

## **Session Seven**

### **“Mapping the Second Decade of East Asian Community Building”**

#### **The Fifth East Asia Congress**

## **Second Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation and East Asian Community Building**

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The Second Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation was adopted 2 weeks ago. This is a very significant step in East Asian community building as well as a milestone in ASEAN Plus Three cooperation. This conference is held at very good timing. Reflecting on the achievements of the first decade and interpreting the guiding document for the second, we will see what we should go from here and what should be done.

### **I. East Asian Cooperation: the First Decade**

The first decade of East Asian cooperation was triggered by Asian Financial Crisis. This is a joint response to increasing economic globalization and regional integration, as well as a measure of collective self-help facing a common threat. Although starting fairly late in comparison with other major regions in the world, East Asian cooperation and integration in its first decade has made significant achievements and maintained dynamism and momentum.

In the first decade, political will and commitment has been strengthened to East Asian cooperation and community building. The adoption of the first “Joint Statement on East Asian Cooperation” by the APT Summit in 1999 indicates a turn in the driving force for regional cooperation from instinctive defense against a common threat to conscious building of regional peace, stability and prosperity on the basis of common interests. The goals, principles, proceeding rules and specific areas for cooperation were all clearly laid out there. East Asian integration began to take shape. The two Kuala Lumpur Declarations adopted in 2005 demonstrated serious commitment to the building of an East Asian community. The convening of the first East Asia Summit marks a significant step forward in regional integration process. As a strategic forum, it not only complements the role of APT in building an East Asian community, demonstrates the openness of the regional process, but also shows the determination of pushing forward the process despite differences.

In the first decade, a set of norms governing regional cooperation has been evolved out of practice, which, termed by some scholars as East Asian political culture or East Asian identities, is not only regulating behaviors of states, but also constituting their

identity and shaping the culture of the region. The goal of an East Asian community of peace, prosperity and progress has become a norm of the norms for regional integration, in the sense that its appropriateness and taken-for-grantedness has been generally internalized by actors in the region. The ASEAN way of consensus, non-interference, informal consultation, and cooperation has been socialized by Plus Three countries and laid foundation for trust and diffuse reciprocity.

In the first decade, regional cooperation has been both widened and deepened. The frameworks for regional cooperation with ASEAN at the core have been set up. ASEAN Plus One, ASEAN Plus Three, EAS, ARF, and so on are playing mutually reinforcing and complementing roles and making joint contributions to regional integration. Under the APT framework alone, 50 dialog mechanisms have been set up and more than a hundred cooperation programs have been carried out in over 20 areas. In the first decade, East Asia has been the fastest growing region in the world. East Asian financial cooperation has been deepened under CMI. Intraregional trade has been increased to over 55%. Bilateral and multilateral FTAs are in progress. Sub-regional cooperation, social-cultural cooperation and non-traditional-security cooperation have all been facilitated steadily.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. East Asian Cooperation at a Crossroads**

Entering the Second Decade, East Asian cooperation and community building is at a crossroads for many differences and challenges loom. Differences are obvious. Some say East Asian cooperation has lost its initial impetus or driving force for there is no immediate threat. Some doubt East Asian cooperation could go far for it is not highly institutionalized and often does not produce immediate results. Some question if ASEAN can go on leading the process. Some worry about the distrust and “rivalry” among countries in the region.

When reviewing and envisioning regional integration, we seem to have different perspectives. Some believe cooperation is temporary and conflict caused by anarchy and fear is constant, and tend to adopt cold-war mentality of balances-of-power, alliances, hegemonies and deterrence. Some remain skeptical about the regional integration process because of all the problems that have been brought up, for instance, low institutionalization, enormous diversity, and the lack of spillover effects from economic cooperation to other fields. Some perceive the transforming and shaping power of the integration process which has presented itself over the last decade, and believe in the expansion of common interests and convergence of expectations in increasing interaction. These differences in opinions and mindsets are causing great confusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Wen Jiabao, “Build on Consensus for New Success—Speech Delivered at the 11th ASEAN Plus Three Summit,” Singapore, November 20, 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.cn/chn/ziliao/wzzt/wenjiabaofangwen/t382702.htm>. Accessed November 21, 2007.

Challenges are also obvious. Here I would like to identify four.<sup>2</sup>First, there are differences among East Asian nations on how the community should be built. We disagree to some extent on the definition of the region, on the leading force for the integration process, and on the degree of institutionalization. These disagreements show that consensus on a well-defined roadmap for East Asian community building is yet to be reached. Sometimes, we prefer to use the European model as a term of reference, but in fact the East Asian approach is very different. European regionalism, supported by the United States, started after WWII, when those European nations were all allies and needed only to overcome the historical memories, while in East Asia today we have both bitter historical memories and present distrust to overcome, and the United States is somewhat suspicious and hesitant. We have to deal with this fact.

Second, the cohesiveness of ASEAN. A distinctive feature of East Asian cooperation shown in the past is the leadership of ASEAN. ASEAN has played the key role in setting in motion the regional process and keep it moving on. Many of the norms and rules have been formulated by following the ASEAN way. The ASEAN leadership has been shaped by its continuous efforts in strengthening its own cohesiveness and building up its capacity, by its conscious efforts in norm-construction and agenda-setting in regional cooperation. However, in the last few years, ASEAN started to show some signs of less cohesiveness for the lack of strong leadership within itself and internal differences over EAS, over institutionalization and so on. A dynamic regional process needs a more cohesive ASEAN at the driving seat. The ASEAN Charter may still lack binding force, it however symbolizes “a strong political will to transform ASEAN into a stronger, more united and effective organization.”<sup>3</sup> This is not only critical to ASEAN, but also important to EA community building.

Third, the competition between China and Japan. There is deep misperception and distrust between China and Japan, which has led to many Japanese’ interpretation of China’s rise as a threat, the overemphasis of Japan on its value diplomacy, and on a single universal model of value system, and the competition between the two countries in the regional process. This competition could be quite benign, for it could push forward the regional process. However, due to the relations between the two countries, the competition has had a conflictual tone, which is detrimental to the regional cooperation.

And finally traditional security issues. A regional community is first of all a security community. In East Asia, traditional security threats continue to exist, if not well managed, could become serious problems for the region. There are territorial disputes over South China Sea. Ranging from civilian activities and economic development in

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<sup>2</sup> Qin Yaqing, “Political Challenges and Political Will: Towards a Sustainable Process of Building an East Asian Community,” Symposium of “Steps towards Building an East Asian Community,” Tokyo, 28 September 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Tommy Koh, Walter Woon, Andrew Tan, and Chan Sze-Wei, “Charter Makes ASEAN Stronger, more United and Effective,” *The Strait Times*, 8 August 2007.

controversial areas to sporadic and minor military skirmishes, the disputes have emerged since 1970s increasingly as a crucial problem intimidating regional stability. There is Taiwan issue. The proposed referendum on and application for UN membership in the name of Taiwan is viewed as a direct step intended to change the status quo across the Strait and therefore poses a threat to the stability of the region. And the nuclear crisis of the Korean Peninsula is another challenge. Although significant progress has been made, there is still a long way to go for the final solution. And how to develop a more institutionalized mechanism to ensure eternal peace on the Korean Peninsula is even more complicated.

### **III. The Second Joint Statement of East Asian Cooperation**

It is right under these circumstances of differences and challenges that the Second Joint Statement of East Asia Cooperation makes great sense. First, it adopts the right perception of possible progress in process, in seeing the transformation of a threat into a blessing, and the practical benefits for and closer links among peoples created by the regional process of the first decade. And it believes in the convergence rather than the divergence of interests, aspirations and commitment to peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity, believes such convergence can be a driving force for community building.

Second, it shows strong political will to settle differences and debates, and concentrate on the process. It reaffirms the long-term goal of EA community building, the driving seat of ASEAN and the role of APT as the main vehicle. This reconfirmation is of great significance because it settles the debates over the issues of leadership and framework for EAc building for the next ten years. It shows that APT has achieved greater consensus and become more united on these issues. Written into official document accompanied by Action Plans, these consensus become norms guiding the EAc building in the next decade. When the big structure is there, the focus is naturally on the process. The title itself “building on the foundations” shows a determination to maintain and reinforce the ongoing process.

Third, it reaffirms certain regional norms, for instance, common interests, ASEAN in the driving seat, dispute-settlement through dialog and consultation, gradual institutionalization and integration. These norms could guide us to tackle challenges. In the spirit of the statement, we should identify and maximize our common interests for the convergence of our expectations, we should support ASEAN integration and community building to increase its cohesiveness and capacity to secure its driving seat and its role of holding the regional process together, we should exercise self-restraint and work together to settle disputes through dialog and consultation, and set up institutionalized mechanisms in due time to maintain stability and reduce hostility, and we should can integrate rather than containing, balancing or counterbalancing one another.

Last but not least, the statement and the action plan have not only built on the ongoing regional process but also greatly enriched it. The action plan shows that cooperation will be further widened and deepened under the APT framework, the integration process will have more substance, and the density of interaction among organizations, institutions, and societies in the region will be greatly increased. And all these interactive and cooperative processes will not only bring practical good to people but also shaping common vocabulary, common norms and common understanding.

#### **IV. Process—Key to Community Building**

A community, in general, refers to “the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, background or nationality.”<sup>4</sup> In international politics, community is “the idea that actors can share values, norms, and symbols that provide a social identity, and engage in various interactions in myriad spheres that reflect long-term interest, diffuse reciprocity, and trust.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the key elements for a community are shared understanding, interaction and trust. We can see the second joint statement is guiding us towards the right direction.

East Asian community building is process-oriented. It is only at the very initial stage. At this stage, it is natural to have diversities, disagreements and differences. What is critical is the strong political will and action to maintain the momentum and keep the cooperation process going. If we adopt the logic of balance-of-power, the ongoing process will stop and the current generally cooperative culture will be reversed to a culture of distrust and conflict. If we doubt and hesitate to go forward, then regional integration and cooperation will lose its dynamism and momentum. If we believe in transformation in process, then East Asian community will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. For the interactive process can reduce distrust, build confidence, construct norms and shape shared understanding for the final goal of a community. Once in the process, we are integrating and being integrated. Such integration process engages all stakeholders and helps maintain regional stability and promote economic cooperation. Such a process is both a means for community building and an end in itself embodying peace and cooperation.

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<sup>4</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, 2003. Version 1.0.

<sup>5</sup> Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, “Security Communities in Theoretical Perspective,” Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett eds. *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.3.