Solidarity as a unifying idea in building an East Asian community: toward an ethos of collective responsibility

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Solidarity as a unifying idea in building an East Asian community: toward an ethos of collective responsibility

Sunhyuk Kim and Hans Schattle

Abstract  This article examines prospects for solidarity, defined as an ethos of collective responsibility that works across a political community’s normative values and policy decisions, as a unifying idea that can inspire and promote steps toward regional political community across East Asia. Just as the European Union’s (EU) founders and its past and present visionaries have appealed consistently to an inclusive, transnational model of solidarity in framing and pursuing European integration, notions of solidarity also contain important affinities with prospects for building an East Asian community. First, the paper examines how the idea of solidarity has evolved in European political thought and especially how solidarity has emerged repeatedly as one of the important concepts throughout the political development of the EU. Then, the paper turns to East Asia and considers the relevance

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of solidarity as an important principle in aspirations and endeavors toward the creation of an East Asian community. We base our analysis upon a variety of sources, including statements and speeches from key political actors, scholarly books and articles, and news accounts and commentaries. We illustrate how earlier manifestations of solidarity in East Asia have often been cast in ways that set the region apart from the rest of the world and have framed particular groupings of Asian countries in opposition to the West, and we argue that a redeployment of solidarity is needed in East Asia that instead emphasizes an ethos of collective responsibility among the principal national actors and external stakeholders within the region and beyond. In contrast with interpretations that suggest that the conditions for developing East Asian community are inescapably distinct from the circumstances in Europe during the second half of the twentieth century, we argue that the idea of solidarity has great potential to advance regional collaboration in East Asia.

Keywords solidarity; regional cooperation; regional community; Europe; East Asia.

Introduction

Drawing upon the intellectual history of solidarity, this article explores how solidarity has been employed as an essential guiding principle in European integration and suggests that it can be used as an important source of inspiration in shaping a regional East Asian community in the future. In particular, we look at ways that solidarity has been translated into specific principles and policy measures in Europe and then trace how the idea of solidarity has also evolved in East Asia. Just as the European Union’s (EU) founders and its past and present visionaries have appealed consistently to an inclusive, transnational model of solidarity in framing and pursuing European integration, notions of solidarity also contain important affinities with prospects for building an East Asian community.

We first define solidarity within the context of ongoing debates in political theory and then examine how multiple and overlapping traditions of solidarity emerged in Europe and proved helpful, to generations of philosophers and policy makers alike, in advancing and facilitating within the EU a socially embedded version of capitalism with vigorous social welfare and regional development policies. Then we will examine how multiple traditions of solidarity have emerged in successive phases across Asia, initially in ways that aimed to differentiate Asia from the West but later in ways that carved out a distinct East Asian regional identity with aspirations for regional community. We show how earlier manifestations of solidarity in East Asia have often been situated within agendas to set the region apart from the rest of the world or in opposition to the West, and we argue that a redeployment of solidarity is needed that instead emphasizes an ethos of collective responsibility among the principal national actors and external stakeholders within and beyond East Asia. We conclude by calling for East Asian leaders to take up the aspects of solidarity that helped propel forward the EU at critical moments, while we call for the current leaders of the EU
to return to more robust interpretations of solidarity that their forebears regarded as vital to the European project but have eroded at times in recent years.

Social and political theorists recently have been giving more attention to solidarity – for different reasons. Some scholars have turned to solidarity as a lever to help strengthen democracy within nation states and overcome fractious debates within many constitutional democracies concerning identity politics and multiculturalism. Historian David Hollinger, for example, has defined ‘solidarity’ as ‘an experience of willed affiliation’ that is ‘more active than mere membership in a community’ and entails thinking about what fellow citizens or nationals owe each other, compared to what might be owed to ‘strangers’ or ‘the rest of humankind’ (Hollinger 2006: 24). Hollinger argues that solidarity of ‘the secular, civic nation’ seems better positioned as a middle ground to secure human rights and social welfare than either more universalist or more narrowly particularist approaches to solidarity. Political theorist Sarah Song has illustrated how American national political and civic life contains two competing approaches to civic solidarity: allegiance to the principles of the Constitution, on the one hand, and the adoption of a shared national culture on the other, which Song worries can lead to social exclusion of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and inappropriate demands for assimilation imposed upon immigrants. As Song (2009: 38) concludes: ‘A more inclusive American solidarity requires the recognition not only of the fact that Americans are a diverse people, but they have distinctive ways of belonging to America.’

Today’s cosmopolitan thinkers, meanwhile, emphasize political allegiances and solidarities dispersed across ‘multiple overlapping networks of interaction’ (Held 1999: 91) and argue that the essence of cosmopolitanism lies in mediating one’s various political and moral obligations in a series of scales across multiple communities that generate varying degrees of loyalty (Appiah 2007; Rorty 1998). As Catherine Lu (2000: 257) has written: ‘Rather than being alienated or solitary, a cosmopolitan self acknowledges its solidarity with a multiplicity of others. From this plurality, we derive various sources of obligation and loyalty, affinity and difference.’ Such multi-layered approaches to cosmopolitan political community have led theorists such as Daniele Archibugi (2008: 141) to argue that stronger roles for global governing institutions neither erode feelings of solidarity among fellow nationals, nor exonerate national governments from fulfilling obligations to their citizens. Social theorist Hauke Brunkhorst (2005) frames solidarity as a means toward ‘the democratic realization of individual freedom’ (3) and advocates the notion of ‘solidarity among strangers’ (76) – with elements of ‘differentiation, pluralism and difference’ (viii) – as a corrective against the unfettered global marketplace, as a route toward global democratic legitimation, and as a way of overcoming the problem of exclusion that typically accompanies more parochial approaches to solidarity, in which solidarity with one’s closer compatriots will inevitably require or lead to the
exclusion of outsiders. Brunkhorst worries, though, that post-national solidarity might erode the French Revolution’s professed ‘patriotism of human rights’, which rested upon the idea that human rights and the rule of law ought to apply to all human persons and decisively linked solidarity with the liberal principle of freedom from domination. It is this normative linkage that Brunkhorst argues must be preserved in the present day in ongoing initiatives aimed at building supranational political communities such as the EU and beyond (Brunkhorst 2005).

We wish to define solidarity as an ethos of collective responsibility that sets up suitable background conditions for policy decisions that not only affirm pragmatic interests among a set of governments or stakeholders, but also, in some cases, extend from common normative values that can be identified among cooperating regional political and economic actors in an interdependent world. While our definition of solidarity ultimately contains more affinities with the cosmopolitan perspectives outlined above, taking into account ‘the needs of strangers’ at home and abroad, and their emphasis on mediating overlapping sources of obligation across multiple political communities, we also believe that certain key elements of national solidarity, such as adherence to constitutional principles, such as freedom from domination and equality under the law, as well as Hollinger’s (2006) notion of ‘willed affiliation’, can be fused together and deployed into the international arena at key moments when national leaders come together and agree to pursue regional collaboration for the sake of securing or promoting commonly shared goods. Our approach to solidarity, consistent with the actual manifestations of the concept in political discourse, operates across national and supranational realms as well as imperatives of idealism and pragmatism.

Moral visions of solidarity through European history

The idea of solidarity – and the older idea of fraternity, which dates back to the early Christian communities of friars – emerged through history as related political concepts building upon ancient understandings of civic friendship, from Aristotle’s political and social thought, and joint liability, from Roman jurisprudence. As a guiding principle that took on great vitality in the formation of modern political community in Europe – and then the transformation of Europe in the latter half of the twentieth century with the launching and expansion of the EU – solidarity has gone through four important overlapping conceptual models in its evolution and development as a key political idea, all of which continue into the present day: (1) a model enhancing the core principles of freedom and equality and descending from ideas of joint responsibility and civic friendship, dating back from the start of the French Revolution in 1789; (2) a model emphasizing socialism and eventually, social democracy, dating back from the 1848 publication of The...
Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; (3) a model oriented toward Christian understandings of social justice and social welfare, dating back to the publication of the Roman Catholic Church’s first papal encyclical on social justice; and (4) an amalgam of the three previous models set forth at the onset of the continent’s present economic and political integration that began just after the Second World War.

Despite some popular perceptions of solidarity today as a woolly idea signaling ties of common affiliation or fellowship, the earliest uses of solidarité in France carried more precise connotations of joint liability or joint responsibility. French legal papers from the sixteenth century show that early understandings of solidarité focused on obligations to repay debts and uphold contracts (Hayward 1959: 270–2). During the 1789 French Revolution and its immediate aftermath, revolutionary leaders began to use solidarité in ways that transformed the term from a legal concept to a political concept by advancing the national credo of ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’. Leaders of the Jacobin movement, as they concentrated political power at the national level at the expense of local and regional governments, appealed to solidarité in their efforts to establish ‘societies of brotherhood’ that would transcend differences in social class, occupational backgrounds and financial status and lead to specific social policy objectives such as the common responsibility of citizens to repay public debts, a guaranteed minimum income for family support, and readiness to share resources with the needy (Stjernø 2005). The ultimate contribution to a theory of solidarity in nineteenth-century France came from Emile Durkheim, who distinguished between the ‘mechanical solidarity’ of a traditional society with relatively little differentiation in cultures and lifestyles, as well as beliefs and traditions, and ‘organic solidarity’ that takes into account sources of divergence and interdependence within modern societies (Durkheim 1984).

At the same time, ideas of solidarity and fraternity also gained a higher profile as socialist political thinking emerged during the nineteenth century in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Although Marx rarely used the exact term ‘solidarity’ and worried that the ‘concept of brotherhood was so generic that it could easily obscure class interests’ (Stjernø 2005: 43–4), Marx and Engels nevertheless developed a theory of international working-class solidarity, crystallized with the rallying cry in the Communist Manifesto: ‘Workingmen of all countries, unite!’ (Marx and Engels 1848) Several years later, Marx addressed the founding conference of the International Workingmen’s Association and told his audience that socialists should not underestimate the ‘fraternal bonds that should unite workers in each country and inspire them to unite in the struggle for liberation. This underestimation would always punish their ambition and result in defeat’ (Sterjno 2005: 45).

Socialist theory after the death of Marx in 1883 split in two directions: the revolutionary socialism of Vladimir Lenin and the Soviet-era Communist bloc, and the European social democratic tradition that eventually gained
momenum after the Second World War. The social democratic tradition, which bears much more relevance to our inquiry, built upon the endeavors of French social philosophers, particularly Durkheim, to engage the idea of solidarity in balancing modern liberalism and the priority of individual autonomy with concern for political community – thereby working across capitalism and socialism rather than being situated squarely within either model. German social democratic thinker and politician Eduard Bernstein heavily influenced the emergence of social democracy across Europe at the start of the twentieth century with his 1899 critique of Marxism, arguing that capitalism seemed resilient in the face of economic crises and recessions, and therefore social democrats should not wait for Marx’s predicted demise of capitalism but should instead work with other social classes in pursuit of political and economic reform, particularly on behalf of workers and their rights (Bernstein 1910; Steger 1997).

Throughout the twentieth century, Roman Catholic social teaching also placed increasing emphasis on solidarity in a series of papal encyclicals that influenced Christian democratic politics in continental Europe. John Paul II elevated solidarity as a core principle of Catholic social teaching in three separate documents. First came Laborem Exercens (1981), which endorsed worker solidarity – and collective action – in response to the Solidarność movement in Poland that launched national strikes one year earlier and effectively turned earlier Marxist and socialist principles of worker solidarity into a successful campaign against Soviet communism. This was followed by Sollecitudo Rei Socialis (1989), which cast solidarity as a universal moral obligation in the face of increasing global interdependence. John Paul II then observed the 100th anniversary of the first Roman Catholic social justice encyclical, Rerum Novarum, by publishing Centesimus Annus (1991), which more forcefully linked solidarity to Catholic advocacy of the ‘preferential option for the poor’ in public policy making. The social democratic model of solidarity as well as Catholic social justice teaching throughout the twentieth century influenced visionaries such as Altiero Spinelli, Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, who would set the stage for European integration in the aftermath of the Second World War.

**Solidarity in the EU: from the Schuman Declaration and the ‘European Social Model’ to a shift toward neoliberalism**

Much in the same way that freedom and equality were cast as essential founding principles in the United States Declaration of Independence, the EU’s founders advanced solidarity as a central principle, alongside the priorities of leaving behind centuries of conflict and entering a new era of collaboration, to justify economic and political integration. The Schuman Declaration, the primary document that formally proposed the establishment of European integration and marked the beginning of cooperation between France and Germany after the Second World War, included two
prominent references to solidarity. Presented in 1950 by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman and drafted by Schuman’s ministry colleagues along with Jean Monnet, the declaration outlined the case for joint management between France and Germany of coal and steel production as a first step toward European federation. As noted in the declaration: ‘The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible.’ In outlining aspirations for a united Europe, the document also argued: ‘Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity’ (Schuman 1950). The existing literature on the origins of the EU does not appear to discuss exactly who inserted the specific term ‘solidarity’ into the declaration, but Schuman was a Christian Democrat strongly influenced by Catholic social teaching as well as a European social reform movement, Solidarisme, active at the turn of the twentieth century. With its stated goal of building up a supranational economic, political and legal order to secure peace through cooperation based in part on solidarity, the Schuman Declaration amounted to a milestone in European history.

Catholic social teaching and the social democratic tradition also influenced Jacques Delors, who as president of the European Commission strengthened European social policy alongside the opening of the single market in 1992 and the decision to launch monetary union and the single currency. A devout Catholic and social democrat who nevertheless championed and presided over the continental expansion of the free market, Delors saw that the single market program provided the Commission with a unique opening to attach social policy initiatives that otherwise would be difficult to put through. As Stephen Liebfried and Paul Pierson observed after the 1992 project, EU institutions have ‘gradually assumed considerable authority in policy domains beyond those directly tied to the creation of a common market’, ranging from gender equality to workplace health and safety to immigration policy (Liebfried and Pierson 1995: 3). Delors also managed to expand regional development funds that would aid poorer regions vulnerable to social and economic dislocations caused by further economic integration – and an expanded role for the Commission in the management of these funds. While Liebfried and Pierson emphasize that the EU remains much more decentralized than conventional federal states, they note that a multi-tiered system of shared political authority over social policy emerged at the European level after 1992 – giving tangible expression, in many respects, to aspirations of solidarity noted elsewhere in European political and social thought.

During the drafting of the constitutional treaty in 2004, a section on ‘solidarity rights’ was included within the document’s rights charter to spell out what the EU classifies as basic social and economic rights, particularly with regard to workers’ rights. This includes the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike and ‘protection against unjust dismissal’, and rights to
safe and respectful working conditions, the prohibition of child labor, the right to paid maternity leave without threat of dismissal, the right to health care, and social welfare and pension benefits for the unemployed and elderly. The ‘solidarity rights’ section, which came across as an effort to allay concern that the new constitution would lead to intrusive government power from Brussels, also included language about EU priorities of environmental protection, sustainable development and consumer protection. After the failure of the constitution in 2005, the provisions on solidarity were added to the Treaty of Lisbon, which took effect in December 2009. This most forceful declaration yet of solidarity as a key founding principle of the EU has been articulated in rights language, thereby situating the idea of solidarity in closer alignment with liberalism than before.

While the concept of solidarity in the EU is still linked with social policy and social rights, the idea has also more recently been deployed in directions more compatible with laissez-faire economics, such as emergency funds intended to be tapped in the event of natural disasters and terrorist attacks and also aid packages that attempt to cushion the impacts of global economic instability and the continent’s unfolding debt crisis. In March 2009, the heads of government across the member states, acting at a European Council summit, doubled to €50 billion a ‘solidarity fund’ established in 2002 to aid non-member states in balance-of-payments difficulties. The member states decided to double the fund despite opposition from Luxembourg’s prime minister, Jean-Claude Juncker, who initially expressed concern about ‘potential recipient countries leaning back and neglecting their homework because they know that there is a European way out for them’ but then said after the summit that member states had agreed to the increase ‘to show our partners that we are ready to show solidarity’, and added that he expected not all the funds would be tapped (Brunsden 2009:).

More recently, the difficulties member states have overcome in deciding what to do about the financial crisis in Greece revolved heavily around ‘what European solidarity means and how much it should cost and to whom’ (Erlanger 2010a: 1). Even with France and Germany initially both in the hands of relatively conservative governments, national leaders from the two countries differed markedly as to their underlying conceptions of solidarity as well as what the principle of solidarity would seem to require to help Greece emerge from its debts. While France consistently supported an aid package to Greece and cited the imperative of solidarity as a key basis for its support, German Chancellor Angela Merkel initially resisted the idea of an aid package largely on grounds that German taxpayers should not pay the price for mismanagement in Greece or set a precedent for future rescues of other Mediterranean countries, namely Spain and Portugal, facing problems potentially similar to Greece (Erlanger 2010b). As an illustration of how European solidarity ran into a critical test during this period, at one point Merkel actually turned to the idea of solidarity while attempting – without success – to soften the blow of Germany’s refusal to provide
support. Following a meeting during the height of the crisis in early March 2010 with Greece’s prime minister, George Papandreou, Merkel said that Germany would not provide funds but that ‘Germany can express its solidarity’ by showing understanding while withholding aid (Becatoros and Paphitis 2010). Merkel’s position was consistent with EU laws (dating back to the Maastricht Treaty) forbidding member states from recognizing (or paying off) the debts of other member states, although her dilution of solidarity to a sentiment of mere sympathy, detached entirely from specific financial support, contrasted with other political leaders in Europe who were calling for commitments of solidarity to be accompanied by aid packages.

While Germany insisted that Greece take greater financial responsibility to conform to Eurozone standards and curb political corruption, France leaned heavily on the idea of solidarity to justify an aid package to Greece and to call for Germany’s role in such a package. Meanwhile, calls for European solidarity issued by national government officials in Greece almost seemed to conflate ‘solidarity’ and ‘bailout’. As Greece’s deputy prime minister, Theodoros Pangalos (The New York Times 2010:), said while making the case for EU intervention for troubled member states: ‘You are the next victims … I hope it doesn’t happen and the solidarity prevails and we find an exit from this escalation [of borrowing costs]. But if this does not happen, the next probable victim will be Portugal.’

By the end of March 2010, the leaders of the Eurozone member states – including Germany – agreed to a ‘bailout mechanism’ worth €30 billion in high-interest loans that would not be sent to Greece immediately but would be available for borrowing if the country’s financial picture were to deteriorate further. Both Merkel and Papandreou once again turned to the notion of solidarity to hail the agreement, which was followed by a much larger financial commitment of €110 billion from the EU in May 2010 to help Greece settle its short-term debts. In Merkel’s (Agence France-Presse 2010) words: ‘I think Europe proved its capacity for action on a major issue, at the same time working to protect euro stability and demonstrating solidarity towards a country in difficulty.’ Papandreou declared: ‘European solidarity has taken flesh and bones. Today’s developments don’t relate just to Greece, our country; it is a significant decision for both Europe and for the European Union’ (Granitsas and Skrekas 2010:). Analysts were more skeptical; as an editorial in The Wall Street Journal Europe (2010: 11) noted: ‘It’s safe to say this agreement is something less than the full-throated vote of solidarity that Athens has been hoping for. It is, instead, an agreement struck in the hopes it will never be used.’ The leader of the Party of European Socialists, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, criticized the agreement as a show of weakness rather than a show of solidarity:

There is a real solidarity gap on the deal for Greece and a real credibility gap on the plans for a European strategy for 2020. The use of the plan only as a “last resort” runs the risk of perpetuating a crisis
footing. Solidarity should not be seen as a last resort. (Papageorgiou 2010:)

On the other side of public opinion, many argued that Greece, not Germany, had fallen short on solidarity by mismanaging its finances in the first place – essentially failing to live up to earlier understandings of solidarity as joint responsibility. As a London resident wrote in a letter published in the Financial Times: ‘It’s time Greece showed some solidarity with the rest of Europe by starting to introduce fiscal discipline’ (Zehle 2010:).

The recent developments to strengthen the Eurozone illustrate how solidarity as an ethos of collective responsibility in Europe has not depended upon the formation of a common European identity but instead has emerged among political elites who hold onto their national identities and advance their national interests while also seeking to situate and mediate their national agendas within more widely shared concerns and goals for the EU and its collection of member states. At the annual summit of the World Economic Forum in January 2011, Merkel reaffirmed Germany’s commitment to European monetary union and the single European currency by promising that Germany is ready to show ‘solidarity’ and provide financial assistance to its more heavily indebted partners in return for firmer commitments to limit budget deficits across Europe. As Merkel (Czuczka and Donahue 2011:) noted in a speech that confirmed her government’s shift toward a commitment to aid in exchange for better fiscal discipline from its European counterparts and articulated a meaningful notion of solidarity as collective responsibility:

> Whoever gets solidarity needs to receive this solidarity under certain conditions … We are going to defend the euro – there is no doubt about this. The euro is our currency and is much more than just a currency; it is, if you like, the embodiment of the Europe of today. Should the euro fail, Europe will fail.

This continued prominence of solidarity in public debates – as illustrated by the recent crisis in Greece, in which national leaders across the European continent relied heavily upon the notion of solidarity as they debated how to respond – underscores that solidarity remains a fundamental imperative in the EU, both flowing from and feeding into heightened recognition of interdependence that has bound together the member states of the EU even as its political elites frequently disagree over the appropriate measures to fulfill this imperative. The deployment of solidarity in the EU has never presumed the existence or even the pursuit of a common European identity; indeed, within the national politics of member states as well as the ongoing interaction across the continent, solidarity does not even presume that political leaders and their respective factions necessarily like each other. The
European approach to solidarity does not derive from fellowship or camaraderie, and indeed, the accompanying policy initiatives often emerge from acrimonious public disputes, but one common trait is this: successful manifestations of European solidarity have emphasized notions of collective responsibility that justify the basis for policy initiatives that involve coordination and, at times, shared sacrifice to solve common problems.

The notion of solidarity as collective responsibility has taken hold in numerous EU policy areas through the years, ranging from the long-standing regional development and ‘cohesion’ initiatives that have redistributed funds from wealthier member states and regions to less affluent areas, with the goal of narrowing social and economic disparities across the EU, to recent appeals for greater EU solidarity in strengthening immigration policy and border controls as Mediterranean countries along the external EU borders are shouldering a disproportionate burden as growing numbers of migrants and refugees make their way to the continent. In this regard, European solidarity going forward faces two significant challenges: first, to build upon the commitment to balanced regional development across a supranational community with much wider disparities than before, now that the former Communist countries have come on board as member states; and second, to make sure that any emerging efforts to develop a more coherent immigration policy will not compromise the inclusive and internationalist approaches to solidarity that often have animated European integration since its earliest days. The EU and its member states need to resist the temptation to take a ‘fortress’ approach on matters of social and economic policy that could then have the effect of rendering solidarity along the lines of a nationalist model writ large rather than the expansive, cosmopolitan approach to solidarity that helped set in motion the era of integration that propelled the continent forward into unprecedented peace and prosperity following the cataclysms of the early twentieth century.

**Solidarity and prospects for an East Asian community**

In contrast with Europe, the concept of solidarity did not play a comparably significant role in constituting political community in pre-modern East Asia, both within individual countries and at the international level. Confucius emphasized benevolence and integrity as personal virtues that the king and other public leaders ought to strive to acquire. Other ancient Chinese thinkers underlined other factors such as the law, military power and love as the main principles of social and political institutions. However, solidarity similar to the models that had evolved in Europe in multiple philosophical and religious traditions did not emerge and develop in ancient East Asia. The pre-modern regional order in East Asia was characterized by a Sino-centric hierarchy consisting of successive Chinese empires at the center and their tributary neighbors in the periphery. Such a hierarchical regional order allowed little room for solidarity – in both discourse and practice – to
emerge and develop. If anything, ‘solidarity’ was imposed unilaterally by hegemonic Chinese empires onto small and weak countries.

From the time Asia entered into the modern period, however, ‘solidarity’ has emerged occasionally as one of the key themes in the development of cooperation in the region. In this regard, solidarity as an organizing principle of regional organizations and institutions is a ‘modern’ phenomenon in East Asia. The evolution of the idea of solidarity in East Asia can be divided into three stages: (1) the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century; (2) 1945–1990 (Cold War period); and (3) 1990 to the present (post-Cold War period).

The concept of pan-Asian solidarity first emerged and spread in East Asia in the mid-nineteenth century. The concept of solidarity at the time had a lot of ‘oppositional’ characteristics – solidarity was against the West and against western civilization. Such oppositional characteristics faded during the Cold War period but then reappeared afterwards. The proponents of Asian solidarity commonly argued for the superiority of Eastern (Asian) ‘substance’ or ‘essence’ to western ‘technology’ or ‘tools’. However, Korea, Japan and China all had different notions of regional solidarity. Korea’s version of pan-Asianism, Dongyangjueui, envisioned a peaceful East Asia, where Korea could remain and prosper as an independent sovereign country. Korean supporters of Asianism proposed solidarity and unity, trilateral coexistence and co-prosperity of China, Korea and Japan. They also argued that if the three Northeast Asian countries could unite themselves, they could effectively deal with the West-dominated international order at the time. For example, Kim Ok Kyun, a reformist politician in Korea during the late nineteenth century and who led the 1884 coup, supported ideas such as ‘Harmony of the Three Countries’ or a ‘Japan–China–Korea Alliance’ and maintained that the unity and cooperation of the three countries were essential in resisting and defeating the West’s imperial ambitions. Also, An Jung Geun, a Korean independence movement activist and pan-Asianist, espoused the concept of ‘East Asian Peace’, proposing the establishment of an international council to discuss such issues as regional peace, a joint bank, a common currency and a common peace corps (Kim 2005: 10).

China’s pan-Asianism was best represented by Sun Yat-sen’s ‘Greater Asianism’. In a speech delivered in Kobe, Japan, on 28 November 1924, Sun compared and contrasted Oriental civilization and Occidental civilization to develop a theory of the superiority of the former over the latter. According to his analysis, Oriental civilization was characterized by the ‘rule of Right’, whereas Occidental civilization is in essence the ‘rule of Might’ (Sun 1941: 151). Sun (1941: 147–9 & 158) prescribed: ‘Should all Asiatic peoples thus unite together and present a united front against the Occidentals, they will win the final victory.’ The ultimate goal of Sun’s ‘Greater Asianism’ was global peace, comprised of multiple concrete steps of regional cooperation and integration. His ‘Greater Asianism’ contained manifestly racial components, such as the fateful clash between the Asian race and the Caucasian
race. Also, he underscored the need for aligning populous China with powerful Japan in combating western imperialism (Sun 1941).

Japan’s Asianism at the turn of the century can be divided into two stages: the initial relatively non-aggressive stage and the later expansionist and military stage. In the 1850–60s, Japan’s Asianism aimed for Asian solidarity with a view to resisting western imperialists’ intrusion into Asia. The main premise of this earlier version of Asianism was Japan’s self-realization that Japan was historically and currently part of Asia. ‘Asia’ was not only a geographical concept but also a concept emphasizing the same race and the same culture. The pan-Asianist discourse at the time had a strong culturalist element. ‘Asian solidarity’ meant the unity and cooperation of China, Korea and Japan in resistance to western imperialism. It was advocated by both liberal and progressive civil rights activists and relatively conservative social groups. However, ‘Asian solidarity’ did not receive much attention and public support at the time, largely because the movement remained abstract and did not offer any specific means and methods to achieve its objectives. Also, Japan’s ‘Asian solidarity’ was clearly Japan-centric and recommended ‘unequal’ cooperation among the three Northeast Asian countries (Kim 2005: 13).

The initial, relatively non-expansionist Asianism in Japan gradually changed into an aggressive and imperialistic version of ‘Greater Asianism’, supported by the military and rightist groups such as Genyosha (Dark Ocean Society) and Kokuryukai (Black Dragon Society). Intellectuals such as Yoshida Shoin envisioned a Northeast Asian regional order with a hegemonic Japanese empire at the top. The treaty Japan forced upon Korea in 1905 included a direct reference to ‘the principle of solidarity’, but that solidarity completely violated Brunkhorst’s conception of solidarity noted earlier as akin to non-domination. Japan’s ‘Greater Asianism’ became consolidated through the Sino–Japanese and Russo–Japanese Wars in the early twentieth century. It culminated with the notion of a ‘Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere’ that was used by the Japanese military to justify and fortify their invasion, conquest and colonization of Asian countries up until the Second World War.

The idea of solidarity in East Asia during the Cold War period (1945–89) was evoked in two polarized forms: either taking sides with either of the two global superpowers (the USA or the Soviet Union) or resisting both hegemons to pursue ‘neutrality’. Unlike various versions of ‘Asianism’ during the pre-Cold War period, neither of these polarized forms of solidarity was inherently anti-western. For the first time, discourses of solidarity in Asia did not pit the region in direct opposition to the West. There were two noticeable attempts at building solidarity of Asian countries: the Non-Aligned Movement and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). First proposed at the Asian–African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement was intended to promote unity and cooperation of ‘Third World’ countries
across Asia and Africa, free from the influences of powerful countries, particularly the two Cold War superpowers. However, the solidarity the movement advocated and promoted was not quite about the Asian region. Rather, the movement was cross-regional, broadly involving oppressed and underdeveloped nations on different continents. The Non-Aligned Movement did not gain much support from Third World countries that belonged to either of the two ideological camps, and it fizzled out.

ASEAN started with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration by the foreign ministers of Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore in Bangkok in 1967. The five founding members, in the face of rapid expansion and diffusion of communism in the Indochinese Peninsula, intended to deal with the threat of communism collectively. ASEAN was established under the sponsorship of the USA and had a highly ideological character from the very beginning. With initiatives for an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in the 1980s and the membership expansion to include 10 countries, ASEAN gradually developed into a comprehensive forum of economic and social cooperation. But the Asian solidarity on which ASEAN was based was ‘Southeast Asian’ solidarity. On the Northeast Asian front, regional solidarity did not emerge as an important concept during the Cold War period. Japan and South Korea each maintained bilateral alliances with the USA and served as strong anti-communist footholds in Asia. If anything, the regional solidarity that existed in Northeast Asia was not very different from that of Southeast Asia, namely pro-USA and anti-communist solidarity. Overall, it should be noted that during the Cold War period, East Asian leaders began moving in the direction of an approach to regional solidarity that did not position the region in direct opposition to the West.

The 1970s also witnessed vigorous expansion of economic interdependence among countries in the region. Japan continued phenomenal economic success and developed vast investment networks in Northeast and Southeast Asia. Japanese investments spurred the creation of trans-border production networks in such industries as textiles, light manufacturing and raw materials (Pempel 2002). China opened its economy, which activated extensive trade networks of overseas Chinese. Regionalization, as a result, proceeded in two different versions. One was organized under the auspices of Japanese keiretsu conglomerates operating in cooperation with the Japanese government. The other was promoted by overseas Chinese seeking to combine their business skills and financial resources in tightly held, medium-sized, family-owned firms, with the vast natural resources, cheap labor and pent-up consumer demand of the People’s Republic of China. The two versions of Asian regionalization were complementary to each other and collectively deepened the process of regional cooperation in East Asia (Katzenstein et al. 2000).

Toward the end of the Cold War era, scholars pointed to the ‘Rise of Asia’ or the arrival of the ‘Pacific Century’. In Northeast Asia, Japan and
Korea emerged from post-war devastation to become global economic powerhouses, while China, after the paradigmatic change to opening and reform in the late 1970s, has continued to surprise the world with its fast growth and formidable potential. Other Asian countries, small and large, showed substantial economic development and political transformation. With the end of the Cold War, the early 1990s witnessed a visible resurgence of Asianism, reminiscent of the rise of various versions of ‘Greater Asianism’ during the pre-Cold War period. Most Asian countries engineered substantial economic growth through the 1980s and the 1990s. This experience generated collective confidence in the distinctive model of Asian development, centered upon the effective role of the state historically exemplified by Japan and South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s. The rise of Asia culminated with the ‘Asian Values’ debate in the early to mid-1990s, with the ‘flurry of articles and books praising supposedly inherent Asian values that seemingly propelled regional economic growth’ (Terada 2003: 275, note 6). Asian leaders became confident about their achievements and critical of ‘western’ values and ‘global standards’ (Mahbubani 2001; Zakaria 1994). At the twilight of the Cold War, signs emerged that Asian articulations of solidarity would once again position the region in contrast with, if not in opposition to, other regions of the world – and particularly the West.

In 1990, Malaysian prime minister Mahathir proposed the creation of the East Asian Economic Group (EAEG). EAEG was predicated on the concept of a broader and more unified Asian region, consolidating the existing notions of separate Asian regions – Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia – into the new appellation of ‘East Asia’ (Terada 2003: 256). ‘East Asia’ was innovative because most of the existing regional groupings had – both during and after the Cold War – revolved around ‘Southeast Asian’ (e.g. ASEAN), ‘Pacific’ (e.g. Pacific Economic Cooperation Council), or ‘Asia-Pacific’ (e.g. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) (Terada 2003: 256). In October 1991, at the Meeting of the ASEAN Economic Ministers held in Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN countries agreed to change EAEG to the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC). However, EAEG/EAEC did not gain much influence because ASEAN members failed to elaborate on EAEC’s objectives, structures and functions, and Japan preferred the existing concept of the ‘Asia-Pacific’.

On the 30th anniversary of ASEAN in 1997, Mahathir resuscitated the idea of EAEG/EAEC by proposing ASEAN+3 (ASEAN Plus Three; APT) and extended invitations to the prime ministers of China, Japan and Korea. In 1998, South Korean president Kim Dae Jung fleshed out Mahathir’s idea further by proposing the establishment of the East Asian Vision Group (EAVG) of eminent persons, an ‘East Asian’ grouping of Northeast and Southeast Asia that was very similar to Mahathir's EAEG/EAEC. EAVG studied and developed APT’s ultimate purposes, basic principles and specific programs for cooperation and submitted a report on ideas to deepen long-term cooperation among APT members to
the 5th APT Summit in 2001. EAVG examined the ultimate aims of a pan-
Asian regional cooperative organization and proposed the East Asian Sum-
mit, the East Asia Forum and the East Asia Free Trade Area as long-term
goals. In 2001, the East Asian Study Group (EASG), which was composed
of high-ranking officials from 13 APT countries, reviewed EAVG’s report
and released an elaborate plan for regional cooperation and collaboration
in November 2002, breaking down EAVG’s 26 projects into specific long-
term, mid-term and short-term measures. As a result of these efforts, the
first East Asia Summit was held in December 2005.

Despite Mahathir’s persistence and Kim Dae Jung’s facilitation, APT
as a new regional forum based on ‘East Asian’ solidarity would not have
come to fruition without the unexpected eruption of the Asian financial
crisis in 1997–98. The post-crisis ‘East Asian’ solidarity, an expert points
out, is characterized by its ‘state-led’ and ‘exclusionary’ (of the US) na-
ture (Bowles 2002). Above all, the crisis brought to relief the dire need
of the countries in the region to establish and develop common institutions
and measures to prevent, manage and overcome various economic chal-
lenges outside the boundaries – and constraints – of the Bretton Woods
institutions and the so-called Washington Consensus. No regional organi-
zation, including ASEAN, came to the rescue of the hardest-hit govern-
ments. Based on their successful experiences with the developmental state
in the past decades, countries in the region could easily agree on the need
for the states to be (back) in charge. Their strong intentions to intervene
and encompass (or reclaim) both monetary and trade dimensions consider-
ably spurred the drive for post-crisis regionalism.

Most important, ‘[i]t was from the perception of collective humiliation
by essentially “Western” institutions like the IMF [International Monetary
Fund] and World Bank that the felt need for greater regional solidarity
emerged’ (Jones and Smith 2007: 169). The Asian financial crisis prompted
the East Asian countries to entertain profound collective skepticism about
the US-led global economic order. The USA did nothing to help Thailand
and Indonesia – only three and a half years after helping Mexico recover
from a similar crisis. As one observer commented, ‘[t]he evolving regional
narrative ascribed the cause of the crisis to U.S.-dominated global funds
that ruthlessly shifted “hot” money in and out of Asia’ (Jones and Smith
2007: 170). East Asian countries began to openly criticize the deficiency of
the political legitimacy of the global financial architecture and began try-
ing to become ‘rule makers rather than rule takers through various regional
financial arrangements’ (Sohn 2005). A desire to limit the influence in the
region of the USA and the international financial institutions became pal-
pable.

China’s and Japan’s convergence of interest in and cooperation with APT
and East Asian community-building were also critical to APT’s success.
China consistently kept a low profile and encouraged ASEAN to lead the
process. As one Chinese analyst observes:

ASEAN has played a key role in bridging and bringing other East Asian countries together for cooperation... and will continue to play an important role in the future East Asia cooperation process... China does not want to be a center of power or a leader. (Zhang 2005: 3, 6)

Meanwhile, Japan also changed its previous critical view on ‘East Asia’. Japanese prime minister Koizumi Junichiro, in a policy speech delivered in Singapore in January 2002, proposed the creation of an East Asian ‘community that acts together and advances together’ (Koizumi 2002:). In a speech delivered at the UN in September 2004, Koizumi (2004:) publicly announced that he had ‘advocated the idea of an “East Asia Community”... building upon ASEAN + 3’.

The latest interesting development in terms of regionalism based on solidarity was the September 2009 election of a Democratic Party-controlled government led by Hatoyama Yukio in Japan. In an editorial commentary that was published in newspapers around the world a few weeks before the election, Hatoyama (2009:) defined his understanding of fraternity as ‘the principle of independence and coexistence’ and viewed solidarity as a concept capable of taming global capitalism as well as ‘a force for moderating the danger inherent within freedom’. While Hatoyama’s essay was widely noted around the world for its aspirations toward an East Asian political and economic community, portions of his commentary also framed ‘fraternity’ as primarily a local or national corrective to a monolithic framing of ‘globalism’ as akin to American economic dominance and therefore suggested that solidarity would entail a turn away from globalism rather than a redeployment of globalism. Thus Hatoyama cast the relationship between ‘fraternity’ and ‘globalism’ as inherently negative, and framed a possible East Asian community and his envisioned initial elements of a common East Asian currency and collective security provisions as ‘a national goal that emerges from the concept of fraternity’ (Hatoyama 2009:).

While Hatoyama depicted regional integration as a ‘national goal’, particularly to advance the principles of pacifism and multilateral cooperation built into Japan’s constitution, he located a prospective East Asian political community inspired by ‘fraternity’ as a desirable middle ground that would avoid ‘excessive nationalism’, on the one hand, and ‘U.S. political and economic excesses’ on the other. Hatoyama also argued that potential obstacles to East Asian political community – namely increased militarization and lingering territorial disputes on all sides – have their best chances of resolution in a multilateral setting, as opposed to bilateral negotiations, and therefore ‘somewhat paradoxically, that the issues that stand in the way of regional integration can only be truly resolved by moving toward greater integration.'
The experience of the EU shows us how regional integration can defuse territorial disputes.’ Hatoyama’s idea of fraternity, with clear references to the EU and its emphasis on the value of fraternity as an antidote to both global liberalism and Asian nationalism, put forward a conception of solidarity that so far bears the closest affinities with European social-democratic approaches to solidarity. However, Hatoyama’s prime ministership collapsed in June 2010, less than one year after the Democratic Party of Japan’s electoral victory, following a series of campaign-financing scandals and an impasse over the question of relocating a US military base on Okinawa. It remains to be seen whether Hatoyama’s ideas of fraternity and solidarity turn out to be as ephemeral as his government or will regenerate in such a way that eventually influences the actual process of community building and institutional development in the East Asian region. Diplomatic incidents over maritime disputes with China in September 2010 have put a freeze on warming Sino-Japanese relations, a prerequisite for advancing the idea of community.

In summary, ASEAN’s initiative, South Korea’s facilitative role, the Asian financial crisis and the domestic political changes within Japan and China were the main causes of the recent surge of regionalism in East Asia. As long as the current round of East Asian regionalism curbs an exclusionary propensity, we can conclude that the negative and counterproductive elements of the previous varieties of (Greater) Asianism during the last century will be substantially diluted. Greater Asianism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was largely anti-western. Advocated and practiced by imperial Japan, it also eventually became suppressive of Japan’s neighbors in the region, triggering tremendous conflict and strife within East Asia. As compared with Greater Asianism of the past centuries, the current wave of East Asian regionalism is more focused on positive goods to pursue, such as increased exchanges and interdependencies, collective problem-solving and efforts at building common institutions. This is why, unlike the previous versions of regionalism in Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and the Asia-Pacific, the current wave of regionalism in East Asia has a greater potential to utilize solidarity as its crucial organizing principle.

Conclusion

Solidarity in East Asia is only beginning to work as an organizing principle of regional institution building. Just as the concept of solidarity played a crucial role in the formative years of the EU, solidarity as collective responsibility should play an important role in inspiring and promoting the process of East Asian cooperation and future integration. In this regard, an important task in East Asia is to redeploy the idea of solidarity more actively and in different ways than before, making the concept more positive, substantive, specific and problem solving, and to avoid past counterproductive...
tendencies of evoking solidarity in ways that frame the region in opposition to other parts of the world. A successful redeployment of solidarity in East Asia as an ethos of collective responsibility will require political leaders across the region to navigate a tricky balance: neither positioning their respective countries and the region at large against the West nor subordinating the region’s interests and collective standing to the West. It also will require new and innovative bridges of collaboration to be built across the region’s capitalist and communist systems as well as nations still working to overcome difficult historical memories of conflict, conquest and colonization.

The juxtaposition in March 2011 of the outpouring of regional solidarity in support of Japan immediately following the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, followed by profound senses of disillusionment and frustration just days later over long-standing territorial disputes, provided striking reminders of both the promise of regional solidarity initiatives and the daunting nature of this undertaking. Still, the political will across East Asia to take on this challenge is growing. As a fervent supporter and aggressive promoter of APT once declared:

> The regional cooperation has brought home the exciting realization that we, the people of East Asia, are very capable of working together, with goodwill and solidarity, to create a better future for all of us and a better world for our descendants…. While there is no roadmap towards a community of East Asian nations, our leaders have come to accept the crucial common belief that we, East Asians, must cooperate and build our future together. They deserve our active support. For we are all in this together. The journey has begun. (Chalermpalanupap 2002: 16)

If leaders across East Asia can succeed in redeploying solidarity on an international scale in ways that take on an expansive and cosmopolitan approach, and set the stage for meaningful political and economic collaboration, this could in turn provide new sources of inspiration to Europe’s political leadership as the continent faces the challenge of returning all the more decisively to the rich traditions of solidarity that made the concept indispensable during the formative years of European integration. With the EU now very much submerged within the neoliberal character of the global economy – and its overriding emphasis upon deregulation, privatization and free trade – notions of European solidarity have at times drifted from the conceptual pillars of collective responsibility and social democracy as well as more inclusive, outward-looking approaches to solidarity.

We conclude, then, by emphasizing that the idea of solidarity should serve as a vehicle for inspiring and facilitating a new regional community in East Asia. In contrast with interpretations that suggest the conditions for developing an East Asian community are inescapably distinct from the
circumstances in Europe during the second half of the twentieth century, we argue that redeploying the concept of solidarity as an ethos of collective responsibility within the region and beyond, rather than as collective skepticism toward external actors and the West, offers great potential as a conceptual lever to advance regional collaboration and integration in East Asia. Region building is primarily a political act of self-construction and self-promotion. It is a highly deliberate and intensely political process in which a region can be ‘imagined, designed, constructed, and defended’ (Acharya 1999: 73). The specific contents of solidarity – as well as suitable policy measures that follow – must now be fleshed out by the visions, ideas and imaginations of able and charismatic leaders in East Asia and Europe.

Notes

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2 The authors are grateful to Tony Judt for mentioning in an e-mail communication the role of Solidarisme.

3 ‘Regionalization’ is largely spontaneous and bottom-up ‘creation or realignment of transactions and attitudes along regional lines . . . driven, brokered, and carried out primarily by private individuals acting on their own’ (Frost 2008: 14). By contrast, ‘regionalism’ is a ‘political movement based on awareness of and loyalty to a region, combined with dedication to a regionwide agenda of some kind’ (Frost 2008: 15). It is basically top-down, coordinated action on the part of governments based on some vision or set of ideas.

References


