

Comments on the papers of Rudka and Hirose

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First, I would like to comment on Rudka's paper, which is a general explanation of sub-regional cooperation in Central Europe and its meaning. He is a specialist on SEFTA, and I should admit that from the economic point of view, SEFTA is beyond my knowledge. But the only thing I can say is that I wonder if SEFTA can be called sub-regional cooperation. Prof. Rudka said SEFTA resembles EFTA, but I think it is difficult to say EFTA is sub-regional cooperation. Taking the examples of Sweden and Finland, who are now members of the EU, they left EFTA but still play active roles in Barents Sea cooperation and other sub-regional cooperation. Anyway, as my field is not Eastern Europe, but Northern Europe, I will comment on sub-regional cooperation in general.

To begin, Prof. Rudka says that after the short-lived process of quick disintegration of political and economic ties among some Central and Eastern European Countries, to compensate for these ties, other new initiatives have come into being, namely sub-regional initiatives. This explanation is true but not new, because this trend already attracted Western European's attention, a few years ago. Of course I do not intend to criticize him on this point, rather my interest is why people in Eastern Europe are making much of sub-regional cooperation now. It seems to me that this tendency has something to do with today's situation in Eastern Europe. Now Poland is taking the lead toward the EU, and also taking the initiative in sub-regional cooperation. Would Prof. Rudka explain the current Polish role in sub-regional cooperation, which he did not refer to at all?

The second question I have is about sub-regional cooperation from a comparative perspective. Actually, at the last symposium of the Slavic Research Center I was asked the same kind of questions by Prof. Hayashi. As Prof. Rudka has pointed out, sub-regional cooperation in general has several

characteristics. First, is its loosely organized framework which is in striking contrast to that of the EU. The EU has a very firm organization and rock-solid laws but, on the contrary, sub-regional cooperation has only a secretariat, and sometimes does not have even that. But secondly, sub-regional cooperation has a multi-layered or multi-dimensional cooperative network, and as Prof. Rudka points out, this network contributes to the deepening of inter-state and cross-border cooperation. In the Baltic Sea cooperation, for example, it is said that nobody grasps the whole of these cross-border organizations or activities. This is only possible when sub-regional cooperation has no state-oriented, top-down organization such as the EU has. Thirdly, the main concern of sub-regional cooperation is practical activities, that is utility, including environment, communication, energy, media, small and medium-sized enterprises, education, agriculture, science and technology, and so on, as Prof. Hirose points out. But of course there are differences. For example Barents Region cooperation, which unfortunately Prof. Rudka does not refer to, but in my understanding is a unique cooperation, was initiated because of environmental concerns, not only on a commercial basis, but also on a military basis, and was later characterized by cooperative activities, which contributed to Comprehensive Security in a broader sense. Fourthly, sub-regional cooperation is not an entity in itself. It only exists in a relationships with other larger forms of cooperation, especially in the process of Europeanization and the EU. Even environmental policy, which is often considered to be independent, is inevitably included in the EU's policy. It is often said that the EU environment policy has a stronger integrative element and also is connected with its European domestic market. In the Treaty of Roma, Paragraph 130r says that protection of the environment should be a component of other areas of Community policy. But because of EU policy, it is believed that sub-regional cooperation is an important step toward Europeanization. This tendency is often pointed out for Baltic Sea Cooperation, and therefore many researchers call it the "Baltic Sea Model".

This explanation is rather Scandinavian-oriented, I have to admit. But at the same time, different types of sub-regional cooperations share common general characteristics and they are moving in the same direction. If you agree, please compare the Eastern European case with other cases, according to these four points.

Next I would like to comment on Prof. Hirose's paper, but first, I want to make two points clear. In Europe even today, it is important to consider small power politics, especially when most people are interested only in the big powers, which have strong influences on the EU or NATO. International politics in Europe is not so simple and in small power politics we can find many interesting factors which may change the traditional framework of international politics. Also in "regionalized Europe", we can't ignore any of the EU, NATO or sub-regional cooperation. The term "sub-region" is somewhat controversial, but it was used in FAO's report in 1989. Now, in the nineties, people tend to use this term not only about European regional cooperation, but also about Asian, South American and African regional co-operation.

In this respect, Hirose's paper is interesting because he gives us an opportunity to consider the relationships between the future of small power politics and regional cooperation. But, at the same time, I dare to say that in Hirose's paper, Austrian foreign policy and Central European Initiative have nothing to do with each other. If the title is correct, I can't help but think that his paper is split into two parts. So the only question I can ask him is about his title*, that is, what kind of relationships are there between Austria and the Central European Initiative? Please answer not only in terms of the Austrian government, but also as you understand it.

Concerning this question I would like to point out two things. First, to my understanding, if we think about the future of neutral states, which are faced with major problems now, we can do this in comparison with the other European neutral states. By way of example, we can refer to Finland and Sweden. These countries, now as members of the EU, border on Russia on the

north, which is a rather important fact. Since the end of the Cold War, it is more crucial for a neutral power to consider its relationship with Russia than its relationship with Eastern Europe. Both Finland and Sweden, like Austria, are not declaring the abandonment of neutrality, and do not belong to the WEU. But Finland and Sweden are paying special attention not only to their multilateral policies but also to their bilateral policies with Russia. For example, Finland decided on a financial aid plan for Russian environmental problems this year, and Sweden aids Russia economically, too. That means that both these countries are making much of their future relationships with Russia, laying the cornerstone for their neutrality. The Finnish and Swedish neutralities are characterized by their flexibility, in each sense, and because of this they are different from the Austrian policy. But I think the relationship with Russia is one important factor for neutrality*¹.

Secondly, if you relate small power politics to sub-regional cooperation, you have to clarify the relation between high politics and low politics, because small power politics is a trial in which small powers can apply balancing strategies to protect their security in the central system of rivalling great powers, but sub-regional cooperation concentrates not on security issues, but on practical issues, as Prof. Hirose and also Prof. Rudka point out.

Note

- 1 Regarding this point Prof. Ueta said to me, "What is the meaning of neutrality now? As for as the aid policy toward Russia, we can say it is EU's policy". Because I didn't have time to answer at the symposium, I am adding some words to this question. CD According to the Finnish and Swedish governments, neutrality means non-alignment. (2) Even if the EU decides to aid Russia, we cannot say that all of the EU members' policies are decided by the EU. There is sufficient room for each country's own policy.

Editor's note: the original title of Hirose's paper was "Austria and the Central European Initiative".