



The China Brief

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North Korea Welcomes China's Premier, Agrees to Rejoin Six-Nation Talks

Premier Wen Jiabao traveled to Pyongyang on October 4th to meet with Kim Jong Il and other North Korean leaders, easing some of the tension which had built up between the two nations over North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Perhaps the most important breakthrough of the meeting was [North Korea signaling its willingness to return to the six-nation talks](#) with the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea.

The joint communiqué issued on October 5th repaired some of the damages to this vital relationship inflicted by North Korea when it unilaterally pulled out of the six-nation nuclear disarmament talks last



Monday, October 5, 2009 –
North Korean leader Kim Jong Il welcomes Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to Pyongyang ahead of three days of bilateral talks.

([Photograph – Agence France Presse](#))

year. In the time since, it has repeatedly provoked China and other nations, [conducting a nuclear test on May 25 and test-firing several short-range missiles](#) over the summer. In response, China broke with its usually friendly stance and voted to tighten U.N. sanctions, a harsh rebuke from North Korea's sole ally and primary trading partner.

The restart of the six-nation talks is a major victory not only for China but also for the United States, which has [refused to agree to bilateral talks with North Korea](#) unless there are guarantees that the North will return to the six-party talks. The United States believes the multilateral negotiations are a much more effective forum for applying diplomatic leverage due to the involvement of regional powers and North Korea's main backer, China. While the assembled nations might seek to force the North Koreans to denuclearize with economic sanctions, China is especially wary of squeezing too hard, for fear that a failed state would leave nuclear materials unaccounted for and [drive a wave of impoverished immigrants into north China](#).

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- The China Open tennis tournament sees top seeds fall early on the women's side; Djokovic and Kuznetsova claim victories



Aiming to Renew Sino-Russian Ties, Putin Visits Beijing, Concludes Major Energy Deal

Premier Wen Jiabao continued his busy diplomatic schedule on October 12th by welcoming Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to Beijing for talks on a variety of topics including energy, monetary policy and missile tests. While some commentators saw these negotiations as the first signs of the emergence of a Moscow-Beijing alliance to counter Washington's influence, others pointed out that the relationship between Russia and China is almost exclusively economic and shows no signs of constituting a broader strategic relationship.

The most important result of the three-day summit was [the establishment of a framework for a massive natural gas deal](#), under which Russia, acting through the government-controlled Gazprom, would supply China's National Petroleum Corporation with 70 billion cubic meters of natural gas per



Tuesday, October 13, 2009 — Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (left) and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao toast after a signing ceremony in Beijing. (Photograph: AP Photo/RIA Novosti/Alexei Druzhinin/Pool)

year. The deal would provide the cash-strapped Russian government a much-needed source of revenue, while simultaneously helping China shift a portion of its electricity generation from coal to cleaner-burning natural gas. While this amount of natural gas nearly equals [the 80 billion cubic meters China consumed in 2008](#), this ballooning supply should facilitate a change in China's energy consumption patterns, where 70% of electricity comes

from coal and only 3% from natural gas. The shift will have many environmental benefits, from reducing the need for destructive strip mining to lowering the frequency of acid rain; unlike coal, natural gas is virtually sulfur-free and thus generates little sulfuric dioxide, the main chemical cause of acid rain.

Aside from the landmark gas deal, several other aspects of the meetings hinted at Chinese and Russian efforts to smooth over past tensions and create a counterbalance of sorts to the global dominance of the United States. In a reflection of their recent repeated calls for a supranational international reserve currency to replace the dollar, both Russia and China agreed to expand their efforts [to denominate bilateral trade in their respective domestic currencies](#), the ruble and yuan. However, neither is ready to fully abandon the dollar; both countries hold large amounts of dollar-denominated assets and are wary of eroding confidence in the dollar, which would decrease the value of the dollar itself and their assets as well. The final significant outcome of the talks was the signing of a [ballistic missile notification pact](#), which requires each nation to provide the other with advance notification of any ballistic missile test launches. Li Daguang, a military expert at China's National Defense University, argued that this deal "shows the special relationship with the two countries, as the launches of ballistic missiles are core state secrets rarely disclosed to other countries."



The Dalai Lama Visits Washington, but not Obama; Some Claim “Kowtowing” to PRC

For the first time in eighteen years, the Dalai Lama visited Washington without meeting with the U.S. president. Instead, he spent the week of October 5th receiving [an award honoring his work in human rights](#), speaking to students at American University, and meeting with various politicians, scientists, and educators. The Tibetan leader’s most recent visit is a stark comparison to his meeting with President Bush in 2007 in which Bush presented him with Congress’s highest civilian honor.

In an effort to remain on China’s good side, [President Obama declined meeting with the Dalai Lama](#) until his visit to Beijing in November. Amid cries of outrage from human rights activists, Obama is facing criticism from members of Capitol Hill as well. Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia urged Obama to reconsider his decision and not to [“kowtow to the Chinese government, a government that brutally oppresses its own people.”](#) While many are in line with Wolf’s thinking that Obama’s administration is relaxing criticisms of human rights issues in China, others are viewing his decision as a chance for a fresh start at U.S.-China

relations. In light of issues ranging from global warming to North Korea’s nuclear weapons, not to mention China’s continued financing of U.S. debt, Obama’s discussions with President Hu Jintao in November will be an important step in coming to agreement with China on crucial issues.

The Dalai Lama’s envoy, Lodi Gyari, [described the decision not to meet as mutual](#). Speaking for the Dalai Lama, he is confident a meeting with President Obama will take place at the appropriate time. In a statement, he later expressed that the Dalai Lama, “taking a broader and long-term perspective,” agreed to delay the meeting in the hopes that an improved U.S.-China relationship would help pave the road towards the resolution of Tibet’s status. While two decades of presidential meetings with the Dalai Lama have not achieved Tibetan independence, Americans and Tibetans will eagerly await the meeting between Presidents Obama and Hu in November.

Chinese Wildcard Shocks Stars at Tennis’ China Open; Djokovic, Kuznetsova Collect Titles

Chinese wildcard entry Shuai Peng turned heads in the women’s competition, downing 9th-ranked Jelena Jankovic and 15th-ranked Maria Sharapova in consecutive matches before bowing out to #17 Nadia Petrova in the quarterfinals. Other notable stars faltered early: top-ranked Dinara Safina lost in the second round to Shuai Zhang, another Chinese player, while Serena Williams was defeated by Petrova in the third round. On the men’s side, the notable early exit belonged to #7 Andy Roddick, who fell in the third round to unranked Lukasz Kubot. In the end, three was the magic number in Beijing, as men’s #3 Novak Djokovic and women’s #3 Svetlana Kuznetsova each picked up their third singles title of the season.



Wednesday, October 7, 2009 — The Dalai Lama arrives for a meeting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the U.S. Capitol.

(Photograph: Win McNamee/Getty Images)

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