

NAPSNET Week in Review 4 April, 2003

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Korean Peninsula

1. ROK Parliament on US-Led War on Iraq

The ROK National Assembly has approved a government proposal to send 700 non-combatant troops to support the US-led war on Iraq. The vote was a victory for President Roh Moo-hyun, who had told parliament that the deployment was essential for pragmatic reasons. He said sending the troops - mainly medical and engineering experts - would strengthen ties with Washington, which he argued was essential for a peaceful solution to the DPRK nuclear crisis. The vote in parliament on the issue had been postponed twice following serious public opposition to the decision. As the president spoke on Wednesday, thousands of people protested outside the National Assembly building in the latest of several rallies across the country. The decision to send ROK troops to Iraq was overwhelmingly endorsed, with 179 in favour, 68 against, and nine abstentions, officials said.

"Deploying ROK Army to Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, ROK) "ROK US-Led War in Iraq Troops" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR03.html#item5>

"ROK Parliament on US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US) "Sending ROK Troops to Iraq?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, ROK)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR02.html#item14>

2. DPRK on ROK Involvement in US-led War on Iraq

The DPRK has condemned the ROK's decision to send non-combat troops to help the US-led war in Iraq as a "criminal act" that will heighten tension on the Korean Peninsula, a news agency said. "The dispatch is a criminal act that further imperils the situation on the Korean Peninsula," the ROK's Yonhap news agency quoted the DPRK's Central Television Broadcast as saying late Wednesday. The broadcast came hours after the ROK parliament Wednesday authorized the deployment of 600 South Korean military engineers and 100 medics in the Gulf. "It is like supporting and cooperating with a US imperialist war against North Korea," the broadcast said.

"DPRK on US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US) "DPRK on ROK Involvement in US-led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR03.html#item4>

"DPRK Response to US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

3. DPRK Missile Test Issue

Intelligence authorities of ROK and US have concluded that the recent intelligence report about a DPRK test of its surface-to-ship missile was not reliable. Defense officials of ROK, Japan and US had made conflicting remarks Tuesday about whether such a test had occurred. The intelligence communities' clarification was a rare move, because the two countries have often refused to confirm DPRK-related issues in order to protect their information collecting methods from exposure. DPRK designated a restricted travel zone in its waters off the coast of Hwajin-ri in the Yellow Sea, the source said, but no actual launch was observed.

"DPRK Missile Test Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, ROK) "ROK Stance on DPRK Missile Firing" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR02.html#item2>

4. DPRK Pakistan Missile Export?

The DPRK exported some 10 Scud missiles to Pakistan last month possibly in return for Islamabad's nuclear technology, a Japanese newspaper reported, quoting an unnamed US security official. The Scud B missiles with the range of 300 kilometres (185 miles) were loaded on a Pakistan-flagged cargo ship in North Korea's southwestern port of Nampo in mid-March, the Sankei Shimbun said. The vessel was refuelled at a PRC port and entered Pakistani territory in late March, it said, quoting the US official and other anonymous sources. The US detected the missile export with satellite information from the National Reconnaissance Office and as a result of Central Intelligence Agency espionage, it said. The US has slapped sanctions on a Pakistani firm and the DPRK over an alleged barter deal in which it is claimed the DPRK swapped missile components for expertise in developing a nuclear program. Pakistan has vehemently denied the allegations.

"DPRK Pakistan Missile Export?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

5. DPRK Nuclear Agenda to UN

UN Security Council will meet Wednesday to take up the DPRK nuclear problem, ambassadors to the United Nations said Thursday as they emerged from a closed-door meeting on the council's schedule for April. PRC's ambassador to the United Nations, Wang Yingfan, said it was not certain whether the consultations will result in a formal step by the council, such as political or economic sanctions. US Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte also said there was no commitment to any outcome in next week's discussions.

"DPRK Nuclear Agenda to UN" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, ROK) "UN DPRK Debate"

(NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR03.html#item2>

6. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Situation

The ROK's president on Thursday urged North Korea to take part in talks amid fears it may pull out of a Cabinet-level meeting next week aimed at reducing tensions. ROK officials have said they hope to use the talks, scheduled for next Monday to Thursday, to try to persuade the DPRK to give up its nuclear ambitions in return for aid and better ties with the outside world. The DPRK called off two lower-level meetings with the ROK last week. The ROK fears it may also cancel the Cabinet-level talks, Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Jung-ro said.

"ROK on DPRK Nuclear Situation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US)

7. DPRK on US Economic Sanctions

The DPRK has blasted the United States for imposing sanctions on its missile marketing agency for exporting missile technology to Pakistan, claiming the deal was legitimate. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said that the DPRK, which has never joined the Missile Technology Control Regime, is bound by no legal restrictions concerning the export of missiles or the transfer of missile technology. "It is our sovereign right to produce, deploy or export missiles to other countries," KCNA said in a report carried by the ROK's Yonhap news agency. It said the DPRK's missile development program was defensive in its nature. "DPRK on US Economic Sanctions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US)

8. US-ROK Joint Military Exercises

US stealth fighter jets and other warplanes brought to the ROK for joint war games will remain to act as a deterrent against the DPRK, the US military said today. The planes are the newest part of an increase of US military force in the region during heightened tensions with the DPRK over its nuclear program. A statement from the US military said that an unspecified number of radar-evading F-117s, some F-15E Strike Eagle fighters and a small Army task force that were brought to the ROK for exercises with the ROK military will stay in the country. More than 85 percent of the forces deployed to the ROK for the exercise will leave, the statement said. They include the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and thousands of soldiers, Marines, sailors and Air Force personnel.

"DPRK on US-ROK Joint Military Exercise" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US) "US Stealth Fighter Jets in ROK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR02.html#item4>

"Longer Station of US Forces for Drill" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, ROK) "ROK-US Training Exercises" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR01.html#item3>

9. ROK-US Talks on Military Alliance

Talks between ROK and US on reducing or relocating US troops here and the future of the alliance will be held next Tuesday and Wednesday at the Ministry of National Defense. Leading US delegation will be Richard Lawless, US deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia and the Pacific, who will arrive in ROK on Sunday. Heading ROK's side will be the director of the ministry's policy planning bureau, Cha Young-gu. Specific topics expected to be aired include the relocation of the 2nd U.S. Army and the removal of troops from the Yongsan base. ROK's policy is that downsizing US forces now is not an option, and that relocating the 2nd Army should come after the DPRK nuclear problem is resolved.

"ROK-US Talks on Military Alliance" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, ROK)

10. US ROK Troop Realignment

According to several sources, the Pentagon would now like to see the realignment started in the 2004 fiscal year, which begins in October, with a move out of the Yongsan headquarters in Seoul to be followed by a redeployment of troops near the DMZ. "We would like to execute this as quickly as possible," said one diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. New ROK President Roh Moo Hyun does not want to see any changes until the DPRK nuclear crisis is resolved. But, said the diplomat, "that timetable is probably too slow for us."

"US ROK Troop Realignment" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

11. DPRK Leader Re-appearance

The DPRK's Kim Jong-il has made his first reported appearance for 50 days, ending weeks of speculation as to what had happened to the mysterious leader. The DPRK's official news agency, KCNA, said that Kim inspected a military medical school in Pyongyang on Thursday. Pictures showed him walking with military staff, smiling broadly. His movements have not been reported since 12 February, when he attended a reception at the Russian embassy in the DPRK capital. It has been his longest disappearance since February 2001, when he was not seen for 35 days, and prompted a flurry of analysis.

"DPRK Leader Re-appearance" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US)

12. DPRK Fighter Jet Missions

DPRK fighter jets have flown beyond the Korean coastline during US reconnaissance flights but have apparently not tried to intercept another reconnaissance mission, as they did early this month, the commander of US forces in the Pacific said today. Four DPRK MiGs intercepted an Air Force reconnaissance plane 150 miles from their coastline on March 2, according to the Pentagon. One flew within 50 feet of the US plane, a modified Boeing 707, in what US officials called a "reckless and provocative" act. After 10 days of deliberation, the Air Force decided to resume the flights, which are watching for a possible missile launch by DPRK during heightened tension between the countries over the DPRK's nuclear program.

"DPRK Fighter Jet Missions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

13. US on DPRK Human Rights

The People's Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) views international human rights norms, particularly individual rights, as "illegitimate, alien, and subversive to the goals of the State and Party," according to the State Department's 2002 Human Rights Report on North Korea. The annual report harshly criticizes the Kim Jong Il regime for gross violations of basic human rights in 2002. The State Department document recounts reports of extrajudicial killings and disappearances along with arbitrary detainment of citizens. An estimated 200,000 political prisoners are detained under harsh conditions in the DPRK's prisons. The complete Department of State report on North Korea can be found online at:

"DPRK Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US) "Human Rights Report on Two Koreas" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, ROK) "US on DPRK Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR01.html#item6>

14. DPRK on US Human Rights

A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK in a statement issued on April 3 accused the US of pulling up the DPRK over its human rights issue. He said the US with the poorest human rights record is not qualified to talk about human rights. Recalling that the US in an "annual report on human rights" released on March 31 slandered the DPRK behaving as if it were a "human rights judge," he continued: Human rights precisely mean national sovereign rights. The accusation made by the US against the DPRK over its human rights issue is nothing but a ridiculous attempt to tarnish the international image of the DPRK by adding the "human rights issue" to the "nuclear issue" and increase its pressure upon the DPRK in a bid to infringe upon its sovereign rights.

"DPRK on US Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US) "KCNA on US Human Rights Report" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR02.html#item13>

15. DPRK PRC Defections

A total of 270 DPRK asylum seekers have defected to the ROK from January to March this year, a 26 percent increase from the same period last year, the ROK's Unification Ministry said Thursday. The ministry expects the number to rise this year because thousands of DPRK refugees are believed to be living in hiding in the PRC, seeking a chance to come to the ROK. "DPRK PRC Defections" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US)

16. US-ROK Relations

US President George W. Bush thanked President Roh Moo-Hyun for sending medical and engineering units to help with humanitarian efforts in Iraq, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said. The two leaders, locked in a dispute with the DPRK over its resumption of nuclear programs, also "reiterated their intention to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue peacefully and to continue close consultations," he said Friday. Roh won a major political victory Wednesday when the opposition-controlled National Assembly overwhelmingly approved his pledge to dispatch some 700 non-combatant troops in support of the US-led war in Iraq.

"US-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US)

17. ROK Domestic Economy

Foreign investment into the ROK fell 48 percent in the first quarter, the government said Friday. The announcement comes as other economic indicators show the ROK's economy is faltering amid the standoff over the DPRK's suspected nuclear weapons program. The ROK's stock market is among the worst performers in Asia this year. The Kospi index has dropped 18.3 percent since January. The value of the currency, the won, has also plunged. The government said there was \$1.1 billion in foreign direct investment in the January-March period. Investment from the US tumbled 72 percent during the January-March quarter to \$356 million, while investment from the European Union fell 24 percent to \$355 million. "ROK Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US) "ROK Economy Depending on DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, ROK)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC on DPRK Dialogue

The PRC has begun playing a more active role in pushing the US and the DPRK to settle their differences over the DPRK nuclear development program, according to the PRC government and Western diplomatic sources. In a series of moves aimed at influencing both sides, the PRC government has warned the DPRK to stop provoking the United States, backing up the warning by closing an oil pipeline to the DPRK for three days in late February, the sources said. At the same time, the PRC has blocked US attempts to use the U.N. Security Council to censure the DPRK for withdrawing from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and has announced that the PRC opposes sanctions against the DPRK leader Kim Jong Il. Government sources said a PRC offer to host talks between the two sides still stands.

"PRC on DPRK Dialogue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US)

2. PRC Response to US Human Rights Report

The PRC expressed "strong dissatisfaction and opposition" Tuesday to a US State Department report denouncing the country for what the US said was a long list of human rights violations. The annual report, released Monday, said the PRC had maintained its less-than-stellar record, which included "instances of extrajudicial killings, torture and mistreatment of prisoners, forced confessions, arbitrary arrest and detention, lengthy incommunicado detention and denial of due process." But the report also credited the government for releasing a number of prominent dissidents and granting permission for senior representatives of the Dalai Lama to visit the PRC.

"PRC US Human Rights Abuse" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US) "PRC Response to Human Rights Report" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR02.html#item9>

"PRC Response to US Human Rights Report" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

3. SARS Development

The World Health Organization yesterday took the unprecedented step of warning travelers to stay away from Hong Kong and the PRC's Guangdong province because an epidemic of a dangerous new lung infection is still spreading mysteriously there. It was the first time in its 55-year history that the Geneva-based United Nations body has cautioned people not to travel to a specific location because of a disease. WHO, which previously had issued travel advisories only because of war or other conflicts, was hesitant to take the step because it was expected to have serious economic consequences, especially for the financial center of Hong Kong. Officials said they felt compelled to take the drastic measure because the epidemic remains out of control and is being transmitted in ways that have surprised and stymied scientists. In addition, there is no vaccine to protect people and no sure way to treat victims of the illness, which can be fatal. The deadly pneumonia, which is spreading across the world, could be more contagious than previously thought, an expert has warned. Hong Kong, which has been hit hard, has established quarantine camps in an effort to try to contain the spread of the disease. The illness, dubbed Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), has so far killed 62 people worldwide, and infected 1,800. Livestock in southern PRC may be the source of the mysterious virus that has killed more than 60 people and caused a global health scare, sources close to the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. "WHO is working on a theory that the virus has its source in farm animals in southern China," a source close to the Geneva-based body stated.

"SARS Virus" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US) "ROK SARS Alert" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US) "SARS Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR01.html#item4>

4. PRC SARS Response

Red tape, face-saving measures and institutional incompetence are most likely behind the PRC's refusal to face up to the outbreak of a deadly respiratory disease, experts warned. Under international criticism, the PRC's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) issued its first bulletin on atypical pneumonia since March 26 urging all health departments to take effective measures to control the disease that has killed at least 62 people worldwide. Doctors were also urged to report to their provincial disease control centers any patients showing symptoms of atypical pneumonia, guidelines on the CDCP's website said. A team of World Health Organization experts was Tuesday also awaiting Beijing's permission to travel to southern Guangdong province where they believe Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) first broke out last November.

"PRC SARS Virus" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US) "PRC on SARS Virus" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US) "Asia Response to SARS" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0304/APR02.html#item8>

"PRC SARS Response" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

Japan

1. Japan on DPRK Missile Test Fire

A high-profile effort by Japan to tighten surveillance of the DPRK got off to a shaky start as Japanese officials contradicted each other and their allies over reports Tuesday that the DPRK had test-fired a missile. Japanese military and government officials announced that the DPRK had launched a shore-to-ship missile from its west coast into the Yellow Sea. A senior Defense Agency official issued a retraction Tuesday evening, telling reporters the government was "still trying to confirm" reports that a missile had been fired. "We are still trying to confirm information including whether or not a launch took place," said the official, Shoei Yamanaka. "It is regrettable I must start by issuing this correction."

"Japan on DPRK Missile Test Fire" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

2. Japan on US-Led War on Iraq

Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi predicted today that the Japanese public would come to understand his decision to support the US in the war with Iraq, but he acknowledged that for now people in his country remain "overwhelmingly against" his position. Koizumi expressed confidence in his decision, which some analysts and policymakers here say is undermining Japan's decades-long efforts to play the role of pacifist nation in world affairs and strong supporter of the United Nations. "I believe it's possible to make them compatible," Koizumi said of the choice between the US and the United Nations, which some in his government had desperately sought to avoid. Opinion polls show opposition to the war at 65 percent or more, and there have been scattered antiwar demonstrations.

"Japan on US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

3. Japan on Korean Peninsula

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he believed the danger of hostilities breaking out over the DPRK's nuclear program were extremely small, according to an interview in the Washington Post released on Wednesday. Koizumi also said he felt that the DPRK would not launch a ballistic missile over Japan, as happened in 1998, and that the administration of President Bush was handling the nuclear crisis appropriately. "I believe the Bush administration is handling this matter appropriately," Koizumi was quoted as saying. "Japan on Korean Peninsula" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, US)

4. Japan Air Missile Defense System

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi indicated Thursday his government and the ruling bloc should discuss upgrading the nation's air-defense missile system, including possible deployment of an advanced version of the Patriot system. "I expect lawmakers close to defense policy and (officials of) the Defense Agency to thoroughly discuss" how to deal with the intensifying threat of DPRK missiles, Koizumi told reporters at his official residence. But he offered no timetable on when he wants the government to make a decision on the Patriot PAC-3 system developed by the US.

"Japan Air Missile Defense System" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US)

5. Japan Offensive Military System

The prospect of boosting Japan's military capabilities is worth discussing, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said Sunday. Referring to a proposal put forth by the Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba, Abe said on a Fuji TV interview show: "It would be natural for us to debate the scope of defense Japan should have based on our defense-oriented policy, given advancing weapons technology, tactics and strategy." He added, however, that such discussions would not result in a change to Japan's exclusively defense-oriented policy.

"Japan Offensive Military System" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, JAPAN)

6. US Japan Minesweeper Calls

US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage expressed hope Thursday that Japan would send military personnel, including minesweepers, to help with reconstruction efforts in postwar Iraq. Armitage, speaking to reporters after a congressional hearing, said Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's strong support for the war has earned immense gratitude from President George W. Bush. "The unbelievable, strong public support of Prime Minister Koizumi and his government to the United States is something that President Bush and this administration will never forget," he said. Armitage said the Bush administration hopes Japan will help out by dispatching medical personnel and minesweepers to the Persian Gulf.

"US Japan Minesweeper Calls" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US)

7. Japan-PRC Relations

Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Friday that Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi will deliver a letter to PRC Premier Wen Jiabao stressing the importance of friendly bilateral ties. Kawaguchi is scheduled to depart on a visit to the PRC on Sunday. "(In the letter,) I will mention the importance of (maintaining) a friendly relationship between Japan and China," Koizumi told reporters at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. "Since this year marks the 25th anniversary of the conclusion of the Japan-China Treaty of Peace and Friendship, I will express hope that the two countries will continue cooperating with each other."

"Japan-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 4, US)

8. US Japan Base Explosions

There have been two explosions outside a US airbase in the Japanese city of Yokohama. Police say the blasts occurred around the main gate of the Atsugi base in the Kanagawa area of the city. Militants opposed to the war in Iraq are suspected of planting the devices, officials say. There were no reports of casualties or damage. Police said they found two steel pipes at a school near the military base which might have been used to fire projectiles.

"US Japan Base Explosions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, US)

9. Japan Nuclear Power Reactor

Japanese industry minister Takeo Hiranuma indicated he wants nuclear reactors that have suspended operations for safety tests to be restarted to avoid power shortages in the summer. Hiranuma, head of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, said, "Winning the understanding of local residents will be a basic premise" for restarting the reactors, which were shut down following a cover-up scandal over safety-check reports. Fourteen of the 17 reactors in Niigata and Fukushima prefectures operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) have been suspended for inspections following the discovery last August that the company had covered up reactor defects, including fractures in the facilities' shrouds. The remaining reactors are scheduled to be shut down by mid-April for safety checks. The 17 reactors, which generate a combined 17 million kw, provide 40 percent of the electricity needs for the Tokyo area.

"Japan Nuclear Power Reactor" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, JAPAN)

10. IMF on Japanese Economy

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that restructuring of the Japanese banking and corporate sectors is "urgently needed," as the global financial system remains vulnerable to possible adverse effects of the war in Iraq. "Japan's banking system has deteriorated in an environment of continued deflation and limited corporate restructuring, despite recent efforts by banks to raise capital," the IMF said in its Global Financial Stability Report. The IMF indirectly urged Japan to prompt nonviable banks and companies to go out of business and help viable banks and companies to improve their competitiveness.

"IMF on Japanese Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 3, JAPAN)

Russia Federation

1. Russia on US-Led War on Iraq

The US-led invasion of Iraq will likely encourage the DPRK to speed up its nuclear program, a top Russian diplomat warned Tuesday. "Unfortunately, the Iraqi situation is nudging North Korea toward the enhancement of its own defense capabilities," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency. "North Korea earlier said that if it feels a threat, it would take appropriate steps, possibly including the creation of a certain powerful weapon for its own defense," he said. Asked whether the war in Iraq would encourage the DPRK to continue developing its nuclear program, Losyukov was quoted as saying: "That is absolutely obvious." "I am afraid that the Iraqi situation is pushing (North Korea) in a direction that isn't in the interests of stability and security," Losyukov said. "Russia on US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

2. Japan-Russia Relations

Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and visiting former Russian President Boris Yeltsin discussed on Tuesday the need to boost bilateral trust in dealing with political issues as well as energy projects. "I told (Yeltsin) we should map out activities through which we can develop trust" to resolve Japan's claims on Russian-held islands and sign a post-World War II peace treaty, Koizumi said. They also discussed the need for negotiating the issues in line with bilateral documents, including the 1993 Tokyo Declaration. The declaration acknowledges the territorial dispute and commits the two countries to work out a peace treaty. Soviet troops seized the three islands and a group of islets off Hokkaido at the end of the war. The dispute has prevented the two countries from signing a peace treaty. Yeltsin told reporters separately that he and Koizumi also talked about a plan to construct oil pipelines in Siberia and transport natural gas to Japan from Sakhalin. "Japan-Russia Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

3. Russia Domestic Politics

Russian business magnate and former Kremlin insider Boris Berezovsky says he is putting \$100 million aside to bankroll a political alliance in Russia aimed at thwarting President Vladimir Putin. Berezovsky, who on Wednesday will resume a court battle in London against Russian efforts to extradite him, said he had set himself the goal of putting together a right-left coalition to prevent Putin tightening his stranglehold on parliament. A once powerful political player in Russia and rumoured king-maker, Berezovsky became marginalised under Putin as the Russian leader wrested control of his media empire from him and went to live in self-imposed exile in the West. Berezovsky, who criticises Putin for autocratic methods, told Reuters in an interview he had earmarked \$100 million to set up "an effective opposition" from members of the far-right and far-left to contest this year's parliamentary poll. "Russia Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, US)

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