

An Jung-geun's *A Treatise on Peace in the East* and Its Implications for Peace in Northeast Asia

Kim Hyun Chul, Northeast Asian History Foundation

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An Jung-geun wrote *A Treatise on Peace in the East* in the Lushun prison after he had assassinated Itō Hirobumi in Harbin on October 26, 1909. This paper shows that the *Treatise* reflects An's understanding of and interest in Western international law, peace conferences, and other related issues, which were founded on his worldview that the international order of the time was defined by the law of the jungle. An's ideas of East peace began from criticism of Japan's post-Russo-Japanese War settlements concerning Korea, Itō Hirobumi's ideas of East peace, and Japan's aggression against Korea. An proposed a peace conference at Lushun to discuss the peace of the region and specific means of cooperation. His foresighted ideas, in addition, included a permanent form of consortium of the three nations, Korea, China, and Japan, and a regional community. The conclusion of this paper provides suggestions for future research and tasks so that we can inherit An's ideas of East peace and apply them to build a peaceful Northeast (or East) Asia.

Keywords: An Jung-geun (안중근, An Chunggün), Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文), Russo-Japanese War, *A Treatise on Peace in the East*, Peace Conference

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Northeast Asian History Foundation

I. Introduction

The year 2011 marked the 102nd anniversary of An Jung-geun's patriotic act of assassinating Itō Hirobumi in Harbin, China, on October 26, 1909. To commemorate the day, several academic conferences and events were held in South Korea illuminating An's efforts to show the world, including Japan, of Koreans' desire for independence and his determination for peace in the East.¹ Recent studies on An Jung-geun focus on his proposals for cooperation between Korea, China, and Japan and his vision of a regional community in his *A Treatise on Peace in the*

¹ A number of academic seminars were held in 2011, commemorating the 102nd year of An's patriotic act. For example, on March 25, the Dalian An Jung-geun Research Association and Dalian University's Korean Studies Institute co-hosted a seminar on the theme of "An Jung-geun and Peace of East Asia." On October 18, Daegu Catholic University's An Jung-geun Research Center held the seminar "An Jung-geun as a Christian." And on October 26, the An Jung-geun Peace and Theology Center and the memorial museum for An Jung-geun co-hosted an academic meeting titled "An Academic Conference and Mass Service Commemorating the 102nd Year of An Jung-geun's Patriotic Act in Harbin."

East (*Dongyang pyeonghwaron*, 1910), and not merely on his resistance activities, such as the assassination of Itō, or the militia efforts abroad and the guerilla (*uibyeong*, 의병) activities for the independence of Korea. In light of this, on April 18, 2010, the Japanese NHK TV broadcasted a documentary which introduced An Jung-geun's ideas of East peace and compared them with those of Itō. The program explained that An's ideas of East peace pursued the coexistence and harmony of the strong and weak, whereas Itō's ideas contributed to the elevation of Japan to a wealthy and powerful nation. The program evaluated An's ideas of East peace as meaningful, but too idealistic.

Recent years have seen growing interest in "East Asian regionalism" in the three East Asian countries of South Korea, China, and Japan, both in academic circles and in the real world. Japan as well as other countries in this region has been proposing a vision of an "East Asian community." Currently the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (plus China, Japan, and South Korea, or ASEAN+3) (APT), and East Asian Summit (EAS) are the main venues for the discussion of an East Asian community. Although a number of organizations such as these are working on the East Asian community, we have yet to see a functioning regional community. The countries of the region, including Japan and China, are competing to take control of the direction of regional cooperation in East Asia, and they are even clashing over the scope of membership and the leadership. Therefore, it is still difficult to reach an agreement between the participating countries. Not only conflicting national interests but different historical views also create distrust between the countries, thereby making it more difficult for them to overcome differences and reach an agreement.²

² For an overview of issues on the East Asian community and positions of the countries involved, see Dongbuk A Yeoksa Jaedan (동북아역사재단, Northeast Asian History Foundation), ed., *Dong Asia Gongdongche nonui ui hyeonhwang gwa jeonmang* (동아시아 공동체 논의의 현황과 전망, *The*

Against this backdrop, recently it has been suggested not only in South Korea but also in Japan and China that An's ideas on peace in East Asia be referred to or reexamined to help establish peace in Northeast Asia or East Asia in the twenty-first century.³ This paper first investigates how An assessed the international situation of that period by looking at the intellectual discussions in early twentieth-century Korea and what he thought of the prerequisites and possibilities to achieve peace in the East. The latter part of the paper examines his proposals for cooperation between Korea, China, and Japan, and then important elements in his vision of East Asian Community and their implications. Finally, the paper proposes future research directions and tasks so that we can inherit and make use of An Jung-geun's vision of East peace to establish peace in Northeast Asia.⁴

Current Status and Outlook of the Discussion on the East Asian Community), (Seoul: Dongbuk A Yeoksa Jaedan, 2009) and, Dongbuk A Yeoksa Jaedan, ed., *Dong Asia Gongdongche seollip gwa pyeonghwa guchuk* (동아시아 공동체 설립과 평화 구축, *Building the East Asian Community and Establishing Peace*), (Seoul: Dongbuk A Yeoksa Jaedan, 2010).

³ In applying An's ideas of Eastern peace in the context of the twenty-first century's regional cooperation and community establishment, researchers and countries use the term *East* differently, applying it to geographically different shapes of the region, that is, "Northeast Asia" and "East Asia." The focus of this paper is Korea, Japan, and China, the three Northeast Asian countries. Therefore, the term "East" generally means "Northeast Asia" here. This choice is made because "Northeast Asia" has a smaller geographical scope than "East Asia" and because An's ideas of East peace are mostly focused on cooperation and exchange between Korea, China, and Japan, the three Northeast Asian countries of the same race and that share the same writing system. However, it should be noted that An's ideas are not applicable just to the present-day Northeast Asia but can be extended to "East Asia."

⁴ This paper refers to late nineteenth-century Korea as the "Joseon" dynasty, the period of 1900-1910 as the "Greater Korean Empire," and the period from the Japanese colonial era to the present as the "Republic of Korea," and simply as "Korea" for the sake of convenience.

II. The International Situation in Early Twentieth-Century Northeast Asia and An Jung-geun's Worldview

2.1. The World Ruled by the Law of the Jungle and a State of War

In the early twentieth century, Korean intellectuals generally perceived the world surrounding Korea to be a dangerous place governed by the law of the jungle and fierce competition for survival among the countries. Upon this reality, they believed that the civilization and mentality of Korea were behind those of the West and Japan. Therefore, in order to survive in this situation, they emphasized that Koreans must become enlightened and become a more competitive people who would make efforts for the independence of the country (Kim Sang-beom, 1907). Jang Ji-yeon (1906), a journalist in the late Joseon era, argued that in order to survive in the world of the survival of the fittest, a Korean organization formed by Korean people must set its goal on preserving its people and enhancing its national power to build a solid foundation for the independence of Korea.⁵

An Jung-geun also thought that it was inevitable for Korea to face a predatory, imperialist war under these circumstances. The introduction in *A Treatise on Peace in the East* analyzes that countries are in an arms race and war:

Today the world is divided into East and West as the different races contend with each other... And with ceaseless warfare, nations in the world are preoccupied with inventing new weapons like machine guns, airplanes, and submarines. Young people are trained and driven to war, and, consequently, so many of their precious lives both from the East

⁵ Kim Hyeon-cheol (2008b) for further discussion of the worldviews of Korean intellectuals in the early twentieth century.

and the West are sacrificed. In the last few hundred years, European countries have completely forgotten about their morality, turning to military power and cultivating contentious and unscrupulous hearts (as cited in Sin Yong-ha, 1995, pp. 169-170).⁶

In order to overcome the abysmal reality of the time, An at first tried education, building schools, and cultivating talent, but gradually he turned to military resistance abroad. Eventually, An went abroad, where he still endeavored to aid the development of Korean education, to join the independence guerillas (*uibyeong*, lit. righteous army) and serve the country (“An’s Court Hearing Record on February 7, 1910,” as cited in Sin, 1995, p. 189).

2.2. Criticism on the Post-Russo-Japanese War Settlements and Change of View on Japan

In the early twentieth century, Korean intellectuals were closely monitoring the competition between Russia and Japan over the Korean Peninsula, worrying about possible escalation to war. They viewed the Russo-Japanese contention as a power struggle between the white and yellow races. Some Korean intellectuals even voiced the wish that Japan, as a representative of Asia, would repel Russia, a Western power, should a Russo-Japanese war break out.⁷

In the late Joseon period, before the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Koreans were fearful of the southward aggression of Russia. They made a number of proposals for strengthening the unity of Asians to defend Asia against white aggression. Some even called for the necessity

⁶ The English text of An Jung-geun’s *A Treatise on Peace in the East* is from the translation by Franklin Rausch and Jieun Han (2009).

⁷ See Kim Hyeon-cheol (2004) for further discussion of the development of discourse on Korea-China-Japan cooperation and the responses of Koreans in the late Joseon era.

of communication and cooperation between the three Asian countries, that is, Korea, China, and Japan, which are geographically close and racially and culturally similar, to prepare against the invasion and threat of Western power and the white race and to preserve their independence.⁸ An's *Treatise* also expresses this "yellow-versus-white race" characterization of the Russo-Japanese War.

Another reason is that it can be said that the war between Japan and Russia was a contest between the yellow and white races. Thus, in one morning, the enmity of the past melted away and in its place arose a great love for those of the same race. This love of the same race is another principle of humanity and rationale (as cited in Sin, 1995, p. 170).

The postwar settlements after the Russo-Japanese War,⁹ however, revealed that the Japanese terms of "East peace," which supposedly were intended to defend Asia from white aggression such as by the Russians, were ironically nothing but a slogan to settle a new regional order in Northeast Asia through Japan's takeover of Korea. Many Koreans condemned the duplicity of Japan and resisted against the Japanese rule. In particular, after the signing of the 1905 Treaty, Jang Ji-yeon strongly criticized Itō's ideas of East peace as nothing but an excuse to usurp the sovereignty of Joseon (*Hwangseong Sinmun* (皇城新聞), Nov. 20, 1905). Korean newspapers also pointed out that Japan forced the Japan-Korea Agreement of 1904 (韓日議定書) although Korea declared staunch neutrality in the Russo-Japanese War. Koreans argued that the best way

⁸ *The Independence (Dokrip Sinmun, 독립신문)*, a Korean newspaper in the late Joseon period, well expressed this atmosphere of the 1890s in its editorial of April 7, 1898.

⁹ In fact, the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905 articulates in Article 1 Japan's de facto colonization of Korea: "Russia acknowledges that Japan possesses in Korea paramount political, military and economical interests, to engage not to obstruct or interfere with any measures of guidance, protection and control which Japan finds it necessary to take in Korea."

Japan could seek peace in the East was to let Korea maintain its independence as it had (*Daehan Maeil Sinbo* (大韓每日申報), June 7, 1906).

Criticism of Japan's ideas of East peace and the postwar dealings was also expressed by An Jung-geun. His *Treatise on Peace in the East* (Sin, 1995, pp. 178-179) and his testimony on February 9, 1910, in the Japanese court in Lushun (*ibid.*, pp. 256-258) stated that Japan had claimed before the Russo-Japanese War that the war was to consolidate the independence of Korea. An believed that unless Itō's policy toward Joseon changed, Korea's independence would be lost and war would continue. An criticized Japan's incomprehensible act of adding a clause that changed Joseon's status to a protectorate in the postwar peace treaty of the Russo-Japanese War, although Korea had not participated in the war.

2.3. Expectations and Disappointment at International Law and International Peace Conference

The Western concept of international law (*manguk gongbeop* (萬國公法, lit. the law of all nations) in Korean at that time) was introduced to Joseon along with the idea that nations can prevent war with other nations by observing international law by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ However, on the verge of losing their country's sovereignty, Korean intellectuals were pessimistic about relying on international law. Park Eun-sik (1906; as cited in Lee Man-yeol, 1980, p. 32), for example, voiced his pessimism that international state of affairs of the time would not allow international law to impose its authority and that diplomatic efforts to restore Joseon's sovereignty would be of no avail. An also

¹⁰ See Kim Hyeon-cheol (2008a) for more details regarding the adoption of Western international law in late Joseon.

expressed a negative thought on international law in his *Treatise*: “Terms such as ‘the law of all nations’ or ‘strict neutrality’ are all conniving schemes of diplomats of recent days, and are not worth mention” (as cited in Sin, 1995, p. 174).

Meanwhile, the idea of creating an international organization and troops as a means to maintain world peace was also introduced to Korea in the late nineteenth century. For example, the December 20, 1883, issue of *Hanseong Sunbo* (*Hanseong Ten-day Newspaper*) presented the establishment of a permanent international body of negotiation, creation of an international army, and disarmament of each individual nation as specific measures to maintain world peace. And *Dokrip Sinmun* in its July 22, 1899, issue proposed creating international troops and launching an international peace conference in Beijing.

Koreans believed that the Hague Peace Conference in 1907 would be their chance to draw international consensus and attention for Korean independence. The anticipation of this possible breakthrough was shown in some Korean magazines that introduced dialogue in the West on the world government and permanent peace. *Seou* (西友, lit. *Western Friends*; December 1, 1907), for example, introduced the idea of a confederation of world nations, for which each nation elects its representative to sit in the “international conference” in The Hague, and this meeting of representatives shall function as the international legislature which will elect the president of the international administration, and the administration will have a standing army sent from each nation. At the news of the European Commission held in March 1909, Park Yu-byeong (October 20, 1909) even called for the necessity of an Asian Union to counterbalance the European Union.

These active discussions on international organizations suggest that An’s worldview reflected the understanding and interest of his Korean contemporaries in Western international law and peace conferences. Betraying the expectations of Koreans, the result of the second Hague Peace Conference turned out pessimistic. Their expectation that

international law and the Hague Peace Conference would provide an international and peaceful solution for the problem of Korea turned into disappointment. Consequently, Koreans needed to find a new way to establish a peaceful world order. An's idea of an East Peace Conference came from the understanding of this necessity, and he also seems to have developed specific plans for the idea.

III. The Main Ideas of *A Treatise on Peace in the East* and Their Implications

3.1. Criticism of Itō Hirobumi's Ideas of East Peace and Japan's Forced Annexation of Korea

In the early twentieth century, both Korea and Japan used the term "East Peace" (K. *Dongyang pyeonghwa*; J. *Tōyō heiwa*), but its meaning was vastly different depending on who was using it in what context. Superficially, An's ideas of "East peace" seems similar to those in Japan in that both proposed that the Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese, the peoples of the same race and same writing system, should unite their efforts to resist the imperial and colonial aggression of the West, including Russia. But upon closer examination, we can find that An's ideas differ from those of Itō, who presented the representative Japanese view of East peace. An criticized Japan's colonization of Korea, and argued that peace in the East could be accomplished only when each Asian country maintained its independence and sovereignty and shared equal status and power. This position starkly contrasts with Japan's ideas of East peace, which were revealed by the course of actions that Japan took in the name of East peace.

In the late nineteenth century, Fukuzawa Yukichi called for Asian solidarity, the united front of Korea, China, and Japan, against white imperialism. Fukuzawa's proposal, however, came with the underlying assumptions that Japan should turn Joseon into its protectorate and that

the reformist faction must take control of the government. Later, Japanese ideas of East peace placed Japan as the leading power of the three Northeast Asian countries. Although Itō claimed at the extraordinary session of the Diet on October 20, 1894, that the Sino-Japanese War was for keeping “peace in the East,” circumstances strongly suggest that the real purpose of the war was in fact Japan taking the position of “superpower in the East” (Ishida Takeshi, 1989, pp. 22-23). In March 1904, right after the start of the Russo-Japanese War, Itō visited Emperor Gojong with the Japanese emperor’s letter and demanded cooperation, saying, “The destinies of Korea and Japan are intertwined. Therefore the two countries must cooperate against Russia.” Later on May 31, 1904, the Japanese government decided at the meetings of senior statesmen and the cabinet to make the Greater Korean Empire a political and military protectorate of Japan. Itō was installed as the first Resident-General of Joseon, and after suppressing the resistance of the Koreans and assuaging international opposition, he implemented a gradual annexation of Korea, disguising it as a voluntary request from Koreans. Itō argued that Korea and Japan were bound by a common destiny to defend the East from the imperial aggression of the West and therefore that it was advantageous for both countries to form “one family” and realize a “political federation” (Han Myeong-geun, 2002, pp. 22-25; Miyoshi, 2002, pp. 665-666).

In the declaration of war against Russia during the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese emperor proclaimed that the reasons for war were “to maintain enduring peace and security in the East and to prevent any injury to the rights and interests of the countries in the region.” However, as soon as the war ended, Japan forced Korea to sign the 1905 Treaty, which deprived Korea of its diplomatic sovereignty. The glaring gap between rhetoric and reality turned An into a harsh critic of Japan for proclaiming peace in the East while working to colonize Korea in actuality.

Pointing out that Japan’s rationale for the Russo-Japanese War was

strengthening the independence of Korea, An argued that without changes in Itō's policy the independence of Korea would be far off and war would continue (Sin, 1995, pp. 285-291).¹¹ An believed that the fault of usurping the independence of Korea mostly lay with Itō as he had played the leading role in annexing the country. An accused Itō of deceiving the Japanese emperor, and believed that the Japanese emperor and government would change their course once they learned of this deception. Therefore, removing Itō, he thought, would contribute to the peace of East Asia (ibid., pp. 256-258).¹² An's list of reasons for assassinating Itō was as follows: the murder of Empress-Consort Myeongseong (Queen Min); forcing the abdication of Emperor Gojong; imposing the 1905 and 1910 treaties; disbanding the Korean army; deceiving the world that Korea wanted to be Japan's protectorate; and ultimately threatening the peace of East Asia (ibid., pp. 88-89).¹³

As discussed so far, An Jung-geun's ideas of East peace were founded upon opposition to the Japanese annexation of Korea after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and upon criticism of Itō's ideas of East peace. In relating his rationale for killing Itō, An emphasized that his actions were not simply to restore the independence of Korea, but to achieve peace and prosperity in the East, including Korea, China, and Japan, and to impel Japan to reflect and realize its folly.

3.2. Criticisms of Pan-Asianism and Discourses on East Peace in Early Twentieth-Century Korea

One might wonder here how well An Jung-geun's reasons for the

¹¹ "The Fifth Trial Record – Defense and Final Testimony (February 12, 1909)," from "The Records of An Jung-geun's Public Trial."

¹² "The Third Trial Record – Judge Hearing (February 9, 1910)," from "The Records of An Jung-geun's Public Trial."

¹³ "An Ung-chil yeoksa" (安應七歷史, Autobiography of An Jung-geun).

assassination of Itō and his vision of East peace were known to his contemporaries in Korea, China, and Japan. Another question is whether Chinese people were ideologically and emotionally ready to accept cooperation and exchange between the three Northeast Asian countries in China and Manchuria.

The reports of An's assassination of Itō in Korean newspapers of that time varied from condemnation to praise. The major Korean newspaper *Hwangseong Sinmun*, for example, reported An's act in Harbin as a murder, placing the main focus on Itō's death, which the paper characterized as undeserved. On the other hand, the *Daehan Maeil Sinbo* treated the reasons for the assassination as a central issue of the report and defined the incident as the patriotic act of a "righteous soldier" who fought for the independence of Korea (Yun Hyo-jeong, 2011). Editorials in Korean newspapers, including *Daehan Maeil Sinbo*, did not cover An's ideas of East peace as a main topic, but they did discuss some of related ideas and messages.

Criticism of the consolidation of the yellow race and Asians was also part of the Korean intellectual discourse of that time. For example, Sin Chae-ho (August 8, 1909) compared being a pan-Asianist Korean, instead of a nationalist in this era of nationalist competition, to being a person worrying about competition with another planet in a far distant future. According to him, pan-Asianism based on racism was merely an excuse to disguise Japan's imperial aggression. From the late 1930s, Japan strongly advocated building a new international order of economies and a "co-habitation and co-prosperity" sphere in the Asia-Pacific region with Japan in the leadership role—namely, the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere." On the surface, the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" aimed at liberating Asia from Western imperial power and realizing a confederation of Asian nations, all independent and equal. But in reality, they invaded Joseon and China and failed in delivering actual "independence" to the Southeast Asian countries under Western colonial rule (Lee Suk-jong, 2008, pp. 49-50).

Park Eun-sik seems to have inherited An's ideas of East peace, considering his statement after the March First Movement. Park said that true peace in the East could be achieved not by combining Japan and Korea in light of the fact that Japan occupied Korea by force, but by guaranteeing Korea's independence under the notion of peaceful cohabitation (as cited in Lee Ho-jae, 1994, p. 186). He argued that Korea's independence was the key to East peace and a way to contribute to world peace.

Like An Jung-geun, Lee Hoe-yeong and Sin Chae-ho were anti-Japanese fighters who died in the Lushun prison and pursued the peace of the East. All three of them believed that to bring peace to the East, all the peoples in the region should have their sovereignty while being independent and equal, opposed to Japan's ideas of East peace, which urged the peoples of Korea and China to form a united front with Japan—in reality, to be occupied and ruled by Japan—to fight the West. These three Koreans viewed the Chinese as an oppressed people like the Koreans and thought that they should join the anti-Japanese resistance fight. Although An and Sin differed in their thoughts on pan-Asianism, their visions of peace shared common grounds in seeking a new international order and peace and the cooperation of Korea, China, and Japan (Lee Deok-il, 2009). As discussed so far, the forms of East peace proposed by Koreans, including An Jung-geun, from the early twentieth century to the end of the Pacific War in 1945, developed from criticism of the Japanese form of East peace.

IV. Ideas of East Asian Regional Community and Implications of *A Treatise on Peace in the East*

4.1. Definition of “Region” and Postwar Proposals of Northeast Asian Regional Community

“Regionalist policy” can be defined as a consistent attitude or policy

adopted by a country towards its neighbors in the same region. “Regionalist policy” can be divided into two types: “regionalist policy as principle,” which pursues solidarity and cooperation of the countries in the region and “regionalist policy as strategy,” whereby each country of the region aims at advancing its national interests (Byeon Jin-seok, 1995; Kim In, 1998).

As a theoretical framework to explain regionalist phenomena, international cooperation is approached in the following ways. First, an international regime that enables international cooperation is established under the leadership of a superpower, and therefore it cannot but reflect the interests and will of the powerful nation. Second, international cooperation can continue without any leading powerhouse as long as the countries involved respect the interests of each other and inter-country cooperation is institutionalized. Third, in an international or regional cooperation, emphasis is placed on the importance of identity, changes of regulations, changes in the interest structure of individual countries, regional identity, and understanding of common interests as cooperation is defined as a process through which involved countries obtain a shared identity. Therefore, common ideologies and social purposes are regarded as particularly important (Yu Hyeon-seok, 2001).

From this perspective of regionalist policy, countries in East Asia including Korea have been interacting and cooperating with each other since the conclusion of World War II in 1945.¹⁴ In so doing, they proposed various regional organizations. Notable examples are discussed in the following paragraphs.

After liberation from Japan, the Syngman Rhee government proposed the “Pacific Alliance,” an idea that can be considered regionalist. The gist of the idea was to install a United States-led anti-

¹⁴ For more details on the proposed regional bodies and regional cooperation ideas in the Asia-Pacific region from the post war to the late twentieth century, refer to Kim Hak-jun (1983), Eo Su-yeong (1983), and Song Eun-hui (1995).

communist security alliance system in Asia similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Lee Suk-jong, 2008, p. 89). Following this proposal, the Asian People Anti-Communist League was formed in 1954. The Park Chung-hee government also started to develop a plan of regional cooperation in 1964, resulting in the first Korea-led organization of regional cooperation. The organization was called the Asian and Pacific Council, and met seven times from 1966 to 1972. The eight countries of Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Vietnam, and South Korea were regular members, and Laos participated as an observer (Kim Hak-jun, 1983, p. 420).¹⁵ In 1982, South Korea proposed the “Pacific Summit,” a regular multilateral meeting of the heads of Pacific Rim countries to discuss issues of common interest and to engage in negotiations (Lee Suk-jong, 2008, pp. 91-92).

In 1989, APEC was launched at the suggestion of then-Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke. APEC was founded as a response to the economic blocks such as the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement, and its purpose was to facilitate free trade and economic cooperation between countries in the Pacific region. The organization was the most important channel of multilateral cooperation in the region in the early 1990s. In December 1997, during the East Asian Financial Crisis, the first ASEAN+3 meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, at the suggestion of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir at an unofficial summit meeting. China once had reservations about regional cooperation, but from 2000, the government changed course and actively extended its free trade agreement partners in the region. The East Asian Study Group, initiated by President Kim Dae-jung, proposed a new organization to rectify the inequality among the member countries, and

¹⁵ See Kim Hyeon-cheol (2005) for further discussion of Syngman Rhee’s “Pacific Alliance” and Park Chung-hee’s Asian and Pacific Council as efforts of the South Korean government to achieve regional cooperation in the 1950s and later.

East Asia Summit was launched in December 2005 as a result. From the beginning, China and Malaysia played the central roles in EAS planning and proceedings, and Japan, worried by the expansion of Chinese influence, suggested expanding the membership of EAS to include Australia, India, and New Zealand, in addition to ASEAN+3. EAS thus now has sixteen member countries. In the case of Japan, in January 2002 Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō introduced the idea of a “community to walk and progress together,” whose main members were to be ASEAN countries along with Korea, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. In November 2009, Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio initiated an “East Asian Community,” a community of only East Asian countries, and without the United States. This led to the United States’s containment of the plan, and in the end, the organization was adjusted in 2010 to include Australia, New Zealand, and India, as well as the United States, in its membership.¹⁶

4.2. The Scope of the Region: “East” in the Nineteenth Century to “Northeast Asia” in the Twenty-first Century

4.2.1. The Definition of the “East” in the Nineteenth Century: The Region Covering Korea, Qing China, Japan, and other Asian Countries Inhabited by the Yellow Race

An Jung-geun believed that East peace was the goal that Korea, China, and Japan should pursue to prepare themselves against the imperial and colonial invasions of Western countries including Russia. Therefore, An

¹⁶ For further discussion regarding the institutional development of the East Asian community and the present development of related issues, see the online article “Dongbuk A yeoksa isyu: Yeoksa hwahae: Dong Asia gongdongche” (동북아역사이슈 – 역사화해 – 동아시아공동체, Historical Issues of Northeast Asia: Historical Reconciliation – East Asian Community) on the Dongbuk A Yeoksa Jaedan website.

urged the three neighboring countries of the same race to be united against Western aggression:

... Now as Western power expands into the East, even a young child knows that the best plan is for the people here to unite our power so that we can defend ourselves. However, for some reason, Japan, without considering the situation, blindly harmed Korea, its neighbor of the same race, ending the friendly relations the two countries had maintained. This is just like the case where the 'fisherman profits from the battle between the mussel and the kingfisher.' Japan's actions have shattered the hopes of the people of China and Korea... (as cited in Sin, 1995, pp. 170-171).

It seems that "the East" in An's *Treatise* is a geographical term that contrasts with "the West" and also refers to a racially distinct country or region such as Korea, Qing China, and Japan, where the yellow race lives, in contrast with the countries or regions of the white race, such as Russia. An proposed a trilateral peace conference of Korea, China, and Japan in Lushun for the peace of the East, and suggested various methods of cooperation between the three countries. Since his suggestions of specific measures for cooperation in "the East" are constantly limited to Korea, China, and Japan, it seems safe to say that An's proposal of a regional body in the East is also confined to these three countries.

The idea that the three countries need to bond and cooperate shares the regional distinction found in the series of discussions in the late Joseon period about "the three East Asian nations as the legs of a tripod" (K. *Dongyang samguk jeongjongnon*). Cooperation between the three countries was an idea shared by many Korean intellectuals in the early twentieth century. Jang Ji-yeon (June 1907), for example, predicted that in the medium and long terms, as society progressed and the minds of people gradually changed, the opportunity to regain sovereignty would grow and peace would be restored in the East so that, ultimately, the

regional situations of Northeast Asia would consolidate the tripod structure of Korea, China, and Japan. Jang hoped for cooperation between the three countries and sincerely hoped that Japan would contain its ambitions and preserve the regional structure of the East.

The scope of “the East” that An envisioned, however, seems to have reached further than just the three East Asian countries considering his statement during the interview with the chief justice of the high court in the Kwantung State Office on February 12, 1910: “If Korea, Qing China, and Japan hold a successful tripartite peace conference, other Asian countries such as India, Thailand, and Vietnam can also participate” (Gukga Bohuncheo, 1996, pp. 51-57). This statement seems to indicate that An envisioned the possibility of the “East” regional community extended to a pan-Asian community that encompasses not just Korea, China, and Japan, but other Asian countries, including today’s ASEAN countries and India.

Park Eun-sik’s opinion summarizes well the perception in the early twentieth century of the scope of “the East.” In the course of defining the roles that each of the three East Asian countries, including Japan, should assume in order to achieve true peace in the East, Park made a distinction between internal East peace and external East peace.

When we say ‘East peace,’ ‘the East’ is used to refer to a number of countries in the East, but the word should at least include the three countries of Japan, Joseon, and China together, and ‘East peace’ hence means the peace among these countries. Therefore, East peace does not mean just the peace and prosperity of Japan but the peace and prosperity of all three East Asian nations. ... In analyzing and discussing East peace, a distinction should be made between internal East peace and external East peace. The former means peace within the region of the three countries and within each individual country, whereas the latter is about defending the East from aggression by peoples outside the East. ... I sincerely wish for the unity and peaceful prosperity of the East, and

how can it be achieved? The only way that we can achieve East peace is by respecting and acknowledging the rights and hopes of the people of each nation and being united as equal partners with free spirits (Park, June 25, 1920).

Apparently, “internal” here refers to the three countries of Korea, Qing China, and Japan while “external” means the West in contrast with the East.

4.2.2. The Late Twentieth Century’s Various Concepts of Region, such as East Asia, Northeast Asia, Asia-Pacific, and Others

An Jung-geun’s East peace is considered unparalleled in East Asia as an ideology that combined ethnic nationalism and regionalism, and contested imperialism (Kang Dong-guk, 2008). He envisioned an institutional body in Northeast Asia to maintain and achieve peace in the region where Korea, China, and Japan would participate as equal partners. In this regard, his ideas of East peace should be examined in the new light of present-day East Asia (Seo Yeong-hui, 2009). Chinese scholars also appreciate An as the first exponent of an East Asian community (Wang Yuanzhou, 2009). That is, An’s East peace is considered the origin of the idea of East Asian Community (Liu Binghu, 2008). In various studies on An, the scope of the East is interpreted as “East Asia” or “Northeast Asia,” though the range of countries belonging vary among scholars.

However, there is as yet no clearly defined and accepted area of “East Asia.” It is generally noted that it is difficult to reach a consensus on “East Asia” and to define this term as a region with an identity that unites the peoples of the whole region transcending their affinity to their sovereign nation. In fact, even until now East Asian countries discuss an East Asian Community in a number of different forms because they approach this as a regional strategy. Each country is competing to build

an East Asian community that best suits its own interests. Consequently, countries have widely differing opinions on various issues such as the geographical perception and range of East Asia, regulations to bind the member countries, specific institutions to implement the regulations, and the leadership of those institutions (Lee Suk-jong, 2008, pp. 3-4).

First, regarding the range of East Asia, in the case of forming an inter-country regional organization, one opinion is to delineate East Asia as ten ASEAN countries and South Korea, Japan, and China, or the thirteen countries comprising the current ASEAN+3 (APT). On occasions concerning development and environment, North Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan are also occasionally included in the community (*ibid.*, p. 16).

Chinese dictionaries define East Asia as the eastern part of Asia that includes China, the Korean Peninsula, Mongolia, and Japan. Or applying not only geographical proximity but economic and cultural similarity as criteria, East Asia is sometimes shaped as the eight countries of China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and Singapore (*ibid.*, pp. 22-25).

On the other hand, Japan has seldom used “East Asia” as a regional concept in which the three Northeast Asian countries are the principal members. More frequently used regional concepts in postwar Japan are “Asia,” “Pacific,” and “Asia-Pacific” (*ibid.*, p. 47). The leanings to the “Pacific” represent Japan’s attention to “cooperation with the developed countries of the West (in particular, with the United States)” as one of the developed countries, whereas the inclusion of “Asia” or “East Asia” reflects its “affinity with Asia.” Since the 1970s, Japanese politicians have frequently used the regional concept of “Asia-Pacific,” which is considered a harmonious regional concept that reflects both sides of Japan’s pursuit: cooperation with Western developed countries and cooperation with Asian countries (*ibid.*, pp. 56-60).

Since the end of World War II, South Korea has used most of the regional concepts circulated in the international community, such as Asia,

the East, East Asia, the Far East, Northeast Asia, the Pacific, the Asia-Pacific, the Pacific Rim, and the Pacific Basin. Although these concepts differ in their historical origins, geographical range, and political implications, they have been used interchangeably with little distinction, and sometimes the same term may refer to different things depending on who is using it. Until the 1980s, “Asia-Pacific” (or “Pacific/Pacific Rim”) was the most dominant regional concept that South Korea employed in the context of regional cooperation. The “Asia-Pacific” that dominated the regional concept of South Korea during the Cold War period was frequently used even after the establishment of APEC in 1989. However, its use has gradually declined since the Asian Financial Crisis. At the same time, the use of “Northeast Asia” has dramatically increased since the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, and it is the most frequently used term in the 2000s along with “East Asia” (ibid., pp. 86-87).

4.3. Directions: From the Nineteenth-Century “International Peace Conference” to the Twenty-first-Century “Community”

4.3.1. International Peace Conference: A Permanent Body for Multilateral Negotiation

As has been discussed above, An Jung-geun not only emphasized the appropriateness and necessity of cooperation between Korea, China, and Japan, he also sought to establish a system to avoid war and establish peace after the Russo-Japanese War. This idea is clearly seen in the following statement of An as he proposed a peace conference to discuss the issue of East peace: “Therefore, I declared a righteous war at Harbin for peace in the East and have decided upon the city of Lushun as the place where this issue will be resolved. In this essay I will present my thoughts on this matter. I ask you to carefully consider what I have written.” (ibid., p. 172) In the context of the twenty-first century, this

statement can be interpreted as a proposal to organize a negotiation body of the three countries of South Korea, China, and Japan.

4.3.2. Specific Measures of Cooperation for “Community”

An Jung-geun’s *A Treatise on Peace in the East* is an incomplete work written just before his death, and limited information is available regarding his specific ideas on a common currency and joint military forces. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the details of his ideas. The best we can do is to make inferences about his envisioned East Asian community referring to his suggestions for the trilateral cooperation of Korea, China, and Japan to advance East peace.

- It will be most wise of Japan to return Lushun to Qing China and make it the center of peace. Lushun should be made into a naval port jointly managed by Japan, Qing China, and Korea, and the three countries should send representatives to Lushun to organize a peace conference and declare peace.
- An East Asian Peace Council should be organized and recruit members, and the funds for its management shall be ensured by collecting membership fees, 1 *won* per member.
- The three countries of Korea, Qing China, and Japan should launch a joint bank and issue a common currency, and they should pursue the development of finance and the economy together in all three nations.
- The countries should open a branch of the peace council and of the bank in important places in each country and facilitate financial security.
- The countries should recruit young men from Korea, Qing China, and Japan to form a joint corps and educate them to speak at least two languages to promote friendship and fraternity.
- Korea and Qing China should facilitate the development of

commerce and industry with the help of Japan.

- In order to obtain international confidence, the emperors of the three countries should have an audience with the Pope, swear oaths, and receive coronation.¹⁷

An's aforementioned suggestions can be summarized as follows: the three countries of Korea, Japan, and China form a body for peace talks and develop a community where the three countries cooperate, such as in launching a joint bank in Lushun, issuing a common currency, and organizing a joint corps of young people from all three nations. Examining these suggestions, we see that An's ideas of East peace pursued mutual development and respect of the three countries and that his detailed measures for regional cooperation also covered just the region of Korea, Qing China, and Japan.

An examination of the formation of the European Union reveals that its main focus was economic integration and that it underwent the following process. The first phase placed importance on monetary policy in order to strengthen the European currency unit, bringing many countries to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and liberalizing intra-regional capital flows. In the second phase, the European Monetary Institute (EMI) was created with the help of strengthened cooperation between central banks. In the third phase, the European Central Bank was launched and a common currency adopted. Finally, in the fourth phase, with the establishment of the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the formation of the European Union was completed.¹⁸

¹⁷ The ideas in this list are from the "Record of Hearing" that recorded An's interview with the Chief Justice of the high court in the Kwantung State Office on February 17, 1910. The citation here is based upon the translation by the Gwangbokhoe (Korean Liberation Association), of the Gukga Bohuncheo (Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs) (Gukga Bohuncheo, 1996, pp. 51-57).

¹⁸ For further discussion regarding the development of the European Union, please see the online

An's suggestions, such as a joint bank, common currency, and joint military forces, are practices implemented in the European Union, and they represent an integrated security, economy, and finance of a regional community. His idea of East peace reminds us of the present twenty-first century EU, and in this regard, scholars and the media are placing him in a new light as a pioneer who presented specific measures to realize a Northeast Asian community. That is, An Jung-geun envisioned an East Asian community with a common currency and a joint military, and dreamed of a Northeast Asian city of peace as early as 100 years ago. His foresighted concepts are impressive as we see them now realized in the European Union (*Hangyeore*, October 24, 2008). Park Yong-geun, president of the An Jung-geun Research Society in Dalian, stated that An's ideas of East peace preceded the proposal of the EU by at least thirty-six years (as cited in *Gyeonghyang Sinmun*, March 26, 2011). An Jung-geun had already pursued regional cooperation as a regionalist policy for the Northeast (or East) Asian region in the early twentieth century, presenting specific ideas to build a regional community.

V. Conclusion

On the brink of the collapse of Joseon in the early twentieth century, An Jung-geun's main concern was restoring the independence of Korea and maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula, in a world ruled by the law of the jungle. Now, 100 years later, in the twenty-first century, An's idea of East peace reminds us of the importance and necessity of amicable relations, interaction, and cooperation between the three nations of Korea, China, and Japan to establish peace in this region. Inheriting An's ideas of East peace from

article "Dongbuk A yeoksa isyu: Yeoksa hwahae – Yureop ui gyeongheom" (동북아역사이슈 – 역사화해 – 유럽의 경험, Historical Issues of Northeast Asia: Historical Reconciliation – Experiences of Europe), on the Dongbuk A Yeoksa Jaedan website.

the past, we have to connect this idea of the past to the vision of the present and past to establish the reign of peace in Northeast Asia (or East Asia) and to promote reconciliation and cooperation between the countries in the region. Although the scope of the region and countries can be different, here I offer a few suggestions.

First, in the future, when Korea is proposing a regional body of negotiation or participating in related meetings, An's ideas of East peace can be cited as a historical example proposed by Korea that supports the necessity of extending the Northeast (or East) Asian identity and forming a regional community. For instance, referring to An's proposal of the East peace conference, we can argue for the necessity of a permanent or institutionalized body for negotiation among the three countries of Korea, China, and Japan.

Second, An's reasons for assassinating Itō Hirobumi may be considered as criticism of Japan's aggression. In particular, An's criticism on the deprivation of Korea's diplomatic sovereignty and annexation process by forcing the conclusion of the 1905 Treaty needs more careful analysis and reconfiguration based upon his interviews in which he challenged Japan's rationale.

Third, An proposed Lushun, a central geographical location, and which had suffered fierce battles during the Russo-Japanese War, as the place to hold the peace conference. An's memorabilia and memorial facilities in Harbin and Lushun require continuous attention and support as a symbol of efforts to promote friendship between China and Korea and to bring a peaceful future to Northeast Asia. Reminding China that An's patriotic act triggered the spread of the anti-Japanese movement in China in the early twentieth century, we should seek to expand cooperation with Chinese scholars in field research, memorial projects, and collaborative studies.

Finally, fourth, it should be known both in Korea and in foreign countries that even though An criticized Japanese imperialism, he never condemned the ordinary Japanese people. Through memorial events for

An's heroism, more exchange and cooperation among young people of Korea, China, and Japan should be promoted, and more opportunities to experience history should be offered to them.

While making efforts for the suggestions above, we should not forget to emphasize the necessity to establish a cultural, historical, academic community in which all the countries in the region including China, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea participate. In the formation of the regional community, resolving differences in historical understanding and reconciling historical conflicts can play an important role in sharing mutual understanding and forming a common identity, and we must find a way to draw attention to this fact.

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