

Joint Development: The Only Path to Peace in Korea

by Mike Billington

Sept. 24—It was true in the 1990s, as it was in 2002-2005, and is even more emphatically true today: Only a policy of engaging North Korea in a process of large scale regional infrastructure development can prevent the threat that war—perhaps global thermonuclear war—could break out on the Korean Peninsula.

When the Soviet Union fell in 1991, Lyndon and Helga LaRouche called for a New Silk Road, from Pusan to Rotterdam, as the necessary basis for ending the danger of global war, uniting East and West through the joint construction of multiple development corridors. The continuing isolation of North Korea was a key stumbling block to this vision of a new paradigm for global peace and development.

The United States and North Korea had never signed a peace treaty to end the Korean War in the 1950s, and confrontations occurred on a fairly regular basis. Constructing a rail corridor through the North, LaRouche posed, would not only complete the proposed New Silk Road, but would provide the North with a stake in this historic development process, and grounds for trust that it would not be attacked.

Today the world is being presented with an apparently unsurmountable conflict between North Korea and the United States, with the danger of war looming before us. The George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations established an imperial policy demanding that all agreements and all talks would be suspended unless North Korea unilaterally ended all nuclear weapons programs and all missile development.

Now, President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong-un are trading barbs and insults, with both sides threatening military action.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, speaking in New York on Sept. 22, called the exchange a “kindergarten fight between children” and urged calm. “We have to calm down the hot-heads and understand that

we do need pauses, that we do need some contacts,” Lavrov told a news conference at the United Nations on the sidelines of the annual General Assembly debate.

But Lavrov also referred to President Trump's speech at the UN as “remarkable,” saying: “I think it's a very welcome statement, which we haven't heard from an American leader for a very long time.” He referred to Trump's defense of the concept of national sovereignty, that “we do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone,” and that, “I will always put America first, just as the leaders of your countries will always, and should always, put your countries first.”

Helga Zepp-LaRouche pointed to the apparent contradiction between this and the threat in Trump's speech to destroy North Korea if it comes to war, calling it a “tale of two speeches.”

But war is neither inevitable, nor even probable. The retired flag officers now serving in Trump's Cabinet have made clear that a war would be catastrophic for South Korea, the region, and the world. Trump has assured South Korean President Moon Jae-in that there will be no U.S. military action without South Korea's accord—and Moon has made clear that he will not allow a war, which would be particularly destructive of South Korea, whether or not nuclear weapons would have been deployed. Also, leading U.S. experts have argued that we can live with a nuclear-armed North Korea, as we have for 20 years already, because we have a powerful deterrent, and because Pyongyang is not suicidal. (See, for instance, [Admiral Dennis Blair](#), former head of the U.S. Pacific Command and former Director of National Intelligence.)

But a solution is necessary, quickly. The 1995 Agreed Framework achieved by President Bill Clinton with Pyongyang—shutting down the North's production of weapons grade plutonium in exchange for a new, safer

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type of nuclear plant, and establishing IAEA inspectors in the country, while moving towards a peace agreement—was cancelled when George Bush and Dick Cheney came to power in 2001. Nonetheless, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy toward the North proceeded, working closely with China and Russia, and with significant input from Lyndon LaRouche, leading to the opening of the Demilitarized Zone in 2002, and the reopening of the Iron Silk Road rail connections between the South and the North. (See http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2002/eirv29n37-20020927/eirv29n37-20020927_048-ko-reas_open_dmz_at_last_silk_roa.pdf.)

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) issued a report in 2003 identifying the two rail routes from South Korea through North Korea, one to China and one to Russia, as part of the New Silk Road connections between Asia and Europe. Even Japan engaged in the process, as Prime Minister Kunichiro Koizumi travelled to Pyongyang and signed agreements with Kim Jung-il, the father of the current North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

The Bush/Cheney neocons, however, were openly out to stop this process. Among other threats, Cheney and Deputy Secretary of State John Bolton threatened to begin boarding North Korean ships—i.e., piracy on the high seas—to stop alleged “proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

China then took the initiative, with Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea, to invite the United States to join Six Party Talks to resolve the nuclear weapons issue peacefully. These began in 2003, leading to an agreement in 2005, again ending the North's weapons programs and bringing the IAEA inspectors back. Bush and Cheney managed to scuttle this peace and development agreement as well, claiming that a North Korean effort to place a satellite in space constituted a breach of the agreement against developing ICBMs—a clear case of “technological apartheid” under the guise of non-proliferation. Obama then adopted his provocative “strategic patience”—no talks until the North ended all nuclear development.

What should be obvious is that the Anglophile imperial forces in the United States, including Bush and Obama, *want* North Korea to have nuclear weapons. Their target is not North Korea, but China and Russia, maintaining the British imperial division of the world into East vs. West. As long as North Korea can be falsely claimed to be an imminent threat to the United States and its allies, there is an excuse to: encircle China with

60% of the U.S. naval nuclear armed forces (Obama's “Pivot to Asia”); place ABM systems and high-powered radar systems in a ring around China (THAAD); and deploy U.S. strategic forces in South Korea. These massive forces are obviously not needed to contain and deter North Korea. The target is China and Russia.

The solution is at hand. First, since President Trump is committed to cooperation with Russia and China, both in fighting terrorism and in economic development, he can be brought to work with them on a development orientation towards North Korea. The proposal by China and Russia for a double freeze—a pause on nuclear and missile tests in the North and a pause or scale-down of the United States-South Korean military exercises—is a sound basis for each side to show concern for the security of the other. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has clearly stated that the United States will not impose regime change, or attack, or force reunification on North Korea, and despite Trump's extreme bargaining position approach, such restoration of talks is both possible and urgent.

President Putin, speaking with the press together with South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok earlier this month, said:

I would like to say that Russia is still willing to implement trilateral projects with the participation of North Korea. We could deliver Russian pipeline gas to Korea, and integrate the power lines and railway systems of Russia, the Republic of Korea, and North Korea. The implementation of these initiatives will be not only economically beneficial, but will also help build up trust and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

President Moon concurred, in keeping with his intent to revive the Sunshine Policy.

China is committed to this approach. Japan is now closely engaged with Russia in developing the Russian Far East, which depends on integrating North and South Korea into the process.

Trump can and must be convinced that to live up to his own challenge, stated in his UN speech, that, “We have it in our power, should we so choose, to lift millions of people from poverty, to help our citizens realize their dreams, and to ensure that new generations of children are raised free from violence, hatred and fear,” that he should fully join with China and Russia in the New Silk Road process, including for a long-term, long overdue peace for the Korean people.