



DIJ Forum

In its series of public lectures, the German Institute for Japanese Studies will present on

Thursday, 22 April 2004

Gavan McCormack
Professor, Australian National University

Difficult Neighbors: Japan and North Korea

Japan has diplomatic relations with virtually every country on earth, save for its nearest neighbor and one time colonial territory, North Korea. More books and articles about North Korea are published in Japan than in the rest of the world put together, and they are overwhelmingly hostile. Supported by a groundswell of public antipathy for North Korea, Japan reorganizes its defense and security policies, tightens its cooperative relations with the US, continues to pay huge subsidies towards the upkeep of US forces in Japan, sends its Self Defense Forces to Iraq and pays a large part of the costs of the war and occupation there, and moves close to the imposition of unilateral sanctions on North Korea and to banning its ships from Japanese ports. Whether or not it is an “axis of evil” North Korea is certainly an axis of major change for Japan.

Yet, in September 2002, the leaders of both countries met; apologized for their respective past crimes, and looked towards a future of cooperation in a peaceful and cooperative Northeast Asia. What went wrong? Is the crisis in Japan-North Korean relations to be explained just by North Korean madness and/or criminality? Why did the apologies of 2002 make things worse, rather than, as both sides anticipated, better? How should we understand the difference between North Korea's self-perception as a righteous victim, seeking justice and redress for a century of injustice at the hands of Japan and the United States, and the predominant perception in Japan (and most of the world) that it is a major threat to regional and global peace? Why is so difficult to reach a resolution of the problem of the abducted families?

This talk will address these questions, and expand on and update material in chapter 6 of my recently published book (the chapter has the same title as today's talk).

Gavan McCormack is a professor in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University and (from April 2003) Visiting Professor in the Institute of Social Science at International Christian University (ICU), Tokyo. His latest book is *Target North Korea: Pushing North Korea to the Brink of Nuclear Catastrophe*. Earlier books include *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, and (with Glenn Hook), *Japan's Contested Constitution – Rethinking the National Role*.

The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on **Thursday, 22 April 2004 at 6.30 p.m.** at the DIJ. Admission is free, but please register by April 20 with Ms. Dinkel at the DIJ.