

Summary of Research

Definition of Community and Regional Integration: an International Comparison

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Research problem

Much of the debate on Asian Integration brings up the issue of Asian Values. Some assert that common asian values are needed in order to create an East Asian Community. These claims in the academic field often are related to the emergence of a shared culture, be it confucianism, asian popular culture or as Tamotsu Aoki puts: middle class's culture¹. Sometimes this discourse is reproduced by politicians, such as Indonesian vice president Jusuf Kalla. In a speech about East Asian Free trade Area, as quoted by the People's Daily in December 2006².

On the other hand, European Community discourse seems to focus on cooperation by several countries without stressing common values too much, as can be seen from its motto: "United in Diversity". Is it possible that Asian stress on "common values" reflect a sense of community based on similarity rather than cooperation?

Given that, in this stage of the research I try to verify whether views of community differ between Asian and European Union Countries. Thus my research questions are:

- 1) Q1 Is there any difference between views on community between East Asian and European views of Community?
- 2) H1 Asian countries will have a stronger view on communities related to ethnicity than most European countries.

Method

To verify these suppositions I used statistical analysis of the responses for ISSP surveys and WVS surveys in european and asian countries.

If a country is a kind of community, by defining what is needed to be a member of that country one is defining what kind of community he or she values. In other words, by assessing what one thinks should be the ideal citizen it is possible to infer about what kind of views in community, in this cases what kind of country, he or she values.

Questions on what is needed to be a country's citizen and on the desirability of international institutions and communities were used. Data was from Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, as well as the countries in the European Union.

Results

On average East Asian countries showed more tendency toward valuing Ethnicity over other aspects when defining what is necessary to be a citizen of a country. In special, Philippine respondents had the highest score when regarding ethnicity as a requisite to being one of them.

Conclusions and Implications

From the results we can infer that the difference on the discourses for regional integration might be based on different views of Community. More detailed research on the reasons for that might be necessary in order to understand the exact implications of these differences on actual process of Asian Integration. A difference in the views of who should be part of a community might help to understand peoples reactions to Asian Integration and provide some useful information on what kind of model for integration is feasible in the region.

¹ Tamotsu Aoki (2005), Higashi Ajia Kyoudoutai to Nihon no Shinro, Tokyo, Nihon Housou Kyoukai Shuppan.

² http://english.people.com.cn/200612/01/eng20061201_327303.html, accessed in 08/2/03