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South Korea's Historic "One Million People Protest" to Oust Washington's Puppet President Park Geun-hye

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Global Research Editor's Note

Compare this event in Korea to the ongoing "few thousand" anti-Trump protesters in the USA. Whereas the latter has made the tabloids and CNN coverage ad nauseam, the million people protest movement against America's puppet regime in Seoul is not news worthy, it has barely been covered by US network TV.

Read the incisive and carefully documented article of Hyun Lee.

Look at the images below: compare them to the anti-Trump protests.

This is a historic event. The message of the Korean people is loud and clear. M. Ch. GR Editor

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As the United States ushers in a new right wing president into office, South Korea is about to give theirs the boot. One million people gathered in Seoul on November 12 to demand Park Geun-hye's resignation. This is the largest protest South Korea has seen since the democratic uprising of June 1987.

Train and bus tickets to Seoul were sold out in major cities across the country as people headed to the capital for the historic demonstration. Youth in school uniforms were a noticeably large contingent. Rainbow flags flew next to trade union banners, and mothers with children were among the crowd. 150,000 workers made up the largest contingent at the demonstration- 35,000 public sector and transport workers, 20,000 government employees, 15,000 metal workers, 15,000 service workers, 10,000 teachers, and 5000 health and medical workers.

The mega-scale demonstration continued throughout the day's evening, with candle-lit protesters packing the Gwanghwamun Square in central Seoul. / Yonhap

Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon refused to supply water from the city's fire hydrants to the police, which had threatened to use of water cannons to block protesters from reaching the Blue House. Referring to the death of farmer Baek Nam-gi, hit by a high-pressure water cannon at a mass demonstration in November 2015, Mayor Park said in a radio interview, "No more." He added, "Water from fire hydrants is intended for putting out fires, not peaceful protests."

It should be made clear to the foreign media that the outpouring of anger on the street is not just about the recent scandal involving the shaman cult leader who used her connection with the president to embezzle money. It has more to do with pent-up anger from four years of neo-authoritarian rule. It is about denouncing Park Geun-hye's labor market reform, which will expand the pool of precarious workers and undermine the power of labor unions. It is about her dissolution of an opposition political party and jailing of labor leaders and opposition lawmakers. It is about her refusal to allow a serious investigation into the Sewol Tragedy and the cause of the death of three hundred people, mostly high school students, who drowned in the ferry that capsized in 2014. It is about her backdoor deal with Japan last year to silence the Korean victims of sexual slavery by the Japanese army during WWII. And the list goes on.

Organizers of last Saturday's demonstration are calling for simultaneous actions in cities across the country on November 19 to continue to press for Park's resignation. If she still refuses to step down, they are calling for a re-convergence in Seoul on November 26. Meanwhile, the country's two largest trade union confederations – the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Korean Trade Unions – have vowed a general strike if Park Geun-hye refuses to resign.

Korea Times screenshot

screen shots al Jazeera

In the past few weeks, Park's approval rating has crashed to an embarrassing single digit, and sixty percent of the South Korean population says she should step down. There are growing calls inside the conservative Saenuri Party for Park Geun-hye to leave the party and its leadership to resign. So far Park has refused to step down, but her resignation, it seems, is a matter of time.

People Power, Not Another U.S.-Backed Authoritarian

Park Geun-hye is a key U.S. ally in what the United States considers a critical region for its geopolitical and economic interests. The US-ROK alliance has been in place since 1953, and the United States maintains 28,000 troops in South Korea. The global economic system is highly dependent on trade with Asia-Pacific, and the East China Sea is a significant sea lane through which much of global trade passes every day. Its alliances with South Korea and Japan are critical for the United States to maintain its foothold in the region to counter China, as well as Russia and North Korea.

So how are U.S. officials looking at the current situation in South Korea? White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest's recent comment seems to suggest they are already looking ahead at the possibility of Park's resignation and feel confident that she will be replaced by someone to their liking. "One of the hallmarks of a strong alliance is that it remains durable, even when different people and different personalities are leading the countries," he said about South Korea during a press gaggle aboard Air Force One.

If leaked classified cables from William Stanton, former deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in South Korea, are any indication, we can be sure that U.S. officials are watching the situation unfolding in South Korea with keen interest. Describing the political situation in South Korea immediately prior to the presidential election there in 2007, Stanton wrote-

> Lee [Myung-bak]'s staffers are trying their best to characterize Park as not quite the unblemished princess she claims to be. … Perhaps even more damaging to her image as the maiden who sacrificed herself in the service of

> the nation upon the assassination of her mother, Park has been linked to the late Choi Tae-min, a charismatic pastor. Rumors are rife that the late pastor had complete control over Park's body and soul during her formative years and that his children accumulated enormous wealth as a result.

Stanton detailed every allegation of corruption, rumors of personality defects and dirt hurled at each other by political opponents in the run-up to the election, then concluded,

> "For us, the good news is that this is shaping up to be an election in which the United States is far from the vortex, quite unlike the 2002 election which had us in the middle of the whirlpool following the death of two schoolgirls accidentally struck by a USFK vehicle. … So whoever wins in December, we are likely to see continuity in U.S.-Korean relations."

For U.S. officials whose main concern is preserving the US-ROK alliance and securing U.S. interests in the region, the current situation unfolding in South Korea is not as simple as the 2007 election and is likely to have their heads spinning. Park is effectively isolated and her resignation seems a matter of time, but if she steps down too soon, it doesn't buy them enough time to ensure that she will be replaced by someone to their liking. If she steps down too late, on the other hand, crescive anger on the streets may become too hot to handle.

Plus, soon they'll have a recalcitrant in the White House. Many South Korean officials have wrung their hands over Trump's comments that he is open to negotiating directly with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and that South Korea should either pay more for U.S. protection or mind their own defense. Although Trump tried to allay their fears this week by reaffirming U.S. commitment to defending South Korea, just what his policy will be on Korea, or any other issue for that matter, is anyone's guess.

With so many uncertainties, we can be sure that those with a vested interest in preserving the US-ROK alliance are busy plotting and maneuvering behind the scene to safeguard U.S. interests in the region. Once-stalled talks between Seoul and Tokyo on a military intel pact are suddenly on an accelerated track. Amidst the chaos of cult worship allegations and police raids on presidential aides, the South Korean Defense Ministry quietly held two rounds of working-level talks with its Japanese counterpart to discuss the General Security of Military Intelligence Agreement- a deal left unsigned in 2012 due to overwhelming opposition from South Koreans but aggressively pushed by the United States, which considers military cooperation between the two historic adversaries vital to its interests in the region.

The Commander of U.S. Forces in Korea also announced last week that it will deploy a U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile battery in South Korea within eight to ten months – in complete disregard of mounting opposition from South Koreans, including small farmers in Seongju and Gimcheon who have been holding nightly candlelight actions since July to block the weapon system from being deployed in their towns.

Anti-American sentiment peaked in South Korea after the assassination of Park's dictator father Park Chung-hee when his replacement Chun Doo-hwan, with a tacit green light from the United States, crushed the democratic aspirations of the South Korean people by massacring hundreds in the southern city of Gwangju.

> Let us hope history does not repeat itself. Let us make sure Park the daughter will not be replaced by yet another U.S.-backed authoritarian, who will turn history backwards and trample on the rights of working people. As we mourn the loss of progress in the United States, let us stand with the people of South Korea, who themselves have endured four years of oppressive rule and are now on the verge of breaking through to a new era through people power.

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