

**NORTHEAST ASIAN REGIONALISM:
GOOD PROSPECTS, SLOW START**

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To achieve regionalism at the beginning of the twenty-first century requires a balanced blend of globalization, nationalism, and recognition of the value of neighboring countries in providing a stable environment for peace and development. After the cold war globalization accelerated, boosting the chances for regionalism; yet we can still find examples of insufficient globalization that complicate integration in Northeast Asia. Both local hesitation and the U.S. failure to build trust in globalization have negative effects. In the 1990s nationalism became more pronounced as well: Chinese nationalism targeted Japan; Japanese nationalism became aroused against China as well as North Korea; South Korean nationalism toward Japan flared at times, Russian nationalism filled a void after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and North Korean leaders, fearing regime collapse, fueled new national hysteria. Bilateral distrust kept clouding visions of a shared future. Even as economic ties grew geometrically, led by China's rise as a trading partner and an investment destination, the spillover for regionalism proved to be much less than many expected. Nonetheless, despite differing strategies, all of the countries in the region except North Korea accepted shared priorities of reducing security threats and advancing economic development. If slow to agree on an agenda for regionalism, they at least kept rekindling hopes and recalibrating their strategies for finding a way forward. Some talk about an East Asian region, including ASEAN, others of a Northeast Asian region, involving Russia. Given the problematic nature of engaging half or more of the countries of ASEAN and the importance of Russian energy to emerging plans, I join others in accepting that the core of a new region will be China, Japan, and South Korea with the addition of Russia amid joint plans for involving North Korea in the mix that is called Northeast Asia.

Poised for a breakthrough in achieving regionalism, Northeast Asia remains an area with extraordinary potential for gains from cooperation. Japan, China, and South Korea already have economies matched only in NAFTA and the EU, and their prospects for increased economic integration, in the wake of two decades of remarkable success, surpass those of any other set of countries. The record of Japan's rising trade with China on a per capita basis is roughly double the widely heralded U.S. trade growth, including Japanese exports far in excess of American ones, and the rise of South Korean commerce with China exceeds the per capita rate of Japan. Although Russia has lagged and North Korea only in 2003 took some steps to boost trade, economic conditions for regionalism, as WTO throws many doors open wider, are remarkable. Before long the levels of gross output and inter-regional trade of both NAFTA and the EU will be within sight.

Globalization keeps raising the bar for regionalism. In the first half of the 1990s arose an appeal for shared values as part of a new world order in opposition to the postwar clashes between democracy and authoritarianism. In the second half of the decade on the path to the establishment of the WTO occurred financial globalization, reducing barriers to the flow of capital. More recently came the response to 9/11 in the war on terror and WMD (weapons of mass destruction). Only by embracing, to a significant degree, all three types of globalization could nations gain the trust of the global community, while also building regional trust among themselves. In parts of the globe this has not been easy, especially in areas without strong records of economic growth and confidence in their ability to compete. In Northeast Asia, too, difficult adjustments have ensued. Above all, in North Korea the deficit in globalization remains for the time being insurmountable. We must acknowledge that not only is democracy distrusted and foreign capital suspect, but even the struggle against terror may draw hesitant support. We should also recognize, however, that the champions of globalization damage their cause when they press any of the above three forces of change unilaterally without sensitivity to diverse viewpoints. If in Northeast Asia there has been insufficient acceptance of the

forces of globalization to serve the goal of regionalism, U.S. actions at times also interfered with regionalism making continuous headway. Lack of accord on globalization is a delaying factor, not an insuperable barrier.

The three core countries generally agree about long-term economic globalization, but they have been slow to act on its principles while also differing on how to embrace the other types of globalization. In China's case, the residue of its socialist planned economy plus acute awareness of vulnerability from its very uneven modernization has permitted its leaders only in stages to accept a market economy (1992), a drop in support for state-owned enterprises (1997), and the terms of entry into WTO (2000). Japan too hesitated despite awakening to the end of the bubble economy early in the 1990s and launching so-called "big bang" reforms in the latter half of the decade. Only in 2003–04 did it become likely that in the course of negotiations on FTA agreements Japan would make serious concessions on agricultural protectionism. South Korea agreed to scrap some of its tight controls on capital in 1995 in order to join the OECD and made a strong commitment to globalization in 1998 after the financial crisis struck, but in 2004 it still wavered about signing its first FTA or speeding talks with Japan toward concluding on target in 2005 Northeast Asia's first regional FTA. Meanwhile, Russia warily talked of joining the WTO while nervously keeping the brakes on regional as well as global economic integration, and North Korea continued to reject real economic openness. If some delays occurred and some areas were left aside, the overall economic record in support of both globalization and regionalism continued to be positive with promising momentum for the coming years.

Insufficient globalization more severely retarded regionalism in Northeast Asia in other respects. China's tensions with the United States over human rights issues and intensified Chinese-Japanese mutual stereotypes, focusing on the former's communism and the latter's imperialism, allow the past to overshadow the required future orientation of a global or regional

partnership. The Taiwan issue has become framed through these historical prisms. In addition, the presence of a nuclear weapons program in North Korea from 2002 that tested whether a common strategy could be found accentuated the absence of a security environment suitable for globalization. The Bush administration complicated agreement on global security with its divisive policies and rhetoric, putting regionalism on hold. An approach that focuses only on economic integration, leaving sensitive security matters aside, cannot build a solid foundation of trust.

Despite recurrent problems, progress was achieved over the fifteen years of lively interest in Northeast Asian regionalism before the pause over the North Korean nuclear crisis. A breakthrough came from Mikhail Gorbachev's acceptance of the concept of an Asia-Pacific region, including the Soviet Union; this led many to look beyond cold war barriers as states normalized relations and opened their borders. Although North Korea remained largely aloof, all other states seized the opportunity to change their strategy in the area and begin to put a search for regionalism on the diplomatic agenda. Japan took the lead. It was seeking a way to make use of its growing economic power to become a political great power and to lessen the abnormal postwar dependency on the United States. Long frustrated in its designs to "reenter Asia" and nervous that the EU and by 1992 NAFTA would forge regionalism that left it on the sidelines, Japanese leaders encouraged journalists and academics to champion the cause of regionalism. Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in 1986 opened the way, and Japanese advocacy of "Sea of Japan economic rim" integration from 1988 gave impetus to lively discussions in support of regionalism. Despite ups and downs in the level of optimism over when a breakthrough would occur, interest in the benefits of regional integration has continued to grow. The challenge remains to coordinate divergent strategies.

Views of Regionalism in Four Nations

Over 15 years perceptions about regionalism have changed often. Japanese were the first to

take the prospects seriously. Initial signs of apparent successes led to bolder plans. In May 1989 China and Russia normalized relations and the provinces of Northeast China soon pressed Beijing to allow free economic zones along the border. Isolated by sanctions after the Tiananmen brutality, Chinese eagerly normalized relations across Southeast Asia and with South Korea, where informal ties had been advancing since the 1988 Seoul Olympics and trade was growing rapidly. In 1990 new institutes and journals showcased the enthusiasm in Northeast China. The Russian Far East also became an active partner in conferences on regionalism. After Gorbachev decentralized economic decision-making and Boris Yeltsin acquiesced to the transfer of political power in return for support, leaders in the Russian Far East, led by the governors in Vladivostok and Khabarovsk who grasped for a lifeline of consumer goods as central support waned, actively pursued ties to their counterparts abroad. From South Korea came the “northern strategy” to develop ties with China and Russia in an effort to entice North Korea. As borders opened, Japanese expectations rose for economic integration and regional trust, involving each of these countries. Glowing reports from Sea of Japan prefectures suggested that grassroots exchanges were building trust.

Japan’s plans for regionalism were unsuccessful. For more than half a century until 1945 Japan championed the theme of *kyodotai* or community under its leadership, leaving a bitter taste among Koreans and Chinese who remained wary of self-serving appeals, backed by military aggression and cultural assimilation. In the cold war era a resurgent Japan took a more conciliatory approach as it gradually made a case for leadership with developmental assistance, investment, trade, and cultural diplomacy too; yet failure to address historical issues or even to quiet leading politicians who demanded a reversal of criticisms of past conduct left Japan’s moral authority in doubt. In the late 1980s and early 1990s it was difficult to separate regionalism in Asia from the spread of Japanese influence. Japanese organizations funded the conferences to discuss regional cooperation, articulated the terms of debate, and held the financial wherewithal to shape whatever decisions were made. The

need for Japan appeared heightened at this time, but the results were limited by Japan's strategies to dangle large-scale projects for developing infrastructure in front of the others and to rely on cross-border links for decentralized regionalism while avoiding sensitive bilateral questions.

After the collapse of the bubble economy and the spectacular emergence of China through double-digit growth, Japan's attitude toward regionalism grew more circumspect. Increasingly, it feared that China would gain the leadership role. At times, whether in the first North Korean nuclear crisis of 1994 or in the heady days of the sunshine policy in 2000 drawing South and North Korea closer in a summit, Japanese fretted that they could be marginalized. When the new Bush administration in 2001 took a harder line against China and the sunshine policy while appealing to Japan to strengthen the alliance, many were ambivalent. On the one hand, they appreciated the advantage their global position would provide, especially for security. On the other, they could not abandon the dream of regionalism. In 2001 Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko proved reticent to join the United States in pressuring China. In 2002 Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro went to North Korea on a mission that failed after revealing aspirations for an independent foreign policy. In 2003 Japan made overtures to Russia, rumored to equal more than \$7 billion, for an oil pipeline to Nakhodka that could jumpstart relations. Most determinedly, in 2004 Japan eagerly courted South Korea in order to establish an FTA. While competing with China for influence in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, Japanese appeared finally to be lowering their expectations, in stages, to build a foundation for regionalism in which leadership would have to be shared. Appreciating economic ties with China more, they still hesitantly relied on the United States and contemplated balance from Russia.

South Korean leaders have three goals in mind as they pursue regionalism. First, they seek economic benefits, placing the Seoul-Inchon metropolis at the region's hub. Second, they envision a regional framework that permits balanced relations among four great powers that would overcome a history of dependency on one power or another. Third, regionalism offers a solution both to engage

North Korea in a gradual process of national reunification and to share the costs of this. When regionalism seems to contradict these objectives, as in the first half of the 1990s when Japan sought a leading role, South Koreans have hesitated. When the South appears to play the driving role in achieving all three goals, as occurred in 2000 when the sunshine policy was at full force, then enthusiasm reaches a peak. Even when the results are more uncertain, South Koreans seek balance between China and Japan as the best hope for economic integration and finding a path forward for a power balance and covering the costs of North Korean transformation. Of course, Seoul must also keep one eye on Washington as it attempts to avoid a weakening in the alliance that presses Pyongyang or a rupture that could put regionalism and globalization at loggerheads.

South Korean interest in regionalism intensified from the late 1990s. Agreeing to establish the ASEAN +3 with China and Japan as well as the states of Southeast Asia, the South was already exploring a forum for regional discussion before the Asian financial crisis. After the crisis struck and Kim Dae Jung was elected president, enthusiasm grew for regional economic coordination. It served a dual purpose: to redirect the national economy along a track of openness to global ties as well as even faster growing regional ones; and to give the South a framework for supporting gradual reintegration with the North that would be pursued through the sunshine policy. When the three countries of Northeast Asia formalized their annual breakfast meeting at the ASEAN +3 summit it was Korea that occupied the pivotal center. Kim Dae Jung became the visionary who urged others to accept a forward-looking statement of principles. In 2004 his successor Roh Moo Hyun used his inauguration to call for creation of a regional community and making South Korea the hub of Northeast Asia. Yet, not all concerns about Japanese dominance had disappeared and even relative trust in the rise of China did not eclipse worries of lost competitiveness. Trying to manage newly assertive anti-Americanism and divided over how fast to push ties with the North, South Koreans put their hopes in regionalism, forming a presidential commission to find a promising way forward.

Chinese attitudes toward regionalism reveal the steadiest evolution. Despite local enthusiasm (Heilongjiang province's "border fever" with the Russian Far East and Jilin province's Tumen River area development proposal on the Russo-North Korean border), Beijing remained for a time guarded in its attitude. It agreed to the ASEAN +3 meetings and gained new appreciation for regionalism when it garnered praise for its responsible handling of the Asian financial crisis. Yet, in the second half of the 1990s it seemed more interested first in countering Western civilizational pressure with regional agreement on values and then in great power balancing through strategic partnerships. Only in 1999 after the Kosovo war did China become more reconciled to U.S. hegemonic power and more practical about the need for a regional counterweight. In 2001 the shock of first the Bush administration's projection of power against China and then regional support for the war against terror induced China to intensify its support for regionalism. In 2004 China's central role in the six-party talks to address the North Korean nuclear crisis boosted its image of indispensability at a time when it was trying to prove that instead of the so-called "China threat" it was engaged in "peaceful rising." Yet, a hardened stance linked to concerns about Taiwan independence left doubts about Chinese patience.

Early in the 1990s China's leaders remained skeptical about multilateralism. If the United States did not dominate through existing global mechanisms, then Japan could gain the upper hand. A decade later Chinese analysts were newly determined that only regional coordination would provide the right mix of economic integration and balance against alliances. Japan had to be drawn closer despite its nervousness about China's rapid rise. Taiwan's quest for independence had to be forestalled. A showdown on the Korean peninsula had to be prevented. China's interest in regionalism was broadening beyond economic ties, but some in Beijing deeply distrusted U.S. handling of Taiwan, North Korean, and Japanese security matters. Regionalism was a priority, but not the top one.

Russia was less enthusiastic about regionalism as well as economic globalization than the three core countries of the region. Under Boris Yeltsin there was no strategy toward the region and

unstable center-local relations produced power struggles over issues such as border demarcation and negotiations, foreign investment incentives and customs procedures, and revenue allocations.

Vladimir Putin began to bring order to regional policy. While economic ties with China rose rapidly after stagnating through much of the 1990s, he made it clear that Russia must not become dependent on China for its oil exports and for consumer imports. Putin sought to involve Japan more deeply in regional matters and looked to the Korean peninsula for a long-term approach to pipeline routes, railroad networks, and regional balance. With population and economic strength in the Russian Far East concentrated close to the Pacific Ocean, Putin strategized about a north-south axis through Korea to be supported by Japan that would sustain them rather than a northwest-southeast axis to Beijing and the bulk of China that could bypass them. Yet, Sino-Russian relations served well to counter U.S. assertiveness and to pressure Japan that held normal relations hostage to the signing of a peace treaty based on recognition of Japanese sovereignty over all four disputed islands.

By 2004 China and South Korea had become the prime backers of regionalism, while Japan and Russia offered cautious support with the goal of denying China leadership and shaping the reintegration process on the Korean peninsula. Japan and South Korea took the lead in exploring an FTA, and Japan was maneuvering to gain an advantage over China in the development of a pipeline through Russia. Yet, China had the most leverage over North Korea, while its geographical ties to Russia increased its clout. South Korea played a pivotal role between the two contenders for leadership. All sides had to be patient: the North Korean crisis put the search for regionalism on hold and the United States kept the threat of unilateral action alive even as it pursued a multilateral approach through six-party talks on the nuclear crisis.

If in the 1990s the United States could remain a secondary force in the path of regionalism, the situation has changed. Bush's plans in 2001 to limit China's influence and to draw Japan closer suggested a view of globalization that stood in the path of regionalism. After 9/11 eagerness for

Russian and Chinese cooperation in the war against terror might have lowered the pressure, but Bush's 2002 State of the Union address including North Korea in the "axis of evil" put the region on edge again. In 2003 multi-party talks suggested to some that China and the United States were reaching an agreement on security, but in 2004 as the U.S. position in Iraq left it weakened China pressed harder over Taiwan and to get a more conciliatory U.S. stance toward North Korea. The battle over WMD brought clashing notions of regional security to the fore and put regionalism on hold.

Three American interests can be varyingly interpreted in support of alternate responses to regionalism in Northeast Asia. First, the United States seeks a global coalition against terror and benefits from a region that can work in concert toward that end rather than be caught in its own security dilemmas or even fail to contain a WMD danger in its midst. Some see U.S. control through sustained divisions without regionalism as the means to this end, while others expect that only a regional entity able to reduce divisions would serve this goal. Second, the United States appears eager to limit the rise of any rival that could challenge for global power, and few doubt that China is the main concern. To contain China many would deny it a regional base, while others expect better results from entwining it in a web of multilateralism that would limit its independent action. Three, as the champion of financial and other forms of economic globalization, the United States welcomes a region with FTAs and full support for WTO. In the 1990s there were fears that regionalism led by Japan would not accept aspects of economic globalization, but lately concern has grown that the United States may itself fear open competition with countries in the world's most dynamic region and the prospect that regionalism would further challenge narrow U.S. interests. If some would block regionalism to keep U.S. influence high, others would steer regionalism in recognition that it is likely to happen anyways and it could serve the three essential U.S. interests.

The Nature of Regionalism in Northeast Asia

Evaluations of regionalism at the beginning of the twenty-first century cannot escape the shadow of the EU, an economic community with growing political integration and general agreement on core civilizational values despite elements of continuing state rivalries. No other geographical grouping, including NAFTA, approaches the European Union's ambitious political agenda; yet proposals for forging regionalism keep spreading, notably where a free trade agreement (FTA) is considered to be within reach or a political boost is sought in the face of U.S. global power. In Asia the notion of regionalism has mostly been applied to ASEAN, although economic consensus there is largely on paper and acceptance of globalization remains mixed. The mere presence of regular summits that create a high political profile along with some economic dynamism in part of Southeast Asia have left a deceptive image; sharply divergent political goals and civilizational differences limit any relevance as a model. Yet, conditions are ripening for some sort of community--more attached to Northeast than to Southeast Asia--that could raise regionalism to a higher plain. Even if it has no prospect of approaching the integration of the EU and it has failed to realize most expectations of the past 15 years, Northeast Asian regionalism, along with the establishment of an "East Asian Community," has considerable promise.

Northeast Asia still has none of the threshold indicators of regionalism. There is no organization or agreed name for the region. Most strategies to date have served narrow purposes associated with nationalism rather than boosting a suitably equal and open partnership among the region's actors. To cross the threshold it is taken for granted that a summit of the national leaders must declare that they have agreed on regionalism together with an optimistic outlook on creating a regional FTA and a joint statement that reassures their nations and the world on essential security cooperation. Academics in a few countries are suggesting that this goal is within reach, converting the ASEAN +3 summit of the three into an East Asian community within the next decade. If it means only appending the three to ASEAN with its limited globalization, then there will remain serious

doubts that regionalism exists. Earlier the United States had led in trying to convert APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), founded at the urging of Australia and Japan, into a strong regional association for lowering trade barriers and beginning to raise security matters. After Bill Clinton led in upgrading the annual meetings to summits and pressed to realize a global financial agenda, it became clear that APEC would not satisfy the need for regionalism. ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) came later, expanding its reach to many great powers while allowing discussion of security issues in a multilateral forum other than the Security Council. By comparison, ASEAN +3 has reached the point of preparing a vision statement for regionalism and providing a venue for serious pledges of FTA negotiations. If the three core countries go further in accentuating free trade and follow the North Korean crisis with more consideration of a joint security outlook, they will take the lead in establishing regional ties while creating a stir that the world's third great regionalism has taken shape. Whatever its geographical range within Asia, this will be a group dominated by the economies and great power leadership of Northeast Asia--China and Japan sharing leadership and the United States left with a large say on security matters.

A series of obstacles have stood in the way of regionalism, leaving it still in an incipient condition. Already during the final stages of the cold war national aspirations focused narrowly, leaving little room for consensus on regionalism. In the early 1990s new strategies favored decentralization, this produced along with border fever a rash of cross-border duplicity. When revised strategies highlighted the creation of civilizational bridges, some linked to pride in Asian values, the result was historical distrust raised to a new level. Later a flurry of summits attempted to form strategic partnerships, but national rivalries were becoming pronounced. The two extremes in the search for regionalism occurred more recently. On the one hand, the sunshine policy gave the appearance of bringing Northeast Asia closer together, raising hopes without resolving security dilemmas. On the other, U.S. unilateralism, especially toward North Korea, suggested that hopes for

regionalism were crushed when, in fact, irrepressible forces continued to operate and a shared sense of frustration added to the prospect that when the crisis ended greater cooperation could be expected. We can draw lessons from these shifting strategies that have kept regionalism from advancing far.

The first lesson is that the countries interested in regionalism must embrace globalization more fully. Their economic growth has been driven largely by exports. Their security has rested primarily in the hands of outside powers since 1945. Cultural divisions are most easily overcome through shared acceptance of aspects of Western culture, including reliance, for the time being, on the English language. All nations still face vested interests, some linked to criminality or corruption, that can be best addressed through pressure from the global community. The greatest promise for regionalism is to take advantage of growing economic openness, shared security concerns about WMD and terrorism, and mutual trust within a global cultural context. Regionalism must build on globalization, even as the possibility widens of emerging from its shadow.

A second lesson is to put security in the forefront, starting with close cooperation to solve the North Korean nuclear crisis and a deal between the United States and China on keeping steps toward Taiwan independence from becoming a tinderbox that could lead to a military explosion. A common threat on the Korean peninsula appears to be bringing the region together, even if its existence stalls regionalism for the moment. U.S. reliance on China as the broker in this standoff has led the Bush administration to moderate its Taiwan policy somewhat. Despite tense times ahead, a stable security environment seems within reach. The aftermath of the nuclear crisis is likely to foster mutual awareness of the need to work together.

Following years of Chinese nervousness about Japanese leadership and Japanese nervousness about Chinese leadership, the obvious third lesson is that this must be a region without a single leader. If China's leaders calculate that time is on their side, they should have the confidence to be patient as the balance keeps shifting. Japan's leaders, in turn, may have to accept the rise of China with an

understanding that they have leverage over how it occurs. The presence of the United States and Russia along with South Korea helps to achieve balance. The North Korean threat is heightening awareness in Japan of the need to work more closely with China, while Chinese analysts now calculate that only Japan's acceptance of regionalism will make possible long-term "peaceful rising." It remains to persuade Japanese that the composition of regional partners, including Russia, will keep China from becoming dominant. In 2004 the Sino-Japanese rivalry appeared to intensify. Prime Minister Koizumi, who keeps visiting the Yasukuni shrine where war criminals are interred, was not welcome in China. Trust needed for co-leadership is not yet advancing.

A fourth lesson is that great effort should be taken to build U.S. support for regionalism. Among some American politicians, especially conservatives in the Bush administration, there is skepticism about a regional community that leaves the United States on the sidelines. Many fear that the U.S. alliance system in the region could be jeopardized, that Japan would stake out an independent foreign policy, and especially that China would transform the region into its launching pad for superpower aspirations. Reassurances must be provided, both on economic openness and on cooperation in global security. U.S. need for NEA cooperation had never been higher, raising the chances for acceptance of some forms of regionalism, however contentious the process. At least some American leaders are likely to be willing to work with East Asian leaders to find common ground.

Fifth on the list of lessons is the need to recognize South Korea's critical position. A situation of two great rivals eyeing each other invites a third party to become a balance. It has gained the trust of China, and since 1998 its relations with Japan have advanced beyond earlier expectations. The South is also likely to play the role of intermediary in integrating North Korea for both regional and national goals. Already in the ASEAN +3 setting, Seoul's central role has been confirmed. In matters such as drafting a vision for regionalism, China and Japan should continue to rely on its intermediate status. Roh Moo Hyun is eager to be the leader who brings regionalism to Northeast Asia.

While many discussions of regionalism omit Russia, this does not make sense for reasons of geographical presence, great power balancing, and energy or natural resource supplies. In the next years energy projects and management of North Korea's transition will presumably be central themes in the start-up phase of regionalism. As long as Russia meets stringent conditions for WTO compliance and is obliged to clean up lawlessness in its Far East, it should not be excluded from the region. Yet, in 2004 criminal control over Vladivostok was tightening, and guarantees for private investment were not within sight.

The seventh lesson is to foster a regional identity. Unlike recommendations to solve little problems first, this region must satisfy deep reservations at the outset through a grand vision to override narrow national identities that look backward. Already in October 2003 the leaders of the core countries signed a declaration to expand the areas of cooperation through ASEAN +3 and to support an East Asian process to lead to a formal East Asian summit. A big part of the challenge is to agree on a common worldview. Even if Tokyo remains wary of bypassing the Southeast Asian context, eventually all parties will find it necessary to narrow the geographical focus and draw on historical themes, including aspects of Confucianism, to make regional identity a reality. A vision of the future together must eclipse recent preoccupation with righting historical wrongs.

A corollary to a need for a future-oriented vision is the salience of compromising on territorial disputes that serve as a reminder of the past. Not only do the division of Korea and Taiwan separatism loom as nettlesome problems keeping the region on edge, four islands in dispute between Japan and Russia, some rocks disputed by Japan and South Korea and Japan and China, and three islands claimed by China from Russia have unsettling effects. Instead of soft regionalism bypassing tough questions, our era calls for hard choices involving those usually identified as staunch defenders of national interests. Symbols of victimization cannot be left to fester if the public is to look ahead to goals that bind nations together for a long time to come.

Ninth on the list of lessons is to nurture engines of regionalism. Large, joint projects should figure among the steps that showcase the promise of regional integration. An energy grid that offers Russia a key role can complement overland transportation arteries, while the symbolism of a breakthrough must be extended also to joint plans for both the security and the economic integration of North Korea. At a summit announcing the formal launching of regionalism we should expect a list of projects that will make it a reality. Huge infusions of capital must link regionalism to globalization.

The tenth lesson is to accept a gradual timetable. Past timetables expressed by boosters of regionalism have erred on the side of excessive optimism. Nationalism still makes caution essential. Quick agreements without demonstrating the advantages to the public would lead to a letdown. The first pronouncements should temper expectations with warnings of a transition ahead. If the first FTA can be signed between Japan and South Korea in 2005 and a breakthrough summit announcement about an "East Asian community" should follow before long, leaders may cautiously aim for 2015 as the time to cross the threshold for proving the merits of regional integration. Many constraining factors suggest that new tensions will cast doubt even on that cautious target.

The final lesson drawn from the mixed record of searching for regionalism over fifteen years is to establish a new organization small enough to concentrate on the most urgent needs of regionalism and open enough to reassure other interested parties. An organization advocating regional identity and nurturing engines of regionalism will likely rest on three firmaments if it is to become the vehicle for full-blown regional integration over a gradual timetable. Success will depend on how soon clear answers can be offered to the following questions. One, will there be general acceptance of the unitary nature of the global economy, world civilization, and international security, as claims of regional distinctiveness are balanced with assurances to the United States and others in the world community? Two, is a balance of countries to be achieved with Korea assuming a pivotal position between China and Japan and others gaining a role without fear that China or Japan will dictate the

approach to regionalism? Three, are countries ready to abandon the myth that regionalism can progress on the basis of economics alone and allow all-around regionalists to gain the upper hand based on growing trust? A substantial agenda remains for the coming decade just to cross the threshold of regionalism. What is not needed is another wave of optimism that pays little heed to the stark lessons of the flawed search for regionalism from the end of the cold war to 2004.

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