

## Governance Across Borders in Northeast Asia: Shaping and Sharing Identities, Ideas, Interests and Institutions

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### Abstract

The paper attempts to examine the extent to which community formation in Northeast Asia (i.e., Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Russia, Mongolia) is feasible. In order to constitute a modicum of governance across borders, one needs to inculcate a certain set of commonalities. This paper empirically examines the state of affairs in the region in terms of identities, ideas, interests and institutions. On the basis of empirical examination, discussion is made on how one might proceed to the task of shaping and sharing identities, ideas, interests and institutions in Northeast Asia so that some sort of regional governance norms and structures can be envisaged in the future.

\*Section 1 on identities draws from the Asia-Europe Survey project: Globalization and Political Cultures of Democracy in Asia and Europe, led by Takashi Inoguchi, funded by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, for the period between 1999-2003 (Project number 11102000).

### 1. Identity

Identity is defined as something which psychologically binds members of a community often on the basis of historical, geographical and cultural factors. Most Northeast Asians find their identity largely on the basis of national community. Southeast Asians are more or less the same in this regard. Compared to Europeans, Asians, Northeast or Southeast, have not developed their regional identity very much. In the 18 society survey done in 2000 (Nippon Research Center 2001), this is amply clear.

The question asked is: Do you feel part of a supranational group? (Answer: "European," "Asian," "Chinese," "Islamic," "Other supranational identity," "Don't think of myself in

this way”)

Asians, i.e., in this case, Japanese, South Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, Singaporeans, Malaysians, Indonesians, Thais and Phillipinos, choose Asian only by 39% on average whereas Europeans, i.e., in this case, British, Irish, French, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese and Greeks, choose European by 57.3%.

tables 1 and 2

Q9 Do you feel part of a supranational group? Breakdown: 9 Asian Countries										
	Total	Japan	South Korea	China	Taiwan	Singapore	Malaysia	Indonesia	Thailand	Philippines
Total	9,160 100.0	1,129 100.0	1,010 100.0	1,002 100.0	1,002 100.0	1,006 100.0	1,000 100.0	1,011 100.0	1,000 100.0	1,000 100.0
European	25 0.3	-	-	-	-	2 0.2	2 0.2	-	4 0.4	17 1.7
Asian	3,573 39	298 26.4	895 88.6	311 31	143 14.3	198 19.7	58 5.8	100 9.9	819 81.9	751 75.1
Chinese	1,527 16.7	5 0.4	-	340 33.9	672 67.1	282 28.0	167 16.7	15 1.5	23 2.3	23 2.3
Islamic	987 10.8	-	-	-	-	73 7.3	430 43	434 42.9	22 2.2	28 2.8
Other supra-national	172 1.9	25 2.2	5 0.5	58 5.8	9 0.9	5 0.5	60 6.0	-	9 0.9	1 0.1
Don't think of myself in this way	2,875 31.4	800 70.9	110 10.9	293 29.2	178 17.8	446 44.3	283 28.3	462 45.7	123 12.3	180 18
NA	1 0.0	1 0.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Q9 Do you feel part of a supranational group? Breakdown: 9 European Countries										
	Total	United Kingdom	Ireland	France	Germany	Sweden	Italy	Spain	Portugal	Greece
Total	9,093 100.0	1,014 100.0	1,010 100.0	1,006 100.0	1,025 100.0	1,001 100.0	1,016 100.0	1,003 100.0	1,000 100.0	1,018 100.0
European	5,212 57.3	251 24.8	453 44.9	709 70.5	550 53.7	595 59.4	690 67.9	769 76.7	752 75.2	443 43.5
Asian	32 0.4	14 1.4	1 0.1	-	4 0.4	1 0.1	-	11 1.1	1 0.1	-
Chinese	8 0.1	2 0.2	1 0.1	1 0.1	2 0.2	1 0.1	-	1 0.1	-	-
Islamic	28 0.3	5 0.5	1 0.1	11 1.1	4 0.4	4 0.4	1 0.1	-	-	2 0.2
Other supra-national identity	186 2.0	37 3.6	7 0.7	46 4.6	13 1.3	31 3.1	9 0.9	15 1.5	14 1.4	14 1.4
Don't think of myself in this way	3,616 39.8	705 69.5	547 54.2	239 23.8	448 43.7	369 36.9	316 31.1	200 19.9	233 23.3	559 54.9
NA	11 0.0	-	-	-	4 0.4	-	-	7 0.7	-	-

\* Source: Nippon Research Center, *The AsiaEurope Survey*, Tokyo: Nippon Research Center 2001, for the project on democracy and political cultures in Asia and Europe, led by Takashi Inoguchi.

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Amongst Europeans Britons are a clear outlier in the European identity registering only 24.8%. Amongst Asians, South Koreans, Thais and Phillipinos are positive outliers in this regard, registering respectively 88.6%, 81.9% and 75.1%. One difficulty arises on this regional identity since two categories, Chinese and Islamic, are chosen heavily in China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Nevertheless focusing on

Northeast Asians in this survey, i.e, Japanese, South Koreans, Chinese and Taiwanese, one can conclude that only South Koreans entertain strong Asian identity. More than two thirds of Japanese choose the last category, refusing to think of themselves in any supranational fashion. Chinese and especially Taiwanese think of themselves as part of the greater cultural Chinese commonwealth, thus Asian regional identity has not developed very much. Therefore one can conclude from this finding that shaping Asian identity may take more time than some of the proponents of Asian regional identity formation tend to think.

## 2. Idea

Of all ideas, freedom is most important for me to examine. Following Freedom House ratings of countries in terms of political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2000), one can see that Northeast Asians would have tremendous difficulties in overcoming the enormous diversity in the degree of freedom. Japan's ratings are 1 (highest group in the world) in terms of political rights and 2 in terms of civil liberties. South Korea's ratings are 2 in terms of political rights and 2 in terms of civil liberties. Taiwan's ratings are 2 in terms of political rights and 2 in terms of civil liberties. China's ratings are 7 in terms of political rights and 6 in terms of civil liberties. North Korea's ratings are 7 in terms of political rights and 7 in terms of civil liberties.

One can argue that the current diversity is not a major problem as community formation takes ages anyway and that meanwhile one can expect regime change might take place in China and North Korea. Those who argue for the likelihood of regime change in such societies depict a number of causal factors. Two most classical and widely shared views on this are (1) that the increasing affluence in China will lead eventually to the societal demand to go free (Lipset, 1962, Ding, 1993, He, 1996) and (2) that the diffusion and penetration of ideas from without through the internet and email are destined to cause the increase in dissidents on the one hand and to cause

Table 3 Political Rights and Civic Liberties of Independent Countries

	Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating		Country	PR	CL	Freedom Rating
	Afghanistan	7	7	Not Free		Dominica	1	1	Free
	Albania	4	5	Partly Free	t	Dominican Republic	2	3	Free
	Algeria	6	5	Not Free		East Timor	6.	4.	Partly Free
	Andorra	1	1	Free	t	Ecuador	2	3	Free
t	Angola	6	6	Not Free		Egypt	6	5.	Not Free
	Antigua and Barbuda	4	3	Partly Free		El Salvador	2	3	Free
	Argentina	2.	3	Free		Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free
	Armenia	4	4	Partly Free		Eritrea	7.	5.	Not Free
	Australia	1	1	Free		Estonia	1	2	Free
	Austria	1	1	Free		Ethiopia	5.	5.	Partly Free
	Azerbaijan	6	4	Partly Free		Fiji	2.	3	Free
	Bahamas	1	1.	Free		Finland	1	1	Free
	Bahrain	7	6	Not Free		France	1	2	Free
	Bangladesh	3.	4	Partly Free		Gabon	5	4	Partly Free
	Barbados	1	1	Free		The Gambia	7	5	Not Free
t	Belarus	6	6	Not Free		Georgia	3	4	Partly Free
	Belgium	1	2	Free		Germany	1	2	Free
	Belize	1	1	Free		Ghana	3	3	Partly Free
	Benin	2	3.	Free		Greece	1	3	Free
	Bhutan	7	6	Not Free		Grenada	1	2	Free
t	Bolivia	1	3	Free		Guatemala	3	4	Partly Free
t	Bosnia-Herzegovina	5	5	Partly Free		Guinea	6	5	Not Free
	Botswana	2	2	Free	t	Guinea-Bissau	3	5	Partly Free
t	Brazil	3	4	Partly Free		Guyana	2	2	Free
	Brunei	7	5	Not Free		Haiti	5	5	Partly Free
	Bulgaria	2	3	Free		Honduras	3.	3	Free
	Burkina Faso	4.	4	Partly Free		Hungary	1	2	Free
	Burma	7	7	Not Free		Iceland	1	1	Free
	Burundi	6.	6	Not Free		India	2	3	Free
	Cambodia	6	6	Not Free		Indonesia	4.	4	Partly Free
	Cameroon	7	6.	Not Free		Iran	6	6	Not Free
	Canada	1	1	Free		Iraq	7	7	Not Free
	Cape Verde	1	2	Free		Ireland	1	1	Free
t	Central African Republic	3	4	Partly Free		Israel	1	2.	Free
	Chad	6	5.	Not Free		Italy	1	2	Free
	Chile	2.	2	Free		Jamaica	2	2	Free
	China(P.R.C.)	7	6	Not Free		Japan	1	2	Free
	Colombia	4.	4	Partly Free		Jordan	4	4.	Partly Free
	Comoros	6.	4	Partly Free		Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
	Congo(Brazzaville)	6.	5	Not Free		Kenya	6	5	Not Free
	Congo(Kinshasa)	7	6	Not Free		Kiribati	1	1	Free
t	Costa Rica	1	2	Free		Korea, North	7	7	Not Free
	Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Partly Free		Korea, South	2	2	Free
	Croatia	4	4	Partly Free		Kuwait	4.	5	Partly Free
	Cuba	7	7	Not Free		Kyrgyz Republic	5	5	Partly Free
	Cyprus(G)	1	1	Free		Laos	7	6	Not Free
	Czech Republic	1	2	Free		Latvia	1	2	Free
	Denmark	1	1	Free		Lebanon	6	5	Not Free
	Djibouti	4.	6	Partly Free		Lesotho	4	4	Partly Free
						Liberia	4	5	Partly Free

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 1999-2000*

NY: Freedom House, 2000



adjustments by the communist leadership on the other (Solomon, 1972, Rose, 2001). While China seems to give a number of symptoms of the decay of communist rule, North Korea seems to defy any prediction on these two causal factors eventually leading to the abandonment of communist dictatorship. After all the North Korean leadership has been keeping people in dire poverty, if not intentionally, thus causing the increasing number of people to leave the country, albeit on a very small scale compared to Central/East Europeans prior to 1989, a symptom of regime collapse if the scale gets enormously large. Also the North Korean leadership forbids people from having access to radio and television and computer. Yet some ethnic Korean tourists and visitors from outside, i.e., South Korea, Japan and China, bring in "subversive information" to North Koreans.

Other than these two causal factors, one sometimes argues that American unipolar unilateral coercive diplomacy might be executed once some large scale domestic disturbances are expected to bring about the momentum of regional destabilization. In China and North Korea during and immediately after the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, such fear was seemingly felt. When the United States is shifting from its two-war strategy to one-war strategy under the new Bush Administration, the United States might be tempted to smash a core trouble spot with a fast, massive and decisive action, if it can believe that such action could trigger regime change.

### 3. Interest

Under the heading of interest I examine the importance attached to the interdependent links of external trade and energy supply. Among China, Russia, Mongolia, South Korea, North Korea, and Japan, the external trade among China, South Korea and Japan overwhelms the rest of external trade in the region, registering 89.5%. The amount of external trade within the region was merely 154 billion US dollars as of 1996 when the total world trade amount was 5,391 billion US dollars. In terms of the ratio of intra-regional trade over total trade, China and South Korea are a high achiever. China registers 19.8% for export, 33.8% for import, South Korea records 25% for export, 27.9% for import. Japan registers 13.8% for export and 17.4% for import. Japan's interest in trade links with Northeast Asia is much smaller than China or South Korea.

Since China and Russia are geographically spread out, one needs to take a look at more geographically confined statistics. China's Northeast (Liaoning, Jiling, Heilongjiang)

registers 53.8% for export and 47.6% for import while Russia's Far East registers 62.0% for export and 33.8% for import, all in terms of the ratio of intra-regional trade over total trade. Mongolia, a landlocked country, registers high figures on this, 72.5% for export and 85.4% for import.

To sum up, one can argue that intra-regional trade links have been on the steady rise, yet that the total amount is still pitifully small compared to the ever rising world trade if the aim is to enhance a regional economic community.

	China	North East 3 Provinces	Russia	Far East	Mongolia	Korea	North Korea	Japan	North East Asia	World	Regional Dependency
China			996	219	80	8,533	497	40,405	50,511	254,773	19.8%
North East 3 Provinces			808	-	2	1,133	300	4,027	6,270	11,655	53.8%
Russia	5,150	814			211	1,807	525	3,922	11,615	85,294	13.6%
Far East	707	-			-	329	-	1,037	2,073	3,345	62.0%
Mongolia	126	2	84	-		2	0	89	301	415	72.5%
Korea	12,484	516	472	307	18		70	15,980	29,024	115,975	25.0%
North Korea	69	59	347	-	0	182		291	889	1,107	80.3%
Japan	29,190	1,438	968	160	66	31,396	226		61,846	447,961	13.8%
North East Asia	47,019	2,829	2,867	686	375	41,920	1,318	60,687	154,186	905,525	
World	138,949	5,949	62,278	2,031	439	150,370	1,931	349,508	703,475	5,391,100	
Regional Dependency	33.8%	47.6%	4.6%	33.8%	85.4%	27.9%	68.2%	17.4%			

Table 4 intra-regional trade

(the source) IMF 『Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook』 1998, 『Liaoning Statistical Yearbook』 1997, 『Jilin Statistical Yearbook』 1997, 『Heilongjiang Statistical Yearbook』 1997, 『Foreign Economic Trade Yearbook 1997/98』, Japan Association for Trade with Russia & Central-Eastern Europe 『Trade monthly report of Russia & Central-Eastern Europe』 May 1998, 『Mongolian Statistical Yearbook』 1997, Korea International Trade Association 『Trade Statistics』 1997, Ministry of Unification 『Monthly South & North cooperating tendency』 No.67 (1997.1)

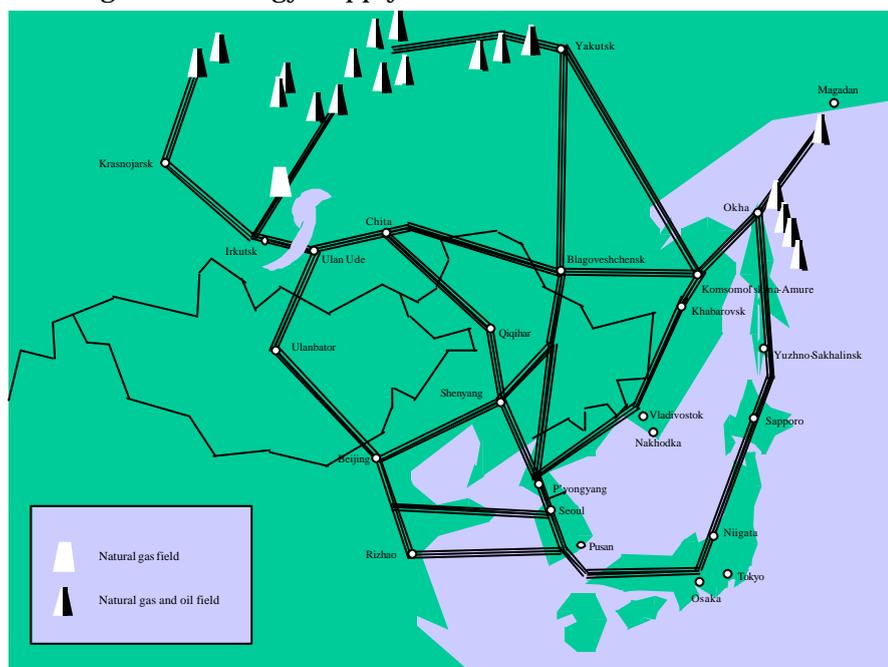
(notes) All data depends on import side, except import of North Korea, export of North East 3 Provinces and Far East of Russia. (c.i.f.)

North East Asia in this table is total value of nations, and regional dependency is based on that value.

Now I turn to energy supply. Energy links are important in itself and also in terms of tying subregions much more tightly. This point is understood well if one recalls the fact that in Europe energy links between the Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation) and the European Community (later the European Union) developed steadily tightly between the Helsinki Accord, a declaration to form a community, and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the destruction of physical barriers to community formation. The regional demand for energy supply has been on the alarmingly fast rise for the last two decades. Not just Japan and South Korea but increasingly importantly China needs petroleum and natural gas almost desperately. Yet the exploration and exploitation of such energy resources which are located abundantly in the Eastern Siberia, the Far East, the

Maritime Province, and Sakhalin Islands need to meet three requirements, i.e., capital, technology and labor. Since Russia needs to have all from outside (slightly less so with technology), it needs to reach a basic accord with Japan and the United States, which could supply a bulk of capital and technology, if they find the whole thing attractive. Both Japan and Russia have been stubborn on the knotty troika, a peace treaty, territories, and economic development, and not much of substance has been agreed on most matters. However one can find some consolation in the fact that Russians now place Japan as the fourth country (12%) toward which Russians are friendly after France (19%), Germany (14%) and the United States (12%) (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001) and that Europe needed two decades to develop the thick links with Russia in terms of building energy supply networks.

Figure 1 Energy Supply Networks Under Consideration



Source: Kan Nihonkai Keizai Kenkyujo, Hokuto Ajia Keizai hakusho (White Paper on the Northeast Asian Economy), Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbun, 2000, p.166.

#### 4. Institution

There are two kinds of institution: one concerns with high politics, the other with low politics. The crux of the matter in Northeast Asia is that even the minimum level of the former type of institutions has been yet to be settled/resolved. First, the

seemingly-difficult-to-reconcile tension between North and South Korea, Second, the seemingly-difficult-to-reconcile tension between Beijing and Taipei. Third, the seemingly-difficult-to-reconcile impasse between Japan and Russia, Fourth, the often-difficult-to-understand Japanese sense of history. These are all very heavy questions and one cannot envision Northeast Asian regional community unless these start to erode as a major barrier.

Nevertheless, institutions have been on the increase in Northeast Asia as well. It is a remarkable development that Japan, South Korea and China regularly meet and discuss matters not only bilaterally but also within a multilateral institutional format like ASEAN PLUS THREE (meaning Japan, South Korea and China). But this institution excludes many important parties to community formation: Taiwan, North Korea, the United States, and Australia. One can argue that including the United States in community formation precludes a healthy development of Northeast Asian regional community. But excluding the United States in community building efforts tends to make the process slow and feeble.

## 5. Conclusion

I have examined the possibility of community building in Northeast Asia in terms of identity, idea, interest and institution. From the above examination, it seems that community building in Northeast Asia has come to acquire big potentials. It will be a long road, however.