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## Comments on Transportation Networks

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These papers give a good overview of specific sectors and possible directions for their complementary development. But I think it is useful to try to envision the big picture—how all this might fit together. In this case a picture is truly worth a thousand words. For example, Figure 1 portrays one long-term view of regional development, which envisions three major north-south growth axes: one through Japan; one through the Korean peninsula to Khabarovsk; and one from Shenyang to Harbin. Others would link Korea and Japan as well as the Yellow Sea rim.

For Northeast China, some see the growth poles and axes developing as shown in Figure 2. Some have even more grandiose ideas such as building a railway tunnel under the Bering Strait to link Russia with North America. As another example, Mongolia has planned its future countrywide infrastructure to link with Northeast Asia and Russia.

The point I am making is that there should be some tentative agreement on a vision or a goal of a unified transportation system. One objective should be the coordination of planning and development toward that goal.

The initial practical step toward the formation of a unified transport network is to establish bilateral connections between North Korea and Japan, and between North Korea and South Korea. These are already in progress as exemplified by the normalization of inter-Korean maritime trade.

The next step is to create two separate multinational transport patterns from the current bilateral transport pattern—i.e., build the Yellow Sea transportation network linking South Korea, Japan, China, and North Korea, and the East Sea (Sea of Japan) network connecting South Korea, Japan, the Russian Far East, and North Korea.

The third step would be to integrate the Yellow Sea circle and the East Sea circle, thus linking the five countries.

Improvements in transportation and telecommunication systems will contribute to a more even distribution of human settlements and industries in Northeast Asia. This anticipated dispersion of economic activities will cause current, concentrated patterns of regional development to be replaced by local systems, thus enhancing the internationalization of medium-size and smaller cities such as Changchun. As a concrete example, Tianjin recently opened up six more international container sea routes to South Korea and beyond.

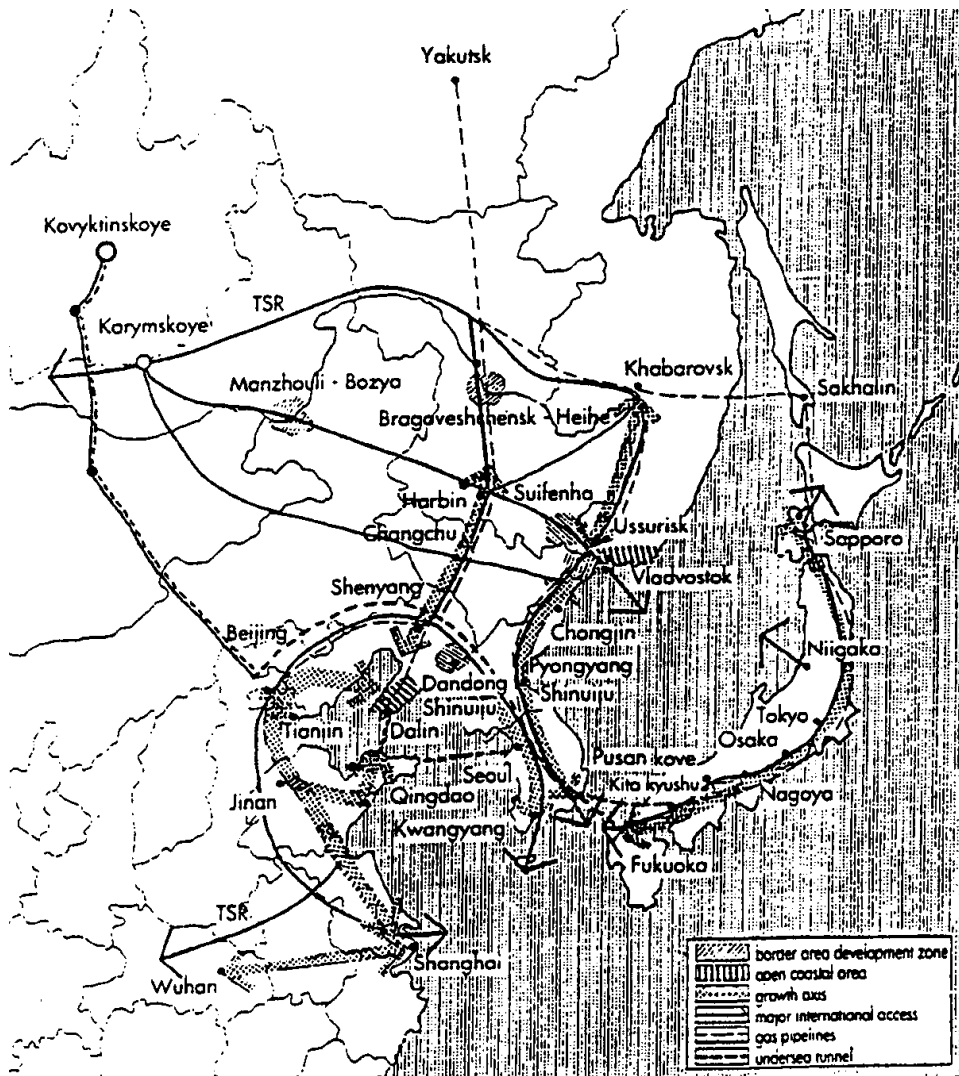


Figure 1. Long-term development concepts for Northeast Asia

Source: Won Bae Kim and Young Bong Kim, Planning Regional Development in Northeast Asia. *Northeast Asia Economic Forum Newsletter* issue no. 19 (winter-spring 1997).

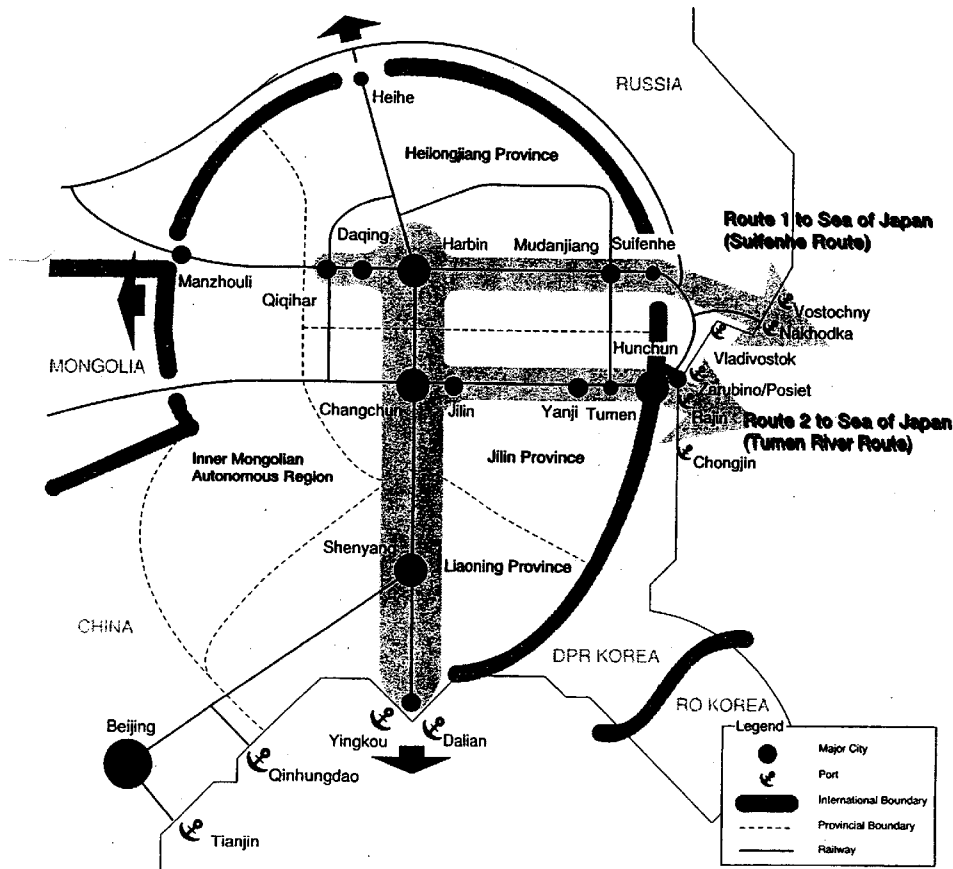


Figure 2. Conceptual map of the development of Northeast China by opening routes to the Sea of Japan (East Sea)

Now is the time for holistic vision. A critical step toward the formation of a unified, single transportation system or market in Northeast Asia would be the establishment of a consultative committee to promote cooperation and coordination in this sector. This committee could develop draft concepts and regional plans, and coordinate the development of detailed implementation schedules and a method for establishing a fully coordinated program of investment and implementation. The committee could have subcommittees for specific fields such as shipping, air, road, and rail transport.

We must break out of the old thinking habits which confine a country's planning to its national boundaries. We should try to tackle problems from the wider perspective of a Northeast Asian Community and think about reaching out

to the other two economic poles of the world economy. In short, transportation planning should abandon the short-term, narrow-sighted emphasis on individual countries' interests and instead favor strategic planning that takes into account the needs and resources of the region as a whole.

For the transportation sector, this is the agenda for the twenty-first century. Indeed, a new regional integration appears to be in the making in Pacific Asia, and integrated transportation systems are necessary to realize this dream.