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New Regionalisms, Border Problems and Neighbouring Policy: A Comparison Between Southeast Europe and East Asia

Abstract

Since the end of Cold War, what we call 'new regionalisms' has flourished in the world. In Europe, the process of EU enlargement has advanced to include former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. In East Asia there have emerged significant region-wide organizations: ASEAN expanded to include ten member states. In addition, the post-Cold War period witnessed the emergence of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN+3, and EAS (East Asia Summit) and so forth. However, it is often said that the institutionalization of political cooperation in East Asia has been much slower compared with that of Western Europe. This paper examines some main features of regionalism in Southeast Europe and East Asia from comparative perspective, referring to the meaning of the border problems in both regions and the neighbouring policy of Serbia and Japan.

Keywords: Japan, Serbia, borders, neighbouring policy.

I. Changes in the Meaning of "Border" After the Cold War Period

1. Changes in Border Implications

As D. Newman states, we live in a world of lines, above all border lines. We may not necessarily see the lines, but they order our daily life practices, strengthening our belonging to, and identity with, places and

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groups in a society, while – at the same time – perpetuating and reperpetuating notions of difference and othering (Newman 2006: 143). We are all cognisant of the fact that borders create (or reflect) difference and constitute the separation line not only between states and geographical spaces, but also between the 'us' and 'them', the 'here' and 'there', and the 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. In this sense, borders retain their essential sense of sharp dislocation and separation, a sharp cut-off point between two polarities (Newman 2006: 148).

It has been proposed that borders have generally become more porous, weaker, and vulnerable since the acceleration of economic globalization and the collapse of socialist regimes in the early 1990s. Along with this line, one should point out that border studies have flourished since then. On this point, J. Anderson states that there exist three reasons for the academic development on the border studies; sudden proliferation of new borders with the fragmentation of the 'Soviet bloc' and Yugoslavia (which also produced some of the 'collapsed' or 'premodern' states); the differentiating effects of the EU's 'deepening and widening' on internal and external borders; and the more general and fundamental transformations of existing borders with globalization (Anderson 2001).

First, it is important to note that the rise of nationalism and ethnic conflicts occurring in the process of transition from socialist and authoritarian regimes have rekindled our interests in the meanings of boundaries. In contemporary discussions, ethnic identity and the advent of the right of national self-determination as such have become the central agenda for the political constitution of the nation-state (Newman, Paasi 1998: 187). In relation to the second reason, I. Likanen points out that the process of EU integration and enlargement has deeply affected how borders and boundaries have been perceived, both in the realms of social sciences and public life. Furthermore Likanen goes on to contend that state borders, at least in Europe, are now getting consolidated into a new relative permanence, but their traditional barrier function appears to be diminishing remarkably, thanks in great measure to European integration and enlargement. This has opened up considerable room for diverse interpretations and research perspectives on borders (Likanen 2010: 21).[2]

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2   A. Paasi notes that in Europe, states are reducing the significance of international borders, with clear benefits. Yet for most of the world they remain one of the defining elements of the polity. See also Ratner 1996: 606.

Regarding the third reason described above, E. Soja examines the meaning of boundaries in this period of globalization which in its manifold forms has loosened up older territorial boundaries of political power and cultural identity, and stimulated the emergence of new and different forms of bounding political economies and cultures at every geographical scale. Among the most useful and interesting ways to describe this loosening up and selective reconfiguration is through the terms "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" (Soja 2005: 35).

2. Advent of Border Studies After the Cold War Era

According to T. Tamminen, recently the spatial scope of analysis has become increasingly diversified, with the primary interests shifting from the level of nation-building or interstate relations to the global and the local level as well. Border-drawing that takes place at supranational or sub-national level is seen to be as important an identity-producing practice as the border-drawing and maintaining actions involved in nation-building processes. Therefore, the borders studied are not merely physical but also mental: divisions between 'us' and 'others', enemies and friends, difference and sameness (Tamminen 2004: 404).

Referring to the recent characteristics of border studies, Tamminen points out that today the actual, concrete frontiers are no longer forming the centre of research interest: the focus is now on the geopolitical action that produces and reproduces them. Boundaries are no longer seen as 'neutral' territorial dividing lines or as simple political constructs. Their creation is considered to play an important role in the discursive construction of spatial and political identities (Tamminen 2004: 404).

Furthermore V. Kolossov states that traditional approaches explain the phenomenon of state borders first of all by political factors, interpreting them as a mirror of neighbouring states' military, economic and political power. The essence of states, their policy and their hierarchical relations at the global and macro-regional levels were seldom taken into account. States were considered as given realities or 'natural' regions, acting as an integral entity (Kolossov 2005: 612).

We have traditionally understood borders (or boundaries) as constituting physical and highly visible lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces. Only more recently have we begun to understand that it is the bordering process, rather than the border per

se, which affects our lives on a daily basis, from the global to the national and, most significantly, at the local and micro scales of sociospatial activity (Newman 2006: 144). New approaches to border research suggest that political boundaries—as well as territories and their inherent symbolisms and institutions—are social constructs and processes rather than stable entities. A historical perspective is therefore inevitable in any account on the meanings of political boundaries (Paasi 2005: 18).

In this academic environment, A. Paasi refers to the important themes of border studies such as the implications of the existing (competing) boundary narratives for the ideas of identity, citizenship, political and territorial loyalties and territorialization of memory and the power relations that these narratives may reveal (Paasi 2005a: 670).

3. Postmodern Constructivist Approach to Border Problems

Recent studies include analyses of the postmodern ideas of territoriality and the `disappearance' of borders, the construction of sociospatial identities, and socialization narratives in which boundaries are responsible for creating the `us' and the `other' (Newman and Paasi 1998: 186). New postmodern approaches successfully complement traditional methods of border study, considering boundaries and cross-boundary interactions at different levels (from the global to the local) and as a single system. For this reason, recent publications show that the scale of analysis is not naturally determined, but represents a social construct and can be used to define the object and the scope of a conflict.[3]

Newman refers to the common features of various border studies in the academic research. For political scientists, borders reflect the nature of power relations and the ability of one group to determine, superimpose and perpetuate lines of separation, or to remove them, contingent upon the political environment at any given time. For sociologists and anthropologists, borders are indicative of the binary distinctions (us/them; here/there; inside/outside) between groups at a variety of scales, from the national down to the personal spaces and territories of the individual.

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3   See Kolossov 2005: 628. Postmodern approaches help us to understand how a political discourse can define the position and role of particular boundaries and borders in foreign and domestic politics and thus enable critical thinking about political choices; *Ibid.*

For international lawyers, borders reflect the changing nature of sovereignty and the rights of States to intervene in the affairs of neighbouring politico-legal entities. For all disciplines, borders determine the nature of group (in some cases defined territorially) belonging, affiliation and membership, and the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized (Newman 2006: 147).

Borders are no longer being understood merely in terms of boundary lines and institutional practices. Instead, the focus has shifted to social, political and cultural processes that construct both borders and our conception of the world (Likanen 2010: 21). In other words, boundaries should not therefore be taken for granted, as if they were elements with one essence, function and trajectory. Neither should boundaries be understood as having some universal, independent causal power. Here it is important to note that boundaries are social and political constructs that are established by human beings for human— and clearly at times for very non-human—purposes and whose establishment is a manifestation of power relations and social division of labour (Paasi 2005: 27).

Here one needs to pay attention to the significance of the postmodern or constructivist approach to border studies. Namely, the construction of identity narratives is itself a political action and part of the distribution of social power in society. Newman and Paasi emphasize that in the study of state boundaries, it is important to know whose `plots' or `turfs' dominate these identity narratives, what is excluded or included by them and how the representations of `us' and `them' are produced and reproduced in various social practices such as the media, education and so forth (Newman and Paasi 1998: 195-196).

One can safely state that our understanding of territories and borders is less rigid and less deterministic than in the past. Territory and borders have their own internal dynamics, causing the change in their own right as much as they are simply the physical outcome of decision-making. They are as much perceived in our mental maps and images as they are visible manifestations of concrete walls and barbed-wire fences. But the latter has not disappeared altogether and, in the existing ethno-territorial and political conflicts, borders are being constructed or moved – as a means of consolidating physical separation and barriers (Newman 2006: 146).

II. Characteristics of Regionalism in Southeast Europe

According to D. Bechev, from the constructivist perspective, regions are invented by political actors as a political programme; they are not simply waiting to be discovered. Regional identity, therefore, is what people, politicians and states make out of it; it is what meaning they inject into history and culture. What we learn from constructivists, therefore, is that geopolitical identities change over time and that defining others and drawing borders between 'us' and 'them' is a key step in the articulation of identities, be they national or regional. The Balkans has proved to be a fertile ground for those arguing about the critical role of imagination and 'othering' (Bechev 2004: 84).

There is no generally agreed definition of Southeast Europe. Moreover, numerous alternative names have been given to various parts of Southeast Europe; the Near East, the Balkans, and Turkish Europe and so forth. According to Bechev, the Southeast European project has been an attempt to overcome the area's marginalization vis-à-vis the West, but the emergence of a coherent regional identity was inhibited by the impossibility to draw clear-cut borders in order to demarcate Southeast Europe (Bechev 2004: 84).

M. Todorova examines the terminology of the Balkans in her book entitled Imagining the Balkans. As in the case of the Orient, the Balkans have served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the "European" and the "West" has been constructed. With the reemergence of East and orientalism as independent semantic values, the Balkans are left in Europe's thrall, anticivilization, alter ego, the dark side within (Todorova 1997: 188).

In the wake of the resolution of the Kosovo crisis of 1999, the Stability Pact served as a turning-point in terms of defining and naming the region, rendering the use of the term 'South East Europe' central to its operations (Solioz and Stubb 2009: 6). Although SEE (Southeast Europe) was only at 'arms length' from the member and the candidate states of the EU from east-central Europe, the EU had hastened to fix its external border with SEE as early as the early 1990s, in order to insulate itself from the zone of 'disorder, war and backward area'. From the EU perspective, sub-regional cooperation in SEE must be understood in a new geographical environment. It should be acknowledged that the EU has started to focus in a new way on what happens beyond its borders (Solioz and Stubb 2009: 10).

Difficulties concerning regional cooperation in Southeast Europe are in general linked to conflicting definitions of such concepts as region and regionalism. Institutionalizing regional cooperation is a process of region-building. How to define Southeast Europe or the Balkans is a complicated issue. Moreover, the major dilemma associated with regional cooperation is the conflicting or contradictory understanding of the goals or significance of such a project. On one hand, regional cooperation can be understood as part of a larger European integration process; on the other, fears have been raised that the magnitude of regional integration thus brought about might even hamper the plans of those countries in the region wishing for a relatively quick integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures and which could lead to increasing isolation of the Balkan region (Tamminen 2004: 405-406).

III. Characteristics of regionalism in East Asia

Viewing the advancement of regionalism and integration processes, one of the most notable differences between Europe and East Asia is that the institutionalization of political cooperation (or regionalism) in East Asia has been much slower than in Western Europe. Undoubtedly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was established in 1967, now stands as the most durable forum that has ever emerged in the 'developing world', and has proved to be an important vehicle with which the countries of Southeast Asia can manage and promote specific interests. However, the development of a wider East Asian regional grouping which, in addition to Southeast Asians, would include the major economies of Northeast Asia – China, Japan, and South Korea – had not gained any meaningful momentum until the late 1990s (Beeson 2005: 978).

Here one needs to point out some features of East Asian regionalism in comparison with the European one. Europeans have tended to seek political union based on collective sovereignty, whereas East Asians have rejected that goal. The desire to create a single market has been a major driving force leading to European integration, whereas most Asian governments see the complete elimination of economic barriers as more of a threat than an opportunity. Furthermore, national resistance to shifting sovereignty to a regional level is stronger in East Asia than in Europe. "This may partly explain why in East Asia the building of a security cooperation structure has so far been less than

productive. The sensitive concerns with national sovereignty, the state monopoly on foreign policy, and popular nationalism in East Asia have long impeded the formation of transnational linkages that could facilitate the development of a regional identity transcending national borders" (Frost 2008: 11).

According to B. He, the key to understanding Asian regionalism lies in nation-states. The core element of Asian regionalism is the centrality of the nation-states. While regionalism is an application instrument to national building, nationalism is always of the essence (He 2004: 120). In contrast to the projects for building nation-states and national economies after the Second World War, the project for region building lacks a clear objective, a shared vision, and strong political support. Political leaders in East Asia express an awareness of regional developments and frequently float proposals for various kinds of joint projects and regional institutions. But they extend very little energy persuading domestic constituencies about the importance of these ideas and devote very few resources to their implementation (Evans 2005: 196).

In addition to this, unlike the earlier European experience, American power has primarily had a constraining rather than an enabling impact on the process of regionalism in East Asia. Not only did the American policy effectively fracture the putative region along ideological lines for approximately fifty years (Beeson 2005: 979). In Europe, the exigencies of war-time reconstruction and the emerging bi-polar confrontation with the Soviet Union gave a critical spur to regional cooperation. In these political and economic situations, the American material assistance accompanying political leverage played a key role in directing the course of regionalism in Western Europe.

Things could hardly have been more different in East Asia. Not only was the Cold War a powerfully centrifugal rather than centripetal force in East Asia, but even when the region was eventually freed from its paralysing influence, East Asian regionalism has accelerated pace despite American wishes. American power in such circumstances facilitated and encouraged European regional initiatives. In East Asia, however, American power has either made regionalism difficult because of the essentially bilateral strategic architecture it has created or actively opposed regional initiatives that threatened to undercut its influence (Beeson 2005: 982).

U.S. foreign policy in East Asia for the past half-century has been based on the concept of the so-called "hub and spokes," with the United

States as the hub projecting its power into the region by means of bilateral alliances and arrangements with such countries such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and so forth (Curtis 2004: 206). Since the end of the Cold War, however, U.S. strategy in East Asia has been rooted in three new assumptions. The first is that retaining bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea will be of critical importance not only to contain any nation but to prevent the creation of a power vacuum and to facilitate the rapid deployment of U.S. military forces to meet contingencies as needed. The second is that East Asian regionalism, like Western European regionalism, is not necessarily inimical to U.S. national interests. The United States needs to avoid a kind of knee-jerk reaction to proposals for regional institutions of which it would not be a part. East Asian nations have vital interests in having the United States maintain a political, economic, and security presence in the region. The third assumption underwriting U.S. policy in East Asia should be that U.S. interests are to be served well by the birth of multilateral approaches to regional security (Curtis 2004: 207).

IV. Changes in the boundary of East Asia

'East Asia' is more a functional concept than a geographical one. The expansion of economic, political, and security interdependence has been constantly changing the scope of East Asia. If we follow this definition of the region, its geographical scope could be expanded or narrowed, depending upon the intensity of interactions in a specific issue area. In this functionalist approach, therefore, the boundary of East Asia varies with the issue areas.

Recently, scholars have turned towards a constructivist understanding of region as constant definition and redefinition. Regions are not longer being understood merely in terms of boundary lines and institutional practices. Instead, the focus has shifted to the political, economic, and military processes that construct the region. Regions are neither static nor permanent structures. As human constructs, they emerge, exist for some time and disappear.

From this constructivist perspective, it may be said that Japan's mapping of East Asia has changed and fluctuated since the end of the Second World War; the Far East, the Northeast Asia, the Pacific Rim, Asia Pacific, and East Asia. In this sense, the boundary of East Asia has

been modified since then. However, in the constructivist approach, it is important to ask who invented these regions, and for what purposes and interests. Beyond the functional approach to regionalism, we must ask who needed these regional frameworks and whose interests they served.

In 1950s and 60s, 'the Far East' was in general use in security issues. Article 6 of the US- Japan security treaty says as follows: for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States can operate its land, air and naval forces out of facilities in Japan. In 1970s, 'Northeast Asia' was widely used in the context of US military strategy, then in 1980s 'the Pacific Basin' or 'the Pacific Rim' in the development of economic interdependence between ASEAN and developed countries in this region, including the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea and Australia. After the end of Cold War, the Asia Pacific, as in APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation), and East Asia, as in East Asia Summit, became commonplace expressions. As mentioned above, the boundary and range of East Asia has been changed and invented.

Regarding the member states or the boundary of East Asia Summit, there is no satisfactory consensus among member states (Terada 2006: 8-9). China insisted that ASEAN+3 should be the official members of East Asia Summit, but Japan pressed that India, Australia, and New Zealand should be invited besides ASEAN+3, accepting the proposal from the United States to counterbalance the influence of China in this region. After all, in the first East Asian Summit, ASEAN+3 and India, Australia, and New Zealand (ASEAN+3+3) participated in the Summit. In the 6th East Asia Summit held in Indonesia in 2011, Russia and the United States became the official members of the Summit (ASEAN+3+3+2). The United States is concerned about the rising Chinese power and how this will affect the developing East Asian regional framework.

V. Neighboring Policy in the Age of New Regionalism: Serbia and Japan

From a historical point of view, neither Northeast Asia nor the Balkans developed regional cooperation and regional identity in the modern age, because almost all countries in both regions got involved in

the great power rivalries and confronted one another. In the Cold War period, both regions were divided into two blocs. After the end of the Cold War many frameworks of regional cooperation were developed in the world, but both regions were faced with their own problems and could not construct regional cooperation schemes on their own initiative. In the Balkans, multilateral regional cooperation mechanisms such as Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe (SP) and South East European Initiative (SEEI) were founded after the settlement of the Yugoslav conflict. However, these cooperation processes have been mainly initiated by external actors such as NATO, the EU, and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), not by regional ownerships (Sadakata 2009: 109).

On the other hand, Northeast Asian countries could not even establish such a multilateral cooperation scheme. In the Cold War era, though three countries of Japan, China, and South Korea joined ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) scheme as members of ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) and ASEAN+3, they could not develop a Northeast Asian regional cooperation framework on their own initiative. In order to substantiate regional cooperation, the good neighboring policy is indispensable based on a mutual understanding of the specifications of the regional geopolitical environment (Frost 2008: 11-14). From this perspective, I would like to examine and compare the neighboring policy of Serbia in the Balkans with that of Japan in Northeast Asia.

1. Serbia and its Neighboring Policy

In the 1960s and 1970s the main point of Yugoslav diplomacy was to pursue a non-aligned foreign policy with Asian-African countries. However, in the post-Tito era, Yugoslavia began to emphasize the importance of cooperation with the Balkan countries for ensuring its own security. In the 1980s the intra-Balkan cooperation got new impetus as there were issues to be resolved, such as problems of surrounding regional economic cooperation, advancement of transportation systems, and the international recognition of national minorities. Yugoslavia took the initiative to convene a Balkan ministerial conference in the latter half of the 1980s.

In the 1990s Serbia acquired new neighbors in the process of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, (the former Yugoslav republics: Croatia,

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro). Due to the ethnic conflicts and the UN sanctions, not only the neighboring countries but also the Western powers and the international community in general regarded Serbia with hostility. In this political situation, the Yugoslav neighboring policy was interrupted for almost a decade.

The geostrategic position of Serbia has drastically changed in the past 20 years. The Yugoslav conflicts brought Serbia a new geopolitical environment along with new neighbors. Serbia began to focus on neighboring countries once again. At present, good neighboring policy is indispensable for the stability and cooperation in the Balkans, and it is among the most important policies for the Serbia's post conflict nation-building process.

After the democratic change of 2000, the international political and geostrategic importance of Yugoslavia considerably diminished within the overall context of European and world politics. First, the then foreign minister G. Svilanović asserted that Yugoslavia should behave as a small and impoverished country, without great pretensions. The first priority was an urgent regulation of its membership and integration in numerous important international organizations. Second, in the field of bilateral relations, priority was given to the normalization and promotion of cooperation with neighboring countries, especially the new neighbors, the so-called independent former Yugoslav republics (Svilanović 2001).

According to the official statement, multilateral regional cooperation is among the highest priorities of the Serbian foreign policy. Serbia has participated in many multilateral regional processes and initiatives. After the conflicts were over, in the process of peace-building, various schemes of the Balkan cooperation have been launched. Nonetheless, there is a lack of positive regional identity shared among the countries in the region.

More recently, in a new geopolitical environment after the so-called UDI (Unilateral Declared Independence) of Kosovo, Serbian political reaction was strikingly prudent and responsible. Foreign minister V. Jeremić stated as follows: "Serbia's decision to contest the Kosovo issue at the International Court of Justice constituted a paradigm shift in favor of peace in the Western Balkans. Our democracy responded with maximum restraint. We ruled out the use of force and the imposition of economic sanctions against the breakaway province. Serbia decided to

defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity through diplomacy and international law" (Jeremić 2009).

Thus presently Serbia has adopted more refined diplomatic policies and activities. I may refer to this as "reasonable diplomacy." From these diplomatic behaviors, it may be said that Serbia has been reborn as a stable and pivotal state in the Balkans. In other words, Serbia is now an indispensable anchor of the Western Balkans.

2. Japan and its Neighboring Policy

Here, I would like to discuss Japanese neighboring policy and geopolitical position in contemporary Northeast Asia.

As to the relations of Japan with South Korea and China, emotional and political estrangement separated these three neighboring countries for the last several decades. There are many controversial issues between Japan and its neighboring countries. Among these there are so-called "historical issues" such as Japan's war responsibility in relation to the issues of comfort women, the Nanking Massacre of 1937, and the Japanese history textbooks. In addition, there exist other critical issues including the abduction of Japanese citizens (Avery 2008) by North Korea, Japan-Korea and Japan-China territorial disputes, and so forth. In a word, the history between Japan and its neighboring countries has been an unfortunate one. In these circumstances, it is often said that Japan and its relations with its neighbors is "near and far": geographically "near" but politically and psychologically "far".

Japan focused overwhelmingly on its relations with the United States rather than on those with its neighboring Asian countries. The Japan-US alliance was very much strengthened through the US strategy toward Northeast Asia in the Cold War era. Even after the end of the Cold War, in June 2008 Foreign Minister Mr. Komura stated that the Japan-US alliance had not only ensured the security of Japan but also served the "public good" in Asia, providing a basis for stability and prosperity in the region. One of the main goals of Japanese diplomacy was to establish a virtuous circle of strengthening the Japan-US alliance and engaging in a proactive diplomacy toward Asia by creating a synergy between the two (Koumura 2008).

In contrast with this, the Japanese government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) emphasized the importance of Japan-Asian

relations with the aim of building the East Asian Community and mak-ing the greatest possible effort to develop mutual trust with China, South Korea, and other Asian countries. However, at present Japanese diplomacy towards Asia has not necessarily produced good results be-cause of its backlog of problems with neighboring countries. In short, we can say that the Japanese government has continuously regarded the US, over the Pacific Ocean, as its neighboring country since the end of the Second World War.

3. Two Neighboring Policies: Serbia and Japan

In the post-Cold War era, the Balkan countries were swallowed up by the wave of the EU/NATO enlargement. Furthermore, in the wake of so-called new regionalism and through the response to the UDI of Kosovo, Serbia was reborn from a "difficult" neighbor to a "reasonable" and "stabilizing" power in the Balkans. On the other hand, Japan has been locked in the stalemate of Northeast Asian international politics.

Japan cannot find a brighter future with the US, but also cannot strengthen its foothold in Northeast and East Asia. Faced with ever de-veloping China, Japan, as if it were a drifting nation, can think of noth-ing but balancing between the US and China (Smith 2009: 232-237). Additionally, in North Korea's nuclear impasse, Japan still cannot play a leadership role in the Six Party Talks. P. Ness states that Japan, poten-tially a major player remains hesitantly deferential to American leader-ship, but most of the other countries in the region want to engage with both the United States and China (Ness 2005: 232; 242-243).

In the regional politics, while Serbia grew from being a "difficult" neighbor to a stable and pivotal country in the Balkans, Japan doesn't seem to be able to grow out of the "difficult" neighbor role, and cannot be a pivotal country in Northeast Asia. In this sense, Japan has many things to learn from Serbia's experience in its neighboring diplomacy. Located in critical regions of international politics and faced with strained situ-ations, it is imperative for both countries to contribute to the stability and prosperity of the respective regions ever more ardently.

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