The Three Chinas in Asia's New Order

Nakajima Mineo

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Soviet Communist Party, attention worldwide is now focused on the fate of East Asia's communist countries, which are, apart from Cuba, the only remaining bastions of communism. In a reversal of the trend of earlier decades, the final part of the twentieth century has been hit by a wave of decommunization that seems set to engulf these holdouts before long. Aware of their precarious position, the governments of China, North Korea, and Vietnam are working desperately to stem the tide.

Whether the process is sudden and dramatic or follows a gradual, zigzag course, the fate of Asia's communist countries could well be decided by the end of the century. Major upheavals could even occur within the five years leading up to Hong Kong's reversion to China in 1997. By the end of the century, the communist governments in the region may have already collapsed. Of course, each country will follow a timetable dictated by internal circumstances, and some of their regimes may even survive into the next century. But signs that they will eventually have to break with communism are becoming ubiquitous.

In China, the departure of first-generation revolutionary leaders from the scene has coincided with the global collapse of communism, triggering a fierce struggle between the reformist and conservative factions. Nonetheless, members of both camps, including Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin, have joined in chanting the slogan "Build a Great Wall of steel," an expression of the government's determination to keep at bay the forces of Western-style capitalism. With Russia and even Mongolia having changed their stripes, the regime's preoccupation with fending off destabilizing forces is only to be expected.

Beijing's official position is that the West instigated the "peaceful evolution" that undermined communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from within, and one of the government's biggest concerns is to forestall this insidious process. This is what makes China wary of closer contacts with countries like Japan and America even as it espouses reform and an open-door policy.

Chen Yun and other hard-liners are still active, and senior leader Deng Xiaoping is determined not to repeat the performance of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. These first-generation revolutionaries can point to the chaos that has attended the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and as long as they retain their influence, they may succeed in averting "Sovietization" for a time.

One should bear in mind that today's so-called conservatives were themselves once reformists in the broad sense. They opposed the Cultural Revolution, and their pragmatic views earned them the label "capitalist roaders." Those responsible for the forcible suppression of the demonstrations

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mosity or revengeful treatment in South Korea, I was still heavy at heart on the eve of my journey.

On our visit to Ms. Kim's home in Pyongyang, she greeted us with an unpleasant remark: "When I heard you were Japanese, I almost refused to permit the visit. I only accepted for the sake of friendship in the younger generations. Let me make it clear that I'd like to have every single Japanese bow down before me and apologize. And even then I wouldn't feel good about it." And on television, the members of the mission from Japan led by the Social Democratic Party who were visiting North Korea around the same time had similar words thrown in their faces by the victims of forced conscription. For these members of Japan's political opposition, who see themselves as champions of the downtrodden, this must have been discomfiting.

Grandmother Kim informed us that her younger sister had been forcibly conscripted (although she avoided stating openly that her sister had been impressed as a prostitute), and she revealed that she herself had narrowly escaped the same fate. Now 74, she has had a hard life. She received little schooling, was sent to work as a servant in a Japanese home, and later lost her husband in the Korean War. The eldest member of our group apologized to her straightforwardly, and the entire six-member family applauded, which saved the situation. But the ill feelings were not entirely dispelled.

Song Rak-un, the head of the Japan Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told us during a discussion that the normalization negotiations between Japan and North Korea are being complicated by arguments over the legality of the 1905 agreement by which Japan turned Korea into a protectorate and the 1910 treaty by which Japan annexed Korea, turning it into a colony. He told us that the North would be bringing up this matter at the next session of the talks but that the details of its stance had not been finalized. We asked him about the controversial proposal that Japan also pay reparations for the period after World War II, and this was his reply: "We can't discuss postwar reparations until the Japanese first agree that the prewar and wartime period covered forty-one years [1905–45], and not thirty-six years [1910–45]. But we obviously have a right to demand some postwar reparations. Japan bears part of the responsibility for the division of the country after the war; it participated directly and indirectly in the Korean War [by dispatching minesweepers, providing bases for the American forces, and supplying materiel for the war]; and it also must make interest payments to cover the decades over which nothing has been done about its obligations. During the nearly thirty years since Japan and South Korea concluded their treaty, moreover, a great many new facts have come to light, and this has made it impossible to use the negotiations between Japan and the South as a precedent for negotiations with the North."

Of course, there is considerable possibility that, to counteract Seoul's normalization of its relations with Beijing and Moscow, Pyongyang will speed up its approach to Tokyo and Washington, and to do this it may tone down its rhetoric and strike a compromise. But if Japan and the North reach an agreement that differs in the least from that between Japan and the South, Seoul will protest. And if Tokyo makes concessions to Seoul on the issues of forced labor and military conscription, including the recruitment of Korean women for service in brothels, Pyongyang will make stronger demands. We must recognize that although the North and the South are still locked in a fierce struggle with each other, when it comes to relations with Japan, they are engaged in a kind of tacit collaboration in a common cause.

Be that as it may, we Japanese know far too little about the Koreas, both North and South, and we have almost no interest in how the Koreans feel. By the same token, the North and South Koreans are unaware of our feelings, and though they know about Japanese imperial rule, they know little about the situation in Japan today. Herein lies a new misfortune, different from that of the colonial period. To avoid making this misfortune any worse, I once took some of my students to the South, and I hope to be able to introduce them to the North if I get a chance to go there again.

Our trip took place in the heat of summer, with the result that the only *kimchi* available was tough cabbage pickled in brine. Next time I want to go in a season when I can eat juicy *kimchi* made from Chinese cabbage. On the way to the airport as we left the country, we gazed at fields where Chinese cabbage seedlings had just been planted. By coincidence, that day was August 15, the forty-seventh anniversary of World War II's end. (Courtesy of Chūō Kōron Sha)

Translated from "'Kimukimu rando' hōmonki," in Chūō Kōron, *November 1992, pp. 214–29; slightly abridged.*

in Tiananmen Square were themselves treated harshly during the Cultural Revolution, thrown in prison and subjected to Red Guard brutality. Even President Yang Shangkun, the most disliked member of the establishment among intellectuals and students today, was pinioned and dragged around.

Nonetheless, the key feature of Chinese politics today is the absence of a democratic faction. People like Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, who took a favorable view of the democratization movement, have disappeared from the political scene. The forces for reform remain active, but the forces for democracy are nowhere to be seen.

China's current leaders gained considerable prestige and legitimacy by surviving the dark days of the Cultural Revolution and steering China in a different direction from that established under Mao Zedong. To be sure, the moment he felt himself threatened by the democracy movement, Deng responded in a frightfully conservative manner, lashing out at what he termed a "counterrevolutionary rebellion" and unleashing the violence at Tiananmen Square. Still, if he and other leaders were conservatives in the strict sense, they probably would not have survived in the present era. As it stands, Deng has, in his own way, kept adrift of the current of the times by advocating reform and opening up the country. This approach may forestall the collapse of communism in China as long as the first-generation revolutionary leaders remain.

In the long run, however, a communist China faces serious challenges. While the country would appear to have avoided the shortages and other economic difficulties that plagued the Soviet Union, I do not view the Chinese economy as optimistically as some observers. Among the problems facing the country are a yawning gap between rich and poor, the task of feeding a burgeoning population in the future, and serious deficits in the operation of state enterprises and in the national budget. And even if China manages to find a way out of these difficulties, it must still deal with the winds of "peaceful evolution" blowing not from the West but from Hong Kong and Taiwan—the dreaded "south wind."

The south wind

Hong Kong and Taiwan are the most dynamic of Asia's newly industrialized economies, and because their ethnic identity is Chinese, they have a far more direct impact on mainland China than Japan or the United States does.

In the process of translating Ezra Vogel's *One Step Ahead in China: Guangdong Under Reform*, I visited Guangdong and conducted repeated observations of the progress of change in Shenzhen and other special economic zones. As Vogel indicates, reform and opening have greatly altered Guangdong Province. The birthplace of the Chinese Revolution, mountainous Guangdong was formerly an impoverished area. Now, however, the per capita gross national product there is estimated at to be $1,000 or more, roughly three times the national average of about $350.

Hong Kong's impact is the biggest factor behind Guangdong's economic takeoff and in particular the changes that have taken place in Shenzhen. As evidence of the colony's influence, the Hong Kong dollar is now gaining ascendancy over the weaker yuan not only in Shenzhen, which adjoins Hong Kong, but throughout Guangdong. The tiny colony of Hong Kong, destined to be absorbed by China in five years, is paradoxically gaining economic dominance over southern China.

The mainland Chinese have traditionally looked down on the British colony, regarding its inhabitants as a bunch of misfits who fled the mainland out of crass self-interest. But the people of Guangdong discovered to their surprise that Hong Kong was quite different from what they had imagined. In time they came to admire the colony. Most of Guangdong's sizable television audience routinely tunes in to Hong Kong stations instead of watching the news broadcasts from Beijing.

The influence of Hong Kong is rapidly spreading through the entire Zhu (Pearl) River delta area, which includes not only the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone extending from Hong Kong to Guangzhou but also Baoan and Dongguan counties immediately to the north and the Foshan industrial belt bordering Guangzhou. Thanks to the waterways facilitating transportation in this region, the entire area is tied together in a single distribution network, which is now undergoing a rapid transformation.

What reform and opening really signify is a new attitude of approval toward the profit motive. This has brought changes to even remote backwaters of Guangdong. Villagers have begun to work hard, going out into the hills early in the morning to collect vines, which they weave into fine baskets for sale in the markets of Hong Kong. The fact that the proceeds go into their own pockets has had a tremendous impact.

Once the logic of capitalism and a market econ-

Kyodo

Shenzhen: The dynamic influence of Hong Kong is being felt throughout Guangdong Province, particularly here in the special economic zone adjoining the British colony.

omy has taken hold in this way, there is no turning back. The current situation flatly contradicts the communist ideals Beijing professes. And as long as China opts for Deng's policy of reform and opening within a communist framework over the hard-line communism of people like Chen Yun, the contradiction can only grow sharper.

Taiwan and Fujian

Meanwhile, Taiwan's influence is making itself felt across the water in Fujian Province, home of the Xiamen Special Economic Zone. Fujian is traversed by the wide Min River that runs to the south of the provincial capital of Fuzhou. Customs and language differ to the north and south of the Min. Xiamen (Amoy) lies in the region known as Minnan, to the south of the river. Many of Taiwan's early settlers came from Minnan, and the Fujian dialect of Minnan is also the prevalent dialect of Taiwan. A sense of affinity stemming from a common dialect has encouraged Xiamen to aim for development centered on rapidly expanding ties with the Taiwanese economy. Already the Minnan district's largest urban center, Xiamen is on the way to becoming China's second-largest "open door" city after Shanghai.

Although Xiamen is only an hour's flight from Hong Kong, Hong Kong businessmen are rarely seen there. The Cantonese people of Hong Kong and Guangdong differ markedly from the people of Fujian in both dialect and character. On the whole, the Cantonese are extremely ambitious and are liable to strike others as aggressive and difficult. The Fujianese, by contrast, tend to pursue their goals more quietly and less abrasively, much like the Taiwanese.

Large real estate firms recently set up in Xiamen offer condominiums in anticipation of an influx of Taiwanese buyers. The area is actively courting direct investment by manufacturers from Taiwan. Formosa Plastics, a leading Taiwanese firm, was on the verge of building a $7 billion plant there, but the authorities in Taipei have put the project on hold because of the enormous sums involved. Nonetheless, Taiwanese businesses are bound to step up investment in southern China, and the mainlanders eagerly await them.

As Fujian and Guangdong take off economically, they are determined to look after their own interests, and they have become very assertive of their autonomy. Under former governor Ye Xuanping, Guangdong remitted only 10% of its tax revenues to Beijing, using 90% inside the province—a source of great irritation to the people of Shanghai, 60% of whose taxes were going to the central government. This sort of decentralization is bound to proceed as long as Beijing takes a favorable view of economic reform and development in the coastal regions. And greater autonomy will inevitably make these regions ever more susceptible to influences from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

This, then, is the impact of the "south wind." Because its thrust is pragmatically economic, and because its purveyors are ethnically Chinese, there is almost no way of preventing it from penetrating deep into mainland society. As capitalism spreads inward from the southern coastal areas, the red core of the country will gradually shrink and ultimately disappear.

The region's other communist states

In my view, East Asia's communist regimes have operated under a premodern form of authoritarian despotism in which the first generation of revolutionary leaders carries tremendous weight. From this perspective, Kim Il-sung and Deng Xiaoping enjoy a kind of prestige far beyond anything accorded Russian leaders like Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

This is particularly true in North Korea, where Kim Il-sung's dictatorship has established the foundations of a veritable dynasty. The cult surrounding Kim Il-sung is inseparable from the system of rule that has emerged under his leadership. In addition, my impression when visiting North Korea was that to an even greater extent than South Korea, the country has preserved an essentially Confucian political culture and social system. This authoritarian, patriarchal tradition provides the foundation for a strong communist bureaucracy led by a specially privileged *nomenklatura*.

Accordingly, the biggest question facing North Korea now is how Kim Il-sung will pass the mantle to his son Kim Jong-il. This issue of succession emerged clearly on Kim Il-sung's eightieth birthday last April 15.

I believe that the only way for Kim Il-sung's North Korea to avoid following in the footsteps of Nicolae Ceausescu's Romania is for it to imitate the succession of power that took place in Taiwan. Kim Il-sung's efforts to maintain the current system by passing the mantle to Kim Jong-il during his own lifetime recall developments in Taiwan in the closing years of Chiang Kai-shek's regime. At that time Taiwan, with a population about the size of North Korea's, was similarly dominated by a Confucian patriarchal system, and no one thought it odd for Chiang Kai-shek to hand the reins of power to his son, Chiang Ching-kuo. Subsequently, however, as Taiwan passed from Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorship through Chiang Ching-kuo's authoritarian government to the present democratic rule of President Lee Teng-hui, the country changed dramatically. It seems to me that this route offers the only real hope for North Korea. The big question is whether Kim Jong-il has the political acumen of Chiang Ching-kuo.

Given the circumstances, North Korea will in all likelihood be the last holdout of communism in Asia, if only because Kim Il-sung is significantly younger than Deng Xiaoping. In East Asia, the life span of communism could well depend on the life span of its patriarchal leaders.

Vietnam, meanwhile, is likely to transform itself less visibly than China, but one day I expect that we will find that it is no longer communist. Like Deng's policies, Hanoi's *doi moi*, or restructuring, campaign focuses on reforming systems and institutions and opening the country up to the outside world. The Vietnamese cannot bring themselves to imitate Chinese policy wholesale, however; while Vietnam and China have officially mended fences, the scars left by China's 1979 invasion are deep.

Apart from *doi moi*, several other developments suggest that Vietnam is moving away from communism. One is the recent emphasis on strengthening ties with Taiwan. The Taiwan trade office that opened in Hanoi in the autumn of 1991 is now the city's busiest such facility. Taiwan's Evergreen Group is beginning to make aggressive investments, on which Hanoi is pinning high hopes.

On a visit to Japan in November last year, senior professors and specialists from the University of Hanoi and elsewhere spoke proudly of Vietnam's Confucian culture and its sizable Chinese community, noting that Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) has Asia's largest Chinatown. The implication was that Vietnam hopes to take its place alongside the newly industrialized economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, all societies within the Chinese, or Confucian, cultural sphere.

Most tellingly, at its congress in mid-October 1991, Cambodia's ruling party, which has been supported by the Communist Party of Vietnam, announced that it was abandoning communism in favor of a platform embracing the introduction of a market economy, a multiparty political system, and liberal democracy. The party also changed its name to the Cambodian People's Party, dropping the term "revolutionary." This suggests the direction that is likely to be taken by the Communists in Hanoi and leads to the conclusion that Vietnam is moving toward a market economy much faster than most observers expected.

Three Chinas

The Chinese sphere is obviously crucial to any examination of socialism's development in Asia. Until recently, China has meant the People's Republic of China to most people—not least of all to the Japanese, who have placed great importance on relations with Beijing. Taiwan, the PRC's rival, was regarded as a minor entity on the verge of historical oblivion, and Hong Kong was nothing more than a British colony.

But as economic factors gain importance, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the existence of "three Chinas" in East Asia. In terms of sheer population, of course, the People's Republic is unrivaled with its 1.2 billion inhabitants, against Taiwan's 20 million and Hong Kong's 6 million. But in per capita gross national product, Hong Kong tops the list at $12,000, followed by Taiwan with $8,500; the PRC's $350 is not even in the same league.

Taiwan now boasts the world's largest foreign currency reserves—well over $80 billion—placing it ahead of even Japan and the United States, not to mention the PRC and Hong Kong. Trade volume is another revealing indicator, in my view the most significant because it directly reflects the movement of goods and capital in the East Asian region. In 1991, Hong Kong's total trade volume was valued at some $200 billion, Taiwan's at around $140 billion, and the PRC's at somewhere in the vicinity of $130 billion. Hong Kong's figure has been swollen by the rapid rise in imports from Taiwan, a large portion of which are reexported to the mainland. Allowing for this special factor, we can see the three Chinas are roughly comparable in terms of trade volume.

On the political scene, observers of East Asia have been preoccupied with choosing Beijing or Taipei, one China or two. And when people have looked at the East Asian economy, they have focused on the dramatic growth of Japan and, more recently, of the four "dragons"—South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—as up-and-coming members of the industrial world. As a result of these preoccupations, we have failed to take sufficient note of the economic interaction and interpenetration of the "three Chinas," a phenomenon especially apparent in Hong Kong's influence on Guangdong and Taiwan's on Fujian. This is resulting in the expansion of the Chinese sphere as a whole.

How to integrate the three Chinas harmoniously into the international system should be a high-priority foreign policy issue, particularly for Japan. The problem goes beyond overcoming such hitches as Taipei's refusal to attend a conference because Beijing is represented, or vice versa. It is a practical matter of recognizing the existence of the enormous Chinese sphere that the three Chinas are creating with the growth of their mutual influence and interdependence and of figuring out how to fit it in with the rest of East Asia and the world.

Maintaining diplomatic ties with Beijing over the past two decades has meant having no official relations with Taipei. In the years ahead, however, Japan-China relations must be founded on the notion of a Chinese sphere encompassing the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. A watershed in this context was the November 1991 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation ministerial meeting in Seoul, at which the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong were all admitted as members of equal standing. This was made possible largely by the strong leadership of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, but Seoul managed the situation adroitly, pulling off a diplomatic feat that Tokyo by rights should have undertaken itself.

In a sense, the events in Seoul signified the collapse, after two decades, of the one-China policy that in 1971 dramatically awarded Beijing a place in the United Nations and forced Taiwan's withdrawal. They demonstrate that the region and the world as a whole are beginning to recognize the need for a new arrangement reflecting East Asian economic realities.

The emergence of a Chinese economic sphere encompassing the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taipei could have profound global consequences. For one thing, this sphere accounts for close to a quarter of the world's population. Hong Kong and Taiwan are already well on their way to joining the club of industrially advanced nations. If the mainland economy takes off as well, the impact on humankind as a whole may not be entirely beneficial. For example, should the PRC continue on its present course, the effects of pollution and environmental destruction could be disastrous. So far we have been spared because the mainland economy remains relatively sluggish, but the increasing interpenetration and interdependence among the three Chinas may well change that.

If the three Chinas can transcend the fundamental differences in their political systems and work together to produce an economic takeoff on the mainland, as they show signs of doing, Japanese businesses may face rougher going there. Already the PRC's eagerness to accommodate investors from Hong Kong and Taiwan contrasts sharply with its cautious attitude toward joint ventures with Japanese firms. A luxury apartment building partly owned by a major Japanese trading firm remained half empty after a year's time because of the high rents, while one built by a Taiwanese company through a Hong Kong firm received generous concessions and was fully occupied in no time. We should probably see such developments as a sort of warning for us.

Regionalism versus globalism

I would like now to consider the best approach to a new East Asian order in light of the developments discussed above. In the wake of communism's collapse in the former Soviet bloc, a major challenge for the international system will be to accommodate the emergence of a growing Chinese sphere with a minimum of friction.

The potential for conflict is great. The reversion of Hong Kong to China in 1997 could spark disturbances that Beijing would feel compelled to put down by military means. Recent moves toward democratizing the colony could fuel demands for political freedom that Beijing would in all likelihood suppress by force.

Until now Taipei has adhered rigidly to its own one-China policy. But the people of Taiwan, including even members of the ruling Nationalist Party, have come to feel a sense of Taiwanese national identity. After functioning for nearly 50 years as a separate entity with a rapidly growing and developing economy, they are ready to think in terms of a Republic of Taiwan, just as Chinese living in Hong Kong have come to take on their own separate sense of identity. But Beijing has indicated that it will not tolerate moves toward independence. Whether a tragic clash can be averted will depend greatly on how the international system accommodates the three Chinas.

The attempt to form a new international system in Asia seems to be caught in a tug-of-war between two opposing forces: regionalism, or Asianism, and globalism. The dawning sense of unity among the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong seems to point to a new regionalism, which could lead in turn to the emergence of a new Chinese empire. But if Hong Kong and Taiwan can preserve and enhance their independence and move in the direction of greater political and economic freedom, the impulse toward globalism could prevail. This seems to be the direction in which the current administration of Taiwan, for example, seems to be inclined.

Since the Tiananmen incident, Taiwan has granted 3 million of its citizens permission to visit the mainland. Each of these visitors has taken along not only money and goods but also the latest information from the capitalist Western world, which has had a great impact. Although Beijing will not admit it openly, the influx of visitors from Taiwan has been a boon to the PRC, which suffered a massive decline in foreign currency income after Tiananmen due to Western economic sanctions and a sharp drop-off in tourism. Yet while Taipei has encouraged visits to the mainland, it remains stubbornly opposed to establishing direct transportation, communications, and commercial links. A liberal leader like Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui surely sees economic integration with the PRC as inevitable in the long run. But to espouse direct links with the mainland would be to emphasize Chinese regionalism at the expense of expanded ties with the rest of the global community.

Taiwan's first priority now is to position itself as a member of the free camp and a proponent of free trade in the face of the trend toward large trading blocs that now characterizes the world economy. It must open up domestic markets and become part of the global economic network. Lacking United Nations membership, Taiwan has to find alternative links to the international community through such organizations as the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the APEC forum.

Beware the new Asianism

There has been much talk recently of forming East Asian trade groupings, including one centered on South China and another on the Sea of Japan. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad has proposed a somewhat broader East Asia Economic Caucus. Before plunging into any of these experiments, we should carefully examine the pros and cons of such a move.

In the coming years East Asia is likely to manifest ever greater economic vitality and serve as an engine for global growth. The sphere comprising the four dragons and the PRC will probably sustain growth in the vicinity of 7%. This means that East Asia will naturally be a focus of global attention. In that case, is it really a good idea to set up a regional economic zone? The short-term gains from such a grouping are unlikely to outweigh long-term adverse effects stemming from concerns that the East Asian region, including Japan, will develop into a monolithic and exclusionist trade bloc.

To understand why Washington has so vehemently opposed Mahathir's proposal, we need to look at the situation from the American perspective. The United States has been hit hard by competition from Japan and the dragons. It is naturally alarmed by any sign that the countries on the western side of the Pacific are moving to exclude it from the picture or challenge its leadership. How Japan responds to the choice between regionalism and

globalism is a matter of vital concern to the rest of the world. I would issue a word of caution to Japanese advocates of the new Asianism.

The coming decades will be characterized by the fragmentation of multiethnic countries and the reunification of divided nations. This process will be attended by numerous ethnic disputes and other conflicts involving the movement of people. Along with the issues of human rights and the global environment, these developments will emerge as the most pressing problems plaguing the world in the wake of the cold war. The October 18, 1991, issue of the French news magazine *L'Express* devoted its cover story to this theme. In "Un monde sans Marx" (A World Without Marx), Jérôme Dumoulin concludes, "At present the new world order gives every appearance of being an endless succession of local disturbances. The only universal is uncertainty. The optimists will christen this 'freedom.'" And in the same feature, Yves Cuau comments ironically, "How wonderful the cold war was for the strategists!"

In this new age of uncertainty, the United States will probably continue to take a fairly clear-cut interventionist stance on such global, universal issues as human rights, notwithstanding growing economic troubles at home. This should be evident from the seemingly disproportionate importance Americans have attached to human-rights violations in China. If China and other East Asian countries become the object of Washington's ire, Japan will be forced to choose between its Asian and global interests. Overall, Tokyo may well be tempted to focus on geographical and cultural considerations as it formulates its response, a slant seen in Japan's post-Tiananmen policy of quickly papering over differences with Beijing to prevent the Chinese from going into diplomatic isolation. If we take this route, however, we run a serious risk of becoming allied with the new Asianism and inviting our own global isolation.

What Japan needs to do now is not to commit itself to some exclusive economic grouping but rather to view East Asia's realities within a broader context and work to create a regional framework open and accessible to the world.

For the past five years this writer has headed a joint Comparative Study of East Asia supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Focusing on the so-called Chinese cultural sphere, defined as those areas of Asia that use Chinese characters in their writing systems and have been influenced by Confucianism, this study examines the hypothesis that such cultural underpinnings have facilitated the rapid economic development of East Asia, including Japan. While this concept provides much fruit for discussion, it could also become a source of friction if it implies a cultural sphere closed to the outside. Japan must constantly keep in mind the common agenda facing humanity as it implements concrete policies toward neighboring regions.

Official international organizations and institutions tend to be hamstrung by concepts like "one China" and U.N. membership. But other organizations are creating a framework for interpersonal relations on a more direct, grass-roots level. Under Governor Hiramatsu Morihiko, Ōita Prefecture has initiated a program of exchange with Taiwan's Kaohsiung Prefecture and Moscow. When former Moscow mayor Gavriil Popov visited Taipei in the autumn of 1990, he was deeply impressed by its affluence and became a great admirer of Taiwan. In this way economic exchange can proceed without the creation of exclusionist blocs.

Hope for grass-roots globalism

Globalism is not the preserve of state leaders and seasoned diplomats posturing at superpower summits or holding forth at Group of Seven meetings. The "grass-roots globalism" of which I speak embraces a fairly high level of exchange, unlike the approach taken by existing nongovernmental organizations, and it offers a basis for an alternative framework for international relations. I believe that Asia's new international order will evolve from the multidimensional intertwining of such forums for exchange.

Mikhail Gorbachev saw the potential to create what he termed a "common European house." This vision led to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and ultimately to the end of East-West confrontation and of the cold war. By contrast, tremendous economic and social discrepancies divide the countries of Asia; as yet we lack the foundations for building a "common Asian house." Japan must open its eyes to the possibilities of a new style of economic and political interaction if it is to lead an open Asia in the twenty-first century. (Courtesy of Yomiuri Shimbun Sha)

Translated from "'Mittsu no Chūgoku' kyōson no zushiki," in This Is Yomiuri, *August 1992, pp. 91–103; slightly abridged.*