

## THE OPTIMISM OF EAST ASIAN INTEGRATION

Some people say: "*Geography is a destiny*". We cannot choose where we live, we cannot decide who our neighbors are, whether we like it or not, and we have to take it. Regardless that China, Japan and Korea share as one region based on geography, there are some other factors that make these three countries considered as one region. The trade and economy relation that has been built since ages is the other reason when people see for a region. Beside, in order to create strong foundations of regional identity, these three countries have similarity in cultural and civilization. Not to mention that hundreds years ago, Korean and Japan have adopted China's knowledge and culture for civilization. These historical perspectives also enhance the migration or cross border movement among these three countries that make people feel that they are in the same region.

However, living in the same region would also make a different perspective from each country on how to see the history. East Asian peoples still take in account the dark period during Japan occupation during on what so called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. The conflicts over history would color each national view of history based on collective memory of each country. Though there some efforts needed to build one transnational history in term of bridging all the differences, still these

perspectives would play significant factors in creating East Asian Integration.

Not only the differences of national view of history, but the consciousness of Asian also becomes a big factor regarding the differences between East Asian Countries, in term of integration building. Western influences for Japanese people after Meiji period made Japan has way of thinking and civilization in advance, yet by years, influence Japanese consciousness of being Asian or have an Asian identity.

Based on realism view In International Relation theory, when two countries have both strong economic and political power in one area, then they become a rival. As China strong economics became an important player in Asia, even in various regional and global forums, China has become an economic booster, substituting Japan's roles, because the regional trades between China and East Asian economy grew and gaining bigger share within East Asian intra-regional trade. This condition makes a difference perspective of Japan economist who tried to establish ASEAN + 6 (China, Japan, Korea, Australia, India, and New Zealand) FTA, rather than ASEAN + 3 (China, Japan, Korea) FTA, where China would be estimated as big part of roles player in economic integration.

All those differences seem bigger than similarity among Japan, Korea and China. It needs other factors to strengthen the intention towards East Asia Integration.

The strong tendency of security dilemma dynamics in East Asia such as North Korean nuclear weapon and political geography issues would heighten integration become important. In economic fields, being integrated into one regional will enhance the negotiations leverage in the world issues, especially when defending against rising regionalism as NAFTA and EU in international trade. Being integrated into one also promote good condition of domestic reform of one country and show that this country is reliable holding onto commitment. The stalemate in the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and the on-going multilateral trade negotiation under World Trade Organization (WTO) also the factors why integration in economic in form of FTA would be like domino effects, increasing high in numbers.

Integration in East Asia definitely needs those various factors and motivations above. On the other hand, the understanding of regional strength and weakness will ease the process of integration itself. In fact, the position of East Asia in international trade has the biggest share GDP in the world (37,8% in 2006) compare to other region (NAFTA: 23,1%, Middle Asia: 6%, EU: 20%, South America: 7,4%, Africa: 2,6%). However intra regional trade of East Asia is slightly below other regions. Regional trade among East Asia in 2005 is only 40% compare to total trade made by East Asia countries. And only China, Japan, Korea, and H.K who have intra-regional trade

volume more than 1% of world-trade volume. Intra-regional trade among EU countries in 2005 is more than 55% compare to total trade made by EU countries. Most of EU countries (except Iberia and North Europe) have intra regional trade volume more than 1% of world trade volume. And about NAFTA, in 2005 the data show how they have well integrated market. Intra-regional trade among NAFTA countries in 2005 is more than 65% compare to total trade made by NAFTA countries. All three countries of NAFTA have intra regional trade volume more than 3% of world trade volume.

Different with economy fact that has the biggest share GDP in the world, security integration in North East Asia become more interesting when looking at the arms race. China, Japan and Korea spend less than 2% of GDP for defense, on the other hand, other region countries defense spending is on average 2,5-3 percent of GDP. China has only \$48 defense spending per capita, \$330 for Japan and \$320 defense spending per capita for Korea. On the other hand, U.S spends \$1,500 per capita, \$790 for U.K., \$760 for France, \$1.560 for Israel, \$1770 for Kuwait, and \$1150 for Singapore. Looking at these facts, North East Asian Countries needs some multilateral security mechanism such as Six Party Talks as a confidence building measure. It needs deepen understanding for China to knowing that maintaining the US presence in Japan is one of the critical values to countering the security dilemma in East Asia.

Despite of Economy and Security fields, building intellectual infrastructure of people in East Asia is also important. Integration in Education Institution would be desirably needed in East Asia countries, like ASEAN Countries that already has SEAMEO (South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization). All the efforts to create an East Asian Integration absolutely take time, through discussion, workshop, forums, seminars and agreement among those countries. Knowledge about basic fundamental disciplinary studies will be very important in finding the optimum way in developing a model for regional integration. The urgency of learning and understanding of aspect about Regional Integration, will establish the intellectual infrastructure for the regional integration in Asia, and perhaps will ease the progress made toward East Asian Integration. Each country's education institution that can participate in facilitating program studies about East Asian Integration would be important to create.

To analyze strength and weakness in East Asia countries through diamond model by understanding the strategy, structure, and rivalry, the factor and demand conditions and related and supporting sectors of this region, will ease the progress toward East Asian Integration. Integration in East Asia is totally desirable and needed, no matter how hard and how long it takes. Not only because we have to prevent and solve the traditional security factors, but also to think about non-traditional securities

factors for human kind, such as refugees, environmental issues, human trafficking. It is true that East Asian Integration would bring benefit to East Asian countries, but it would be possible that East Asian Integration would also gain the benefit for the whole world.

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Takashi Terada, "Constructing an 'East Asian' concept and growing regional identity: from EAEC to ASEAN+3", *The Pacific Review* 16:2(2003)

Most of material of this paper is based on lectures of Regional Integration Summer School Beijing-Tokyo-Seoul (lectures in order listed):

1. Prof. Jin Hyun Paik, "Korean Politics and Inter-Korean Relations", Lecture on August 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, Seoul National University, Korea
2. Prof. Tsuneo Akaha, "Integration in East Asia and Security Issues in North East Asia", Lecture on August 5, 2008, Waseda University, Japan
3. Prof. Hatsue Shinohara, "From Collective Memory to Transnational History", Lecture on August 5, 2008, Waseda University, Japan
4. Prof. Wang Jisi, "New Trend of China's Diplomatic Relations", Lecture on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, China.
5. Prof. Taeho Bark, "Regionalism in Asia and Kore's External Economic Strategy", Lecture on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Seoul National University, South Korea
6. Prof. Shujiro Urata, "Japan and East Asia: Changing Economic Relations", Lecture on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Waseda University, Japan
7. Prof. Chong-Sup Kim, "Global Production Network in East Asia", Lecture on August 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, Seoul National University, Korea.
8. Prof. Akiko Kamogawa, "Asian Integration and Student Mobility", Lecture on August 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, Waseda University, Japan
9. Prof. HwY Chang Moon, "Korean Economy and Business in Globalizing World", Lecture on August 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, Seoul National University, Korea.