

СТРАНЫ, НАРОДЫ И КУЛЬТУРЫ STATES, NATIONS AND CULTURES

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Opportunities and Challenges in Contemporary China – Japan – South Korea Cooperation: The Cultural Aspect

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Abstract. *As the three major economies in Northeast Asia, China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea play a crucial role in promoting regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. The effectiveness of regional cooperation needs to be based on mutual trust through culture, and the cultural characteristics of different countries can reflect the political and economic relations between different countries, and at the same time also play a role in the establishment of cooperation mechanisms in different countries. China, Japan, and South Korea are geographically close to each other, with similar cultural characteristics and rapid development of cultural industries, each of which has formed its own unique cultural advantages. Under the support of the concept of the "Belt and Road Initiative" to build a community of common destiny for mankind, promoting cultural cooperation between China, Japan, and South Korea, achieving cultural tolerance and cultural identity among the economies will be conducive to deepening regional cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea. Therefore, it will significantly enhance the effect of regional cooperation. This paper will analyze the cultural foundation of the regional cooperation mechanism between China, Japan, and South Korea from the perspective of their cultural commonnesses and cultural differences, and at the same time point out the potential opportunities and challenges that China faces in cultural cooperation, so as to provide new perspectives for advancing multicultural identity and tolerance, and deepening cultural, political and economic cooperation.*

Keywords: Northeast Asia; regional cooperation; cultural cooperation; Belt and Road initiative; cultural tolerance

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Возможности и вызовы современного сотрудничества Китая, Японии и Южной Кореи: культурный аспект

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Аннотация. Китай, Япония и Республика Корея являются тремя крупнейшими экономиками, которые играют решающую роль в развитии регионального сотрудничества в Северо-Восточной Азии. Эффективность регионального сотрудничества должна быть основана на взаимном доверии, а культурные особенности отражают политические и экономические отношения между государствами в целом и играют роль в создании и развитии механизмов эффективного сотрудничества. Китай, Япония и Южная Корея находятся географически в одном регионе, имеют схожие культурные особенности и быстрое развитие индустрий и технологий, каждая из которых сформировала свои уникальные культурные преимущества. При поддержке инициативы «Пояса и пути», направленной на создание сообщества единой судьбы человечества, развитие культурного сотрудничества между Китаем, Японией и Южной Кореей, достижение культурной толерантности и культурной идентичности между экономиками будет способствовать углублению регионального сотрудничества. Таким образом, этот фактор значительно усиливает эффективность регионального сотрудничества. В предложенной статье анализируется культурная основа механизма регионального сотрудничества между Китаем, Японией и Южной Кореей с точки зрения их культурной общности и культурных различий. На основании проанализированных материалов определены потенциальные возможности и вызовы, с которыми сталкивается Китай в культурном сотрудничестве, чтобы обеспечить новые перспективы для развития мультикультурной идентичности и толерантности, а также углубления культурного, политического и экономического сотрудничества.

Ключевые слова: Северо-Восточная Азия; региональное сотрудничество; культурное сотрудничество; инициатива «Пояс и путь»; культурная толерантность

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1. Introduction

The all-round cooperation among China, Japan and the ROK is an important part of promoting the building of a community of common destiny for mankind, and the increasing trade exchanges and investment cooperation among the three countries have made important contributions to the economic growth and development of the Asian region. The cultural and economic influence of China, Japan and South Korea is diverse and far-reaching, and their cultural and artistic works and industrial development have brought rich and diverse cultural experiences and economic opportunities to the world, and promoted interregional cultural exchanges and economic cooperation. If we review the history of China, Japan and South Korea, it is not difficult to find that China, Japan and South Korea have already had some exchanges and cooperation in the historical period, for example, Buddhism originated in India and then spread from Central Asia to China, and then came across the sea to Japan and South Korea, and Japanese envoys were sent to Japan to study and visit during the Tang Dynasty. As the major economies in Northeast Asia, the important position and cultural influence of China, Japan and South Korea in the Asian region is undeniable, in the current cultural cooperation, China, Japan and South Korea in cultural cooperation projects and mechanisms, have a certain degree of breadth and depth of the development of the region and have an important role in mutual understanding. However, there are both opportunities and challenges in the process of cultural exchanges and cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea. In the future cooperation, China still faces some potential challenges such as historical disputes, political factors and cultural differences. In response to these factors, this paper aims to discuss the potential opportunities and challenges of cultural cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea, explore possible ways to strengthen cooperation, put forward suggestions and prospects for promoting cultural cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea, and explore new areas and opportunities for cooperation.

2. Comparing the Cultures of China, Japan, and South Korea

2.1. Cultural Commonness

In a common geographical environment, people facing the same problems and challenges will naturally develop similar values and interests. Shared language habits, religious beliefs and a global perspective will increase the sense of belonging and identification with a society or group, a country or a nation. Individual cultural identities also become the cultural commonalities of the group. Recognizing national cultural differences and accepting foreign cultural identities are important elements in seeking common ground and promoting cultural integration.

Historical links between China, Japan and Korea began as early as the Han Dynasty (2nd century BC) in China, and notable cultural exchanges happened further, including the dispatch of Japanese ambassadors to the Tang Dynasty (around the 8th century BC). Buddhism also originated in India, spread to China via Central Asia, and later crossed the ocean to Japan and Korea. Unlike the religious practices of India, Zen was a new form of Buddhism created in China that promoted self-cultivation and contemplation of the principles of the world. In Japan, Zen had a significant impact on East Asian culture by being integrated into the local culture and emphasizing the "peace" aspect. In Korea, for example, Zen is still the largest branch of Buddhism. Zen was introduced to Southeast Asia, but its influence was limited. Common ideas such as Buddhism and Zen provided the basis for exchanges between the three East Asian countries. East Asian cultures are religiously and philosophically compatible, and there is room for greater exchange. In addition, as countries in Northeast Asia deeply influenced by Confucian culture, these three countries share similar cultural characteristics in terms of building a strong sense of responsibility in society, emphasis on ethical relationships among people, promotion of a sense of collectivism, and emphasis on the rule of propriety and self-restraint [1]. In China, Japan, and Korea, the boundaries between superior and subordinate in social relations are very strict, and most people have a clear sense of obeying those who have absolute power, including leaders, elders, teachers, and so on [2]. This strong collectivism is not only conducive to internal cohesion and external competitiveness, but also to improved organizational performance when extended to groups, societies or regions.

Another important example of cultural interaction in East Asia is language. Both Japanese and Korean borrowed Chinese characters and once formed a "Chinese character culture circle". In modern times, however, when Japan and Korea opened their doors to the West, the part of the language that they had borrowed went back to China. Language produces literature, and the aesthetic symbols of East Asian literature are very similar. Korean poetic tones, Japanese haiku and traditional Chinese poetry often feature bamboo forests, gardens and the moon. These symbols are rarely found in Western literature and are particular traces of East Asian culture [3]. China, Japan and Korea share similar cultures and already have a deep understanding of each other that can be used as a basis for co-operation.

2.2. Cultural Differences

The Asian region is also one of the most ethnically, religiously, geographically, historically, and culturally complex regions in the world, and North-East Asia is one of the regions with the greatest number of differences and divergences in terms of political systems, economic levels, socio-cultures, ideologies, and military security.

As a unified multi-ethnic state with 56 ethnic groups, China's ethnic policy is based on political equality, with special provisions at various levels for the development of economic and cultural endeavors in ethnic minority areas, respect for the customs of ethnic minority areas, and the development of ethnic minority languages and writing systems. Under the general environment of upholding ethnic equality and safeguarding ethnic unity, the national autonomous regions have achieved long-term stability and shared prosperity, and have created a stable situation of cultural mixing. Unlike China, Japan has a relatively simple ethnic composition, with the Yamato ethnic group accounting for up to 98 percent of the population, and can be regarded as a mono-ethnic country, while South Korea, with the Korean ethnic group as its main ethnic group, has a number of commonalities among members of its society in terms of religious beliefs, cultural traditions, living customs and values. This mono-ethnic structure shows a strong sense of national responsibility and historical mission, but it is also prone to narrow ethnocentrism and a strong sense of national superiority, rejecting foreign cultures and being intolerant of cultural identities different from their own.

3. Status of China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Cooperation

3.1. Opportunities

To resolve the crisis of mutual trust and the development dilemma among the economies of the Northeast Asian region, the first step is to strengthen the integration of national cultures and deepen cultural identity. Through a deep understanding of diverse cultures and the promotion of traditional friendships, an open, inclusive, balanced and comprehensive regional cooperation framework should be established so that political communication and trade flows can be driven by people-to-people communication, thereby laying a humanistic foundation for the promotion of a mutually beneficial and win-win model of global governance.

China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, which are all part of the East Asian Chinese character culture area, have both cultural commonalities and national cultural characteristics formed by historical and cultural inheritance. In the long process of development, due to differences in countries, nationalities and ideologies, as well as changes in living conditions, social systems and humanistic environments, different countries and nationalities are bound to develop different values and cultural differences. Language is a bridge for narrowing cultural differences and reducing the clash of civilizations, as well as an important means for achieving "people-to-people" and "heart-to-heart" communication. As President Xi Jinping pointed out in his speech entitled "Join hands to create the splendor of the Silk Road" at the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis in Tashkent, "An important tool for communication is language. The charm of a country's culture and the cohesion of a nation are mainly expressed and transmitted through language. It is only by learning different languages that we can understand the differences of different cultures, look at the world objectively and rationally, and get along with each other in a tolerant and friendly manner" [4].

The Belt and Road Initiative is based on the principle of "people-to-people communication", without which political communication will be even more difficult. Cultural identity is a prerequisite for people-to-people communication. In the rapidly developing information age, the role of modern media in cultural communication is of great significance [5]. First, through extensive media cooperation, network propaganda and information sharing, we

can reduce the impact of sudden foreign cultures on society, reduce the indifference or rejection of other cultures by a certain country or nation, and form an open and diversified interactive mechanism to enhance the exchange and dissemination of regional multiculturalism. Second, media cooperation should emphasize technical support, service linkage and people-to-people communication. The purpose of cooperation is to benefit all parties and make progress together, rather than copying and reproducing, or stopping at superficial language translation or exchange. The media of different countries can establish a mechanism to exchange articles and news, share excellent media resources, jointly promote and disseminate the cultures of different countries and ethnic groups, strengthen cultural identity and promote multicultural integration. Finally, a mechanism for exchanges and visits among media professionals to enhance mutual understanding and close cooperation among various media in China, Japan and Korea, should be established, so as to seek common ground while respecting differences and complementing each other's strengths. Only by correctly interpreting the culture of other countries media can more accurately disseminate information on national culture and politics, reduce contradictions and differences caused by asymmetric information, and establish an open and developing cultural communication mechanism.

Relying on the rich and interrelated historical relics, traditional arts and folk cultures of the three countries, the combination of humanistic exchanges and tourism resources should be promoted, as well as joint development of tourism and cultural and creative products with the most historical and humanistic characteristics of the three countries; exploration of the development of regular exchange programmers among schools should be conducted, and establishment of a cooperation mechanism for language training of students should be considered, same as exchange visits of scholars and cooperation in research need to be promoted; and work on special research on historical reconciliation and regional integration, and establishment of consensus in academic fields should be endorsed. To build consensus in the academic field, eliminate disputes and break historical ties. Common efforts are needed in order to strengthen cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and to enhance mutual understanding and promote mutual friendship.

In addition, the consensus on "separation of politics and economics" avoids political obstacles. At present, China, Japan and the ROK have reached a consensus on "separating politics from economics" in trilateral cooperation, which means reducing obstacles to economic and trade exchanges caused by political issues and promoting positive interaction among the three countries at the strategic level [6]. Deepening economic cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea is not only in the interest of the three countries, but also conducive to the prosperity and development of the Northeast Asian region and the world as a whole [7]. Economically, the mechanism of China-Japan-South Korea economic cooperation has been steadily established, and trilateral trade and investment liberalization has made positive progress. Under the "ballast" of the economy, the three countries are less likely to have major conflicts on security issues; in the security field, China, Japan and South Korea are trying to avoid conflict, maintain a certain level of strategic mutual trust and develop cooperation. Politically, the South Korean government is actively working to improve Korea-Japan relations, and the restoration of Korea-Japan relations will bring more opportunities and possibilities for China-Japan-ROK cooperation [8].

3.2. Challenges

In fact, due to long-standing differences in geopolitical claims, territorial disputes and historical perceptions, the Southeast Asian region has developed a complex and contradictory relationship between countries that are economically interdependent and politically lacking mutual trust [9].

First, the differences in national and political systems have affected the different social characteristics of people. After a long period of feudal autocracy under the influence of Confucianism, Chinese people generally have an instinctive psychological and habitual behavioral characteristics resulting in obedience to those in power, and a higher degree of acceptance of the social status, distribution system and power given to individuals, as well as stronger self-discipline and self-restraint.

Unlike China, which has a socialist system, Japan and Korea are economically advanced capitalist countries, with a constitutional monarchical political system in Japan and a presidential and republican system in Korea. Although under the influence of long-term militarism, some Japanese still have the remnants of "military statehood" in their thinking, the development of

democracy in Japan is on the right track, and South Korea, as the fastest developing democratizing country in Asia, shares the same commonality of advocating fairness and justice, democracy and righteousness. In addition, Japan and South Korea are more inclined to avoid the unpredictable future and prefer orderly and lawful paradigms of behavior because of their geopolitical environment, security concerns and war experiences [10]. In Northeast Asia, the general characteristics of the Japanese and Koreans are such that they enjoy the certainty of having everything under control more than the risk of challenges. They prefer the stability of order to the unpredictability of the future.

In addition, the global geopolitical situation is becoming increasingly tense. As the global geopolitical environment has become tenser, Japan and South Korea have adopted a more conservative national security strategy and strengthened their security cooperation with the United States. First, there is an escalation of geopolitical confrontation in Northeast Asia. In 2022, the problems in the Russia-Ukraine relations and the current situations between the two countries has not reinforced their perception of Russia as a partner. Second, in the context of Sino-US competition, Japan and South Korea are more concerned about China's rapid development, and their foreign policies show a certain tendency of "pro-US and anti-China". Finally, regional security tensions have led Japan and South Korea to seek to align themselves with the US Indo-Pacific strategy, which seeks to contain China in a wider range of arenas. The continuation of this situation is not conducive to the development of trilateral cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea.

There is a clear trend towards the securitization of economic issues. At present, the biggest obstacle to global economic development is the issue of economic securitization, which has led to the return of trade protectionism, as well as various types of investment and technical barriers. This has reduced the level of trust between countries and increased the cost of cooperation between countries. The economies of Japan and South Korea are highly dependent on China, but in order to strengthen their own economic security, Japan and South Korea have responded positively to the "economic securitization" measures of the United States. These countries spreading the pressure of their own risks by decoupling from China, expanding the scope of their foreign cooperation and joining the alliance mechanism led by the USA.

3.3. Future Development

General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out the need to respect the diversity of world civilizations, overcome barriers between civilizations through civilizational exchanges, overcome clash of civilizations through mutual understanding, and overcome superiority of civilizations through civilizational coexistence. At present, China, Japan and South Korea are facing the challenge of building a community of shared human destiny and realizing win-win exchanges, and the construction of the Belt and Road, which China is championing, is creating new opportunities for cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea. The development of the cultural industry of the three countries has strong complementarity, cultural industry as a new industry, has obvious advantages in promoting regional cooperation. China, Japan and South Korea can explore the potential of cooperation in the field of cultural industry [11]. As the economic and cultural integration of China, Japan and South Korea continues, China, Japan and South Korea can actively follow the trend of developing culture and promote the deep integration of cultural enterprises, cultural industry and tourism, to create new and sustainable growth points for the common economic interests of the three countries [12]. Moreover, China, Japan and South Korea can continue to integrate their respective advantages and resources, link up with the development needs of neighboring countries through the "Belt and Road" platform, and jointly open up third-party markets based on deep cooperation, thus opening up a wider space for the development of the three countries. Finally, China, Japan and South Korea also need to strengthen the construction and optimization of the cooperation mechanism, the cooperation mechanism is to maintain the smooth operation of the regional cooperation of the main vehicle, for the three countries mature and beneficial cooperation projects should be opportunities to encourage and support [13], so that more subjects to participate in China-Japan-ROK cultural exchanges and cooperation, so that the theme of cultural cooperation is more diverse and vibrant. Overall, China-Japan-South Korea cooperation faces a number of challenges and opportunities. Despite the fact that historical issues, competitive economic structures and different security perceptions have delayed cooperation, through reasonable guidance and constructive dialogue, China-

Japan-ROK cooperation has reached consensus and is back on track with the efforts of all parties.

Conclusion

Cultural cooperation among China, Japan and South Korea has opened up new avenues for cultural exchange and cooperation in East Asia and achieved a series of results with broad prospects for cooperation. Among them, the development of China's cultural industry remains strong, and the cultural industry has become a new pillar of China's economic development. However, Northeast Asia's ability to jointly withstand external risks may be weakened by unresolved historical legacy issues, uneven regional development and ethnic conflicts in the region, which may shake the foundation of regional cooperation. As the advocate and leader of cooperation in Northeast Asia, China should lay a profound foundation of cultural identity and, under the guidance of the Belt and Road Initiative, build a community of shared human destiny, enhance mutual cultural understanding and cultural identity, avoid contradictions and conflicts due to cultural differences, and establish an open and effective multilateral cooperation mechanism. The mechanism of open and effective multilateral cooperation will be established.

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