

Northeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era: Minimum Order and Optimum Order*

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An Overview of the World Order

If one accepts the premise that the cold war has ended, then what is likely to be the shape of the post-cold war world order? This question forces us to embark on a speculative excursion in a dual sense, for neither the premise nor the prognostication can rest on firm ground.

At first glance, the premise seems all but unassailable. The two super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, have so dramatically altered their bilateral relationship that they can no longer be viewed as adversaries; they have become friends and even allies, as their unprecedented cooperation in forging counter-measures against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait demonstrates.

There is, moreover, the unequivocal language of the Charter of Paris, which was adopted by the 34-nation summit meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in November, 1990: "The era of confrontation and division of Europe has ended. We declare that henceforth our relations will be founded on respect and cooperation."⁽¹⁾

What, then, is the ground for caution, for not accepting the end of the cold war as a *fait accompli*? Recent developments in the Soviet Union raise the possibility that old ways may yet return, gradually eclipsing Gorbachev's vaunted "new thinking." If Moscow's crackdown in the Baltic republics and adoption of hardline policies at home are emblematic of the ascendancy of the military and the KGB in Soviet politics, as is widely assumed, then the cold war is by no means over.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union faces so many intractable prob-

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(1) For excerpts from the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, see *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 1990, p. A4.

lems, political, economic, and other, that its superpower status is in serious jeopardy, if it has not evaporated already. With only its military arsenal relatively intact, Moscow's ability to conduct a cold war with Washington has declined precipitously. No matter who controls the levers of power in the Kremlin, the Soviet Union is exceedingly unlikely to place a top priority on undermining and opposing the West. Another factor that will militate against the renewal of the cold war is the disintegration of the Soviet empire. The historic transformation of Eastern Europe, to which Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* have directly contributed, has all but eliminated Soviet satellites and client states. Moscow can no longer count on unwavering support, either moral or material, of "fraternal socialist states," should it adopt anew a posture of confrontation vis-a-vis the West.

In sum, while caution dictates us to refrain from celebrating the end of the cold war prematurely, chances of its being rekindled in the near future seem quite low. Hence it is not foolhardy to speculate on the contours of an emerging world order. In this paper, we shall use the phrase "world order" in a dual sense. In a descriptive sense, it refers to the salient attributes of the world such as (1) power configuration, (2) resource distribution, (3) relevance of law, and (4) the role of ideology. In a prescriptive sense, it refers not to the attributes of the world as it actually exists but to those of the world as it should be in terms of a set of shared values.

During the cold war era, the world order was marked by a bipolarity of power, unequal resource distribution, relative impotence of law, and the salience of ideology. Power during the cold war era remained largely bipolar in the sense that the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers were so immense as to make those of the other nuclear powers pale in comparison. In terms of the ultimate measure of power — the power of destruction — the two superpowers were in a class by themselves. The configuration of economic power, on the other hand, was multipolar rather than bipolar, with the United States, Western Europe, and Japan being the dominant players.

This meant that resource distribution displayed pronounced inequality. The industrialized democracies generated and controlled the bulk of the world's wealth, with a handful of newly industrializing economic systems (NIES) trailing closely behind them. The ideal of the rule of law eluded the world during the cold war era. Flagrant violations of international law

not only remained unpunished to a large extent but very few concerted efforts at regulating lawless behavior in the world arena were made. The foremost stumbling block to the promotion of the rule of law was the cold war; the Soviet Union and its allies displayed a profound distrust of rules of international law that they viewed as biased in favor of the capitalist West, refusing to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and avoiding adjudication in every conceivable way. To be fair, one should also note the reluctance of the United States, along with many other states both in the West and in the Third World, to accept the jurisdiction of the world court. And both the Soviet Union and the United States resorted to force in pursuit of their respective national interests, as did numerous other states in the various regions of the world.

Finally, ideology played a major role in the conduct of Soviet foreign policy and hence in the shaping of the world order during the cold war era. Much of Moscow's international behavior was guided by its quest for the elusive but ideology-tinged goal of establishing global hegemony. The Soviet buildup of an awesome military capability, which extracted opportunity costs of inestimable proportions, was also driven by ideological considerations, even though it was clearly fueled by the vicious circle of an arms race with the United States. It should be noted that the salience of ideology varied not only over time but also among the various socialist states, with China during the Maoist era and North Korea occupying one end of the spectrum and Yugoslavia the other.

What changes, if any, are occurring or likely to occur with respect to the preceding dimensions of the world order in the post-cold war era? As far as power configuration is concerned, the United States and the Soviet Union have yet to reduce measurably their strategic military capabilities; for the time being, perhaps for many years to come, then, bipolarity may prevail in the world from a purely military standpoint. Until and unless the Soviet Union puts its economic house in order and finds an amicable solution to its ethnic problems, however, its ability to flex its military muscle in the world arena is likely to remain rather limited.

Using the combined yardstick of military and economic power, then, one may argue that only one superpower remains: the United States. It is possible, moreover, that the American leadership in the war against Iraq in the Persian Gulf may so enhance the power position of the United States in the world that it may emerge as the principal guardian of the new world order—the guarantor of *Pax Americana*. Militating against

such a scenario is the diminished economic strength of the United States, which is heavily dependent upon the financial contribution of its allies for the costs of the Gulf war.

No major change is discernible regarding resource or wealth distribution, which remains uneven. In the category of marginal change, however, one may include the windfall profits of some petroleum exporting nations, notably Saudi Arabia. The deterioration of the Soviet economy may also be cited as an example of marginal change, even though its impact on Soviet citizens is anything but marginal.

It is with respect to the rule of law and the role of ideology that one finds unmistakable signs of fundamental change. The Soviet Union has now aligned itself with champions of international law and supporters of the International Court of Justice. Not only did Moscow lend unequivocal support to United Nations Security Council resolutions condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and authorizing "all necessary means" to bring about Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, but it also worked strenuously, albeit unsuccessfully, to persuade Iraq to comply with UN resolutions in order to avoid war.

Change in Soviet policy, to be sure, does not necessarily ensure the rule of law in international relations. Major transgressions persist as exemplified by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and refusal to heed UN resolutions that have been approved nearly unanimously in the Security Council. Nonetheless, the commitment of all major powers to the rule of law not only in rhetoric but also in action does enhance appreciably the prospects for the attainment of that lofty ideal.

No less remarkable is the decline of ideology. Nothing illustrates this better than the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Korea, which can only be explained in terms of the convergence of national interests pure and simple on the part of the two states. What needs stressing, however, is that the decline of ideology is not the same thing as its demise. Moreover, new sources of cleavage have emerged in lieu of ideology: ethnicity and religion. Even though, strictly speaking, they are by no means new, they are nonetheless becoming more salient and potent than ever before.

In the remainder of this paper I propose to sketch an outline of the post-cold war order in Northeast Asia, which is defined functionally rather than geographically to include the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, the two Korean states, Taiwan, and Mongolia. The inclusion of the

four great powers means that there will be a significant overlap between the regional order and the world order.

Borrowing concepts from the New Haven School of international legal studies, I shall examine the prospects for "minimum order" and "optimum order." The former entails "minimizing unauthorized violence and other coercion," while the latter necessitates "the greatest production and widest distribution of all demanded values that can be attained with available resources."⁽²⁾

Since President George Bush has referred to a "new world order" a number of times, his definition of the term merits attention. In his State of the Union message delivered to the joint session of the U.S. Congress in January 1991, Bush said:

What is at stake [in the war against Iraq] is more than one small country; it is a big idea—a *new world order*, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind: peace and security, freedom and the rule of law. Such is a world worthy of our struggle, and worthy of our children's future. The world can therefore seize this opportunity to fulfill the long-held promise of a *new world order*—where brutality will [not] go unrewarded, and aggression will meet collective resistance.⁽³⁾

Bush is clearly using the term "new world order" in a prescriptive sense, and his emphasis seems to be on the establishment of "minimum order."

Prospects for Minimum Order in Northeast Asia

In order to assess the prospects for minimum order in Northeast Asia, we need to examine the potential sources of disorder in the region. What and who are most likely to cause "unauthorized violence and other coercion"? The latter phrase encompasses the use of force not sanctioned by international law or by the U.N. Charter such as armed attack, war of aggression, and acts of terrorism.

A review of the track records of the states that comprise the region during the cold war era suggests that the foremost source of disorder has

(2) Lung-Chu Chen, *An Introduction to Contemporary International Law: A Policy-Oriented Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 85-86; Myres S. McDougal and Harold D. Lasswell, "The Identification and Appraisal of Diverse Systems of Public Order" in Myres S. McDougal and Associates, *Studies in World Public Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), pp. 3-41.

(3) *New York Times*, Jan. 30, 1991. Emphasis added.

thus far been North Korea. Among the most serious examples of its use of "unauthorized violence" are its invasion of South Korea in June 1950, its commando raid on South Korea's presidential mansion in January 1968, the Rangoon bombing incident of October 1983 in which 16 high-ranking South Korean government officials and five other persons were killed, and the mid-air bombing of Korean Air flight 858 in November 1987 which resulted in the loss of 115 lives.⁽⁴⁾

North Korea has categorically denied responsibility for any of these incidents. It has steadfastly claimed that its troops crossed the 38th parallel in June 1950 in "self-defensive counter-attack" after South Korean troops under American orders invaded its territory first.⁽⁵⁾ Pyongyang has dismissed all other incidents as Seoul's fabrications or in its words "self-enacted dramas" (*chajakguk*).⁽⁶⁾ Nonetheless, evidence implicating North Korea in all of these cases is so overwhelming as to dissipate any doubts.

The question that needs to be answered, then, is: Will North Korea do it again? What are the chances of North Korea's invading South Korea again? What about terrorist acts? To deal with the question of war first, I am inclined to believe that the North Korean leadership — Kim Il Sung in particular — has learned a bitter lesson from the Korean War and is unlikely to repeat the same mistake again.⁽⁷⁾ Most important, the deterrent power of the combined troops and arsenals of South Korea and the United States arrayed against North Korea is truly formidable. Add to the above the economic woes of North Korea and strains in the Pyongyang-Moscow alliance triggered by the growing links between Seoul and Moscow.

The prevailing view in South Korea, however, is that North Korea is

(4) For a list of North Korea-provoked incidents during the 1958-1989 period, see Republic of Korea, Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper 1989* (Seoul: 1990), pp. 273-281.

(5) See Kim Il Sung's radio speech on June 26, 1950, a day after the North Korean invasion, in *Kim Il Sung chojak sonjip* [Selected Works of Kim Il Sung], vol. 1 (Pyongyang: Choson Nodongdang Ch'ulp'ansa, 1967), pp. 272-278. See also *Mije nun Choson chonjaeng ui tobalja* [The American Imperialists Are the Precipitants of the Korean War] (Pyongyang, 1990).

(6) For North Korean allegations, see *Choguk P'yonghwa T'ong'il Wiwonhoe Sogiguk T'ongbo* [Bulletin of the Secretariat of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland], No. 13 (Jan. 1984), pp. 1-20 and No. 59 (Feb. 1988), pp. 15-20.

(7) For an elaboration of this interpretation, see my article, "Han'guk chonjaeng kwa Pukhan chongch'i" [The Korean War and North Korean Politics], *Kyegan sasang* [Thought Quarterly], Spring, 1990, pp. 169-178.

poised for war. In support of such a view the South Korean authorities point to North Korea's edge in military capability over South Korea, its forward deployment of troops and weapons, and the underground tunnels that have been discovered along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). According to a defense white paper published in Seoul in 1990, North Korean troops outnumber South Korean troops by the ratio of 1.5 to 1. Pyongyang, moreover, has a considerable edge in military equipment as well; for example, 3,500 tanks as opposed to Seoul's 1,500, 9,000 artillery pieces as opposed to Seoul's 4,000, 460 combat vessels as opposed to Seoul's 170, 24 submarines as opposed to none in the ROK navy, 830 tactical aircraft as opposed to Seoul's 480. North Korea, according to Seoul's defense white paper, has begun to produce the Soviet T-72 tank on an experimental basis and produces "new 23mm self-propelled anti-aircraft gun [s] and the SCUD long-range missile."⁽⁸⁾

When the quality of equipment is taken into account, much of Pyongyang's putative edge over Seoul is blunted. Since the mountainous terrain of the Korean peninsula limits the mobility of mechanized forces, a quantitative edge in tanks and armored personnel carriers may not necessarily translate into tactical advantage in a war. The incomparable deterrent power of tactical and battlefield nuclear weapons in the U.S. arsenal in South Korea should not be overlooked in considering the military balance in Korea.

On the other hand, the grim reality of the underground tunnels, of which three have been discovered thus far, and of the forward deployment of 61 regular divisions/brigades underscores the need for vigilance on the part of South Korea. If one were to bend over backwards to give Pyongyang the benefit of the doubt, one could surmise that the tunnels were probably dug during a period when Pyongyang considered blitzkrieg a viable option and that the forward deployment may be a function either of a military doctrine that stresses forward defense or of a strategy that counters the deployment mode of the adversary.

Also noteworthy is Pyongyang's argument that its expenditure of enormous amounts of resources in the construction of "monumental structures" designed to endure for ages betrays its lack of aggressive intentions. Pyongyang further insists that it lacks the military capability to launch an invasion, for it does not have three to one advantage over Seoul

(8) Republic of Korea, Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper 1989*, pp. 71-82; 138-142.

in troops and weapons, which rudimentary military doctrine decrees that the attacking party should enjoy over the defending party in warfare.⁽⁹⁾

In sum, while North Korea does indeed possess an awesome military capability, its military power is offset to a striking extent by the combined arsenals of South Korea and the United States and by South Korea's economic strength.

North Korea's ability to plan and carry out terrorist acts is also formidable. That it has not done so since November 1987, however, suggests that a sober reappraisal of the costs and benefits of terrorism may have occurred in Pyongyang. In none of the terrorist incidents in which North Korea has been implicated can it be said that net gains accrued to Pyongyang. On the contrary, North Korea has suffered incalculable losses in terms of reputation, credibility, and diplomatic relations in the world arena. All this leads me to be cautiously optimistic about the probable direction of Pyongyang's policy — that it will most likely refrain from resorting to unauthorized violence and other coercion.

Will China become the disturber of peace and security in Northeast Asia? The most recent example of a massive use of force has, in fact, occurred in China — the brutal suppression of pro-democracy students and workers in Tiananmen Square by Chinese troops in June 1989. Although it was an internal use of force, the Tiananmen massacre nonetheless had the potential to spill over beyond China's borders. A strict definition of "minimum order," moreover, would have to include the prevention of "unauthorized violence and other coercion" within a state's boundaries. In cases such as the Tiananmen incident, the use of violence by Chinese troops was "unauthorized" in the sense that it violated rules of international law regarding human rights.

China's track record also includes occasional acts of violence directed against minority nationalities, most notably the Tibetans, and the 1979 invasion of Vietnam, which Beijing described as an attempt to "teach Vietnam a lesson." China also faces the unfinished task of national reunification and has not ruled out the military option to achieve it. Notwithstanding all this, the probability that China will become a source of disorder in Northeast Asia seems negligible. The principal basis of such a prognosis is the enormity of challenges confronting the Chinese leadership

(5) Choguk P'yonghwa T'ong'il Wiwonhoe, "*Namch'im wihyop" in'ga pukch'im wihyop in'ga* ["Threat of Invading the South" Or Threat of Invading the North?] (Pyongyang, 1982), pp. 4-16.

at home. Of the myriad problems Beijing must grapple with, the most pressing seems to be economic. It has a long way to go before it attains its modest goals of modernization. With a dramatic improvement in relations between Beijing and Taipei, with attendant economic benefits to the mainland, the likelihood of China's initiating military action against Taiwan has dwindled to a vanishing point.

The severity of economic problems plaguing the Soviet Union, exacerbated by ethnic tensions, makes it highly improbable that Moscow will employ "unauthorized violence and other coercion" in Northeast Asia, as it did in Afghanistan in 1979. In a strict sense, the Soviet record in the region is nearly unblemished, for Afghanistan lies outside the region. Moscow, however, did play a major role in the Korean War: not only did it train, arm, and equip the North Korean armed forces but it also provided direct guidance and even had pilots flying combat missions in the war. Ironically, it was the Soviet Union's absence from the U.N. Security Council in June 1950 that enabled the world body to authorize the use of force to repel the North Korean aggression, thus paving the way for the first and only collective security action under UN auspices. In other words, in Korea the Soviets were instrumental not only in aiding and abetting the use of "unauthorized violence" by North Korea but also in facilitating the first use of "authorized violence" by 16 UN members led by the United States. As will be discussed below, the Soviet Union continues to be a major factor in the Korean equation today.

This brings us to military alliances in the region, of which there are at least four in operation. Significantly, all but one of the military alliances pertain to the Korean peninsula. The sole exception is the U.S.-Japan alliance, which, as an alliance between the world's most powerful countries, is arguably the most important bilateral security pact in the world today. As both countries value the alliance immeasurably, it seems to be in solid shape. The perennial trade friction, Washington's pressure on Tokyo to increase its share of the costs of U.S. bases and troops in Japan, and a diminution in the perceived threat to Japan's security — all of these factors, however, remain sources of potential strain in the security relationship. The probability that the alliance will help disrupt peace and security in the region seems all but nonexistent.

Next in importance is the U.S.-ROK alliance. As adumbrated above, this provides potent deterrence against North Korean aggression. While problems exist — notably, the issues of command structure, burden shar-

ing, and force level — this alliance, too, seems to be in excellent shape. Pyongyang's constant protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, the alliance in and of itself is not a potential source of disorder in the region. In the absence of North Korean provocations, the alliance is not likely to engage in hostile military action. Should force be employed against North Korea with the aim of reunifying the divided peninsula, it would most likely take the form of unilateral action by South Korea, not a joint campaign under the rubric of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

The other two military alliances are the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s alliances with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, respectively. Forged as a counterweight to the U.S.-ROK alliance, these two military pacts have weathered turbulence in Pyongyang's relations with Moscow and Beijing over the years. In the 1960's and the 1970's the main source of strain between Pyongyang and its patron states was the acrimonious quarrel between the latter two. Unable or unwilling to take sides, Pyongyang tried valiantly to straddle the fence. Disillusioned by Soviet policy, Pyongyang briefly sided with Beijing, paying a high cost in the process. It later patched up relations with Moscow and then tried to pursue the policy of equidistance. That enabled Pyongyang to receive military, economic, and technical assistance from both Moscow and Beijing.

Most recently, however, the USSR-DPRK alliance is under severe strain. The direct cause of the strain is the stunning success of Seoul's *nordpolitik*, to which change in Soviet policy has contributed. The breathtaking speed with which Seoul and Moscow have normalized their relations has been a source of profound irritation and anger on the part of Pyongyang, which has publicly accused Moscow of having literally sold out to Seoul, adding that the money — an estimated 3 billion dollars in an economic aid package — with which Seoul "bribed" Moscow came from Washington.⁽¹⁰⁾

North Korea's dilemma is that its options are limited. With its economic situation continuing to stagnate, Pyongyang has been dealt a severe blow by its number-one trading partner and foremost source of ultramodern

(10) See "Ttalla ro p'algo sanun oegyo kwangye'," ["Diplomatic Relations" That Are Sold and Bought With Dollars], a commentary in *Nodong sinmun*, Oct. 5, 1990. That this commentary appeared in the daily organ of the Workers Party of Korea signed by "commentator" (*nonp'yongwon*) is significant, for it reflects the authoritative view of the top North Korean leadership.

military hardware. The Soviet policy of replacing barter trade with hard currency trade will impose added burdens on North Korea, which has been suffering from a chronic shortage of foreign exchange and is in de facto default of most of its loans from the West and Japan. This helps to explain the eagerness with which North Korea is pursuing the goal of normalizing relations with Japan. During the first round of formal negotiations held in Pyongyang in January 1991, North Korea demanded reparations from Japan not only for colonial rule but also for damage Japan had allegedly inflicted on North Korea during the postwar period.⁽¹¹⁾

The PRC-DPRK alliance, by contrast, remains sturdy. The overall relationship between the two countries appears to have been strengthened. The value of friendship with China for North Korea has increased sharply for a number of reasons: first, China remains one of the few remaining bastions of socialism, along with Cuba and North Korea. The Tiananmen incident seems to have provided Pyongyang with a negative lesson — the danger of “ideological pollution” that accompanies economic liberalization. North Korea, which applauded Beijing’s crackdown on the demonstrators, hopes to minimize the risks of ideological contamination by a combination of controlled opening and stepped-up indoctrination.

Second, China is in a position to compensate for some of the losses North Korea will suffer as a result of the decline in the volume of economic cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow. China, for example, can increase its export of crude oil to North Korea, and the cross-border barter trade between the two countries can be expanded, even though the impact of such trade on the North Korean economy as a whole will remain rather limited.

China’s own economic needs, however, will constrain its ability to accommodate Pyongyang’s wishes. The growth in the volume of trade between Beijing and Seoul and the exchange of trade offices with consular functions between them illustrate the limits of Beijing-Pyongyang cooperation. In a sense, Beijing has embraced not only the policy of separating economics from politics but also a de facto two-Koreas policy.

In brief, none of the four military alliances in the region poses a palpable threat to peace and security. On the contrary, they serve, directly or indirectly, to deter “unauthorized violence and other coercion” in the region. From all this we may conclude that the prospects for minimum

(11) *Asahi shinbun*, International Satellite Edition, Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 1991.

order in the region are quite good.

Prospects for Optimum Order

When we turn from minimum order to optimum order, however, the picture becomes considerably gloomier. It should be recalled that "optimum order" requires maximizing not only the production but also the distribution of "values." The latter include respect, power, enlightenment, well-being, wealth, skill, affection, and rectitude.⁽¹²⁾ Another typology of values might encompass human dignity, justice, development, human rights, and quality of life. Maximizing these values is a laudable goal indeed; it is also a tall order.

Before the goal can be attained or approximated in the region as a whole, it needs to be addressed in each of the countries that comprise the region. It is not hard to see that none of the countries has met the challenge adequately. Nonetheless, there are wide variations in the degree to which the various countries measure up against the yardstick of optimum order internally. Generally speaking, the more democratized a country, the higher the degree of approximation to the standards of optimum order.

At the high end of the continuum, therefore, are located the United States and Japan, in that order. At the low end are found North Korea, China, and perhaps Mongolia. South Korea, Taiwan, and the Soviet Union occupy intermediate positions. Brief reflection on the situation in the United States and Japan will indicate how elusive the goal of establishing optimum order can be. While material conditions of living in the two countries, which happen to be the world's top two wealthiest countries, are generally good, distribution of wealth leaves a great deal to be desired. The plight of homeless people in major cities of the United States is a case in point. In Japan, too, there is a sizable number of under-class people including an estimated two million *Burakumin*.

The persistence of discrimination against minorities in both countries also underscores the distance they need to travel before the values of human dignity, justice, and human rights are equitably distributed among the greatest number of people. To the extent that discrimination is a state of mind, its eradication will be a long, difficult process — perhaps beyond

(12) Chen, *An Introduction to Contemporary International Law*, p. 16.

the realm of feasibility. Nonetheless, its deleterious consequences can be minimized by public policy and acts of the state. There is much room for improvement in this regard in both the United States and Japan, even though the latter's track record is a lot worse than the former's.

If, as suggested above, optimum order remains but a distant goal in the most democratized countries of the region, its attainability in the other countries is highly questionable. What matters, however, is not *whether* optimum order can ever be established in any country but the *degree* to which it can be approximated. With democratization either accomplished or under way in most countries of the region, therefore, there is a glimmer of hope that a slow march toward optimum order will continue.

As far as regional optimum order is concerned, there is a possibility that networks of cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, that have been formed and that may yet emerge in the region may make some contribution to a greater production and a wider sharing of some of the tangible values. At the bilateral level, the dyads of (1) the U.S. and Japan, (2) the U.S. and South Korea, and (3) Japan and South Korea are most noteworthy in this regard. The existence, even intensification, of friction in these sets of bilateral relations should not obscure the fundamental fact that mutual advantages sustain all of them; hence, by implication, a sharing of values occurs in all of them.

Multilateral networks of cooperation have been somewhat slower to develop in the region. Even though there is a strategic integration of sorts among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, their economic interactions lack any coordinative mechanism. The economic vitality of the region raises the possibility that an Asian common market may yet emerge as a counterweight to the scheduled integration of the European Economic Community in 1992. However, such an arrangement, should it materialize, will most probably encompass states from outside the region as well, notably Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN countries.

Multilateral institutions for the protection of human rights, such as an Asian court of human rights and an Asian commission on human rights, will be essential if optimum order is to be attained. Such institutions, too, will of necessity be broader in scope of jurisdiction than Northeast Asia. Given current conditions, however, their emergence seems much more distant than the formation of an Asian economic community.

Conclusion

While the cold war has been officially declared terminated, no one should rule out the possibility that it may break out again. Ominous developments in the Soviet Union help fuel such fear. Assuming that it is indeed over, what is the shape of the world order that is beginning to emerge?

There will be both continuity and change. Continuity will be found in the configuration of power and resource distribution. Power, measured in economic terms, will remain multipolar, while military power will continue to display bipolarity. Distribution of wealth will not change, with industrialized democracies enjoying its disproportionate share and a handful of newly industrializing economic systems (NIES) following closely behind them. What will change is the enhanced commitment to the rule of law; there will be an unprecedented amount of consensus among major powers regarding the importance of promoting respect for international law. Another notable change will be a sharp decline in the role of ideology in shaping policy, both internal and external. In international relations in particular, pragmatic considerations will emerge as the principal determinant of state behavior.

In Northeast Asia one can anticipate the establishment of "minimum order" in the sense of "minimizing unauthorized violence and other coercion." In order for that to happen, North Korea, which in the past has been the single most important source of disorder in the region, will have to exercise restraint in its policy toward South Korea. A multiplicity of factors points to the likelihood that may indeed be the case.

Much more elusive, however, is "optimum order" in the sense of maximizing the production and distribution of such key values as human dignity, justice, development, human rights, and quality of life. Even the most democratized countries of the region fall short of meeting its requirements. At the level of the region as a whole, optimum order remains even more distant, perhaps unattainable.

If minimum order is firmly established in Northeast Asia, that will be a signal accomplishment indeed. And the prognosis is reasonably good for that to happen. In a word, the prospects seem much better for minimum regional order than for minimum world order in the post-cold war era.