

Session IV

Regional Collaboration for Peace Building

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

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Looking for an example of successful regional collaboration for peace throughout history yields two examples. One is what happened in Europe, and the other is what happened in the Western hemisphere. The rest of the world still regards regional cooperation or collaboration for peace building a dream. It seems wise to look hard at these two examples to see what factors were responsible for their success and, therefore, can be applied to East Asia.

In Europe, the following factors seem to be pertinent. First, shared perception of a common external threat is what brought European nations together to form a security structure.

Second, ideological homogeneity exists among the states of the region. In the post-World War II period, when the European experiment began, homogeneity among states existed in the sense that ideologically the principal of legitimacy did not differ from one state to another, i.e., they were all democratic republics.

Third, it must be pointed out that without Franco-German reconciliation, there would not have been a European structure for peace. European success in realizing the reconciliation between the two old enemies was made possible, ironically, by the cruelty and enormity of the evil they had experienced.

Fourth, the role the United States played in Europe promoted European integration. Of course, the United States has a traditional strategy of divide and rule, and it intervened in European affairs to make sure that Europe did not achieve political union. But in the 1940s-1950s, Europeans were so

poor and helpless that it did not occur to Washington that Europe could become a competitor. Therefore, the United States persuaded Europeans to get together under the Marshall Plan and, later, the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) strategy, instead of applying the historical strategy of divide and rule.

In the Western hemisphere, the key to success seems to be simple. The hegemonic position of the United States ensured that this hemisphere would have a regional approach to peace building and security issues in general. It is the hegemonic status of the United States that ensures success of the regionalism in the Western hemisphere.

If these conditions are keys to success, one finds that none of them applies in Eastern Asia. There is no extra threat to the region that all the states of East Asia agree is a threat. The region of East Asia today at least nominally has no ideological homogeneity. And the role of the United States is also quite different. It is neither the role that one sees south of the U.S. border, nor is it the role that one sees in Europe. In East Asia, the United States continues to apply the historical strategy, which is to make sure that there is no political unity in East Asia. The geopolitical imperative for the United States in this region is to make sure that there is a degree of tension between Beijing and Tokyo.

Additionally, two other factors are relevant in the case of East Asia. One is the centrality of China. The question we face with regard to China is whether it is possible at all for East Asia to acquire a stable equilibrium, given the size of China, without involvement of an external power, i.e., the United States.

Second, nations in Northeast Asia uniquely lack multilateral experience. Throughout their history they never had multilateral experience and these three countries—China, Japan, and Korea—lived more isolated than any other nation. This is why even today it is difficult to convince them that matters of real importance can be dealt with productively through multilateral processes. For them, serious business is reserved for bilateral or unilateral actions.

Nevertheless, it would be premature to conclude from the above observations that regional cooperation for peace and security is impossible in East Asia. There are objective trends that tend to open up the possibility of regional integration, including economic interdependence, cultural interactions, and attention to Asian values. What is most striking, however, is the fact that all of the Asian states, despite their ideological heterogeneity, are committed to pursuing the same goals, which can be described as identity

of state aims. Despite the negative list above, history seems to be on the side of those who are looking at East Asia as an open book. And we should find a way to build a community out of the possibilities that are arising from the changes that are taking place.

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The presidential election in Taiwan reelected Chen Shui-bian, but more important than this is the result of the referendum. The rejection by voters means that the Taiwan people prefer the status quo. While it is true that the so-called Taiwanese identity is gaining ground in Taiwan, it was proven that the status quo is more important for the Taiwanese. This result is apparently a mixed blessing for China.

Regarding China, Japan appreciates China's rational reaction to Japan's decision to send members of the Self Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq; this decision split in half the national opinion in Japan itself. Had there been some noise from China, it would surely have triggered anti-China sentiment among the Japanese. The revision of the Japanese constitution is, in a way, a part of Japan's normalization attempt. And China must be watching carefully to see what the normalized Japan is going to look like.

The Japanese economy is recovering mostly thanks to China. But we are also worried about China's bubble economy infested by non-performing loans and some other problems. While Japanese exports to and investments in China have been increasing, Japanese corporations are becoming cautious about the future of the Chinese economy in the next one or two years.

Concerning the membership issue of the East Asian community, while the core of the community should be Ten + 3 (ASEAN-10 plus China, Japan, and South Korea), the community should maintain its commitment to open regionalism. There seems to be a consensus within Japan that the core of the future East Asian community would be ASEAN + 3. One of the reasons behind steady advancement of the concept of East Asia seems to be the absence of strong leadership, which contributes to emergence of a kind of balance of power or a stage for collective leadership in the region. The other element of the membership issue is Taiwan's status. While the East Asian community is basically considered to be a group of nation-states in the region, it needs to be open to the idea of being a society- and people-based community.

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When we talk about East Asian community building, we must come out of the European shadow, because East Asia is different from Europe. East Asia has different history, and its current situations are quite different from Europe. East Asia also has different interests.

The most fundamental foundation of East Asia seems to be the increasing interdependence in the region. Once this process started, it became like a moving train. The economic development of each country and regional stability are now common interests in the region, the protection of which provides an incentive to bind the region together.

The second factor is China's rise. This is generally a positive factor in bringing the region together. Most of all, China's rise probably provides a new foundation for regional economic growth for the future. Past economic developments in the region—Japan, the “four dragons,” and ASEAN—have not provided markets for East Asian products. China's rise, on the other hand, will eventually provide a market at least parallel to that of the United States. If China successfully readjusts its policy to mobilize more domestic demand and base its growth more on domestic strength, it will prepare a regional foundation for long-term economic growth. Seen in this light, the proposed China-ASEAN FTA probably is a rational choice, benefiting both China and ASEAN, and, possibly, the entire region.

The third factor that provides foundation to the East Asian community is the regionalism in the rest of the world. Regionalization in other parts of the world, for example, Europe and North America, is putting a lot of pressure on East Asia to come together and promote its interest in world affairs as a region.

Aside from these factors, a change of great significance to the region is the end of the cold war. Although the North Korean issue still exists, there is no longer an issue that divides the region into two camps. Even the North Korean issue can be regarded and treated as a regional affair. In other words, there still remain some specific issues but none of them is fundamental enough to divide the region, which is a very positive factor toward regional community building.

The issue at hand is how to proceed. First, we need to enhance the existing interdependent relations and common interest through various devices including, for instance, FTA arrangements. It would be ideal to find a way to coordinate all of these multi-layered arrangements in the region eventually

into one—an East Asian FTA. FTA seems to present a new path to open regionalism, which is different from APEC. APEC is open regionalism based on unilateral liberalization. FTA is different from a common market, and it is also different from a custom union. The key factor here is whether China and Japan will compete or cooperate in this process.

Second, we should strengthen regional cooperation in this institutional building process. The East Asian community must be based on regional institutions. Therefore, it will be very important to move the current Ten + 3 process into the East Asia summit, bring all of these separated and multi-layered FTAs into one East Asian FTA, and further promote the Chiang Mai Initiative into a common regional financial architecture. Also it would be important to establish some kind of security forum or institution.

One complicating issue is how to find a way to accommodate the United States in the East Asian regional community, perhaps not as a member but as an important partner. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is a possible conduit, but ARF seems to be too broad. It would be ideal if we could gradually move to a more stable and more balanced Pacific relationship between East Asia and the United States. It seems that the United States has gradually accepted that a regional integration in East Asia will not hurt its interests. Besides, it should be easier to convince the United States of the importance of an East Asian community because of China's rise. Handling China would be a difficult task if individual East Asian countries have to address it separately, but it would probably be easier if tackled as a region.

A lot seems to depend on China's behavior in the future. Its economic future remains worrisome, but it seems most people are still optimistic. Economists seem to believe that high growth is possible for the next decade or two, because of China's unique potential and many favorable factors surrounding China. Another issue is the so-called new face of China's foreign policy. This new face is based on two basic factors: domestic-centered thinking, or preoccupation with the domestic situation, on the part of Chinese leaders, and the stability of the outside environment, which is helpful for China to realize its transition and modernization.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Feasibility of East Asian Community

Before pondering the role of the East Asian community, participants spent some time wondering about the imperatives for this proposed community and if this community would be feasible. A Japanese political scientist suggested three strategic imperatives as unstated goals of East Asian community building: (1) a hedge against the possibility of China emerging as a regional hegemon, (2) a hedge against possible future Sino-Japanese rivalry, and (3) a hedge against the possible end of the U.S. hegemony. Since East Asian community building is a long-term project, this speaker believed that planners should be prepared for the situation in which there is no superpower in the world.

An ASEAN economist identified the security imperative for East Asia as stemming from two factors. One is preemption of certain likely internal conflicts without resorting to outsiders. The other is the enhanced capacity for regional solutions to the kind of conflicts that the region has seen so far, such as North Korea or Myanmar. These security imperatives take precedence, according to this speaker, over economic imperatives.

A Japanese political scientist participant followed by stating that, when it comes to economic imperatives for East Asian community building, there is a meeting of minds, but when it comes to security imperatives, views seem to be somewhat divergent. Given the situation, this speaker suggested that the concept of human security might be a glue or a source of convergence for the security imperative of East Asian community building.

While one panelist expressed his skepticism regarding East Asian community building on the grounds of the lack of a multilateral tradition in the region, several participants spoke up to defend the movement. A Japanese economist participant disagreed that there has been no multilateral arrangement in Northeast Asia, citing the example of a few ongoing arrangements among China, Japan, and South Korea in the area of environment. Also from Japan, a political scientist observed that in the past two or three years the region has seen both that various sorts of multilateralism are emerging and that multilateralism can make things happen. This speaker cited the example of the ARF's attempt to facilitate preventive diplomacy as well as the Shangri La Dialogue process to bring regional defense ministers together for policy dialogue. He concluded that the image of multilateralism in the region is not based solely on the wider range of cooperative security

arrangements but it is more like a myriad of various functional approaches based on the issue area to which countries and communities having the will and capacity will join.

In response, the original presenter clarified that he had tried to explain how multilateralism is viewed in the region, but also shared with other participants his long-time frustration and disappointments in dealing with the United Nations.

Another possible obstacle to community building in the region seems to be the presence of a great schism within Northeast Asia. An ASEAN international relations veteran referred to, for instance, "the historical enmities" within Northeast Asia that may be a hindrance. Some participants thought that ASEAN may be able to play a constructive role in this problem. A senior ASEAN intellectual claimed that ASEAN, by itself a collection of small states, can play a moderating and mediating role to connect the three major powers in Northeast Asia. Moreover, he believed that, if ASEAN thus can feel that it has this mission sacrée, it would also help ASEAN and, therefore, the region. From a somewhat similar angle, a Japanese expert of East Asian politics observed that some gaps exist not only between ASEAN and the three major powers but also among the three themselves; this speaker suggested that ASEAN might be able to bridge those gaps. For future stability and peace in the region, ASEAN countries should consider what they can do for the three, while the three should consider what they can do for ASEAN.

One ASEAN participant posed a more fundamental question on the philosophy of East Asian community. He wondered if the region is attempting to build simply a community of states or a community of societies. He himself wished to think that the entire region is in agreement that community building is actually an effort toward building a community of societies in East Asia, because the resultant community will have to deal with the reality of non-state actors that can also have an impact in building peace in the region. To him the most fundamental question should be what the end goal of community building is, and if it would make governments in the region more responsive and, therefore, enhance good governance. He stressed the critical importance of expanding the number of believers in an East Asian community, particularly among the younger generation, noting the important role educational institutions can play in community building through social capital investment and value formation. He also observed that the region can use the U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer model in promoting community building. Enhancing community building in

the region, according to this speaker, will depend on tangible evidence of people-to-people interaction, which is important in terms of image building as well as peace building.

Taming China

By far the largest element in the formation and management of the East Asian regional community seems to be China. Referring to the possibility of China growing into a superpower to the annoyance of the United States, an ASEAN senior intellectual held that the attitude of new leaders in China, who value a peaceful environment for development and recognize the important role that the United States will play in East Asia, is very encouraging. This speaker underscored the value of including China in the structure of an East Asian community with the rest of the region, provided China will not try to be a regional hegemon in the future. An institution that is capable of integrating China in this way, he predicted, will be able to cope with the United States in a positive way as well.

An East Asian scholar admitted that China presents a challenge to community building. What China is capable of doing and what China comes to signify is, according to this speaker, a matter for the attention of the entire region because the implications affect all the countries. A Japanese scholar participant agreed that the region had welcomed China's stable development in recent years as well as the stable leadership of the Chinese Communist Party because China's rise will be important to the region. He cautioned, however, that it will take a long time before China rises to its full potential, given the still fluctuating domestic situation.

Engaging China positively in an East Asian community would itself be a major stabilizing factor for the region. But another good effect of China's positive engagement is the tranquility it brings to the United States. An ASEAN intellectual referred to the comment made earlier by a Chinese participant who claimed that the United States might be more willing to accept the East Asian community concept if it believes that China, in the context of the East Asian community, would be more accepting of a U.S.-China reconciliation.

In relation to China, some comments were made by participants who were agitated by recent developments in Taiwan. A Chinese scholar participant claimed that Taiwanese leaders must be helped to understand what Taiwan needs, what the region needs from Taiwan, and how to participate in the regional process. Referring to the recent presidential election and

national referendum in Taiwan, this participant expressed the opinion that Taiwanese leaders are not yet sophisticated enough to discover how to live in an international community in ways acceptable for China as well as Taiwan. This speaker suggested that Taiwan should be invited to participate in the community building, including, most importantly, activities among civil societies in the region for educational purposes.

Agreeing that Taiwan is not good at handling international relations, a Japanese participant said that he believes that Taiwan must behave itself internationally. Taiwan can be a member of the East Asian community in terms of economic and even cultural contexts, but in terms of politics and security, the region may have to be cautious, he warned.

The Role of a Normalized Japan

As a South Korean participant pointed out, "Japan is another country whose role or non-role is a matter of great interest to us." He stated that Japan's "normalization" in particular is a concept that poses very difficult questions for all East Asian countries.

Analyzing the situation from a more traditional framework, an ASEAN senior intellectual posited that the critical role for Japan would be to, essentially, persuade the United States, as its ally in the region, of the virtue of an East Asian community, particularly from the viewpoint of positively engaging China in regional affairs. This speaker admitted what a difficult game this is for Japan, which has always been rather timid in showing diplomatic initiatives, but he saw a great opportunity for China to receive peaceful assistance, cooperation, and interdependence with the United States.

A Japanese participant expresses his hope that the 60 years of unarmed development and peaceful international contributions might make Japan's active role in international affairs, including East Asian affairs, a little more acceptable. He believes that the Japanese public is accepting of the SDF having been sent to Iraq, and he hopes that those SDF soldiers prove themselves different from the former Imperial Army of Japan, which would make them acceptable internationally but particularly by East Asian countries.

Another Japanese participant, in the belief that behind the U.S. opposition to an East Asian community has been the suspicion of Japan taking some leadership in the region, expressed the opinion that this suspicion is gone now and that the United States can accommodate Japan's taking a greater leadership in East Asia.

Playing a greater international role, including in security affairs, is an essence of the “normalization of Japan” argument, leading to discussion on the desirability of the Constitution, particularly Article 9. A Japanese participant favored revision of Article 9 on the grounds that the widening gap between reality, including the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq, and what Article 9 stipulates is becoming uncomfortable. However, this speaker also stressed the importance for the Japanese to debate why they wish to modify Article 9 and to explain to the whole world what this normal Japan will mean to the international community.

It is noteworthy that, in response to this comment on the normalcy argument in Japan, there came a sobering comment from a Chinese participant, who summarized Chinese public opinion on the motivations for Japanese “normalization” as (1) pressure from the United States, (2) desire to have a bigger piece of the cake, and (3) desire to normalize the Japanese military role.

Managing Difficult Relations with the U.S.

By far the greatest number of references were made during the session to the management of good relations with the United States, which could be a problem for an East Asian community. One of the panelists, in retrospect, observed that what is emerging from the current session is the realization that the United States poses the greatest challenge for East Asia to deal with in designing for the future of the region.

An ASEAN intellectual agreed that the most important challenge to East Asian community building can be summarized as what to do with the United States. Historically, U.S. policy in East Asia has been geared to maintaining U.S. supremacy, and this speaker predicted that this will not change for a long time. Therefore, the problem that is emerging is how to mix and complement this strategic fact, i.e., 50 years of U.S. supremacy, with the budding effort to build an East Asian community. In the end, said this speaker, East Asia will need to exercise its creativity and its best performance in finding ways to convince the United States of this new situation.

A Japanese participant agreed that how to convince the United States that East Asian community building is not inimical to U.S. interests is a crucial factor. The reconciliation of China-Japan relations as well as a commitment by these two countries to be more responsible for the international public good will be key.

A Japanese political scientist participant, recognizing the importance of U.S. engagement in the region, emphasized that the context of this engagement is considerably different from that before September 11, 2001, and, therefore, East Asia has to adjust to this new image of U.S. engagement, which is based on U.S. recognition of its own vulnerability and the weakness of its homeland security. For example, the Korean peninsula issue is not an issue only of Northeast Asia because it is also a homeland security issue of the United States, and this means that East Asian countries are now managing bilateral alliances with the United States not only for their own sake but also for the sake of the homeland security of the United States. This is security interdependence between East Asia and the United States, which might provide the former with an opportunity to help the latter in the matter of security for the first time.

A North American participant responded to these comments from East Asians by asking whether the East Asian community would be conceived of as a threat on the part of the United States. He acknowledged that there are some impulses in that direction because, as the United States looks out at the world 30 or 50 years in the future, the only country it can see possibly rivaling the United States or overshadowing it is China. He reassured the group, however, that in the final analysis an East Asian community would not pose a threat because (1) terrorism is the number one threat today and an East Asian community is potentially a positive deterrent toward terrorism, and (2) an East Asian community as it stands is a very long-term project whose character will be closer to a forum than a community based on similar political systems and common values.

Moreover, this speaker saw a global and historic role that an East Asian community can play. While the United States so far overshadows any other single entity in terms of power in the military and economic senses, politically the world is dealing with architecture that has not changed for years and is based on a former equality of states. The question is how the world can reconcile the political structure and the power structure, and this speaker believed that an East Asian community would play a major role in finding an answer to this question.

Perhaps reflecting newly gained self-confidence on the part of East Asia, an ASEAN senior intellectual suggested that, if East Asia considers the United States to be so critical for the regional community even though it will not be a member, the United States should be invited to all the East Asian intellectual dialogues. He concluded that it is good to know that East Asians might now influence the United States.