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EMERGING POWERS
AND EMERGING ASIA

GAO XIAN

[I]

Globalization is an inevitable trend in the world today. Undoubtedly, the present world order and rules of game are created and dominated by US and other Western powers. The free flow of trade, capital, technology, materials, manpower, information, etc. are meant to serve their interest and that of their transnationals. While the rest of the world is to follow their rules of game, to open national borders and to get “globalized”; This is the ideal world order of their design.

Paradoxically, the actual development of world affairs has its objective process, it does not run solely on their track. Thus, development of regionalization in the midst of globalization is one example. It is true, regionalization is nothing new, it started much earlier, but the active growth and expansion of regionalization process is an outstanding phenomenon side by side with globalization today. And, what is more important and noteworthy is the rise of emerging powers, the major representatives of which are BRICAS---Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. This phenomenon is rather out of expectation of the

dominating powers. Those emerging powers are all developing or disadvantaged nations in the present world order. They are all leading nations in respective regions/continents with common features such as: sizable territory, population, natural resources, and domestic market. They all have strong determination to change their lot through reform, opening-up and national revival, although they all face problems, difficulties and contradictions, historical or contemporary, internal or external, national or ethnic. But they managed to make use of available possibilities and avoid pitfalls in the globalization process. Thus, they began to divert some of the disadvantages and unfair conditions in the world order and turn the situation partially to their benefit. The emerging powers are in different levels of development in the present world and their road ahead might be full of obstacles and uncertainty.

Naturally, the rise of the emerging powers is an encouraging inspiration to their fellow developing countries, also a serious challenge to US and the dominating group, because things seem to run out of their control.

[II]

Asia is where 2 (or 2 and 1/2) emerging powers (China and India, and Russia of Euro-Asia) come from, and China and India are now the most outstanding emerging powers in the world, and what is more,

with the progress of regionalization process and the rise of more and more emerging economies, it is possible for Asia to develop into an emerging region as a whole.

Asia is heading towards equal and multilateral regional cooperation. Regionalization in Asia has several features.

1, East Asia has taken the lead in regionalization of Asia. Regional cooperation activities started in Asia in 1961 with the establishment of Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) which developed into Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. This process has shown remarkable growth and expansion since mid-1980s with ASEAN as the core of operation, it takes various forms of multidimensional and multilevel “horizontal cooperation”, such as: sub-regional economic cooperation, bilateral and multilateral cooperation between countries/areas, free trade areas of different types, etc. It presents a lively and colorful picture of regional cooperation for different needs.

2, Regionalization in Asia is mainly a regionalization of developing countries/economies (all but Japan). The procedure and contents of regional cooperation in 10+3 mechanism of ASEAN lay primary emphasis on the guiding principles of Equality, Mutual Benefit, Negotiation and Unanimity. This has much to do with the fact that most countries in this region were colonies or semi-colonies before the war, even after they won independence politically in the post-war years, they

still suffer inequality and dependency economically and technologically (hence politically too) in international affairs. Naturally, in regional cooperation, they cherish the above-mentioned principles as of primary importance.

3, In regionalization of East Asia, so far there is no “leader” in its real sense. It is true, in the present 10+3 mechanism, 10 (ASEAN) acts as “host” and 3 (China, Japan and ROK) acts as “guest”, in other words, the 10 nations which hold less economic weight (for instance, the aggregate GDP of the 10 nations of ASEAN was 8.8% of that of the regional total in East Asia) are the core of the process while the 3 big nations are invitees. There might be some change in the future with the progress of the regional cooperation. For example, ROK did raise at the 2001 Summit Meeting the idea of transforming 10+3 Summit Meeting into East Asia Summit Meeting by eliminating the host-guest status difference. But there will not be a “leader” of dominating role although ASEAN now is playing a leading role. Different nations may play different parts and contribute differently, yet they are all on equal basis and have equal say for common good in this community of cooperation.

Now that the First East Asia Summit Meeting will be convened in Malaysia in 2005, this will mark a new stage of regionalization in Asia.

4, The ongoing process of regional cooperation in East Asia is trying to benefit all members according to their different development

needs and different development levels through measures and arrangements of cooperation and mutual support to achieve co-development of participants, so that all of them are able to make better use of globalization opportunities and avoid or reduce globalization damages. At the same time, In East Asia, in addition to cooperation in the field of trade and finance which is already going on, the member countries will strengthen their cooperation in political and security fields, and further to the fields of social, cultural, and science & technological cooperation.

5, Besides the active performance of regional cooperation in East Asia, regionalization activities in other parts of Asia, such as South Asia, Central & West Asia, and Northeast Asia are all pushing forward with varied speed and different momentum. The general trend of Asian regionalization is heading towards coordination of the whole region as well as inter-regional cooperation.

[III]

Regionalization in Asia benefits the individual countries / economies as well as the region as a whole. Reform and opening up in different countries / economies has been the most important motive force for economic growth and internal progress. The external conditions, especially the activities of regional cooperation help to improve

economic performance of member countries and to enhance regional identity of Asia which in turn promotes economic growth and regional solidarity. All those factors were helpful for Asia to recover from natural and man-made calamities (such as tsunami of 2004 and financial crisis of late 1990s) and difficulties in the course of its way forward. These constitute the foundation for the emergence of Asia.

The rise of China and India as emerging powers in Asia marked an important stage for emergence of Asia and has overall strategic significance in the world. Asian economy began its “take-off” with Japan in 1970s, then followed with “Four Dragons” and “Four Tigers”. And it is the emergence of China and India that gives Asia the real sense of an emerging continent. The emergence of China and India pushes forward a new round of energetic development in Asia and was one of the main pulls for world economic growth in last two years. The emergence of Asia, especially East Asia and South Asia, has provided and is providing strong impetus to world development. Asia has biggest population in the world. The population of East Asia and South Asia combined amounts about 3 billion, approximately 50% of the world total and about 65% of that of the developing world. This is not only the major human power in world development, but also very big emerging market of development potentials. The emergence of Asia, especially East Asia and South Asia, also provides new experiences and new models for peaceful co-existence

among nations and areas of different social systems and different cultures. Moreover, the emergence and regionalization of Asia is an open process, which stresses coordinated development with other regional communities as well as global economic and political organizations, and pays much attention to inter-regional cooperation. So, the emergence and regionalization of Asia will benefit the whole world.

Therefore the emergence of China and India, the two biggest developing countries and longest Oriental civilizations, plays active part in Asia, it has very important significance to the final realization of emergence of Asia.

It is true, The process of emergence and regionalization of Asia is not without difficulties. There are problems of hot spots and historical disputes which will have to be rationally and patiently solved.