

PRESENT TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THEIR IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING*

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Introduction

In the Asia-Pacific Region, three important trends appear to be exerting the most dominant influences on international cooperation and understanding.

First, superpower behavior in the Western Pacific appears to be in the direction of greater stability: China's decision to participate fully in the international trade and investments; America's "Pacific shift"; Gorbachev's Vladivostok peace initiative towards Pacific states; and the establishment or greater use of communication channels at the highest levels among the four major powers with differing ideologies and interests (USSR-Japan, China-USSR, Japan-China, and US-China).

Second, trends point to the Pacific trade basin as an area of greatest potential for trade and peaceful cooperation presently and continuing at least in the near future.

Third, private-sector initiatives and developments point to greater role of the people and non-governmental entities in shaping the future economic, cultural and national life of various Asian societies. These trends are: greater people-to-people contacts and culture-to-culture interfaces due to the global communication explosion; greater role of workers in economic production systems occurring or contemplated in the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Japan and the US; and heightened activities of private business interests in pushing for greater and freer trade in ASEAN and Asian NICs (or newly-industrializing countries).

This paper will present and discuss the thesis that these trends point to the Pacific area as most likely going to be a prosperous, stable and indeed "pacific" region in the near-term future and probably also in the long-term future.

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Political Trends

China's Greater Participation in International Trade

Three events in China within the last fourteen years [1977-1991] have dramatically transformed the economic and political landscape of the Asia-Pacific region: 1) the fateful decision of the Fifth National Peoples Congress in the People's Republic of China almost a decade ago to triple its economic output by year 2000 towards the eventual goal of transforming China into an industrial superpower; 2) the opening of diplomatic relations with Japan and the United States; and 3) the signing of numerous trade and commercial agreements with the West. China under Deng Xiaoping is a China more willing to participate in international trade and to accept Western capital and technology, for the mutual benefit of China and her partners in economic and technical cooperation. It is also a China showing a measure of willingness to experiment with use of greater private incentives and freer markets.^{1,2} The extent of this experimentation and the rate and manner of economic growth are presently the subject of internal debate among China's leaders.

It is interesting to note that for both China and the Soviet Union at this time, the commitment to attain economic growth is definitely expressed, together with the recognition that accelerating this growth requires a serious re-examination of their economic production methods and approaches.

For as long as China has not realized her long-term industrial goals, it appears likely that her leaders will not allow China's resources and attention to be diverted by involvement in any expensive physical conflict or protracted military adventurism in the Asia-Pacific region. China in effect had entered into a "tactical alliance" with the West, for the purpose of helping herself to Western capital, technology and markets. These assessments, if accurate, would imply an appreciable increase in the political stability of the Asia-Pacific region in the near-term (five years or less) as well as medium-term (five to fifteen years) outlooks.

Chinese leaders view their physically huge country as an economically underdeveloped Third World country. Their aging leaders view the excesses of the Cultural Revolution as so much lost time that must be made up as quickly as possible. Their self-image is that of being a "leader of the Third World." If the radical experimentations now taking place in their production systems and production relationships succeed, and China becomes an industrial superpower in a couple of decades, there is however no assurance that this small-power self-image with its associated small-power logic will remain and would not be replaced by a big-power image and big-power logic.

The peacetime scenario that could alter the configuration of the Asia-Pacific region is that of a Japan-China economic and trade tandem. Already, Japan is China's top trade partner. The complementarities between the two big powers' respective economies and resource mixes (China with its huge market, cheap labor, abundant natural resources including energy, and need for capital and technology; Japan with its surplus capital, high technology, export orientation, and great need for resources and energy) are tremendous forces towards peaceful cooperation that will surely be felt in the future.

America's "Pacific Tilt"

Since 1776, the demographic and economic centers of gravity of the United States have been shifting westwards. The acquisition of California, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and the Micronesia; the colonization of the Philippines; and the defeat and military occupation of Japan — these actions have sealed America's fateful links with the Pacific for the next decades and perhaps even centuries. Immigration from Asia has been growing faster than that from Europe. The population and economic impact of Asian immigrants to the United States are increasing.³

Her 1975 defeat in South Vietnam was not sufficient to detract from her continuing self-image as "an Asian and Pacific power," but only led to a geographical redefinition of her security commitments in Southeast Asia.

For the first time starting in the 80s, United States Pacific trade had surpassed her Atlantic trade.

If the flag follows commerce, as history teaches that it does, logic suggests that the focus of US foreign policy and military planning will shift increasingly to the Pacific...⁴

The United States is clearly the dominant military power in the region. Here, there is no "balance of power" in the sense of equilibrium arising from near parity in military power among major actors. The American defense umbrella covers Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, the Micronesia, and New Zealand.

The approximate equilibrium or stability that obtains in the Pacific area is one that arises from clear military dominance of one power: the United States. In absolute quantitative terms the Soviet Pacific Navy is still way behind that of the United States' (except in submarines).

Some other events are tending to erode American superiority in the Pacific. There is a conflict between anti-nuclear position of the New Zealand govern-

ment and its commitments under the ANZUS Treaty; while in the Philippines there is the issue of whether or not to renew the Military Bases Agreement beyond 1991. The Philippine Constitution provides that such an action takes the nature of a treaty and is therefore a prerogative of the Congress, which can choose to refer the issue to the people through a plebiscite. The United States views the Rarotonga Treaty which provides for a nuclear-free South Pacific, and the initiatives by Indonesia and Malaysia to have a similar agreement among ASEAN member states, as diminishing its military flexibility in the American-dominated "Pacific Lake."

However, given the commitments of most western Pacific rim countries to the free enterprise system, and given the existing network of trade and Japanese/American investments in the area, it is very likely that stability stemming from a clear American military dominance will remain in the short and medium term horizons.

Gorbachev's Vladivostok Initiative

A responsible world citizen will hold the position that the horrors of a global nuclear war, at the least, provides heretofore an effective deterrent to superpower adventurism and, at the most, provides a basis for a realistic desire on the part of both superpowers for peace. It is unproductive to view one's and one's friend's desire for peace as genuine, and that his enemy's as insincere.

In this context, the Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev's "Vladivostok Initiative" in July 1986, followed by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's Asian tour can be viewed as a bold opening for peace towards the Pacific.⁵

In addition to the Soviet Union's desire for peace, there are reasons to suppose that domestic predicaments form another motivation behind Gorbachev's Vladivostok peace initiative, and that the Vladivostok speech was aimed not at the United States but at other Pacific States, particularly Japan.

Declining productivity during the last two decades (see table below), exacerbated by a large percentage of output diverted to defense, was made worse in the 1980s by declining prices of the Soviet Union's most important export earner, petroleum. Western observers claim that the average longevity of Soviet citizens have declined by two years in the past decade.⁶ A question is how long Soviet consumers will continue to bear the burden in terms of low-quality goods and scarcity of even the most basic commodities, while continuing to be exposed to the affluent lifestyles in the West. Communication, computerization and biotechnology are revolutionizing the industrial structures of Japan and the West, and promising to leave the Soviet economy further behind.

	Declining Growth Rates in the USSR⁷ (% change/5 years)			
	1966-70	1971-75	1976-80	1981-85
National Income	41	28	21	14
Industrial Output	50	43	24	15
Agricultural Output	21	13	9	5
Labor Productivity	37	25	17	13
Real Income/Capita	33	23	18	9

In a speech before the World Forum on Peace and Disarmament in February 1987, Gorbachev declared that:

Our international policy is more than ever determined by domestic policy, by our interest in concentrating on constructive endeavors to improve our country.

This is why we need lasting peace, predictability and constructiveness in international relations.⁸

It has been argued that the key to the industrial future of the Soviet Union lies in the development of vast Siberian resources, and that sooner or later an eastward shift in Soviet domestic and foreign policy attentions will gain momentum.⁹ In this presence, the Soviet Union must come to terms with the political influence and military power of the United States in the Pacific, and with an emerging Japan-China economic tandem. According to this view, a number of Soviet behaviors in and near their Pacific Eastern frontiers are predictable as a neutral course of Soviet economic development dictated by their geography, and less as a sinister plan to overrun the western Pacific — which could mean a collision with the United States, Japan and China, a hardening of China's pro-Western tilt, and even a remilitarization of Japan.

These Soviet behaviors include: 1) construction of the Baikal-Amur Main-line linking Vladivostok and Nakhodka in the Pacific to Lake Baikal, 2) increase in maritime and naval activities in the Sea of Japan, South China Sea and Western Pacific, 3) support of North Korea to obtain access to her ports and land transport network, 4) encouragement of Japanese investments in Siberian network, and 5) the Vladivostok initiative.

Two-thirds of Soviet territory is in Asia, and Gorbachev asserts that the Soviet Union is "also an Asian and Pacific Power." The sooner Asia-Pacific countries come to terms with this geopolitical reality, the more readily would attitudes and structures to build peace develop.

The Soviet Union can develop its Pacific frontiers slowly using scarce domestic capital, or rapidly by attracting additional capital from external sources. Japan, with its burgeoning capital and foreign exchange surpluses and its need for resources that can be provided nearby by Siberia, presents an alternative to the Soviet Union. A Soviet compromise in Japan-Soviet Kuriles islands dispute would open the possibility of a peaceful scenario of Japan recruiting both socialist giants into the mainstream of Pacific trade and investments.

Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev's proposal in Vladivostok to hold an Asian Helsinki-style peace conference in Hiroshima and the arrest of newsman Nicolas Daniloff coming at the heels of the speech, tend to support the interpretation that the initiative is not primarily directed at the United States. After President Ronald Reagan's famous "microphone joke", Soviet leaders must have been long convinced that they have to wait out his term of office to achieve any progress in re-establishing peaceful detente with the United States. Therefore, it appears that the Gorbachev initiative is aimed at other Pacific states, most likely Japan.

The political component of any Soviet Pacific shift may therefore take a rather wide spectrum of modalities and possibilities, from peaceful to conflict-prone. It appears that Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech indicates peaceful directions of Soviet participation in the emerging Pacific trade basin. This is a welcome indication. In the meantime, Pacific states are watching for concrete Soviet actions to confirm its verbalized intentions.

Progress in High-Level Communications Among Major Powers in the Asia-Pacific

Progress in Sino-Soviet and Japanese-Soviet high-level meetings is taking place. After nine years of suspension, Sino-Soviet border talks have been resumed. Gorbachev had promised to reduce Soviet troops from Mongolia and appears to have agreed to the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Mongolia.¹⁰ During the six-nation Pacific tour of Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, he opened the possibility of Vietnamese withdrawal from Kampuchea. Secretary-General Gorbachev is also expected to make a state visit to Japan soon [President Gorbachev is scheduled to visit Japan in April 1991], the first visit by a Soviet leader to Japan. United States

Secretary George Shultz had just visited China, and further cooperation in technical and even military areas is expected.¹¹

Clamor for Greater Democratization

A pattern is discernible among many unrelated political events over the last decade in the Asia-Pacific region:

- 1) the defeat and pullout of American forces in South Vietnam — the end of the domestic conflict between American military planners and the American people who do not support that war, a conflict resolved in favor of the latter;
- 2) the “People Power” revolution which peacefully overthrew the dictatorial regime of former Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos;
- 3) the growth in the Republic of China (Taiwan) of a political opposition that is presenting a second choice to the people;¹²
- 4) the Spring student demonstrations in Shanghai, People’s Republic of China, towards greater democratization that led to the removal of Vice-premier Hu Yao Bang;
- 5) the agreement between China and the United Kingdom for the 1997 return of Hongkong, with guarantee from China of Hongkong’s continuing economic autonomy under a “one China, two systems” principle;
- 6) militant actions by minority groups seeking to express their grievances and claiming a greater share of political and developmental participation in their respective national lives: the Muslims in southern Philippines, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, political opposition groups in Korea, blacks and American Indians in the United States, etc.

These events are not always ideologically-inspired and they take place in both free enterprise and socialist societies. These events demonstrate a universal and plain desire on the part of peoples for greater roles in shaping their own fates, for wider democratic empowerment, and for more effective political voice within their larger societies.

Economic Trends

Many business forecasters and political analysts expect that the "Pacific trade basin" promises the best prospects for growth and stability in the next decades. The next century is said to be a "Pacific Century". They point to the rapid growth of Japan; the emergence of Asian newly-industrializing countries (ANICs) or the "small dragon economies" in Asia (Taiwan¹³, South Korea, Hongkong, and Singapore); the huge mineral and energy resources of Pacific rim countries (Canada, Australia, Indonesia and Soviet Siberia); and the huge market that can be offered by Southeast Asia and, given the right political conditions, also by the People's Republic of China. Average growth of countries in the western Pacific has consistently surpassed those of other regions of the world during the 1960s and 1970s, except for the Middle East.

	Average GDP Growth Rate	
	1960s	1970s
Western Pacific	7.4	6.8
Middle East	6.2	6.9
North Africa	7.2	5.6
Socialist Bloc	4.8	5.9
Latin America	5.1	5.1
North America	5.0	3.7
Western Europe	5.0	3.2
South Asia	4.2	3.5
Africa (excluding North)	4.0	2.5

IMF, 1981

The two biggest "growth engines" of the world economy, Japan and the United States, are located in the Pacific.

A number of political trends, some of which were touched above, has the potential of creating a favorable environment for the growth of Pacific trade, such as:

- 1) the entry of China in the mainstream of global economic and technical cooperation, and the willingness shown by her leaders in maintaining the free enterprise system in Hongkong after China regains sovereignty over the British territory (a "one China, two systems" policy) and, by suggestion, also of Taiwan should the reunification of the two Chinas take place in the distant future;

- 2) the growing importance of the Pacific, especially of Japan, in Soviet domestic developmental imperatives — together with the parallel shift in American trade towards the Pacific;
- 3) the emergence of ASEAN; and
- 4) low likelihood of a major conflict among the inner Pacific rim countries.

Other forces may detract from the trend towards a stable and progressive Pacific trading community. Conflicts and potential conflicts exist among the outer Pacific rim countries. However, the conflict areas (Korean peninsula, Sino-Vietnamese border, Kampuchea, Sino-Soviet border) are not as crucial to the two superpowers' vital interests as Europe is to the Soviet Union and as the Persian Gulf is to the West. The latter areas are more likely candidate areas for any triggering of global superpower conflict than those in the northeast and southeast Asian mainland.

Protectionism, a behavior not unexpected among national actors during a period of global economic slump such as what has been taking place since the 1979-80 escalation of oil prices — is harming global trade, and eventually everybody. Because trading behavior is motivated by comparative advantages between trading actors, trade is an activity that generates benefits for both trading parties.

In mathematical game theory, trading is a "game" which always result in net benefit to both "players" although such benefits may be asymmetrical. In the language of mathematicians, trading is a "positive-sum game."

Protectionism is a form of behavior wherein each trader attempts to tilt the asymmetry in his favor. Both traders still obtain some benefits, no matter how small, otherwise they will not engage at all in any trading activity. Protectionism is therefore basically different from war. In the case of modern warfare, the result is often loss to both parties, although again the losses to the "players" of this type of "game" may be asymmetrical. Nuclear war is said to be a "no win" situation, including that between a small and a big nuclear power. It is certainly a "negative-sum game" wherein both parties exert to tilt the asymmetrical losses against the other.

From this viewpoint, if the choice is only between the two, trade conflict is preferable over military conflict. By the very nature of incentives/disincentives involved, national actors — once they view the consequences rationally — will both try to avoid both types of interaction and will try to develop a healthy trading environment. The more interdependent nations become, one can argue

that the incentive to cooperate in maintaining a stable and progressive trading system becomes even greater.

A welcome related development is the competition between the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the United States and Japan on the other hand, for development assistance to South Pacific countries.¹⁴

The private sector, which shares less of the concerns of their governments towards national security and economic protection interests, exerts a collective force in the direction of a healthier trading system.

In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), thanks to the accumulating fund of political goodwill among its member countries, the non-governmental and private sector groupings notably those under the umbrella of the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) are very active. ACCI had organized many sectoral business groups across ASEAN countries. ACCI members have been more eager than their own government counterparts in pressing for freer intra-ASEAN trade, investments and monetary movements.

The Third ASEAN Summit which was held in Manila in December 1987 created some expectations about the forging of greater commitments towards economic cooperation, although the private sector in ASEAN countries were not expecting dramatic new initiatives or liberalization of trade. Private sector expectations of the pace and scope of regional trade and cooperation are always higher than what their governments in this regional bloc are willing to commit themselves to.

Moving Towards Ideological Convergence?

Although the difference between capitalism and communism remains fundamental at the conceptual or ideological level, a curious and interesting convergence at the production or operational level is taking place in factories in both the East and the West.

There is a convergence across the East-West ideological fence towards greater role of workers in the production system. If this trend continues to its logical conclusion, the future shape of, and possibilities for, international cooperation and understanding could be radically altered towards very desirable direction.

What is this trend?

It is the social experimentation towards giving more management participa-

tion and/or equity ownership to workers in enterprises. This experimentation is now taking place in one form or another simultaneously in China, the United States, Japan and perhaps soon in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev — and hints at the future likelihood of convergence at the operational or eventually at the ideological level.

In the United States, equity-sharing in favor of employees in the form of “employee stock ownership plans” or ESOPs are gaining. Around 7,000 American companies have now adopted ESOP as part of its strategy for achieving greater employee loyalty and productivity. Research on ESOP companies discovered that they display higher profitability, productivity and employment growth than conventionally-owned companies. Employees expressed greater satisfaction over their roles in their companies.¹⁵

A common ESOP modality is for the company to set up an ESOP fund, which receives tax-deductible contributions in stock or cash and which holds company stock in trust for the employees. In many companies, the ESOP trust fund is leveraged; that is, it is used as a basis for borrowing money to buy more company stock. The ESOP plan becomes a technique for the company to raise new capital at the same time that it creates a deferred form of employee benefit.

In the Philippines, about 60% of the stocks of the largest sugar refining company (Victoria Milling Company) is owned by its employees, either directly or indirectly through an innovative pension foundation. The publisher of a local newspaper (Malaya) had started to sell stocks to its employees. A small-scale gold mining company (Olegram) is jointly owned and managed by the capitalist and the miners. The Land Bank of the Philippines, a government financing agency, is planning to set up “village corporations” which would eventually be fully owned and managed by the farmers themselves, with the bank performing the role of a temporary or “steward” investor and manager.

A parallel experimentation is, surprisingly, taking place at the People’s Republic of China. Chinese economic planners and theorists are in effect beginning to deviate from the Marxist principle of sole state ownership of capital, and have begun to experiment in part-ownership of enterprises by company managers and employees. The state continues to own the biggest percentage of a factory’s stocks, but avant-garde Chinese economists believe that

when enterprises are at least partially owned by managers and workers, the latter have a vested interest in making the concerns work¹⁶

And that

To develop productive forces, ownership of the means of production must be diversified on the basis of predominance of public ownership, which also constitutes an important part of the economic structure reform.¹⁷

Interestingly, the Soviet Union under Gorbachev is watching the Chinese experiments in private worker incentives and manager "responsibility system", and have made announcements of economic and political reforms along parallel lines: worker incentives, decentralization/devolution of planning downwards to the factory level, encouragement to writers and intellectuals, "glasnost" (or openness), secret ballot and multiple candidates during election of party officials. These measures, if they succeed in the Soviet Union, will result in greater participation of the Soviet citizen in determining their own economic and political fates.¹⁸

During the visit of Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Qian Qichen to Moscow, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze remarked that they are "following with great interest the Chinese people's efforts to succeed in their modernization program."¹⁹

To revitalize their stagnant economy, Vietnam has adopted new policies: one-year tax holidays and other incentives to "privately-owned production" and inventors, relaxation of the rule against public servants taking a second job, offer of government loans and use of private trademarks, etc. The direction and policy intentions, independent of whether implementation will match policy, are themselves meaningful trends that parallel the trends pointed out above in other countries.²⁰

More well-known is the Japanese style of management which is worker-oriented:²¹ lifetime employment, no lay-offs, assured eventual promotion, worker participation in management via Quality Control Circles or Productivity Improvement Circles, etc. The company is like a big family or "iemoto" (a form of formal organization not based on kinship) wherein the company president is like a father whom everybody can approach for help. The Japanese style of management reflect the Asian premium on the virtues of loyalty and personalism in business and official undertakings.²²

These trends, basically motivated by the desire for greater efficiency of production, and also greater competitiveness in the international marketplace, hinges in the philosophy of integrating workers into a more organic relationship with the owners and managers of the enterprise. These schemes make the worker part-manager and part-capitalist, and if carried further can lead to the

beginning of the blurring of distinctions between laborer and capitalist. A more organic relationship is being developed at the workplace. From different ideological starting points in the East and West, the production-structure in more operational terms is becoming interestingly similar.

If this trend of "operational convergence" continues into the future, then whatever ideological differences will remain between the major powers in the Asia-Pacific would, hopefully, in time not be seen as worth shooting at each other with nuclear weapons.

CULTURAL TRENDS

Much of cultural trends in the Asia-Pacific region are also global in scope. "Democratization" and "decentralization" trends are discernible in the winds of change sweeping the region. More participation and clamor for greater participation of individuals in various spheres of life are felt.

Technological developments are contributing to this trend. Easier communication and travel are bringing peoples and cultures together. Microcomputers are democratizing access to information. Satellite communications and the microwave dish antenna together are promising the prospect of individual households receiving regional television broadcasts. Arguments are made in favor of decentralized non-conventional forms of energy sources such as solar energy collectors, biogas generators, windmills, etc.²³

Competition in world trade are spurring innovations in the workplace and adoption of new forms of incentives for workers. An interesting convergence across both sides of the East-West ideological fence is taking place in the direction of experimentation in participatory management and equity sharing. Non-governmental agents are being more visibly felt as development media across national borders; they serve to empower and organize the poor to enable them to lift themselves from poverty.

Greater Roles of Non-Governmental Institutions

The state has been the powerful actors in the international arena for centuries, the only actors with a monopoly of the use of military, police, monetary and other legally accepted coercive powers over its citizens. In this century especially, other forms of organizations have appeared: non-governmental institutions such as multinational corporations, private assistance organizations, cause-oriented groups (anti-nuclear groups, environmental protection foundations, consumer interest groups, human rights organizations), multi-

lateral development agencies, scientific and technological societies, etc. These organizations operate both within and across state or national boundaries, and have begun to exert influences comparable with those of smaller states.

Institutions and conventions established by and among governments have taken up roles that cannot be adequately handled by individual governments, supplementing governmental roles and often creating a life and a self-interest of their own. Multilateral financing bodies, United Nations agencies, conventions (on warfare, patents, telecommunications, etc.) and declarations of human and social rights as well as duties of states — all these are little by little diluting and altering the once powerful sole authority of the king or the state.

Local self-help organizations are learning to assert their roles and complementing government efforts at rural development.²⁴

The cry for human rights can be utilized as a political tool by some governments, but it can not be denied that it is contributing towards shaping a global code of conduct, a global moral consensus, which empowers the individual vis-a-vis the coercive powers of states.

Non-governmental organizations or NGOs have mushroomed, for example, in ASEAN. However, NGOs must apply for affiliation with the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia and are required to abide by the policies, guidelines and directives of the ASEAN Secretariat. ASEAN NGOs span a wide range of concerns: art and dances, language, health, scientific professions, law, tourism, and other areas. Examples of ASEAN non-governmental groups are: the ASEAN Law Association, the ASEAN Women Circle of Jakarta, the ASEAN Cardiologists Federation, the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation, and a host of others.

The Nairobi meeting on "The Enabling Environment for Effective Private Sector Contribution in Development in Sub-Saharan Africa" in October 1986 is an event that illustrates the essence and fundamental motives behind the trend described above:

This [meeting] occurs at a time of some disillusionment with the results of previous development strategies based on substantial government control or intervention in the economy, subsidized but loss-making industries, despite protection, and forms of dirigiste planning. Instead developers are seeking succour in the private sector, a designation which spans a broad spectrum from the small businessman to the vast multinational corporation, from the grassroots peasant group or voluntary worker to such national or international non-governmental

organizations such as Oxfam, Caritas or InterAction.²⁵

This trend appears to parallel the decentralization/ Privatization experiments being undertaken in the factories in China, the United States and Japan, and being eyed by Soviet leader Gorbachev (described above).

Greater People-to-People Contacts

The dizzying pace of advances in telecommunications, mass media, computers and other information-related technologies is creating what has been called a "global village" or an "electronic cottage." There are more opportunities for people-to-people contact through

- (1) international exchange in television programs;
- (2) wide dispersal of music, movies and instructional materials through the video cassette recorder/player, the compact disc and now the digital audio tape;
- (3) international direct-dialing;
- (4) instant transmission of documents through telefacsimile (telefax);
- (5) local area networks for information exchange;
- (6) subscription to data banks within and beyond national borders; and so on and so forth.

New fields are being created such as cross-cultural management, artificial (computer) intelligence for translation between languages, bilingual television broadcasting, live televised cross-national interviews or conferencing, and so on.

More intensive and extensive cross-cultural interactions are accentuating awareness of differences and similarities among cultures, lifestyles and viewpoints at the level of the man in the street. Information is transferred across borders more readily and inexpensively than traded goods. The patent outcome of these socio-technological changes is empowerment of the people arising from greater awareness of issues.

ASEAN, after establishing the political basis for cooperation in economic and functional (or technical) areas, is presently at the threshold of entering into a qualitatively higher phase of greater cooperation in the cultural sphere that will

tend to merge perceptions, harmonize interests and blend cultures more closer.

An ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information (COCI) facilitates intra-ASEAN cultural and information exchange programs. An ASEAN Cultural Fund was established to finance COCI projects. Some examples of how cultural exchange is carried out are: art symposia, yearly ASEAN film and music contest and festival, children's book production, painting and photo exhibits, an ASEAN exchange program of radio and television artists, an ASEAN Youth Music Workshop, yearly ASEAN Film Weeks in ASEAN capitals, joint projects by the ASEAN Motion Pictures Producers Association, etc.

ASEAN has been moving from mainly official/governmental towards greater private sector and people-to-people contacts. Citizens of ASEAN member states can now travel within ASEAN without prior visas. Regional news items are beginning to compete for space in local dailies with international news items. It is not unrealistic to expect the development of a regional cooperation in daily live television broadcasting, similar to what is obtaining at a subregional scale between Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. The concept of an ASEAN University has been floated and discussed for years, and the time appears ripe for political commitments in this direction.

CONCLUSION

The trends in international relations in the Asia-Pacific region, in the political, economic and cultural spheres, together point to a coherent over-all trend of: higher levels of peaceful cooperation and people-to-people understanding (see Summary Table). A parallel trend towards decentralization and democratization is taking place at all levels: political, economic and technological.

SUMMARY TABLE

<p><u>Political Trends:</u> PRC: fuller participation in international trade, investments, and technological cooperation</p> <p>US and USSR: greater attention to the Pacific; less likelihood of nuclear confrontation compared elsewhere</p> <p>Popular clamor for wider democratic participation</p>
<p><u>Economic Trends:</u></p> <p>Pacific nations: long-term movement towards a Pacific trading community; protectionism during short-term global recession</p> <p>An indicative "operational convergence" in production systems among free enterprise and socialist economies</p>
<p><u>Cultural Trends:</u></p> <p>Greater role of private sector and NGOs</p> <p>Greater people-to-people contacts</p>

The words that most closely describe the essential element or pattern discernible behind the above trends are

- (1) "people-orientation" or "empowerment of the people", and
- (2) "trade-orientation" as a stabilizing force in international relations and in building a network of interdependence and "economic organicity" among nations.

The Asia-Pacific region best demonstrates these welcome trends in international cooperation and understanding. Altogether the mix of trends appear to support the commonly-held view that the Pacific area is most likely going to be a prosperous, stable and indeed "pacific" region for international cooperation in the near-term and hopefully also in the long-term futures.

NOTES

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²"China Since Mao." Newsweek, 8 September 1986, pp. 8-17.

³"U.S. Asians Reach Out." Asiaweek, 8 March 1987, p. 55.

⁴Ernest Conine (Los Angeles Times). "America's Pacific Tilt." The Manila Chronicle, 22 December 1986, p. 5.

⁵"Mission from Moscow: Shevardnadze Hits the Diplomatic Road to Press the Kremlin's Asian Initiative." Newsweek, 9 March 1987, pp. 30-33.

⁶Shinsaku Hogen. "The Diplomacy of Deceit." Japan Times, 8 September 1986, p. 6.

⁷Robin Pringle. "Mr Gorbachev's Economic Reforms." The Banker, February 1987, pp. 15-17.

⁸"Soviet Policy `to Pursue Peace to Better the Country'." Straits Times, 18 February 1987, p. 26.

⁹Serafin D. Talisayon. "Western Pacific by 2020." In: "The Pacific Lake: Philippine Perspectives on a Pacific Community" edited by Jose P. Leviste, Jr. Manila: Philippine Council for Foreign Relations, 1986, pp. 189-208.

¹⁰"An End to Isolation." Far Eastern Economic Review, 5 March 1987, pp. 18-20.

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