

## **Culture Differences in Regional Cooperation of Northeast Asia under the "Belt and Road" Initiative**

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**Abstract:** As the three major economies in regional cooperation in Northeast Asia, China, Japan and Korea are the key to humanistic exchanges and cultural exchanges. They are also an important guarantee for expanding cooperation in the political and economic fields and building a community of human destiny. This paper analyzes the problems existing in regional cooperation in Northeast Asia from a humanistic perspective, avoids cultural conflicts, promotes multicultural identity and cognition, enhances humanities and mutual trust in regional cooperation, and provides humanistic support for deepening political and economic cooperation between China, Japan and Korea.

With the construction of the "Belt and Road" initiative, China's international economic influence has been continuously improved, and it has the basic conditions for cooperation with neighboring countries to achieve mutually beneficial and win-win development. China's economy is the most important source of economic growth in Asia. China's role as an "advocate" and "leader" in regional cooperation and development has also become increasingly prominent. However, compared with the positive role played by ASEAN in regional cooperation, the bilateral or multilateral cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea has not been effective in promoting regional development. There are still many problems in regional cooperation and development in Northeast Asia.

### **1. 1. Problems in the regional cooperation of Northeast Asia under the "Belt and Road" initiative**

#### **1.1 There is a big difference between social system and ideology**

China is an emerging economy that adheres to the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. Japan and South Korea, as capitalist countries that have long maintained "alliance relations" with the United States, will have a positive interaction with China's bilateral relations. Although the confrontation between the different camps has eased after the end of the Cold War, it has not completely eliminated the alert. The different social systems of China, Japan and Korea determine the ideological differences, and this difference is embodied in all aspects of the legal system, ethics, religious beliefs, value orientation and other social aspects, which in turn affects economic activities. For example, some of Japan's domestic forces have rendered the so-called "China threat theory" and the Japanese government's negative attitude towards the AIIB and its derogatory behavior, which is an unbalanced mentality and negative sentiment about China's strength. As an American ally in Asia, South Korea has long stood under the umbrella of the United States. It is more reliant and intimate to the United States, both in terms of ideology and emotional psychology. On the other hand, as an extraterritorial influence factor, the United States' trade protectionism is sometimes draped in nationalist skirts, based on patriotism and interpreting policy behaviors in order to seek ideas and psychological identity. Therefore, reducing the negative impacts between China, Japan and Korea due to differences in social systems and ideologies, deepening perceptual and rational

understanding through humanities exchanges, and promoting the integration of diverse cultures is an important part of promoting regional cooperation.

### **1.2 Lack of political mutual trust, territorial and security disputes in the region**

In Northeast Asia, the attitudes of various economies to China's economic development and the "Belt and Road Initiative" also have their own characteristics. South Korea develops economic relations with various economies with a positive attitude and conducts bilateral or multilateral cooperation with countries along the "Belt and Road". For example, the "New South, New North" policy proposed by South Korean President Wen Biaozen has many similarities with the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. Southeast Asia and the European economic circle are also important targets for Korea's foreign cooperation and development. Although Japan is the most developed economy in Asia, the complicated historical origins and political disputes between China and South Korea determine that it cannot occupy a dominant political position in the region. China's economic development and international status are also invisible. It has created competitive pressure on Japan.

In Northeast Asia, there are unresolved issues such as the issue of the Diaoyu Islands in China, the affiliation of the Sino-Korean Suyan reef, the issue of Japan and South Korea, the dispute over the maritime rights between China and Japan, and the legacy of the Second World War. Although the current situation on the Korean Peninsula is developing well, there are still uncertainties in the future. The weak foundation of trust between the economies in Northeast Asia cannot withstand the test of sudden conflicts and is also vulnerable to extraterritorial factors. Once the current cooperation mechanism is cracked, the length of the recovery period is difficult to control.

### **1.3 The economic development gap is obvious and the industry competition is fierce**

China, Japan and Korea have strong complementarities in economic cooperation. Compared with Japan and South Korea, China has obvious advantages in the production and sales of labor-intensive products. In contrast, Japan and South Korea have developed rapidly in the fields of energy conservation, environmental protection and social welfare in recent years. On the other hand, although China, Japan and South Korea are the three major economies in East Asia and belong to the Confucian cultural circle, their economic development levels are quite different, and the obvious economic development gap will also lead to disputes in regional cooperation.

Although the industrial division and trade structure of China, Japan and South Korea still have the characteristics of "vertical complementary", with the economic transformation and upgrading of China, the pressure of "horizontal competition" between China, Japan and Korea is gradually strengthening. Undoubtedly, there are economic differences, historical contradictions and cultural conflicts in Northeast Asia, but at the same time, they are also accompanied by opportunities for cooperation and development. Forming an institutional integration and cooperation framework is an inevitable need for regional development. In October 2003, the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea signed the "Joint Declaration on Promoting Tripartite Cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea" in Bali, Indonesia, officially launching a dialogue and consultation mechanism for the signing of relevant issues. With the gradual advancement of China-Japan-Korea FTA negotiations and the official signing of FTA in 2015, the cooperation between the parties in Northeast Asia is growing. This cooperation cannot be confined to traditional areas of cooperation such as politics, economy and diplomacy. The exchange and recognition of the humanities environment is also urgent.

## **2. Cultural differences and identification in the regional cooperation in Northeast Asia under the "Belt and Road" initiative**

As mentioned above, in the complex and volatile situation and state relations in Northeast Asia,

differences in political and economic fields, as well as differences in social systems and ideologies, will have a negative impact on deep-level cooperation at the regional level. As an objective reflection of political and economic relations, cultural factors have a counter-effect on the development of state relations and the establishment of cooperation mechanisms. In turn, narrowing cultural differences and enhancing cultural identity have become a guarantee for reducing cultural conflicts and building political mutual trust in Northeast Asia.

## **2.1 Recognizing differences in cultural differences and developing diversity cooperation**

The three countries of China, Japan and Korea, which are also the cultural circles of East Asian Chinese characters, have their own national cultural characteristics and cultural commonalities formed in cultural inheritance. In the long history and culture development, due to the differences in the state, the nation, and the ideology, and the changes in living conditions, social systems, and humanities, different value orientations and cultural differences are inevitably formed. Regional cooperation requires the commonality among economies as the basis for dialogue and consultation, but more importantly, respect and recognize the diversity of development in different economies. For example, although China, Japan and Korea are influenced by Confucianism, they have their own emphasis on “benevolence”, “righteousness” and “loyalty”. Although the three parties have different religious beliefs, language culture and economic development level, they share common. Have a strong willingness to integrate. To promote regional economic cooperation in Northeast Asia, it is not necessary to exclude differences and differences between economies. Instead, the differences in production factors and the complementary of synergy should be closely combined to form a multi-model industrial and technical cooperation network to improve each other. The consultation and coordination mechanism with complementary advantages will carry out regional and sub-regional cooperation and expand the economic benefits of regional economic integration development.

## **2.2 Enhancing the cohesiveness of collectivism and strengthening the community consciousness of destiny**

Although there are still many problems and obstacles in regional economic cooperation in Northeast Asia, the three countries of China, Japan and Korea all have a strong sense of collectivism, which is the most basic element that promotes the mechanism of integration and cooperation, and is also the greatest advantage of the spiritual level. There are imbalances in development among the economies in Northeast Asia, and even the instability of the Korean Peninsula has not been eliminated. This is an obstacle that cannot be circumvented during the development of regional economic integration. However, the economies of Northeast Asia region not only have a strong sense of collectivism, but also have strong self-discipline. This cultural characteristic has injected more cohesiveness and anti-risk ability into regional cooperation. With the gradual achievements of China, Japan and Korea FTA, the cooperation between the economies in Northeast Asia is also more criss-crossed and closely linked. Regional cooperation opportunities and risks coexist. Unresolved historical issues, peninsula problems, regional development imbalances, ethnic conflicts, and border conflicts in the region will not only weaken the ability to jointly resist external risks, but also shake the foundation of regional cooperation. Therefore, as the key to promoting regional integration in Northeast Asia, all parties should open more “two micro-ends” to communicate new channels and non-governmental dialogue channels to enhance mutual understanding and be driven by common political, economic and security interests. We will strengthen the community of destiny and deepen political mutual trust and promote economic cooperation through close ideology.

### **2.3 Promoting language and cultural exchanges and promoting multicultural integration**

China is the largest economy in East Asia and a country with diverse ethnic coexistence and diverse cultural development. In addition to the most populous Han nationality, China also includes 55 ethnic minorities including Korean, Mongolian, Manchu, Uyghur and Miao. The multi-dimensional coexistence of the nation determines the diversified development of culture and is also conducive to the mutual influence and integration of cultures in adjacent areas. For example, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China is adjacent to Mongolia and Russia. The similar humanities, geography and climatic environment are not only conducive to narrowing the cultural differences between each other, seeking more benefit sharing, but also promoting the construction of the Sino-Mongolian-Russian Economic Corridor. And enjoy an absolute advantage in the development process of promoting cooperation and win-win. For example, the Koreans in Northeast China are closely related to the Korean and Korean countries in terms of historical origins and traditional customs. While forming the cultural diversity of ethnic minority areas, they also inherit the cultural commonalities across regions. The concept of economic globalization and shared development has brought the links between regions and countries closer. With the increase of cross-border exchanges and cross-border marriages, the number of multicultural families has also increased to varying degrees in various regions and countries. In March 2017, the Korean Ministry of Justice revised part of the "Multicultural Family Support Law" and established a multicultural support center under the Women's Family Department to provide educational support, human rights protection, health care, language communication and other services for multicultural families. Multicultural families are the microcosm of multicultural integration, which is conducive to the integration of different cultures. As of the end of 2017, South Korea has established a total of 144 Sejong schools in 57 countries and regions around the world. Among them, Asia is the region with the largest number of Sejong schools, and 89 schools have been established in 23 countries. By the end of 2016, China had established 513 Confucius Institutes and 1,073 Confucius Institutes in 140 countries and regions around the world to promote national languages and spread national culture. The communication of language and culture between regions is an important channel to narrow cultural differences and promote cultural integration, and it is also the most direct and effective way to enhance the feelings and identity between ethnic groups. Diversified and multi-channel cultural exchanges are the need for humanities interconnection in East Asia and a necessary condition for promoting regional economic cooperation.

### **3. Conclusion**

In summary, there are indeed differences in national culture between China, Japan and Korea, but at the same time there is also a profound basis for cultural identity. Under the guidance of the concept of "One Belt and One Road" to build a community of human destiny, rationally avoiding contradictions and conflicts caused by cultural differences, enhancing mutual understanding in the humanities field, enhancing cultural identity, and forming an open and efficient multilateral cooperation mechanism is driving the Northeast Asian regional economy. It also is humanistic foundation for cooperation and diversified development.

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