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# Japanese Ideas of Asian Regionalism

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## **Abstract**

Japan is geographically located on the fringe of Asia. Japan's location is often divided between those arguing that Japan is inside Asia and those arguing it is outside Asia. Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism are thus immensely varied. This article details a number of Japanese ideas on Asian regionalism with author/agency, scope and method specified. Special mention is made of weak integration of government agencies, thus causing proliferation of many Japanese ideas within Asia. With the increasing self-assertiveness of China, the apparent peaking out of American hegemony, and the steady rise of non-Chinese Asians, Japan tries to maintain enduring alliance with the United States, to invigorate interdependence with China, and to reinvent new relationships with the countries of the East Asian Summit. Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism take those templates as guidelines to develop new ideas of Asian regionalism.

## **1. Introduction**

Regionalism is defined as the aspirations and actions of banding together on a regional basis to achieve common goals. Here are three inherent difficulties. First, although it is not difficult to aspire jointly to achieve something, it is not easy to act jointly; therefore, the normal 'collective action' problem arises (Olson, 1962). Second, to do something on a regional basis is not easy. As the United Nations Security Council permanent or semi-permanent membership dispute shows, neighbors are often most difficult to handle (e.g., Bush, 2010 on Japan and China). Common goals are not easy to set up. Brazil's candidacy is opposed by Mexico and Argentina; Japan's candidacy is opposed by China and Korea; Germany's candidacy is opposed by Italy; India's candidacy is opposed by Pakistan; and South Africa's candidacy is opposed by Nigeria and Egypt (Russett, 1997). Third, more recently, the tide of globalization has been so deeply felt that the validity of confining actors and goals based on their regions is not so easy to assess. Nevertheless, regionalism is always present (Asian Development Bank, 2008). It is alive and well in many regions, and this is also the case in Japan. In this

paper, I examine Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism over the last century and beyond in light of the above three kinds of difficulties. This examination is carried out in three terms: normative, economic, and security.

## **2. Normative dimension of Japanese ideas of regionalism**

Until the 1950s, one of the key Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism was anti-colonialism (that is anti-Western colonialism), national self-determination, and independence. From the time of the Japanese participation, as a victor in World War One, in the Versailles conference of 1918 through to the Japanese entry into the United Nations in 1956, this theme was repeated consistently. One can see some commonalities between Prince (later Prime Minister) Fumimaro Konoe's essay published in 1918, stressing the theme of Western dominance in peace settlements and criticizing Western colonialism which prevented national self-determination and racial equality, and Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi's United Nations speech in 1958, stressing national independence, racial equality, and solidarity with Asia. It may not be an exaggeration to say that this idea derives from the experience and memory of Japan facing the threat of being conquered and colonized. This included the initial nineteenth century opening of the country and ports by naval coercion, the imposition of extraterritoriality and tariff non-autonomy long into the twentieth century, the steadily executed and concerted Western economic embargoes against Japan, and the relentless execution of war against Japan, which led Robert McNamara who designed the massive city bombing of Japan, for one, to say that, unless the United States were a victor, it would be charged as a war crime offender. One can argue that this line of writing Japanese history faded by the 1960s remarkably swiftly. At the same time, one can counter argue that this line of writing Japanese history dies hard, as evinced by the hard-to-suppress dissonance of the two not-so-well-functioning bilateral history commissions with Korea and China (Inoguchi, 2007). The memory of anti-colonial Japan makes Japan's ontological insecurity (Zarakol, 2010) difficult to erase. Japan's defeat in World War Two negated the key drives of modern Japan, at least it seemed to those who carry some bones and tails of Konoe and Kishi: enlightenment and empowerment along the Western way. All the efforts that led to 1945 ended in emptiness. This ontological emptiness or insecurity sometimes makes Japanese ideas of regionalism more difficult to prevail or to be accommodated in the region.

As a matter of fact, of the 32 countries in Asia which were surveyed by the AsiaBarometer project during the period from 2003 to 2008, only two countries were negative towards Japan's impacts: Korea and China (<https://www.asiabarometer.org/>). All the rest were remarkably positive about Japan's impact on their own countries. Along with Canada, Japan stands out as one of the most positively perceived countries globally according to a BBC survey. Yet ontological insecurity intermittently arouses dissonance with Korea and China. It looks as if any good idea of regionalism is bound to stumble on this dimension before it is further articulated. It may be regarded as intriguing to some that these three Northeast Asian economic giants have almost

become a pillar of the world economy, with intraregional trade (between China, Japan, and South Korea) exceeding 50% of total trade as of the early 2000s, only a decade since the end of the Western and Japanese embargo against China that followed the Tiananmen massacre of 1989. The much-vaunted European Union only achieved a similar figure exceeding 50% a few decades after the Rome Treaty of 1957. One can argue that despite all the disagreements over history, territory, and honor, the three countries have established one of the densest and strongest regional zones for economic transactions, trade, investment, technology flows, etc.; therefore, one does not have to worry too much about normative issues – perhaps. Yet the nagging doubt remains when disagreement swiftly and often so easily becomes the issue of vigorous contention. In 2006, when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Korea to encourage President Roh Moo Hyun to conclude a bilateral free trade agreement, the latter refused for some unknown reasons. The issue had been in progress since President Kim Dae-Jung's proposal, during a visit to Tokyo in 1998, for a free trade agreement, because Japan's agricultural lobby was difficult to persuade. Yes, this cannot be explained solely by economics. After all, Korea has concluded such an agreement with the United States and the European Union. Why not with Japan as well? Some say that he was angry about Japan's minuscule concessions on agricultural liberalization when Korea had agreed to drastically liberalize its agricultural sector. Others say that the history issue came to his mind suddenly, prompting him to say no when his staff had already prepared to sign the document. In 2010, when the Japanese coast guard constrained the captain and crew of a Chinese fishing vessel, who were fishing in the Japanese exclusive economic zone, the Chinese government demanded that Japan release them immediately, apologize, and make payment to China, and cancelled a number of bilateral interactions and threatened to stop business transactions. Such contentions are not uncommon on issues related to the law of the sea. Some Chinese protestors carried slogans opposing Japanese aggression in the late 19th century. Only after Prime Minister Naoto Kan ordered the release of the captain did Prime Minister Wen Jiabao call a halt to his government's actions and the two sides conversed for 20 minutes during the Asia-Europe meeting. Why so much fuss on both sides? Yes, history as contended by both sides hangs heavily. One can argue that Chinese aggressive behavior is not solely targeted against Japan, but is sometimes also targeted against many, such as Norway for the decision to award the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, or even against the Chinese government and the Chinese Communist Party in a disguised form, since waving the anti-Japanese banner enables demonstrators to act safely.

The point here, however, is that whatever the reasons for contentious interaction, it seems that it is still necessary for much trust to be built before regional undertakings can be given serious consideration. Ironically, interactions and transactions among the three countries have steadily accumulated. Besides the history issue, normative vocabularies of bilateral interaction include former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's fraternity and President Hu Qintao's harmonious society. Despite all their good intentions, these phrases sound hollow against reality. So vague are they that they cannot become the

basis of regional architecture, especially when normative issues – not only history but also more broadly rule of law, freedom, property, human rights, democracy, free passage, free trade, peaceful resolution of disputes, the environment etc., as is the case with Hatoyama's fraternity concept – must be taken up for serious and sustained discussion. From Hatoyama's point of view, these disagreements are so huge that one is compelled to start from nothing, that is let us be friends before we begin discussion. In a similar vein, both Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and President Kim Dae-Jung called for building a future-oriented relationship. Their thinking was that when building a future-oriented relationship, one can do so only on the basis of solid understanding of the past, but one should not stumble on the past and never start building a future-oriented relationship.

Looking at the normative dimensions of regionalist ideas in Japan, Korea, and China, one gets the impression that they are thin and that to make them thicker invites trouble immediately. That is why from the Japanese point of view, their regionalist ideas have been dominated by what they call functionalist ideas, which try not to delve into troublesome issues, including normative issues, directly, and leave economists to discuss regionalist endeavors in the functionalist mold.

### **3. Economic dimensions of Japanese ideas of regionalism**

'Economics take command!' may be the apt sentence for Japanese ideas of regionalism. Or to put it differently, separate economics from politics. What are Japanese economics like then? It starts from the old idea of the pattern of diffusion of products and technologies in the 1930s through to the 1950s as observed in Japan's vicinity in Asia. The 'flying geese' pattern was coined by the economist, Kaname Akamatsu (1965). Watching the slowly building economic protectionism and embargoes surrounding Japan in the inter-war period, Professor Akamatsu discovered the pattern of product and technology diffusion from Japan to Korea, Taiwan, Dalian, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and further to Southeast Asia. This was a cascading pattern of diffusion led by Japan. Although the real origins of diffusion of technology were often the United States, it looked as if the Asia-Pacific region was Japan-led in an environment of protectionism in the inter-war period. The same pattern was discovered in the post-war period of the 1950s into the 1960s when many of the Southeast Asian countries were still colonies of Western countries and when the United States was preoccupied with fighting a war in Korea and watching civil wars in many parts of Asia, including China and Vietnam. Into the 1960s through to the 1980s, Japanese economic development went well and it looked as if the Asia-Pacific economy was embraced by Japan (Hatch and Yamamura, 1996). In the 1980s, Japanese split into two schools of thought, one the East Asia line, the other the Asia-Pacific line. The former became the ASEAN plus Three (Japan, Korea, China) line whereas the latter became the APEC line. The APEC line focused on economics and multilateralism led by the US. The ASEAN plus Three focused on East Asia. Given the oft mutually difficult Three, using the arena of the ASEAN meeting was most expedient and effective means to tie the Three together

and to link the ASEAN with the Three. Into the 1990s, Chinese economic development became very dynamic. Into the 2000s, regional economies grew so steadily that the three Northeast Asian countries, especially China and Korea, became more global-oriented than oriented to regional matters. From the Japanese point of view, the Japan-led pattern of product and technology diffusion in East and Southeast Asia is still retained. Furthermore, since Japanese direct investment started to shift from China to some Southeast and South Asian countries, Japanese ideas of regionalism have become more focused on non-Northeast Asia. China and Korea have temporarily reached the semi-saturation of domestic demand at home. Both have gone global much more drastically than Japan. At the same time, instead of exploring far peripheries at home, namely Tibet, Xinjiang, and the southwest part of the country, China now focuses on those provinces adjacent to coastal provinces, namely Anhui, Henan, Hebei, Hunan, Hubei, and Sichuan, for its next focus for economic development. Korea now focuses on consolidating domestic infrastructure so as to place every part of South Korea within one and half hour's reach of the capital, so that the entire country can become a sort of greater metropolitan Seoul. Once diplomatic normalization is to be achieved in a nebulous future, South Korea is most likely to invest a lot in infrastructure, both industrial and non-industrial, so that North Korea can become a good market for South Korean business as well. The high exchange rates of the Japanese yen, that seem to be continuing for quite a while after the post-Lehman global recession, encourage many Japanese manufacturing firms to shift to Vietnam, Indonesia, and India and many other emerging economies because the highly valued yen is reducing the profitability of exports of Japanese manufactured products from Japan. To some it may be mildly intriguing to find that Japan regards itself as a front-runner in technology in East and Southeast Asia and seeks to enhance its ties with Southeast Asian countries. Japan as the first flying geese is alive and well! (Hatch, 2010). Indeed, when Asia alone (Tay, 2010) thrives, Japan as a front-runner in technology in the region must perform its duties well. As far as technology is concerned, Japan strives to achieve a strong partnership with ASEAN countries. ERIA, the Economic Research Institute for East Asia and the ASEAN, a think tank closely tied with Japan and the ASEAN for designing and implementing ASEAN-wide industrial and resource locations, embodies such Japanese aspiration. The challenge to Japanese technological superiority especially in Korea is so real that no self-complacency should be entertained. In the longer term, demography and social policy development seem to occupy the minds of Japanese policy makers. All the Northeast Asian societies, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Japan, have been reducing their population in the 2000s. China is about to enter into this club of fast-shrinking populations and reduced economic growth rate. Of all the top ten military powers in the world, it is estimated that only the United States and India and possibly the United Kingdom will be still in the expansionary phase in 2050 (Haas, 2008). The logical Japanese conclusion points to Chinese demographic standstill and reduction that would encourage Japan to look further to the West, that is India and South and Central Asia. With regard to social policy development in Asia, social policy expenditure

faces difficulties in relation to demographic decline as productive population declines. Social policy has a lot to do with domestic stability since it provides a safety net. Whether social policy expenditure goes up or not has a lot to do with military expenditure, which might go up despite lower economic growth rates in Asia, precisely because solid conflict-preventing norms and rules have not been agreed to in the region (Inoguchi, 2009a). This in turn leads me to turn to the security dimensions of regionalism.

#### **4. Security dimensions of Japanese ideas of regionalism**

The core of Japanese security calculus is the American security umbrella over Japan. Japan may not be able to shoulder what would be huge defense costs without the United States security umbrella. Japan deluded itself when the United States occupied Japan after its resounding defeat in 1945. Overnight many Japanese transformed their thinking from anti-American to pro-American. In other words, America went from being the occupier to the defender. At the same time, most Japanese have been overwhelmingly pacifist in the sense of rejecting Japan's use of military force and bemoaning wars and praying for peace. The irony is that the Japanese can only feel that they are secure with America freely using military facilities on Japanese archipelagoes. Although the Japanese self-defense forces do work alongside the United States armed forces in Japan, the former cannot be effective alone without offensive armed forces. Only with United States military involvement can the self-defense forces be defensively effective. Examining the case of the Senkaku Islands, the United States government assures Japan of its commitment to Japanese security in principle, but it maintains a policy of not taking sides when a territorial sovereignty issue is involved. Article five of the Japan-United States Security Treaty stipulates that the United States defends places where Japan has effective administrative control, but it does not mention territorial sovereignty. Furthermore, the 2002 agreement reached by the bilateral meeting between foreign and defense ministers stipulates that the United States Armed Forces will intervene to help Japan only when the Japanese self-defense forces are engaged in defending themselves in combat areas. The geographical location of the Senkaku Islands is a sensitive area. It is close to Taiwan, an island that China regards as being its own unalienable sovereign territory. Furthermore, in 1992 the Chinese government passed a law declaring the Diaoyutai (Senkaku) Islands are a Chinese territory. Although Japan maintains effective control over the Islands and this control was internationally recognized in 1895, the United States may not be very helpful to Japan in this respect, and the Islands are located far from Tokyo and Japan's naval facilities. Furthermore, the maritime self-defense forces are not necessarily strong unless they are supported by the United States Navy and Air Force. The question posed to Japan is how to handle China's excessive self-assurance action. Looking at United States foreign policy from a Japanese perspective, one immediately notices that President George W. Bush's coalition policies with security allies such as Japan and President Barack Obama's policy of conducting multilateral diplomacy both visibly dilute the role and value of security allies like Japan. When its only security ally is loosening its commitment to Japan, what

are Japan's options?: (1) to request the United States to enhance its commitment with incentives such as sending the Japanese self-defense forces to areas where the United States needs help; (2) to empower the Japanese self-defense forces to handle disputes and conflicts; (3) to placate aggressive actors to calm down and deal with them without using force; (4) to band together with a number of like-minded actors to constrain aggressive actors in the region; (5) to bring aggressive actors into a forum in which aspirational and/or binding norms and rules can be shaped together and agreed on. All of these are being used and the last one is an aspect of Japanese ideas of regionalism. After all, the ASEAN meetings have been almost the sole opportunity for the three Northeast Asian countries to sit down together for some years. Since 2005, the East Asia Summit has been another way of meeting not only with the ASEAN ten but also India, Australia, and New Zealand. The Japanese calculus for creating the East Asia Summit was to dilute the ability of aggressive actors to permeate the thinking of many ASEAN countries by also including those states that do not necessarily regard aggressive actors as the future. More recently, the three Northeast Asian leaders have sat together to talk at least once a year. The fourth option is not used. Why? The answer given by Levy and Thompson (2010) is that when the overall global security hegemony is retained by the United States, regional balance of power fluidity is least likely to exist. That is why China's immense rise has not triggered power balancing by East and Southeast Asian countries. What will happen when the United States military and naval bases and facilities located in Japan are relocated to the United States territories or to some other countries? It is uncertain. The point here, however, is that the Japanese ideas of regionalism must take into account such a security calculus.

## **5. Various Japanese strands of Asian regionalism**

Four major strands of Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism can be identified in terms of geographical coverage: (1) fraternity-based East Asian community, (2) flying geese-led economic community, (3) security-driven Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, (4) Asia-Pacific Community. It is important to note here that I examine ideas and strands of regionalism, not necessarily only government statements of regionalist proposals pursued for a prolonged period of time.

### *5.1 Fraternity-based East Asian community*

Former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of the Democratic Party of Japan presented in 2009 an idea based on fraternity. Fraternity is a key concept which is used to stress the need to build confidence in prospective community members. Although fraternity, *yuuai*, is a vague concept, Hatoyama apparently meant to inculcate basic trust between Japan, Korea, and China. Hatoyama inherited his ideas from his grandfather, Prime Minister Ichiro Hatoyama (r. 1955–1957), who had also been unhappy about Japanese diplomacy that relied heavily on the United States and had felt the need to inculcate the good neighborly relations with Korea and China. The peril of proximity has featured in this trio's relationship for a long time. Korea and China are the only two



countries in Asia whose citizens perceive greater negative impact on their countries from Japan than positive impact, according to an AsiaBarometer survey carried out during the period between 2003 and 2008. The historical narratives of the trio are very different from each other, always threatening like an active volcano. Hatoyama and those who are of a similar persuasion use a grandiose and extremely vague idea precisely because otherwise what functionalists would call regional economic integration would be a glamorous castle standing on sand (*sajo no rokaku*). Bemoaning the prevailing distrust towards Japan among citizens of Korea and China and the consistent failure of historical accounts of key events and personalities in modern East Asian history to converge, two programs have been put in place between the trio. First, massive citizen-to-citizen mutual visit programs organized by central and local governments. This program started when Yasuhiro Nakasone was prime minister in the period 1982–1987. Second, joint bilateral government commissions with Korea and with China were set up to study history. This program started after Socialist Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama issued what has become the standard statement on Japanese debt to history. Since trade among the trio surpassed 50% of their total trade in the early 2000s, functionalists may boast of the steady and solid economic foundations of community. This school of thought, however, argues that since economics works reasonably well, spirit and heart must be brought into a community in which they are deficient. What are meant by spirit and heart? What are key benchmarks of spirit and heart? Kanji (Chinese ideographs) culture in East Asia is like Latin in medieval Europe and constitutes the common spirit in East Asia. Asianism in Japan constitutes heart in Japanese thinking. It is a passion sometimes verging on anti-Americanism. The reason Hatoyama is perceived by the United States government as possibly anti-American seems to lie in his apparent Asianism. After Hatoyama resigned from the prime ministership, he said that he wanted to achieve what his grandfather, prime minister Ichiro Hatoyama, had tried in vain to achieve, that is to liberate Japan from the status of an American appendix by way of major revision of the Constitution and of the Japan-United States Security Treaty. It is important to note that the Japanese idea of Asianism is not necessarily endorsed by the majority. Rather, like British voices about Europe, Japanese voices about Asia are split into two, the maritime Asia-Oriented school and the Continental Asia-Oriented school. Hatoyama belongs to the latter.

### *5.2 Flying geese economic community*

School textbooks in Japan normally use the following sentence to characterize Japan. As Japan has few natural resources, it has been necessary to develop technological know-how and to build up manufacturing and processing industries and to manufacture industrial goods for export to purchase food, energy, and mineral resources from abroad. Thanks to such hard work, Japan has been able to move forward at the technological frontier.

The task confronting Japan is harder as the tide of globalization permeates every place so that whatever advantage Japan may enjoy now in this or that area is bound

to be lost. Even if advantage is partially lost, by shifting the location of factories Japan can move forward using older technologies and investing in research and development activities. To keep the number one position on as many technological frontiers as possible, Japan will remain the lead goose followed by other geese flying as a group. This flying geese group has been translated into a regionalist group. As a matter of fact, the majority understanding of Japanese regionalist ideas focuses on the flying geese economic community encompassing East and Southeast Asia, and on resources, technology, products, and the environment. Needless to say, geographical coverage changes over time. In the medium term, the flying geese pattern will encompass far more areas, including India, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kazakhstan. Although the flying geese model is a regionalist idea, in the medium term it may evolve into a globalist model with a somewhat narrow scope. What is widely believed to be Japan's Achilles heel is the weakness of higher education, especially the inability to attract able researchers, and the low level of investment in building the organizational and social infrastructure for sustained top-level advanced research at universities and higher research institutions. Another weakness may be the inordinate emphasis on the Japanese characteristics of such flying geese endeavors, such as using Japanese language and team practice.

### *5.3 Arc of freedom and prosperity community*

This is the idea launched by Foreign Minister Taro Aso in 2007. The idea combines a number of more politically motivated foreign policy concerns: democracy building in former authoritarian societies, education to achieve gender equality in Islamic societies, building anti-terrorist coordination networks etc., in a number of countries starting from maritime East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and ending with Baltic states as if the Arc encircled China. However, the key motivations were to fine tune policy to align with President George W. Bush's anti-terrorist actions and to enhance Japan's ties with those countries to which it has rarely attended in the recent past through the use of official development assistance and the exchange of state guests' visits and other policy instruments. With the end of the Bush presidency, the idea has been transformed into more or less routine policies, including some anti-terrorist international coordination.

### *5.4 Asia-Pacific community*

This is one of the oldest ideas of regionalism. It encompasses the United States and Pacific countries, including Latin American countries along with East and Southeast Asia. This idea of Asian regionalism is embodied in the institution called the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation conference (APEC). Already it has been solidly bureaucratized like the OECD. Its key tasks are the monitoring, reporting, and analyzing of primarily economic movements of the huge region called the Asia-Pacific. It originated in a Japanese and Australian idea (Saburo Okita and John Crawford) to monitor and assist further economic development and trade and investment when Asian countries were

**Table 1.** *Six bureaucratically centered models of regional order*

Key concept	Key Agency	Nature of regional order
(1) alliance	Foreign Affairs	Greater East Asia diluting expansive China
(2) free trade	Economics & Industry	bilateral economic partnership package in a vacuum of WTO multilateralism
(3) currency	Treasury	emergency provision of foreign reserves paving the way to an Asian euro
(4) defense	Defense	self-strengthening within Pax-Americana
(5) environment	Environment	regional cooperation in demography, energy and the environment, leading to a regional environmental regime
(6) subnational linkage	Internal Communications and Affairs	dense subnational interactions and linkages, paving the way to a dense regional community

still at the slowly developing stages. In the late 1960s, the Asia-Pacific map, sized in terms of per capita income level, looked like the two giants, Japan and Australia, sandwiching small Asian economies. The members have grown in number and the scope of its activities has grown enormously. But it is essentially an international organization, characterized by United States participation, professional technocratic work, and no binding power. As a matter of fact, Japan may not dislike this style of regional organization. President Barack Obama's Trans-Pacific Economic Partnership (TPP) idea is along the lines of the Asia Pacific Community model with stress on norms and rules and more binding power. For this reason, Japanese views have split into two categories, agricultural protectionism-environmentalism and agricultural liberalizers.

## 6. Six bureaucratically centered models of regional order

Now, I turn to a number of regional order models that have been articulated by key bureaucratic agencies (Inoguchi, 2009b). I compare the following given models (see Table 1), each of which has a key concept that is presumed to work as a driving force of regional order. Geographical frameworks differ from one to another, reflecting the core constituencies of each model's designer.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that Japanese bureaucratic agencies exercise some semi-sovereign power within the government constitutionally as well as in terms of the historically molded institutional framework (Inoguchi and Jain, forthcoming in 2011). Packaging some of them is not so easy. That is why there are so many models in Japan. The opposite side of the same coin is that the aggregating, synthesizing, and integrating actors, such as the Prime Minister, have

<sup>1</sup> These models are sub-models of Japanese foreign policy. The Japanese foreign policy models at a broader and more grandiose level are presented in Inoguchi (2000).

not been powerful enough to articulate their lines and appeal vigorously to the rest of the region.

### 6.1 *Alliance model*

The alliance model is promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with its two key concerns being the alliance with the United States and its associated slogans of freedom, liberal democracy, and free market. Its latest manifestations are the two concepts: the East Asia Summit (the ASEAN plus Six), and the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity.<sup>2</sup> The East Asia Summit has been installed in part to thwart the potentially China-dominant ASEAN plus China and Korea grouping. That is why three countries were added to its members – India, Australia, and New Zealand. But before it was inaugurated, China wielded its influence among the ASEAN members in shaping the agenda and other matters as well. The competition between the two major powers seemed to end with the somewhat diluted interest of many members in the organization itself. Then the Ministry of Economics and Industry managed to get its proposal to set up the organization's think tank, an Institute of Economic Research at Bangkok or Hanoi, accepted at the East Asia Summit. The ERIA, the Economic Research Institute for East Asia and the ASEAN, subsequently was established in Jakarta. This leads to the Ministry of Economics and Industry's bilateral free trade centered model. The other model by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity model, whereby those countries surrounding China and Russia in East and Southeast Asia, South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Central Europe are portrayed as being linked with each other in their common aspiration for freedom and prosperity. Registering a clear departure from the erstwhile pragmatic, down-to-earth, low profile slogans of Japan, it waves the flag of freedom, liberal democracy, and the free market. It makes clear that Japan's agenda involves the taming of China and Russia – if this is possible at all. It is not a coincidence that Japan has recently agreed to the provision of nuclear energy generation technologies to such countries as Kazakhstan, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

### 6.2 *Free trade model*

The Ministry of Economics and Industry's previous favorite imagery of East and Southeast Asia was the flying geese formation of industrialization, trade, and investment, with Japan leading the flock in the region. Now that Japan's developmental momentum has undeniably shifted to others, and now that the tide of globalization permeates each and every part of the region, Japan attempts to pull other countries

<sup>2</sup> The conventional set of Japanese foreign policy statements since 1952 normally contains three pillars: alliance with the United States, neighborly friendship with Asia, and upholding the United Nations as an entry into influence. Since 9/11, a new set of Japanese foreign policy statements have been introduced. In addition to how to uphold the spirit of alliance and manage alliance politics with the United States, Japan seeks (1) to uphold and spread the spirit of alliance abroad on the one hand and (2) to emphasize the need to consolidate Japan's position *vis-à-vis* its rising neighbors on the other. See, for instance, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Speech (2007) and Foreign Minister Taro Aso's speech (2006).

towards itself with what is called a bilateral economic partnership agreement, while keeping the concept of the flying geese formation alive and expanded. It is a good contrast to a United States-led neoliberal bilateral free trade agreement that strongly pushes everyone in a market-driven direction. Conversely, the Japanese initiative is meant to be agreement friendly to each economy's non-competitive sectors, at least in the short term. When the World Trade Organization has been unable to reach a compromise on agricultural liberalization, financial and other services, intellectual property rights, environmental degradation etc., it is argued that a bilateral economic partnership agreement is the best answer in that it facilitates bilateral trade liberalization step by step. Clearly, the East Asia Summit's think tank funded by Japan's Ministry of Economics and Industry is a symbol of this model. Needless to say, opposition to a bilateral free trade agreement approach has been so strong as to prevent Japanese agreements with key countries like the United States, the European Union, and the Association of South-East Asian Nations. In contrast, President Lee Myung-bak boasts that Korea has been trying to expand what he calls the largest world economic territory, meaning the combined space covered by bilateral free trade agreements with Korea (Asahi shimbun, 2011).

### *6.3 Currency model*

Stunned by the Asian financial crisis in 1997–1998, the Ministry of Treasury has been putting forward the idea of an Asian currency, a common currency akin to the euro in the European Union. The sudden dearth of foreign reserves in an emergency should be avoided by the timely supply of foreign currency by an Asian Monetary Fund. Short of this, due to the refusal of the United States government and the International Monetary Fund, the Ministry of Treasury has been enhancing the foreign reserve pooling and providing schemes through the Asian Development Bank. This is one of the schemes devised to cope with the fast and massive capital flows in an era of globalization. The ultimate goal is an Asian currency which might become realized in a nebulous future. With a common currency used for all businesses, transaction costs are kept minimal. With the increasingly large size of combined GNPs and combined trade in the region, an Asian currency would be able to compete with the United States dollar and the euro in the longer term, at least according to the Ministry of Treasury. With China and India expected to be in ascendance for some time to come and with Japan about to emerge again with advanced technological innovations achieved during the hard times of recession and deflation, an Asian currency has a future, at least according to the currency model.

### *6.4 Defense model*

The Ministry of Defense has recently achieved its half-a-century-long dream of increasing its status from agency level to ministry level. Befitting the era of the revolution in military affairs, it seeks highly advanced weapons. Because the United States still occupies the lion's share – 85% – of world weapons research and development

investment, it will continue to be the only dominant military power for at least the next two to three decades. By Japan joining forces with the United States, not only can Japan build its defense and deterrence system in a consolidated fashion, but it can also help the United States retain and extend its predominant position for a longer period of time. Hence Japan's willingness to invest in missile defense, satellite intelligence, anti-terrorist network formation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and the partial sharing of weapons, codes, and intelligence, etc. At the same time, the Defense Ministry argues that Japanese pacifism and its reluctance to use force needs to be overcome first at home, that is in the self-defense forces in which constitutionally those military officers and soldiers are not treated as equal to civilian service personnel. Hence, the overall reluctance of the Defense Ministry to send troops abroad, whether for peacekeeping or combat purposes.

### *6.5 Environment model*

Deterioration in the quality of air and water in the region has been noted repeatedly. The inefficient use of energy, the alarming shortage of water, the mindless emission of poisonous byproducts of manufacturing and mining, the careless treatment of nuclear power plants, the decreasing arable land, the rising sea levels, and the contagious rise of infectious disease are but a few of the symptoms of the environmental problematique. The Ministry of Environment has been busy concluding agreements on technological cooperation in environmental areas. Not surprisingly, a broad convergence of public opinion calls for governments to put a high priority on environmental degradation in Japan, South Korea and China as registered in the AsiaBarometer Survey (Fukushima and Okabe, 2006). The high priority consensus on the environment among the Northeast Asian three – Japan, South Korea, and China – at the grassroots level is most noteworthy. In a similar vein, technological agreements with such countries as Kazakhstan, Vietnam, and Indonesia with regard to the safety measures in nuclear power generation plants have been concluded recently. Given the alarmingly rapid increase in the demand for energy in the region and beyond, environmental policy cooperation cannot be overemphasized.

### *6.6 Subnational linkage model*

Globalization breaks down the organic unity of the nation-state. Rather it packages an unexpected team of players at different spatial locations for common economic advantage. The movement of people for business, tourism, and other purposes is rapidly increasing in the region. Unthinkable even a decade ago, immigration continues to rapidly increase in Japan. One of the subway stations, about 30 minutes away from Central Tokyo station, is crowded every morning with hundreds of Indian professionals commuting. More than ten thousand Indians live in that area alone. They work mostly in the financial service sector and IT areas. Along similar lines, millions of Chinese tourists visit Japan every year. They constitute a major source of tourist income for Japanese tourist industries. Many traditional inns with communal single sex hot spring baths

tailor themselves to the taste of Chinese tourists. The traditional communal hot spring big bath has been changed to individual hot spring baths attached to each hotel room to meet the preference of Chinese tourists who abhor public nudity. Language learning has been on the steady increase in the region. Only two decades ago Japanese language teaching was forbidden in South Korea. Half a century ago Japanese universities did not teach the Korean language except in a few rare cases. Now in both countries language training in Korean and Japanese respectively is thriving. Language instruction in China and Japan shows a similar trend. Fudan University in Shanghai has 75 professors who read and speak Japanese, whereas the University of Tokyo has some 25 professors who read and speak Chinese. Subnational linkage is handled mostly by the Ministries of Internal Communications and Affairs and of National Land and Transport. Local governments often lead subnational linkages. More noteworthy are non-governmental and transnational organizations that spearhead such linkages.

### **7. Regionalism and globalism**

Having noted at the outset that regionalism has inherent problems of collective action (costs of collective entrepreneurship and free riders), geography as destiny (geographical neighbors as given), and globalization as the end of geography (tyranny of distance reduced), I have examined the Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism in normative, economic, and security terms, because regionalism has to face value-laden, utilitarian and national interest equations. Then I have characterized four Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism: fraternity-based East Asian community, flying geese-led economic community, security-driven arc of freedom and prosperity, and the Asia-Pacific community. Having approached the subject this way, I want to examine the angles of regionalism and globalism in relation to the Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism. Globalism is here defined as the aspiration and action to unite on a global basis.

Before examining the Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism, I want to recapitulate what I understand as the logic of European regionalism in order to enable Asian regionalist ideas to be compared. European regionalism has many equations (Murray, 2008). First, the immediate task was to empower Western Europe *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, which had been enhanced by World War II, through building joint Atlantic forces with the United States command by way of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Security-wise it represented the American advance into Europe. Second, the no-less immediate task was to recover from the ashes of war. To recover and develop, borders and barriers to economic and other interactions and transactions had to be reduced step by step. Starting with pooling energy and then enabling free trade of products and free movement of people in the European Community, it achieved a unified common currency with the Maastricht Treaty of 2000. Economic regionalism was to build a Europe that could stand alone without being bothered too much by the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States was comfortable with the idea of self-sustaining Europe as long as it was committed to free trade, democracy, and common defense

*vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. Third, European regionalism has become very normatively oriented. The European Union attempts to inculcate 'good European citizens'. Some such as Laidi (2008) have gone as far as to claim that the European Union is a normative empire. Freedom, democracy, human rights, rule of law, market capitalism, and the peaceful resolution of international disputes are some of those principles which the European Union wants member aspirants to demonstrate in order to prove that they are eligible and credible candidates.

Although the above is pitifully brief, at least it provides the basis for a comparison of Asian regionalism. First, unlike Europe, which saw the Soviet Union as a threat, Asia has not excluded China as a possible member of various regionalist ideas. This aspect puts strains and stresses intermittently on some other regional actors since China is different from most other states in the region. Second, while Europe has adopted a step-by-step approach by making explicit the criteria for inclusion and exclusion, Asia has been hesitant to adopt such an approach to membership. Rather Asia often seems to collectively adopt an ambiguous strategy as to membership criteria and regionalist goals. Third, unlike Europe, which is self-conscious regarding norms and rules, Asia is seemingly hesitant to be specific in these respects. When norms of sorts are mentioned, they tend to be very vague and not well articulated. Recent examples are 'harmonious society' (Hu Jintao) and fraternity (Yukio Hatoyama).

This comparison brings me to note that Europe wants to cope with globalism by uniting itself, whereas Asia wants to adapt to globalism, which permeates their national life, primarily directly and not necessarily through a transnational regional organization. Since there is no transnational regional organization empowered with authority and capacity in Asia, no government is willing to place its future in the hands of a non-existent transnational organization. Most Asian states seem to regard state sovereignty as nearly sacrosanct. They seem to think that delegating part of sovereign power to a transnational regional organization is highly problematic. If some states in Europe take collective action for rescue operations in Greece, some states in Asia take non-coordinated action to purchase United States Treasury Bonds. If some Europeans take action to save Greece or other countries in the region, it is to save the unity of the European Union. If some Asians take action to save the United States, it is in part to save the United States to endure its difficulties longer and recover faster than without such intervention. To shift from East Asia to Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has held non-interference in internal affairs as its first principle for more than four decades. When the South China Sea Declaration for Action was agreed on in 2002, it did not contain any binding power. In the 2000s, a few maritime incidents took place in the South China Sea with some ASEAN states and China claiming that certain islands were part of their exclusive economic zones or territorial waters. China warned that it would not deal with a joint ASEAN actor. Nor did ASEAN states seem to pursue joint action *vis-à-vis* China. When states are unlikely to form a coalition within a region, it will not be easy to move forward to create a regional organization with authority embodied in the organization itself. All of this is meant to say that Asian



ideas of regionalism, including Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism, do not seem to point to the direction of the imminent formation of regionalism with binding power. It is only through the arduous process of interaction and transactions over many more years that Asian regionalism may bear some fruit. The four Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism that we have examined will grow as workable regionalist formulas only by going through more challenges successfully.

## 8. Conclusion

Northeast Asia is a thriving region. It is also a huge and complex region with players riding on the tide of globalization (Tan, 2009) as well as on its multilayered historical and cultural legacies (e.g., Goto-Jones, 2010). Therefore, the region provides many splendid opportunities and some pitfalls unless diverse perspectives and sentiments are well kept in mind. Japanese ideas of Asian regionalism on the whole try to inculcate 'good neighborly' relationship and 'strategic win-win' situations regionally with heavy reliance on trade, inventions, technology, the environments.

## About the author

Takashi Inoguchi is Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo and President of the University of Niigata Prefecture. He specializes in Japanese politics, comparative political behavior, and international relations. He has published numerous books and articles, amongst which are *Japanese Politics: An Introduction* (Trans Pacific Press, 2005), *Political Cultures in Asia and Europe* (Routledge, 2006), *Citizens and the State* (Routledge, 2008), *Globalisation, Public Opinion and the State* (Routledge, 2008), *The Quality of Life in Confucian Asia* (Springer, 2010), *American Democracy Promotion* (Oxford University Press, 2000), *Reinventing the Alliance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), *The Uses of Institutions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), *Japanese Politics Today* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming in 2011) and the *US-Japan Security Alliance* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming in 2011). He is Executive Editor of the *Japanese Journal of Political Science* (Cambridge University Press) and Director of the AsiaBarometer project.

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