

4

Development of the Tumen River Region and Its Effect

Ding Shicheng

Since the end of World War II, there has been a rapid development of regional economic organizations in the world (Table 4.1). In 1988, countries and zones in the world with a population over 1 million totaled 131. Only 15 of them are not members of regional economic organizations; of these, 14 are in Asia. In 1992, the 12 EEC countries will form a unified economic bloc. A common market of the same nature will also appear in North America. This trend toward forming economic regions and blocs will promote economic and technical cooperation in Northeast Asia as well.

NORTHEAST ASIA

In its broad sense, Northeast Asia covers Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, China's Northeast, Northwest, and North, and the former Soviet Union's Eastern Siberia and Far Eastern Region. Its area is 17,500,000 km² (40 percent of Asia) and its population is 580,000,000 (20 percent of Asia). In its narrow sense, it includes Japan, North Korea, South Korea, China's Northeast and the former Soviet Union's Far Eastern Region. Its area is 8,280,000 km² (19 percent of Asia) and its population is 290,000,000 (10 percent of Asia). The economy and technology of these six countries in Northeast Asia are quite complementary (Table 4.2). This complementarity favors economic and technical cooperation in Northeast Asia.

There are several reasons for the possibility of cooperation in Northeast Asia:

- Dialogue has replaced confrontation; exchange has replaced cold war.
- Both North Korea and South Korea will join the United Nations.
- The countries in the region are quite close to each other geographically.
- Throughout history there have been broad exchanges in culture, economy, and technology among these countries. ✦
- The economic and technological complementarity is favorable for cooperation.

Table 4.1 The emergence of economic regions in Northeast Asia

	1960	1970	1980	1988
Number of regional organizations	8	13	18	25
Number of member states and zones	45	71	113	137

Table 4.2 Economic and technological complementarity in Northeast Asia

Country	Practical technology	Space technology	Resources	Capital	Labor
Russia	import	export	export	import	import
China	import	export	export	import	export
North Korea	import	import	export	import	export
South Korea	export	import	import	export	export
Japan	export	import	import	export	import
Mongolia	import	import	export	import	import

Table 4.3 The economic circle around the Sea of Japan

Region	Area	Population	GNP
Northeast Asia (narrow sense)	8,280,000 km ²	290,000,000	\$3,040 billion
Economic circle	2,900,000 km ²	280,000,000	\$3,030 billion
Percentage of economic circle in Northeast Asia	35%	96%	99%

- Specialists, scholars, and the people of these countries all share a desire for cooperation in order to promote their common prosperity.
- Relations among these countries have steadily improved, and personnel exchanges and international trade among them have increased.
- It has received the UN's attention and wishes to further such cooperation.

Economic cooperation in Northeast Asia involves several aspects:

- Further developing international trade in the region
- Increasing the investment ratio in the region
- Setting up the Northeast Asian Bank and promoting economic development in Northeast Asia

- Carrying out joint development
- Establishing economic coordinating organs

Scientific and technological cooperation also involves several aspects:

- Enhancing bilateral scientific and technological cooperation in the region
- Promoting preferential technical transfer in the region
- Enhancing regional science and technology exchanges
- Promoting regional science and technology cooperation
- Increasing science and technology personnel exchanges in the region

THE ECONOMIC CIRCLE AROUND THE SEA OF JAPAN

The core of Northeast Asia is the economic circle around the Sea of Japan. This circle includes Japan, North and South Korea, China's Northeast, and the former Soviet Union's Amur Oblast, Khabarovsk Oblast, and Primorski Krai (Table 4.3). Areas around the Sea of Japan, however, are relatively backward: The coastal area of Japan facing the Sea of Japan is not as advanced as the other side of Japan; the Pacific Coast lags behind the Baltic Coast in the former Soviet Union; the eastern part is more backward than the western part of the Korean peninsula; the eastern part of Jilin province is not as developed as the Liaodong peninsula in China. There are several reasons for this relative backwardness: long periods of war and political confrontation; persistent lags in transport and communications; the closed state. To change this region's backward status will call for dialogue in place of confrontation, quickened steps in opening up to the rest of the world by the countries and zones concerned, accelerated construction work in transport and communications, and joint development of the Tumen River Project.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TUMEN RIVER REGION

Development of the Tumen River region is the starting point in Northeast Asian cooperation. The Tumen River, which originates in Changbai Mountain, is a river separating China and Korea and the former Soviet Union and Korea. With a full length of 516 km, it has a drainage area of 33,000 km², an annual discharge of 6.9 billion m³, and an average discharge of 219 m³ per second. It is 300 to 500m wide at its lower reaches, 3 to 3.5m deep in its main channel, and, if dredged, navigable for ships of 2,000 to 3,000 tons.

The Tumen River region refers mainly to China's Jilin province, North Korea's Ryong and North Hamgyong provinces, and the former Soviet Union's Primorski Krai. This region lies in the very center of Northeast Asia. Northeast Asia in both its broad and narrow senses, as well as the economic circle around the Sea of Japan, all have the Tumen River region as their core. The mouth of the Tumen River is less than 1,200 km from all the cities with more than 100,000 people in Northeast Asia (in its narrow sense).

Moreover, the Tumen River region is where China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea share borders. At present, each of these countries has already established customs and there has been border trade among the three. Scholars and specialists in China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea suggest that special and free economic zones be set up in the region.

Scholars and specialists in China suggest the reconstruction of the Tumen River seaport. Both the former Soviet Union and Korea have their ports in the region. Reconstruction of this seaport will facilitate contacts and exchanges between Northeast Asia and other countries. Neighboring countries have shown their support for development of the Tumen River region, and UNDP favors the development of the region as well.

Development of the Tumen River region is favorable to cooperation in Northeast Asia for several reasons:

- It calls for the joint efforts of countries in Northeast Asia.
- It will promote the development of adjacent regions in China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea.
- It will further the development of coastal areas of both Japan and South Korea facing the Sea of Japan.
- It will also help the participation of Mongolia in Northeast Asian cooperation.

There are three plans for development of the region:

1. China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea separately develop one or more areas in the region.

2. Of the three countries, China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea, two of them jointly develop one area.

3. China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea jointly develop one area in the region that borders on all three countries. This plan is the best of all. The only place to carry it out is the lower reaches of the Tumen River.

There are three levels for development of the region:

- A small Golden Delta free economic zone. This zone covers Korea's Unggi, China's Jingxin, and the former Soviet Union's Posyet—an area about 1,000 km².
- A big Golden Delta special zone. This zone covers Korea's Chongjin, China's Yanji, and the former Soviet Union's Vladivostok—an area of more than 10,000 km².
- A belt that would ultimately include China's whole Northeast, the former Soviet Union's Far Eastern Region, and Korea's Ryong and North Hamgyong provinces.

Communications and transport are a primary concern. Development should:

- Improve communication networks in both the small and the big Golden Delta, and install telephone systems of programmed control.

- Improve the present airports of Vladivostok, Yanji, and Chongjin, start international routes, and plan an international airport in the small Golden Delta.
- Reconstruct China's Tumen River seaport, expand Korea's seaports of Chongjin, Unggi, and Najin, and expand and open the former Soviet Union's seaports of Nakhodka, Vladivostok, and Posyet.
- Extend the Tumen-Hunchun railway to Kraskino and the Hunchun-Fangchuan railway to Khasan.
- Build a 9,300 km-long high-speed railway that will link Jingxin, Tumen, Changchun, Ulaanbaatar, and Berlin.
- Build four expressways: one linking Chongjin, Yanji, and Vladivostok; another linking Unggi, Jingxin, and Posyet; the third linking Hunchun, Fangchuan, and Khasan; and the fourth linking Vladivostok, Posyet, Fangchuan, Unggi, and Chongjin.

In the small Golden Delta, the three countries should build new cities at the mouth of the Tumen River in order to form a group of cities close to each other with a total population of 1 million. They should also build new centers of industry, commerce, finance, information, technology, and education. Finally, they should construct infrastructure such as electricity, water, heat, gas, drainage, and roads to serve the new cities.

Research and planning are essential. China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea should:

- Carefully research and plan projects for the construction of new cities.
- Do a better job of planning and designing in the early stages of construction.
- Issue necessary laws, policies, and regulations.
- Coordinate well in their planning and execution.

A transnational free economic zone would have administrative management subordinated to China, the former Soviet Union, and Korea. A transnational free economic zone coordinating organization should be set up. This organization would:

- Ensure the free flow of personnel, goods, and capital inside the zone.
- Carry out a Hong Kong model inside the zone.
- Carry out common planning and a reasonable distribution of industries inside the zone.
- Carry out a preferential tax policy inside the zone.

THE TUMEN RIVER SEAPORT

The "Japan Route" (a Silk Road on the sea) was recorded in the Bohai state of ancient China. In 1905, Hunchun was opened to foreign countries; a commercial port was established in 1907 and general customs was set up in 1909.

Hunchun was a busy port during the 1920s and the 1930s, with 1,500 ships calling there annually. After the Zhanggu Peak battle between the former Soviet Union and Japan in 1938 during World War II, the Japan army closed the Tumen River and no Chinese ships could get to the sea along the Tumen.

China has the right to build the Tumen River seaport for several reasons:

- Historically China had the right of access to the Sea of Japan and actually exercised it.
- In 1860, the government of the Qing dynasty signed an unequal treaty with Russia, ceding 400,000 km² of its territory along the Sea of Japan to Russia.
- The Hunchun border treaty signed in 1886 provided that China had the right to the sea and China exercised that right until 1938.
- Since the end of World War II, China has lost and restored its right to the sea repeatedly.
- The governments of both the former Soviet Union and Korea agree that China has the right to access to the sea along the Tumen River.

The purpose of constructing the Tumen River seaport is to:

- Quicken development of the local economy.
- Facilitate participation and involvement in Northeast Asian cooperation.
- Promote Northeast China's reform and opening up to the outside world.
- Restore China's right to the sea.

Several factors support construction of the seaport. Since large amounts of goods from Northeast China must be shipped along the Tumen River to countries around the Sea of Japan and those in North America, the port would help the interflow of commodities among countries in Northeast Asia. When dredged, the Tumen River is navigable for ships of 2,000 to 3,000 tons. If the river is dredged and the railway bridge is rebuilt, the Tumen River can be made navigable for large oceangoing ships. Since the Tumen River seaport not only benefits China, but also neighboring countries, it is possible to obtain international support.

The port can be built phase by phase, growing from a small-sized port to a big one gradually. Its handling capacity should reach 20 million to 50 million tons after a few decades. The plan for the seaport's construction has several options:

- Rent seaports of the former Soviet Union and Korea.
- Construct a river/sea boat and barge dock at the inland river.
- Construct a 10,000-ton-class port at the inland river.
- Construct a channel.
- Construct a seaport along the Japan Sea.

Constructing a seaport at the inland river involves several aspects. The problem of four months' freezing can be resolved by constructing a reservoir, deep digging, using icebreaking boats, or using an ice-river barge. The reclamation period for constructing a dock with a handling capacity of 2 to 4 million tons a year and also for dredging will be five years. The reclamation period for constructing a deep-water inland port of the 10,000-ton class is presently estimated at more than ten years. Up to the year 2000, the inland port can only handle 30 to 50 percent of the total goods. The rest can be handled by the ports of the former Soviet Union and Korea. European Hovercraft have a maximum range of 830 nautical miles, a speed of 35 nautical miles per hour, and can navigate in waves 3 to 5m high. This kind of craft is suitable for passenger handling across the Japan Sea. The best type of ship for handling goods is the carrier barge and the sea/river boat.

EFFECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

In China, the development will:

- Accelerate economic development of the Yanbian area in particular.
- Further the economic development of Northeast China.
- Encourage China to participate in Northeast Asian international cooperation.
- Advance the opening of Northeast China to the outside world.

In the former Soviet Union and North Korea, the development will:

- Promote economic development of Russia's Far Eastern Region and Korea's Ryong and North Hamgyong provinces.
- Advance the opening of the former Soviet Union and North Korea to the outside world.
- Increase border trade among China, the former Soviet Union, and North Korea.
- Further the development of ports of the former Soviet Union and North Korea along the Sea of Japan.
- Encourage the former Soviet Union and North Korea to become involved in Northeast Asian cooperation.

In Japan and South Korea, the development will:

- Quicken the economic development of areas facing the Sea of Japan.
- Benefit the export of technology, capital, and commodity.
- Benefit the restructure and adjustment of industries.
- Benefit their involvement in Northeast Asian cooperation.

In Mongolia, the development will:

- Benefit its cooperation with other countries in Northeast Asia.

- Benefit development of the eastern part of Mongolia.
- Promote Mongolia's access to the Sea of Japan.
- Advance the opening of Mongolia.

In other countries and regions, the development will:

- Promote economic cooperation between Northeast Asia and other countries.
- Attract other countries to invest in and export technology to Northeast Asia.