

**WHAT CAN NORTHEAST ASIA LEARN  
FROM EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main aim of following paper is to describe and analyze the contemporary development in Northeast Asia (NEA) region, from the point of view of the European Unions policy perspective. Northeast Asia faces one of the fastest economic developments among the world regions in last few years. The regional events attract the attention of world community, specially the economic one, but political as well. It's the region of contradictions and possibilities. The main interest of the EU stems from the economic interests and political and security stability likewise.

Since the policy of the EU towards Asia is oriented mainly on the cooperation with the regional integration groupings as ASEAN, ARF and SAARC are, and on the ASEM meetings, the paper is aimed to outline the main features of the Northeast Asia's regional development. The paper is divided into three parts. In introduction the Northeast Asia (NEA) delimited applying four dimensions which are used to conceptualize region. The first part analyzes the regional features which may be seen as obstacles to regional integration. In the second part the lessons NEA can learned from the European experiences. E.g. how to overcome the historical disputes and animosities dividing the regional actors, how to solve the security and political questions arising among the states – this is connected with the possibility of institutionalization of the Six-Party Talks process. Third part of the paper highlights how the EU approaches the region and where it operates. Union has developed good relations with the particular regional actors. Any worsening of the regional situation, particularly the security one, concerning mainly the North Korean nuclear and missile program, would negatively influence the international security environment and financial system. On the other hand the contemporary development leading toward disarmament of Korean nuclear program and easing tensions between the US and DPRK, offers possibilities to deepen the Unions programs of cooperation with the Pyongyang regime in its opening to the world.

The conclusion summarized the achievements of the mutual relations and offers some recommendations for the future.

## **INSTEAD OF INTRODUCTION**

Before analyzing the contemporary situation in NEA is necessary to clarify the conceptualization of 'region' as used in following paper. When we look at the scholarly debates tackling the issue of defining region we will find several approaches applied, different perspectives and dimensions used. What we won't find is one generally acknowledge definition. From a number of different studies dealing with region, regionalism, regioness, etc. (Hettne & Sönderbaum 2002, Langenhove 2003, Tavares 2004) we will apply a definition composed of four dimensions used to define the region as described by Tavares. These dimensions are as follows: (i) geography, (ii) shared regional perceptions, (iii) agency and (iv) regularity and intensity of interactions. Further, we will examine the application of particular dimension on the concerned region with the aim to offer a solid delimitation of NEA.

Firstly, the geography as a tool to characterize a region is based on territorial proximity. NEA is an example of a region whose clear geographical delimitation is complicated task. As Southeast Asia is geographically delimited as a territory between Chinese borders in the North and Indian border in the South and adjacent peninsulas and islands, NEA would be delimited by Chinese borders on the south and west and adjacent islands, by Pacific shore of the Japanese islands on the East, the northern Russian territories on North. The states generally considered to be part of the region are China with its island territories – Hong Kong and Taiwan, two Korean states and Japan and part of the territory of Russian federation, particularly its Far Eastern provinces.

Secondly, the shared regional perception is based on the idea to conduct socialization processes particularly among the ordinary people living in the region. These processes are ought to be led by the region-builders. In NEA some attempts have been already launched by the leaders of regional players – China, South Korea, Japan and Russia. The regional programs of university students exchange have started. The bilateral cultural exchange programs are working within the region, declaring for example 2007 to be year of China in Russia, etc. Practical examples are the links on e.g. South Korean News Agency – Yonhap – referring to webpage of Japanese, or Russian Press Agencies. Lately not only states and government participates on the building of regional identity, important role is played by the investing companies based mainly in Japan and opening their subsidiaries around the region. Thanks to the World Wide Web and television broadcasters the contemporary music, way of living and fashion are spread around the

region. These trends are being explained as an effort to preserve a regional specification and protect it from the Americanization which goes hand in hand with globalization.

Thirdly, talking about the agency or structure is nowadays not presented in NEA. The main regional players are states with their national interests and idea of sovereignty which remains strong within the region. As mentioned above, private companies and different cultural entities are step by step becoming important players. Even though to encompass the contemporary structure of region is more complex issue taking into account American military presence which shapes the security environment.

As last two paragraphs show the issue of building a regional identity or consciousness are on the way, together with evolving structure and growing number of important regional players. This development is a question of time and ability of the people in the region, particularly their leaders to overcome disputes, prevent eruption of a military conflict and build peaceful relation in order to secure the growing trends the region is experiencing since the end of Cold War.

Returning to the definition of the region, one of the four dimensions left to be mentioned. This dimension serves best in order to characterize Northeast Asia. In compliance with it the region is define via the degree of regional internal cohesion expressed through the creation of three sets of linkages. First set - social linkages encompassing ethnicity, culture and common historical heritage. Second set - political linkages created by similar political systems or regimes and institutions. The final set is composed of economical linkages or preferential trade agreements. Application of these linkages is narrowing the definition of NEA region. Talking about the social linkages in NEA the proofs of common historical experience, shared cultural and traditional roots – the civilization in this part of the world spread from China to Korean peninsula and to Japanese islands concerning not only system of writing, language but also thought about society and the rules the social life is governed by – mainly Confucianism are found here. The three concerned territories of three/four<sup>1</sup> states experienced similar political regimes starting with authoritarian rule of emperor who presented himself to be the heir of god. The issue of political linkages is more complicated. The region was divided during the Cold war by an Asian iron curtain which is the 38 parallel dividing Korean peninsula. Southward from the border we could find the countries to be considered as part of the democratic western world, on the contrary countries in the north were part of the so

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<sup>1</sup> When talking about historical development of NEA before the end of World War Two the region has three main actors, China, Japan and Korea. After the division of peninsula, four states which share traditions arose.

called Socialist block. In spite of the end of the Cold war, this division of region still remains even if not in so strict lines as before. On one side we have China and North Korea as allies and states whose regimes share the roots, nevertheless significant differences appeared between these two countries since the 90s. In the meantime China started with the economical reforms which are slowly leading the country to political changes. North Korea on the contrary strictly observes the same guidelines created in the 50s by its founding father Kim Il Sung and is very careful in introducing any reforms. The other side of the border encompasses Japan, South Korea and the US together with Russia. United States and Russia are two actors who firstly declared their interests in the region already in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then they are trying to secure their presence through interests and linkages created with other players. Russia, clearly a dominant superpower during Cold war decisively influenced one part of the region providing training and lectures to personalities interested in socialism or Marxism-Leninism. After the dissolution of USSR government of newly established Russian federation struggled for securing itself and dealt mainly with the problems in former Soviet republics. Nevertheless Russia never abandoned its interests which are growing together with growth of China, country becoming a big purchaser of Russian oil and gas. In the case of US, it holds its position within the region through military presence and bilateral security alliances with South Korea, Japan and Taiwan.

Moving to the field of economy, since the end of Cold war the region is experiencing efforts to strengthen cooperation in this area. Lately we are witnessing ambitions to move to the creation of regional Free Trade Area are being supported by regional leaders. In this process main role is played by three actors, namely China, Japan and South Korea. These players are following global trends in broadening the economical cooperation among the sovereign states. To briefly describe the development of economic cooperation the main impulse for its reviving was the end of bipolar confrontation on global scale. Even if the Cold war division still prevails in the relations among regional actors, the economy field is less affected by it. Nevertheless, the efforts to deepen the cooperation collided mainly at the beginning of the 90s with the consequences of this part of the history, particularly taking into the consideration the political regimes of the concerning actors. In order to broaden the economic cooperation reforms on the national level are necessary together with international agreements which would facilitate trade and investment relations among actors. These actors don't need to be national states, the private companies' counts as well. Last development shows that

these barriers are being overcome and the three actors are interested in further development in this field. For this purpose a Declaration on Tripartite Cooperation has been signed in October 2003<sup>2</sup> trilateral summit among leaders of China, Japan and South Korea. Leaders agreed on the need to seek ways to strengthen their across-the-board and future-oriented cooperation in a variety of areas, including economic relations and trade, investment, finance, transport, tourism, politics, security, culture, information and communication technology (ICT), science and technology and environmental protection (Trilateral Declaration). A Joint Study Group was created with the aim to examine the possibilities of trilateral economic cooperation which may possibly lead to the NEA economic integration and FTAs' creation. Notwithstanding the efforts among regional actors to create a regional FTA, these ambitions weren't fulfilled so far. As we will see further in text, several obstacles to broadening of the cooperation exist in the region and are interconnected with the main features of contemporary situation as listed further. In spite of complication within the NEA regional actors actively participate in the processes which are under way in neighboring regions. Several regional groupings exist in Asia and adjacent Pacific area as ASEAN – integrating 10 Southeast Asian countries, CIS and CSTO – organizations created from the successors of Soviet Union, SCO – relatively new regional grouping, operating in Central Asia. On inter-regional level we have to mention APEC – forum putting together the countries from both sides of Pacific ocean, ASEM – Asia-Europe Meetings where ASEAN + 3 with EU members are consulting different sets of issues, then the ASEAN + 3 mechanism putting together 10 southeast Asian economies with three Northeast Asian actors (ASEAN + 1 mechanism as meeting of ASEAN member states with one particular Northeast Asian player), ARF which puts together representatives of not only Asia and Pacific but the EU as well, last but not least on the list is the EAS – East Asia Summit process which started in Kuala Lumpur in 2005 with the aim to create a purely Asian regional grouping omitting the interests of the US and putting together ASEAN, South Korea, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand. This list of international groupings arising all around the NEA presents an ability of countries cooperating and agreed on common issues and solve the problems peacefully. The question is what prevents NEA countries from this development, what are the main obstacles to set the pace toward integration?

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<sup>2</sup> This summit took place on the side of ASEAN+3 meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

## FEATURES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Northeast Asia is 'paradoxical region' (Kuhnhardt, 2005) showing on one hand enormous economic growth and ambitions to broaden regional economical cooperation not only among three regional actors but with other regions as well. On the other hand looking at the geopolitics we are witnessing a cluster of difficulties and obstacles to any efforts made in the field of economic cooperation. When analyzing the region several characteristics and similarities are found by different scholars. Brzezinski depicts the contemporary situation in East Asia by comparing it to Europe, saying that 'East Asia is yet to establish whether its geopolitical future will resemble the Europe of the first half of the twentieth century or the Europe of the second half of the twentieth century.' (2005 pp.107) 'No other region in the world is oscillating between a truly 21<sup>st</sup> century aspiration and a 19<sup>th</sup> century type of geopolitical parameters coupled with a set of "left-overs" from 20<sup>th</sup> century regime controversies.' (Kuhnhardt, pp.3) Robert Ross characterized NEA using term East Asia as a region which has 'world's largest and most dynamic economies as well as great power competition.' (1999, pp.81) In order to make these statements clear, we will further focus on the explanation of the regional features.

The main features of regional development will make the problems or obstacles to the regional integration more clear. In order to keep the chronology not the importance we will divide the features into the three main categories:

- I. Legacy of historical development: 1. Japanese imperialism at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century  
2. Cold war order
- II. Internal politics of regional actors
- III. Power struggle between regional and non-regional actors and between regional players among themselves

### I.1 Japanese colonial rule

Legacy of history as a feature of contemporary regional relations is chronologically divided into two periods. The first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century marked by Japanese imperial ambitions presents one of them. To better understand why this period is so influential we have to return back to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century when 'new Japan' arose from what is known as Meiji Restoration. The country underwent a deep reform process which touched the society, economy and politics. The Japanese expansion was conducted in the same time

as western efforts to strengthen influence over China. This western approach is by many Japanese considered to be main reason why actually Japan began with its imperial policy. Not only the need of resources but also Japan's efforts to protect East Asia from getting under western colonial rule are often mentioned. Regardless the reason one has to admit that Japan colonial rule was cruel, any rights of the nations living on the occupied territory were infringed and every attempt to overthrow the Japan rule was suppressed. Japanese ambitions led to several wars with other regional powers as China and Russia and ended with the extension of Japan rule on the Asian continent – through Korean peninsula which was and still is perceived by the Japanese as a bridge to continental Asia, then to some parts of Chinese territories and Mongolia. Japanese colonial rule ended with its defeat at the end of WWII. Notwithstanding, this period of NEA history remains an influential feature within regional relations. The mistrust and concerns are deeply rooted among Chinese and Koreans. Although Japan adopted a pacifistic constitution and still doesn't dispose with the regular army, any attempt to change status quo of Japanese society and politics is by Beijing and Seoul perceived as a potential threat to their national as well as regional security. Another historical heritage presents a series of territorial disputes in the region as e.g. the issue of the name of Sea of Japan/East Sea between Japan and South Korea, moreover the question of disputed islands influences the relations between Japan and South Korea in the case of Togdo/Takeshima Islands, between China and Japan the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands, etc.

## I.2 Cold war order

Shortly before the end of WWII the division of the world has been agreed by the Allies, this decision concerned Europe as well as NEA. Primarily in Far east USSR and the US agreed on shared rule over territories occupied by the Japan. As situation between them deteriorated and the Cold war broke out, these division became permanent secured by creation of two opposite blocks in matter of political, societal and economical system. The border between two competing world was physically presented in two regions Europe and NEA where it was embodied on Korean peninsula. Even if the Cold war ended the region remains divided, or to be precise the Korean peninsula remains divided along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel which is considered to be the most fortified and militarize border in the world. This fact is not surprising taking into account fact, that the two Korean states together with their allies from Korean war remain technically in a state of war. Moreover the Cold war division is strengthened by the character of North Korean

regime, which remains hostile and suspicious towards the surrounding countries and US and perceives the IR almost purely from the realist point of view – precisely as a power struggle where the primacy is guaranteed by military strength. Its ‘natural’ reaction to this development is nuclear and missile program are considered to be one of the biggest threats to regional as well as global security. Since all the regional players are interested on securing their economic development and possibly even their cooperation, their main aim concerning North Korea is peaceful solution and ending these programs as well as signing of peace agreement and establishing normal relations with Washington. These efforts are embodied in the so called Six Party Talks process which is under way in Beijing since August 2003. We will analyze the process in detail in following part of the paper. Other issue, connected with the third group of features is the question of American military presence in the region through troops deployed in South Korea and Japan. They are perceived by the regional actors ambiguously on one hand as a sign of hegemony and dominance of the US and as a potential threat, on the other hand as a guarantor of regional status quo. China and South Korea whose cooperation is growing since establishing of diplomatic ties after Seoul 1988 Olympics, share concerns from Japanese renewed militarization and accept the US troops as a factor preventing it. Moreover, the US influences the regional situation through another mechanism, the bilateral security treaties concluded with Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. These treaties are by some scholars (Weber, 2007) considered to be an obstacle to the regional integration. Comparing it to Europe where the US supported creation of institutions since first signs of integrational efforts.

## II. Internal development leading into nationalism

The change of world order after end of the Cold war not only influenced the international order. The internal systems of most of the world states have been influenced with the same strength either we talk about democratization processes in former socialist states or reforms as conducted in China slowly leading from economy to politics. These changes brought together new threats caused by globalization, growing interdependence in all fields of states’ existence and interconnectedness through internet and technological improvements. Also the ideas and thoughts are spreading around the globe as never before. These trends are not avoiding NEA either. For China for example the separatism presents a threat not only to territorial integrity moreover to the economic

development. From this reason nationalism and strong affiliation to state are strongly supported by Beijing calling upon the progress the country achieved in last 20 years. As the threat of communism decreased still more voices appear in South Korea as well as Japan calling for withdrawing of US troops from their territory. Their presence is perceived as a securing of American dominance, not only military but also cultural and political. In South Korea particularly policy of Bush Jr. Administration towards North Korea is perceived negatively.

### III. The power struggle

The regional actors can be divided alongside the power pyramid, on the top of which superpower is placed. The only nowadays superpower<sup>3</sup> are undoubtedly the US which are involved in region. Reportedly the US controls the ship transport across Pacific and are interested to continue in this development. Besides the North Korean reclusive regime with its nuclear and missile program which are violate the non-proliferation regime the US declared to be one of their vital interests keeps their presence and attention. Moreover there is China as fastest growing economy in the world with its political regime which remains one party rule with different values as those one promoted by the US. Talking from the point of view of geopolitics the China represents a possible challenger to American hegemony within the region. Clearly China is becoming a power in fool meaning of this term. The fact that other regional actors do not perceive China as a threat anymore, even boost this concerns. As Ross stated already in 1999 China became a major trading country in the region, its potential is embodied in its more than billion people counting population. The investments Chinese companies have all around the world are becoming a useful tool how to gain an international acceptance and slowly become an important global power. Nowadays is clear that the region lacks a leader who would potentially support and guide the regional as was case of France and Germany in European integration. Taking into account that Russia is too much involved in the happening in former Soviet republics, Japan from the position of maritime power and with the historical memory is still perceived as a threat, Korean states involved in solving their relations and dealing with possibilities of reunification the only possible candidate to become a regional integration leader is China. Through its reform politics, economic

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<sup>3</sup> In the paper the 'superpower' is considered to be a state fulfilling two criteria, it has global interests and possesses tools in order to achieve them and in the case of being attacked with WMD state is able to return the attack with the same or even stronger blast.

growth and slow societal transformation is likely to be accepted as a leader. This possibility is not in favor of Washington's policy. Therefore many scholars predict a confrontation of these two powers to be a future of NEA. On one hand the military presence of the US and growing Chinese expenditures for an army might support this claim, on the other hand the economical interdependence which binds the regional players closely together, the interest on continuation of economy growth or worsening economical situation in the US are possible barriers to a military confrontation.

As previous text shows the situation in region is complex and complicated and in order to overcome all the obstacles a long term development and efforts will be needed. Moreover the question of integration will need to be carefully examined and analyzed if to be applied on the region. We've already briefly touched the issue of regionalization within the NEA expressed by efforts of the regional leaders to build the regional identity by stressing the common values and traditions, supporting students and worker as well as companies exchange, nevertheless there is still lot of obstacles still lot of efforts needed to exert. Even though when this ambitions are achieved within the region it would mean only the first step on a long way towards building a stable and lasting regional grouping supported by operating institutions which would have enough power to implement their decisions and recommendations.

## **WHAT CAN NORTHEAST ASIA LEARN FROM EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE?**

European integration and creation of permanent institutions is a most significant step towards regional integration in the human history. Even though the process was not smooth and had to face several obstacles, slow downs or even reverses, European integration is still on track lately moving towards broadening in the field of politics and security. Wanting apply the European experiences on NEA reality, one needs to return back to the half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the onset of the processes. European cooperation was built on the ruins left by the WWII. The regional leaders wanting prevent eruption of any other similar conflict and seeking political, economical and social recovery for the European nations believed this could be achieved through cooperation. The primary aim to create a joint management of resources lately leads to cooperation in other areas firstly in economic field and later in politics.

Theoretically speaking to explain the European integration two IR theories or approaches are dominant – neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism. These have developed in the time the process was already underway. Both approaches differ in analyzing main principles and guides of the integration in Europe. The main question neo-functionalists try to find an answer to is the relation between economical and political integration, how the economic one influences and leads to the political. For this purpose three features within neo-functionalist thoughts are crucial – spillover effect, elite socialization and creation of supranational interested groups. The spillover describes process according to which the cooperation in one field leads to formulation of new goals which primarily were not intended to be encompassed within this field. Even if political integration is not declared as a goal of cooperation, the spillover effect leads to it at the end. Other neo-functionalism's feature, the elite socialization counts with the development of so called supranational loyalty within the participants of decision-making processes. Meaning the supranational elite is formed, loyal to the institution and ideas of integration. Neo-functionalism expects that the interest groups operating on national scale will formulate their demands and interest with an eye to supranational institutions. From the critics of neo-functionalism the other crucial theory arose, the intergovernmentalism. It is a state-centric theory which privileges national state within the integration process in Europe based on classical IR theories as realism and neo-realism. The theoretical base of this approach determines the perception of international organizations, considered to be forums in which states convene to discuss common issues, share ideas and negotiate agreements. Cooperation is conducted rationally and has nothing in common with idealism or ideology. The cooperation within Europe is more about pooling or sharing or delegating of sovereignty than about its transfer. The approach is based on division between high and low politics, where high politics is perceived to be purely an issue of national identity, low politics is more technocratic and easier to be a subject of negotiations. There are several other theories created in order to explain integration process in Europe as confederalism, domestic politics approach, and liberal intergovernmentalism.

Now we will focus on the appropriation of these two main theoretical approaches for case of NEA. Although the theories have been created on empirical analysis of running processes, some their features may represent a blueprint for the NEA regional leaders on the way to move on in the cooperation. Borrowing one of the tools of neo-functionalism, the spillover effect, some forms of economical cooperation are underway

in NEA. Although nowadays we cannot really talk about spillovers, the reality is that three regional economies are searching for facilitators of mutual trade relations, either within the framework of FTAs that have so far bilateral character or abandoning different kinds of barriers in trade. But will the spillover effect lead to the political cooperation? Not even in Europe was this shift welcomed and took some time to set the pace for it. As analyzed above Northeast Asia has several challenges to cope with and overcome. For the European integration the homogeneity in political regime was a huge facilitator of development, also the support from the Washington helped. In NEA is the lack of Kantian source of peace<sup>4</sup> (Ross, 1999) perceived as one of the barrier to a peaceful development and integration.

In this state of relations in NEA the other approach seems to be more appropriate, intergovernmentalism with its favoring of sovereign state and cooperation without sovereignty transferring. Point out once again the NEA reality, all the regional actors, if we talking about China, Japan, or both Korean states are not keen to shift their sovereignty which is still perceived to be most important feature of states independence. One have to admit, that integration as it is proceeding in Europe is most likely not applicable for NEA. Nevertheless is clear, that any institutional grouping in NEA which would bring the actors together will contribute to facilitating the tensions and leading to a peaceful situation in the region.

Moving from the theoretical field to a real situation, the NEA can learn how to overcome disputes rooted in historical animosities and warfare! Several papers and analysis have been written comparing the ability of Japan and Germany face their history and cope with their military past. In order to find forgiveness among the European nations Germany undertook several steps as issuing of formal apology, financial compensation, preservation of memory, creation of trust, etc. (Weber, 2007) In the post-world war II era Germans tried to come to term with their past starting with the Nuremberg trials, following with the public debates about the Nazi period and Holocaust etc. The German leaders continuously called the citizens for facing the past acknowledging the crimes and holding responsibility for that. Situation in Japan was different, even if Japanese leader apologize for the colonial brutality and for the war crimes, the apology was not fully acknowledged by the Japanese population Events, as visit of former Prime Minister Koizumi to Yasukuni Shrine where war victims as well as wartime military commanders - considered by Asian countries to be a war criminals – are

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<sup>4</sup> The features of Kantian peace are: liberal democracies, economic interdependence and multilateral institutions.

buried, worsen the situation. While in Europe the historical experience led to the efforts to prevent another war from outbreak and led to the cooperation and integration, in Asia the history still puts obstacles to the reconciliation among regional actors. One has to admit, that Germany was able to regain trust of other European countries by supporting the creation of transnational institutions and by engaging itself in them.

Another experience the NEA can learn from Europe is how to overcome a Cold war division which Europe experienced recently. Europe was together with NEA divided alongside the iron curtain after WWII. Its central and eastern part found themselves under Soviet dominance which pervade in the region for more than 40 years. The situation has changed after 1989 when the European countries and even Russia by itself launched the democratization processes. These processes were guided from the political elites within the particular European states. Even if the process of overcoming the communist legacies was complicated and harmful, nowadays seems that was successful. This development was confirmed when eight former socialist countries entered the EU in 2004 and two more in 2007. After all, in NEA the situation is far more complicated. One of the problems is caused by the fact, that China as well as North Korea implemented the classical Marxism-Leninism theories with certain changes and adjusted them to their traditions and particular situation. Moreover the state ideology is deeply interconnected with the Confucian traditions of these countries which boost its influence even more. When talking about Central and Eastern European countries the change came from the people, ordinary citizens who protested on the streets against regime. The only attempt in NEA – the protests in Beijings' Tien an men square was brutally suppressed and paralyze any other similar efforts. Notwithstanding in the case of China we are already witnessing several changes not only in economy, but in the political and social life as well. When talking about North Korea, here is the situation completely different. Nowadays we don't have any proofs of existence of any opposition group aimed against regime. The true is, that the regime is so strong and state ideology so deeply rooted in the society that most of the refugees from North Korea are leaving country for economical not political reasons. Any possible change within these two countries must therefore come from their elites.

Nowadays the discussions are underway dealing with the question if the EU may be perceived as *the model* for other regions. Even if European experience is unique and many different factors influenced its creation, the other regions may learn from what was

positive but even from the negativities this scale integration brings or better how to avoid the faults. In Europe the EU is not the only example of regionalization, several others organization and institutions operate here. One which is particularly interesting for the possible future development of NEA is the OSCE.

To explain more in detail, the OSCE was established through institutionalization of Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Conference launched the so called Helsinki process in the mid-70s and meant a breakthrough in East-West relations during the Cold War. The Final Act brought series of principles which all the participants from both blocks obliged to follow and implement into their legal systems. The most important was the issue of protecting and securing of the human rights. The results of the process are well known and their asset is enormous for international relations. In this way it has undoubtedly influenced the NEA countries as well. Other fact is, that the countries may nowadays take this mechanism as a blueprint for their mutual cooperation in order to overcome the issues that divide them. This recommendation has been put on the table already in 1999 in the report elaborated by Finish presidency of the European Council, where OSCE was set as an example of cooperation the NEA can build upon. Looking back at the NEA regional development since the beginning of new century a mechanism of cooperation was created in 2003. The mechanism is Six-Party Talks process. Even if the stated aim of the Talks is peaceful solution of North Korean nuclear and later missile program, documents adopted lately in Beijing suggests the possibility of transforming the Talks to a regular or permanent body or institution which would possibly deal with other issues concerning regional development and security. This possibility has several supporters among scholars and regional leaders as well. To mention the most famous, former South Korean president Ro Moo Hyun was a big supporter of Northeast Asia Cooperation Initiative, a plan was worked out in order to stress the notion of NEA itself. The conception is based on the effort to capture the structural transformation of the world order and to recognize the growing importance of NEA in this system and also the region's internal dynamism. The concept does not omit any regional actor, not even North Korea and points out efforts to tackle this problem.

## **INTERESTS OF EUROPEAN UNION**

Relations of the EU towards Asia are expanding rapidly; the EU is nowadays seeking an increasingly close relationship with Asia, going beyond traditional cooperation, to

economic integration and deepening of political cooperation. Asia has recently become Europe's main trading partner, accounting for a third of Europe's total trade flows. Moreover, European FDI in Asia amounts to a third of European investment abroad, and is growing.

Strengthening of EU-Asia relations is one of the EU's external policy priorities. The EU is consequently fostering dialogue and cooperation with all Asian partners, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Association of South-East Asia Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). To further strengthen political and economic relations, regular summits take place with individual countries in the ASEM framework. Regular political and sectoral dialogues are vital so that two regions can constructively engage on issues of mutual interest. Furthermore, the European Commission is moving to negotiate Free Trade Agreements with South Korea, India and ASEAN, as well as Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with Asian partners.

Northeast Asia as region which has been undergoing significant change since the end of Cold War is increasingly becoming to the center of EU's interests. Many regional scholars agree with the statement, that the region has potential to take a lead in creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century world order. With its population of around 1.5 billion and encompassing two 20<sup>th</sup> century miracles economies – Japan and South Korea - and 21<sup>st</sup> century economic giant China is the region scene of interest of other world players including the EU.

Regional cooperation efforts in North-East Asia have in the past been very limited, partly in reflection of the heritage of World War Two and the Cold War. Recently however, there has been greater interest in the creation of regional free trade areas (Japan and Singapore, Japan and South Korea). China, Japan and South Korea play an active part in the ASEAN Regional Forum as well as in "ASEAN + 3" forum. These three countries also play an important role in ASEM, and in APEC.

As analyze in previous text, the integration of China into the regional economy and polity, and solving of relations between Japan and its neighbors, will shape the regional outlook in the coming years. The region also posses' major international security challenges, taking into consideration questions such as the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and relations across the Taiwan Straits. Human rights issues are likewise important, notably in North Korea and China.

Nowadays except of bilateral relations and ASEM meetings the EU has no comprehensive approach towards NEA. In spite of its leaders are aware of the growing importance of the region and the need to create a regional mechanism, the EU absent here. Nevertheless the EU can engage itself in the region and offer to regional actors its experiences from integrational process.

The EU may involve in the regional development in the position of mediator and facilitator. In the complexity of relations among all regional actors a big advantage is possessed by the EU. In fact European powers never played a crucial role in the regions history with the only exception – the colonial ambitions in China in 19<sup>th</sup> century which actually never led to establishing of colonial rule as in the other parts of the world. Moreover the EU lacks any ambitions in region concerning the power struggle in which the regional actors find themselves. As Kühnhardt recommends the EU should conceptualize its NEA strategy as one of ‘law first’. Only through promoting a norm-based interactions would help with turning the suspicion and distrust in the region into mutually advantageous and predictable patterns under common legal frames (Ibid.).

The EU politics towards the region is composed of individual relations towards eight<sup>5</sup> particular regional actors and issues. Among others as important the issue of North Korean nuclear program is considered. In the 1990s European Union participated on the international efforts to dismantle North Korean nuclear program. It became a member of Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO). KEDO was founded by the US, Japan and the South Korea under the provisions of Agreed Framework<sup>6</sup>. The Executive Board was joined by the EU in 1997. By joining KEDO the EU recognized the global importance of maintaining regional security in NEA and also of promoting the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. According to the terms of Accession Agreement, the EU has provided a total of €118 million (EU official web page) in funding for the organization since 1996 – not counting the additional bilateral contributions of a number of EU Member States. As a reaction to eruption of second nuclear crisis in October 2002 the Executive Board Meeting decided to suspend heavy fuel oil deliveries as from December 2002. The reactor project was suspended – in 2003 - and later terminated – in 2006. In first half of 2007 the Secretariat was closed.

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<sup>5</sup> The EU defines eight economies within the region: China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan

<sup>6</sup> DPRK-US bilateral accord concluded in 1994 in Geneva. The DPRK agreed to shut down its nuclear facility in Yongbyon in exchange for two light water reactors whose were expected to be built with the international participation. For this purposes KEDO was established.

Outbreak of second nuclear crisis slowed down not only the regional development and cooperation but the European activities likewise. EU's declared aim was to play a supporting role in international efforts to solve the peninsular situation in peaceful manner. Furthermore the EU offered its help in an effort to implement agreements recently adopted within the Six-Party Talks framework. Other group of EU's activities towards North Korea is the regular direct meetings underway since 2000. During the first meeting of EU highest representatives in 2001 the EU's support to peaceful development and solution of Korean division was stated, likewise the EU's commitment to provide North Korean population with a development aid.

## **CONCLUSION**

The regional integration processes experienced since the end of Cold war major development all around the world. The degree of integration and the way how the process is realized differ region by region. Undoubtedly the most advanced example of regional integration is the European Union on the contrary the least developed region in regional integration is Northeast Asia. In the case NEA is able to overcome obstacles and disputes a way toward regionalization may be paid and later possibly the integration may be launched. That is where the European Union can get involved and offer consultations and advises in these processes. Meanwhile is in favor of the EU to continue maintaining relations towards Asian countries and work together on strengthening cooperation. In NEA particularly the EU should seek for possibilities to be involved in the running processes as Six-Party Talks are. Further the elaboration of complex approach towards region will be needed. The region is reportedly heading toward broadening cooperation, but many efforts to overcome the disputes will be necessary. Nowadays we cannot say how much time NEA needs in order to start with the integration, we cannot even say how will this process evolve if either in economy or security field. Recent development shows the ambitions and interests of leaders to communicate and cooperate. And comparing the situation to the period of end of the 1990s the regional actors came through difficulties and acknowledged their interdependence not only in economics but mainly in the security.

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