Asian Crisis Essay, Research Paper

The continuing Asian economic crisis that began in mid-1997 ranks as Asia’s second biggest event since World War II. The crisis suddenly halted the region’s unprecedented three decades of rapid economic growth.

Within Asia itself, the crisis has had not only serious domestic social, political, and economic impact, it has affected intra- and extraregional international relations, as well as intellectual and policy discourse.

At the same time, the crisis has almost incompatibly, spawned the deepest uncertainty yet among Asian government and business leaders and the public at large about the wisdom of following the universalistic (but really Western, especially American-propagated) capitalist doctrine of free markets, private enterprise, international openness and political democratization as the most secure path to economic prosperity and social well-being.

There is now more or less an agreement that the domestic origins of the Asian crisis lay in macroeconomic imbalances, structural deficiencies in financial sectors, and shortcomings in political and corporate governance. Some or all of these problems were more severe in the countries most affected-Thailand, Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia-than in those that were relatively unscathed-Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan.

A year ago, at a Corporate Conference organized by the Asia Society in Hong Kong, a multinational Eminent Persons Group delivered a report, “Asia at the Crossroads: The Path Ahead.” In that report, the assembled experts concluded that provided the needed changes are put into place, the

Countries of East and Southeast Asia should emerge from the crisis better positioned to improve the lives of their citizens and to contribute to international stability and prosperity.

I hope that the situation will change. On January 8, 1999, the ASIAN Secretariat issued a press release about the Second Meeting of ASIAN Heads of Statistical Offices, held in Bali on January 5-6.