

Bush Re-Election Dismays Japan, Korea

by Kathy Wolfe

The Japanese and Korean governments, with large numbers of troops in Iraq, have reacted with caution to the re-election of George Bush. But two former heads of state and the press have been openly critical, accusing Bush of destroying the American union and the peace of the world. Japan's top daily *Asahi News*, Nov. 9, virtually accused Bush of vote fraud, comparing him to Josef Stalin.

Former Japanese Prime Minister and elder statesman (age 85) Kiichi Miyazawa said Nov. 1 that "tricky neo-conservatives" have made it so that "I am now critical of the United States. Average Americans are honest men of integrity and of humility," he said. "But U.S. diplomacy no longer embodies such traditional virtues because of the neo-conservatives. The United States used to be modest and introspective. It didn't shoot enemies first. But the neo-conservatives believe they should make pre-emptive strikes whenever they feel the need."

Criticizing Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi for sending troops to Iraq, Miyazawa said: "Mr. Koizumi gives the impression that his view is shared by the majority in ruling parties. But I don't think so. Japan had an option of turning down the U.S. request. . . . Belief in the existence of weapons of mass destruction turned out to be unfounded. The Prime Minister should honestly explain to the people that he received incorrect information."

Former South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung in a Nov. 8 speech in Stockholm, called on Bush to make "a reliable offer of compensation to North Korea, in return for nuclear disarmament," referencing the fact that it was Bush who unilaterally broke President Clinton's peace treaty with Pyongyang.

Kim said that Washington could resolve the issue by offering the North a guarantee of non-aggression, and by lifting economic sanctions, the premises upon which the Six Power Talks were originally organized—premises now unilaterally rejected by Dick Cheney.

"It's time for Bush to display more mature diplomatic capability," commented a Korean state radio editorial Nov. 4. "President Bush had spawned severe criticism in the international community for a controversial war against Iraq. We now hope that the re-elected Bush will listen carefully to international opinion and stabilize the war-devastated coun-

try. . . . South Korea should re-arrange Seoul-Washington relations. . . . The U.S. will have to be more proactive toward a peaceful resolution” with North Korea.

‘Armageddon Election’

“‘Un-Civil War’ Against U.S. Democracy: ‘Armageddon Election’ In U.S.” was the title of an *Asahi News* report in Tokyo Nov. 9. Author Yoichi Funabashi warned that neo-con fundamentalists are tearing the Union apart. “The entire United States is divided into Republican and Democratic camps,” he wrote. “A wide gap between the two over values such as abortion, gay rights, and gun control” has made this a “‘cultural war’ which *Time Magazine* described as an ‘uncivil war.’ And the victor tends to believe and act as if might makes right. . . .

“George W. Bush wooed right-wing religious organizations on these issues. This election resembled a ghastly war of terrorism with both sides aggressively casting aspersions on each other. John Zogby, CEO of Zogby Polls, called it the ‘Armageddon election,’ the biblical battle to end the world.

“I heard from an influential Republican who belongs to a prestigious club in the Midwest, that at lunch recently, two gentlemen started shouting at the top of their voices. They were evaluating Vice President Dick Cheney—but they became so emotional that they couldn’t stop yelling, he said, calling it ‘the worst scandal in the club’s history.’

“... Moreover, courts, not voters, decide disputed election results,” Funabashi abruptly concluded. “What happened to the democracy in which the United States takes pride? It’s a serious issue when Americans and the international community start to doubt the legitimacy of U.S. governance. Four years ago, the Bush Administration came into being with a single vote—in the Supreme Court. The fact that it went to war with Iraq without just cause gave rise to distrust and antipathy. If legitimacy of the election is questioned again, it will damage U.S. prestige further. Soviet leader Josef Stalin once said: ‘Those who cast votes decide nothing. Those who count the votes decide everything.’ Who would have thought the United States would be reduced to the same level? Stalin may be laughing at America from his grave.”

There were no less than four such editorials in *Asahi News* on Nov. 4, 5, 8, and 9, which were also published in Europe in *Asahi’s* sister paper, the *International Herald Tribune*. “Bush has pressed ahead with the doctrine of the conservative Christian church,” *Asahi* wrote Nov. 4. But “if Bush pushes a particular religion or its values, it will further divide the people.” Abraham Lincoln “did not regard the Civil War as a ‘holy war’ and tried to reunify the divided country,” the paper noted.

‘America Has Chosen War’

“Japan should speak out” against the Bush war deficit and trade deficit, which threaten the world monetary system,

Asahi also wrote on Nov. 4. “The value of the dollar declined when the Vietnam War turned into a quagmire, leading to the ‘Nixon shock’ in the early 1970s, which in turn led to the oil shock” of 1974-5. [“Nixon Shock” is Japanese for “August 15, 1971,” when everyone in Japan with dollars found their holdings cut in half.] “And if Bush implements tax cuts that are too large, it will not only increase budget deficit. If it is only the rich who benefit, his government can expect to face the wrath of the poor.”

Asahi editorialized on Nov. 5: “If the Bush Administration imposes its own ideology on other countries in disregard of their cultures and histories, it will naturally arouse resentment. Indeed, the attitude of the Bush Administration is a key reason for the mess in Iraq.” The policy of “pre-emptive strikes is responsible for further fanning anti-Americanism in the Islamic world,” the newspaper commented on Nov. 8. Iraq “continues to spiral out of control,” and across the Islamic world, “etched into the hearts and minds of viewers, is the utter despair of the civilian population.”

The editorial continued: Washington has “turned its back on the Palestinians, while in Iran thousands chanted ‘death to America’ recently, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the U.S. Embassy occupation. Lebanon’s *Daily Star* greeted last week’s re-election of Bush with its own stark scrutiny: ‘Having consigned their country to the Bush Administration for another four years, the American people have chosen war.’ This is an ominous prophecy.”

Interestingly, *Asahi* said that sharing peaceful nuclear power development, and solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are the keys to Middle East peace. (Japan depends on nuclear power for 45% of its energy.) The paper called for “finding an acceptable balance with the peaceful use of atomic energy worldwide. . . . If the Bush Administration continues its pre-emptive strike doctrine,” while allowing Israel to be “de facto a nuclear power,” then a solution “is doomed” because every nation in the region will want nuclear weapons.

Asahi wrote: “The U.S. should change its stance leaning toward Ariel Sharon, and have Israel sit at the table making serious efforts for peace. To come to grips with the anti-American sentiment of the Arab world, the United States must exhibit leadership that is fair. . . . Otherwise, the world’s only superpower will find itself bogged down in a desperate Middle East quagmire.”

Warning of Economic Crisis

“Bush Victory to Usher in High Oil Prices, Weak Dollar,” was the *Korea Times* headline Nov. 5, summing up Seoul’s response to the economic disaster Bush is creating. “High crude oil prices and the weak dollar, the two major variables in global economic growth, will persist for quite some time with the re-election of Bush,” the paper wrote.

The Federation of Korean Industries warned that Bush’s re-election may discourage both domestic and foreign invest-

ment in Korean businesses by raising the level of dangerous confrontation with North Korea.

Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI) forecast Nov. 5 “negative prospects for the Korean economy with a clash in opinions between the Bush Administration and the South Korean government” because “Bush prefers a long-term blockade policy (against North Korea) over early resolution” of the North’s nuclear crisis.

SERI sees “increased pressure to open the Korean markets” by Bush crony firms seeking takeovers, raising hackles because U.S. and British banks already own 68% of the Korean banking system. SERI says, that high oil prices and a weak dollar will raise Korea’s import bill and weaken its exports. “Oil prices are forecast to remain high due to Bush’s aggressive policy of filling the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the effects of his re-election in the Middle East,” SERI writes.

Japanese and Korean sources have even warned that the “monetary neo-cons” in the Bush “economic team” are demanding a “New Plaza Accord,” in which Asian nations would be asked to raise their currencies sharply against the U.S. dollar. This refers to the 1986 “Plaza Accord” with Japan, demanded by then U.S. Treasury Secretary Donald Regan (head of Wall Street’s Merrill, Lynch). “U.S. pressure on Korea and other Asian nations to raise the value of Asian currencies is expected to increase, as South Korea, China, and Japan account for up to 38% of the U.S. \$422.7 billion cumulative trade deficit January-August this year,” SERI said Nov. 5.

“If Mr. Bush gains a second term, he need only recall what his role model, Ronald Reagan, did,” an Oct. 22 *New York Times* editorial noted. “After cutting taxes in the first term and seeing the trade deficit rise to previously unimaginable levels, aides engineered the Plaza Accord in the first year of his second term. The dollar fell and the trade deficit narrowed. It is time to consider such a policy again.”

U.S. consumers are spending Bush’s massive tax cuts on imports from Asia, “sending all our demand overseas,” the *Times* said.

“At end of August, the combined dollar U.S. T-bill holdings of Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore were \$1.1 trillion, up 22% from the end of 2003. Since Bush took office, they have added to holdings at nearly half a billion dollars a day,” the editorial noted.

The 1986 Plaza Accord was a classic and effective Venetian “boom-bust” attack on Japan. By driving up the yen by more than 30%, the Accord drove up real estate and stock prices in Japan, creating a giant “bubble economy” which forced chunks of industry to move overseas. Japanese banks and real estate companies became the world’s largest, and were sold massive bankrupt Western companies such as Rockefeller Center, which bankrupted the Japanese financial system and caused the “Tokyo Crash” of 1991. Japanese industry has never recovered.