

## 12 A VIEW ON CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN EAST ASIA

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Let me begin this last chapter of this volume with the economic region: Asia, more precisely East Asia, the focus of the following discussion. East Asia, understood here as the geographical region stretching from the Kuril Islands in the North to the Indonesian archipelago in the South, is still considered today as one of the less advanced regions of the world compared to Western Europe and North America from an institutional point of view. Particularly in direct comparison with Europe's spectacular progress in achieving integration over recent years, East Asia still presents a very narrow spectrum of regional organization and collaboration (Buzan and Segal 1994). Using Europe as a reference point seems difficult as the regions have completely different premises but it help to understand the changes and challenges in this region.

Europe and East Asia are characterized by completely different political circumstances (Arndt and Pflüger 1995). Immediately after World War II, Europeans began to reappraise the past and draw far-reaching political and social conclusions which still now determine the actions of the European states. Particularly France and Germany, but also the Benelux countries and Italy made efforts early on to achieve a new order in Europe with the goal of safeguarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Hrbek 1993). These states came to the conclusion that European integration would promise more success in the achievement of this goal and in preventing totalitarian and authoritarian tendencies than would isolated efforts within a narrow national framework. In a Europe still suffering at first hand the effects of the dreadful experiences of World War II, union was also considered an effective way of keeping Germany under long-term control.

In the East Asian region there has been no comparable cross-border political or historical reappraisal with all that that implies economically, socially, corporately and culturally. On the contrary, the East Asian states are observably in a process of national self-assertion, which manifests itself not least in high regard of their national sovereignty. These states are therefore not prepared to cede national rights to supranational organizations. In addition, there is still a great deal of political resentment towards Japan, as there has not yet been a comprehensive reappraisal of its past as

a martial and colonial power (Böhn 1992; Platz and Rieger 1996). These subjects have been aired politically and addressed publicly in Japan only lately, when for example on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Japanese surrender on August 15 1995, the head of the Japanese government at that time, Murayama, expressed his regret for the horrors of World War II, and in recent excursions into foreign policy on the part of the current Prime Minister Koizumi.

Even though in many states in the East Asian region, flexible pragmatism seems to be the order of the day, and there is less concern with accounting for the past in routine business, Japan's historical legacy remains an obstacle to a far-reaching process of integration (Pohl 1994). There are reasons other than history for the low level of integration in the region that originate in the socio-cultural, religious, political and economic differences between the countries.

Politically, the region spans democracies such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, authoritarian regimes such as Indonesia and the Philippines and totalitarian states such as China and Cambodia (Binderhofer, Getreuer-Kargl and Lukas 1996; Dürr and Hanisch 1986). Japan has had a democratic constitution since 1947, but democracy in other states in the region (for example South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines) is still very much in its infancy and, in Western European understanding at least, not at all sound. The political unrest in recent years in Indonesia and in the Philippines, the treatment of the opposition in Malaysia and the violation of human rights in many East Asian states (for example in Laos, China, Myanmar and Cambodia) make integration of the states and political contact between them extremely difficult.

The religious situation in the East Asian region is also heterogeneous: Muslims in Indonesia, Buddhists in Thailand, Atheists or Confucianists in China, Christians in South Korea and in the Philippines and Shintoists in Japan are just a few examples (Bechert and Gombrich 1995; Edsman 1976; Weggel 1989). No other region of the world, Latin America, Europe, North America, nor even Africa can boast such variety. A clash between different Asian ideals and social models originating in the political, social, religious and historical areas of conflict is not impossible (Huntington 1994). For example, the ASEAN states still harbour considerable resentment towards China, which with its economic development over the last twenty years has been able to resume its role as a major power (Hilpert and Haak 2002). The rise in the Chinese defence budget and Peking's claims to the Paracel and Spratly Islands which are also claimed by ASEAN members are indicators of future conflict. The Taiwan issue is also far from being clear and military threats by the People's Republic of

China in the Taiwan Straits are putting a further strain on moves towards regional integration.

There are other economic and political factors that stand in the way of regional integration. Economic growth in the Asian countries is based largely on successful exporting. Japan is very worried that increased regional integration in East Asia would partition off the trading blocks EU, NAFTA and the potential East Asian block from each other and create exclusive groups (Hilpert 1993).

If this partitioning does come about, external trade in the East Asian region would develop into a zero-sum game as all the exports and imports would be taken by countries in this region. Growth supported by exports would therefore no longer be possible. Japan in particular, which has already been plagued with serious economic and structural problems for more than ten years would, as a largely export-oriented country, suffer. The growth engine of export, already weakened, would fail and the difficult situation in Japan, which stagnating domestic consumption is doing nothing to help, would become even worse. Against this background, attempts by the Japanese economic and foreign policy makers to use APEC (Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation) as an instrument and to promote the liberalization of commercial policy which is also desired by the WTO (World Trade Organization) are understandable.

Another economic problem is the widespread protectionism in the region. In each of the countries which are all at very different stages of economic and social development, the amount of protectionist activity varies (Dieckheuer 1995). The introduction of a free trade zone in the region would result in the profits from the increase in trade effected by a reduction in duty flowing mainly towards the more prosperous countries. They have always had relatively open trade connections and would only suffer small losses in income from duty (Hilpert 1993). This background makes sense of the recent free trade agreement between Japan and Singapore, which on the basis of their per capita gross social product are two of the richer countries of the region, and clearly leaders. Singapore leads in East Asia as a metropolis of service and trade and Japan in East Asia, as the second largest industrial nation in the world. We will see new free trade agreements between Japan and other nation in the near future.

Even if the reasons given do not exactly accelerate formal integration in East Asia, there have been particularly in the last ten years, signs of development in the region quickly making up ground, focussing mainly around ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) ASEAN was created in 1967 in Bangkok (Rüland 1995). The five founding states were Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei

became a member on 8 January 1984, Vietnam on 8 July 1995, Laos and Myanmar on 23 July 1997 and Cambodia on 30 April 1999. The founding statement, the Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967 gave the three fundamental goals of the association:

- ‘1. To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of South-East Asian Nations;
2. To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter; [and]
3. To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields; ...’

([http://www.aseansec.org/history/asn\\_his2.htm](http://www.aseansec.org/history/asn_his2.htm)).

These goals would indicate that the focus of the joint policy is economic and cultural. However, evaluating ASEAN against its own targets shows that its achievements in these two central areas of policy, economics and culture, might be considered meagre. When ASEAN was founded, it was impossible not to take historical circumstances into account; after the fall of Indochina, the fear of more communist attacks in East Asia worsened. This fear became manifest when, in 1971 in Kuala Lumpur, four years after the foundation of ASEAN ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality) was launched as a security policy concept; here, neutrality signified mainly the absence of influence of foreign states in the region (Feske 1991). To overstate the case, in its initial stages, ASEAN was an anti-communist association looking for wide support from the West (Schütte and Lasserre 1996, p. 13).

The foundation of ASEAN should however also be seen in the context of an early wave of ‘Third World regionalism’. In East Asia, indeed, in the whole of Asia, ASEAN was the first subregional co-operative association to include neither established nor newly industrialized countries, but developing countries exclusively. Buzz words such as ‘south-south co-operation’ or ‘new world economic order’ associated with fantastic ideas about dissolving asymmetrical distribution of power between the rich countries of the North and the poor countries of the South defined the spirit of much development and regional political discourse (Rüland 1995).

Nine years after Bangkok, regional integration received new impetus, which was motivated primarily by security policy. On 23–24 July

1976, the first meeting of the heads of government of the ASEAN states took place on the Indonesian island of Bali. At this first ASEAN summit, an agreement, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South East Asia, TAC, and a framework agreement on an action program (Declaration of ASEAN Concord) were signed. A closer look at these documents reveals:

- 'An agreement on mechanisms to deal with conflict peacefully;
- the explicit renunciation of threats or the use of violence;
- the establishment of a 'High Council' to deal with conflict by regional trials;
- the intention to carry out major projects jointly;
- mutual guarantee of duty relief by creating a Preferential Trading Arrangement, PTA;
- the establishment of a central ASEAN secretariat in Jakarta' (Stahl 2001, p. 25).

A year later, regional co-operation was strengthened particularly as regards economic policy. At the second ASEAN summit, 4–5 August 1977 in Kuala Lumpur, the association responded to the difficult economic situation world-wide with comprehensive resolutions including a rice reserve, an oil regulation programme and a swap arrangement where there were problems with the balance of payments. Intensive collaboration with neighbouring states and with the European Community were also decided.

During 1976 and 1977 the direction for regional integration was essentially laid down, but no significant changes took place for several years. The third ASEAN summit did not take place until ten years later, from 14–15 December 1987 in Manila. However this was disappointing in so far as no further steps towards integration were taken. Limited progress was made in key points such as institutional reforms, integration of economies and economic policies and joint defence.

Another five years passed before the fourth summit was held in Singapore in 1992. ASEAN aims were widened to include the Singapore agreement. In the three central documents (1. Singapore Declaration, 2. Framework Agreement on Enhancing ASEAN Economic Co-operation, 3. Agreement on Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT)) the states in the association agreed to widen collaboration in matters of security, to strengthen the ASEAN institutions and to set up a free trade zone in East Asia – the Asian Free Trade Association (AFTA) – which would reduce duty step by step over 15 years to 0 to 5 per cent for all industrial goods and remove non-tariff obstructions to trade (Erdmann and Kreisel 1994; Freiwald 1996).

The economic success of the ASEAN member states, illustrated in the 1970s and 1980s by average growth of 7 per cent annually in the national gross domestic product, was only the result of regional collaboration in that the joint security policy ensured political stability (Uhlig 1992). It was mainly the efforts of individual member states of the association which were responsible for the growth and less so the agreements within the framework of the Asian Free Trade Association.

Part of the success story of ASEAN is that after years of effort to create a nuclear weapon-free zone in South East Asia, at the fifth summit conference in December 1995, the Treaty on the South East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) was finally implemented. The signatory states declared themselves willing to renounce the development, the construction and the purchase of atomic weapons. However, it should be noted that still up to the present day, each state is free to accept ships or aircraft equipped with nuclear weapons from other states in their own sovereign territory, which is not completely in line with the theoretical concept of a nuclear-free zone.

The path towards peace and stability in South East Asia which started in 1992 in Singapore continued with the ASEAN 2020 vision which was agreed at the informal summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997. The following is a précis of the declarations of intent and the goals: peace and stability in South East Asia with peaceful resolution of conflict; the development of a partnership for dynamic development and reduction of economic differences between the states and the establishment of a association of humane societies. The 'Hanoi Action Plan' and the 'bold measures' agreed at the sixth ASEAN summit on 16 December 1998 in Hanoi targeted primarily an economic revival of the region following the crisis in Asia in 1997–8.

These agreements can be characterized more or less as an ad hoc programme intended to return the states to steady growth. It is considered that economic growth is the necessary prerequisite for modernizing the countries and creates the necessary framework conditions to allow all the ASEAN states to make up ground. At the end of the 1990s the economic objectives were given priority over the efforts to achieve integrated security. At the third informal summit in Manila in November 1999, this trend was underlined when no more objectives for security policy integration were set. However, at the 34th ASEAN foreign minister conference in Hanoi, the positive progress of the ASEAN forum, particularly the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), in the security dialogue for East Asia was highlighted and the significance of ASEAN for security policy integration was further reinforced.

In the 35 years that ASEAN has existed, it has been more successful in security policy than in economic policy. Early on ASEAN was concerned to find a way to calm the initially very tense relationships between the member states. Whereas from the beginning of the European integration process, regional exchange of goods together with the political motives for integration were of great importance (particularly for Germany: Europe was its most important market after the USA) in South East Asia, it was more the decisions on security policy which had an integrative effect. Peace in large parts of South East Asia, long-awaited particularly in Vietnam and Cambodia, represented one of the most important mainstays for the dynamic development of the economy in the ASEAN countries and their integration in the global economy.

Key impulses for favourable economic development in the ASEAN countries were provided particularly by Japan, as an advanced industrial state. In the mid-50s, Japan began its dynamic rise to becoming the second largest industrial nation in the world, proving spectacularly that it was possible to make up ground in industrialization. Japan was elected as a model for economic development by Malaysia amongst others. 'Look East' was one of the key slogans which the Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammed Matahir frequently used in his modernization propaganda, shunning the Western development models in favour of recipes for success from Japan. Even though the Japanese business models became less celebrated in the 90s, Japan's leading economic position in East Asia is undisputed. With only 7.5 per cent of the population, Japan made around 60 per cent of East Asia's gross domestic product. Japan's leading role in the region can be illustrated with the 'flying geese' model.

The model describes the regional economic interdependencies of East Asia, which resemble a staggered chase in which Japan is pursued by the Newly Industrialized Economies (NIE) – Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan – these by the ASEAN states and the ASEAN states by China. The countries all entered the phase of industrial development at different points in time: in Japan this was in the 1920s and 1930s, in the NIEs it was in the 1970s, in the ASEAN states it was during the 1980s and for China it was the end of the 1980s. This has resulted in a dynamic mix of development in East Asia which did not stop completely in the Asia crisis in 1997–8, but was merely interrupted.

The flying geese model assumes further that countries in a certain stage of development can only produce those products which are appropriate for the capital and technology with which they are equipped. Technologically more complex products and the necessary means of pro-

duction associated with them must be imported from countries in front of them in the model and therefore on a higher development level. In a countermove, the countries that are not yet quite so well developed export more labour-intensive products into more developed countries as they can manufacture them more cheaply with their lower wage costs and associated outlay (Böhn 1992, Pohl and Weggel 1984).

As a country develops, the availability of capital, human resources and technology improves so that it can manufacture higher value products and control the appropriate production processes (Schütte and Lassere 1996). As the wage costs in this country are still relatively low however, it gains competitive advantage over the country on the next higher level of development and is able to force it out of its traditional product ranges. However, as the country in its turn is forced out of production in some areas by countries on lower development levels, there is a shift in each position in the model overall. Each country therefore has its own fixed place within the model with the prospect of going through the same development processes as countries on higher levels. Due to the different developmental stages and the associated competitive advantage for each country, division of labour over the region is pronounced. Associated with this is the intensification of intraregional trade and intraregional direct investment, which again is growing much faster than the exchange of goods and capital with other regions.

In the flying geese model, Japan will always be out in front with the leading economic role in East Asia. However, the condition for this is that the technology transfer from Japan to the other East Asian countries only takes place with a definite time offset. If, for example, the NIEs were able to use modern information systems to catch up with Japanese industry more quickly, Japan's position out in front would be under threat. Therefore, it would seem more sensible from the Japanese point of view to keep the management of their industrial 'transplants' in the other countries in the region Japanese and only outsource those areas of the company which are not involved in the development of new products or manufacturing technology. This keeps the industrialization and development process in the East Asia region largely dependent on the development process in Japan, unless European and American companies strengthen their involvement in the region should their strategic situations or economic objectives change.

Comprehensive economic integration in this region would eventually reduce the heterogeneity of the countries and make Japan's strategy of maintaining its leading role much more difficult. One should also not forget the 'little tigers' – South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore



which since the 1960s have shown impressive development in industry and services and have made their influence felt in East Asia (Gaffga 1996; Hilpert and Haak 2002).

In addition, China's boom since the early 1980s has brought an enormous economic dynamic to the region. Both in international business and in international economics, it is widely recognized that the current rise of China has wide implications for the international economic and political order in general and for the East Asian region in particular. The states in the region are facing the challenge of an economically and politically successful China. China's industry with its low sales prices and its improving product quality, is set to become a major competitor in global manufacturing products' markets, including the Japanese domestic market, which is quite a worrying prospect for Japan's economic and political elites. On the macro level, China is challenging Japan as East Asia's center of economic gravity in terms of production and markets. In the 1990s, China initiated a new phase of regional business co-operation. Even though this new trend was mainly launched and promoted by Japan and Australia, ASEAN played a key role in a formal sense.

From the point of view of ASEAN there were primarily two trends which gave efforts towards multilateral co-operation and integration new urgency: the American retreat from the region (unification of Vietnam, withdrawal of American military from bases in the Philippines in 1992) left a power vacuum which gave rise to old and new concerns and fears regarding the hegemonic ambition of Japan and China. Furthermore, from the point of view of ASEAN, at the beginning of the 1990s, global tendencies to form political trade blocks increased. The East Asian states saw here the danger of losing important export markets in North America and Europe (Maull and Nabers 2001), which was equivalent to losing one of the central catalytic functions for increasing industrialization or in more general terms for the modernization it required. For the ASEAN member states, symptoms of this block building tendency were particularly apparent in the European Union's plans for a single domestic market and in the formation of NAFTA.

How did ASEAN respond to these changes? From the economic policy point of view, the association relinquished its reservations on the concept of East Asian-Pacific economic co-operation. In 1989, it agreed to the foundation of APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) which was promoted by Australia (Hilpert 1992). 1992 can be seen as a turning point in terms of both security policy and the economy. At the fourth ASEAN summit in Singapore, discussion on security policy was widened as part of the ASEAN Regional Forum as was the attempt at economic co-

operation within the member states based on a free trade zone, the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

In the context of this development, institutionalized political integration emerged in both economic and security policy. These included APEC mentioned above (founded 1989, 1991 summit), the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), which began in 1991 as the East Asian Economic Grouping and since 1997 has been organized as the ASEAN+3 meeting initially for foreign ministers and then as an annual summit for the heads of state and government of the ASEAN member states with China, Japan and South Korea (Korhonen 1988). Furthermore there is KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization), founded in 1996 and ASEAM (Asia Europe Meeting) also since 1996.

What brought about these East Asian co-operative processes? It seems that with the exception of KEDO, they were triggered by economic involvement on regional and transregional level (Maull and Nabers 2001). Transnational and multinational companies from Japan with their internationally networked company structures (*keiretsu*), overseas Chinese companies in trade and investment and also Korean mixed conglomerates (*chaebol*) and internationally active Taiwanese groups drove the forms of horizontal and vertical division of labour in East Asia on (Schütte and Lasserre 1996, pp. 65–90). In addition to company networks, the role of networks of scientists, politicians, journalists and business associates should not be underestimated in their efforts to breathe life into and drive on regional co-operation and integration. Since the 1960s, a number of unofficial discussion forums have emerged, where scientists, business associates and journalists talk to government representatives about co-operation issues in East Asia. The most important forums are the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC), which led to the foundation of APEC and above all the Council for Security Co-operation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), which complemented the ASEAN Regional Forum in the area of security policy.

On the whole, economists still dispute the value of informal business integration and the tendencies towards political co-operation and integration (regionalization) in East Asia. For instance, ASEAN is frequently held up as an example of the success of interstate co-operation outside of Europe; however a number of experts doubt the durability of these relationships. Some scientists tend to decry the organizational forms of collaboration on security and economic policy that have emerged over the last ten years as talking shops and grant them only little influence in the increasing stability in East Asia and particularly in the ASEAN states (Maull and Nabers 2001). Other authors, on the other hand, including acknowledged international economists, stress the enormous capacity to

learn of the countries in East Asia which the impressive economic growth rates over the last few decades have proven. They argue that East Asia on the basis of this proven capacity for learning and the development of regional co-operation with formal integration could catch up with West and possibly overtake it (Bergsten 2000).

However, it is difficult to share this optimistic assessment. A striking example: the Asian crisis, which started in July 1997 with the devaluation of the Thai Bath and gradually died away in 1999, clearly showed the structural problems with interstate co-operation in East Asia. The economic and internal political difficulties experienced by most of the founder members of ASEAN during the Asia crisis and the expansion of ASEAN at the end of the 1990s to include three very troubled members, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos created an additional burden for the cooperative negotiations of the association. New regional and transregional co-operation processes must be put on a broad and solid basis so that crisis events in the region can be dealt with. Without international help, the Asian crisis would not have been overcome so quickly.

Whilst in Europe, for example, the level of integration rose considerably with the agreements in Maastricht, attempts at integration in East Asia happen on a much lower level. The conditions for East Asia becoming a single integrated area are already unfavourable given the heterogeneity discussed above. In Europe, almost two thousand years of shared culture and geographical proximity have produced an almost homogenous entity in comparison to East Asia. In recent years, European integration has been balanced. Despite the North-South divide that exists in the European Union, the range of economic power is much smaller than in East Asia. The political, cultural and economic differences in East Asia must be seen as a serious obstacle to an integration process comparable to that in Europe. A single currency, even it were to be seriously considered by the East Asian states, is a long way away. A JPY block would not be acceptable to many countries for historical reasons. There would be no point in having a single currency without China as the second most important commercial and industrial power in the region and without the economic potential of the overseas Chinese (Hilpert and Haak 2002).

The existing commercial ties, co-operative and integrated areas in East Asia are currently characterized by informal organizational structures. Co-operative ventures in East Asia have therefore fundamentally a different quality from those in the early stages of the European Union. The unwillingness on the part of individual countries in South East, and also in North East Asia to cede their national rights as sovereign states to a supranational organization is the key reason for the low

level of institutionalization in Asian economic relationships. One of the consequences of this is that decisions are frequently made on the basis of the smallest denominator as all member states must agree. Fundamental structural reform and real turnarounds in economic, currency and security policy leading to closer co-operation and wider integration should not be expected in the near future.

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