

## The Concept of East Asian Community and Regionalism Foreign Policy of Japan and Korea

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Translated by Wenting Yang

For 10<sup>th</sup> lecture of international seminar of One Asia Foundation, Principal Hsu Hsing-Ching invited Professor Lee Jong-Won of Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University, to be our guest speaker. Professor Lee received his Ph.D. degree from the University of Tokyo and he is a distinguished Korean scholar specializing in contemporary East Asian Relations and Korean Studies. Principal Hsu Hsing-Ching praised Professor Lee is a specialist who is well-known and highly respected in Japanese society. Whenever Japanese media, for example well-received TV news show “Sunday Debate” (NHK), want scholars’ opinion on issues related to Korean Peninsula, they invite Professor Lee to these news shows to provide his opinion. Thus, he opinions are highly-valued. After this lecture, Professor Lee visited Chang Jen-Hu, the chairman of the board of directors of our University and Professor Lee gave his new book “朝鮮半島 危機から対話へ Korean Peninsula: From Crisis to Dialogue” published in October to Chairman Chang as a present. Professor Lee and Chairman Chang had a pleasant conversation and a good time.

Except his masterpieces *東アジア冷戦と韓米日関係 East Asian Cold War and Korea-US-Japanese Relations* (東京大學出版會 Tokyo University Press, 1996), Professor Lee wrote and edited various books, including *戦後日韓関係史 History of Post-War Japanese-Korean Relations* (有斐閣 Yuhikaku Publishing, 2017), *東アジア和解への道 East Asia: Way to Reconciliation* (岩波書店 Iwanami Shoten, 2016), *国際政治から考える東アジア共同体 Think About East Asian Community from International Politics* (ミネルヴァ書房 Minerva Shobo, 2012), etc. Echoing the main theme of our course, Professor Lee's lecture focused on the concept of “East Asian Community.” Professor Lee traced the exact actions regarding multilateral cooperation system of East Asia since the 1990s and analyzed the foreign strategies of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, China, Japan, and Korea. In this short lecture limited in 80 minute, Professor Lee did his best to resolve students’ questions and cared about whether student understood his lecture. Professor Lee used straightforward style and language to express his thoughts in order to reach the best learning effect for students. The spirit of his education style worth our respects. The following is a summary of his lecture:

From the 1990s to 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the new unit in the field of international politics, the term “region” became popular. After the end of Cold War, the tension between countries was gradually eased. The impact of globalization rapidly intensified the interdependence relations between neighboring countries. Under the trends of “regionalization” and “regionalism” in every region, there are 173 regional institutions established globally such as European Union (EU), African Union, ASEAN. In recent years, the Brexit of United Kingdom and populism in some European countries seemed signaling reactionary forces against regional integration in Europe where was once a region leading the trend of regionalism. However, the ideas of maintaining the framework of EU remain strong in European countries. It is because people expect

regional community can surpass the limitation of sovereign states and enjoy the benefit gaining from globalization and restrain its negative effects.

First, we need to think about the meaning of “regional community.” The concept and function of “East Asian Community” are viewed as an alternative to power transition and competition between United States (US) and China and viewed as a mechanism which can exceed national identities and nationalism. Second, from the perspective of political science, we think a region can be constructed. Region is not only a geographical entity, but also is the result of historical, political, and perception activities. For example, the term “North Atlantic” (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO) was constructed after the end of the Second World War for the reason to integrate the alliance between West Europe and the US. The term “Asia and Pacific,” later “the Asia-Pacific,” was constructed by scholars for emphasizing the importance of Asian and Pacific region. For the term “East Asia,” scholars tend to emphasize its economic meaning in the 1980s, while emphasizing its international political meaning in the 1990s. Recently, Japan and the US advocate the region of “Indo-Pacific.” After he explained the basic concept, Professor Lee continued to elaborate the formation process of the concept “East Asia” in the field of political science.

In the 1990s, the concept “East Asia” was transformed with a goal of forming “community.” Advocated by ASEAN countries and echoed by Japan and Korea, the concept “East Community” was significantly developed. Members who conducted middle power foreign policies, such as ASEAN countries, Japan and South Korea, aimed at promoting institutionalized regional cooperation. With the background of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, “ASEAN+3 (Japan, China, and South Korea) Meeting” was held and it can be viewed as the birth of first “East Asia” regional framework. “ASEAN+3” set up a long-term goal to establish “East Asian Community” as proposed by South Korea President Kim Dae-Jung. “East Asian Community” is not only an ideal vision but also a policy issue that countries in this region should negotiate. In addition, the establishment of “East Asian Summit (EAS)” in 2005 further signaled the beginning of a new stage.

However, the conflicts among participants of EAS appeared and it impeded the development of “East Asian community.” Meanwhile, countries in this region faced the difficulty of how to response to “China’s rise.” In order to balance the rise of Chinese influence which was higher than these countries expected, Australia, New Zealand, and India joined EAS as founding countries. In 2011, the US and Russia also joined EAS and membership expanded to 18 countries. It reflects the international political rivalry in the region of East Asia. Nevertheless, EAS held annually has become a place for member countries to discuss “China Problem,” instead of a place for regional cooperation. Thus, China lost its interests in East Asian regionalism and turned to a vision aiming at establishing a cross-regional economic zone with Eurasia at the center, through utilizing its momentarily economic power and conducting measures like “The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).” On the other hand, the US and Japan also announced a framework of “Indo-Pacific,” aiming at balancing China.

As mentioned above, so-called “East Asian Community” refers to two meanings. Broadly speaking, it refers to concepts of various visions regarding regional cooperation in East Asia. In a narrow sense, it refers to the idea that “ASEAN+3” proposed as a future goal in 2002. However, the idea of “East Asian Community” was

under stagnant condition. ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) established in 2016 caught the world's attention, symbolizing a step forward to regional economic integration of Southeastern region. At the same time, main actors like China, the US, Japan announced their new "ASEAN strategies" and declared that they will intensify their exchanges with AEC. Moreover, the US raised the concept of "Asia-Pacific" and "Indo-Pacific," while China promote the integration of Eurasia with the basis of BRI. These reflected that the competition and cooperation over the area and form of the region continued. With the competition and cooperation over the concepts of the region, "East Asian Community" is facing a crossroad.

There are three thinking points in Professor Lee's lecture:

1. Is there an identity of "Asian" (East Asian)? The multiplicity of identity (such as place, nationality, region, world), what is the common ground for Asian?
2. What is the obstacle of regional cooperation (regional integration) in Asia? What is the reason of distrust?
3. What kind of region should we construct? Was there cooperation in a region between the US and China?

After the lecture, students were active asking questions. Junior college student Chen You-lin from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature asked that whether the goal of the framework of "Indo-Pacific" proposed by the US, Japan, India, and Australia is containing China like NATO in the Cold War Era? Senior college student Wen Hsin from the Department of Journalism asked that why populism appeared and why it is opposed? Senior college student Chu Hsiang-ying from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature asked that now the US and India joined, how the concept of "East Asian Community" was expanded? How should we interpret it? Professor Lee was delighted to hear these profound questions and praised students' active attitude toward learning knowledge.

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