

# **GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE YELLOW-SEA REGIME**

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### Certificate

Certified that the dissertation entitled **Geopolitical Perspectives on the Yellow-Sea Regime** submitted by **Mahua Sarkar** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

• We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*Mahua Sarkar*

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*Introduction*

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Northeast Asia, which embraces three semi-enclosed seas of the Pacific Ocean (i.e., the Yellow and the East China Seas, and the Sea of Japan), contain probably the most deeply divided regional pattern of state relations in the world. In addition to historic enmities, there are cleavages between the countries with different political and economic systems, as well as competition between the two divided states of Korea, China and Japan.

However, a new era is dawning in the region. In economic terms, and to a growing extent in political aspect, the Northeast Asia region has become a major theatre of East-West interaction. The Yellow Sea, which occupies the centre of Northeast Asia, is fast becoming an area of increasing international attention and activity.

There are many obvious reasons why the Yellow Sea region will assume an increasingly important position. It is surrounded by the Korean Peninsula on the east, the Chinese land-mass on the west, the East China Sea on the south, and has Japan as a neighbouring littoral nation. It is the homeland of some of the world's oldest and most complex civilizations, and of more than one-fourth of the human race. It is also the locale where some of the major political and economic developments have taken place in the recent years; where problems of political, economic, and

social development, of demographic and ecological challenge, and of the reconciliation of tradition and modernity - in other words, the problems that constitute the present world problematique - have seized gigantic proportions. It is also a region where some of the most innovative and future-oriented contemporary ideas and inventions have germinated and been applied.

There are some important changes taking place in the Yellow Sea regime. First, and foremost, the region is steadily becoming the most important zone of the world. It has the highest growth rates in Japan, China and South Korea among others, and leads the rest of the world in technological innovation. The region has two of the four main power centres of the world - China and Japan actually facing each other across the Yellow Sea. Being a region of rapid population growth, it has the potential for extensive economic and social development. Moreover, the sea begins to play an even bigger role in the life of the littoral states, not only in its traditional role as a medium of communication and source of food, but also as a source of energy and raw materials.

The political environment too has changed for the better, with major developments in the international scene. With the disintegration of USSR into CIS, countries in the

Yellow Sea are redefining their relationship with their neighbours and other powers. The impressive economic growth of Japan, Korea and China has opened new spheres of interaction and cooperation among these countries. China and Korea also begun to reassess the importance of the Yellow Sea. We also find that the geo-strategic location of the region becomes a decisive factor for the interaction and cooperation among the states, inspite of the socio-political difference in the region.

This study will thus examine the growing importance of the sea in the rapid economic development of the coastal states and how the issues related to the Yellow Sea effect the inter-state relations and vice-versa. It will also examine the increasing importance of the region in terms of the economic, domestic and foreign policies of the coastal states and how they conduct their international relations at a regional and global level.

It remains to be seen, whether the politically differing philosophy and ideology of the nations surrounding the Yellow Sea will act as a deterrent for a proper regime building or whether these nations be able to transcend beyond these cleavages and act collectively in the emerging economic environment.



This introductory note is followed by a brief discussion of the physical social and demographic characteristics of the region.

The second chapter examines the economic policies and the economic development in the recent years, as well as the domestic political currents within the major powers of the regime, the de-emphasis on ideology, the de-emphasis of force as a means of conduct of foreign affairs and the emphasis on revamping the domestic situation by fundamental restructuring of their respective economies.

Chapter III studies the impact of the new emerging law of the sea on the Yellow Sea regime, especially those aspects of the law of sea and maritime jurisdictional claims that effect the trade and commerce and freedom of navigation in general. It also discusses some important legal and political issues which may arise due to the geographic and political complexities in the region.

Chapter IV studies the strategic importance of the Yellow Sea regime and the impact of the external influence on the regional political climate, as well as the emerging regional threats to the peace and stability in the region.

The concluding chapter looks into the prospects for cooperation among the Yellow Sea States especially the

economic cooperation and the formation of a Yellow Sea Economic Sphere (Huanghai Sea Economic Sphere) within the broader framework of APEC. It also highlights the long-term trends in the political-economic relations in the region and the prospects for emergence of the Yellow Sea regime as one of the most important regions of the world in the future.

*Yellow Sea Regime: The Geographical Setting*

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## 1.1 Physical Geography of the Yellow Sea

Yellow Sea is an epicontinental sea, about 500,000 km<sup>2</sup> in area, characterised by a flat, broad, and featureless sea-floor with water depth less than 100m. Yet it is not a typical semi-enclosed sea, being completely open to the East China Sea to the south with which it has only an arbitrarily established boundary following a line running from Saishu Island off the south coast of the Republic of Korea to the mouth of the Yangtze River near Shanghai.<sup>1</sup> The dimensions of the Yellow Sea, according to this admitted by arbitrary delineation, are approximately 1,000 km. in a north-south direction and 700 km. east to west.

Included within the Yellow Sea is the Bo Hai, a prominent gulf in the northwestern corner of the sea. A line connecting the Liaodung and Shantung peninsulas separates the Bo Hai from the Yellow Sea proper. The Korea Bay lies east of the Bo Hai, between the Liaodung Peninsula and the coast of North Korea.

The Yellow Sea is notoriously shallow, a consequence of the sediment brought into the region by the outflow of the

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1. See International Hydrographic Bureau Special Publication 23 (Monaco, 1953).

Yellow, Liao, White, Yangtze and Yalu rivers. Although the shallow water and sandy and muddy bottoms shelving gently toward the coasts are not conducive to the formation of good harbours, rising sea-levels in the Pleistocene have resulted in drowned western shores of the Yellow Sea and the Bo Hai, particularly surrounding the old, mountainous Shantung and Liaodung Peninsulas. The bays that have formed sometimes make ideal harbours and anchorage. Qingdao, Yantai, and Lushan are examples of some which have developed into ports.<sup>2</sup>

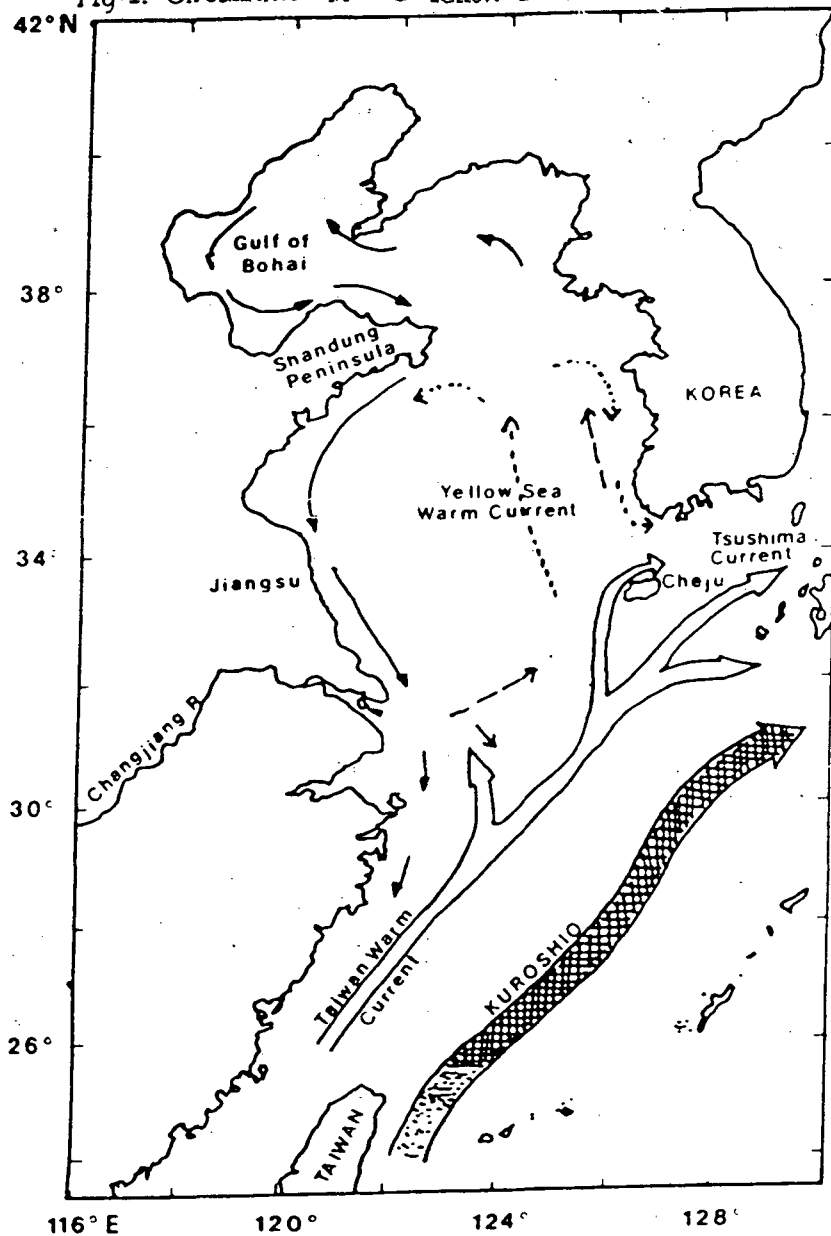
The Yellow Sea is largely affected by the monsoon. In winter, the dry, cold arctic continental airmass blows from the north/north west and cools the water. This wind is relatively persistent with average speed of 8-9 m/sec. In summer, the sea is under the influence of a warm moist maritime tropical airmass. Gales and strong winds associated with typhoons, sometime prevail. The annual range of air temperature exceeds 25 degrees C. The southern part is influenced by a warm current (the Yellow Sea Current).

The major components of the water masses of the Yellow Sea are coastal fresh water (from the numerous rivers), the Kuroshio-origin warm, saline water and the Yellow Sea proper

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2. Rhodes W. Fairbridge, ed., The Encyclopedia of Oceanography (New York, 1966), p.995.

Fig. 1. Circulation in the Yellow Sea.



water. Due to the large river discharge along the Chinese coast in summer, low salinity coastal waters develop in this area. These waters generally flow southward and thrust offshore near the Changjiang estuary. Further offshore, these waters mix with the nearly passing Taiwan Warm Current water and are transported towards the Korea Strait.

The circulation of the Yellow Sea is generally weak and not yet clearly defined. Over the outer continental shelf, the Kuroshio current flows northeastward and has a maximum transport in summer. Inshore of the Kuroshio, a warm, saline current called the Taiwan Warm Current flows parallel to the Kuroshio, but unlike the latter which flows offshore to the south of Japan, the former flows into the Japan Sea through the Korea Strait between Korea and Japan. The semi-enclosed Bo Hai, north of the Yellow Sea, is characterised by northward inflow of saline water along the Korean coast and outflow of less saline water along the coast of Shandong peninsula. (see figure).

## **1.2 Geographical Background of the Littoral Nations Comprising the Yellow Sea Regime**

The Yellow Sea Regime comprises of the east-Asian sub-continent and peninsula, along with the islands of Japan. The littoral nations namely, China, North Korea and South Korea around the Yellow Sea to form a cul-de-sac. Japan has

been included in the present study as it has a very important role to play in the economic-political-legal issues of North-east Asia.

**China:** China is situated by the shores of the western Pacific overshadowing the remainder of East Asia. It is surrounded by the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and the South China Sea, in the east and the south. Stretching for about 2000 miles from north to south, between the cold, inhospitable Siberian forests and the lush, tropical lands of south-east Asia; and over 3000 miles from east to west, between the mountains and deserts of Central Asia to the Pacific coasts, it occupies over 3.5 million square miles and second largest country in the world.

China's land boundaries are officially given as 20,000 kms. long, shared by twelve other countries namely Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, India, Laos, the Mongolian People's Republic, Nepal, North Korea, Vietnam, Pakistan, Sikkim and Russia. Though several vital border points are either disputed or undelimited, frontier issues are most serious along the Sino-Russian and Sino-Indian borders. Between North Korea and Vietnam, the great curve of the China coast, 8700 miles long, faces eastwards across the yellow, East China and South China Seas towards the Pacific. Territorial waters claimed by China include much of the



South China Sea as far as latitude 4° N., and are studded by over 5,000 islands, including islands of Hainan and Taiwan. Taiwan is regarded by the Chinese government as part of the territory, although under the de facto control of Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>3</sup>

Altogether there are twenty-one provinces (excluding Taiwan), five autonomous regions, and three provincial-level municipalities, Tientsin, Peking and Shanghai, China has a total population of 1119.69 million (UN, 1989 census).

**Relief:** Relief is important in delimiting suitable areas for settlement and economic development. China has been compared to a 'three-section staircase', generally high in the west and relatively low in the east.<sup>4</sup> The highest region is in the south-west of the country, where most of the Xingai-Tibet plateau is above 13,000 feet in height. The second flight lies to the north beyond the Kunlun and Chilian ranges and to the east beyond the Chiunglai and Taliang mountains comprising of a number of plateaux and basins between 6,600 m and 3,300 feet above sea-level. This second zone follows an arc eastwards from the Tarim Basin in

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3. W. Gordon East and O.H.K. Spate, eds., Changing map of Asia: A Political Geography. (London, 1971), pp.354-5.
  4. See Jen Yu-ti, A Concise Geography of China, (Peking, 1964), p.12

Sinkiang, across the Szechwan Basin and the Yunnan-Kweichow plateau in the south-west. Much of the land in the third flight of steps, is located in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze, the North China plain, and the North-east plain, lies below 1,600 ft.

About one-third of China's surface is made of highlands. Longitude 103° E marks a major divide between the higher attitudes and steeper slopes to the west and the lower, less severe land to the east. 26% of the largest are the Chinghai - Tibet, Inner Mongolian Loess, and Yunnan-Kweichow plateaux. The yellow earth of the loess, and the limestone hills of Yunnan, Kweichow, and Kwangsi, represent some of the most distinctively Chinese. Another 10% of Chinese surface is classified as hill country, and is found mainly in Fuken, Chekiang, Kiangsi, Hunan, Shantung, and Liaoning. A further 20% is occupied by basins; here there is a marked contrast between the arid and semi-arid Tarim, Dzungarian and Tsaidam basins and the immensely fertile Red basin of Szechwan. The remaining 12% of China's land area is made of plains, which are economically the most significant landform zones; the three largest plains, each covering approximately 116,000 sq miles, are the North China plain, the Middle and Lower Yangtze plain, and the North-east plain. The North China plain saw the birth and first

flowering of Chinese civilization, and the North east plain, the most recent major expansion of Chinese population.<sup>5</sup>

Threading their way across the mosaic of landforms are China's great rivers, life-giving and yet destructive frequently. The most famous rivers are Hwang-ho (yellow), 3000 miles long with a drainage basin of 300,000 sq. miles; the 3,600 miles long Yangtze, with a drainage basin of about 700,000 sq. miles. and Sikiang. They provide China with a magnificent arterial highway along the main stream, which has made possible the growth and consolidation of so vast a cultural and political entity.

**Climate:** While the monsoonal reversal of winds gives an element of unity to the climate of most of China proper, the temperature regimes range from cold continental in the far north-east to tropical maritime in the deep south. Nevertheless, throughout China January is normally the coldest month and July the hottest. The seasonal regime varies considerably, for while some parts of China remain snow-covered others enjoy perpetual spring'. Summer lasts for between five and eight months in Kwantung, Kwangsi and Fukien, contrasting with the prolonged winter over much of the Chinghai-Tibet plateau and Heilungkiang.

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5. Ibid., pp.14-20

The higher summer temperatures are accompanied by the rainy season brought by the on - shore monsoon winds. 'In the coastal China, a plentiful rainfall is taken for granted. In the winter, hinterland rain and snow are regarded as something rare and precious'.<sup>6</sup> This tendency for rainfall to decrease from south - east to north - west is a fundamental feature of China's climate. As in India, the summer monsoon is vital to the country's livelihood. Any variation in the amount of precipitation from the normal results in serious consequences.

While climate is obviously a major element in helping to delineate the most suitable areas for agriculture, soils are also important. The main agricultural soils of China are the chernozems, brown soils, red loams, saline - alkaline soils and rice paddy soils. The black earths are found mostly in the northern North - east plain; the brown soils in the North China plain, where dearth of alluvium is most evident; the red loams in hilly parts to the east of Chinghai - Tibet plateau and South of the Chinling mountains and Huai river; the saline - alkaline soils in central and southern China, in the mildly and lower Yangtze plain, the Swechwan basin, and the Canton delta.

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6. Ibid., p.26.

**Demographic Characteristics:** An appreciation of the major characteristics of China's vast population, according to the UN 1989, Demographic yearbook, 1.119 billion or 1.1 billion is vital to an understanding of almost every aspect of the contemporary Chinese scene. This is true too of the more recent demographic history, from the mid - eighteenth century, since when there has been a marked growth in the size of population and constant pressure on the 'carrying capacity' of the Chinese realm.

China possesses between one - fifth and a quarter of the total population of the world. Though it covers an area of 9,597,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the majority of the population lives in the monsoon country east of the mountain barrier of central Asia. Over 90% of China's inhabitants are crowded within this area. The most densely settled regions are the central parts of North China plain, the Yangtze delta, the coastal zone between Yangtze and Sikiang, the mild Yangtze basin around Weihsien, and the Red basin of Szechwan. There is extreme population congestion in certain eastern provinces, with densities of up to 5,000 per square km in the lower Yangtze. In China's periphery, densities fall below 45 per square km and large tracts are uninhabited, as in much of Tibet, Qinghai, Kinjiang, Nei Nenggu (Inner Mongolia) as well parts of Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu (Kansu) Heilungjian and Jilin.

The average population density stands at about 116.6 per km<sup>2</sup> is comparatively low, and at first appears that with an area as large as 9,597,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the population could very easily accommodate itself. Yet only 12% of China's surface area is cultivated, with an additional 12% classified as reclaimable waste - land. About 10% is in forests and roughly 28% is pasture land. This leaves as much as 40% of total area unclassified, and therefore presumably mostly of little use other than in the strategic context, or for isolated mineral extraction.<sup>7</sup> Thus these land utilization figures help to explain the acute concentration of the Chinese population in the more fertile areas.

Modern life had led to a greater increase in the urban population. In 1947, the figure was 12% of the total population, and in 1980, the urban population stood at 13% of the total population with an annual growth rate 3.1%. There are as many as fifteen 'million' cities, over fifty cities with over half a million inhabitants, beside a hundred towns with population between 1,00,000 and 5,00,000 inhabitants.

Cities with population above 10 million include Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjian, located on the North east

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8. W.G. East and O.H.K. Spate, no.3.

and near the Yellow Sea coast. Other cities in the Yellow Sea hinterland with population ranging between 1.5 million and 5 million are Shenyang, Harbin, Luda, Taiyuan, Wuhan, Fushan Jinan and Nanjing. Other 'million' cities of central and south China are Chengdu, Chongqing, Canton, Xi'an and Lanchow.

**Korea:** Korea is an peninsula thrusting from the north - east section of the Asian continent in the south - easterly direction for about 1,000 Km. The Korean peninsula, irregular in shape is elongated in the north - south direction and separates the Yellow Sea from the Sea of Japan, and lies between 124°E and 132°E and 33°N and 43°N.

The land boundary to the north is largely formed by the two rivers, the Amnok - Kang (called Yalu in Chinese) and Tuman-gang (called Tumen in Chinese) which flow between China and Korea. the Yalu flows southwest and empties into the Yellow Sea and the Tumen flows north-east into the Japan Sea.

The peninsula, contiguous to the two continental powers of China and Russia and adjacent to oceanic Japan, has acted for long as a land bridge through which continental culture was transmitted to Japan.

The area of the peninsula is 221,487 Km<sup>2</sup> and divided

into two parts - the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North). The administrative area of RoK is 99,117 Km<sup>2</sup> or about 55% of the peninsula.

**Relief:** Korea is geomorphologically characterized by hills and mountains which occupy nearly 70% of its territory. On the whole, the western and southern slopes of the peninsula are very gentle with numerous plains, low hills and basins developed along the rivers, whereas the eastern coast is steep with high mountains. The T'aebaeksan Mountains run nearly parallel to the Nangnimsan Mountains. The two mountain ranges have been a great barrier to communications between the eastern and the western side of the peninsula since early times.

Smaller systems of mountains, originating in the Nangnimsan and T'aebaeksan ranges, run parallel to each other in a north east - south west direction. They are, from north, the Kangnamsan, the Choyusan, the Myohyangsan and the Myoraksan mountains, all of which are located in North Korea. The Namgyoungsan in North Korea and several others, including the Sobaeksan in South Korea, also have their roots in the two main ranges and run in a north - east - southwest direction.<sup>8</sup>

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8. A Handbook of Korea (Seoul, 1988), p.16.



Most of the peninsula is otherwise characterized by low hills showing mature development, having an erosional lowland in its earlier state, before upliftment took place. the so called "roof of Korea", the Kaena Plateau, has an average elevation of about 1,500 m above sea level, and Mt. Paektusan, the highest mountain has an altitude of 2,744 m above sea level.

Most of the major rivers flow into the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea after draining the western and southern slopes of the peninsula. Considering the size of its territory, Korea has a relatively large number of streams. Six rivers exceed 400 Ks. in channel length - the Amnok - Kang (790 Km.), the Tumangang (521 Kms), the Hanggang (541 Km) the Kungang (401 Kms.) and Naktonggang (521 Kms.). The first two rivers constitute the international boundaries with China and Russia and flows into the yellow and Japan seas respectively. The Naktonggan flows in the East China Sea in the south and rest into the Yellow Sea. Their flow discharges fluctuate from season to season due to their dependence on summer monsoons for water. The gradient of longitudinal river beds is mostly very low in the lower reaches of the major streams, permitting navigation for quite a long distance from river mouths. Accordingly the rivers have played a significant role in life - styles since early times. It is not able that most of the historical

capital cities such as Seoul, P'yongyang, and Pugo developed along major rivers as port cities.

There are about 3,000 islands off the coast of Korea, most of them are of the southern and south western coasts. The total length of coastline is estimated at 17,300 km of which 8,700 kms. of it on the peninsular portion and 8,600 kms. of the islands.

The soil of the lowlands as well as the mountain areas is usually brownish, having been derived from granite and gneiss, with limestone and volcanic rocks in limited areas. Light brown and sandy acidic soils are common in the soils derived from granite, and clay brown to red soils are common in the granitic gneiss areas. In the areas of Kwangwon - do and northern Hwanghaedo provinces, limestone - originated red soils are found. In the northern mountains, pedzolic and ash - gray forest soils are found. Cultivated soils, especially paddy soils are artificial soils developed through plowing, irrigation and fertilizing over long periods, silt from irrigation water and occasional flooding of rivers has changed the soil composition in many areas to a uniform loam unrelated to the natural soils of the vicinity.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Ibid., p.18.

**Climate:** The Korean climate is influenced more by the continent than the ocean. It has a humid, East Asian monsoonal climate. the mean temperature during winter is generally below freezing. In summer, the mean temperature of the hottest month is above 25°C, except in the northern interiors.

Korea is located in the East Asian Monsoon belt. During the winter months, continental high pressure air masses develop over inland Siberia, from which strong northwesterly winds bring dry, cold air into Korea. The winter monsoon, usually stronger than the summer one, causes much hardship during winter.

The summer monsoon brings abundant moisture from the ocean, and produces heavy rainfall. Precipitation is therefore heavily concentrated in summer. About 70% of the annual rainfall comes during June through September. Annual precipitation varies from 500 mm in the northeastern inland areas to 1,400 mm along the southern coast.

There are two types of cyclones which affect the climate of Korea. The first originates in the Yangtze Valley. It passes Korea usually in March and April, brings abundant rainfall which is very important for transplanting rice. The second, also known as typhoon, usually originates in the east Philippines, moves toward the north and around

Taiwan and shifts towards the Korean peninsula. Typhoons usually occur in July and August.

**Population:** In 1985, the Korean peninsula had a population of 60.6 million, of which South Korea had 41.0 million and rest (19.6 million) lived in North Korea.. This, South Korea has a higher density of population of 415 persons per Km<sup>2</sup> whereas North Korea had a density of 175 per km<sup>2</sup> only. As a whole, the population of South Korea increased rapidly after has reduced from 2.21% in 1970 to 1.25% in 1985. The sex - ratio of South Korea's was 101.7 males per 100 females.

Before World Was II, Koreans migrated to two major regions, Manchuria and Japan. It is estimated that about 6,00,000 Koreans remain in Japan. the most important migration in recent time is the north - south movement of people after 1945 and during the Korean War (1950-53). About 2 million people have migrated from North Korea to South Korea since 1945.

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The distributional pattern of the population proves that relief plays an important role in the settlement of koreans. The population density is greater along the coastal regions around the Yellow Sea and the south sea. The eastern coast has very low density of inhabitants due to the rugged terrain which is a deterrent to the food cultivation, industrial set - up and communication.

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Despite rapid industrialization after the World War II, Korea still has a large rural population, 42.7% in the 1980 census. As most of the rural population engages in agriculture, it is highly concentrated in the lowlands of the west and south coast along the major river valleys.

Since 1960 there has been an out-migration of rural population to the urban areas. The total urban population rose from 7 million to over 21 million, or from 28% to 57%.

The concentration of population has been especially great in Seoul, the capital of South Korea, and in Pusan, the largest port and industrial centres. The population of Seoul has increased from 2.5 million in 1960 to more than 10 million in 1985. Pusan has a population of about 4.5 million.<sup>10</sup>

The numbers of cities has increased form 12 in 1945 to 57 today. The four major metropolitan areas in South Korea are - Pusan, Taegu, Inchon and Kwangju. The capital of North Korea, Pyongyang has population of 3 million.

**Japan:** Japan consists of four main islands, Honshu (Main land), Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku and a large number of smaller islands of which Okinawa is one. Japan islands are

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10. Ibid., p.2.

separated from the continent by the Sea of Japan in the west, and by East China Sea from China and Pacific Ocean in its eastern coast. Apart from Korea, which is structurally an area of ancient folding a kin that of the adjacent parts of the continental mainland to which it belongs, the Japanese islands forms part of the vast circum-pacific zone of recent orogenesis. Within this zone the major outlines of relief are determined by a series of island arcs, notably the Kurile and Sakhalin arcs, which converge in Hokkaido (the northern most island of Japan); the great Honshu arc, dominating the main Japanese island, and sub-divided into north - eastern and south - west portion on the opposite sides of the Chubu node, which marks the junction with Bunin arc extending southwards to the Marianas; the Ryukyu arc, between Kyushu, and the southern most projection of the Honshu arc.<sup>11</sup>

The entire zone relief is predominantly mountainous, slopes are exceptionally steep, and level lowland is conspicuous by its scarcity.

Moreover, the tectonic youthfulness is reflected alike in the abundance of volcanoes and the high incidence of earthquakes, sometimes of devastating severity, and in the overall shortage of accessible mineral wealth.

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11. See Prue Dempster, Japan Advances, A Geographical Study (London, 1971), pp.1-20.

It is estimated that only a quarter of the surface of 37,765 Km<sup>2</sup> has a slope gentler than 1 in 7, although a sixth of the total area may be regarded as relatively flat and low-lying and such areas occur mostly in very small and scattered patches, separated one from another by massive steep and heavily forested ranges. In the absence of any extensive structural lowlands the typical Japanese plains occupy more or less isolated coastal indentations and consist of deltaic alluvial sediments, interrupted by 'diluvial' ridges and terraces, formed of older alluvium which, being severely breached, coarse in texture, and often underlain by very low water-table, are much inferior in agricultural potential to the younger alluvium. Such lowlands range in size from a square mile to less than 5000 square miles of the Kanto plain, in which Tokyo has grown up.

The climate of Japan is essentially between the warm temperature maritime in the northern limits of the Kanto plain, and the cool temperate in northern Honshu, to cold in Hokkaido; but remains distinctly maritime throughout.<sup>12</sup>

**Population and Urbanization:** Japan has a population of 123 million (1989) with a density of population of about 330 per

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12. See, Glenn T. Trewartha, Japan, A Geography (London, 1965), pp.39-44.

Km<sup>2</sup>. Japan also holds the distinction of having the world's largest city Tokyo (with a population above 15 million) as its capital. Most of the cities in Japan are million cities, since they are located on plains and valleys. There is a distinct concentration of population in the Kobe, Kyoto and Osaka region which exceeds 40 million.

A concentration of economic activity is found in its three main conurbations, Osaka - Kyoto - Kobe, Nagoya and Tokyo - Yokohama - Kawasaki. The other important cities are Sapporo, Fukuoka, Kitakyushu, Hiroshima and Yokohama. Tokyo, despite the mushrooming of Yokohama and Kawasaki in the vicinity shows a higher degree of primacy. Tokyo assumed and has subsequently retained a large part of the commercial role which formally belonged to Osaka, since the Occupation of Japanese islands.<sup>13</sup>

In this brief study, we find that the Yellow-Sea Regime which encompasses the Yellow Sea in the centre, and the littoral nations of China, Korea and Japan, surrounding it, has a geomorphological and climatic similarity, which is reflected in the mode of lifestyle, the occupation and cultures of the above mentioned countries. Thus, the factor of geographical location plays a vital role in giving the region a distinct identity.

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13. Ibid., p.155.



*Northeast Asia in Transition: Challenges for the  
Yellow Sea States*

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Northeast Asia, which embraces three semi-enclosed seas of the Pacific Ocean, contains probably the most deeply divided regional pattern of state relations in the world. In addition to historic enmities, there are cleavages between the countries with different political and economic systems, as well as the competition between the two divided states, Korea and China.

However, a new era is dawning in the region. In economic terms, and to a growing extent in political aspect, the North east Asian region has become a major theatre of East-West interaction. As the Pacific Basin becomes an area of increasing international attention and activity, it is natural that North east Asian countries will play an important role in the years ahead.

At a regional level, the international relations of Northeast Asia - of which the Yellow Sea regime or part- has undergone a series of changes earmarked by the 'break-up of the former USSR, China's efforts to open its economy by adopting sweeping reforms and its desire to seek improved ties with the Koreas, and Japan's quest for an independent international role. Thus, the major characteristics of the recent changes in the power configuration of Northeast Asia include the changing domestic political currents within the major powers of the regime, the de-emphasis on ideology, the

de-emphasis of force as a means of conduct of foreign affairs and emphasis on revamping the domestic situation by fundamental restructuring of their respective economics.

An attempt has been made, to understand and analyse the growth of importance of Northeast Asian region in terms of the politico-economic conditions as existing in the region today. This will also reflect the growing importance of the Yellow Sea Regime and the development of the economies and regional power syndrome in the Yellow Sea region.

### **2.1 Korean Economic Policy and Interests in the Yellow Sea**

The Korean peninsula has a long and varied coastline. The east coast is relatively straight and rocky, with a tidal range of only one or two feet but is characterised by relatively poor condition for port development. The west coast is low and deeply indented with long stretches of mud flats. Here the tidal range of more than 17 feet makes it almost impossible for deep and natural harbour facilities, resulting in low priority of build-up for industrial establishment, as compared to the south-east coastline.<sup>1</sup>

The south and west coasts are fringed with more than 3,300 islands, of which about 600 are inhabited. The largest

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1. A Handbook of Korea (Seoul, 1988), p.16.

islands of Korean West coast are Cheju, Kangwha and Chindo. The west coast has one of the most favourable site for reclamation which is actively taking place for agricultural and industrial purposes. In addition, to the potential for land reclamation, the west coast has well-developed continental shelf extending to the Chinese coastline. Thus, 40 percent of the total area of continental shelf in Korea and fishery resources including high-value shell fishes and edible seaweed are abundant, becoming the in source of income for the fishing villages along the west coastline.

The Korean west coastal region has, however, remained as one of the most depressed regions and lost relative and absolute population, especially since 1949 when maritime and trading activities with mainland China decreased. Historically, ties between the west coast of Korea and the east coast of China had been very strong in terms of trade and maritime transportation before 1949. As Korea and China begin to open mutual exchange on economic co-operation, even though not fully normalized, the two countries have strengthened trading partnership by total volume of 10 billion dollars in 1992, making China, South Korea's third largest trading partner after U.S. and Japan.<sup>2</sup>

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2. Figure given by Roh Jal-won, South Korean representative to Beijing. See Korea Herald, March 4, 1992, pp.1, 11.

Since the mid 1980's, Korea has established a program of West Coast Development under the popular heading of "The Era of West Coast", and appears to be based on both internal and external reasons. The internal one is to booster more balanced regional development for the west coast region which has chronically suffered poor accessibility to the development corridor from Seoul to Pusan and economic stagnation of agriculture and fishery, and set aside from the mainstream of remarkable economic development during the past two decades largely due to the aforementioned inferior natural condition for port development and water resources. The external factor is primarily concerned with Korea's response to expanding Chinese linkages in terms of trade and resource development and also to face to the coming era of Pan-Pacific and North-east Asian countries.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Economic Development in South Korea**

Koreas remarkable economic growth is the envy of much of the developing world. The country's per capita GNP was barely \$200 in 1962, but is now more than \$4000. Its exports - worth \$ 52 million in 1962, the year the export drive

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3. Sang-Chuel Choe, "Korean Economic Policy and the Coastal Zone Management of the Yellow Sea", in Choon-ho Park, Dalchoong Kim, Seo-Hang Lee eds, The Regime of the Yellow Sea - Issues and Policy Options for Co-operation in the Changing Environment (Seoul, 1990), p.85.

began, passed \$ 1 billion in 1970 and \$50 billion in 1988. More than 95 per cent of the exports in 1988 were manufactured goods, roughly a sixth of the manufactured goods, roughly a sixth of the manufactured exports by developing countries. Korea ranked 11th largest trading country in the world with a total trade volume of 153 billion US dollar in 1991, accounting for 2.1% of the world trade. Traditional and labor-intensive export products such as wigs, plywood, footwear, textiles and apparel have led the way. But by the mid 1970s, Korean exporters had diversified their markets and Japan and United States took more than 70 percent of Korea's exports. In 1980, their share came down to 44 percent, as Korea broke into new markets in Europe, middle East and the rest of the developing countries.

Apart from goods, Korea exports services, in the form of construction and engineering workers as well, especially to the Middle east which provides the most important source of construction contracts, and southeast Asia also accounting for a significant number of projects. This began generating invisible trade surpluses towards the end of the 1970s, but the economic slump in the oil-producing world drastically cut revenues and new contracts orders during the 1980s, as a result of which Koreas invisible trade balance

has fallen back into the red, just as the nation's visible trade balance has improved.<sup>4</sup>

Because of Korea's poor resource endowment, crude oil and raw materials make up well over half of its total imports. Other major import items include transportation equipment, particularly ships for repair and aircraft, machinery, and electric and electronic products.

Japan is Korea's most important supplier of imports, particularly of manufactured goods, in 1985, Japanese goods made up 24.1 percent of Korea's imports. The geographical proximity of Japan has always its producers an advantage in sales, delivery and service in the Korean market.<sup>5</sup> The United States supplier both raw materials and sophisticated capital goods to Korea, and it held a 20.9 percent share of the Korean market in 1985.

Of course, Korea's dynamic growth and promising outlook does not mean that the nation has overcome all its problems. In the 1990s, the Korean economy shows many signs of structural limitations, as evidenced by the \$13 billion trade deficit in 1992. Several factors contribute to the problems. First, three years of trade surpluses (1986-89)

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4. A Handbook of Korea, no.1, p.358.

5. Ibid.

Fig. 2. IMPORTS FROM JAPAN AND NORTH KOREA TO CHINA

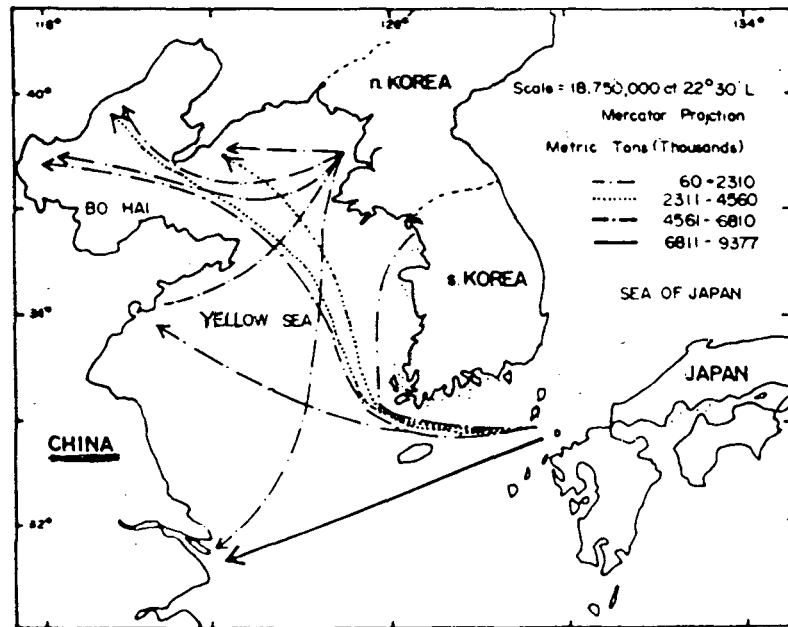
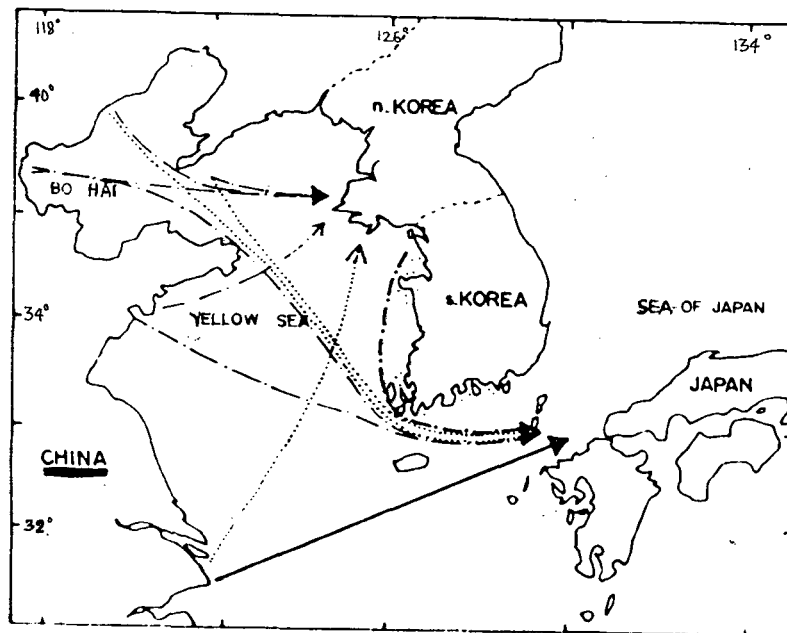


Fig. 3. EXPORTS TO JAPAN AND NORTH KOREA FROM CHINA





weakened the incentive to make the adjustment to more knowledge intensive from labour-intensive industry. Second, many of the economic woes are due to sharply rising wages in relation to productivity. Between 1988 and 1990, wages for south Korean workers increased about 23 percent more than their productivity. Third, sky rocketing land prices pushed up production costs while encouraging speculation.<sup>6</sup>

Another pressing concerns is the imbalance in regional development. As mentioned earlier, the south and western coasts along the Yellow Sea, have remained underdeveloped for long. On the contrary, the central and eastern region especially, around Seoul, has drawn disproportionate share of jobs, investment and decision-making power due to economic over concentration.

Unprecedented rates of high economic growth have been thus, accompanied by sectorial and regional imbalances. Recognising the importance of regional balance, the Korean government is now paying serious attention to regional development and non-spatial integration in its Sixth Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-91). The second National Comprehensive Plan (1982-91) promoted the

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6. Hong Yung Lee, "South Korea in 1991 - Unprecedented Opportunity, Increasing Challenge", Asian Survey (Berkeley) vol.XXXII, no.1, January 1992, p.68.

development of lagging regions through the growth centre approach.<sup>7</sup> Considering the powerful spatial impact of non-spatial economic policies in Korea, increasing economic interactions between China and South Korea will influence greatly the spatial development of the country. As the southeastern coastal region has developed in close association with Korea's export economy which is primarily tied with Japan and the U.S., the western coastal areas is likely to develop fast with changing foreign trade patterns particularly in China.

## **2.2 North Korea: The Economic Crisis and the Possibility of Change**

In contrary to the South Korean highly developed economy, the economy of North Korea seems to have been left out of the general atmosphere of prosperity and dynamism which characterises the rest of the Yellow Sea region. The North Korean economy has been led to develop on the autarchial line up until the late 1960s. Heavy emphasis has been placed on military buildup, devoting whatever resources available to enhance war capabilities under the slogan of the "Fortification of the whole Country and the Cadrization

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7. A Handbook of Korea, no.1, p.361.

of the Whole People."<sup>8</sup> The bottleneck began to appear towards the end of the 1960s, and the regime seems to have tried to overcome them through capital and technology from abroad, incurring about two billion dollars of external debt. In 1990, the nation had recorded its poorest economic performance in recent years, with the GNP showing a negative growth rate of - 3.7 percent and its total GNP was estimated at 23.1 billion dollars, which was one-tenth of South Korea's 237.9 billion dollars GNP.

North Korea suffers most seriously from shortages of food and energy. In fact, the situation in 1991 was so disappointing in terms of energy availability that the average operating rate of industries dropped to 40 percent of capacity.<sup>9</sup> The energy shortage in North Korea was due to its severe hard currency shortage and the refusal by its major trading partners, China and former USSR to grant credit for imports, especially more so after the fall of USSR.

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8. See Byung Chul Koh, "The Inter-Korean Agreement of 1972 and 1992: A Comparative Assessment", Korea and World Affairs (Seoul), vol.16, no.3, Fall 1992, pp.463-82.
  9. Rhee Sang-Woo, "North Korea in 1991; Struggle to Save Chuch'e Amid Sings of Change", Asian Survey, vol.XXXII, no.1, January 1992, p.58.

What North Korea needs now i.e. either a change of political ideology or a total change in economic strategy to transform into a strong economy. In particular, since the North Korean economy is almost on the brink of a disaster, it may become inevitable for North Korea to promote at least, a Chinese style economic reform in order to improve its economy.

### **2.3 Economic Co-operation between North and South Korea**

During the 1990s, there has been a substantial degree of improvement in the North-South Korean political and economic relationship. This optimistic turn of event comes largely from the sudden sweeping reforms in the former USSR and most Eastern European countries. The unification of Germany has also raised great hope among the Korean people about the possibility of their country's re-unification, followed by the 5th North-South Premier meeting in December 1991, reaching the historical Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression and Economic Cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

The actual economic exchanges between the two sides since 1945 was mainly confined to commodity trade and there existed no economic cooperation. The effort to increase

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10. ~~see~~ Byung Chul Koh, no.8.

commodity trade was largely made by the South. The North had economic ties with the communist bloc and about half of its international trade was with the former USSR and rest with China and other East European countries.

However, the volume of trade with Soviet Union and China, dropped sharply with the disintegration of USSR, and due to North Korea's lack of hard currency. Trade between the two Koreas however increased with South Korea becoming the third largest trading partner of North Korea after China and Japan in 1992.

North Korea's most remarkable effort to get foreign investment was revealed through its proposal to establish a "special economic zone", in order to create a giant free-trade zone. The North Korean authorities asked for the participation of South Korean firms in the Tumen River project, along with China, Russia and Japan.<sup>11</sup> This event was significant in the sense that North Korea finally opened the door for south to participate in North Korean economic development.

For economic cooperation, the possibility maybe brighter than commodity transactions. Areas of cooperation as revealed during North-South Economic Talks included joint

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11. Rhee Sang-Woo, no.9, p.60.

exploitation of natural resources in the North, establishment of common fishing zones in the Yellow Sea, and joint ventures in fishing and processing, development of tourist resources and sites of tourism along the Yellow Sea coast the two sides, and joint ventures in various manufacturing industries. Efforts are on to construct a manufacturing complex in Nampo, combining South Korean technology and capital with North's labour.

Since North Korea hopes to maintain its very strict political system, an outward opening would be gradual in time and restrictive in space. What inhibits the economic co-operation between the two Koreas now, is a lack of confidence and apprehensions about the future of North Korean diplomacy.

#### **2.4 Chinese Open-door Policy and Coastal Development of the Yellow Sea Areas**

The current extensive economic development and reform in China was first launched at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in December, 1978, with the aim not only to overcome problems in the aftermath of Cultural Revolution,<sup>12</sup> but also

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12. D.H. Perkins, "The Prospects for China's Economic Reforms", in Barnett and Clough, eds., Modernizing China: Post-Mao Reform and Development (Boulder, 1986), p.29.

to engineer a new strategy for the long-term economic development of China. There was a shift of focus of development to the "Four Modernizations" in the areas of agriculture, industry, national defense and science and technology, as also the stress on the need for overcoming serious imbalances in the economy.

But the most important aspect of the new development strategy, apart from improvement of existing infrastructural facilities, technological transformation, better management of enterprises, family planning and population control, was its open-door policy approach.<sup>13</sup> Domestically, it advocated the "liberation of thoughts" and condemned "leftist" radicalism. Internationally, it promoted economic cooperation and technological exchanges with foreign countries.

The magnitude of the growth that took place subsequently, especially of a major economy such as China, is quite unprecedented in world history. The aim that Deng Xiaping set for the economy at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1978, was to double the GNP by the year 1990 and double it again by the

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13. Ma Hong, New Strategy for China's Economy (Beijing, 1983), pp.26-28.

year 2000 A.D. The economy, quite unexpectedly, doubled two years ahead of schedule by 1988 and is expected to quadruple by 1994.<sup>14</sup> The basic ingredients were quite simple; first, agriculture was opened up, allowing generation of surplus capital in the rural areas. This also ensured a degree of stability as it provided relative prosperity to some 800 million people.

This led to demand, which was met by massive investments mainly from abroad. The overseas Chinese numbering 55 million invested readily and a total of 55 billion dollars had been invested in China by 1992, with a major percentage from them.<sup>15</sup>

Economic development has also been spurred on by exports. China's trade has shown an enormous rise in recent years, growing at an average rate of around 16 percent, which in a period of world recession is very substantial. Exports were 85 billion dollars in 1992. This is expected to be 93 billion dollars in 1993 and 150 billion dollars by the year 2000 A.D. By 1992 China was the 13th largest exporter in the world.<sup>16</sup> In recent years there has also been a very

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14. Time (New York), April 12, 1993, p.25.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p.34.



large export surplus, which has led to an accumulation of foreign exchange reserve of 43 billion dollars by February 1992, that is sixth largest in the world, just a shade less than that of the USA.<sup>17</sup>

Economic activity has been linked with that of the countries on its border to mutual advantage. Initially Special Economic Zones connected with Hong Kong. Later these were considerably widened and expanded. Now special linkages have been established between Heilongjian - Siberian Russia, Tienjin - South Korea, Fujian - Taiwan, Xinjiang - Central Asian Republics, and Yunan - Southeast Asia.

#### **2.4a Special Economic Zones and Open Areas in China**

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are products of the open-door policy. The first four special economic zones in Shenzhen, Zuhai, Shanton and Xiamen, were set up in 1979 in an endeavour to carry out special policies and enhance foreign trade, to attract foreign capital and to build export-oriented manufacturing industries. The special economic zones (SEZ, henceforth) were to include economic activities such as agriculture, services and other non-

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17. Central Intelligence Agency Handbook, August 1992, p.iv & p.6 based on International Monetary Fund Statistics, quoted in D. Banerjee, "China and its Emerging Role in the Asia-Pacific Region", Strategic Analysis (New Delhi), vol.XVI, no.4, July 1993, p.3.

Fig. 4. Open Areas of China.

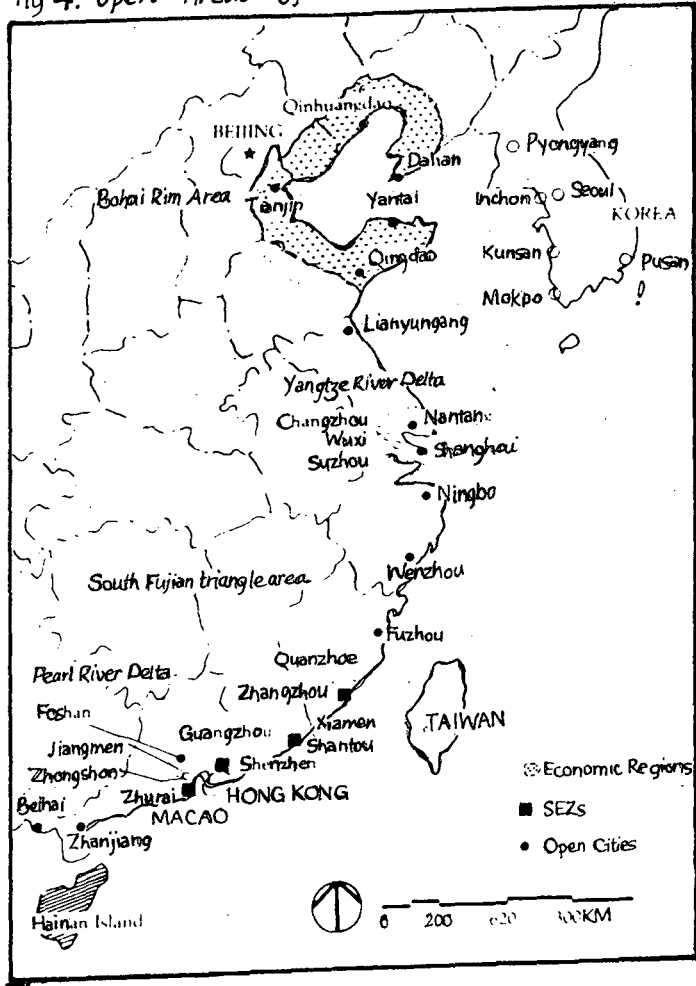
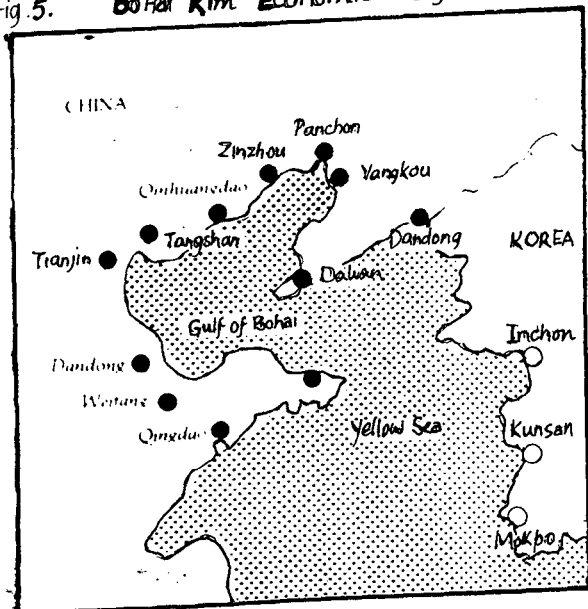


Fig. 5. Bohai Rim Economic Region.



industrial undertakings. These SEZs were to act as 'windows' for technology, management, knowledge and Chinese open-door policy towards foreign countries. Further, it acted as an experimental ground for economic reforms, and provide models and experience for the national economic reforms. After being reviewed in 1984 by Deng Xiaping a new proposal to further open fourteen coastal cities was implemented,<sup>18</sup> six of which were on the Yellow Sea coast. The chosen cities are China's traditional industrial and/or commercial centres with a long history of development. They have their own hinterland both in transportation networks and institutional relations. In comparison with the SEZs, there are more effective in their role as centres of distribution network between the hinterland and the overseas markets.

#### **2.4b Coastal Area Development on the Yellow Sea Coast**

The development of the coastal areas of the Yellow Sea is a case in point where the open coastal cities, like the SEZs, play an important role in the long-term development strategy of China, acting as central focal points of dispersion and convergence of resources between the

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18. The fourteen coastal cities opened were Tienjin, Shanghai, QunHuangdao, Yentai, Qingdao, Ningbo, Wenzhou, Lienwengang, Nantung, Fuzhou, Guanzhou, Zhanggang, and Beihai.

hinterland and overseas markets. Of the fourteen coastal cities, six are on the coast of the Yellow Sea, with Shanghai and Nantung at its southern tip, between the yellow and East China Sea, and Dalien at its northern tip where Yellow Sea joins with Bo Hai Bay. The other three cities are Yentai, Qungdao and Lienwengang. All the six cities are port cities, most of which have deep harbours for ocean-going liners and freighters. All, except one (Hautung) are terminals of important railways and railway networks.

Domestically, Dalien has long been the major entreport for the industrial Northeast. It has an easy access to the coal mines and other natural resources as well as the industrial capabilities of the area. Longhai Railways from Lienwangang leads all the way to the remote hinterland, beyond the city of Xian, to Gansu Province. Shanghai is of course, the best known international port in China, and one of China's most dynamic centre for industry and both domestic and international trade. Besides Shanghai, Dalien has had a history of contacts with Japan, especially during the period before Sino-Japanese War. On the other hand, open coastal cities on the Shandong peninsula, namely, Yentai and Qingdao, have had long time relations with the Koreans. As both Japan and South Korea are rapidly growing economics that are looking for markets for trade and investments, such

traditionalities can easily be developed into new economic ventures and exchanges under the open policy in China.

During the first one-and-half-year of opening policy of coastal cities, Qingdao and Yantai together imported 616 projects with foreign capital and technology, signed contracts amounting to 6.42 billion US dollars with direct foreign investments amounting to 1.85 billion. By 1987, Japan became the second trading partner of China, next to Hongkong which serves as an entrepot for China. By 1991, South was ranked as China's eighth largest trading partner. Not only has China become the third largest country for investment by South Korea, by the end of 1991, 185 South Korean enterprises had gained permission to invest in China and 110 had done so previously, with a total investment of more than 900 million dollars.<sup>19</sup> Thus, we find that the development of the Chinese open coastal cities along the Yellow Sea has great economic implications, not only for China's coastal areas and hinterland, but also for the other coastal nations, such as North and South Korea and Japan.

Coastal area development in China will have considerable impact on its national economic growth as well

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19. Jia Hao and Zhuang Qubing, "China's Policy toward the Korean peninsula", Asian Survey, vol.XXXII, no.12, December 1992, p.1146.

as spatial development. A recent analysis of regional development in China indicated that the coastal provinces increased their share of industrial output from 60 to 61 per cent during the years 1980-85. South growth resulted from the rapidly developing role of the coastal provinces as centres of foreign technology and increased trade. China's Seventh Five-Year Plan (1986-1990) emphasised the rapid growth of advanced region. The plan aimed at forming and expanding national economic zones including the most advanced regions - the Shanghai Economic Zone, the Northeastern Economic Zone and the energy production bases centred around Shanxi Province, the Beijing-Tianjin - Tangshan Zone around the Bo Hai Rim Area and the Southwestern Zone.<sup>20</sup>

The importance of China in the Northeast Asia may be understood in the strong complementarity that exists among Northeast Asian economies. Resource-rich, yet capital and skill-abundant Japan and South Korea fit in well with resource-rich, yet capital and skill-insufficient China and North Korea. Lack of capital and technology is actually the major reason behind the still insufficient exploitation of the comparably rich agricultural and mineral resources

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20. See, Y.C. Jao and C.K. Leung, eds., China's Special Economic Zones: Policy, Problems and Prospects (Hong Kong, 1986).

(coal, oil etc.) in Northeast China. Labor hungry Japan could look to Northeast China and North Korea for a fountainhead of manpower, a prospect to be in reach for quite a while.

Thus we find that the urban and industrial development is rapidly occurring in the coastal areas of the Yellow Sea, not only in Korea but also in China. This will accelerate development of this region in the coming years and the area surrounding the Yellow Sea is likely to become the core region of the Asia-Pacific economy.

## **2.5 Changing Relationship between the Yellow Sea States**

The current situation in Northeast Asia has, for the time being, given China an advantageous position as the single power that is both maintaining close relations with North Korea and developing new ties with the South. China's economic relations with the peninsula were centred on the North until the early 1980s. They were characterised by a huge, lopsided economic aid program and barter trade from Pyongyang's benefit, with almost all economic transactions based exclusively on political and ideological considerations. As Moscow - Pyongyang relationship faded, China became the leading economic partner of North Korea.

Mutual support in the domain of ideology and domestic politics, both being socialist countries has for years been an important element in North Korean - Chinese relations. Similarities between the official ideologies stem, to a large extent, from both shared political cultures and decades-long ties between the revolutionary leaders of the two countries.

However, its pursuit of economic opening and reform in the 1980, the importance of ideology in China's foreign policy has generally been declining. There has now been a shift a policy towards South Korea and China has been gradually developing relations with South Korea.

Economic factors have grown in importance in China's external relations over the last decade. China, a developing country with an enormous supply of low-cost labour and abundant natural resources, and South Korea, a newly industrialized nation with a booming economy and less expensive technology-intensive industries have become natural partners in economic cooperation. Geographically, China's Liaodong and Shandong peninsulas and Bo Hai area are just across the Yellow Sea from the west coast of Korea. The Liaodong peninsula is among the most industrialized areas in China, with the largest coal and copper deposits in the country, and both it and Shandong peninsula are rich in



coal, petroleum and gas. Such geographic features provide convenient transportation and significantly reduce shipping costs, a solid advantage of Sino-South Korean trade and other economic cooperation.

South Korea's overtures towards China were also motivated by its long desire to open economic relations with a country whose huge market, ample labour, and rich natural resources constitute a target that the South Koreans have been actively seeking for decades. Beginning in the early 1980, the export - oriented South Korean economy encountered serious difficulties due to global trend of protectionism, and the government of ROK was forced to appreciate its currency, further open its domestic market, and purchase more foreign merchandise. This served as an impetus for Seoul to diversify its external markets and explore economic relations with China.

Besides this economic aspect, the progress of Sino-South Korean relations has resulted, to a larger extent, from Seoul's desire to strengthen its position vis-a-vis North Korea. As President Roh Tae Woo emphasised on the event of his recent trip to China: "The main goal of my 'northern policy' was to open formal relations with North Korea's friends and allies, and through them to influence

North Korea itself."<sup>21</sup> To date, Seoul's 'nordpolitik'<sup>22</sup> has scored significant breakthroughs, with it establishing formal diplomatic relations with all former socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the former USSR in 1990.

What made it possible for Seoul's Northern Diplomacy to reap success so far has been a combination of many factors. The pragmatic and open policy that the PRC pursued since 1978, and M.S. Gorbachev's 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' were among the most important circumstantial factors. South Korea's economic achievements and its fast growing economy enabled ROK to be recognised as an important economic power in the world. Korea ascended in the world GNP ranking from 30th in 1970 to 27th in 1980, and the 15th in 1988 and 13th in 1989. It was this that tempted China to attract Korea as a source of capital and technology by opening trade relations and later full diplomatic ties in August 1992.

Assessing this trend toward cross-recognition of South Korea by the communist bloc countries as unavoidable North Korea began to reassess its counter-productive stance and began to seek its own strategy of cross-recognition. Thus,

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21. New York Times, September 18, 1992, p.A8.

22. On Seoul's Northern Policy, See Young Whan Kihl, "The United States and South Korea's Nordpolitik", Asia-Pacific Review, vol.2, no.1, Spring 1990, pp.3-13.

in September 1990, North Korea announced its desire to open negotiations with Japan for diplomatic normalization, while expressing the desire for normalization of relations with the United States.

Determined to free itself from the state of isolation, as practised for decades by Kim Il Sung, DPRK, announced its intention to join the United Nations on May 28, 1991.

The desire on the part of North Korea to survive and overcome the externally generated crises, via what may be called "diplomacy of promotive adaptation", was the motivating force driving and accelerating North-South Korean dialogues and negotiations in 1991-92, on peaceful coexistence, nuclear non-proliferation, economic co-operation and unification issues.<sup>23</sup>

However, one must not forget that it was China who actively encouraged a North-South dialogue with an emphasis on solving the pending problems between the two Koreas. While China publicly endorses Kim Il Sung's re-unification project to establish a confederate Korea, with a "one nation, one state, two systems and two regional

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23. See Young Whan Kihl, "North Korea's Foreign Relations: Diplomacy of Promotive Adaptation", Journal of Northeast Asian Studies, vol.10, no.3, Fall 1991, pp.30-40.

governments",<sup>24</sup> it also stressed the need for "mutual recognition of each other's ideology and social system."<sup>25</sup>

Beijing's persistence in taking the above stand is given impetus by several considerations. First, reunification has long been desired by the Korean people on both sides, and as long as the North-South dialogue and consultation on reunification continues, tension on the peninsula would be ameliorated, which in turn would better serve China's geopolitical and economic interests. Second, in recent years China has frequently faced the question of taking sides between Pyongyang and Seoul - on such matters as U.N. membership and the North Korean nuclear issue - and the choice became more difficult following the development of Sino-South Korean relations. China now seeks to avoid a direct and publicized conflict with either side, which often leaves North Korea no choice but to accept reality. Third, in the long run, a peacefully unified Korea would be a more important and energetic economic partner of China, and a friendly relationship with the peninsula could also be

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24. See B.C. Koh, "A Comparative Study of Unification Plans: The Korean National Community versus the Koryo Confederation", Korea Observer (Seoul), vol.21, no.4, Winter 1990, pp.437-55.

25. Beijing Review, October 14-20, 1991, p.7.

conducive to safeguarding China's political and strategic position in Northeast Asia.

Thus, we find that the Asian politico-economic environment is being slowly transformed by the growth of Chinese power. According to Z. Brzezinski, China is bound to make its weight felt increasingly and both its ambitions and assertiveness are likely to grow in the near future.<sup>26</sup> While accretion of China's power is highly probable, some relevant concerns are about its political stability and leadership succession. Secondly, with the Korean re-unification well on the cards, how a united Korea of 70 million habitants with vibrant, capitalist economy interact with China and Japan is a major question.

China's prospects for playing a leading role in the region, are closely tied to the resolution of its internal problems. It has to cope with the difficulty of maintaining the tattered economic trappings of communist rule whereas the locomotive of economic growth is capitalist in nature, while at the same time managing the consequences of unequal regional growth especially in the regions closely linked in economic terms to Japan Hongkong and Taiwan.

Another important question is the future role of an economic giant, Japan, in the North east Asian sphere.

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26. See The Washington Quarterly, Spring, 1992, p.7.

Japan, with the world's second largest GNP, is a state whose policies have global, and not solely, regional impact. It has long been an economic super power. In fact, Japan has since the late 1980s, become uncomfortable with its image of "an economic giant but a political dwarf", and worked out a strategy to achieve the status of a big political power as its predominant goal. By sustaining the pace of its economic expansion, Japan intends to catch up with and even surpass the United States in terms of GNP in the early 21st century, and by taking full advantage of its swollen economic strength, proceed to gain a political position and play a major role in the world's political and economic life.

However, Japan will have to depend much on China's support and cooperation if it wishes to play a role to its expectation in the North east Asia region. Although regional affinity with Japan's political system and admiration of Japan's international marketing acumen provides Japan with an opportunity to shape an influential East Asian foreign policy,<sup>27</sup>

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27. See James Cotton, "The Limits to Liberalization in Industrializing Asia: Three Views of the State" Pacific Affairs (Vancouver), vol.64, no.3, Fall 1991, pp.311-27. Comments on Japan's burgeoning role as a role model for future Asian development trends and policy behaviour, see Michael Richardson, "As West Pushes for Democracy, Asia Leans Towards Japan", International Herald Tribune, November 9-10, 1991, pp.1, 5; and Richardson, "Japan's New Asian Sphere", International Herald Tribune December 2, 1991, pp.1, 11.

The above discussion thus makes clear the fact that it is China, which, at this point of time, determines directly and indirectly the direction of inter-regional policies and the foreign relations at the regional level in the Northeast Asian region. One may also say that the positive changes in international relations has created conditions conducive to serious positive changes in the Yellow Sea regime, especially in the Korean peninsula and the normalization of relations between the Yellow Sea States in a major way.

*Maritime Issues in the Yellow Sea Regime*

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The Yellow Sea has a number of characteristics that make it a geo-strategic region of considerable importance, both to the littoral states and to outside powers. It is not a typical semi-enclosed sea, being completely open to the East China Sea to the south, with which it has only an arbitrarily established boundary. On the other hand, the northern extremities of the Sea are completely enclosed and the land areas to the north and west form a cul-de-sac. Thus, oceanographic and commercial influences from the south are important, as well as military and strategic considerations caused by the proximity of the three dominant coastal states to each other.

Physical characteristics of the Sea, for instance its shallowness consequent to the influence of the Chinese rivers with their large loads of silt, are of lesser importance than the strategic and commercial considerations. There are important ports in the region, and a number of naval bases. In addition, the three coastal countries do not enjoy consummate harmonious relations with each other. These factors, plus some aspects of the still evolving law of the sea, have a potentially great influence on the most important of navigational considerations, the maintenance of strategic and commercial lines of communication. Whether these be in the form of trade routes for commercial intercourse between and among China, North Korea and South

Korea and Japan or paths by means of which naval vessels travel, is important in assessing the degree of navigational freedom to be expected. For merchant shipping sea lanes of communication are the crucial factor; for naval vessels one usually speaks of strategic lines of communication. The acronym of SLOC is appropriate for both.

This chapter will discuss those aspects of the law of sea and maritime jurisdictional claims in the Yellow Sea that effect SLOCs and freedom of navigation in general Coastal configuration, which influence port characteristics, and distances, along with the Sea's principal dimensions, which obviously influence maritime jurisdictional claims will be discussed followed by a description of maritime claims of the three coastal states, and finally some important legal issues which may arise due to geographic and political complexities in the region.

The boundary between the Yellow and East China Seas arbitrarily follows a line running from Saishu Islands off the south coast of the Republic of Korea (ROK, henceforth) to the mouth of the Yangtze River near Shanghai.<sup>1</sup> According to this delineation, the dimensions of the Yellow Sea are approximately 1000 kms in the north-south direction and 700

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1. See International Hydrographic Bureau Special Publication, 23 (Monaco: 1953).

kms east to west. Included within the Sea is the Pohai (Bo Hai), a prominent gulf in the northwestern corner of the Sea. A line connecting Liaodung and Shandung peninsulas separates the Bo Hai from the Yellow Sea proper. The Korea Bay lies east of the Bo Hai, between Liaodung Peninsula and the coast of North Korea.

Coastal characteristics of the Yellow Sea countries - China, North Korea and South Korea - are important considerations for various aspects of marine policy. The south and west coasts of the Korean Peninsula are indented and fringed with small islands, generally justifying the drawing of straight baselines. Much of the Chinese coast, on the other hand, is smooth, although complex near the mouth of the Bo Hai, with coastal indentations and offshore fringing islands, to justify straight baselines for the purpose of defining the territorial sea and internal waters.

The Yellow Sea is extremely shallow due to the sediments brought in by the Yellow, Liao, Yantze, and Yalu rivers. The coasts generally are not conducive to the formation of good harbours, except drowned western shores and the Bo Hai, particularly surrounding the old, mountainous Shandung and Liaodung Peninsulas. The bays are thus ideal for harbours and anchorages, for examples, Qingdao, Yantai and Lushan.

In winter, formation of sea ice in the inner Bo Hai and ice from the frozen rivers turn into ice-drifts which hinder navigation. Large tidal ranges on the west coast of Korean peninsula also cause navigational problems.<sup>2</sup> Other than these, the Yellow Sea is not known to have severe navigational hazards due to physical characteristics.

### 3.1 Claims to Maritime Jurisdiction in the Yellow Sea

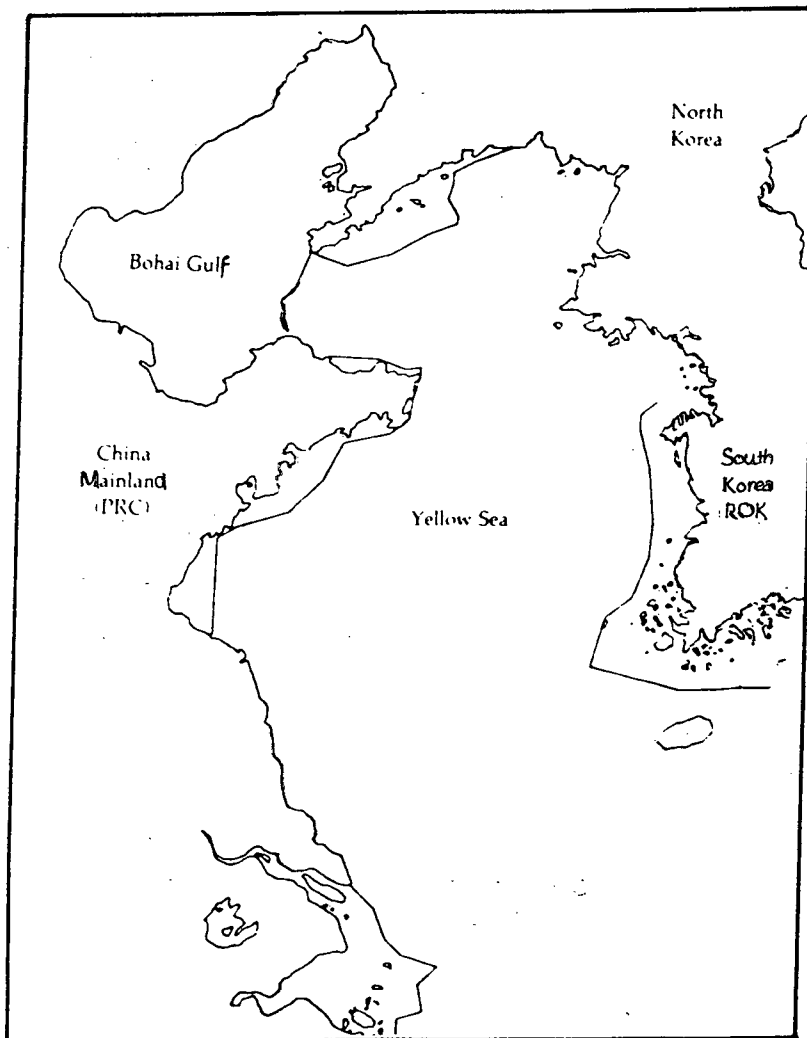
The Convention on the Law of the Sea permits nations to claim internal waters, territorial seas, exclusive economic zones, and under some circumstances archipelagic waters. All but archipelagic waters are applicable to the case of the Yellow Sea. Claims to internal waters are based on provisions of the Convention, which permit drawing straight baselines, under some circumstances: where the coast is deeply indented and/or fringed by offshore islands in close proximity to the coast. It is also possible to draw legitimate straight baselines that enclose bays and mouths of rivers.

Chinese claims of straight baselines is not clear. Much of our information is based on surmises about the legitimacy as well as the pronouncements of the government of People's

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2. Rhodes W. Fairbridge, ed., The Encyclopedia of Oceanography (New York, 1966), p.995-998.

*Fig. 6. Straight Baselines of the PRC and ROK.*



Republic of China. On 9th September, 1958 China claimed that its territorial sea, would be 12 nautical miles and referred to the question of baselines in the following terms:

"China's territorial sea along the mainland and its coastal islands takes as its baseline the line composed of the straight lines connecting basepoints on the mainland coast and on the outermost of the coastal islands... The water areas inside the baseline, including PoHai Bay and the Chiungchow Straits, are Chinese inland waters."<sup>3</sup>

It is not clear from this statement whether the Chinese mean that straight baselines apply along the entire coast of China or only in the named areas, Bo Hai Bay and the Chiungchow Straits. The usage of straight baselines is obviously inappropriate for a long stretch north of Shanghai. However, it might be applicable for the deeply indented coastlines of Shandong and Liaodung peninsula. Bo Hai may be claimed as internal waters on many grounds. It can be closed off as a bay by short segments of baselines connecting the numerous islands across its mouth; it may qualify as historic waters due to the long influence of China in the region and the generally landlocked nature of the waters; and since the waters are landward of legitimate

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3. J.R.V. Prescott, Maritime Jurisdiction in East Asian Seas, East-West Environment and Policy Institute, Occasional Paper No.4, (Honolulu, 1987), p.15.

straight baselines they become by definition internal waters.<sup>4</sup>

The three Yellow Sea countries claim territorial seas 12 nautical miles wide, as permitted by the Convention (UNCLOS III, 1982). The outer limit of a country's territorial sea depends not only on claimed width but also on baseline from which the territorial waters are measured. The 1958 declaration claims a 12 nautical miles territorial sea from straight baselines although it has not published the baseline from which its territorial sea is to be measured either as a text or on maps. Thus China's claims to maritime jurisdictions are vague and primarily due to lack of specificity of the Chinese government.

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which can extend seaward 200 nautical miles from the coastal baselines, was a new innovation brought about by the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The exclusive economic zone has its roots in the concept of the exclusive fishing zone and the doctrine of the continental shelf.<sup>5</sup> Since the Yellow Sea is

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4. Article 8 (1), United Nations, The Law of the Sea, Official Text of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with Annexes and Index (New York: 1983) p.4.

5. See, D.J. Harris, Cases and Materials on International Law, (London, 1991), p.418-19.

less than 400 miles wide, claims to full 200 nautical miles zone creates overlaps and may result in potential controversies. For want of a more definitive resolution of the problem, line of equidistance is a more logical basis to discuss and delineate EEZs, than median lines.

The rights, jurisdiction and duties of the coastal state in the EEZ are cited in Article 56 of Part V of the LOS Convention.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, the coastal states has sovereign rights over resource-related activities, particularly the exploration to exploitation of living and non-living resources of the water column, sea-floor and seabed, in the EEZ, but many states insist that they also have legitimate authority over navigation in the EEZ. The contrary view is that the EEZ is a sui generis zone that is also a part of the high seas and therefore free to navigation by both commercial and military vessels, while at the same time subject to control by the coastal state concerning resources. This is presumably what the Convention intends, but international law is determined not so much by Conventions but by the actions of states.

Throughout the long negotiations which culminated in the Convention on the Law of the Sea, navigational freedoms were considered of paramount importance and were weighted

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6. The Law of the Sea, no.4, p.18.



against the newly espoused rights of coastal states to a larger share of the ocean's resources. The balance which ensued and was written into the Convention is still being tested, as states make claims to Exclusive Economic Zones and prescribe regulations for foreign ships in these zones. Some of these regulations stretch the strict interpretation of the articles of the new law of the sea to some what unreasonable limit, but, the law of the sea is still evolving; it is influenced by the Convention, but it will become what countries make of it by their actions.<sup>7</sup> It is this customary law that is important in assessing the security of SLOCs in the Yellow Sea as well as in other maritime regions.

The 1982 Convention defines innocent passage clearly and specifies a number of activities which render passage non-innocent. The Convention does not per se distinguish between military and commercial vessels in its rules for innocent passage, but many coastal states do. They insist that naval vessels request permission to transit the territorial sea, but do not make similar provision for merchant ships. Yellow Sea countries are among those who believe that the coastal state needs and is entitled to more protection and control over its territorial waters than the

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7. See, Robert W. Smith, Exclusive Economic Zone Claims: An Analysis and Primary Documents, (Dordrecht, 1986).

Convention provides in a strict interpretation of the relevant articles in the law of the sea.

An important provision of the Convention provides for the suspension of innocent passage by the coastal state "if such suspension is essential for the protection of its security including weapons exercises. Such suspension shall take effect only after having been duly published."<sup>8</sup> The maritime powers have campaigned successfully for a new category of passage called "transit passage" which would apply in straits used for international navigation.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding these provisions, there is a potential problem in the Cheju Strait of the Yellow Sea. The South Korean straight baselines are well off-shore of the Korean peninsula, and the Republic of Korea claims a 12 nautical mile territorial sea. Since the territorial sea also extends around Cheju-do, the combined width of the territorial seas plus the distance offshore of the straight baseline along the southern coast of South Korea completely closes off Cheju Strait. Since Cheju Strait is a strait used for international navigation, the rules of transit passage should apply rather than innocent passage, as argued by some

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8. Article 25(3), The Law of the Sea, no.4, p.9.

9. Articles 37-44, Ibid., pp.12-14.

nations. Because the Convention specifically states that transit passage cannot be suspended,<sup>10</sup> the distinction between the two types of passage is important to maritime powers with navies operating outside home waters. South Korea is, however, justified in claiming the non-applicability of the transit passage in Cheju Strait, as the passage south of the Cheju-do is of equal convenience for to vessels.

The maritime boundaries on the west coast of Korean peninsula between North and South Korea too are complicated. They have never been negotiated upon either. Due to the complicated nature of the coast, one with many indentations and offshore fringing islands, claims to exclusive economic zones are bound to overlap. If the two countries claim the equidistant line as an appropriate boundary, it is difficult to construct the boundary due to the presence of a group of islands known as the Western Islands. Of these islands in question, three are located just south of the 38th parallel of latitude and two, further east, near the port of Incheon<sup>11</sup> The islands are involved in a controversy between the two countries, but more importantly this dispute causes the

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10. Article 44, Ibid., p.14.

11. Shanon McCune, Islands in Conflict in East Asian Waters (Hongkong, 1984), p.64.

median line between North and South Korean claims to maritime zones to be likewise in dispute. And because of this dispute, navigation in the Yellow Sea is fraught with perils of a political nature.

### **3.2 Military Security Zones in the Yellow Sea**

Two countries in the Yellow Sea have either interpreted the EEZs of their nations as military or security zones, or simply established a new class of maritime jurisdiction in the region, the military zone. In August 1977, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea promulgated two military zones, one in the Sea of Japan extending 50 nm seaward of its claimed baseline and one in the Yellow Sea. The Yellow Sea military zone extended throughout the complete 200 nm claim of the North Koreans to an EEZ, which in actual practice extends only to the median line between North Korean and Chinese baselines in the area. North Korean newspapers at the time claimed that its military zones were created to keep away U.S. and South Korean "spies and saboteurs".<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to understand why North Korea limits its Sea of Japan military zone to 50 nm, while claiming the full extent of its allowable EEZ as a military security zone in the Yellow Sea.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Ibid., p.17.

13. Ibid., p.18.

For more than 30 years, the Chinese have announced restriction in coastal areas well outside its territorial sea. In 1955, Japanese fishing vessels were barred from two security zones and a fisheries conservation zone. All three zones extended beyond the limits of the Chinese claimed territorial sea.<sup>14</sup> Thereafter, subsequent claims to security zones were made and naval ships barred from operations in the Chinese EEZ. There are two security zones in the Chinese waters currently, one of which is a military alert zone extending west from the North Korea - China border, at the mouth of Yalu River, to a point off the Shandong Peninsula. This zone includes the Bo Hai and legitimately claimed territorial waters, as well as an area which other countries consider high seas, and entry into the zone is with the express permission of the Chinese authorities. There is also a military exclusion zone in the vicinity of Shanghai. Here all navigation is prohibited. Since the Chinese territorial sea boundary is undelineated in this area, the extent of this military exclusion zone too is unclear.<sup>15</sup>

During the early years of the Law of the Sea negotiations, the Chinese made it clear that they envisioned

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14. Bruce D. Larkiw, "East Asian Ocean Security Zones", in Elizabeth Borgese and Norton Ginsburg, eds., Ocean Yearbook 2 (Chicago, 1980), p.288.

15. Ibid.

the new idea of an exclusive economic zone to be one in which actual sovereignty could be exercised, not mere control over resources. Their contention was that the new law of the sea "should clearly stipulate that the exclusive economic zone is a sea area under the jurisdiction of a coastal country and not part of the high sea, and that the coastal country should enjoy exclusive jurisdiction over the sea area".<sup>16</sup> Hence, according to them, military installations and military activities could be barred by the coastal state since the EEZ was not part of the high seas. Following this line of view, the Chinese navy, in the mid seventies, kept a defensive stance with its strategy devoted almost exclusively to defense of the coast against enemy attack. The situation has changed over the years. With the PLA Navy acquiring longer range ships and cruising far outside Chinese home waters, their policy concerning the use of EEZ might change, since the PLA Navy might want the freedom to operate in other countries' EEZs. In this sense, the impact of the law of the sea has been less influential in the Yellow Sea regime. We find here, that internationally recognised coastal state sovereignty over the EEZ is inconsistent with the aims of naval powers and their desire for complete freedom of navigation.

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16. Ibid., p.289.

### 3.3 The Effect of Maritime Zones on the Commercial Sea Laws of Communication in the Yellow Sea

The Convention on the Law of the Sea attempts to strike a balance between the rights of coastal states to protect their waters and capitalize on the marine resources, and the navigational freedoms traditionally exercised by nations with interests in shipping and naval security. Although absolute freedom of navigation has been eroded somewhat by the Convention, the maritime powers have insisted on some non-negotiable minimums. "The geographic locus of these nonnegotiable minimums have been identified as the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs)".<sup>17</sup> A distinction has been made by some, between trade routes and the SLOCs, with reference of trade routes "as the flow of commodities between regions, countries or ports" and SLOCs as "the path used by ships as they cross the seas between trading areas."<sup>18</sup>

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17. John P. Craven, "Freedom of Navigation for War, Commerce and Piracy", in Jon M. VanDyke, Lewis M. Alexander and Joseph R. Morgan, eds., International Navigation: Rocks and Shoals Ahead? (Honolulu, 1988), p.32.

18. Bernhard J. Abrahamsson, "Commercial Sea Lanes of Communication", in Jon M. VanDyke, et.al., eds., International Navigation Rocks and Shoals Ahead? (Honolulu, 1988), p.39.

The sea lanes of communications almost always include some passage through EEZs, territorial seas and archipelagic waters, and regulating these critical passageways becomes a critical issue in the balance between navigational freedoms and the rights of nations to exercise a reasonable degree of control over their coastal waters.<sup>19</sup>

The Convention does not specifically distinguish between military vessels and merchant ships when it sets forth the rules of innocent passage through territorial seas<sup>20</sup> although submarines and other underwater vehicles are required to navigate on the surface and show their flags.<sup>21</sup> All ships enjoy the right of transit passage through straits used for international navigation.<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding the Convention's rules, many coastal states treat merchant ships and navy vessels differently, maintaining that naval vessels, by virtue of their functions, cannot be on innocent passage. Requiring that naval vessels ask for permission to enter territorial seas on innocent passage is common among the coastal states of the Yellow Sea. Infact, North Korea has even restricted

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19. Ibid., p.40.

20. Articles 17,18,19, The Law of the Sea, no.4., p.6.

21. Article 20, Ibid., p.7.

22. Article 38, Ibid., p.12.



merchant ships from entering into its territorial waters without prior permission, thus creating problems for South Korea and China on this issue.

The fact that Yellow Sea countries make restrictions on navigational freedom by claiming military security zones or simply restricting innocent passage in territorial seas and Exclusive Economic Zones is of significance because of substantial trade carried on between the Korea and China. Trade between South Korea and China, particularly, has increased remarkably, especially after the Asian Games in Seoul in 1986. Diplomatic relations were established between the two in August 1992, although they had established trade offices in each other's capital (with quasi-diplomatic status and functions) in 1990. Today, South Korea ranks as China's eighth largest trading partner, preceding even France and Italy. On the other hand, China is South Korea's third largest trading partner after United States and Japan. Travel between the two countries has also shown a dramatic increase, and China has begun exporting a large number of skilled labourers to South Korea.<sup>23</sup>

There are numerous benefits to be derived from this increased trade between the two nations. Korea, with its

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23. Jia Hao and Zhuang Qubing, "China's Policy toward the Korean Peninsula", Asian Survey, vol. XXXII, no. 12, December 1992, p. 1146.

newly industrializing economy, manufactures many products needed in China, while China has natural resources that Korea requires. In addition, the two countries are geographically close together and SLOCs within the Yellow Sea are relatively short and convenient, provided no political obstacles are put in the way of free transit. While the restrictions on navigation of commercial vessels engendered by regulations imposed by coastal states and their declaration of military security zones are important, the increasing trade relations between South Korea and China will result in the establishing of direct sea routes across the Yellow Sea. The presence of various maritime zones will create a mere annoyance rather than an actual political navigational hazard. Hence, the requirement of permission to enter territorial seas on innocent passage may apply more for naval operations than commercial voyages in the near future.

Thus we find that the unusual nature of maritime zones in the Yellow Sea affects the security of both commercial and military SLOCs. The implications of the various restrictions imposed by North Korea and China in their claimed waters are not serious for merchant ship operations, and it is reasonable to assume that the increased trade between South Korea and China will not be excessively hampered by the requirements of China regarding its military

security zones. For the foreseeable future, however, South Korean merchant ships will probably want to avoid incursion in the North Korean EEZ, since the zone is contiguous with a claimed military security zone.

Since the military security zones are not sanctioned by the Convention on the Law of the Sea, and are by no means recognised as customary international law, they are in a sense undesirable. They inhibit freedom of navigation, seriously for naval vessels of the Yellow Sea countries, less importantly for merchant ships. Many international law scholars and government policy makers believe that traditional high seas freedoms must be preserved, and the maritime zones in the Yellow Sea are not a shining example of what international law should be.

#### **3.4 Maritime Issues in the Yellow Sea Regime**

Having studied the major maritime jurisdictional claims and issues regarding communication and navigation, a discussion on the impact of the new emerging law of the sea on the Yellow Sea regime with respect to the diplomatic mutuality of interests is indeed a necessity. The variety and complexity of some legal and political disputes likely to arise in the region need to be negotiated in order that the coastal states interact peacefully and co-operate in their use of the marine resources in the Yellow Sea.

Among the possible legal issues that may arise is the fact that the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have not declared their exclusive 200 mile zones for fishing or economic purposes. In the Yellow Sea, nowhere does the distance from one headland or island to another reach 400 nautical miles. Thus unilateral claims of the coastal states to their continental shelf or economic zone jurisdiction would substantially overlap along what would be the median line between them. Under the 1982 UN Convention for the Law of the Sea, it is conceivable for shelf boundary and the economic zone boundary to be different.<sup>24</sup> The choice of principle to apply for the delimitation of boundaries between the coastal states, thus becomes a major legal issue. While ROK persists with the median-line principle, PRC has equally insisted on the natural prolongation of the land territory principle from the beginning.<sup>25</sup>

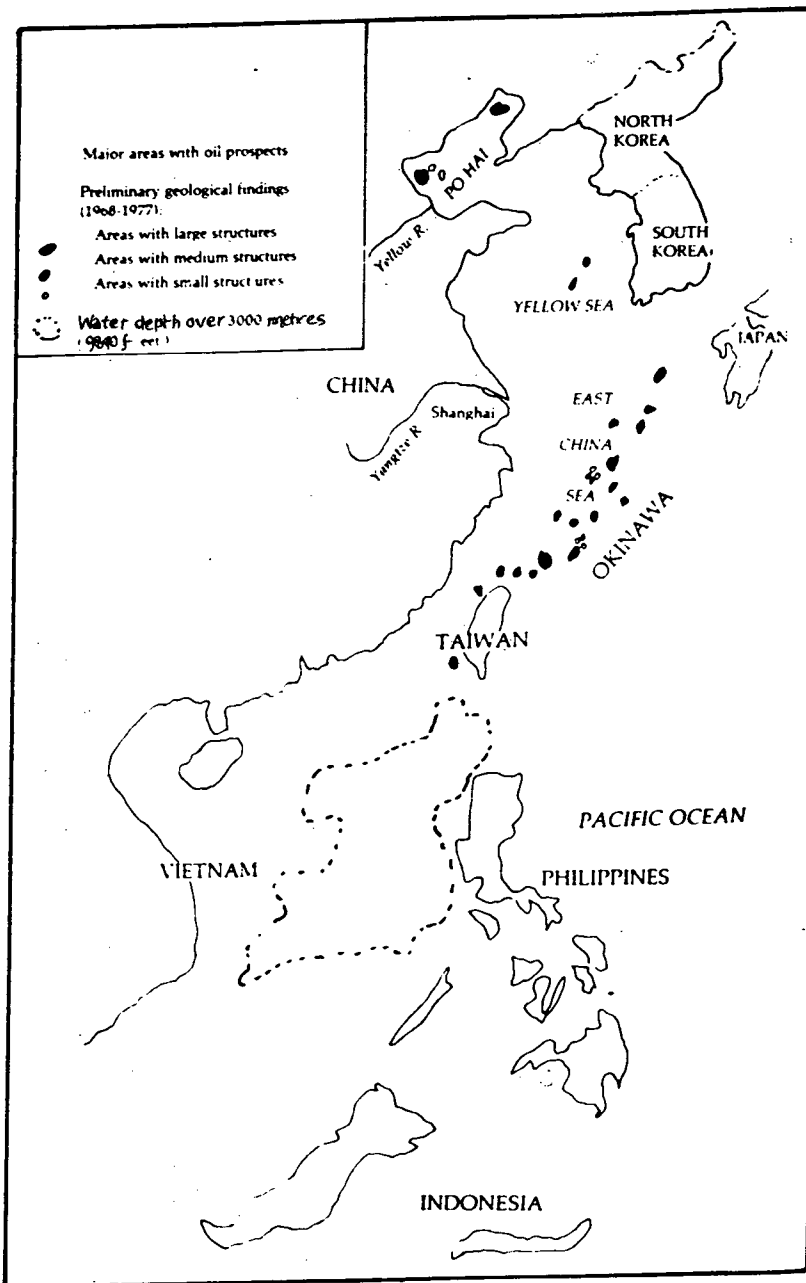
It must be mentioned here, that the precise definition of the natural prolongation of the land territory principle is as yet undecided. The International Court of Justice

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24. See, D.J. Harris, no.5, pp.432-34.

25. See, Choon-ho Park, " Oil Under Troubled Waters: The Northeast Asia Sea-Bed Oil Controversy", Harvard International Law Journal (Massachusetts), vol.14, no.2, Spring 1973, pp.212-60.

Fig. 7. Major Areas with Oil Prospects



Source: Selig S. Harrison, *China, Oil, and Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 49.

(ICJ), which created this novelty in its 1969 judgment of the North Sea Continental Shelf Cases,<sup>26</sup> did not do so, nor did the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) which incorporated it into the above Convention of 1982 (Article 76). ROK may therefore raise a serious question to PRC whether the sea-bed and the subsoil of the Yellow Sea as it is would constitute the natural prolongation of the Chinese land territory. Since of each of these two states are involved in shelf and economic zone boundary problems in other seas contiguous to the Yellow Sea, (for example, in the East China SEa, ROK insists on the median line principle towards Japan), neither is likely to compromise its position towards each other, particularly since one situation could militate against its own interests in another.

It now remains to be seen how PRC will eventually respond to what was done by ROK in 1970 in the name of its Sea-Bed Mineral Resources Development Law enacted in that year. Four sea-bed oil tracts were staked out unilaterally in the Yellow Sea based on the median-line principle.

Second, the problems of baselines from which the breadth of each coastal state's territorial sea is to be measured. In the Yellow Sea, the coastlines are deeply and irregularly indented and studded with numerous small

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26. See, D.J. Harris, no.5, pp.29-44.

islands, many of them uninhabited. Both ROK and PRC have approximately 3,500 such islands along their coasts altogether. The size and location of some islands off ROK and PRC would give rise to controversies with respect to their legal status.<sup>27</sup>

On the Korean side of the Yellow Sea, extensive land reclamation work has been underway since the 1970s. As a result, the coastline is being gradually reduced such changes in the physical environment can also add to the problems of baseline determination on both the Korean and Chinese coasts.

Third, the protection of the marine environment in the semi-enclosed seas. Throughout the Northeast Asian seas, virtually nothing is being done to protect the marine environment under joint efforts of the coastal states. Given the increasingly intensive use of the Yellow Sea for economic and other purposes, the model for them to follow would be the so-called Regional Seas Program of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the Barcelona Convention in 1972 among the Mediterranean coastal states, or other

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27. Seo-Hang Lee, "South Korea and the Continental Shelf Issue: Agreements and Disagreements between South Korea, Japan and China". Korea and World Affairs (Seoul), vol.X, no.1, Spring 1986, p.62.

regional arrangements in enclosed or semi-enclosed seas.<sup>28</sup>

Another issue related to the area, is the problem of conservation of living resources. The Yellow Sea is one of the rare instances where fishing operation is possible virtually in all seasons. Such favourable natural environment has caused over-fishing to the point of low productivity. Though joint-regulation of inter-fishing among China and Japan (1975) and Japan and ROK (1965) were concluded, there is no agreement to which all the coastal states are parties. There is also the problem of the so-called Peaceline, originally claimed by ROK around the Korean peninsula in 1952 for the purpose of regulating Japanese fishing. Although it has been superceded by the fisheries agreement of 1965, it is formally still in force.<sup>29</sup> This inoperative line will have to be lifted preferably on the occasion of ROK's declaration of its 200-mile zone for fishing or economic purposes, or otherwise as part of comprehensive adjustment of its maritime jurisdiction.

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28. See, Barbara Johnson and Frank Langdon, "The Impact of the Law of the Sea Conference Upon the Pacific Region: Part", Pacific Affairs (Vancouver), vol.51, no.1, 1978, pp.5-23.

29. See Choon-ho Park, "Fishing Under Troubled Waters: The Northeast Asia Fisheries Controversy", Ocean Development and International Law, vol.2, no.2, Summer 1974, pp.122-23.



The major political issues as they relate to the use of the sea and its resources in the Yellow Sea arise from the fact that ROK and PRC have only just established diplomatic relations with each other and that Korea still remains under divided leadership between the North and South. The relation established recently between ROK and PRC has so been based on economic co-operation and trade agreements. Though all the three countries are signatories of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the sea, none of them have ratified it. Only North Korea declared an exclusive 200-mile economic zone in 1977 and, simultaneously, a 50 mile military boundary zone (as discussed before) "to protect" the former.<sup>30</sup> Little is known of any bilateral agreements between North Korea and PRC over their sea-boundary which is necessary in the northern part of the Yellow Sea.

Thus, on account of the political relations among the coastal states of the Yellow Sea, there is no single multilateral agreements in this area. The eventual coming in force of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, will however make it necessary for the coastal states of the troubled waters to review their maritime relation with one another towards joint efforts.

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30. See, Choon-ho Park, "The 50-Mile Military Boundary Zone of North Korea", American Journal of International Law (Washington, DC) vol.72, no.4, October 1978, pp.866-75.

*Strategic Environment of the Yellow Sea Region*

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Since the mid 1980s international relations in Northeast Asia have been undergoing profound change as the traditional rigid pattern of relationships in the region has been fundamentally altered. For decades, the old pattern was characterised by military confrontation and ideological antagonism within the overall "big-four-plus-two" equation, (with the former Soviet Union and China backing North Korea and the United States and Japan supporting South Korea) accompanied by the Moscow - Beijing competition within the "Northern Triangle" for influence in North Korea. The dramatic disintegration U.S. - Russian confrontation and the Moscow - Beijing and Moscow - Tokyo rapprochement have all contributed to blurring the traditional "zero-sum" formula that had dominated international power games in the region.<sup>1</sup> Today, there is a growing trend of mutual readjustment of policies among the nations concerned. In the new pattern, military and ideological factors, though not entirely absent, have been eclipsed by a new web of increasing economic interdependence and political accommodation.

With the shifting power balance and multipolar structure in the region, it is unlikely that any single power will be able to play a dominant role in the

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1. Jia Hao and Z. Qubing, "China policy toward the Korean Peninsula", Asian Survey, vol.XXXII, no.12, December 1992, p.1138.

foreseeable future. Due to the impact to its approach to South Korea despite Pyongyang's protest, Moscow's influence in the North is significantly damaged, and deeply plagued by domestic problems, its influence on the peninsula tends to diminish further. The United States, so far enjoying a relatively advantageous position, is now troubled by its own economic readjustment, particularly the impact of budget deficits and other domestic problems. Growing nationalism in the region, including in South Korea, also weakens the US clout there. Finally, Japan is confronted with economic challenges from a group of newly industrialized economies in East Asia, and from South Korea in particular. How Japan will translate its economic power into political influence remains to be seen; the potential for a resurgence of Japanese military power is still an extremely heated issue in the region.

Among the four major powers in the region, China today is still relatively weak in terms of overall national strength, particularly compared to the United States and Japan. In addition, China's foreign relations are still in the process of recovering from the setback caused by the 1989 Tiananmen incident, with Sino - US ties especially damaged. Nevertheless, given its strategic position, geopolitical proximity, huge economic potential, and traditional relations with the peoples in both halves of

Korean Peninsula, China continues to play an important role in the regional power games. In fact, new developments and Beijing's policy adjustment in recent years have increased China's influence in the region.

The end of the Cold War, however, does not mean the resolution of all old problems. In this regard, Northeast Asia retains some 'glaciers' of the old era.<sup>2</sup> China and Korea remain the last two countries in the world that are still separate due to the Cold - War legacy, and the territorial dispute between Russia and Japan over the "Northern Territories" still need to be solved. Strategic "asymmetries" prevail in Asia, complicated by Russian and Chinese land power confronting American and, Japanese increasing offshore military capabilities.

Thus discussion intensifies over what role Northeast Asia will assume in any emerging international security order. This can be attributed two factors. One is that most of Northeast Asia's indigenous powers - Japan, South Korea and China - are now integral players in an increasingly interdependent global economy. This is critical because traditional measures of power are rapidly

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2. William T. Tow, "Northeast Asia and International Security: Transforming Competition to Collaboration, Australian Journal of International Affairs vol.46, no.1, May 1992, p.1.

shifting in today's world from exclusively military indices to a much wider array of technological, managerial, and natural resource criteria collectively what Joseph Nye has labeled as 'soft power' in international relations.<sup>3</sup>

A second consideration underscoring Northeast Asia's role in the changing global security system is a declining willingness and capacity by both the USSR (or CIS that has succeeded it) and the United States to project and sustain military superiority in the region. The USSR's sovereign disintegration, along with Washington's worsening fiscal plight, have combined to relegate Northeast Asia to a position of comparatively lesser importance in the traditional superpowers' global strategies. Russian and American military deployments in North east Asia, of course, remain formidable even as prospects for a direct superpower confrontation taking place in that theatre are diminishing.<sup>4</sup> Uncertain, however, is how Japan, China, and the two Koreas will interact strategically in what has become one of the world's most prosperous centre of the economic development and trade.

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3. See Joseph Nye, Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power (New York, 1990), especially chapter 6.

4. William T. Tow, no.2, p.2.

Contemporary threats to North east Asian security includes China's pursuit of military modernization; North Korea's drive to become an indigenous nuclear power; and possible Japanese remilitarization because of Japan's intensified concerns about alliance abandonment by the United States.

#### 4.1 Emerging Regional Threat

In today's more complex multipolar security environment, regional threats are complicated by a myriad of global and regional risks that represent 'unexpected threats that somehow always confound predictive efforts': these may include the ramifications of nuclear and conventional arms proliferation, recalcitrant nationalist postures on outstanding territorial and ethnic questions, and disruptions to economic growth caused by domestic strife or by the interruption of access to critical natural resources.<sup>5</sup>

##### 4.1.a China's military power

Over the long-term, China represents the most serious military threat to Northeast Asian security. Apart from American and Russian military assets, China's nuclear force

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5. Lewis Libby, "Remarks on Shaping U.S. Defence Strategy: Persistent Challenges and Enduring Strengths", Adelphi Papers 257, Winter 1990/91, p.66.

is the most important component of strategic power in the East Asian theatre. Chinese leaders increased their country's defence budget by 15.2 percent in 1990, after almost a decade of decline in military spending, in return for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) supporting their hard line against political dissidents during the Tianenmen Incident in June 1989.<sup>6</sup> While military spending in 1991 reportedly increased another 12.1 percent, all is still not well in China's defense sector. China's military - industrial complex is topheavy and financially draining.

Over the past two decades, Chinese international security policy has been relatively consistent in its desire for a stable domestic and international environment which would allow it to pursue its Four Modernizations Program unimpeded. It has sought to be a powerbroker in a bipolar world, maneuvering between Soviet and Western blocs to its own maximum diplomatic and strategic advantage and establishing its status as an unmistakable and independent global power in its own right. It has moved to neutralise regional threats to its own security by establishing its indispensability to the resolution of any conflict in East Asia.<sup>7</sup>

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6. See Harlan W. Jencks, "Civil-Military Relations in China: Tiananmen and After", Problems of Communism (Washington, DC), vol.40, no.3, May-June 1991, pp.14-29.

7. See Roxane D.V. Sismanidis, "China's International Security Policy", Problems of Communism, vol.40, no.4, July-August 1991, pp.49-62.



Historical antipathy between China and Japan have been driven by events outside a strictly bilateral context. Soviet expansionism, Sino-American tension over Korea and Taiwan, and China's quest to achieve great power status in Northeast Asia have all been underlying factors. Beijing is especially apprehensive about Japan's regional and techno-economic attributes which could impede China's own international marketing aspirations and which Tokyo could rapidly convert to strengthen its military capabilities.

Nor is China sanguine about other aspects of Northeast Asia's strategic environment. The Korean peninsula represents a particularly difficult policy dilemma for Beijing. While maintaining a US \$ 3 billion annual trade volume with South Korea and approving Seoul's application for UN membership, China still nominally supports Kim Il Sung's hard-line Marxist government in North Korea. This gives China an advantageous position as a single major power that is both maintaining close relations with Pyongyang and developing new ties with Seoul.

#### **4.1.b North Korea on the defensive**

North Korea's nuclear weapons programme surfaced as the region's most urgent security issue, during the latter half of 1991. Of greatest concern is the Yongbyon nuclear complex, about 100 Kilometers north of Pyongyang.<sup>8</sup> North

Korea's incentives for developing its own nuclear force can be traced to its history of confronting a postwar American nuclear deterrence posture deployed in South Korea; its uncertainty over the security guarantees extended to Pyongyang by the Soviet Union and China, as those two traditional allies move toward more comprehensive politico-economic ties with the prosperous South; and to Kim Il Sung's awareness that his growing strategic isolations one of the last bastions of hardline Marxist - Leninism will become even more precarious as South Korea's scale of economy soon allows it to surpass his own country militarily. Although a nonaggression agreement between the two Koreas was reached in December, 1991, the differences between the two are still acute.

#### 4.1.c Rise of Japanese militarism

Japan's neighbours have always harboured fears about that country's ultimate strategic intentions and potential military capability. The dominant Asian perspective is that as long as US remains committed to a strong regional military presence, future Japanese defence initiatives can be contained within the overriding framework of the American

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8. David Sanger, "Mysterious Korean Plant", International Herald Tribune (Hongkong), November 11, 1991, p.6.

deterrent. A substantial reduction in the American military power in Asia caused by its domestic budget deficits and by the American electorate's growing resentment over what it view as Japan's and South Korea's inadequate defense 'burden-sharing' efforts could remove constraints against Japanese rearmament. Japan currently pays approximately 50 percent of the total costs of US forces stationed in Japan (around 3 billion dollars). The 1991 defense budget in Japan was fixed at a 2.9 percent annual growth rate and the Japan Defense White Paper in July 1991 emphasised Japan's growing international security responsibilities and implied that changes in the country's defense posture would now allow for less restrictive interpretations of what constituted legitimate 'self - defence'.<sup>9</sup>

Over the short - term, however, Japan's military power projection capabilities will remain limited. Japan cannot now seize or control large areas of ocean for a protracted period. The majority of Japanese policy analysts emphasis the need for their country to convey its rejection of military expansionism more effectively by differentiating between economic success and military capabilities, as what other Asians feel toward Japan could stem from the

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9. William T. Tow, no.2, p.10.

differential in economic power which gives way to a groundless feeling of unease.<sup>10</sup>

Of special mention is the Sino - Japanese relations which are predicated on China's need for Japanese financing and technology rather than on any semblance of a common world view. Yet Japan's postwar economic miracle, remains a source of inspiration for other Asians who are pursuing economic development strategies but wish to remain free of western pressure to democratise their societies. Regional affinity with Japan's political system (a dominant political party such as Japan's LDP, in power through successive contested elections) and admiration of Japan's international marketing acumen provides Japan with an opportunity to share an influential East Asian foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

The above discussion gives a clear picture of the changing international relations and the new political balance within the region. In short, the general trend is towards diplomatic normalization, political reconciliation and military détente and disengagement. Diplomatic developments have opened up channels of communication and

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10. Sinichi Kitaoka, "We cannot take Asia Lightly", The Japan Times (Tokyo), July 30, 1991, p.20.

11. Micheal Richardson, "Japan's New Asian Sphere", International Herald Tribune, December 2, 1991, pp.1,11.

provided hope for amicable negotiation of long-standing disputes. This reflects directly on the strategic environment of the Yellow Sea Regime, since it is a part of the Northeast Asia, with its coastal states being the major players in the international politics today. All the disputes and issues related to the Yellow Sea, thus, will be directly influenced by the force of change in the global and regional political balance.

#### **4.2 Geo-political Importance of the Yellow-Sea Regime**

As mentioned earlier, there is a marked change in the traditional measure of power and criteria for assessing the strategic importance of a particular locale or a region. The agendas which determine the geo - political importance have changed from exclusively military indices to a wider spectrum of issues relating to the technology natural resources and economic capabilities of the nations involved. Similarly, in the Yellow Sea, the nature of geo - politics and the strategic issues among the nations have seen a marked change - from confrontation to a diplomacy of mutual economic co - operation. More stress is being laid on restructuring of the economies and revamping of domestic situations.

The Yellow Sea contains probably the most deeply divided regional pattern of state relations in the world.

In addition, to historic enmities, there are cleavages between the countries with different political and economic systems, as well as the competition between the two divided states, Korea and China.

However, a new era is dawning in the region. In economic terms, and to a growing extent in political aspect, the Yellow Sea region has become a major theatre of East - West interaction. As the Pacific Basin becomes an area of increasing international attention and activity, it is natural that the Yellow Sea countries will play an important role in the years ahead. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to trace the economic development in the region.

During the second half of the 1970s, and in the early 1980s, the world economy experienced a great recession, the severity of which was quite unprecedented during the World War II period. This stagflation situation had its roots in the decline in efficiency and productivity associated with the progress of Welfare program in advanced countries, compelled with the break - down of the Keynesian demand management policies.

In the midst of this economic malaise, the Yellow Sea region has been nearly immune to it. In this region are

found one highly developed economy (Japan), successful NICs (Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong), and developing socialist economies (China and North Korea). These economies are very diverse from one another in terms of the stage of economic development, the size of economy, the system of allocation and management, and the objectives of the government policies.

In the economic structure of the Yellow Sea area, where strong complementarity exists among the sub-regional economies, China plays a unique role. The country has often been considered, with justification, as a huge potential market because of its massive population. Even today, when its expansion is still hindered by the existing low per capita national income, the Chinese market is already playing a decisive role in comparison with other developing economies, whether in Asia or elsewhere in the world.

Chinese development has also been spurred on by an enormous rise in trade activities, especially exports. In 1992, China was the 13th largest exporter in the World, and has accumulated a large exchange reserve of US 46 billion dollars, which in 1992 was the sixth largest in the world and just a shade less than the US Economic activities, within the region, has been linked with the bordering

economics to a mutual advantage. Special Economic Zones (SEZs) connect its economic zone to other nations, for instance the Bohai Rim economic region to the Koreans. China's recent announcement of opening up of most of its coast development foretells an accelerated development in this region, and this is likely to become the core region of the Asia - Pacific economy.

In the Yellow Sea region, South Korea ranks second after China in its economic performance. But considering the size of the population and the country, its development is phenomenal. Korea is pursuing a strategy of technology - oriented industrial development, and though it is a resource-poor country, it has highly educated and motivated man - power.

North Korea, on the other hand, has been placing more emphasis on military build - up, devoting whatever resources available to enhance war capabilities under the slogan of the "Fortification of the Whole Country, and Cadreization of the Whole People". This has led to negligence of shortage of food.

Japan, though geographically not strictly part of the Yellow Sea region, may also be included in this study, as it has shown its presence in the region as a third state involved in many marine - resource oriented issues. Its



importance is also related to an increase in economic co-operation with the traditional Yellow Sea nations. Japan has a hand in the success story of South Korea along with the US, and has recently been pursuing economic relations in a big way with China and North Korea.

We find, thus, a strong complementarity existing among the four Yellow Sea littoral nation's economies. Resource-poor, yet capital and skill-abundant Japan and South Korea fits well with the resource-rich, capital and skill-deficient China and North Korea. This explains the strategic importance of the Yellow Sea region seen in the light of technological and economic development. The Yellow Sea acts a channel of communication and mutual cooperation by means of trade, which is one of the primary concern for these fast developing economies.

Economic development has also brought about the growing realization of the economic importance of the Yellow sea-bed, in terms of availability of marine resources, and mineral resources in the sea-bed. The Yellow Sea is one of the rare instances where fishing operation is possible virtually in all seasons. Every specific data on fishery resources in the area, though, is always plugged in with that of the East China Sea, and no definite information is available with respect to the Yellow Sea itself. However, the fishery

resource is fast depleting due to overfishing. Despite this, China leads in fishery exploitation, followed by South and Korea and Japan.

#### 4.3 Chinese Interests in the Yellow Sea

Since the rapid development of industries and economic activities in the yellow Sea region has reached its peak, there has been an increasing demand for petroleum in the area. The sea - bed is known to contain great potential for oil and gas reservoirs. In fact, the Bohai Gulf Basin, is one of the large continental hydrocarbon bearing basins in the Yellow Sea, and its annual output of crude oil amounts to 40 million tons. The Bohai Economic Zone will increasingly become the focus of China's oil development efforts since the area contains half of the country's reserve.<sup>12</sup> Some minor oil and gas discoveries were also made in the Korea Bay and this area could be a site of dispute as it extends into the North Korean jurisdiction. Exploitation has not approached the areas of uncertain jurisdiction in the Central Yellow Sea bed, which is a legal no man's land due to over -lapping maritime jurisdictional claims. However, petroleum reserves and other potential oil

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12. See Selig S. Harrison, China, Oil and Asia: Conflict Ahead? (New York, 1977), pp.42-57.

producing sea bed makes the Yellow Sea an area of possible disputes in the future, while enhancing its strategic importance.

China's strategic interests in the Yellow Sea, initially arose from its perceptions of threat, particularly apprehension caused by Soviet attempts to encircle it, which was not unwarranted. The Yellow Sea was particularly important for the counter - circumvention strategy, because China's capital Beijing's location next to the sea shore of the Gulf of Bohai. A military zone was thus declared in the northern part of the Yellow Sea and the entry of foreign naval vessels was banned from its economic zones too. Coastal and Economic Zone security thus has become a primary concern of China, even after the break - up of the USSR.

Economic development and the four modernization program has also led to an increased consciousness of the natural wealth of the Yellow Sea. One of the motives of the China's naval strategy is to protect the Bohai Gulf Oil field which is under exploitation and the other potential sites for future use. Chinese navy have also sought to protect the fishery and the marine environment, in order to ensure over fishing and pollution in the Yellow Sea.

#### 4.4 The Korean Question

The Korean Peninsula has remained a deeply divided region since the Cold War era. Indeed, antagonism on the peninsula is only a remnant of the East - West conflict in the region, creating different political systems in the North and the South. The ensuing political, economic, ideological and military confrontation has meant that the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean peninsulas has become one of the most critical issues in the post - war global politics.

The situation on the Korean Peninsula has undergone significant changes since the last decade; while in some ways has improved and in others remained uncertain and problematic. Besides normalization of relation between Moscow and Seoul, Beijing has also opened full diplomatic relations since August 1992. Both the Koreas have been accepted in the United Nations and the two have also signed a non - aggression pact as well as a non - proliferation agreement. On the other hand, North Korea has yet to implement these agreements and has still not allowed effective bilateral monitoring and inspection of its nuclear program. Despite its desparate economic situations, North Korea has continued its accumulation of SCUD missiles and long range ballistic weapons.

Although the Korean Peninsula has a promising future in bilateral trade relations and can effectively collaborate to improve the economy of the region, the political environment is quite unstable due to North Korean unwillingness to relieve tensions. For South Korea, the importance of Yellow Sea lies not only in pursuing its balanced regional development, especially along the coast of the Yellow Sea, but also in its defense strategy. With North Korea feeling more pressed into a corner by reforms in China and the Soviet disintegration, and South Korea feeling more confident because of its growing economic prosperity and suspicious of US intentions and even more so of Japan's, there is an added incentive to try to resolve the problem of unification on an intra - Korean basis, instead of depending on "outside powers" to solve their problem.<sup>13</sup>

Thus when Korean Peninsula is reviewed from the geo - political point of view, it is one of the most apparent places where the interests of the four superpowers - Japan, China, USA and Russia have been inextricably intertwined. In other words, due to its strategic location and situation, as well as its role as a gap - narrowing bridgehead between the oceanic - oriented powers and the continental ones, the equilibrium on the Korean peninsula has been formed in

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13. Gerald Segal, China and the Disintegration of the Soviet Union, Asian Survey vol.XXXII, no.9, September 1992, p.860.

triangular relationships, divided into two parts - the relationship between and among the ROK, USA and Japan on one hand, and among China, Russia and North Korea on the other. However, Russia has ceased to play an active role in the peninsula, having no longer an ideological sympathy with North Korea.

Another 'strategic' problem in the region is the potential build up of Japanese military power which complicates the strategic calculations of the two Koreas. While Japanese naval strategy has so far been of limited or no importance in the Yellow Sea, both the Koreas as well as China fear the destabilization of the regional peace, effecting the North east Asian region as a whole.

In conclusion, one may say that Northeast Asia, and that of Yellow Sea in particular, security context has largely shifted from management of superpower competition in the regime to more emphasis on identifying and reconciling sources of heightened intra - regime competition. Northeast Asian security could be better assured by creating institutions or regimes that would facilitate state - to - state cooperation on diplomatic and economic issues. And here, the Yellow Sea Regime may serve to further the region's interdependence and co-operation among coastal states, in order to maintain a status quo and peace for their mutual economic development and prosperity.



The evaluation, so far, of the situation prevailing in the Yellow Sea region and Northeast Asia clearly reveals the chasm in the regional international relations and interaction between the nations involved. Although the coastal states of the Yellow Sea share a common historical and cultural heritage, there are essential differences in national political systems of the bordering states, in their foreign policies and the level of economic development. One also realises how overlapping claims of the states on the sea expanses and the marine resources in a comparatively small size of sea, the Yellow Sea increases the probability of disputes and conflicts, in the region. Drawing attention to these and other peculiarities of the Yellow Sea political environment M.J. Valenica remarked "Conflict has been more the rule than cooperation".\*

#### **5.1 Prospects for Development and Cooperation in the Yellow Sea Region**

If one relies only upon "communities" or "similarities" as the sole criterion for the evaluation of the regional cooperation prospects in the Yellow Sea, those prospects would definitely appear not very bright. But the reality proves otherwise. The socio-political differences in the

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\* M.J. Valencia, "The Yellow Sea, Transnational Marine Resource Management Issues", Marine Policy vol.12, no.4, October 1988, p.382.



region, the complex and acute nature of marine international relations and international disputes do not only fail to prevent the development of regional interaction here, but, vice-versa, they make the need for such interaction ever more insistent.

Certain present-day developments give us every right to look at the prospects of the regional co-operation in the region with reasonable and realistic optimism. The overall improvement of the international situation, the spreading of new political thinking to the international relations, the positive changes in the political environment of the region and lastly, the moulding of the "regional consciousness" has led to the realization by the coastal states of the objective need in closer and more active regional interaction.

Within the region, its inextricably interwoven twin aspects - the role of 'outside' powers in the region which is not always benign and the multitude of national and regional problems of change and development - are posing challenges to the managers of national and international affairs. Two overriding concerns of the region become unambiguously evident. First, there is a keen desire to get in touch and cooperate with neighbouring countries and second, to zealously safeguard their freedom of thought and

action and not allow their destinies to be controlled by 'outside' powers.

All the countries in the region are facing the problems of peace, security and development. There are a variety of political systems and of economic developments, and thus, the need to allow democratic and autonomous functioning of political systems, and that their economies are strengthened if necessary through international economic cooperation.

## **5.2 Prospects for Economic Cooperation**

International economies are moving towards formation of groupings: trade blocs and relevant organization are being set up, normally by two or more neighbouring countries or regions, through the conclusion of formal agreements by which the signatory countries commit themselves to a cooperative relationships. Or it may be that a kind of economic cooperation is shaped when countries and regions which share common features in economic development and have similar economic concerns, engage themselves in an extensive economic exchange and take identical stand in international economic affairs.

The trend towards regional blocs is a product of the evolution of the international politics and economy and has been prompted by certain factors. The dramatic changes in

the world political pattern, since the mid 1980s, has resulted in moving the East-West relations from confrontation to dialogue and the world political scene, from tension to relaxation

The termination of the Cold War has not only shifted the focus of international relations from political and military confrontation to a trial of strength in comprehensive state power, especially in economic and scientific and technology clout, but also broken through the political constraints on economic relationships imposed during the cold-war period of bipolarity. The consequence is an increased economic exchanges and cooperation among countries and regions of different systems or political orientation.

Driven by the accelerated movement in Europe and North America towards a unified economy, the Asian-Pacific economic cooperation over the past few years has been moving ahead at a notably quickened pace. Because of their difference in social systems and level of development as well as in the operational mechanism of their economies, the Asian-Pacific countries at this stage do not possess the conditions for forming a community. Nor is it likely that free trade zone encompassing the whole region will be constructed in the foreseeable future. Pluralism, loose

connections and multi-level operations will characterize the economic co-operation in this for a fairly long time.

Several levels can be differentiated in the economic development of the region, especially in the Northeast Asian area. With the successive shifting of industries that have lost comparative advantage in funding and technology from high-level to low-level economies, economic ties among these countries (especially in the Yellow Sea region) will become more cohesive, while the volume of intraregional trade will grow steadily and the international division of labour will evolve from the vertical to horizontal.

The major cooperative organizations currently in operation in the region include: the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), a consultative forum of political, commercial and scholastic affairs; and the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), a governmental consultative organisation.

At present, the Asia-Pacific economic cooperation is being conducted at three layers: the pan-regional cooperation (APEC), the sub-regional cooperation, and the sub-subregional cooperation. The subregional cooperation refers to various economic cooperation in the East Asian region, embracing countries lying on the west coast of the

Pacific (Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan etc.). On a smaller scale, are included the ASEAN Free Trade Zone, Northeast Asia Economic Sphere, Japanese Sea Ring Economic Sphere and Yellow Sea Economic Sphere (Huanghai Sea Economic Sphere), which includes the states of China, North and South Korea and Japan. The sub-subregional cooperation refers to the bilateral or multilateral cooperations among various economic 'Growth Triangles'.

Economically speaking, the Northeast Asian economies enjoy some degree of mutual complementarily and mutual supplementation. What Japan and South Korea lack in natural resources is exported by China and North Korea and at the same time Japan and South Korea supply capital and technology to China and North Korea. Capital and technology transfers from developed to less developed countries will undoubtedly raise the economic/technological level and therefore, enhance the international competitiveness of the products of the recipients. Thus, the Northeast Asia Economic Sphere and the Yellow Sea Economic Sphere will witness new prospects of vigorous development and cooperation among the economies. A further relaxation of the strained relation between North and South Korea and the bright prospects for their unification, will bring a new boom in economic activity and development in the region.

### 5.3 Changes in the Balance of Power and Prospects for Peace

Compared with the cold war period, the new era unfolds with at least two obvious characteristics: one is that competition in economy and national strength will become the main theme in international relations in place of military and ideological confrontation, and the other is the growing tendency of economic and political pluralism.

In the Northeast Asia and the Yellow Sea area in particular, with the collapse of the cold war structure, and the change of the military posture, all countries have begun making adjustments in their domestic and foreign policy. China and South Korea have carried out reform in their political system in order to fit in with the new international situation. In the course of their policy adjustments, various domestic contradictions have occurred in these countries and especially in South Korea, which has invariably displayed strong nationalist sentiments for safeguarding national interests and sovereignty. On the other hand, in order to speed up their economic development, all the four nations - China, North and South Korea and Japan - are very active in regional economic cooperation and pay attention to improving state-to-state relations.

The system of international relations in Northeast Asia represents an extremely complicated mechanism of interaction

of social, economic and political systems of individual states and groups of states. The basic tendencies and general direction of the development of this immense regional system are being shaped primarily by a resultant force underlying the interrelationship among the two regional powers and an outside power - China and Japan and United States respectively.

Japan has consolidated its position as the second economic power of the contemporary world. It is increasingly becoming one of the main participants in the growing competition in Asian markets. The countries in this region, especially the two Koreas, attract Japan not only because of their geographic proximity but also because of their financial potential and relatively low development of their productive forces. It is also expanding economic ties with China. However by the end of this century, economic and political competition will become increasingly stronger. This competition could become one of the principal components of the international economic and political relations in the Northeast Asia, shaping the general pattern of interaction among the Yellow Sea States.

China, itself will emerge on the world stage as an established world power, as a new and leading 'power centre' of socialism. China already plays an important role in the

Yellow Sea region by encouraging interaction between the Koreans and by opening diplomatic relations with South Korea and influencing North Korea to open up its economy to foreign investments and trade. China will however, remain suspicious of the U.S. military presence in the area (especially in the Korean Peninsula) and be apprehensive towards the increase in Japanese military activities in the Yellow Sea. Consequently, China is likely to build up its defence potential, modernize and develop the Navy and Air Force, and thus turn into a Pacific power.

The United States will continue to be present in the region as an outside power and actively participate in the economic and military affairs in the region. At the same time, the U.S. expansion in East Asia will face an ever-increasing resistance from China and Japan, in an effort to keep American involvement in regional problems to the barest minimum.

As for Korea (both North and South), it is today emerging in a new capacity and its role in enhancing security and cooperation in Northeast Asia and especially the Yellow Sea regime, is growing dramatically. The transition of the USSR-CIS and the U.S. from confrontation to cooperation, which includes the military area, too, has made possible reduction in the U.S. armed forces in the



region south of the Korean Peninsula. Among favourable factors defusing the international tensions around the Korean Peninsula, one notes the rapid and full-scale development of relations between the USSR-CIS and the Republic of Korea (South Korea), including the establishment of diplomatic relations; progress in relations between Seoul and Beijing, and the process of establishing contacts between Pyongyang, on the one side, and Washington and Tokyo, on the other.

However, the North Korean Government's decision on March 12, 1993 to legitimately withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has spoilt this congenial environment in the Korean Peninsula, and the threat of conflict between North Korea and the U.S. led United Nations is not unlikely in the near future. Secondly, North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT will be a serious threat to regional and international peace and stability. On the regional level, the neighbouring countries will reassess their security perspective.

However, the overall picture of international political relations in Northeast Asia will be characterised by greater diversity and polycentrism. The main weights in the balance of power in the region will be economic and political and not military factors, despite the seeming dominance of the

latter. The economic factors, will make themselves felt in the form of the economic, scientific and technological potentials of nations, first and foremost in those aspects than can be utilized as instruments of regional and, in the final analysis, global influence in the increasingly interdependent international system.

Given the ascendancy of the Northeast Asian region in terms of its significance in international economic relations, one can expect an overall intensification of multilateral political interaction among the Yellow Sea States, or even a fundamental shift in emphasis from the Atlantic to the Pacific world of politics, with all its political, military and international and legal superstructures. This means that the Yellow Sea regime will become the focal point of very active diplomatic, military, political and international activities in the area of international law and accords. The forecast underscores the need for the states of this important region to come to grips with the resolution of their existing problems.

As Owen Lattimore, a leading U.S. expert on Asia wrote more than 40 years ago: "Asia was for several centuries an area in which political history and economic fate of hundreds of millions of people were determined by things that happened somewhere outside of Asia. We have now crossed

over into a period in which things happening in Asia, opinions formed in Asia, and decisions made in Asia, will largely determine the cause of events elsewhere in the world". This prophetic observation seems to have finally come true.

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