

Comments on the papers of Rudka and Hirose

Takayuki Ito

Dr. Rudka's paper is an excellent survey on recent developments in sub-regional cooperation, such as the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Central European Initiative, the Visegrad Group, the Central European Free Trade Agreement, inter alia. Dr. Hirose presents a superb overview of Austria's shifting foreign policy stance from active neutrality through realistic neutrality to a pro-Western orientation. It is quite interesting to know how Austria, at the same time as it leaned toward the West, developed an active Eastern policy. Austria, so to speak, rediscovered the CEI, a fact which is also noted by Dr. Rudka.

Dr. Hirose shares with Dr. Rudka a high evaluation of the CEI's role in the European integration process. Dr. Rudka states, "The CEI may prove to be a more significant contributor to Europe's multi-layered integration than had originally expected."* Here he, a Pole, slips in what might be considered some somewhat derogatory remarks on the Czechs: "Even the Czechs now seem to be more interested."* This is quite understandable, for the Poles find themselves among those who have tried hardest to make Central European integration a success. In the West much more was expected of the Visegrad Group than of the CEI. The Visegrad Group was interesting for at least two reasons: first, it represents the only sub-regional cooperation that consists of exclusively former Warsaw pact countries; second, it aimed at cooperation, not only in the economic sphere, but also on security matters. But now Visegrad is being eclipsed by the CEFTA which is a purely economic institution, as Dr. Rudka rightly noticed. The only country still interested in Visegrad is Slovakia. He points out that "Slovakia has recently become the strongest promoter of such cooperation" # as alternative structures of cooperation to the EU and NATO.

I well appreciate that both papers give us rich interesting information on regionalism in East Central Europe. As I see it, however, my task as a discussant is to provoke discussions rather than conduct mutual praising, so I would like to move on to a more critical section of my comment.

It is true that we have here good surveys of relevant events, but we are left quite at a loss about their significance. In other words, there is little analysis. Doubtless there are many new interesting things in what both speakers have presented us, but, I must say, they are not so substantially new for us here. What we would like to know is not that such and such things took place of which we are more or less informed, but what these things imply, in other words, an in-depth analysis of the subject-matter.

It is of course an interesting fact that after the Cold War a lot of sub-regional groups popped up in Europe like mushrooms after the rain. But what does this mean? Dr. Rudka tells us, this is a product of "world-wide trends toward increased regional cooperation and integration." Of course, this is true. But it is only partly true. If the regional integration were a strong trend in Europe today, why were they not immediately admitted into the EU and NATO instead of being forced to set up separate associations? Why do some countries like Russia seem to be left out in the cold? Apparently not only "world-wide trends" toward integration are at work here. How are those countries joining sub-regional associations related to each other, to the core nations of the EU and NATO, to the former Soviet Union countries, and to the rest of the world? In other words, what is the nature of the New European Order, or the "New European Architecture" as it is called in Dr. Hirose's paper? How does the structure of this architecture look? We look for answers to those questions in the papers, but in vain. Let me try to sketch out my own view just briefly.

Dr. Rudka says, when East Central Europeans rejected the Russians' offer to reform the CMEA, "political factors played a decisive role." Then, disintegrating tendencies made themselves felt, but these tendencies "were reversed, as soon as the

understanding of those countries' economic interests dominates over their short-term political emotions." Thus, in Dr. Rudka's understanding, economics is most important in promoting regionalism. Dr. Rudka adds, "Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland had acknowledged very early in their mutual relationships that their chances for quicker integration with Western Europe and the world economy as a whole could be enhanced only through progress in their mutual cooperation."

I must raise some objections to this reasoning. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland did not acknowledge at first the necessity of regional cooperation as one step toward integration with Europe and the rest of the world. On the contrary, they saw it only as a hindrance to integration. They competed against each other in the race to join Europe. Only at the suggestion and under strong pressure of the West did they proceed to get together to set up regional associations. To put it more pointedly, it looks as if these associations were imposed by the West upon the reluctant East and Central Europeans, maybe as toys for them to play with, as Dr. Rudka hinted in his presentation. In any event they were imposed by the West. The political motivations of the West are as clearly at work as those of the countries concerned. I agree with Dr. Csaba when he emphasizes political rather than economic considerations behind the enlargements talks, but in a slightly different context. Why did the West insist that peripheral countries should form associations of their own instead of joining the EU or NATO directly?

We have to understand that a new power bloc emerged when the Cold War ended: Integrated Europe. The new Europe is different from the Europe that we know from the past: it constitutes one single whole. The integration process of Europe, itself one of the consequences of the Cold War confrontation in the 1950s, did not come to halt, when the Cold War ended; on the contrary, it is still making further progress. This Europe exhibits a strong attraction to countries lying on its periphery and beyond its pale, enticing them into its fold. What is the foundation of this

order? Apparently it is not military power as in the Cold War case. Neither is it primarily economic power. Economic giants have emerged elsewhere in the world. Europe's share of the world economy is steadily declining. I believe the foundation of the new European order is a system of values and norms that are shared by Europeans or people who believe themselves to be Europeans.

If a certain system of values and norms prevails among different nations, state sovereignty can no longer have absolute priority. You do not need military power to maintain peace and order. You have only to control values and norms that are shared by member-nations. This reminds me of the old Chinese world order.

There was no concept of state sovereignty in East Asia under the old system. Instead, there was a value system more or less accepted by participating nations. It was supposed that the value system was embodied in the "Middle Nation" and should be emulated by "Barbarians." Of course, I do not intend to say that the same value system and the same distinction between the "Middle Nation" and "Barbarians" exist in Europe today as in old China. Values and norms commonly accepted in Europe today are those of democracy and the market economy, not Confucian concepts of "virtues" and "customs." Making a distinction between the "Middle Nation" and "Barbarians" would be impossible in Europe today. I do suggest, however, that Europe today resembles East Asia under the old system in the sense that commonly accepted values and norms, not the concept of state sovereignty, govern international relations. Interference with internal affairs which used to be considered the worst evil that a European state could allow is an everyday experience today. Therefore, the Chinese example may help us to understand how the new European order functions.

If you set the standards of political conduct for a set of nations, it is quite natural that a differentiation should come about between those model nations which have little difficulty in living up to them (since the standards often originate from their own

countries), and those handicapped or latecomer nations which try to meet the required standards but not always with success. Inevitably there emerges a certain hierarchical order among the participating nations. Professor Kokubo today made an interesting indication that there is an idea in the EU of creating a gradation among those which are already EU members or strive to be so. Dr. Rudka rejected it vehemently, and Dr. Csaba joined him as it seemed to me. But I have to say that such a gradation, such a hierarchical order among member-nations springs from the very nature of the value-oriented system, however egalitarian those values might be. As it is said, all are equal, but some are more equal than others.

European nations have a long tradition of elaborating and establishing values and norms for their governments' conduct on the basis of multilateral deliberations. Special international institutions have been created to promote these efforts. Typical examples are the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). There is a network of bilateral or multilateral agreements and international organizations in Europe, which determines where a given nation is located in the European hierarchy. The innermost core of the order consists of those nations which belong to both NATO and the European Union, primarily France, Germany and Great Britain. The outermost framework is given by the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which includes even non-European countries like Tajikistan or Turkmenistan. Between these two poles there are many strata which assign each European nation to some place in the order: regional organizations like the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), functional organizations like the Council of Europe, organizations auxiliary to some major ones like the North Atlantic Council for Cooperation (NACC), bilateral agreements with a European organization like the Association Agreement with the EU or the Pact on Stability in Europe with the OSCE, and so on. All these intermediate associations and agreements seem little more than antechambers to the EU and NATO. I call this

system as a "hierarchically structured concentric circle of European states." To put it more graphically, the system looks like Mt. Fuji with the top not as a sharp peak but as a flat plateau and with a long, gradually declining mountainside.

The core nations in the European order may be compared to the "Middle Nation" in the Chinese order, and outer or more peripheral nations to the "Barbarians." This system is, though discriminatory, by no means closed or exclusive. What matters most is whether the given nation observes common values and norms, not where they are located. By Chinese tradition, a "Barbarian" is entitled to the Emperor's scepter if he is civilized enough; conversely, people of the Middle Nation may be degraded to the status of "Barbarians" if they become uncivilized. In this sense, the system is open, even cosmopolitan so long as it is prosperous and confident enough to integrate peripheral elements. Dr. Heinrich Vogel, Director of the Federal Institute for International Studies in Cologne, is so confident of the future of the EU that he once said to me: "European integration is doomed to success." If this is so, Europe will remain cosmopolitan for a while. The system ceases to be open, however, when it forfeits dynamics and integrative power.

In Europe today, peripheral nations strive to get as close as possible to the status of core nations. This is, I believe, what Ms. Miho Oshima calls "Europeanization." To achieve this objective, they have to behave correctly and to climb up step by step the hierarchical ladder of international agreements and organizations. Austria is one of those fortunate nations who have managed to get out of the limbo of EFTA countries and finally join the EU. As Dr. Hirose splendidly reported today, it is now trying to play a pivotal role between the core nations in the West and its Eastern neighbours associated in the CEI. Peripheral nations are competing against each other and live in the hope of being eventually admitted into the family of core nations on some day in the future, but at the same time in fatal fear of being punished and degraded for a small offence of common values and norms.

In Dr. Rudka's view "CEFTA is just as a transitory institution to something better." This fits marvelously into my scheme. Regional groups may be characterized as international pressure groups. Peripheral nations feel entitled to receive some reward while they behave correctly. They try to put pressure on European institutions, first of all, on the EU and NATO. The story Dr. Rudka told us today of the CEI having established its secretariat with the EBRD in London is quite revealing. It tries to perpetuate its efforts to pump loans out of this European institution. The concept of "Central Europe" which we discussed yesterday so excitedly, namely a concept of something located between the barbarous Russians and the civilized West, also wonderfully fits into my scheme. So long as this mechanism works, you do not have to resort to military means to maintain peace and order.

There are certain limits to expansion of this kind of order. It cannot help being culturally and often geographically bound, in no matter how universal terms it might try to define itself. The Council of Europe cannot be a Council for other regions of the World. It may be true that certain values and norms which go beyond state borders are binding in Europe, but the rest of the world still remains governed by the concept of state sovereignty and principles resulting from it. Russia is located exactly on the colliding point of the two worlds.

Editor's note: a quotation from the original version of Rudka's paper.