

One lesson is that, in the long run, economic prosperity and political liberty are linked. The rejection of communism by the peoples of Eastern Europe was not an ideologic decision. They rejected communism because it did not work. Moreover, they have chosen to pursue both democracy and the open market because they know that neither can be secured without the other.

This triumph of the values of democracy and the open market has roots as well as resonance in Asia. The reforms which are blooming now in Central and Eastern Europe showed their first buds in China. At a time when they were still shunned in their own land, the economists who had designed the brave reforms of the 1968 Prague Spring were teaching and toasted in China, sponsored by the Chinese government.

And the lessons of Central and Eastern Europe cannot be lost on the China and the Asia of today. The events of Tienanmen Square brought a bloody halt to the march towards democracy in China. But that was one battle in a long struggle. In time, that struggle will be won. And the lessons of Eastern Europe - that prosperity and freedom go hand in hand - will be learned and acted upon - in China and in other countries where democracy has yet to spread.

But the events in Europe have other implications for Asia. If the Cold War is over in Europe, the same cannot be said for Asia, where the signs are mixed. The Soviet Union has reduced its standing army and its nuclear missiles in the Asian region. It has withdrawn from Afghanistan. It has pulled out of Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. At Soviet prodding, Vietnam has withdrawn its forces from Cambodia. But Soviet Far-East forces, particularly its growing navy, remain far in excess of what is needed for a prudent national defence. Doubts persist in Japan and elsewhere as to whether Mr. Gorbachev's peace offensive applies to Asia as well as Europe.

The Cold War in Asia owes most of its origins to the Cold War in Europe. But it also has a life of its own. It would be a tragedy if resolving the tensions in Europe which have brought so much bloodshed to Asia does not also lead to accommodation in Asia.

However, winding down the Cold War in Asia may not mean the end of conflict; indeed, in some cases, it may intensify conflict. Superpower tensions are usually seen as making conflict more likely. But they have also acted at times to limit conflict through constraining individual countries and regimes. The challenge is more complex than simply reducing superpower tensions.