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THE CONTEMPORARY INTELLECTUAL LANDSCAPE  
IN EAST AND S.E. ASIA

In the past 40 the countries in the East and South East Asian region have gone through vast political, social and cultural changes that have been both very rapid and profound. Japan has gone through military occupation, from economic recovery to economic superpower. Korea has gone through independence, national division and war, rapid economic progress, as well as a somewhat slower progress, especially in response to popular pressure, to democratic government. Post war China, Asia's first military nuclear power, has gone through its cultural revolution and subsequent liberalisation of the economy on the basis of a more flexible interpretation of its political doctrines. Hongkong, after its postwar almost phenomenal recovery has become one of Asia's most important financial centres without shedding its colonial status, but faces the profound uncertainty of its future resulting from the virtual abandonment of its people by its colonizer and its projected inclusion into China.

The South East Asian countries, linked together through ASEAN and having gained their independence in different ways, have each gone through the searing pains of political change as well as substantial progress in their economic development. The other South East Asian countries are all trying to adjust to the consequences of peace after their long experience of the violence of war. Brunei, latecomer into the family of ASEAN, blessed with abundant natural resources, is in the process of articulation its own national identity and its place in the order of things.

All these changes have also involved profound shifts in intellectual and value orientations, worldviews, and political culture. The fact that these changes have taken place during the lifetime of only three generations have in addition tended to dramatise the sharpness of these changes between generations.

The various perceptions therefore that exists about the national self and about the other countries on the eastern rim of the Pacific regions have become especially important now that a considerable degree of economic cooperation within this region has developed in the larger context of a desired or perceived process of economic integration of the Pacific region as a whole.

In each particular phase of its historical evolution or revolution in the past 40 years each country and each generation has had, with more or less success, to define its national identity and purpose anew, as well its place in the world

The period of colonialism was also a period of intellectual isolation from each other for the countries of this region. In part maybe because of the allconsuming preoccupation with their own problems, much of this isolation has continued to this day, even though new economic ties have developed and continue to do so.

Still if economic cooperation is to continue it will be essential for each of these countries to develop a much deeper understanding of each other, and to familiarize themselves with the manner in which each looks at at their own future as well as the future of this region. Many of the concepts about that future, much of the interpretation of current events have been articulated by people outside this region. There remains a need for a fuller understanding of each other's own assessment of the prospects for this region which features such a great variety of profoundly different cultures. This also needs a much greater familiarity with each other's scholarly work, about each of their own countries as well about other countries in the region. It is of the greatest importance for intellectuals of one country to know what are the moral and social concerns of their fellow intellectuals in other countries, as well as the cultural roots of those concerns. And despite the existence of a few regional journals in English, these laudable efforts should be supplemented with a much greater and sustained regional effort something that may well require a clearer conceptualisation of intellectual cooperation.

The purpose of the conference is to lay the foundations for a continuing and opened dialogue among intellectuals of the region. This would open the possibility for deeper mutual understanding of the basic factors that shape political, social and economic behaviour of the countries in the region, as well of the basic values undergirding these factors. It might contribute to a more solid foundation for regional cooperation and cohesion than mere convergence of economic interests would provide. It could assist each other in the search for solutions to contemporary problems of each of these societies in the rapid transition they are undergoing through comparison of each other's experiences and views, and it could contribute to the articulation of a shared vision of the future of the region.

Organisation of the conference:

The conference is divided in three substantive parts, an introductory part and a final general review of the discussions. Each part is to take up a morning, an afternoon or an evening.

The three substantive parts could be the following:

## I. NATIONAL SELFPERCEPTIONS AND WORLDVIEWS

Analyses by at least two participants of each country of the way people in his or her country see themselves, in relation to their history and the various changes through which they have gone; in response to modernity, science and technology and development, in relation to other countries and peoples, as well as in relation to the major international and global issues. How do people see the future.

The Japanese participants could be asked in addition to deal with the question of internationalisation and culture

## II. REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHANGES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

What are in one's country the prevailing positive as well as negative stereotypes of the other countries; what are the lessons that each of us can draw from the national experience of the other countries. What are the roles each country expects the other countries to play in the region and which roles they would'nt want them to play. Are there common intellectual or moral concerns in the region that would lead to greater intellectual cooperation? If so, what are these shared concerns.? Would greater knowledge of pre-colonial historical ties between our countries open new approaches to mutual understanding?

## III. VISIONS OF A DESIRABLE FUTURE FOR THE REGION

Several of the many concepts regarding the Pacific region are based on the cooperation of marketeconomies. On the other hand, it is unlikely that China's - and for that matter also the Soviet Union's - inevitable economic participation in the Pacific basin will take place on the same basis. Their participation may change a number of other patterns. Trade patterns which now seem to converge on either the American or the Japanese market, or both, may shift directions. Is there any likelihood that the various patterns of economic development in this region might lead to different, non-Western types of modern societies? What might they have in common beyond shared economic and security interests. What is the role intellectuals should play in enhancing the interactions between the countries of the region?