

# Comment

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1. I understand the content of the paper presented to have been generally as follows:
  - (a) The relative superiority of the two approaches for describing the Post-Cold War structure of the Asia Pacific Region, that is, (i) economic interdependence and (ii) a power balance.
  - (b) The opinions of the author on the future structure of the Asia Pacific Region.
  - (c) The role of small states and regional organizations in building a new structure.
  - (d) The conclusion appears to be that "The structure which will come about is unclear and fluid since the direction which the United States will follow is still unknown. Therefore, consideration should now be given to the promotion of the growth of small states and regional organizations to establish the framework and set the direction for building a new future structure."

2. The point to be noted in the above (a) is the criticism of the theory of "economic interdependence" which is also seen in some scattered circles in Japan. The author does not consider "interdependence" to be a problem if literally meaning mutually beneficial interdependence, but cannot approve of the present state of affairs, which is one of "asymmetrical interdependence" where one party "depends" on another. Next, he criticizes the theory of the "balance of power." A "balance of power," as seen from past examples, requires the existence of a superpower for maintaining that "balance." He considers, however, that the previous superpower, the U.S., cannot be expected to play the role of a "holder of the balance" after the end of the East-West Cold War, in particular in the latter half of the 1990s.

After criticizing these two theories, the author concludes in (b) that the new structure in Asia Pacific will be one of a "complex of mutually overlapping alliances or groupings that have economic and security functions since the presence of a superpower is in danger and the world is no longer founded on single ideologies and structures."

3. The author throws light on the roles of organizations among small states and regional organizations as evidence of this and studies the possibilities and functions of the Asia Regional Forum (ARF) in security matters and the APEC and EAEC as economic groups.

The author argues as follows: The security system in the Asia Pacific Region will consist of a overlap of alliances and grouping formed by bilateral and multilateral agreements. As a current one, mention may be made of the non-governmental level

forum on the South China Sea issue. The ARF, which was established in July of 1994, is still in its infancy and its future is uncertain. For the time being, the importance of the security treaties between Japan and the U.S. and South Korea and the U.S. should be given high marks. These two treaties are important both in terms of security and economic well being for both the U.S. and Southeast Asia.

The author defines the following problems and reaches the following conclusions from the above viewpoint: "If the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is abolished, APEC will be seriously affected and the EAEC will become more realistic. Conversely, if APEC fails to succeed and the EAEC succeeds, then the way the Americans view the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty will be heavily influenced."

The commentator is interested in this conclusion of the author. This is because if we go just a bit further with the theories of the author, then the result would be that "Asians want the continuation of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and that therefore it is better that APEC succeed and the EAEC not succeed." No further comment is necessary.

Note that the issue of the EAEC is interesting as a bargaining chip among Malaysia, Japan, and the U.S., but the author stated in the final concluding remarks that "The task of diplomacy is to hold this region (from the context, the Asia Pacific Region) together." If this is the case, then the author seems to be stressing APEC and to be positioning the EAEC as merely an area where small powers can maneuver.

Next, regarding the ARF, the author is extremely negative when it comes to the influence which its founding entity ASEAN, can have on the structure of the Asia Pacific Region as a whole. This is because coordination of opinions in this area is difficult internally. Further, ASEAN has been slow even to realize a regional AFTA (free trade agreement).

No particular comment is required on this point either.

Regarding APEC, he states that "no NATO or EU or the like has been born in the Asia Pacific Region. One attempt to overcome different cultural backgrounds and differences in levels of economic development to achieve loose agreements on union (such as free trade agreements) has been APEC. This, however, is far from a free trade structure."

Turning our discussion then to the EAEC, the author does not discuss the political and economic aspects of the EAEC, but turns his interest toward the cultural aspects of the region which the EAEC seeks to encompass. The commentator would also like to draw attention to this point.

First, the author turns his attention to the point that "if the EAEC does take off, it could have a common cultural basis in a rising Asian consciousness." Next, he goes on to say that "East and Southeast Asia is of course much more culturally diverse than Europe and in so far as there is a collective consciousness, it is externally defined. Yet rising economic development, the awareness of a shared community oriented philosophy as distinct from the western emphasis on individualism, a consensual approach to the resolution of problems, and so on have made many East and Southeast Asians increasingly aware they have a common Asian cultural identity."

Therefore, the author, Professor Lee, concludes as follows: "If the EAEC is a cultural grouping searching for an economic framework, APEC is an economic framework searching for a common culture. If Huntington is to be believed,

wouldn't APEC, as an economic group, last long as a meaningful organization since it lacks a common cultural base? The key to the success of APEC, accordingly, is the convergence of Asian communitarianism and western individualism."

"The problem is that it is not one or the other, it is a combination of the two—that is, democratic order without sacrificing community interests for individualism. In point of fact, Asia is moving toward democratization, while the U.S. is awakening to the need for cooperative endeavor."

Regarding the EAEC, the commentator draws attention to the fact that the recent "Asian values" being propounded in Southeast Asia in actually appeared in relation to state control and desire for continuous power in Singapore by the former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Lee Kuan Yew began pushing this idea in the 1970s first of all with the intention of injecting a spiritual ethos into the Singaporean people for political and social stability. The need for this was felt due to the way the people's thinking were rocked and social order became looser along with rapid economic growth. Second, Confucianism, which is a part of the Asian value system, is a convenient ethical system for state control. Third, it was a theoretical weapon to use in battling the harsh criticism of the western media over the ruling style of Lee Kuan Yew with regard to democracy and human rights.

In Singapore, the government leaders began talking once again about a reevaluation of Asian values in the late 1980s. This was a period in which the issue of Lee Kuan Yew yielding power began being debated. It was therefore probably designed to clearly support social stability, political calm, and the continuation of the Lee Kuan Yew regime.

By way of note, Lee Kuan Yew's successor, Goh Chok Tong (current prime minister) stated as follows at the time (October 28, 1988). "The book by E. Vogel which I am currently reading (George Lodge and Ezra Vogel, *Ideology and National Competitiveness*) makes use of the term communitarianism. The author believes that national competitiveness is dependent on either individualism or communitarianism. We must decide which of these is suited to us. We have the same cultural base and value system which enabled Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan to succeed, that is, Confucian ethics."

That is, Goh Chok Tong was trying to faithfully follow the line propounded by Lee Kuan Yew. Further, other leaders of the next generation in addition to Goh Chok Tong began saying the same thing. What is interesting here is that all the leaders from Lee Kuan Yew on down who spoke of Asian values probably are English-educated and were afraid of losing their own cultural roots. They also had in common an awakening to Asian values from the works of westerners who saw a certain spiritual background in the economic growth of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Whatever the case, what Lee Kuan Yew had in mind was Confucianism as a rationale for state control. In that sense, it related only to Singapore. The Suharto regime of Indonesia, however, and the Mahathir administration of Malaysia, should welcome this as well when considering the future of their regimes. Mahathir etc. has also begun talking about Asian values.

What about the level of the citizens of these countries? What about the Moslem Malaysians and Indonesians, the Buddhist Thais, and the Christian Filipinos? The

commentator has never heard about “Asian values” at the level of the people of Asia. It is doubtful that they have a common understanding of “Asia.”

The Asian theory much talked about in recent years should be rethought from the ground up as a new system of values including the values of democracy and human rights, though these may be unpleasant when pointed out by Western countries.