

Unprecedented Progress In Eurasian Cooperation

by Mary Burdman

On Aug. 8, the office of South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun announced that the leaders of North and South Korea would hold their second-ever summit Aug. 28-30 in Pyongyang, North Korea. This meeting symbolizes the rapid progress which is being made in Eurasia toward cooperation on economic and security matters, led by diplomacy from Russia and China, in particular. In the case of the Koreans, of course, the whole Six Party Group has signed on to the diplomacy, including the United States and Japan, as well as the Koreans, Russia, and China.

The Korean announcement followed by only six days, a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum in Manila, where two additional unprecedented measures of cooperation among Eurasian nations were put on the table. The first was the proposal by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov for direct cooperation between the ASEAN nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO, an organization of Russia, China, and several Central Asian nations, has gradually been turning from a security pact against terrorism, into a forum for discussion of economic development—which would now be extended further to the ASEAN nations. The second significant announcement came from the foreign ministers of Russia, China, and India, who reported, after meeting in Manila, that they would hold another trilateral meeting in October, in Harbin, China.

These initiatives represent “good news” for world peace and progress, granted that they are followed up by the necessary political purge of the Cheney faction in Washington, D.C., which would open the door for the creation of a new international monetary system, needed as a foundation for sustainable growth and progress for Eurasia, as well as the rest of the planet.

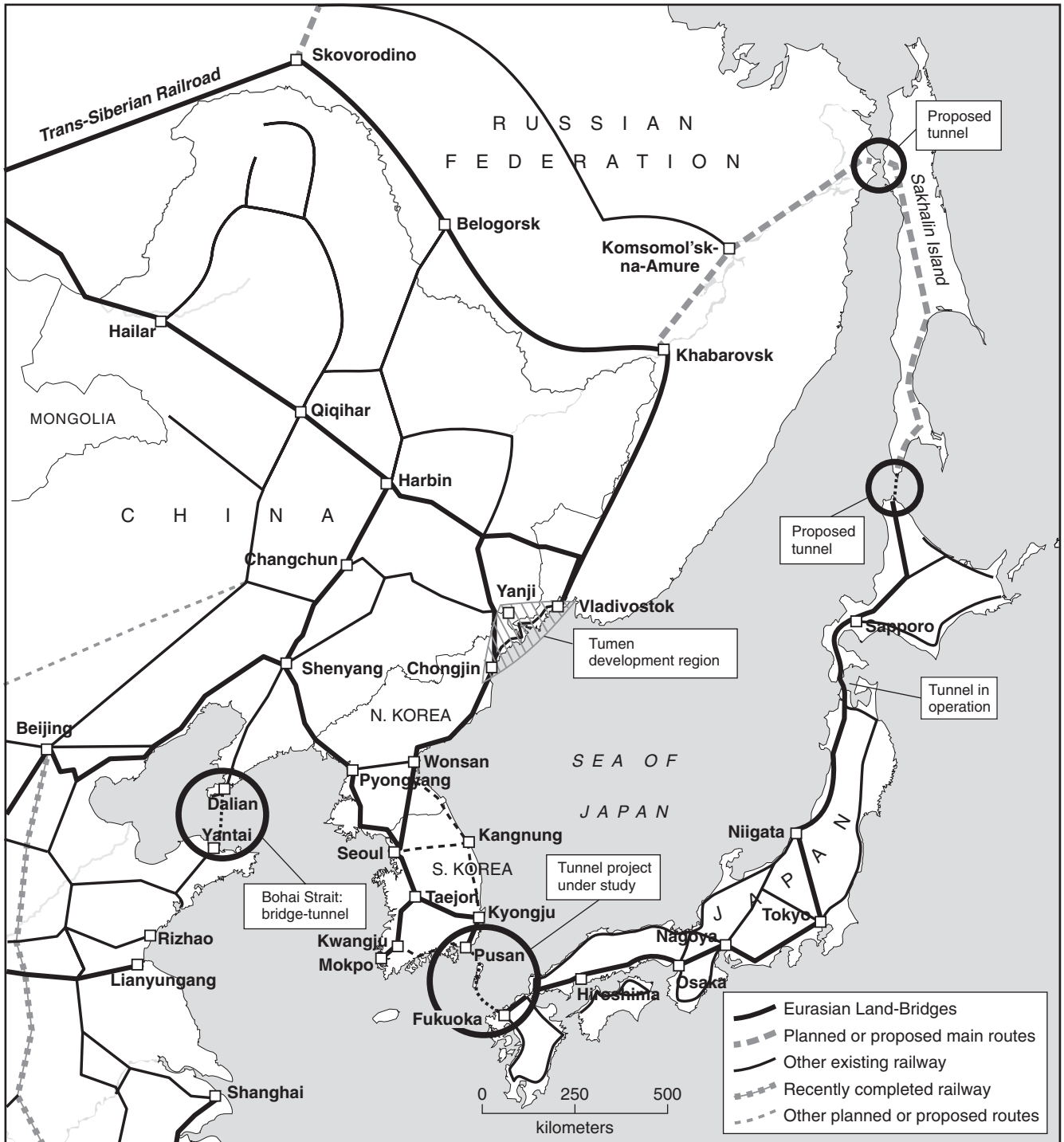
The Korean Breakthrough

Only five years ago, George W. Bush named North Korea as part of the so-called “Axis of Evil,” along with Iraq and Iran—Dick Cheney’s targets for war. But the sustained intervention of the leaders of Eurasia, especially China, has worked to avoid crisis. A sane faction in the U.S. State Department, led by Christopher Hill, has been working with China, Russia, and the two Koreas, to avoid war.

The first historic summit of the two Koreas was held in June 2000, between Kim Jong-il and then-President Kim Dae-jung. The two sides have still been technically at war since the 1950-53 hostilities, and their border is the most heavily fortified in the world. The first summit opened the way for road and rail connections and some economic cooperation. President Roh’s office, the Cheong Wa Dae, has issued a statement saying: “The second inter-Korean summit is expected to contribute to peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula,” and the North Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) also confirmed the meeting. Its statement said: “The meeting between the top leaders of the North and the South will be of weighty significance in opening a new phase of peace on the Korean Peninsula, co-prosperity of the nation, and national reunification by expanding and developing inter-Korean relations.”

President Roh told his cabinet that the summit agenda will include denuclearization and economic cooperation. “The second inter-Korean summit will help normalize inter-Korean relations and provide fresh momentum to improve North Korea’s relations with international society,” Roh was quoted by Yonhap, the North Korean news agency. “The [South Korean] government has to calmly prepare for the summit. The preparations should be focused on making practical progress in Korean Peninsula denuclearization, inter-Korean peace, arms control, and economic cooperation. We need to have compre-

Far East: Infrastructure Projects and the Tumen Development Region



EIRNS

This map, originally appeared in an EIR Special Report, titled, The Eurasian Land-Bridge: The 'New Silk Road'—locomotive for worldwide economic development, January 1997. It shows the linkup of the Korean rails to the Trans-Siberian railroad.

hensive and creative approaches.”

The other members of the Six-Party Talks have all welcomed the new summit.

The 'Iron Silk Road'

What matters more than words, however, is the nexus of economic cooperation which particularly Russia and China

are putting together, which would support the peace process on the Korean Peninsula. More broadly, it would create the climate of cooperation among North Pacific Rim countries, which could open up grander perspectives, like the rail and development corridor to a Bering Strait Tunnel linking Eurasia with the Americas.

Russia has a longstanding offer to help in the completion of the Trans-Korean Railway, which would link North and South, and then go on to link up with the Trans-Siberian Railroad. The linkup would fit with the Putin government's intention to modernize its transport infrastructure. The latest talks between Russia and the North Koreans on the potential linkup occurred in March 2007, with the promising followup being the progress on the North-South Korean rail connection, which was demonstrated in the highly publicized train ride across the Military Demarcation Line on May 17. The project is nicknamed the "Iron Silk Road."

Russia and China are both putting industrial, transport, and energy development of the vast Northeast Asian region on the front burner. The Far East region of the Russian Federation has fallen into deep economic crisis since the fall of the Soviet Union, and is rapidly losing population. In China, the Northeast region, of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang provinces, was its industrial base in the 1940s and '50s, when cooperation with the Soviet Union was vital. The area has since become a "rust belt," but in the past two years, Beijing has made revitalization of this area, and expanded cooperation with Russia, a national policy.

On Aug. 7, Russian Economic Development and Trade Minister German Gref arrived in Vladivostok to attend a conference on urban development, Itar-Tass and the *Vladivostok Times* reported. The main theme of the conference, "Development of Vladivostok as a Center of International Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region," is preparation for the 2012 APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) summit, but it will discuss broader development of the area. The conference will discuss creation of special economic and trading zones, founding the Far Eastern Center of Shipbuilding and Repairs, and railway transport development, including high-speed rail to link Vladivostok, the end-terminal of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, to neighboring cities of Ussuriysk and Artyom. Although a "recreation area" including gambling is also on the agenda, the Primorye Territory authorities are proposing to build a nuclear power plant, an aluminum smelter, oil refining and petrochemical facilities, and other industrial capacity. Other urban infrastructure, for water and road facilities, is also planned.

China's State Council has approved a comprehensive regional plan to revitalize the Northeast, the *Shanghai Security News* reported Aug. 8. The plan is to create four industrial bases to manufacture heavy equipment, new materials, rail and energy infrastructure, and agriculture products, and to foster research and development. The comprehensive plan will include Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, and eastern Inner Mongolia Region, an area with a population of 122 million.