

New Silk Road Diplomacy Steps Up in NE Asia

by Kathy Wolfe

On May 14, South Korea's Constitutional Court threw out the impeachment of President Roh Moo-hyun and restored him to a new majority government, as his youth movement supporters tied yellow ribbons to lamp posts around the country in celebration. North and South Korea also announced for May 26 the first meeting of their two military general chiefs of staff since 1945. Members of the new National Assembly are demanding cancellation of deployment of 3,000 Korean troops to Iraq.

In the face of these developments, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced on May 17 the redeployment of 3,600 American troops from Korea to Iraq; but such pressure may be too late. President Roh responded on May 20 by calling for a "cooperative defense" in which South Korea starts to take charge of its own security, in light of rapidly improving relations with North Korea.

In Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also said on May 14 that he would visit North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-Il in Pyongyang May 22, to bring home the families of five Japanese abducted by the North. More widely, Koizumi's aim is to restart talks on diplomatic relations in June, eventually to allow major Japanese support to upgrading North Korea's rail system and reopening the Trans-Korean Railway. Japan's Foreign Ministry has been negotiating the move with Pyongyang since April 28. Koizumi's office announced that "Japan is ready to discuss the contents of economic assistance."

This occurred as working party-level Six-Power Talks on North Korea's nuclear program collapsed in Beijing May 14. After Vice President Dick Cheney's April 9-16 Asian tour, threatening a blockade if North Korea did not "take steps" toward unilateral surrender, U.S. delegate Joseph DeTrani made the same demands in Beijing May 12-14, adding that North Korea must close all nuclear power plants, as well as arms programs. North Korean delegate Pak Myong-kuk rejected this as "a humiliating measure that can only be imposed on a country defeated in war."

The leaders of both South Korea and Japan have also stepped up plans for separate bilateral summits with Russian President Vladimir Putin this week, where a key topic will be regional detente with Pyongyang.

Korea's Revolution: 'Second Chance at 1989'

The crisis tactics by the Washington neo-cons have gone



The reinstatement of South Korea's President Roh Moo-hyun after an impeachment by Cheney's neo-cons allies, and the sweeping victory of Roh's Uri Party, are proving part of a process which could change East Asian politics. Key to its success is Lyndon LaRouche's Eurasian Land-Bridge idea.

too far, and it seems that nations of Northeast Asia are taking steps to ensure peace via economic development projects such as the New Silk Road-Eurasian Land-Bridge, diplomats said. By ensuring "permanent crisis," Cheney's fits have frozen investment in Japan and South Korea for two years, and stalled the Eurasian Land-Bridge "from Tokyo to Pusan to Paris" by preventing South and North Korea from linking their rails for traffic. Now, *EIR* has reports from Tokyo and Seoul that a fresh decision has been made to push on with the Land-Bridge.

Making this possible is the peaceful "people's revolution" just achieved in South Korea, which if it spreads to Japan, will shake the world.

The neo-cons enraged the Korean public on March 12, when President Roh Moo-hyun was impeached by a lame-duck National Assembly dominated by MPs who work closely with Cheney's American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington. On top of the demand for Korean troops for Iraq, this brought hundreds of thousands into the streets. King Sejong Road, a 12-lane boulevard from the center of Seoul to major ministries, the American Embassy, and the Presidential Blue House, was occupied for weeks each night, as far as the eye could see, by a youth movement in peaceful candlelit vigils. The key to its success was something new to Korean (and Japanese) politics: non-violence. Since the Vietnam War, demonstrations in Korea and Japan have been very violent, alienating the general public from political activism. But recently, Christian leaders in Korea and allies in Japan introduced Martin Luther King's principle of non-violence, and the moral superiority of it has rallied the public as it did in East Germany in 1989.

The result: President Roh's new Uri Party won a clear majority in April 15 National Assembly elections, for detente with the North for the first time since 1945. Uri more than

tripled its strength in the 299-seat legislature to 152 from 49. This gives Korea a “second chance at 1989.” Germany missed its chance and fell under International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity, which ruined its economy and Unification. The Eurasian Land-Bridge “New Deal” program can help Korea avoid that mistake.

Japan has been the “swing factor” for the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Its scientific and engineering capability, let alone money, may be critical to the Silk Road’s success, so the neo-cons have made all efforts to keep Japan out of the project. But despite appearances that Japan is cut off from the outside, a peace movement also has potential to spread there. Over 30,000 marched in Tokyo March 20 on the first anniversary of the Iraq war. “World Peace Now,” a network of 50 citizens groups, said that the non-violent approach, new to Japan, can bring out large numbers for the first time, where violent protests until now have failed.

Mr. Koizumi was last in Pyongyang on Sept. 17, 2002, a visit worked out with then-South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. The next day, the two Koreas cut open the DMZ for the first time in 50 years to rebuild the Trans-Korean Railway—a strategic turning point for the Eurasian Land-Bridge. A half-dozen European nations opened diplomatic relations with North Korea, which began to modernize its economy. Peace was “breaking out.”

The neo-cons couldn’t tolerate this, so only weeks later, on Oct. 4, Cheney staged a confrontation in Pyongyang, by having emissary James Kelly allege discovery of a secret North Korean uranium program. This resulted in the Bush Administration ripping up the Clinton-North Korea Framework Accord treaty and declaring the present nuclear crisis, putting the region on the verge of war since. The Japanese press went to war against North Korea. While Pyongyang meant to improve relations in October 2002, by releasing five Japanese, who had been abducted in the 1970s, to visit home, Tokyo’s neo-con controlled media began a hail of headlines demanding return of dozens more allegedly still in captivity. For 18 months, this has created what is called “the New Cold War” in Japan. The joke is that Mt. Fuji could erupt and kill 20 million people in West Tokyo—but the headlines would still be on abductions. It was almost impossible to talk of Japan joining in the New Silk Road. “Koizumi is more likely to discuss bombing railroads, than building railroads,” one Tokyo economist complained during the Iraq War.

But now, with that war going sour, the Iraqi prison scandal, and Cheney’s unilateralism causing the Beijing talks to fail both in February and again May 14, it seems the neo-cons have gone too far even for the Japanese. Tokyo civic groups even had a rally outside the U.S. Embassy May 13, to protest the abuses of Iraqi prisoners.

Those in Japan who support the Eurasian Land-Bridge know Lyndon LaRouche, and *EIR* with its 1997 *Eurasian Land-Bridge Report* very well. They understand that Japan’s

future lies with the economic reconstruction of North Korea, China, Russia and the Eurasian continent. These are the people who proposed the Asian Monetary Fund.

Russia and China

Regional cooperation of the two Koreas, Japan, Russia and China is the key to forging a coalition big enough to allow the Land-Bridge to be built, hopefully with America joining in, but if need be, without it.

Recent improvements in Russo-Japan relations are interesting here. Japan has suddenly dropped its 50-year demand for the return of the Kurile Islands before it will do business with Russia, and trade surged 25% in 2003 due to the doubling of Japanese investment in Sakhalin oil and gas to over \$1 billion. Japanese power companies took deliveries of Russian oil and committed to buy Russian gas for the first time in 2003. Exxon-Mobil and SODECO, a Japanese government company operating the Sakhalin I fields, have proposed a 3,000 km gas pipeline via Russia to Korea. The Sakhalin II fields are due to supply Japan, under a Royal Dutch/Shell-Mitsui-Mitsubishi venture, which recently agreed to invest \$9 billion more in expansion of production capacity.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made special efforts to restore and upgrade the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR) and bring back Japanese and Korean cargo, which nearly disappeared when the IMF cut budget funds for infrastructure in the 1990s. Putin has been in Pyongyang twice to discuss joining the TSR to the Trans-Korean Railway. In August 2001, Kim Jong-il visited Moscow via the TSR, signing a \$500 million deal for Russia to upgrade rail lines in North Korea. In late 2003, a large 100-man Russian rail engineering team spent several months in North Korea, surveying the North Korean rail lines between Russia and South Korea to begin the upgrade process.

South Korean Foreign Affairs Minister Ban Ki-moon will visit Russia May 23-27 to arrange President Roh Moo-hyun’s first visit to Moscow and discuss peaceful resolution of the nuclear crisis. He will meet Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, National Security Council Sergei Lavrov and Chairman of the Duma Committee on International Affairs Konstantin Kosachev. Roh was to visit Moscow in July; the impeachment debacle put that back a bit, but relations are on a fast track, and this summit is Roh’s next priority trip. En route home, Ban visits Sergei Darkin, Governor of Siberia’s eastern-most Primorski Province, to discuss economic cooperation.

President Putin meanwhile plans a summit with the Japanese head of state as soon as possible, Russian Ambassador Alexander Losyukov announced May 20 in Tokyo. Losyukov, until recently a Vice Foreign Minister who headed the Russian delegation to the Six-Power Talks on North Korea, has made some of Moscow’s strongest warnings on the danger of nuclear war in the region. His deployment to Tokyo at such a critical time is noteworthy.