming expressed early hopes for diplomacy with North Korea under Yoon, who seeks a tougher approach to Pyongyang compared to his predecessor. During the four-day [visit](#), Liu promoted such cooperation through separate meetings with top unification, foreign affairs, and national security officials of the Moon administration and incoming counterparts. Pyongyang test-fired a ballistic missile a day after Liu’s arrival, and the Yoon administration expressed its “deep regret” on May 26 when Beijing and Moscow blocked the proposed UNSC resolution. Citing North Korea’s rising military threat and China’s “contradictory” response, a *Korea Herald* editorial [demanded](#) Seoul to “strengthen not only the US alliance but also its solidarity with the liberal democratic camp” abroad. Liu and his new South Korean counterpart Kim Gunn affirmed their willingness to maintain dialogue through telephone exchanges on [June 9](#) and July 26, as North Korean artillery drills underscored South Korea’s security concerns. But in the latest call, Liu [reminded](#) Kim that the peninsula stalemate persists because North Korea’s “steps toward denuclearization and its legitimate and reasonable concerns have not received the response they deserve.”

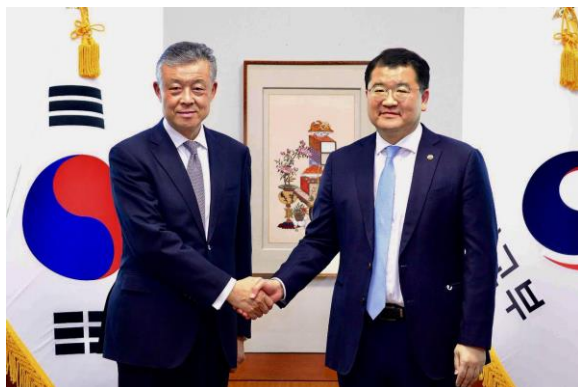


Figure 3 Chinese Special Representative on Korean Peninsula Affairs Liu Xiaoming visits Seoul. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

. . . While North Korea Shows Allegiance to China on Taiwan and the United States

North Korean Society for International Politics Study researcher Kim Hyo-Myong appeared to offer support for Chinese positions on regional affairs in a June 29 [article](#) featured by the *Korea Central News Agency* entitled “Asia-Pacific is Not North Atlantic.” This article took up NATO’s opposition to China as shown in its “new strategic concept,” arguing that NATO should stick to NATO business and keep itself from being used together with the “Quad” and “AUKUS” and forming a “trans-pacific encirclement ring aimed at containing and isolating China.” More specifically, Kim forecasted doom for South Korea for having “shaken dark hands with NATO, a root cause of disaster.”

Aligning with China’s position on Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan, a [North Korean foreign ministry spokesperson](#) responded to a journalist’s question on Aug. 3 that “we vehemently denounce any external force’s interference in the issue of Taiwan, and fully support the Chinese government’s just stand to resolutely defend the sovereignty of the country and territorial integrity.” Further reinforcing support of China’s position on Taiwan, the [Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea \(WPK\)](#) sent a letter on Aug. 9 to its Chinese counterparts expressing solidarity with China’s response to “any reckless and vicious anti-China offensive by the US and its vassal forces...”

In addition, the North Korean foreign ministry took up public criticism of US congressional passage in August of the “[Chips and Science Act](#)” as evidence of “the sinister design of the US, and it has now provoked a backlash in China.” North Korea’s stepped-up support for Chinese and Russian positions in confrontation with the West illustrates the extent to which major power rivalry and political stalemate at the UN have generated strategic space for North Korea, even as it requires North Korea to be more vocal in its alignment with Chinese and Russian positions opposed to the United States and South Korea.

China-South Korea Economic Ties: Cooperation and Competition

The Aug. 27 China-South Korea Meeting on Economic Cooperation [produced](#) extensive agreements under the Xi-Yoon leadership, promoting: (1) supply chain cooperation through a new director-level consultative body, (2) public and private sector responses to global uncertainties, and (3) overseas projects in energy and other fields. The 10th round of follow-up FTA talks was held virtually on July 13, which focused on services and investment. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo affirmed current priorities in their virtual address to a 30th anniversary business [forum](#) in Seoul on Aug. 24. Supporting multilateralism and principles of “openness” and “inclusion,” Li identified the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as a driver of regional development and expressed hopes for concluding China-South Korea FTA talks. But economic competition and alternative multilateral initiatives are sources of strain.

China-South Korea trade reached \$300 billion in 2021, almost a 50-fold growth since diplomatic normalization in 1992. South Korea represented 4.5% (\$150.5 billion) of China’s total exports as its fourth biggest export destination. As South Korea’s biggest partner, China accounted for a quarter (\$162.9 billion) of South Korean exports. South Korea’s overall trade deficit reached a record high of \$10.3 billion between January and June of this year, renewing unease over export dependence on China. A *Korea Herald* editorial [warned](#), “If a country depends too much on another country, particularly one with a contrasting ideology, it may be in a bind.” As the strongest driver of South Korean exports, growing from 3% to 40% of total exports to China between 2000 and 2020, semiconductors are a major source of Korean [concern](#). The Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry [cautioned](#) that Seoul should devise “plans to prevent China from weaponizing South Korea’s dependence on China,” especially given “China’s technological advancement and the tech rivalry between the US and China.” But such plans confront mixed responses to initiatives like the US-led “Chip 4 alliance” with South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan to manage supply chain disruptions. Addressing the National Assembly in August, Foreign Minister Park Jin and Industry Minister Lee Chang-yang countered fears over friction with China by refuting Chip 4’s competitive intentions.

Similar concerns over such competition emerged during Biden’s Asia visit in May, which featured a tour of a Samsung Electronics chip plant and the launching of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Yoon called IPEF the “first step” to “work together to build a rule-based new order in the region” and assured South Korea’s participation as “a liberal democracy and a market economy system.” But the South Korean media already [anticipated](#) IPEF to be the “first major test for Yoon’s diplomacy” challenging Wang Yi’s proposals in Seoul on advancing the China-South Korea partnership. A *Korea Times* editorial [cautioned](#) that joining could prompt Chinese retaliation and regional instability, arguing, “IPEF membership should not sour Korea-China ties.” After the initiative’s official launching, others [voiced](#) the need for “pragmatic diplomacy...to protect national interests.” Domestic division prompted the Yoon administration to take early steps to emphasize that national interests were driving its decision. As Yoon [told](#) reporters on May 23, “if we exclude ourselves from the rule-setting process, it will cause a great deal of harm to the national interest.” In a press release ahead of Biden’s visit, the trade ministry identified supply chain resilience as a priority while also supporting economic ties with China through initiatives like RCEP and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

China’s COVID-19 Assistance to North Korea

Following its first public admission that COVID-19 cases had entered the country on May 12, North Korea announced a “[severe national emergency](#)” and redoubled the implementation of strict quarantine measures intended to contain the spread of the virus. Having reportedly rejected international offers for vaccine assistance including the Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine, the Korean Central News Agency provided [official daily counts](#) of 4.77 million cases and 74 deaths from May 12 to Aug. 10, at which time Kim Jong Un rolled back quarantine measures and [declared victory](#) over the virus. (A downside of the early declaration of victory is that any subsequent cases [were characterized as the “flu”](#) rather than a return of COVID-19 to North Korea.)



Figure 4 Kim Jong Un inspects a pharmacy in Pyongyang in a May 2022 photo released by KCNA. Photo: KCNA via AFP

Following North Korea's announcement that the virus had penetrated into the country, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian [stated](#) that "China is ready to go all out to provide support and assistance to the DPRK in fighting the virus." North Korea reportedly requested assistance a few days later, after which [three Air Koryo flights were dispatched](#) to Shenyang to transport medicines on May 17, the first flights between North Korea and China since January of 2020. A delegation of Chinese physicians also [traveled to Pyongyang](#) to play advisory roles to the North Korean government on how to manage the COVID-19 outbreak.

Mixed Signals in China-North Korea Trade

Kim's declaration of victory over the COVID-19 pandemic provided a basis upon which some observers speculated that the North might loosen its self-imposed isolation. Efforts to [resume a spring trade fair in early May](#) foundered on COVID-19 restrictions in China that forced it to go virtual with less than a dozen participating Chinese and North Korean companies on both sides, prior to North Korea's admission that COVID-19 cases had reached the country. Both North Korea's COVID-19 outbreak and its conclusion between May and August stimulated speculation that the leadership in Pyongyang might ease supply shortages by [resuming freight train](#) service with China following four months of suspension.

While China-North Korea trade recovered in the first four months of the year to over \$100 million in April, North Korea's COVID-19 outbreak pushed the May and June values [back](#) to around \$20 million per month due to the resumption of quarantine restrictions. These

reports included [imports from China](#) in July alone of over a million facemasks and 15,000 pairs of rubber gloves in response to the COVID-19 outbreak inside North Korea. Meanwhile, it [appears](#) that North Korea's illicit trade in fuel with China has resumed despite both the COVID-19 quarantine and UNSC resolutions restricting the bilateral trade in oil and coal. It is hard to say whether the China-North Korea economic relationship has hit bottom, how quickly it might recover from the effects of COVID-19 quarantine, or to what extent the relationship has transitioned to an off-the-books exchange in critical areas, including as a way station for North Korean transfers of illicit earnings and laundering of cyber currencies.

Conclusion: Pessimism Clouds Beijing and Seoul's 30th Anniversary

Commemorating 30 years of China-South Korea diplomatic ties, Xi Jinping stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation amid external structural shifts compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Yoon seeks not just quantitative but also qualitative progress in relations with Beijing. But the 30th anniversary motivated critical reviews of the partnership, pointing to overall pessimism. China's state media [urged](#) both sides to set a global example of "pragmatic diplomacy," with economic cooperation as the foundation for managing external challenges. Although Chinese Ambassador Xing Haiming [affirmed](#) bilateral relations "have entered a more mature and stable stage," he also expressed concerns over US-led competitive pressures extending to multilateral economic initiatives like IPEF and the smaller Chip 4 alliance. Perceptions of an escalating US-China "fight for hegemony" constrain South Korean [hopes](#) for the China-South Korea relationship under Xi and Yoon, including both leaderships' trust-building efforts. As pessimists [caution](#), the regional impact of such rivalry makes it increasingly "doubtful whether Seoul and Beijing can deepen their partnership further down the road." Meanwhile, North Korea's dependency on and alignment with China and Russia seem to have bought Kim Jong Un time and space to reconsolidate political control, but it is unclear whether North Korea's external dependencies brings with them constraints on North Korea's desire to continue military development, including a possible seventh nuclear test, at the expense of renewed diplomatic talks with South Korea and the United States.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-KOREA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 3–6, 2022: Chinese Special Representative on Korean Peninsula Affairs Liu Xiaoming visits Seoul.

May 9, 2022: Moon Jae-in and Chinese Vice President Wang Qishen [meet](#) in Seoul.

May 10, 2022: Vice President Wang Qishen [leads](#) a Chinese delegation to Yoon's presidential inauguration ceremony in Seoul.

May 15, 2022: South Korean media [reports](#) that North Korea has requested Chinese assistance on COVID-19.

May 16, 2022: Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin [hold](#) virtual talks.

May 24, 2022: South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff [reports](#) that two Chinese and four Russian warplanes entered the Korean Air Defense Identification Zone without notice.

May 26, 2022: China and Russia [block](#) a UN Security Council resolution a day after North Korean missile tests.

May 30, 2022: North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong-ho [expresses](#) support for Xi Jinping's new global security initiative.

June 2, 2022: Yang Jiechi and South Korean National Security Advisor Kim Sung-han [hold](#) telephone talks.

June 2, 2022: South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong and Chinese Ambassador Xing Haiming [meet](#) in Seoul.

June 7, 2022: President Yoon Suk Yeol [names](#) Seoul National University Professor Chung Jae-ho South Korea's Ambassador to China.

June 9, 2022: Chinese and South Korean nuclear envoys [hold](#) telephone talks.

June 10, 2022: Chinese and South Korean defense ministers [meet](#) on the sidelines of Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

June 11, 2022: South Korean Coast Guard [seizes](#) a Chinese boat for illegal fishing in South Korean waters.

June 12, 2022: An illegal Chinese immigrant is [caught](#) attempting to cross the Korean sea border by boat.

June 14, 2022: Seoul [hosts](#) the China-South Korea-Japan International Forum on Trilateral Cooperation.

June 22, 2022: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi [meets](#) outgoing South Korean Ambassador Jang Ha-sung in Beijing.

July 3, 2021: Chinese veterans affairs official Li Jingxian and South Korean Defense Ministry's international policy Director-General Kim Sang-jin [meet](#) in Xiamen and agree to hold a ceremony on September 15 to return the remains of Chinese troops killed in the Korean War.

July 7, 2022: Foreign ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin [meet](#) in Bali on the sidelines of the G20 meeting.

July 13, 2022: 10th round of China-South Korea FTA follow-up talks is [held](#) virtually.

July 20, 2022: South Korea [beats](#) China 3–0 in East Asian men's football match.

July 20, 2022: Asiana Airlines [resumes](#) its Incheon-Beijing route in more than two years.

July 25, 2022: South Korean Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun and Chinese Ambassador to South Korea Xing Haiming [meet](#) in Seoul.

July 26, 2022: Chinese and South Korean nuclear envoys Liu Xiaoming and Kim Gunn [hold](#) telephone talks.

July 28, 2022: Kim Jong Un [expresses](#) support for China–North Korea ties to commemorate the anniversary of the Korean War armistice.

Aug. 1, 2022: Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Wu Jianghao and South Korean Ambassador to China Chung Jae-ho [meet](#) in Beijing.

Aug. 1, 2022: North Korea Defense Minister Ri Yong-gil [sends](#) a congratulatory message to Chinese counterpart Wei Fenghe marking the 95th anniversary of the PLA’s founding.

Aug. 3, 2022: North Korean Foreign Ministry through KCNA [opposes](#) Pelosi’s Taiwan visit.

Aug. 4, 2022: Chinese and South Korean Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Park Jin attend ASEAN meetings.

Aug. 9, 2022: Chinese and South Korean foreign ministers [meet](#) in Qingdao.

Aug. 9, 2022: Workers’ Party of Korea [sends](#) a “solidarity letter” to the Chinese Communist Party denouncing Pelosi’s Taiwan visit.

Aug. 24, 2022: China and South Korea [commemorate](#) the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

Aug. 24, 2022: South Korea’s Unification Minister Kwon Young-se and Chinese Ambassador Xing Haiming [meet](#) in Seoul.

Aug. 27, 2022: 17th China–South Korea Meeting on Economic Cooperation is [held](#) virtually.



COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-ASIA-PACIFIC

JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONS

FEW POSITIVE SIGNS AND MUCH NEGATIVITY

JUNE TEUFEL DREYER, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

The tone of China-Japan relations became more alarmist on both sides with long-anticipated plans to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations still clouded with uncertainty. Several related events were canceled or postponed *sine die*. Internationally, Prime Minister Kishida was exceptionally active, attending meetings of the Quad, the G7, NATO, and Shangri-La Dialogue, where he [delivered](#) the keynote address. A common theme was attention to a Free and Open Pacific (FOIP) and the need for stability in the region, both of which Beijing sees as intended to constrain China. At NATO, Kishida met with US and South Korean representatives for their first trilateral meeting in nearly five years and suggested the possibility of joint military exercises. Meanwhile, China continued pressure on Taiwan and the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Although Foreign Minister Wang Yi and State Councillor Yang Jieqi were active internationally, Xi Jinping himself has not ventured outside the Chinese mainland since January 2020 save for a brief, tightly controlled visit to Hong Kong, which is unquestionably part of China.

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Speculation ranged from concern with his health to worries that he might be toppled by unnamed enemies—who these enemies are and what degree of influence they wield are the topics of much discussion, since Xi has through selective arrests of potential rivals and the country-wide imposition of his thoughts, effectively silenced public expression of dissident opinions.

After former Prime Minister Abe was assassinated on July 8 in an incident unrelated to foreign policy, the Chinese government sent condolences, though no Chinese representative attended the wake. A state funeral is to be held in the fall, with much speculation on who will represent the PRC.

Politics

Japanese officials made numerous [attempts](#) to shore up Tokyo's position in visits or [discussions](#) with leaders of the South Pacific, [Africa](#), [Europe](#), the US, and Korea. Typically, the public statements of their deliberations were bland declarations on the need for maritime security and vaguely worded objections to those who would change the status quo through force though it is likely that private conversations were more specific. China, which had no doubt that it was the target of the allegations, countered with objections, some of which suggested that the meetings were instigated by the United States, and in others that they aimed at a [resurgence](#) of Japanese militarism or a re-creation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 19th century, with the UK also seeking to [regain](#) its past glory. Beijing must have been disconcerted when a representative of Komeito, the ruling LDP's junior coalition partner and normally anti-military, [stated](#) that Japan should discuss possessing the ability to strike enemy bases that are preparing for an attack. If adopted, this would provide an opening for pre-emptive military strikes, as more conservative voices have been arguing for some time, and hence mark a departure from Japan's long-held exclusively defense oriented policy. Thus far, while there has been much discussion of the issue, there has been no formal decision made.

Another irritant was Japan's increasing insistence on the importance of Taiwan to Japanese security, with former Prime Minister Abe [urging](#) allies to prevent China from taking Taiwan. In a startling departure from precedent, Taiwanese Vice-President William Lai was

permitted to visit Japan in July, with media referring to Lai by his official title, though he was on a private visit to attend Abe's funeral and therefore, according to the Japanese government, there had been no violation of Tokyo's one China policy. Objecting strongly, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson [insisted](#) that it was impossible for Taiwan to have a vice president, since Taiwan is a part of China. Adding to Beijing's ire, a supra-party delegation of Diet members visited Taiwan a few weeks later, which *Global Times* [denounced](#) as "nonsensical actions by politicians seeking Instagram-worthy publicity." The annual ritual [denunciation](#) of Japanese ministers who visited Yasukuni Shrine on or near the date of Japan's surrender after World War II was, by contrast, relatively subdued, being limited to "stern denunciations," possibly because neither Kishida nor higher-ranking officials attended. However, underscoring Beijing's concern with Japanese-Taiwan relations, on the eve of the surrender anniversary an article in *Renmin Ribao*, the official paper of the Central Committee, Zhong Sheng "Voice of the Central [Party]" a pseudonym for a highly authoritative entity, [issued](#) a litany of complaints against Japan including its most recent criticisms of China's "legitimate countermeasures in the Taiwan Strait."



Figure 1 Taiwanese vice president Lai Ching-te greets officials as he attends the funeral of late former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in Tokyo. Photo: AFP via Getty Images

Moving beyond East Asia, Japan attempted to balance China by [offering](#) a generous aid package to Africa and by [seeking](#) to establish a multinational consortium to deal with Sri Lanka's massive debt problem. Chinese media [reacted](#) to these initiatives with derision. In Africa, Japanese officials contrast Chinese aid, with its heavy emphasis on eye-catching

buildings, sports stadia, and large infrastructure projects like port construction and railroad building, with the quieter and, they argue, ultimately more beneficial to development, Japanese emphasis on projects like education for rural areas and providing safe drinking water. Moreover, they point out, Chinese projects have had problems: railroads have lost money, ports have arguably been of greater economic and strategic value to China than to locals, and in one infamous example, the headquarters of the African Union was [discovered](#) to be bugged, allowing all its communications to be monitored by the Chinese. The Japanese acknowledge, however, that Africans seem to place greater value on the Chinese projects than those of Japan, and have suggested that better publicity might help. Details of the Sri Lanka debt relief project await the announcement of plans for the meeting of the consortium.

The Chinese government is aware that many of its citizens find Japanese culture attractive, with several recent incidents showing the sensitivity of the issue. In some cases, public opinion rather than party or government directives seem to have driven expressions of hostility. In July, a number of Chinese cities [canceled](#) their annual Matsuri festivals. Though tracing their heritage back to Shinto observances designed to show gratitude for the blessings the gods, they gradually evolved into seasonal festivals to welcome events like the blossoming of cherry blossoms or parades to honor historical events; as imported into China, they serve strictly as entertainment. Yet August brought several [reports](#) of the harassment and detention of Chinese women who wore kimono. There is no evidence that wearers attached any political significance to their clothing. And, as some more knowledgeable individuals pointed out, although the kimono has become a symbol of Japan, its original design was borrowed from China.

There were a pair of bright spots, both in August. *Kyodo* [reported](#) a dinosaur-themed event sponsored by the Japanese embassy in Beijing in which 150 children and their parents heard a paleontologist explain that China and Japan were contiguous at the time the dinosaurs lived. An [article](#) in *China Daily* discussed the 30-year friendship between Xi Jinping and the Tsukamoto family of Osaka. A more nuanced article in the normally shrill *Global Times* [mourned](#) the death of Kazuo Inamori, a respected business management expert aged 90,

for his contributions to the development of bilateral trade and China-Japan friendship, though adding a warning that Tokyo must not cross China's red line on Taiwan.

The peculiar nature of the 7-hour mid-August [meeting](#) between top national security advisers—no flags, no handshakes, a terse delayed statement, and a photograph in which the two stood side by side, expressionless—aroused speculation that their governments might be seeking to assuage tensions without inflaming public opinion in each country. Veteran political analyst Funabashi Yoichi provided perhaps the most astute summation, [opining](#) that the two sides seemed to have been pulled back to their positions of 50 years ago, with both lacking domestic support for better relations. He advocated that they try to understand normalization as managing conditions rather than solving problems, this being, he said, the essence of competitive coexistence. As the report period closed, Chinese Ambassador to Tokyo Kong Xuanyou [urged](#) prudence on Japan's part, warning again that bilateral relations are at a crossroads and face a fresh round of conflicts.



Figure 2 Akiba Takeo, left, secretary-general of Japan's National Security Secretariat, meets with China's foreign policy chief Yang Jiechi. Photo: Xinhua via Kyodo

Economics

Chinese economic planners struggled to cope with the continued decline of the property market, the country's worst drought in 60 years, and record-setting high temperatures; the projected 5.5% annual growth rate has been quietly dropped. The slowdown had adverse effects on China-Japan trade. Positive signs included the June opening of the Qingdao-Osaka fast logistics route, the first such since the RCEP trade agreement went into effect on Jan. 1. In the same month, there were [reports](#) of the continued success of Japanese fast fashion giant

Uniqlo despite the pandemic, which a Chinese source attributed partly due to Uniqlo's vertically integrated structure and partly because of its refusal to comment on the political matters which hurt many of its [less circumspect](#) rivals. Looking to the future, in August Japanese logistics company SBS Holdings [calculated](#) that buying electric vans assembled in China would lower its operating costs by 30% over gas-powered vehicles.

More typical was the revelation, also in August, that more Japanese companies, [concerned](#) with COVID-induced supply chain disruptions, higher wages in China, and issues of quality control, are moving facilities back to Japan or, in some cases, to Vietnam. In May, the Japanese government [passed](#) a law tightening access to semiconductor supply chains, artificial intelligence and other cutting-edge technologies through public-private partnerships. *Nikkei* [opined](#) that China-Japan financial cooperation might have hit its [high water mark](#) a decade ago.

Defense

China continued pressure on the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands—Japan's defense ministry [reported](#) 17 intrusions of PRC coast guard vessels into Japanese-claimed waters as of mid-August—and increased the tempo of operations in the Taiwan Strait. Typically, the ships arrive in threes or fours, stay for a few hours closely shadowed by Japanese Coast Guard vessels, and then depart. The choice for Japan is whether to accept these efforts at China's creeping assertion of its claims to the area or to risk unwanted escalation by more strongly resisting them.

In May, satellite photography detected a mockup of a Japanese E-767 surveillance plane, presumably for targeting purposes, in the Xinjiang desert. If destroyed or disabled, Japan would be unable to [monitor](#) the Nansei Islands. Japanese sources expressed concern that the Chinese navy was about to [launch](#) its third aircraft carrier and that it had made advances in hypersonic weapons. The Fujian was launched on June 17 though is not expected to become fully operational before 2026 after being fitted out and operationally tested. The carrier will deploy to Hainan, in south China, where Japan, Taiwan and several Southeast Asian states will regard it as a threat. Although Chinese aircraft carriers operating around Japan represent a

threat to Japanese sea control in time of conflict, submarines could effectively cut lines of communication even before carriers arrive.



Figure 3 Satellite imagery depicting what is believed to be a model of an advanced-radar-equipped plane used by the Japanese Self-Defense Force in Xinjiang. Photo: 2022 Planet Labs PBC via Nikkei Asia

Japanese countermeasures include [efforts](#) to strengthen collaboration with the Five Eyes intelligence sharing group of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the US, reinforcing its ties to the Quad, and plans to raise defense spending to 2% of GDP. None of these will be simple or easy. Japan has expressed willingness to participate in the Five Eyes arrangement but seems reluctant to commit, and there are misgivings within the Five Eyes group as to whether Japanese laws provide adequate protection for secrets that would be shared. If Japan were to join, it would be the only non-English speaking state in the group. As for the 2% increase, former Pentagon official Elbridge Colby argues that it would be too late to meet the threat. Colby [described](#) the presence of a Chinese carrier strike group near the Japanese home waters as a very serious and urgent problem, saying that if Taiwan falls to the PRC, China will be able to jeopardize and possibly cut Japan's sea lanes of communication to the south. Inadequate though the increase might be, powerful voices argue that the amount is excessive, might be better spent on pressing domestic issues, and would provoke strong countermeasures from China.

These objections notwithstanding, the perception of maritime threat continues. An imbalance in air defense is also a concern, with Japan having approximately 300 fourth- and fifth-generation planes to China's 1,000: in one ameliorative effort, the Japanese and British governments are in talks to [develop](#) a successor to the ASDF's F-2 fighter jet, with input from Lockheed Martin of the US. In July, the defense ministry's Defense of Japan 2022 white paper [emphasized](#) the need for deterrence, taking note

of the PRC's ramping up civilian-military fusion and its "relentlessly continuing unilateral attempts to change the status quo through coercion near the Senkaku Islands" while creating faits accomplis in the South China Sea. Though the paper was sparse on details, measures to bolster the defense of the Nansei Islands are an important part of plans. Chinese state news agency *Xinhua* [responded](#) that the white paper was full of bias and showed a total disregard for facts.

The Future

Both sides have publicly professed their desire for better relations but seem unable to transcend the issues that divide them while keeping mutually beneficial trade relations as stable as possible. No breakthrough seems likely. Two important indicators will be the rank of the official—if any—sent to represent China at Abe's state funeral in late September, and what level of attention each side will accord to commemorating the 50th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japan relations at the end of September. Seemingly most likely would be low-key occasions emphasizing burgeoning trade relations since 1972 and, on the Chinese side, the inclusion of pro-China Japanese nationals who will lavish words of praise on the bilateral relationship. With Xi Jinping virtually assured of a third term as PRC leader at the 20th Party Congress that will convene in mid-October and Kishida apparently secure as prime minister following a successful House of Councillors election, current tensions are likely to endure.

CHRONOLOGY OF JAPAN-CHINA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 5, 2022: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, meeting with Japanese counterpart Kishi Nobuo, [reiterates](#) the US commitment to defend the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

May 7, 2022: Foreign Minister Hayashi [visits](#) Fiji and Palau to discuss concerns over Chinese expansionism in the South Pacific in the wake of Beijing's security agreement with the Solomon Islands.

May 9, 2022: China's leading military newspaper [describes](#) Prime Minister Kishida's visit to Asian and European countries from April 29 to May 6 through the guise of a free and open Indo-Pacific as having strategic intentions of gathering support for the revision of Japan's constitution.

May 10, 2022: Responding to an LDP party member's criticism of Chinese air force planes entering Taiwan's air defense identification zone, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson [states](#) that "there is no reason for Japanese individuals to force themselves into the spotlight."

May 11, 2022: Spurred by concerns over China and Russia, Japan [passes](#) a law strengthening supply chains to procure semiconductors and other vital products and facilitate development of artificial intelligence and other cutting edge technologies through public-private partnerships.

May 14, 2022: *Yomiuri* [reports](#) that China will soon unveil its third aircraft carrier which, despite rumors to the contrary, may not be equipped with an electromagnetic catapult system since the required amount of electricity is not currently available.

May 15, 2022: *Yomiuri* [reports](#) Japanese and UK governments are coordinating in development of a successor to the ASDF's F-2 fighter jet, with Lockheed Martin to participate in a limited role.

May 17, 2022: Former Pentagon official Elbridge Colby [terms](#) the Kishida administration's plan to move toward spending 2% of GDP on defense as too late to meet the threat.

May 19, 2022: In a videoconference with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, FM Hayashi [states](#) that Japanese public opinion is very critical of China, and expresses deep concern about Chinese activity in the East China and South China seas, Hong Kong, in Xinjiang, and in the Taiwan Strait. *Xinhua* omits Hayashi's words.

May 20, 2022: Satellite [photos](#) indicating a dummy Japanese E-767 surveillance aircraft that could be used for training to attack with missiles are [detected](#) in the Xinjiang desert.

May 21, 2022: A Japanese academic [urges](#) caution on Taiwanese lobbies in Japan who call for a version of the Taiwan Relations Act, which he worries will give China a pretext for aggression.

May 22, 2022: *Reuters* [reports](#) that Japan is asking its universities for greater scrutiny of foreign students and scholars to prevent technology leaks to places like China.

May 23, 2022: Quad members Australia, India, Japan, and the US [announce](#) a satellite-based plan to help Indo-Pacific countries track illegal fishing and unconventional maritime militias.

May 24, 2022: Prime Minister Kishida and President Biden [confirm](#) their commitment to oppose China's and Russia's expanding military activities in East Asia.

May 24, 2022: DM Kishi [describes](#) Beijing and Moscow's sending warplanes near Japan's airspace during the meeting of the Quad "provocative," with China responding that they were part of an annual military exercise.

May 25, 2022: *Global Times* [editorializes](#) that the Quad is an insidious effort to contain China.

May 26, 2022: Chinese military source reportedly [tells](#) *Yomiuri* that [drills](#) by aircraft carrier *Liaoning* off Japan from 3-20 May near Okinawa were to establish the capability for around-the-clock attacks on Taiwan.

May 30, 2022: *Nikkei* opinion [poll finds](#) the approval rating for Kishida's Cabinet reached the highest level since it was sworn in after Kishida and Biden affirmed the need to strengthen deterrence "with China in mind."

May 30, 2022: Komeito representative [states](#) that Japan should discuss possessing the ability to strike enemy bases that are preparing an attack.

May 31, 2022: Japan's foreign ministry [creates](#) internal strategy group tasked with monitoring Chinese activities.

June 2, 2022: Japan's Defense Ministry [announces](#) that its de facto aircraft carrier *Izumo* will make 12 ports of call that include four South Pacific states as well as fellow Quad members.

June 2, 2022: Japanese companies are cautiously [resuming](#) operations in Shanghai, though concerned about another extended lockdown and pessimism over how soon the Chinese economy will recover.

June 3, 2022: Japan announces [plans](#) to develop drones to support fighter aircraft, and is considering equipping drones with missiles that would intercept enemy-launched missiles. To be developed with the US to ensure interoperability, the drones will be equipped with artificial intelligence.

June 3, 2022: Chinese media [describe](#) reports that *Izumo* will participate in RIMPAC exercise and Indo-Pacific Deployment as further examples of Japan's violation of its pacifist constitution.

June 4, 2022: Japan's Foreign Ministry [protests](#) presence of Chinese ships apparently releasing observation equipment in Japan's EEZ about 73 km north of Ishigaki Island.

June 4, 2022: In response to strong concerns from the LDP, Japan's government [revises](#) a draft document with a timeline of five years for

comprehensive strengthening of Japan's defense.

June 4, 2022: *Nikkei* [assesses](#) that Japan's economic strength in Southeast Asia has declined relative to that of China, which does three times more trade with ASEAN countries even though Japan leads in accumulated investment.

June 5, 2022: *Jiji* [describes](#) mood ahead of the 50th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japanese relations as far from festive, as persistent tensions mean it will be difficult to hold large-scale government-sponsored events, leaving the private sector to play the major role.

June 5, 2022: Japanese government [establishes](#) 30-member team to designate by year's end the use of land plots viewed as important for national security, such as remote islands and areas near Self-Defense Forces bases.

June 6, 2022: Japan's defense ministry is [studying](#) the war in Ukraine to prepare a response to an invasion by an unnamed power and decide what equipment and what an enhanced budget should focus on.

June 7, 2022: In a telephone conversation with Japanese national security chief Akiba Takeo, his Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi [states](#) that old problems in bilateral relations are intertwined with new ones and that challenges cannot be ignored.

June 8, 2022: [Elaborating](#) on the Yang-Akiba telephone call, *Global Times* asserts that "Japan needs a head blow to wake up."

June 10, 2022: In a [keynote](#) speech to the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD), Kishida says that Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia, chiding China for not complying with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and stating that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in violation of international law are continuing.

June 11, 2022: [Speaking](#) at the SLD, Japanese DM Kishi says that joint military operations by Russia and China are upending international norms and that Japan is on the front lines of the increased tensions.

June 11, 2022: [Responding](#) to Kishida's speech, former vice-president of the PLA's Academy of Military Science states "on the so-called issue of unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East China Sea, it was Japan who firstly and illegally 'nationalize' [sic] the Diaoyu Islands and other relevant island [sic] around the region."

June 11, 2022: Head of *Yomiuri*'s international news department [argues](#) that, faced with China's militaristic rise and North Korea's missile development, the Japanese public has given up its utopian dream and now supports strong defense spending.

June 12, 2022: On the sidelines of the SLD and marking the first [meeting](#) between Chinese and Japanese defense ministers since 2019, Kishi raises "serious concerns" over the continuation of joint Sino-Russian military exercises around Japan to counterpart Wei Fenghe.

June 17, 2022: Japan's defense ministry [reports](#) that two Chinese navy vessels, one of which is a destroyer, are spotted navigating through the Tsugaru Strait toward the Pacific with seven Russian navy vessels, including a destroyer and an intelligence-gathering ship, and may be conducting joint training exercises when the Chinese vessels are deployed in the Pacific.

June 18, 2022: Having [confirmed](#) Chinese construction work suspected to be for gas field exploration in contested waters, the Japanese government lodges a protest over this and repeated intrusions by Japanese ships into waters around the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

June 21, 2022: Chinese luxury market analyst Jing Daily [attributes](#) Japanese fast fashion behemoth Uniqlo's exceptional success despite the pandemic partly to its refusal to comment on political matters such as sourcing of cotton from Xinjiang, which has hurt several of its rivals.

June 23, 2022: [Citing](#) the launch of the PRC's third aircraft carrier and the joint Chinese-Russian circumvention of Japan's home islands, *Asahi*, normally accommodative to Chinese government positions, editorializes that China's "reckless military buildup is needlessly stoking tensions."

June 24, 2022: Japan Coast Guard [confirms](#) that two China Coast Guard vessels intruded into Japanese territorial waters off the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands and stayed for 64 hours, repeatedly attempting to approach a Japanese fishing boat.

June 26, 2022: *Global Times* reports first successful voyage of the "golden channel" Qingdao-Osaka fast logistics route since the RCEP trade agreement came into effect on January 1.

June 27, 2022: [Speaking](#) at the G7 summit in Germany, Kishida takes the unusual step of criticizing China by name, saying "The G7 countries need to present measures to deal with China's unfair and opaque financing for development projects."

June 28, 2022: At G7 press conference, Kishida [says](#) he wants to hold summit talks with Xi Jinping; although there are no plans for a summit, it's important to keep dialogue at various levels.

June 28, 2022: In response to Kishida's efforts to broaden NATO's concerns to the Indo-Pacific, *Global Times* [cites](#) Mencius saying that a gentleman [NATO] should not stand under a dangerous wall, and that the sewage of the Cold War should not be allowed to flow into the Pacific Ocean.

July 2, 2022: Aiming to bolster Japan's ability to defend the Nansei Islands from Chinese expansionist activities, the defense ministry [contracts](#) for the delivery of 12 next-generation offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) from fiscal year 2023.

July 4, 2022: Japanese government lodges [protest](#) to Beijing through diplomatic channels about the passage of a Chinese frigate through the contiguous zone around the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, the fourth such instance since June 2018.

July 5, 2022: Veteran Japanese political analyst Yoichi Funabashi [argues](#) that Japan and China look as if they are being pulled back to the starting point of normalization 50 years ago, with both lacking domestic support for better relations.

July 6, 2022: Japanese defense ministry official [expresses](#) “serious concern” about the numbers of Chinese and Russian warships circumnavigating Japan, with speculation centering on their checking SDF surveillance capabilities and tracking systems, with information being shared between the two countries.

July 8, 2022: *Global Times* [describes](#) late former Prime Minister Abe as a controversial figure who ruined his contribution to bilateral ties by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, “denying” Japan’s invasion history, and declaring that a Taiwan emergency is a Japanese emergency.

July 8, 2022: Japanese government lodges a diplomatic [protest](#) after two Chinese Coast Guard ships stayed continuously in the territorial waters around the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands for 64 hours and 17 minutes from July 5-7, the longest single intrusion since 2012.

July 11, 2022: Taiwan Vice President William Lai becomes the most senior official to [visit](#) Japan since Tokyo broke relations in 1972 to recognize the PRC.

July 11, 2022: According to a Japan expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Japan [saw](#) in the NATO summit an opportunity to join with the US and some European countries to encircle China, possibly intervene militarily in the Taiwan question, and consolidate the Japan-US alliance thus increasing US military presence in the region.

July 12, 2022: China’s foreign ministry [lodges](#) “stern representations” with the Japanese government over Taiwanese vice-president William Lai’s attending Abe’s funeral.

July 15, 2022: US satellite operator Planet Labs [releases](#) photographs from base in Xinjiang showing a mockup of a Japanese SDF aircraft destroyed, apparently from a missile.

July 16, 2022: Taiwan’s China-leaning opposition party the KMT’s decision to lower the flag at its Taipei headquarters to half-staff in honor of former PM Abe draws [criticism](#) from the party’s more assertively pro-China faction.

July 18, 2022: Draft basic guidelines [indicate](#) that Japan is to invest heavily in high-tech areas that involve the nation’s security.

July 21, 2022: A Chinese navy ship [sails](#) through Japanese territorial waters, the sixth such intrusion of the year and the first since April.

July 22, 2022: Defense of Japan 2022 takes [note](#) of China’s ramping up civil-military fusion, its “relentlessly continuing unilateral attempts to change the status quo by coercion near the Senkaku Islands, and the creation of *faits accomplis* in the South China Sea” and highlights the need for deterrence.

July 25, 2022: *Xinhua* [responds](#) to the white paper by describing it as showing a total disregard for facts and full of bias.

July 27, 2022: Stating that Japan must be able to deal with the drastically changing security environment, LDP Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi [urges](#) that defense spending increase from 5.4 trillion yen in fiscal year 2022 to the mid-6 trillion range in 2023.

July 27, 2022: At least seven Chinese cities [cancel](#) annual Japan-themed Matsuri festivals after some incidents, including a woman who enshrined Japanese war criminals at a Nanjing temple and, separately, unspecified comments by others that were made during the public debate over former Japanese prime minister Abe.

July 28, 2022: *Global Times* [denounces](#) the cross-party visit of Japanese lawmakers to Taiwan as nonsensical actions by politicians seeking Instagram-worthy publicity.

July 29, 2022: Speaking at CSIS, Foreign Minister Hayashi [emphasizes](#) China’s behavior in the Indo-Pacific, saying the “logic of brute force” was gaining traction over the rule of law.

Aug. 3, 2022: Japan’s government [protests](#) after five Chinese missiles shot in retaliation against Taiwan hosting US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi land in Japan’s EEZ.

Aug. 4, 2022: In response to Japan signing a G7 letter of protest against Chinese actions against Taiwan, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi [cancels](#) meeting with counterpart Hayashi that

was to be held on the sidelines of the ASEAN meeting.

Aug. 10, 2022: Newly appointed Defense Minister Hamada Yasukaza expresses [concern](#) about China's military exercises near Taiwan and pledges to increase the defense of Japan's southwestern islands.

Aug. 11, 2022: Huang Xingyuan, representative director of the Japan-China Friendship Center, [advises](#) Japan to rectify its mindset of relying on China for its economy and the US for security and to drop its emphasis on the US-Japan alliance.

Aug. 12, 2022: Japanese logistics company SBS Holdings [calculates](#) that buying electric vans assembled in China will lower its operating costs by 30% over gasoline-powered vehicles.

Aug. 13, 2022: Economics Minister Nishimura Yasutoshi [visits](#) Yasukuni Shrine, the first member of Kishida's Cabinet to do so.

Aug. 14, 2022: Reacting to Nishimura's visit and the 77th anniversary of Japan's surrender after World War II, *Global Times* [observes](#) that more countries are becoming concerned that Japan may return to militarism. It does not mention any specific countries.

Aug. 14, 2022: About 150 children and parents [attend](#) the showing of a dinosaur-themed film at the Japanese embassy in Beijing, with a paleontologist explaining that Japan and China were contiguous at the time the dinosaurs lived.

Aug. 14, 2022: In the 17th such [intrusion](#) so far this year, two Chinese Coast Guard ships enter Japanese waters around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.

Aug. 14, 2022: China's Foreign Ministry [issued](#) stern representations to Japan over its ministers' behavior in visiting the Yasukuni Shrine.

Aug. 16, 2022: On the eve of the anniversary of Japan's surrender after World War II, Zhong Sheng "Voice of the Central [Party]" a pseudonym for a highly authoritative entity, issues a [litany](#) of complaints against Japan including its most recent criticisms of China's

legitimate countermeasures in the Taiwan Strait.

Aug. 16, 2022: *Nikkei* [reports](#) a rise in anti-Japanese sentiments in China, resulting in the cancellation of events and removal of paintings that public opinion regard as "too Japanese."

Aug. 16, 2022: Four Chinese Coast Guard vessels [enter](#) Japanese territorial waters near the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands.

Aug. 18, 2022: Chinese state councilor Yang Jiechi and head of Japan's national security secretariat Akiba hold [talks](#) on the security implications of China's recent activities in areas surrounding Taiwan

Aug. 19, 2022: In a telephone conversation with Solomon Islands Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele, FM Hayashi expresses Tokyo's [concerns](#) about the security pact that the Solomons concluded with China in April.

Aug. 21, 2022: With a Taiwan contingency in mind and mindful of the missile gap with China, the Japanese government announces plans to [station](#) more than 1,000 long-range missiles, most of them from Kyoto to the Nansei Island chain.

Aug. 21, 2022: Chinese military experts [respond](#) that there is no connection between Tokyo's decision to deploy more and longer-range missiles and Chinese actions; the true motivation is to revise Japan's pacifist constitution and enhance its military power.

Aug. 22, 2022: Japan's Defense Ministry announces plans to [equip](#) MSDF vessels engaged in long-term voyages with the system offered by SpaceX to boost telecommunications capabilities and resolve the issue of manpower shortages in the MSDF.

Aug. 22, 2022: Mindful of Chinese and Russian advances in hypersonic missile technology, Japan's budget [requests](#) for fiscal 2023 will include funds to strengthen Japan's capability for detection and interception.

Aug. 23, 2022: In what appears to be an attempt to soften relations ahead of the September commemoration of the 50th anniversary of mutual diplomatic recognition, an article in

China Daily [describes](#) the 30-year friendship between the Tsukamoto family of Osaka and Xi Jinping.

Aug. 23, 2022: To stem the [exodus](#) of domestic firms from defense-related production, Japan's Defense Ministry will seek a special budget to dissuade them from doing so.

Aug. 24, 2022: Jiji reports [meeting](#) between Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and a supra-partisan group of Diet members who favor stronger Taipei-Tokyo relations. Delegation head Keiji Furuya terms Chinese intimidation of Taiwan "absolutely unacceptable."

Aug. 24, 2022: After a nearly two and a half year ban, China will [allow](#) foreign nationals, including Japanese, to apply for visas to study in the PRC.

Aug. 25, 2022: *Asahi* [reports](#) that more Japanese companies, concerned with COVID-induced supply chain disruptions, higher wages in China, and issues of quality control, are moving facilities back to Japan or, in some cases, to Vietnam.

Aug. 25, 2022: PM Kishida, [speaking](#) at the triennial Tokyo International Conference on African Development, pledges \$30 billion in investments in human resources, mainly in the agricultural and health sectors

Aug. 26, 2022: Mindful of China's growing influence over Sri Lanka, Japan, its second-largest creditor, seeks to [organize](#) a conference to resolve Sri Lanka's debt crisis.

Aug. 26, 2022: *Global Times* [criticizes](#) Japan for its failure to acknowledge forced labor abuses during World War II.

Aug. 26, 2022: According to *Nikkei*, Sino-Japanese financial [cooperation](#) may have hit its high water mark 10 years ago, with a proposed agreement on cross-ownership of each other's bonds having fallen into abeyance.

Aug. 28, 2022: Chinese ambassador to Tokyo Kong Xuanyou [urges](#) prudence on Japan's part, warning that bilateral relations are at a new crossroads and face a fresh round of conflicts.

Aug. 30, 2022: *Global Times* [mourns](#) the death of business management expert Kazuo Inamori for his contributions to development of bilateral trade and Sino-Japanese friendship.

Aug. 31, 2022: *Bloomberg* [reports](#) that Japan will develop and mass produce a cruise missile and a high-velocity ballistic missile as it seeks the ability to strike more distant targets.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

JAPAN-KOREA RELATIONS

THE PASSING OF ABE AND JAPAN-KOREA RELATIONS

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How might the passing of former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo impact Tokyo's approach to Seoul? This unexpected turn of events loomed large in the minds of many who have been cautiously optimistic that Japan and South Korea would take steps toward a breakthrough in their stalled relations. In our [last issue](#), we discussed how this summer could provide good timing for Seoul and Tokyo to create momentum in this direction after Yoon Suk Yeol's inauguration as president in South Korea and the Upper House election in Japan. However, the results from this summer were mixed. Seoul and Tokyo have not yet announced whether Yoon and Kishida will hold a summit any time soon. Both leaders ended the summer juggling domestic politics amid declining approval ratings. However, there were some meaningful exchanges between the two governments, signaling that both sides were interested in improving relations.

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Abe's death and the Upper House election: what next?

At the shocking news of Abe's assassination in July, major South Korean dailies denounced the act of political violence directed at a political leader during an election campaign. President Yoon made a condolence visit to the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, where he [wrote](#), "I hope South Korea and Japan, the closest neighbors, will closely cooperate in the future." Lee Nak-yeon, a prime minister under the Moon Jae-in government [said](#), "we didn't always agree with him on political and diplomatic issues. But we have cultivated a bond of personal trust." Prime Minister Han Duk-soo and National Assembly Deputy Speaker Chung Jin-suk are to visit Japan to attend a state funeral for Abe, to be held on Sept. 27.



Figure 1 South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol leaves a condolence message at a memorial altar for Japan's late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Photo: Yonhap via Reuters

For most South Koreans, Abe was known for his nationalist views on historical issues at the heart of bilateral diplomatic friction. Beyond history issues, Abe's legacy and its impact on Japan-Korea relations cannot be fully understood without considering broadly his role in shaping Japan's direction as its longest-serving prime minister. First, he has influenced Japan's international role, grand strategy, and national identity as a country that upholds [the Peace Constitution](#). Japan's postwar grand strategy—known as the Yoshida Doctrine—placed greater emphasis on developing economic over military power, while ensuring national security primarily through its alliance with the United States. Arguably, one of Abe's legacies will be that he has led Japan away from this postwar formula. Since his first term as

prime minister in 2006, Abe became a symbol of Japan's conservative agenda and of a brand of nationalism that aspires to great power status with corresponding military capabilities. He has pursued steps toward this direction adamantly and gradually, while seeking to revise the Peace Constitution.

Whether Abe's legacy will be constitutional revision of Article 9 weighs heavily on thinking about the future of Japan-Korea relations and is a concern in Seoul. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)'s revision proposals address four areas: the status of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) (Article 9), educational system reforms, the emergency clause, and the demerging of prefectural constituencies of the Upper House. Shortly after the LDP-Komeito coalition's victory in the Upper House election on July 10, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [vowed](#) to "build on [Abe's] many accomplishments," [stating](#) that he "intends to proceed with the revision process with any one of the proposals, once approval is won after deepening discussion on them." According to [the exit poll by Jiji](#), the Japanese public is interested more in the economy than in constitutional revision: 30.2% of the voters responded that economic and labor policies determined their votes, while only 4.7% said that constitutional revision was the basis of their voting decision. Among those who voted for the LDP, only 3.2% said it was because of constitutional revision. By mid-August, a *Kyodo News* survey [showed](#) that only 2.1% of Japanese respondents thought Kishida should regard constitutional revision as his top priority, while 44.9% pointed to economic measures to deal with soaring prices as the top priority.

Second, under Abe's vision of a "rules-based international order," Tokyo broke away from its previous reluctance toward taking a leadership role in regional affairs. In the face of a rapidly rising China and the relative decline of US power, Abe's strategy resulted in a Japanese foreign and security policy that sought to counter China's growing influence and assertiveness together with countries like the United States and Australia. As Abe sought to shape the international order, especially during his second term as prime minister (2012–2020), his views, and the resulting policy initiatives—simultaneously internationalist and nationalist—became more mainstream across Japan's political spectrum. Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, the strategic focus beyond Northeast Asia on maritime areas in

Southeast Asia, and the promotion of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the “Quad”) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) are among the significant expressions of this path. As a result, Seoul and Tokyo often found themselves adopting diverging strategies to deal with the shifting power balances in the region.

Due mostly to LDP's factional politics, it is less clear whether and when Japan will change the course of its Korea policy that Abe and his like-minded conservative colleagues have set. There was a view that the July election victory would strengthen Kishida's position and allow him to pursue a Korea policy that restores friendly relations with the Yoon government. After the July 10 Upper House election victory, the ruling LDP-Komeito coalition increased their majority from 57% of seats to 60%. The ruling coalition also controls over 60% in the Lower House. Given that Kishida does not face Diet elections until 2025, he could have three years to pursue his own policy agenda in the absence of Abe.



Figure 2 Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida places a flower next to the name of a winning Liberal Democratic Party candidate at the party's headquarters during the July 2022 Upper House Elections. Photo: Kyodo

However, the passing of Abe adds another layer of uncertainty and risk-aversion to Japan's approach to Seoul. In early July, the South Korean foreign ministry launched a consultation body that brought together victims, lawyers, scholars, former government officials, and journalists in South Korea with the goal of producing a viable solution to the issue of wartime forced labor. Given the outlook of President Yoon and his team on the direction of South Korea's foreign policy, it is likely that Seoul will continue to make efforts toward

overcoming the obstacle posed by the forced labor issue. However, the Kishida government has cautiously responded to Seoul's goodwill gestures taking minimal political risks, and is not likely to change its basic stance that South Korea should first present a solution to this issue. Abe, who could have facilitated that change in the face of opposition from conservatives skeptical about friendly relations with South Korea, is no longer able to support that agenda.

Kishida's plan to consolidate his position within the LDP faced a setback when members of opposition parties and the public opposed his decision to hold a state funeral for Abe. Kishida made the case for the state funeral (estimated to cost \$1.8 million), citing Abe's record as prime minister. 56% of Japanese respondents [answered](#) that they were not convinced by the justification while 42.5% responded that it was sufficient. Unexpectedly Abe's death brought to the fore links that he and other lawmakers had with the Unification Church. Despite Kishida reshuffling of the Cabinet and apologizing for some LDP lawmakers' ties to this group, the approval rating of the Kishida government has [dropped](#) to 48.1% by early September, the lowest since he took office in October 2021. According to a [Kyodo News survey](#), 89.5% of Japanese respondents wanted the LDP and its lawmakers to explain their links with the Unification Church more clearly, while 84.7% believed that they should sever their ties with the group. In early September, the LDP announced that 121 lawmakers had ties with the Unification Church.

Yoon's First 100 Days

South Korean president Yoon took office on May 10 after winning the March presidential election with a razor-thin margin of 0.75%, [coming](#) into the renamed Office of the President (formerly Cheong Wa Dae) with an ambitious and expansive agenda. From the start, he had to govern with an opposition-led National Assembly. A surprise result in the June local election [gave](#) him a much-needed early political tailwind, given his lack of a clear popular mandate. However, as he passed his first 100 days in office in early August, there have been several roadblocks for the new conservative president.

First, his approval rating has [plummeted](#) to a historic low of 24% by early August, reaching the under [30% mark much faster](#) than

predecessors Moon Jae-in (near end of his five-year presidency) and Park Geun-hye (after two years). Furthermore, his agenda has been set back by a series of domestic debacles, including a poorly handled [flood response](#) in August, [controversial personnel appointments](#) and [communications](#), [soaring inflation](#), [historic high gasoline prices](#), and [infighting](#) within his own People Power Party. It is no surprise that he then [promised](#) to "always attend to what the people want" during the Aug. 18 press conference marking his first 100 days.

Yoon does have a relatively strong foreign policy showing so far. He set the tone for a more expansive global agenda with his first trip abroad when he [attended](#) the NATO summit in Spain at the end of May, the first-ever NATO summit invitation and appearance by a South Korean president. A very successful US-Korea summit in Seoul on May 21 [preceded](#) that trip, setting the foundations for stronger alliance cooperation for the rest of his five-year term. His administration [joined](#) the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), and is in discussions to [join](#) the new "Chip 4" semiconductor grouping with the US, Japan, and Taiwan.



Figure 3 US President Joe Biden and members of his cabinet sit with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio during a trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid on June 29, 2022. Photo: Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images

One of the biggest indicators of South Korea's Japan policy is Yoon's National Liberation Day (Kwangbokchol) address on Aug. 15. This day celebrates Korea's independence from Japan in 1945 after 35 years of Japanese colonial rule. It is a yearly tradition for the South Korean president to deliver a speech to commemorate those who fought for independence against imperial Japan. In his first Liberation Day

speech, President Yoon [called](#) Japan a "partner" for South Korea to face common threats together, even as he acknowledged Korea had to "unshackled ourselves" from Japan. He appealed for the two neighbors to "swiftly" improve relations [based](#) on the spirit of the Kim-Obuchi Declaration, and to work together in areas such as economic and security cooperation. Some pundits [believe](#) that Yoon's reconciliatory message, which had a political cost, adds credibility to his overture with Japan. On the same day, Prime Minister Kishida did not [visit](#) Yasukuni Shrine, and instead sent a ritual offering on the anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II. Two of his Cabinet members visited the shrine, which South Korea protested by [expressing](#) "deep disappointment and regret."

First 100 days of Yoon-Kishida and Trilateral Cooperation

The first 100 days of the Yoon-Kishida relationship have seen many firsts, including the first trilateral leader summit and trilateral military exercise since 2017 and the first trilateral defense ministerial and South Korean foreign minister visit to Japan since 2019.

There has been a flurry of meetings geared toward strengthening trilateral cooperation between Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington. A US-Korea-Japan trilateral summit [took place](#) for the first time since 2017 on the sidelines of the NATO summit. Prime Minister Kishida, like his Korean counterpart, became the first Japanese leader to [attend](#) a NATO summit. After a protracted period of dysfunctional trilateral relations, many [lauded](#) this trilateral summit as an "important breakthrough" in diplomacy.

For the past few years, the US has played the role of facilitator, and its efforts have paid off with two new leaders in Seoul and Tokyo seemingly willing to work together. The Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, seeking a region that is "free and open, connected, prosperous, secure and resilient," deems the cooperation and views support of its two closest allies to be [vital](#). President Yoon understands that improving trilateral coordination can provide a stronger foundation to bolster his North Korea policy and deal with Chinese actions. It can also help his aspiration for South Korea to [become](#) a "global pivotal state." For Prime Minister Kishida, strengthening trilateral cooperation would be helpful for the "realism

diplomacy" he [espoused](#) during the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2022. His foreign minister, Hayashi Yoshimasa, [called](#) Japan-Korea and trilateral coordination "really indispensable" for the stability of East Asia, especially for dealing with North Korea at a speech in Washington, DC on July 29. The reality remains that the three countries face common security and economic challenges, including an ever-growing North Korean threat and a more assertive and influential China.

On June 11, a trilateral defense ministerial [took place](#) for the first time since 2019 on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. The ministers committed to enhancing trilateral security cooperation, including in combined exercises, information sharing, and high-level policy consultations, and to identifying new trilateral actions to deal with North Korean missile tests. A day later, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup [used](#) his Shangri-La speech to express his willingness to have a "serious dialogue" to work with Japan, despite unresolved bilateral issues. With Japanese Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo in attendance, Lee said the Yoon government wants to "normalize security cooperation" with Japan to help deal with the North Korean missile and nuclear threat.



Figure 4 US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III hosts a trilateral meeting with Japanese Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo and South Korean Minister of National Defense Lee Jong-sup at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 11, 2022. Photo: Chad J. McNeeley/ US Department of Defense

As widely expected, the Yoon government's outlook on South Korean foreign policy is more open to trilateral security cooperation. Foreign Minister Park Jin [spoke](#) publicly about "normalizing" as soon as possible GSOMIA, the intelligence-sharing agreement between the

Korea and Japan. Coming shortly after the assassination of Abe, Park's visit to Japan marked the first visit by a South Korean minister to Japan since November 2019. Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi [attended](#) Yoon's inauguration in May. This was also their second meeting in a month, as they had [met](#) earlier on July 8 at the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Bali. During their meeting in Tokyo, the two ministers reaffirmed the importance of the bilateral relations, agreed to cooperate on the North Korean nuclear threat, and acknowledged the necessity of resolving the forced labor issue at an early date, preferably before the forced liquidation of the two Japanese companies' assets in Korea. During the same trip, Park met with Prime Minister Kishida, and [relayed](#) Yoon's message that he believes Kishida is "trustworthy partner" to improve bilateral relations, and that they will try to [reach](#) a "desirable solution" before the liquidation of assets. The two foreign ministers [met](#) again at the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh on Aug. 4, but no breakthrough took place on the forced labor issue.

In mid-August, US-Korea-Japan followed through on the commitment made during the June defense ministerial to deepen trilateral cooperation. They [conducted](#) a trilateral missile warning and ballistic missile search and tracking exercise during the multinational Pacific Dragon exercise in Hawaii. This was the first trilateral military exercise since 2017.

Forced Labor, Comfort Women, and More

The early days have focused on incremental steps and public signaling for future cooperation, but a laundry list of unresolved bilateral issues remain. The forced labor issue remains the biggest hot button issue for the two new administrations. In anticipation of a pending final decision by the Korean Supreme Court on whether to liquidate the domestic assets of two Japanese companies (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Inc. and Nippon Steel Corp), the Yoon government [launched](#) a government-private consultative body on July 4 to explore ways to resolve the issue with the victims. The issue topped the agenda during Foreign Minister Park's meetings with Hayashi and Kishida in July and August. Throughout the process, Japan has maintained its consistent position that the 1965 normalization treaty settled all claims related to forced labor. A Japanese foreign

ministry official [warned](#) in July that “once the assets are liquidated, there's no going back.”

The Yoon government's efforts to improve relations with Japan came in the form of creating this consultative body. It has met four times in a closed-door setting with the goal of producing a proposal for the South Korean government. Another effort of the Yoon government was to submit an argument to the Supreme Court by the South Korean foreign ministry. The intent was to make the case for considering this issue as a matter of public interest and that it is making efforts to reach a diplomatic solution with Japan. By law in South Korea, a government agency can file an argument in a written form to present the case that concerns the public interest. The victims and their representatives roundly [criticized](#) this move. The victims' legal representatives and most victims [boycotted](#) the third meeting on Aug. 9, which ended without a resolution. On the same day, Korea's new ambassador to Japan, Yun Duk-min [called](#) for holding off on the liquidation process, and warned of "great damage" to Korea's economy, including the loss of "tens or hundreds of trillions won" in business opportunities. On Aug 19, the South Korean Supreme Court delayed its final decision for further deliberation. As this body's closed-door consultation sessions ended in early September, Park [promised](#) that he will meet with the forced labor victims to listen to their views.



Figure 5 Legal representatives of Korean forced labor victims hold a press briefing in front of the foreign ministry building in Seoul on Aug. 9, 2022. Photo: Yonhap

On the issue of Fukushima seafood import ban, the new Yoon government [maintained](#) its position that it will not lift the ban on the grounds that the issue is of a great importance

for the public health and safety in South Korea. South Korea is currently in a bid to get Japan's support for entering the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). However, Oceans Minister Cho Seung-hwan [confirmed](#) that South Korea will not change its position in exchange for its bid to join the CPTPP.

On the planned release of contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, the South Korean foreign ministry [participates](#) in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)-led monitoring of the discharge plan. Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority [approved](#) Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO)'s final plan on July 22 to begin discharging the wastewater next spring. The complete discharge process will likely take several decades to complete, which also involves construction of discharge facilities. The South Korean government responded to the official approval by saying it will take "best responsive measures," while emphasizing the utmost importance of people's health and security.

On the comfort women issue, the Yoon government has signaled its intent to respect the 2015 bilateral agreement. Park [conveyed](#) this position during his meetings with Prime Minister Kishida and LDP lawmaker Nukaga Fukushima in Tokyo in July.

Audacious Offer to North Korea and Status Quo

President Yoon's Liberation Day speech on Aug. 15 [spelled](#) out his audacious plan to improve North Korea's economy in return for denuclearization. He promised a litany of economic assistance to the North, including a large-scale food program, providing assistance for power generation and distribution infrastructure, modernizing hospitals and health infrastructure, implementing investment and financial initiatives, and improving agricultural productivity. According to Kim Tae-hyo, Yoon's deputy national security adviser, all North Korea has to [do](#) in return is correspond to the economic incentives with equal steps in a denuclearization roadmap, with the ultimate goal of "freezing, declaration, verification, and dismantlement" of its nuclear program.

North Korea [responded](#) by launching two cruise missiles two days later, its first weapons test in over two months. By the end of the week, North

Korea officially responded to Yoon's plan with a rejection from Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. In her colorful statement, she not only [called](#) Yoon "foolish," but also criticized his plan as "an absurd dream," and reiterated that North Korea has no plans to denuclearize in exchange for economic incentives.

For Japan, the North Korean threat remains the important element for bilateral cooperation between Japan and Korea, and to trilateral US-Japan-Korea cooperation. This is evident by the August trilateral military exercise and numerous meetings emphasizing a common response to North Korea as a critical area of cooperation. For Prime Minister Kishida, [resolution](#) of the abductions issue remains a top priority for his administration.

Pyongyang did not mention the passing of Abe until late August. On Aug. 21, North Korean state media outlet [DPRK Today](#) [referred](#) to Abe as "a samurai descendant who committed unmeasurable crimes against Korean people," criticizing Yoon for sending a condolence message. During the summer, there was no visible change in Pyongyang-Tokyo relations.

Looking Ahead

As summer ends, there is cause for cautious optimism. With the passing of Abe and the domestic political struggles in both Seoul and Tokyo, the state of bilateral ties prompts the question, "is the glass half empty or half full?" There has been no progress on the potential reinstatement of South Korea on Japan's whitelist of countries with fast-track trade status, the resolution of the forced labor issue, or a summit meeting between Kishida and Yoon. Yet, South Korea is actively seeking to improve relations with Japan, while Japan is waiting for a measure on the forced labor issue that is politically acceptable domestically. In both countries, low approval ratings mean that the leaders may not have the political capital to pursue an unpopular policy at home. Without Abe, who could have persuaded conservatives skeptical of improving relations with Seoul, Kishida will now likely choose a safer political path and will not likely meet with Yoon without a deliverable on the forced labor issue in hand.

CHRONOLOGY OF JAPAN-KOREA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 10, 2022: Yoon Suk Yeol [takes](#) office as the 20th president of the Republic of Korea.

May 10, 2022: Japan's Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa [attends](#) Yoon's inauguration, and also meets Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin.

May 12, 2022: South Korean FM Park [vows](#) to build "future-oriented partnership" with Japan during his inauguration ceremony.

May 16, 2022: Japanese government [announces](#) it will exempt travelers arriving from South Korea from quarantines if they test negative for Covid-19 upon arrival. The exemption takes effect the next day.

May 19, 2022: South Korean foreign ministry [says](#) it will participate in the IAEA-led monitoring of the planned discharge of contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

May 25, 2022: South Korean Minister of Oceans and Fisheries Cho Seung-hwan [announces](#) Yoon government's intention to keep the ban on Fukushima seafood import.

May 31, 2022: Air service [resumes](#) between South Korea's Gimhae International Airport in Busan and Japan's Fukuoka after a two-year suspension due to the pandemic.

June 8, 2022: South Korean President Yoon [announces](#) the appointment of Yun Duk-min, the former chancellor of the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, as ambassador to Japan.

June 8, 2022: US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong, and Japan's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mori Takeo [express](#) commitment to advance trilateral cooperation and security ties to respond to the North Korean threat during a trilateral meeting in Seoul.

June 11, 2022: US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup and Japanese defense Minister Kishi Nobuo [hold](#) trilateral ministerial meeting at the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

June 12, 2022: South Korean DM Lee [expresses](#) willingness to have a "serious dialogue" to work together with Japan during his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

June 15, 2022: During a visit to the US, South Korean FM Park [speaks](#) about "normalizing" GSOMIA, the intelligence-sharing agreement between Korea and Japan.

June 29, 2022: US President Joe Biden, South Korean President Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [hold](#) a trilateral summit on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Madrid.

July 1, 2022: A support group for Korean victims of forced labor [rejects](#) a government proposal for a "subrogation payment" to resolve the forced labor issue with Japan.

July 4, 2022: Yoon government [launches](#) a government-private consultative body to look for a resolution to the forced labor issue.

July 8, 2022: Former Prime Minister of Japan Abe Shinzo is [assassinated](#).

July 8, 2022: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, South Korean FM Park, and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa [hold](#) trilateral meeting at the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

July 10, 2022: Japan [holds](#) Upper House election. The ruling LDP-Komeito coalition increase their majority from 57 % of the seats to 60 %.

July 16, 2022: Yun Duk-min, new South Korean ambassador to Japan, [arrives](#) in Tokyo to begin his posting. He is a fluent Japanese speaker, and calls the two neighbors "the most important partners that share strategic benefits" upon his arrival.

July 18, 2022: South Korean FM Park [visits](#) Japan, and meets his counterpart, FM Hayashi. This was the first visit to Japan by a South Korean foreign minister since November 2019.

July 19, 2022: South Korean FM Park [meets](#) Japanese PM Kishida in Tokyo, and relays President Yoon's message to improve bilateral relations.

July 22, 2022: Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority [approves](#) Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO)'s final plan to begin discharging the wastewater next spring.

July 26, 2022: South Korean foreign ministry [files](#) a written argument to the Supreme Court to explain its position on the forced labor issue and its efforts for a diplomatic solution with Japan.

July 29, 2022: During a visit to Washington, Japanese FM Hayashi [calls](#) Japan-Korea and trilateral coordination "really indispensable."

July 31, 2022: A Japanese poll [shows](#) that the Kishida Cabinet's approval rating goes down to 51%, a record low since he came to office in October 2021.

Aug. 3, 2022: Legal representatives and supporters of forced labor victims [criticize](#) the South Korean foreign ministry's written opinion to the Supreme Court.

Aug. 4, 2022: South Korean and Japanese foreign ministers meet on sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. A Japanese newspaper [reports](#) that South Korean side asked Japan to put Korea back on its whitelist and to remove the export controls on three chemicals.

Aug. 8-14, 2022: South Korea, Japan, and the US [participate](#) in a trilateral ballistic missile defense exercise during the broader multinational *Pacific Dragon* exercise in Hawaii. This was the first trilateral drill since 2017.

Aug. 9, 2022: South Korean government-private consultative body to resolve the forced labor issue meets for the third time, with boycotts by legal representatives and victims' support group.

Aug. 9, 2022: Yun Duk-min, new South Korean ambassador to Japan, [calls](#) for holding off the liquidation process, and warns of "great damage" to the South Korean economy.

Aug. 9, 2022: South Korean Supreme Court [delays](#) making a decision on the forced labor issue case for further deliberations.

Aug. 15, 2022: South Korean President Yoon [calls](#) Japan a "partner" to face common threats together during his Liberation Day's speech.

Aug. 15, 2022: Japanese PM Kishida [sends](#) a ritual offering, instead of visiting himself, to Yasukuni shrine for the anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II.

Aug. 31, 2022: South Korean FM Park [announces](#) intention to meet with forced labor victims.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

CHINA- RUSSIA RELATIONS

EMBRACING A LONGER AND/OR WIDER CONFLICT?

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Unlike in 1914, the “guns of the August” in 2022 played out at the two ends of the Eurasian continent. In Europe, the war was grinding largely to a stagnant line of active skirmishes in eastern and southern Ukraine. In the east, rising tension in US-China relations regarding Taiwan led to an unprecedented demonstrative use of force around Taiwan. Alongside Moscow’s quick and strong support of China, Beijing carefully calibrated its strategic partnership with Russia with signals of symbolism and substance. Xi and Putin directly conversed only once (June 15). Bilateral trade and mil-mil ties, however, bounced back quickly thanks to, at least partially, the “Ukraine factor” and their respective delinking from the West. At the end of August, Mikhail Gorbachev’s death meant so much and yet so little for a world moving rapidly toward a “[war with both Russia and China](#),” in the words of Henry Kissinger.

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Xi-Putin Talk: Once in Four Months

Unlike their Western counterparts who gathered and communicated frequently in many multilateral and bilateral formats, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping had only one direct dialogue in the May-August period. Their [June 15 telephone conversation](#), however, revealed the quality, complexity, and direction of bilateral relations. Both stated that Russian-Chinese relations were at “an all-time high” and they reaffirmed their commitment to “consistently deepen the comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction in all areas,” though Xi pushed for “steady and long-term development of practical bilateral cooperation.”

The last time they talked was Feb. 25, when Putin briefed Xi about Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine, shortly after its start. This time, the war was the last item in their conversation. Instead, the two leaders started with issues of “practical cooperation” such as economics at a time of a “more complicated global economic situation.” Both pledged to expand cooperation in energy, transportation, finance, etc. Xi, for example, mentioned the Heihe-Blagoveshchensk cross-border highway bridge, which [opened to traffic](#) on June 10 after years of deliberation and delay.

To its east, the [Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye railroad bridge](#) was also ready to open in the second half of 2022. In addition to the new bridges, Russia’s energy exports to China reached an unprecedented high level for three consecutive months ([May to July](#)), in sharp contrast to the steady decline of Russia’s energy exports to Europe. In the first half of 2022, China-Russia trade increased 27.2% and much of the rise came from Russia’s exports to China ([48.2%](#)). Bilateral trade was expected to reach \$200 billion in 2022, a sharp rise compared with the 2021 value of [\\$140 billion](#). For security and reasons of cost-effectiveness, they handled a growing part of the bilateral economic intercourse through [RMB and rubles](#).

Not everything was bright between Beijing and Moscow in the economic arena. In late June, Russian Vice Premier [Yuri Borisov](#) indicated that Russia would “decrease” its participation in the joint CR929 project, a long-range 280-seat widebody twinjet airliner. At the same time, however, China’s Ambassador to Moscow [Zhang Hanhui](#) revealed that China was “ready” to supply Russia with civilian aircraft components.

In late August, a Chinese shipyard started to build for Russia the first nuclear-powered floating production unit (9,549 tons) with the [RITM-200 reactor](#) for the Arctic.

Global and foreign policy issues took up much of their conversation, as both leaders pledged to coordinate actions at the UN, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, etc. Putin reiterated Russia’s depiction of Russia’s “overlapping” and “very close positions” in global affairs for “a truly multipolar and fair system of international relations.” Xi’s goal, however, seemed more moderate as he described China’s push for more “solidarity and cooperation among emerging market countries and developing nations” with the goal of an “international order and global governance towards a more just and reasonable direction.”

China’s press release provided more specifics on Russia’s positions. Putin was quoted as saying that Russia supported Xi’s April 21 [Global Security Initiative](#), which overlaps considerably with Russia’s repeated calls for “[indivisible security](#).” Putin was also cited for his opposition to “any force [interfering] with China’s internal affairs” (including Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and Taiwan). Putin briefed Xi at the end of their talks on Russia’s military operations in Ukraine. In his turn, Xi repeated China’s long-held policy of “independently assessing the situation on the basis of the historical context and the merits of the issue,” and said “all parties should push for a proper settlement of the Ukraine crisis in a responsible manner.” For this, the Kremlin press release considered China’s support for Russia’s special military actions as “legitimate” for “security challenges created by external forces.”

The sparsity of the top leaders’ interactions in May-August was offset by near-normal interactions at the functional levels of the two governments during this period. Lavrov and Wang Yi met in person several times ([July 7](#), [July 28-29](#), and [Aug. 6](#)) and via video at others. Other senior diplomats, too, frequently interacted on multilateral and bilateral forums for regional and global issues. Russia and China actively coordinated efforts in the SCO and BRICS with a greater sense of urgency to expand. [Ten countries](#) already intended to join the SCO by the end of August, among them Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates. At a time of worsening relations with the West, deeper and more active engagement with the “rest” of the

world were the consensus in Beijing and Moscow.

Military Cooperation: Business as Usual

According to the Kremlin website, military and defense issues were also part of the June 15 conversation, not mentioned in the Chinese press release. This discrepancy may reflect China's official stance of [principled neutrality](#) in the Ukraine conflict. Its operationalization meant that China would walk a delicate line: continue its normal and ongoing mil-mil interactions with Russia but not provide Moscow with "material support" for military operations in Ukraine.

In his interview with *TASS* in early May, Chinese Ambassador to Moscow [Zhang Hanhui](#)—when questioned about changes in Sino-Russian military-technical cooperation (weapon sales, missile defense, etc.)—stated that China attached great importance to the issue and would deepen and broaden military-tech cooperation with Russia. Things looked routine in the next few months as the two militaries engaged in several "normal" exchanges:

- May 24: Russian and Chinese bombers conducted their [4th annual aerial patrols](#) since 2019 over the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan. It was the first since the Ukraine conflict and coincided with President [Biden](#)'s Japan visit for the Quad summit.
- Aug. 13–27: [China](#) participated in the 8th annual International Army Games in Russia (main site) and 11 other countries, including [Venezuela](#) for the first time. More than 270 teams from 37 countries joined the games.
- Aug. 16: Chinese Defense Minister [Wei Fenghe](#) was invited to speak, via video, to the 10th Moscow International Security Conference. Wei also participated in the [2021](#) Moscow International Security Conference.
- Aug. 31–Sept. 7: The PLA joined the [Vostok \(East\) 2022](#) strategic command and staff drills, together with troops from Belarus, Algeria, India, Tajikistan, and Mongolia. The exercises took place at 13 training grounds in Russia's Eastern Military

District. The [PLA](#) sent 2,000 servicemen, 300 pieces of equipment, 21 airplanes, and three warships.

As this "normalcy" of China-Russian mil-mil ties continued throughout May–August, so did China's principled neutrality in the Ukraine war. Four days before the Xi–Putin talk in mid-June, Defense Minister [Wei Fenghe](#) told the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore that "China has never provided any material support to Russia with regard to the Ukrainian crisis." The Ukraine conflict was "the last thing that China would want to see," said Wei, adding that China supports dialogue between Russia and Ukraine and hopes that the United States and NATO would hold talks with Russia for the soonest ceasefire. In late June, the [US side](#) confirmed that no overt Chinese military and economic back of Moscow had been detected.

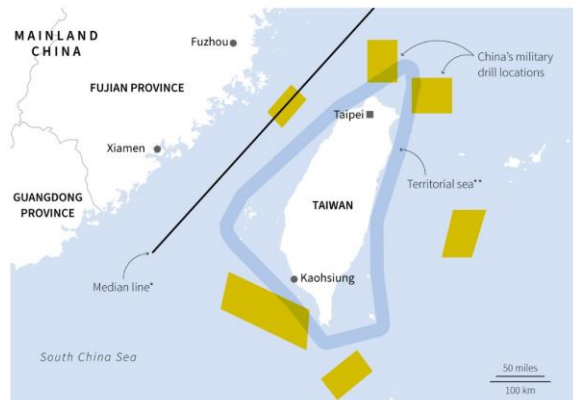
Russia's "Taiwan Moment"

Between its principle and practical needs, China "threads the needle on Ukraine," commented [Andrew Nathan](#) of Columbia University in *Foreign Policy*. What kept Moscow and Beijing apart, according to Nathan, was the fact that they had little interest in the other's core interests: Taiwan and South China Sea (SCS) for China and Western threat in Eastern Europe for Russia.

Nathan was both right *and* wrong. He was right because Europe and the western Pacific are separated by the huge Eurasian landmass. China, too, consistently argued that the Ukraine and Taiwan issues were totally different. Nathan was wrong, however, to ignore the fact that Washington was the common denominator for both Ukraine and Taiwan. Immediately after [Pelosi's controversial Taiwan visit](#) on Aug. 2–3, the PLA staged a four-day massive military exercises around Taiwan, a dress rehearsal of a future blockade (see Figure 1).

China embarks on military drills

The map below shows the locations of China's military drills surrounding Taiwan after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi – a veteran China critic and the third most senior U.S. politician – visited Taipei this week.



* An unofficial maritime line of control which China does not recognise, although neither side's aircraft or battleships normally cross it.
 ** A 12-nautical mile zone from the baseline or low-water line along the Taiwanese coast. Taiwan's control also extends to the air space over the territorial sea as well as to its bed and subsoil.

Sources: Xinhua News Agency; Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative; U.S. Congressional Research Service

W. Foo | Reuters, Aug. 4, 2022

Figure 1 A map of Chinese military drills around Taiwan following House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei.
 Photo: Reuters

On Aug. 10, China published its [third Taiwan White Paper](#) (the first two were published in 1993 and 2000) with a much more assertive tone in curbing any internal and external forces for Taiwan's separation from the mainland. On the following day (Aug. 11), US STRATCOM chief Navy Adm. [Chas Richard](#) revealed that the US was "furiously" writing a new nuclear deterrence theory that simultaneously faced Russia and China.

Despite its non-commitment to any crisis over Taiwan, Russia reacted swiftly and strongly to Pelosi's visit. On the eve of the trip, Russian media blamed the US for "provoking China in 'the most dangerous place on earth.'" Kremlin Spokesman [Dmitry Peskov](#) described the visit as "purely provocative." He [reiterated](#) the point shortly after Pelosi landed in Taipei. [Vladimir Dzhabarov](#), first deputy chairman of the International Committee of Russia's Federation Council, or upper house of Parliament, went as far as to say that Russia may offer assistance to China if it was asked. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergey [Lavrov](#) stressed that he did not see any other "reason to create such an irritant literally out of nowhere." As the Chinese kicked off the unprecedented military exercises around Taiwan on Aug. 4, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council [Dmitry Medvedev](#) (Russian president in 2008-12 and prime minister in 2012-20) called Pelosi's visit to Taiwan a "malicious provocation." On Aug. 16,

[Putin](#) weighed in. In his speech to the 10th Moscow Conference on International Security, Putin described Pelosi's visit as "a thoroughly planned provocation" and "part of the purpose-oriented and deliberate US strategy designed to destabilize the situation and sow chaos in the region and the world."

Behind Russia's quick and supportive policy declarations was a much gloomier assessment of the rapidly deterioration of the delicate stability of cross-Strait/Pacific relations. [Vasily Kashin](#), one of the most authoritative security analysts in Moscow's prestigious Higher School of Economics, pointed out that Pelosi's visit had led to "a new course on the Taiwan issue" by China with an emerging consensus that "the real possibilities for 'peaceful reunification' are narrowing." This new course of the PRC was based on three assessments: "a simultaneous increase in separatist sentiments inside the island, an increase of American military assistance to the island, and an accelerated erosion of the one-China policy by the United States." As a result, China's "demonstrative military exercises are likely to develop into a real military intervention" if necessary.

Russia's support for China was timely. In their meeting on Aug. 5 on the sidelines of an ASEAN conference in Phnom Penh, Chinese Foreign Minister [Wang Yi](#) thanked his Russian counterpart Lavrov for "Russia's immediate reiteration of firm support for the one-China principle and opposition to any act that infringes on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." Wang attributed Russia's actions to "the high-level strategic coordination between the two sides."

Russia's speedy reaction to Pelosi's Taiwan visit was in sharp contrast to China's carefully handled policy of neutrality on Ukraine. It also highlights the asymmetry of the Ukraine and Taiwan issue: Russia's high sense of insecurity prior to its use of force in Ukraine and China's patience and belief that [time was on its side](#) prior to the Pelosi visit. At least two additional factors contributed to Russia's support regarding Taiwan. One was obvious: NATO's eastward pivot was made official at the [Madrid summit](#) in late June. And for the first time in history, China was named in NATO's official document as a challenger to West's "interests, security, and values" that "seek[s] to undermine the rules-based international order." Also for the first time, Indo-Pacific

nations (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea) were invited to attend. Already, various US-sponsored forums in the Indo-Pacific region were rapidly growing (the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, AUKUS, Blue Pacific, etc.) in the past two years.

Russia's strategic playbook always included common sense: NATO's newfound interest in the "China problem" would divert West's attention away from the Ukraine conflict. In fact, Foreign Minister Lavrov had warned months [before the Madrid summit](#) that NATO's "line of defense" was moving east. Even [before](#) Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine, he remarked that NATO's attempt to influence the Indo-Pacific "a dangerous game."

To Russia, with Arms?

Beijing reciprocated Russia's public support with both words and deeds. In his Aug. 16 video speech to the 10th Moscow Conference on International Security, Defense Minister [Wei Fenghe](#) vowed to "to work with the militaries of various countries" for peace and security. Wei also called for "deepening defense cooperation" with other militaries this time, which was [lacking](#) in a similar speech at the same Moscow security forum a year before.

Wei did not directly mention Russia. At the [International Military-Technical Forum "Army-2022"](#) outside Moscow on Aug. 15-21, however, China's military-defense institutions presented an [unusually large and diverse range of products](#), including a total of [83 military and dual-use products](#) of stealth fighters, AWACS, warships, mine-detecting sweepers, various radar devices, and military vehicles. Almost all the Chinese exhibits were said to have already been "equip by the Chinese military and/or been [exported](#)."



Figure 2 Type-075 amphibious assault ship and Type-052D Destroyer models (Type-054A is not shown). Behind the naval vessel, models of various air defense weapons systems and drone models are on display. Photo: Guangchazhe Wang (Shanghai)



Figure 3 Various Chinese manned aircraft (left to right): J-10 fighter, L-15 trainer, Y-20 cargo plane (equipped with China's WS-20 engines, not Russian D-30KP-2 engines), KJ-500 AWACS, JF-17 fighter (co-produced with Pakistan), and J-31 stealth fighter (likely to be adopted by the People's Liberation Army Navy as a carrier-based fighter-bomber). Photo: Guangchazhe Wang (Shanghai)

On Aug. 20, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu visited the Chinese exhibition area. He was accompanied and briefed by Maj. Gen. Wei Yanwei, China's defense attaché in Russia, and representatives of the Equipment Development Department of the Central Military Commission. Shaoigu reportedly thanked the Chinese side for the "[detailed briefing](#)" (详细的介绍). Shoigu skipped the Chinese military product stand in the 2021 Moscow defense expo, but visited sites of [Kazakhstan, India, Belarus, and Pakistan](#).



Figure 4 Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu attends "Army-2022" in Moscow. Photo: Global Times (Beijing)

The lack of Russian attention to Chinese products in past expos may be natural because China was expected to buy, or learn about, Russian products and technologies. They therefore came mostly with cameras and notepads, remarked a Russian defense industry [insider](#). Meanwhile, Russia was more interested in selling things to China. The 2022 Moscow expo seemed to be a watershed as the Chinese side was ready to market all the PLA's major hardware to anyone including Russia.

China did not develop its military equipment overnight. Its defense modernization has been underway for at least 30 years and continues today. Aside from its massive importation of Soviet arms during the 1949–59 Sino-Soviet “honeymoon,” China and the Soviet Union signed the first-ever military sale contract of [48 Su-27s](#) on Nov. 1, 1990. This was [followed by](#) eight Kilo-class submarines (1993–94), four Sovremenny-class destroyers (1997–2002), S-300 SAM system (2001 & 2003), S-400 system (2015), 24 Su-35s (2015), etc. From 1992–2015, 80%, or \$32 billion, of China's arms import came from Russia. Thereafter, arms transfers from Russia to China steadily declined due to the rapid development of China's arms industry resulting first from learning from the Russian products and later its own R&D. On the eve of the Ukraine war, China had almost completely turned the table around from “buying everything (无物不买)” from Russia/Soviet Union to “almost nothing to buy” (无物可买), remarked [a Chinese analyst](#). As a result, almost all the Chinese exhibits in the Moscow expo were indigenous Chinese products, though many components could be traced to Russian designs. Still, the Chinese arms industry maintained a low-key posture in Moscow's annual military-tech expo until 2022.

The Ukraine war seems a turning point. China's public space continued to be deeply divided in the summer regarding the ethics (who is to blame) of the war. More attention, however, was paid to the strategy-technology aspects of the war. [Many](#) were surprised by the seeming incompetence of the Russian military, its lack of precision-guided munitions, and slow adaptation to the battlefield reality. Many attributed this to the shortcomings of Russia's military modernization focusing on its Battalion Tactical Group (BTG) as old-fashioned (over-emphasis on armor and lacking electronic surveillance and communication elements) without adequate infantry and logistical capabilities.

Russia's shortage of [drones](#) was seen as a key factor, particularly the 2-in-1 long-range drones capable of both reconnaissance and attack missions. China's [WJ-700](#) (see Figure 5), which was on display in Moscow this time, was said to be as good or even better than its US equivalent (MQ-9 Reaper).



Figure 5 China's WJ-700 drone. Photo: Guangchazhe Wang (Shanghai)

It remains to be seen if Shoigu's visit to the Chinese arms exhibition in Moscow would lead to any substance. The Russians were reportedly looking for [Iranian drones](#) and India's [Brahmos supersonic missiles](#) (jointly developed with Russia), but have so far not purchased Chinese arms even as some [Russian media](#) urged Moscow to do so. Some in China toyed with the idea of reselling the four Russian Sovremenny-class destroyers (8,000 tons and newly refurbished) back to Russia, which would instantly elevate Russia's naval power after major attritions of Russian naval surface vessels such as the sinking of the [Moskva](#) in April. However, various “[internal obstacles](#),” including those in the Russian military and arms

industry said to prevent Moscow from turning to Beijing for arms. Meanwhile, one should not rule out the importance of Russia's "face." For decades if not centuries, Russia was used to being China's big brother with arms and advanced products going south. The reversal would be hard psychologically, argued a [Chinese analyst](#). The biggest obstacle to acquiring Chinese arms was, therefore, Russia itself.

Arms transfer to Russia would mark a major change in China's current posture of principled neutrality. Short of this step, China and Russia didn't hesitate to add new elements to their mil-mil relations. The [People's Liberation Army Navy](#) (PLAN), for example, was for the first time added to the Vostok-2022 exercises in August-September. Back to May, the joint China-Russia bomber patrol of the western Pacific included, for the first time, Chinese J-16 fighters to escort the bombers and the newly commissioned [Y-20 tanker](#) conducted midair refueling operations (see Figure 6).



Figure 6 Two Chinese J-16 fighter jets conduct an escort mission for a Chinese H-6K bomber and a Russian Tu-95MS bomber during a regular China-Russia joint strategic patrol above the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the West Pacific on May 24. Photo: Global Times (Beijing)



Figure 7 A midair refueling of a Y-20 tanker conducted during a joint China-Russia bomber patrol. Photo: Global Times (Beijing)

Finally, China's principled neutrality in the Ukraine war was, and perhaps should be, more

precisely defined, argued [Zhao Huasheng](#), one of the most prominent Russologists in China. China's policy was not typical neutrality but one of "constructive involvement" (建设性介入), argued Zhao. While the former was passive, aloof, and rigid; the latter was flexible and constructive. A typical neutrality could be irresponsible regardless of right or wrong, said Zhao. China's "constructive involvement," by contrast, was based on the merits of the issue, and specific actions of the parties involved. In the case of the Ukraine war, China actually supported both parties: sovereignty for Ukraine and Russia's security concerns. Neutrality would support neither. Taken together, China's policy may not entirely support Russia, particularly in the ethical domain. It was, nonetheless, a rejection of US and NATO eastward expansion.

In China's public/intellectual space, Zhao's effort to clarify China's policy toward the Ukraine conflict shed light on China's policy trajectory. In the highly sensitive military-security area, Beijing's policy exhibited both continuity of existing principled neutrality and the ability/potential for change along the line of "constructive involvement." Immediately after the start of the Ukraine war in late February, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson [Hua Chunying](#) said that Russia was capable of coping with the situation in Ukraine on its own and did not need China's military support. As the war dragged on and tension on the Taiwan issue rose, "China has presented in Moscow major equipment of its army, navy and air force. The Russian military would be instantly modernized if it takes them," said a [Chinese observer](#). In retrospect, China had traveled quite a distance from Hua Chunying's February statement.

Shortly after the Ukraine-Crimea crises in 2014, [this writer predicted](#) in a publication for the US Army War College that "...a real and close alliance between Moscow and Beijing...is neither likely nor necessary in the short and medium terms, unless the core interests of both are perceived to be jeopardized at the same time." In the summer of 2022, Pelosi's Taiwan trip in the middle of Russia's Ukraine war created not only a perfect storm in US-China relations deriving largely from US domestic politics (Bloomberg's interview of [Kissinger](#) on July 19), but also forced Beijing and Moscow to reconsider their ties between a partnership with "unlimited cooperation" and a typical military alliance with binding security commitment.

The winds of a wider war were blowing. The question was how strong they would become.

Conclusion: “[End of History](#)” with the Last Soviet Man?

One did not need to wait for long as August turned to be more eventful and consequential than expected. On Aug. 30, the passing of Mikhail Gorbachev—the last and longest-lived Soviet leader—was the end of something: be it post-Cold War triumphalism, the pessimistic “[unipolar moment](#),” or “[liberal international order](#)” whose rise and fall had been hotly and fashionably debated by Western political and intellectual elite in the past decade. Regardless, Gorbachev’s legacy will continue to impact the world, including Russia and its largest neighbor, China.

[Putin](#) bid farewell to, but did not attend the funeral of, the first and last president of the USSR who, perhaps unintentionally, started a curious cycle of asymmetrical perceptions of Soviet/Russian leaders in the eyes of Russians and Westerners: popular in the West but hated at home, or vice versa. One wonders if Putin and his successors care about this binary.



Figure 8 Russian President Vladimir Putin pays his respects to the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow. Photo: China.com

For many in China, Gorbachev’s effort to normalize relations with Beijing was recalled as “a huge historical accomplishment in Sino-Soviet relations,” according to late Foreign Minister [Qian Qichen](#). In fact, the current “best-ever” strategic partnership could be traced all the way back to the last Soviet leaders, particularly Gorbachev, who was instrumental in removing the “[three obstacles](#)” in Sino-Soviet relations: Soviet troops in Afghanistan, Soviet support for Vietnamese troops in

Cambodia, and Soviet military concentrations along the Chinese border.

In the last few Soviet years, Gorbachev’s daring and controversial domestic reforms of *Glasnost* (гласность) and *perestroika* (перестройка) were closely watched by a generation of Chinese. “Gorbachev represented a generation of Soviet reformers who intend to transform the overly centralized Soviet politico-economic systems,” said [Feng Shaolei](#), an authoritative Russologist in Shanghai. Years after the Soviet implosion, Gorbachev reportedly confided to [a senior Chinese diplomat](#) that “the Soviet Union collapsed because there was no Deng Xiaoping in Russia.” Gorbachev did not specify how so much was owed by so many to just one person. His romantic and rapid reforms were nonetheless in sharp contrast to Deng’s gradualist and pragmatic ones. Reforms were difficult and even dangerous, noted a Chinese observer, particularly in large countries like China and Russia. Regardless of the outcome of these reforms, both China and Russia faced a race between forces destroying the old system and rebuilding new ones. And the rest was history.

Beyond Russia and China, there was little left of the legacy of Gorbachev’s “[new thinking](#)” (новое мышление) of reconciling with the West. Post-Soviet Russia had never been at ease with the West even during the good-old days of Yeltsin. In fact, [the current Russian leader](#) declared just a few months before Gorbachev’s passing that “[T]he era of a unipolar world order has come to an end.”

As a result, Aug. 24 marked a strange day, observed [Wan Qingsong](#), a young Chinese Russia specialist in Shanghai. It was the 30th anniversary of Ukraine’s National Day (in the wake of the Soviet collapse) and six months of Russia’s special military operations to demilitarize and de-Nazify this former Soviet republic that, paradoxically, contributed significantly to the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany in WWII. Meanwhile, more weapons were pouring into Ukraine (\$8 billion US commitment) and Russia was mobilizing an additional [137,000 troops](#). Neither had made any significant change on the front. In August, even Europe’s largest [Nuclear Power Plant in Zaporizhzhia](#) was constantly shelled (Russia took it in March).

For many in Europe, [Gorbamania](#) had evaporated long time ago. Gone with it was a generation of European statesmen: Helmut Kohl, Margaret Thatcher, and Angela Merkel. In the immediate future their successors face the [largest-ever wildfires](#), rapidly rising inflation, and paradoxically, a growing “[Ukraine fatigue](#).” With all these preoccupations at home, rising tension in the east served as both a temptation for and diversion from Europe. In contrast to West’s indirect role in the Ukraine war, however, Taiwan and the looming US-China confrontation would make Ukraine child’s play.

“We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it’s supposed to lead to,” warned [Henry Kissinger](#) in his Aug. 12 interview with WSJ. This was just one of the four warnings voiced in May–August by Kissinger (others being [June 11](#), [July 18](#), and [Aug. 19](#)), the last living architect of the post-Cold War system after Gorbachev.

Both Gorbachev and Kissinger were marginalized in their respective homeland, though for different reasons. Ironically, a thinker and practitioner of the art of equilibrium like Kissinger is better received in Beijing and Moscow. The world, however, is helplessly moving into a “[dangerous disequilibrium](#)” at the dawn of Kissinger’s centenarian status.

One wonders if history might really come to an end this time.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

MAY—AUGUST 2022

May 5, 2022: Chinese Ambassador to Russia, Zhang Hanhui [praises](#) deepening China-Russia strategic cooperation on energy projects, military technology, and space issues during an interview with TASS.

May 13, 2022: Dai Bing, China's deputy ambassador to the United Nations, [supports](#) Russia's claim in a UNSC meeting that the US conducted covert biological research activities in Ukraine.

May 16, 2022: China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian [rejects](#) the G7 Foreign Ministers' Communiqué issued May 14, which [urged](#) China to not support Russia in the war, not undermine sanctions imposed on Russia, and "desist from engaging in information manipulation, disinformation and other means to legitimize Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

May 17, 2022: Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo reportedly [says](#) that the United States is not "seeing systematic efforts by China" to go around US export controls. China's technology exports to Russia declined sharply in March 2022, China's exports of laptops to Russia [fell](#) 40% year-on-year.

May 19, 2022: BRICS holds its annual foreign ministerial meeting via video. A joint statement is [released](#) calling for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. It did not use the term "invasion." Chinese FM Wang Yi [criticizes](#) the West's "absolute" and "unilateral" security policies, as well as arms supply to Ukraine. He also proposed to explore the potential and procedure for BRICS expansion, including mechanism such as BRICS-plus.

May 23, 2022: President Biden [compares](#) Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the possibility of China taking Taiwan by force.

May 23, 2022: Russian FM Lavrov [states](#) that Russia would focus on developing relations with China and "reliable" countries to reduce its dependence on Western imports.

May 24, 2022: Two Russian Tu-95MS and two Chinese H-6K strategic bombers [conduct](#) annual joint aerial patrol over the waters of the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea. President Biden was in Japan for the 2nd day of his official visit.

May 26, 2022: Russian FM Lavrov [says](#) in an interview with RT that NATO's next 'line of defense' will be moved to the South China Sea.

May 26, 2022: In a speech to George Washington University, US Secretary of State Blinken [calls](#) China most serious long-term threat to world order while Russia "poses a clear and present threat."

May 26, 2022: Russia and China [veto](#) a UNSC resolution on the DPRK (North Korea) for its recent missile tests.

May 26, 2022: Chinese envoy to the WHO Yang Zhilun [votes](#) against a US-backed proposal condemning Russia for creating a health emergency in Ukraine. The resolution was approved by a majority.

June 1, 2022: China FM [Wang Yi says](#) that "China is willing to work with the Russian side to continue to implement the important consensus of the two heads of state and promote the development of the global governance system in a more just and reasonable direction." Wang gave the video speech at a forum held by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Russian International Affairs Council. Wang's Russian counterpart Lavrov also attended.

June 2, 2022: A video conference is [held](#) by technical, transportation and economic planning experts from China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. They had a “thorough exchange of views” on construction of the China–Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan (CKU) railway, which had been [shelved](#) for 25 years at least partially because of Russia’s reservation. The CKU will cut the freight journey between China and Europe by 900 km and 7 days compared with the current Russian and Kazak transit routes. Construction will begin in 2023.

June 7, 2022: Chinese State Councilor Wang Yong says at a virtual meeting with Russia’s envoy to the Volga Federal District that China and Russia had elevated their “level of cooperation under new circumstances.” Both agree to deepen cooperation between local governments of the two countries via the “Yangtze–Volga mechanism.”

June 8, 2022: The 3rd “China+Central Asia” (C5+1) Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was [held](#) in person in Nur–Sultan (Astana before March 2019). The five Central Asian countries are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. C+C5 ministers all agreed to elevate C+C5 by setting up a mechanism of C+C5 head of states summit. In March, the US (Blinken) and C5 [held](#) the 3rd C5+1 foreign minister meeting via video. The first one was [held](#) in November 2015 with John Kerry as US Secretary of State.

June 11, 2022: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy [says](#) at the Shangri–La Dialogue that the world must not leave any country behind that is “at the mercy of another country which is more powerful, in financial terms, in territorial terms, and in terms of equipment.” He did not mention tensions between Taiwan and China in a Q&A after his formal speech.

June 12, 2022: Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe [says](#) that “on the Ukraine crisis, China has never provided any material support to Russia,” adding that “China–Russia relations is a partnership, not an alliance. It does not target any third party.”

June 15, 2022: Xi and Putin talk over the phone. They reaffirmed support to each other in the economic, diplomatic and security areas. Putin briefed Xi on Russia’s operations in Ukraine. They also discussed mil–mil relations.

June 16, 2022: Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin says that China and Ukraine “maintain open and smooth lines of communication.”

June 22, 2022: In his virtual speech at the BRICS Business Forum, President Xi [criticizes](#) military alliances and hegemonism that led to the Ukraine crisis. Xi also promoted the concept of “indivisible security” in his Global Security Initiative unveiled in April 2022.

June 23–24, 2022: President Xi [chairs](#) the BRICS 14th summit in Beijing via video. The summit’s Beijing Declaration was adopted and released at the event. Both Xi and Putin joined the event via video. Membership expansion was a key issue for the summit.

July 7, 2022: Chinese FM Wang Yi [meets](#) Russian FM Lavrov on sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in Indonesia. Wang repeated China’s claim to hold an “objective and impartial” position on Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine, while confirming deepening bilateral cooperation with Russia.

July 14, 2022: Chinese FM Wang Yi [criticizes](#) US effort to divide Russia and China when he was interviewed by Chinese media.

July 22, 2022: Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Korean Peninsula Affairs Liu Xiaoming has a phone call with Vice Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov of Russia. They [exchange](#) views on the situation on the Korean Peninsula. The two agreed to maintain close coordination regarding the Korean issue.

July 28–29, 2022: Shanghai Cooperation Organization [holds](#) its annual foreign ministerial meeting in Uzbekistan. Wang Yi and Lavrov joined the session.

Aug. 2, 2022: Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov [describes](#) Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan as "purely provocative." Vladimir Dzhabarov, First Deputy Chairman of the International Committee of Russia's Federation Council, or upper house of Parliament, goes as far as to [say](#) that Russia may offer assistance to China if asked.

Aug. 3, 2022: Russian FM Lavrov [says](#), regarding Pelosi's Taiwan visit, that he did not see any other "reason to create such an irritant literally out of nowhere."

Aug. 4, 2022: Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev (Russian president in 2008-12 and prime minister in 2012-20) [calls](#) Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taiwan a "malicious provocation."

Aug. 5, 2022: Russian FM Lavrov [meets](#) in Phnom Penh with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. They criticized "the policy of lawlessness, demonstrated by the US colleagues, who are seeking to establish their dominance."

Aug. 10, 2022: TASS [cites](#) Chinese Ambassador Zhang Hanhui as saying that the US the West was now "replicates Ukrainian scenario regarding Taiwan."

Aug. 13-27, 2022: China participates in 8th annual International Army Games in Russia (main site) with 11 other countries.

Aug. 15-21, 2022: Army-2022 international military-technical forum including a military equipment expo kicks off at the Patriot Exhibition Center outside Moscow. The Russian Defense Ministry was the organizer of the event.

Aug. 16, 2022: Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe [addresses](#) 10th Moscow Conference on International Security.

Aug. 16, 2022: In his speech to the 10th Moscow Conference on International Security, President Putin [depicts](#) Pelosi's visit as "a thoroughly planned provocation."

Aug. 18-19, 2022: Tashkent [hosts](#) SCO's 17th Meeting of Security Council Secretaries under the presidency of Uzbekistan.

Aug. 24, 2022: SCO [holds](#) annual defense ministerial meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Russian Defense Minister Shoigu reportedly [said](#) that Russia slowed down its military operations in Ukraine in order to avoid civilian casualties.

Aug. 30, 2022: Mikhail Gorbachev, first and last Soviet president, dies in Moscow. China expresses condolences over his. Chinese foreign ministry spokesmen Zhao Lijian [says](#) that "Mr. Gorbachev made positive contributions to the normalization of China-Soviet Union relations."

Aug. 30-Sept. 5, 2022: Russia [conducted](#) its "Vostok" (East)-2022 exercises involving 50,000 military personnel, more than 5,000 pieces of military equipment, including 140 aircraft, 60 warships, boats and support vessels. China, Algeria, India, Belarus, Tajikistan and Mongolia participated. The PLA [sends](#) 2,000 servicemen, 300 pieces of equipment, 21 airplanes, and three warships. Vostok-2018 included nearly 300,000 troops including for the first time from the Chinese army. The PLA claims that its participation "is unrelated to the current international and regional situation."

Aug. 31, 2022: Outgoing Russian Ambassador to China Andrey Denisov [meets](#) in Beijing with Li Zhanshu, chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee. Li spoke highly of Denisov's contribution to Sino-Russian relations.

PACIFIC  FORUM

COMPARATIVE

C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

AUSTRALIA-US/EAST ASIA RELATIONS

AUSTRALIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT: CLIMATE, CHINA AND AUKUS

GRAEME DOBELL, AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

Australia has changed government and the political war over climate change draws to a close after raging for 15 years. The new Labor government led by Anthony Albanese promises continuity on foreign and defense policy, delivered with a different tone. In the government's first 100 days, it chipped some ice from the frosty relationship with China. Ending a Beijing ban on meetings with Australian ministers that was in its third year, Chinese ministers had face-to-face talks with Australia's foreign minister and defense minister. Albanese's observation that dealing with China will continue to be difficult was demonstrated by a diplomatic duel in the South Pacific, as Canberra pushed back at Beijing's ambition for a greater security role in islands. Two major defense announcements are due in the first months of 2023: the plan for an Australian nuclear submarine, based on the AUKUS agreement with the US and UK, plus a re-set of Australia's military and strategic posture because of the toughest security environment in decades. Labor says the alliance with the US should go "beyond interoperability to interchangeability" so the two militaries can "operate seamlessly together at speed."

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The New Labor Government

The Labor Party's victory in the May 21 election ended nine years of government by the Liberal-National Coalition. The voters delivered a realignment of politics as well as power. Labor achieved a narrow win that will remake much. Anthony Albanese is Australia's 31st prime minister. He is only the fourth Labor leader to take the party from opposition to government since World War II. Labor crept back into office with a historically low primary vote in the House of Representatives, where governments are made. In the 151-seat House, Labor won a bare majority of 77 seats; 16 seats are on the crossbench, held by independents and the Greens; the Liberal-National Coalition won 58 seats. The coalition would need a net gain of 18 seats in the House to win majority government. The Greens and independents thus form a firewall for Labor's hold on power at the next federal due election in 2025.



Figure 1 Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese celebrates his victory during the Labor Party election night event on May 21, 2022 in Sydney, Australia. Photo: James D. Morgan/Getty Images

The Liberal Party is pushed into political purgatory, losing lower house seats to Labor, the Greens, and independents. Electorally, the heart was ripped from the Liberals as they lost a swathe of heartland suburban seats that have defined the party. The erosion of the party base is symbolized by the [loss of the Melbourne seat of Kooyong](#) by the Liberal deputy leader, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg. Kooyong isn't just heartland, it's the heart—the seat once held by Robert Menzies, founder of the Liberal Party. The Liberal identity crisis arrives as a heart attack. In the heartland seats of Sydney and

Melbourne, the Liberals lost to independents rather than Labor.

The new force in the House of Representatives is the “teal” independents—the teal color imagery merges the Liberal's traditional blue livery with the climate imperatives of the Greens. The teals attacked from the Liberal center in those heartland seats, as the base rose up, with women independents defeated sitting Liberal (male) members of Parliament. In claiming victory on election night, Albanese declared, “Together we can end the climate wars.” Victory for the teals, as much as for Labor, defined the result of the climate war for the Liberal Party.

The Liberal history of climate change denialism crashed into an electorate that had decided the science is settled. Climate change was nominated as the [top election issue](#) by 25% of respondents in a survey by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. As prime minister from August 2018 to May 2022, Scott Morrison strained to shift the Coalition closer to the science side of the fight, but he becomes another casualty of the climate war. Morrison joins the four prime ministers who preceded him—Malcolm Turnbull (Liberal), Tony Abbott (Liberal), Julia Gillard (Labor), and Kevin Rudd (Labor)—as leaders whose careers were deeply wounded or truncated by the climate conflict. A world turning away from carbon challenges Australia, which is the [third biggest exporter](#) (behind Russia and Saudi Arabia) of fossil fuels.

Morrison confronted [COVID-19, climate change and China](#), and the new era of strategic competition. On climate, Morrison dragged the Coalition to the point where he was talking about “decarbonization” as a positive rather than a negative. Morrison moved some distance from his performance as treasurer in 2017, when he [brandished](#) a lump of [coal](#) in Parliament. Being the champions of coal helped the Coalition in previous elections, but harmed it in 2022.

Morrison's achievement as prime minister was to disarm the Liberal denialism on net-zero emissions—although he had less success with the junior member of the Coalition government, the National Party. The first bill Labor introduced when Parliament resumed in July was [legislation](#) reducing Australia's net

greenhouse gas emissions to 43% below 2005 levels by 2030.

Speaking to Parliament on the Climate Change Bill, Albanese said “the decade of [inaction and denial](#) is over.” Australia was “out of the naughty corner in international forums,” Albanese said. “We are once again engaging with the global community who understand the importance of acting on climate change and understand that this is also not just an environmental issue, this is the biggest economic transformation that we will see globally in our lifetime, as big and as significant as the Industrial Revolution.”

Albanese Gets on the Plane

In his first weeks as prime minister, Albanese flew to Japan for the Quad summit; to Jakarta to meet Indonesia’s president; to a NATO summit in Madrid; to Kyiv to express [support](#) for Ukraine; and to Paris to [repair](#) relations over the junking of Australia’s submarine contract with France. Elected on a Saturday May 21, Albanese was sworn-in as prime minister on Monday and immediately got on a plane to fly to Tokyo for the May 24 Quad summit with US President Joe Biden, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio. The welcome [jest](#) from Biden was, “You were sworn in, you got on a plane, and if you fall asleep while you’re here, it’s okay.”



Figure 2 Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese meets with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv. Photo: Official Website, President of the Ukraine

“The government in Australia has [changed](#),” Albanese said in Tokyo, but “the Government’s commitment to the Quad has not changed.” Albanese told the summit: “I [acknowledge](#) all

that the Quad has achieved, standing together for a free, open, and resilient Indo-Pacific region and working together to tackle the biggest challenges of our time, including climate change and the security of our region. My government is committed to working with your countries, and we are committed to the Quad. The new Australian government’s priorities align with the Quad agenda.”

Labor’s attitude to the Quad today (version 2.0) differs markedly from its rejection of the first version of the Quad. Back in 2008, the Rudd Labor government walked away from [Quad 1.0](#) because ties with Japan or India could endanger its relationship with China, as Kevin Rudd [argued](#): “Australia would run the risk of being left high and dry as a result of future foreign policy departures in Tokyo or Delhi.” Labor has gone from negative to positive about the Quad, reflecting the shift from positive to negative in Australia’s view of China. When Quad 2.0 was created in 2017, Labor matched the Coalition government’s enthusiasm for the reborn grouping.

By June 6, Albanese was in Indonesia for an annual summit with President Joko Widodo on the “[comprehensive strategic partnership](#).” The trip continues the tradition, [built over 50 years](#), that the first bilateral visit by a new Australian prime minister is to Jakarta. “Australia’s [relationship](#) with Indonesia is one of our most important,” Albanese said. “We’re linked not just by geography, but we are linked by choice.” The focus on Indonesia feeds into a core Australian policy, repeated by Albanese, that “ASEAN and ASEAN-led institutions are at the absolute centre of our vision for the Indo-Pacific.”

At the NATO summit at the end of June, Albanese was one of four leaders from the Asia-Pacific: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. He said the Russian invasion of Ukraine had “[solidified](#) the support amongst democratic countries for the rules-based international order,” while Australia well understood the view of NATO’s new [statement](#) on China’s “systemic challenges.”

Dealing with China, Dueling in the South Pacific

In the last major [foreign policy](#) speech of his prime ministership on March 7, Scott Morrison attacked China and Russia as “a new arc of autocracy” seeking “to challenge and reset the world order in their own image.” Australia, he said, “faced its most difficult and dangerous security environment in 80 years.” China’s growing power and influence were a geostrategic fact, Morrison said, and “China has become more assertive, and is using its power in ways that are causing concern to nations across the region and beyond.”

In the national budget delivered on March 29 as the prelude to the election, the Morrison government warned Australia had to be “realistic about [the growing threats we face](#)” in a “world less stable,” confronting “aggression” and “coercion.” The state-of-the-world survey from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in the budget gave a flavor of the incoming government brief the department would give Labor. A “deteriorating strategic environment” confronted Australia, DFAT reported, as great power competition intensified: “The rules, norms and institutions that support Australia’s prosperity and security are under persistent pressure.”

The word “pressure” is a one-word description of what China has been applying to Australia from trade to the South Pacific. The Australia-China [diplomatic icy age](#) is five years old. China has been doing the [trade squeeze](#) on Australia for two years. China placed [tariffs and restrictions](#) on Australian exports worth about A\$20 billion, also advising Chinese students not to study at Australian universities. During the campaign for the May election, a shared Labor-Liberal line was to blame Beijing for the chill. The three-word summation used by both sides was the phrase, “China has changed.”

As he headed to Tokyo for the Quad summit, two days after the election, Albanese [commented](#): “The relationship with China will remain a difficult one. I said that before the election. That has not changed. It is China that has changed, not Australia.” An early response from China to the new government was to end a ban on meetings with Australian ministers that was in its third year. Labor’s defense minister and foreign minister each had face-to-face discussions with Chinese counterparts. Three

weeks into government, on his first trip as deputy prime minister and defense minister, Richard Marles at the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore had a one-hour [meeting](#) with China’s Defense Minister Wei Fenghe. Marles called it “[an important first step](#)” that took place without any conditions: “[W]hile there is a change of tone, there is absolutely no change in the substance of Australia’s national interests.”

In Bali at a G20 foreign ministers meeting in July, Foreign Minister Penny Wong [met](#) China’s State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi. Wong said they discussed differences and the need “for the relationship to be stabilized.” Wong’s meeting with Wang was a face-to-face version of the diplomatic duel the two foreign ministers had been waging in their travels around the South Pacific. No previous Australian foreign minister has spent so much time in the islands in their first months in the job as Penny Wong, visiting [Fiji](#) twice, [Samoa and Tonga](#), [New Zealand and Solomon Islands](#), [Papua New and Timor-Leste](#).



Figure 3 Fiji Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama shakes hands with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong during her visit to Fiji, May 26, 2022. Photo: Facebook/Penny Wong

On her fourth day as foreign minister, Wong’s first major [speech](#) was to the secretariat of the Pacific Islands Forum in Suva: “Our region has not faced a more vexing set of circumstances for decades. The triple challenges of climate, COVID and strategic contest will challenge us in new ways. We understand that the security of any one Pacific family member rests on security for all.” The line about the security of each island state and strategic contest was a jab at China’s Wang Yi, who did an eight-country, 10-day [tour](#) of the islands selling China’s proposal

for a South Pacific [pact on security and development](#). China's impact on Australia's election campaign came from an unexpected direction, when China announced in April that it had signed a [security pact](#) with Solomon Islands. A leaked draft of the treaty said China would supply Solomon Islands police, armed police, and support from the People's Liberation Army.

The draft allowed China to "make [ship visits](#) to, carry out logistical replenishment in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands, and the relevant forces of China can be used to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in the Solomon Islands." Morrison said a Chinese military base in the Solomons would be a "[red line](#)" for Australia and the US. Labor said the pact was a policy failure by the Morrison government, with the sharpest line from Penny Wong: "This is the [worst foreign policy blunder](#) in the Pacific that Australia has seen since the end of World War II." Wong's call was shaky history but a deadly political thrust at a Coalition government that wanted to campaign on its security credentials and its record standing up to China.

A wry rubric of Canberra is that South Pacific governments can't be bought but they can be rented. Today's version is that China wants to do more than rent an island government; it wants "elite capture." The nightmare of elite capture in a Pacific capital is China getting control of "dual use" infrastructure—a civilian port with military uses. Canberra twitches every time Beijing casts its eye across ports in PNG, Vanuatu, or Solomon Islands. A China surprise, a new base in the islands, was nominated by the US Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell as "the issue that I'm most concerned about over the next year or two." He was speaking in January at the [launch](#) of an Australia chair at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Campbell said the US had to lift its game in the South Pacific, to match what's done by Australia and New Zealand: "But that's an area that we need much stronger commitment. And I'm, frankly, looking to Australia as the lead here. And we, as the United States, have to be a better deputy sheriff to them in this overall effort."

AUKUS, the US Alliance and a Defense Review

Labor promises two sets of defense announcements in the first quarter of 2023:

- the plan for a nuclear submarine under the AUKUS agreement with the US and UK;
- a reset of Australia's military posture based on a defence strategic review.

AUKUS was announced on Sept. 16, 2021, hailed by Scott Morrison as the most important step in the alliance with the US since the ANZUS treaty was signed in 1951. If the nuclear submarines surface, then AUKUS will be Morrison's strategic monument in the same way Robert Menzies claimed ANZUS as one of his greatest achievements. Australia will use AUKUS to get "[nuclear-powered submarine technology](#), leveraging decades of experience from the US and UK." Under an 18-month [timeline](#), to March 2023, the three nations will decide on "the optimal pathway to deliver at least eight nuclear-powered submarines for Australia." Canberra stated it had no plans to acquire nuclear weapons and the nuclear submarines would "remain consistent with Australia's longstanding commitment to nuclear non-proliferation." AUKUS will also be used to build joint capabilities and interoperability in cyber, capabilities, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies.



Figure 4 US President Joe Biden is virtually joined by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson for the announcement of AUKUS on Sept. 16, 2021. Photo: Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images

Neither the US nor the UK has spare capacity in their nuclear submarine construction programs. And Australia's Navy must start from scratch to create nuclear expertise and train crews. Defense Minister Marles describes AUKUS as a "[huge](#)" task: "The decision about which

submarine we go with and how quickly we can get that, the cost, and how we make sure we're doing this in a way that does not give rise to proliferation, all of that work is happening at a pace. We look forward to being able to make the final announcements on time in the first part of next year."

The creation of AUKUS sank Australia's A\$90 billion contract with France to create the Attack-class conventional submarine. French President Emmanuel Macron lashed out at Morrison claiming Australia [lied](#) to France. Biden told Macron the US had been "[clumsy](#)" in the reaching the secret agreement with Australia. The secrecy the Morrison government applied to France also extended to the Labor Party.

The Biden administration insisted it would go ahead with AUKUS only if Labor gave it solid backing. But Morrison [waited four-and-a-half months](#) before informing Labor. During the election campaign, Albanese condemned Morrison for seeking political advantage by telling Labor about AUKUS only [the day before it was announced](#). "The Biden administration sought reassurance from the Australian government that Australian Labor had been consulted on these issues," Albanese said. "It is extraordinary that the prime minister broke that faith and trust with our most important ally by not briefing Australian Labor on these issues." Morrison replied that he'd maintained full secrecy and did not want to give Labor the chance to [leak details](#) of the negotiations: "AUKUS is a ground-breaking agreement, the most significant defence security agreement Australia has entered into in over 70 years. And I was not going to risk that on the Labor Party."

Rather than baulking, Labor embraced AUKUS and the switch from conventional submarines to nuclear-powered subs. Labor's decision had political and strategic dimensions, maintaining the bipartisan consensus on the US alliance as it entered a new era, and putting fresh life into the "[oldest relationship](#)" with the UK. The Albanese government has linked the AUKUS decision timeline to a [review](#) of Australia's [defense force and force posture](#). The chosen path to the nuclear submarine and the defense changes are both due to be announced in March.

Marles said the AUKUS choices and the Defence Strategic Review will run concurrently and cross-pollinate: "Together, these bodies of work are going to lay the foundations for defence policy for our country for decades to come." The strategic review is being run by former Labor Defense Minister Stephen Smith and a former chief of the Australian Defence Force, Sir Angus Houston.

In his first trip to Washington as defense minister, Marles said Australia wanted to see "how we best [integrate and operate](#) with the US." The "integration" ambition defined by Marles is to reach towards "interchangeability": "We are making big investments in defense capital infrastructure to support, maintain, and sustain the growing number of Australian and American forces. We will operationalize a regular [US] presence and an increased exercise tempo. We will move beyond interoperability to interchangeability. And we will ensure we have all the enablers in place to operate seamlessly together at speed."

Getting closer to the US to "increase the range and lethality" of the Australian Defence Force helps answer the new strategic dilemmas that Marles describes: "For the first time in decades, we are thinking hard about the security of our own strategic geography; the viability of our trade and supply routes." In setting up the defense review, Labor embraces a key conclusion of the Morrison government's 2020 [Defence Strategic Update](#): Australia no longer has [10 years' warning time](#) of a conventional attack. The 10-year window was previously based on the time it would take an adversary to prepare and mobilize to cross the sea-air gap and tackle the distances that define the continent. Discarding the 10-year warning time meant ditching the comfort of 50 years of Australian strategic theology.

Camelot to Canberra, Australia's Man in Washington

The new US ambassador to Canberra, Caroline Kennedy, arrived in Australia on July 22. The Kennedy name meant the "Camelot to Canberra" line got plenty of headline use. The diplomatic significance of the appointment, though, is as a statement not just about the US-Australia relationship, but the trilateral with

Japan. Kennedy becomes the second US ambassador this century to serve in both Canberra and Tokyo, where she was ambassador from 2013 to 2017. Her trilateral service follows that of Tom Schieffer, a friend and business partner of President George W. Bush, who was ambassador to Australia (2001–2005) and Japan (2005–2009).

In her confirmation hearing before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Kennedy said Australia could be a [model](#) for the US in responding to China. “Certainly Australia most recently has been challenged by Chinese economic coercion and I think the United States can learn a lot from their response,” Kennedy said. “They’ve stood firm and I think they’ve managed to come together with a bipartisan foreign policy and a greater and deeper partnership with us in the security and diplomatic areas, as well as across the board.”



Figure 5 Caroline Kennedy is sworn in as the US ambassador to Australia. Photo: [Twitter/@USEmbAustralia](#)

In her arrival statement in Australia, Kennedy said, “This is a critical time in the history of our two countries. What we do together in the next few years will determine the future of the region and of the planet, and I can’t wait to get started.” As Kennedy was preparing to head to Canberra, Australia’s previous ambassador to the US, Joe Hockey, was releasing his memoir [Diplomatic](#), on serving in Washington from

January 2016 to January 2020. A member of Parliament for 19 years, finishing as Treasurer in Tony Abbott’s government, Hockey starts with the big truth that shapes the life of any Australian ambassador in the US—history has “made America fundamentally different from us.”

“Many demons,” Hockey writes, lurk “in the American psyche.” And that’s about as far as he goes on the “inherent differences.” The Hockey emphasis is on the “long and friendly history” between the two allies: “It’s a bit like a successful marriage: we like each other a lot, we are not identical and do not always agree; however, we have shared our lives over many years. We are loyal to each other and we really enjoy each other’s company.” Hockey went to Washington because his dream to become prime minister was dead. His luck deserted him in the series of political car crashes that marked the Liberal Party death struggle between Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull. The chapter headed “Goodbye, Canberra” has a subhead reference to “politics at its worst,” and the smile dims as he lets fly: “Within our [Abbott] government, there were too many who were more focused on polls than policy. The sickness of populism afflicts the weak. That didn’t stop them from engaging in duplicity and deceit.”

From Washington, Hockey did most of his work with Canberra on a secure phone, talking to the prime minister, ministers, and department heads. Others in Australia’s embassy wrote the “cables” that are a central expression of the existence of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (acting as circulatory system and thinking process). Hockey’s Canberra understandings (“the sharpest knives always come from your own side”) explain that phone preference—“given my past life as a politician, if I wrote any cables, I couldn’t rely on all the people reading them not to share them with the media.”

A well-directed leak can sink you. As Hockey notes, Britain’s ambassador to the US had to resign in 2019 after a London leak of his cables claiming that President Donald Trump “radiates insecurity” and describing the White House as “clumsy and inept.” Hitting Washington at the start of 2016 for the final year of Barack Obama’s administration, Hockey witnessed the close but

not familiar relationship between Obama and Prime Minister Turnbull: “Both men had a healthy love of detailed intellectual discourse—especially their own. Like two history professors discussing dialectical materialism, their conversation was eye-watering but hardly warm.”

Then comes the chapter headed simply “Trumpageddon.” On the Hockey telling, he read the signs of the presidential campaign and started building bridges to Trump, while Canberra was in denial till the votes came in. Hockey says Trump “was one of the most authentic political candidates I had ever seen,” even though he was “confronting, rude and naïve.” When he later spent time with the president, even on the golf course, Trump was constantly questioning, churning through ideas and trying out lines: “Most political leaders are narcissists. They not only need to be the centre of attention, they often think they are the smartest people in the room. They also have fantastic egos. They believe they can charm the leg off a billiard table with their quick wit and nice smile. Enter Donald Trump.”

Hockey describes a White House that lacked leadership and leaked like a sieve, with everyone competing for Trump’s attention and approval. The leaking meant the *Washington Post* quickly got the [transcript](#) of the president’s [notorious](#) phone conversation with Prime Minister Turnbull on Jan. 28, 2017, a week after the inauguration. Turnbull [needed Trump to commit](#) to the deal struck with Obama for the US to accept refugees Australia had exiled to Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Trump berated Turnbull over a “dumb deal” and the “worst deal ever.”

When Hockey answered the phone and spoke with Turnbull “straight after the conversation, he was shaken. His voice was quivering and he was clearly upset.” Hockey says the Trump-Turnbull call was “disastrous.” The ambassador put on his politician’s helmet and marched into the White House to argue the dangers of a “massive deterioration in the alliance.”

The public crisis—“the madness that followed the leaked phone call”—offered a chance to lock in the deal. The strong foundations of the alliance, Hockey says, “can’t be undermined by

the whims of a leader.” Thinking like a politician, Hockey launched a campaign with a strong story: “100 years of Mateship,” marking the two countries’ shared military history—Australia is the only country in the world to fight side by side with the United States in every major conflict’ since the Battle of Hamel on the Western Front in 1918. Mateship is a complicated concept for Australia, and the campaign got plenty of [criticism](#) in Australia for being [blokey](#) or [subservient](#). For the US, though, mateship struck a chord and Hockey says it became a “successful touchstone.” Certainly, mateship seemed to work with Trump. “After the disastrous first phone call,” Hockey writes, “Australia went on to have a series of political and economic wins during the Trump presidency.”

Hockey exalts that the “mates” theme was [embraced by President Joe Biden](#) in his address marking the 70th anniversary of the ANZUS alliance: “Through the years, Australians and Americans have built an unsurpassed partnership and an easy mateship grounded on shared values and shared vision.”

The Hockey prediction is that Biden will not run for a second term as president. And he links that with a prediction that Trump, too, is unlikely to run: “Apart from his age [Trump will be 78 in 2024], and the likelihood the Democrats will seek to legally bar him from running, I don’t think he could bear the prospect of losing again.” With questions in the air about both Trump and Biden, Hockey judges, “America hasn’t been in such a precarious position for a long time.” As he finishes the book, Hockey writes of how luck and quick reactions spared the ambassador an obituary about a culture-clash smash in New York.

When an Australian jumps out of a taxi and prepares to make a dash across 5th Avenue, the habit of a lifetime is to look the wrong way for the traffic. Australia drives on the left; America drives on the right. It’s a simple metaphor for the many different ways of looking and moving of the two nations. Rushing for a late-night drink in the city that never sleeps, Australia’s ambassador to the US, Joe Hockey, stopped his taxi by Central Park and dashed across the avenue, checking in the Australian direction. That “near-fatal error,” Hockey observes, was

“like so many who think they understand America.”

CHRONOLOGY OF AUSTRALIA-US/EAST ASIA RELATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2021 – AUGUST 2022

Sept. 1, 2021: Prime Minister Morrison [marks](#) the 70th anniversary of the signing of the ANZUS treaty with a [statement](#) to parliament.

Sept. 9, 2021: Indonesia–Australia Foreign and Defense Ministers 2+2 meeting [takes place](#) in Jakarta.

Sept. 11, 2021: Inaugural India–Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between Foreign and Defense Ministers [takes place](#) in New Delhi.

Sept. 13, 2021: Australia–South Korea Foreign and Defense Ministers 2+2 Meeting [takes place](#) in Seoul.

Sept. 13, 2021: Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese [says](#) a Labor government will make climate change “central to the US alliance.”

Sept. 16, 2021. Australia is to [get](#) nuclear-powered submarines in a partnership with the US and the United Kingdom Britain under “new enhanced trilateral security partnership called [AUKUS](#).” Australia [cancels](#) its A\$90 billion deal with France for diesel-electric submarines.

Sept. 16, 2021: 31st Australia–United States Ministerial Consultations AUSMIN [takes place](#) in Washington.

Sept. 16, 2021: China [applies](#) to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership. As one of 11 members of CPTPP, Australia has a veto over China’s proposed membership.

Sept. 17, 2021: France [recalls](#) ambassadors from Washington and Canberra in protest at Australia’s submarine switch, calling US and Australian behavior “unacceptable between allies and partners.”

Sept. 20, 2021: Responding to concerns about Australia’s approach to the region because of the new AUKUS partnership, Australia’s ambassador to ASEAN [makes a statement](#) on “Australia’s steadfast commitment to ASEAN centrality,” supporting the “objectives and

principles of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.”

Sept. 21, 2021: US Defense Logistics Agency [awards](#) contract to build the largest fuel storage facility in Darwin, to hold 300 million liters of fuel.

Sept. 22, 2021: President Biden and PM Morrison [meet](#) in New York.

Sept. 22, 2021: Taiwan [applies](#) to join the CPTPP.

Sept. 24, 2021: First in-person Quad [summit](#) of Australia, India, Japan, and the US, hosted by President Biden, [takes place](#).

Sept. 24, 2021: PM Morrison [gives](#) a virtual address to the UN General Assembly.

Sept. 24, 2021: Agreement [reached](#) on “an enduring regional processing capability in Nauru,” supporting the policy that would-be asylum seekers trying to reach Australia by boat are transferred to Nauru for assessment of claims.

Oct. 6, 2021: Regional processing in Papua New Guinea of “people who have attempted to travel to Australia illegally by boat” [ends](#), with the PNG contract to cease on Dec. 31, 2021.

Oct. 6, 2021: Golden Jubilee (50th anniversary) of the Five Power Defence Arrangements between Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Britain, and New Zealand, [marked](#) by Exercise BERSAMA GOLD 21, conducted across Singapore, Malaysia and parts of the South China Sea

Oct. 7, 2021: Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott [makes](#) “private visit” to [Taiwan](#) and meets President Tsai Ing-wen.

Oct. 8, 2021: Defense Minister Peter Dutton [chairs](#) annual South Pacific Defense Ministers’ Meeting.

Oct. 15, 2021: Australia [supports](#) international statement expressing deep concern at “the dire situation in Myanmar, and its worsening implications for regional stability,” and

supporting the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar.

Oct. 16, 2021: FM Marise Payne [convenes](#) and co-chairs fourth virtual Pacific Women Leaders' Network meeting.

Oct. 20, 2021: United States Marine Rotational Force-Darwin (MRF-D) [departs](#) from the Northern Territory at the end of its rotation.

Oct. 21, 2021: Australia [implements](#) legislation for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP).

Oct. 25, 2021: Australian federal government [provides](#) \$1.33 billion so Australia's Telstra can buy Digicel Pacific, the top telecommunications operator in Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga, and Fiji. The move blocks a possible sale of Digicel to China.

Oct. 27, 2021: PM Morrison and FM Payne virtually [attend](#) inaugural ASEAN-Australian Leaders' Summit, which agrees to establish a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and Australia. Morrison told the summit that "[AUKUS does not change](#) Australia's commitment to ASEAN or the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific."

Nov. 1, 2021: With COVID restrictions lifted, Australians are allowed to travel overseas without quarantining for 14 days on return.

Nov. 1, 2021: At climate summit in Glasgow, PM Morrison [pledges](#) Australia will reach net zero emissions by 2050 by "driving down the cost of technology and enabling it to be adopted at scale."

Nov. 5, 2021: FM Payne [leaves](#) to visit Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia to discuss recovery from COVID-19 and the new Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between ASEAN and Australia.

Nov. 10, 2021: ASEAN-Australia Informal Defense Ministers' Meeting [takes place](#).

Nov. 17, 2021: At the first "Sydney Dialogue," PM Morrison [announces](#) Australia's Blueprint for Critical Technologies, listing 63 critical technologies.

Nov. 17, 2021: Canberra [updates](#) guidelines to strengthen Australian universities against foreign interference.

Dec. 8, 2021: Australia [says](#) it will not send official representatives to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Dec. 11, 2021: PM Morrison [addresses](#) the US Summit for Democracy.

Dec 12, 2021: Australia, Japan, and US [announce](#) funding for an undersea communications cable for Micronesia, Kiribati and Nauru.

Dec. 13, 2021: President of South Korea Moon Jae-in visits Canberra to [mark](#) the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Moon and PM Morrison announce creation of a comprehensive strategic partnership. Canberra locks in a billion-dollar weapons contract with South Korea, the largest-ever [military deal](#) with an Asian nation.

Dec. 15, 2021: President Biden [nominates](#) Caroline Kennedy to be US ambassador to Australia

Jan. 6, 2022: Australia becomes Japan's first formal defense partner after the US, as PM Morrison and PM Kishida Fumio [hold](#) a virtual summit to sign a defense treaty for [interoperability and collaboration](#).

Jan. 21, 2022: Australia-UK Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN) 2022, in Sydney, involving defense and foreign ministers, [pledge](#) deepening strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Jan. 27, 2022: Australia's Air Force [announces](#) it will deploy aircraft and personnel to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands for joint exercises with the US and Japan.

Feb. 1, 2022: Australia joins the US, European Union, and others in a joint statement marking the one-year anniversary of Myanmar's military coup, expressing "grave concern" and pointing to the coup's "devastating impact."

Feb. 6, 2022: FM Payne [notes](#) the one-year anniversary of the detention of Australian Professor Sean Turnell by "the Myanmar military," repeating the call for his immediate release.

Feb 11, 2022: 4th Quad foreign ministers meeting [held](#) in Melbourne.

Feb. 17, 2022: Patrol aircraft on a surveillance flight over Australia's northern approaches [is illuminated](#) by laser by a Chinese Navy vessel.

Australia protests to China, calling the lasing “a serious safety incident.”

Feb. 21, 2022: Australia reopens borders to all visa holders who are double-vaccinated against COVID-19, allowing in tourists, business travelers, and other visitors.

Feb. 24, 2022: PM Morrison and FM Payne condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, announcing financial and business sanctions.

March 1, 2022: PM Morrison announces he has COVID-19 and will isolate for seven days while still performing all responsibilities as prime minister.

March 4, 2022: A virtual summit of the Quad leaders (Australia, India, Japan, and the US) [takes place](#) to discuss Ukraine.

March 7, 2022: PM Morrison [announces](#) Australia will build a new submarine base on its east coast to support future nuclear-powered submarines.

March 10, 2022: PM Morrison [announces](#) plans to increase the size of the Australian Defence Force by 30% by 2040, taking the total permanent ADF to almost 80,000 personnel. Defence’s total permanent workforce is to increase to over 101,000 by 2040 – an increase of 18,500 over the target set in the 2020 Force Structure Plan.

March 14, 2022: Australia joins the Netherlands to start legal action against Russia in the International Civil Aviation Organization for downing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in 2014.

March 24, 2022: After refusing for nearly nine years, Australia [announces](#) it will accept New Zealand’s offer to resettle refugees detained at offshore detention centers on Nauru and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea.

March 25, 2022: Top cyber security adviser to President Joe Biden, Anne Neuberger, [says](#) the US would invoke the alliance to support Australia if it suffers a major cyberattack.

March 29, 2022: Australia’s federal budget presented to parliament.

March 31, 2022: Australian journalist Cheng Lei [faces](#) a closed trial in Beijing, 19 months after she was detained and accused of providing state secrets to foreigners. Australia’s ambassador to China is barred from attending the trial.

April 2, 2022: India and Australia [sign](#) an economic and trade agreement to eliminate tariffs on more than 85% of Australian goods exports to India and 96% of Indian imports into Australia. PM Morrison said the India deal “built on our strong security partnership and our joint efforts in the Quad, which has created the opportunity for our economic relationship to advance to a new level.”

April 5, 2022: FM Payne travels to Brussels for a NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers’ meeting to discuss a “coordinated international response to Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine.”

April 6, 2022: AUKUS [announces](#) trilateral cooperation on hypersonics and counter-hypersonics, and electronic warfare capabilities, to deepen cooperation on defense innovation.

April 6, 2022: Australia [sends](#) two intelligence chiefs to press Solomon Islands not to sign a proposed security pact with China. Visiting Honiara, head of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, Paul Symon, and director-general of the Office of National Intelligence, Andrew Shearer, brief Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare on Australia’s security fears.

April 10, 2022: PM Morrison [announces](#) that Australia’s federal election will be held May 21.

April 12, 2022: Australia’s Minister for International Development and the Pacific Zed Seselja flies to Honiara to press the Solomon Islands government not to sign a security cooperation treaty with China.

April 19, 2022: China announces it has signed a security pact with Solomon Islands. Australia says it is “deeply disappointed” at the agreement which could “undermine stability in our region.”

May 21, 2022: Labor Party wins Australia’s national election, ending nine years of rule by the Liberal-National coalition government. Labor leader Anthony Albanese will be the new prime minister. Outgoing prime minister Scott Morrison steps down as leader of the Liberal Party.

May 23, 2022: Labor leader Albanese is sworn in as Australia’s 31st prime minister. With new Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Albanese departs Canberra for Tokyo for a meeting of the Quad.

May 24, 2022: Quad summit in Tokyo involving the leaders of Australia, Japan, India and the United States [takes place](#).

May 26, 2022: FM Wong [visits](#) Fiji for talks with Fiji's Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, seeking to counter China's proposal for a pact with South Pacific nations on [policing, security and data communication](#).

May 26, 2022: A Chinese jet [flies](#) dangerously close to an RAAF P-8 surveillance aircraft over the South China Sea, releasing aluminium chaff ingested in the P-8's engine.

May 30, 2022: At a conference in Fiji with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, 10 South Pacific nations [walk away](#) from a trade and security deal, refusing to sign a multilateral agreement with China.

June 6, 2022: PM Albanese [meets](#) Indonesia's President Joko Widodo in Jakarta.

June 10, 2022: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern [has](#) talks in Sydney with PM Albanese. Ardern said the new Labor government offered the chance for a "reset" with New Zealand. Albanese said the two countries were in "lockstep" in the South Pacific.

June 16, 2022: Australia [updates](#) its commitment to the United Nations convention on climate change, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% below 2005 levels by 2030, putting Australia on track to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

June 23, 2022: Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles [attends](#) Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Rwanda.

June 25, 2022: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the US launch the [Partners in the Blue Pacific Initiative](#).

June 28, 2022: PM Albanese [arrives in Madrid](#) for the NATO summit.

July 2, 2022: PM Albanese meets President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, promising a "new start" to relations, following the breach over the Morrison government's termination of the French submarine contract in 2021.

July 3, 2022: PM Albanese [visits Kyiv](#) to meet Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy,

expressing [Australia's support](#) for the people of Ukraine and the defense of their homeland.'

July 13, 2022: PM Albanese travels to Fiji for the Pacific Island Forum [summit](#).

July 22, 2022: New US Ambassador Caroline Kennedy arrives in Australia.

July 25, 2022: US and Australia [co-host](#) 2022 Indo-Pacific Chiefs of Defense conference in Sydney.

Aug. 3, 2022: Australia [announces](#) a Defence Strategic Review to examine military force structure, force posture and preparedness, and investment priorities.

Aug. 5, 2022: FM Wong [addresses](#) the ASEAN-Australia Ministerial Meeting in Phnom Penh, introducing herself as "the first Australian Foreign Minister who is from Southeast Asia."

Aug. 5, 2022: FM Wong [meets](#) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Japan's Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa, in Phnom Penh, expressing their commitment to the trilateral partnership.

Aug. 26, 2022: PM Albanese [establishes](#) an inquiry into the secret actions of previous PM Morrison in appointing himself to administer departments other than the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Aug 31, 2022: Papua New Guinea [says](#) it wants a new security treaty with Australia, and with New Zealand and the United States.

Sept. 1, 2022: A jobs and skills summit [takes place](#) at parliament house in Canberra.

Sept. 2, 2022: Australia [lifts](#) the target for permanent migrant entry visas from 160,000 to 195,000 people for the 2022-23 financial year.

Sept. 6, 2022: President of Timor-Leste Jose Ramos-Horta [visits](#) Australia.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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