

**Asia Leadership Fellow Program/East-West Center
Workshop and Public Symposium**

The Community of Asia: Concept or Reality?

May 19-20, 2006

This workshop/public symposium is a joint project of the Japan Foundation and the International House of Japan, commemorating the publication of a book by the Asia Leadership Fellow Program alumni compiled on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the program. The East-West Center co-hosted the event.

SESSION I: RETHINKING ASIA AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC

May 19, 2006 (Friday)

9:45 AM to Noon

Moderator: Lee Jong Won

Janadas Devan, Senior Writer & Columnist for *The Strait Times* in Singapore, tackled the issue of the economic and political relationship between China and Japan and the role of the United States in influencing political stability in the Asian region. Historically, the China-Japan relationship is similar to the relationship of Britain and Germany prior to the outbreak of World War I: the economic interdependence and political indifference that exists between the two Asian economic powerhouses are much like their 20th century counterparts in Europe. He observed how fierce competition for resources and a mixture of national pride and strategic security has influenced the relationship between these two countries.

In addressing US policy on China, Devan noted that there has not been any dramatic change in policy within the past six administrations; it has always been about balance and integration. The United States has always been cautious and has relied on diplomatic arrangements when it comes to political issues with China. This led to his observation

that the U.S. is unlikely to mitigate pressure on China but at the same time will avoid an all-out confrontation as China has become a balancing factor in the global economy.

Arnold M. Azurin, Research Fellow and Journalist from the Center for Integrative and Development Studies of the University of the Philippines, focused on the concept of building an Asian community with a solid foundation based on a keen sense of trans-border kinship among Asian neighbors. This would be attainable by removing protective barriers, demilitarizing borders, and expanding cultural reach to advance the mutual interests of the countries involved. Border disputes among Asian neighbors (Indonesia-Malaysia and Thailand-Cambodia) and the ever continuing disagreements over conflicting claims to certain natural resources, such as the contested Spratley Islands in the South China Sea, have been key destabilizing factors that have been straining the otherwise cordial relationships among Asian countries, particularly in the South East and with China. Azurin criticized the ASEAN consensus-building protocol as ineffective due mainly to its inability to address these territorial altercations. Additionally widening the rupture in Asian solidarity is the constant reminder of questions pertaining to wartime atrocities; in particular, Azurin cited the “history textbook revision” issue in Japan labeled as inaccurate by China and Korea.

Charles E. Morrison, President of the East-West Center, in the free discussion that followed, raised three topics – the contextual definition of Asia, nationalism versus regional community building, and Asian regionalism.

In defining the contextual meaning of the word Asia, the discussants pointed out that the word “Asia” has always meant what-it-was-not. As an example, the term “Southeast Asia” referred to the command base of the American forces during World War II, and did not originally mean the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, etc. Furthermore, it is impossible to have an Asian community defined in terms of cultural and economic consolidation because of the diverse backgrounds of the countries within its territory. It is only through geographical identity that Asia exists.

Subsequently, nationalism or national pride also has an impact in regional community building. Asian countries comprise a diverse heritage of nationalistic pride, making it difficult to unite this region. For one thing, as Morrison observed, confidence in nations must exist in order to develop a cordial understanding for building a unified community that would benefit all members. Respect for each other's nationalistic ideologies is one of the keys to building a regional community, and the role of culture must be at a minimum.

The discussion on regionalism centered on the concepts of networks, economics, and civil society. Citing an example of a network community, Morrison said that the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as an economic-based network is successful in uniting a community of nations since it is a very efficient way of joining together leaders of the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, a common value system plays an important role in regional community building in Asia, wherein the strength of the civil society lies – sharing a universal value of cooperation and community building.

SESSION II: ASIA BEYOND TIME AND MEMORY

May 19, 2006 (Friday)

1:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Moderator: Chiharu Takenaka

Hideki Kan, Professor, Faculty of Humanity at Seinan Jogakuin University in Japan, focused on the relationship between wartime memories and nationalism, additionally discussing the rise of democracy and the human rights movement, the emerging concept of an East Asian community and the prospects for trans-nationalism.

Ill feeling between nations gives rise to nationalism. More often, this feeling of nationalism is being exploited by individuals for the advancement of their own greed. Kan pointed out that one of the important challenges in approaching history is how to make nations view war memories in a more manageable and restrained way. It is in this sense that civil society plays an important role in the progress of national reconciliation and the deepening of communal sympathy. As civil society plays an important role in the

democratic process and an important ingredient of an open society, it can provide not only protection of human rights but also a strong guidance towards historical reconciliation between nations. Given the increase in transnational movements and interdependence, it is not farfetched to talk of the prospect of a transnational history in which the presently existing wide gap in our understanding of history and war memories can be narrowed through mutual dialogue based on common values such as human rights and democracy.

On behalf of Urvashi Butalia, Director of Zubaan Books and founder of Kali for Women, who could not participate in the workshop, Chandrika Sepali Kottegoda, Founding Member and Director of the Women and Media Collective in Sri Lanka, provided insights to the little known stories of kindness and cooperation between Hindus and Muslims at the time when the British colonial rule divided the Indian subcontinent in 1947 into what is now known as Pakistan and India. Kottegoda presented a literary work written by Butalia, outlining the history of violence brought about by the displacement of millions of people as a result of India's division. Entitled "The Other Side of Silence," the book also tells the story of the journey of a young man back to his childhood village in Pakistan after years of being alienated, and the complete acceptance of his people.

Geoffrey M. White, Senior Fellow at the East-West Center and a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, offered additional knowledge based on his background in cultural anthropology, discussing how memories of war relate to the present. According to White, history has a strong influence on doing things in the present, on how people react and accept things. He also pointed out that discourses about history are almost always political and that states are inherently concerned with the illustration of war, hence the many war memorials. Moreover, as far as memories of war are concerned, White pointed out that institutionalization will rely on how the state perceives, acts, and remembers history.

Among the major topics that emerged during the question and answer forum is the context of history from the perspective of the viewer or interpreter, be it an individual or

a collective group, and how it influences the present. History from the point of view of an individual is distinct from history as perceived by a community. Then, there is also the question of how much memory can be trusted, as this also greatly influences the present. Azurin pointed out, as an example, the recent political squabble between China and Japan concerning the atrocities inflicted by the Japanese against the Chinese during the Second World War as depicted in revised Japanese school textbooks. China demanded that Japan not hide from its younger generations the acts of violence that it committed in other countries, but Azurin commented that China focused the limelight on Japan without mentioning the Chinese government's crimes against its own people. The history of war, as he pointed out, should be victim-based, writing about the violence no matter who the aggressor is. Further topics that were brought up dealt with similar issues regarding the history of violence such as the atrocities committed against women in the Philippines during World War II by the aggressors, violence committed against the Koreans during and after the Japanese occupation, the war between India and Pakistan, and how El Salvador ended 12 years of civil war and is now on the path of nation building. All of these discussions centered on how these countries and those involved interpret history in a more positive light.

SESSION III: RE-THINKING ASIA AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC

May 19, 2006 (Friday)

3:45 PM to 5:45 PM

Moderator: Karina A. Bolasco

Kasian Tejapira, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Science at Thammasat University in Thailand, outlined recent developments in Thai politics. He explained that Thaksin Shinawatra was Thailand's Prime Minister until April, 2006 when, after winning the snap election and after an unscheduled audience with King Bhumipol, he announced that he was stepping down from the position. Sinawatra's resignation was influenced by many factors. Most prominent among them was a growing discontented public that organized mass protests for his resignation led by Sondhi Limthongkul, due to growing suspicions about corruption in the government. One prevailing issue of

corruption was that Sinawatra's company, Shin Corp, grew by a staggering five hundred percent in assets during his term, an indication that he might have used his influence for his company's gains. Additionally, his programs and reforms to turn a poor peasantry into entrepreneurs did not materialize, the influence of royal power coupled with the Patani problem in the south, the tsunami disaster, SARS, and the bird flu problem all added up together with growing political, social, and civil unrest to influence his resignation.

Park Won Soon, Chairman of the Hope Institute Founding Committee in Korea, and former secretary-general of the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) and founding chairman of the Beautiful Foundation, Korea, discussed the current trends and status of civil society groups in South Korea. The strengthening of non-governmental organizations in South Korea is influenced by strong support from private citizens and universities, where they are now establishing courses related to non-governmental organizations. Adding to this is the growing influence of NGOs regarding policy making issues of parliamentary government supported by Korean's past two presidents, who are well-known human rights advocates. However, the lateral movement of civic group leaders into government positions is causing another challenge and crisis in South Korea's civil society. As Park pointed out, civic organizations provide a "power plant" for producing public officials, thereby slowly discrediting the reputation of NGOs as civil advocates and branding them as mere machineries for political ambitions.

Mahendra P. Lama, Chairman of the Centre for South, Central, South East Asian and South West Pacific Studies, School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in India, gave an in-depth analysis of India's democracy from its humble beginnings to the challenges that lie ahead. Some of the factors shaking India's underlying democratic foundation are deeply rooted in culture and ideology. Decentralization of political institutions and the devolution of power is a major factor at the local level. Discriminatory practices such as gender disparity are also deeply rooted, justified on socio-cultural-economic grounds. Even political parties are jumping on the gender equality bandwagon, when in reality, according to Lama, they are the kingpins of gender discrimination. And then there is the problem of governance that is creating

insecurity among the people because even the most basic of state services do not reach the majority of the poor population, and yet the administration is boasting about an eight percent growth rate. Moreover, the problem of bureaucracy promotes bribery and corruption in government institutions.

Another factor that poses a great challenge to Indian democracy is the conflict and violence brought about by cultural, social, economic, and ideological disparities. Regional conflicts promote anti-unification ideologies that are major stumbling blocks for democracy. Communalism, in all its forms, is also one of India's enemies, often used as a means of political propaganda. The relationship between the Center and the State also poses a major challenge because regional imbalance can be a major cause of conflict and instability – a major threat to the democratic foundation. And lastly, the problem of cross-border migration adds to the exploding population of India – with already over one billion inhabitants, population can be a major area of democratic collapse.

Ambassador Raymond Burghardt, Director for the East-West Seminar Program, Hawaii, in keeping with the theme of the conference enumerated several general issues for democratic development. Civil society development encompassing the role of the churches, private sector, labor unions, and strong religious organizations are key elements of political development. Internal divisions such as communal and ethnic conflicts, the adherence to traditional practices, the role of democratization in economic development, decentralization and devolution of authority, and external pressures are some of the basic issues raised regarding democracy.

The third session of discussion centered exclusively on defining the attributes of democracy as they relate to Asia. Burghardt distinguished among the broad spectrum of governments in Asia, prompting discussion topics such as the different notion of democracy and the practice of different types of democracies as hindrances to a unified Asian community. Also, constitutional liberalism as it developed in the West is not perceived as modern democracy in Asia because of significant differences in social and cultural background. Tejapira noted that although Asian countries have “imported” the

concept of democracy, it is impossible to copy the Western social and political forces and adapt them to the Asian level. Park continued to emphasize the role of civil society in democracy building, adding that elections alone do not guarantee democratic functioning. Lama, drawing upon his own experiences, pointed out that the common aspirations of democratic developments are freedom, security and empowerment to the people at the 'grassroots level.' In concluding the session, Morrison described universal suffrage as a legitimizing principle of Asian democracies, stressing that democratic processes were much easier in the earlier Western context.

PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM: THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN ASIA

May 20, 2006 (Saturday)

9:45 AM to 12:30 PM

Moderator: Charles E. Morrison

The moderator, Charles E. Morrison, President of the East-West Center, opened the discussion by talking about the state of democracy in Asia, noting among other things, new discoveries from previous discussions. He explained that democracy goes beyond the known and accepted constitutional processes and norms such as elections, and in its entirety, the true essence of democracy is to protect and uphold people's rights and privileges and to build and protect social institutions which are beneficial to upholding these rights.

Park Won Soon, Chairman of the Hope Institute Founding Committee in Korea, former secretary-general of the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) and founding chairman of the Beautiful Foundation, Korea, summarized Korea's rough road toward democracy, enumerating various political, social, and economic hardships that the country has endured from the time of the end of the Second World War, to the split-up of the country into North and South, up to the economic crisis of 1997. Park emphasized the participation, importance, and influence of civic organizations in molding and shaping the political system of Korea. One major issue that he discussed centered on civic involvement in promoting justice and human rights in the society by providing concrete,

practical, and alternative ways to promote transparency and accountability, citing PSPD as a model civic organization. Park believes that by raising people's consciousness, there can be concerted and coherent efforts to bring about more ethical governments and political systems. He also believes that by promoting philanthropy, society in general can contribute a great deal in alleviating poverty within itself and narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

Chandrika Sepali Kottegoda, Founding Member and Director of the Women and Media Collective in Sri Lanka, discussed the plight of the relief operation after the tsunami disaster of December 26, 2004. She pointed out that individuals, as well as civic groups and organizations, were the most comprehensive and the most responsive in the relief operations carried out all over the country, most importantly in the conflict-stricken areas of the North and East where the government has little control. This further demonstrates and solidifies the role of civic organizations as key ingredients in a democratic society.

She also outlined the need for the government to intervene or take serious steps in providing protection to women, especially concerning their right to have a fair and equal opportunity with regard to obtaining much needed public assistance and services. In addressing this problem, Kottegoda suggested that there should be a representation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the Disaster Management Committee that will take part in addressing the needs of the female population of Sri Lankan society, especially their participation in the economic recovery of the state.

Kasian Tejapira, Associate Professor of Political Science at Thammasat University, Thailand, and also a former guerilla fighter, in general terms focused on the experience of democracy building in Asia. According to Tejapira, there is no such thing as universal democracy. Instead, democracy takes on different forms and meanings every time it is "exported" from one society and absorbed into another. Since Asia comprises many different and distinct cultures, it is impossible to consolidate or realize democracy in a society which originated from a different socio-cultural background. The society which "imported" it will almost always reinterpret and refunctionalize democracy according to

its social, political, and economic needs, much distinct from the original concept and meaning of democracy intended by the society from which it came. Once taken in, the term “democracy” disintegrates, affecting the system of political signification, where it clashes or couples with the host language, thereby becoming diverse in the process.

Tejapira further emphasized that democracy is absorbed in a society as a self-educating process where the people have to experience and learn, invent and reinvent democracy in order to find its true meaning and purpose in that particular socio-cultural background. It is not something which any nation or state can inject into another society as a duplicate of its own model or interpretation of democracy.

Liu, Xin, Fellow of the Sociology Division, E-Institute of Shanghai University, and an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California in Berkeley, USA, commented on Western perceptions of China’s political image today as being no different from the post-Mao period of the late 1970s to early 1980s. He stressed that to be able to distinguish these time periods, we must analyze what China is today and what it has transformed into. We must look at it in the perspective of the mid-1990s period, a period in which the Chinese government demonstrated two broad phenomena. First was its gradual but steady move away from political ideology and towards economic prosperity as an accepted source of legitimacy for the party, and second, the socio-cultural repercussions of this shift for Chinese society. China boosted its foothold as a global political and economic power by furthering ties with Western and Asian countries. Liu argued that the economic powerhouse that is China today is a result of a “rupture” that paved the way for a gradual but steady departure from Maoist ideology towards economic success and a technologically advanced market economy.

Discussant Raymond Burghardt of the East-West Center, who is also a former ambassador to several South-East Asian countries, dealt with the characteristics of democracy in the Asian region. He cited the unique democratization process of Asian countries as being role models for other neighboring countries aspiring to become democratic societies. Referring to the presentation made by Park, he noted that

democratic countries share common aspects such as rule of law, which protects a society from autocratic rule, and an established system of checks and balances where the press and the civil society can actively participate. Referring to Liu's comments on the Western perception of China, Burghardt formally noted that the development of a civil society, regional-based organizations, and the decentralization and devolutions of power are some of the common factors that form a part in perfecting a society's democracy.

Morrison, on the other hand, tackled the issue of the democratic process being divided into four aspects in order for a country to be a true democratic society. He stressed the importance of a legitimizing principle of governance through electoral processes. In order for a government to be legitimate, there must be auxiliary institutions to support and preserve democracy, a solid, stable functioning, and a system of protecting the citizenry, especially women and minorities. He also emphasized the importance of socio-cultural experiences as an important factor in the learning process of democratization, confirming Tejapira's notion of a learning process in democracy.

In the question and answer forum, Burghardt explained that there are Asian countries where there are debates on changing the form of government from a presidential to a parliamentary system due to the fact that the present form causes some confusion and disillusionment. Whereas there is stability, on the other hand, there is the difficulty of having change, as these changes must always follow a certain procedure of law before taking effect, which can prove costly to some poor countries in economic terms.

Kottegoda commented on the slow performance of the Sri Lankan government in providing relief aid to the North and East due to the presence of the LTTE in that area. Answering another question, she explained that although the tsunami disaster was a positive development for peace in Aceh province in Indonesia, that was not the case in Sri Lanka due to the negligence and inability of the government in dealing with the insurgents. In addressing the true essence of democracy in Sri Lanka, she said that the 1960s and 70s were the turning point towards democratization during the redrafting of the Constitution.

A question raised to Te japura about obtaining a moral compass regarding democracy brought about a memory from his personal experience that whatever democracy is, it is not worth killing for. In answering the issue regarding the essence of democracy in Thailand, he asserted that it must not be enforced from outside, but rather it must be aspired to within the socio-cultural structure.

Park further emphasized the importance of civil society and non-governmental organizations in participating in the delicate process of democratization. He said that civil society helps reform uncontrolled management, which is the primary reason for corruption and economic failures.

Finally, Morrison concluded that lack of democratic processes is a key to hopelessness, exploitation, and a potential for terrorism, and that it is a vital issue for the political community and for the world as a whole.

Visit to U.S.S. Arizona Memorial

"While we honor those who here gave their last full measure of devotion all of us hope and pray that the time will come when we no longer need to dedicate memorials to men who died in battle- - - that we will dedicate memorials to those who live in peace - - - to all nations and all men"

**Frank G. Moss
United States Senator-Utah
Ground Breaking -7 December 1971
Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i**

The words above, spoken at the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the U.S.S. Utah Memorial, encapsulate the tone and the discussion that afternoon at the Arizona Memorial. On December 7th, 1941, 58 died on the U.S.S. Utah; on the U.S.S. Arizona, 1,777 people died.

Daniel Martinez, the guide at the Arizona Memorial, opened his tour with the following statement: “What we hope to do here at Pearl harbor is allow people to understand the past, not with the bitterness of hatred that once started it, but rather how we have these new relationships with each other.”

The Arizona was chosen, as a memorial for remembering all of those who got killed in the Pearl Harbor attack because it suffered the most loss of life, 1,177 service men in total. When US NAVY ships sail by the Arizona, they salute, as so do the Navies of Japan, the Philippines, China and Australia because there is a connection between all sailors of the world and this site.

The Architect of the memorial, Alfred Price, stated that he intended the memorial to be a place where all people can come to in a time of peace to remember a day of war.

The tour guide stated that when he asked why a Japanese or a Chinese person why they came to the memorial, the often say that they feel it is their duty. Not only do they want to visit a place connected with a relative, but they also to pay respect.

The average age of the sailors on the Arizona was 19, which is the same as the average age of the Japanese aviators who participated in the attack.

Each year, the December 7th ceremony, which commemorates the anniversary of the attack, is attended by a delegation from Japan to offer prayers and as a peace initiative. The ceremony is also opened by a Hawaiian chant: this is to make the memorial culturally relevant to both Hawaiians and to the Japanese.

Many survivors of the U.S.S. Arizona have had their ashes buried within the ship, to rest with their fellow sailors. Alfred Price, quoting Senator Moss, once said, “All of us hope and pray that the time will come when we no longer need to dedicate memorials to men who died in battle- - - that we will dedicate memorials to those who live in peace - - -” Many gathered at the Arizona Memorial from the “Community of Asia” conference

noticed how the weekend's discussions appeared to be working toward greater peace in Asia.