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# ASEAN's PERCEPTIONS OF JAPAN

## *Change and Continuity*

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Bhubhindar Singh

### Introduction

Relations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Japan have long been influenced by the events of World War Two (WWII). Japan's wartime actions, which entailed rapacious resource exploitation and grave atrocities, are still fresh in the minds of many Southeast Asians. This historical memory has colored the perceptions of ASEAN people about the kind of role Japan could play in ASEAN affairs during the post-war period. Such perceptions have especially blocked Japan's participation in the political/security affairs of ASEAN. Although ASEAN has gradually welcomed Japan into its economic sphere, it has generally rejected Japan's involvement in its political affairs. Robert O. Tilman has captured this divide in ASEAN's perceptions of Japan in his works, which are among the most influential on this subject.<sup>1</sup> Tilman wrote, ". . . it is obvious that trade balances and strategic political thinking do not have a one-to-one correspondence."<sup>2</sup>

This paper aims to develop Tilman's argument on ASEAN's perceptions of Japan. It identifies two distinct attitudes in these perceptions. First, as argued by Tilman, ASEAN countries' perceptions of Japan tend to differ on issues relating to the economic or political/security spheres. While Japan's

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1. Robert O. Tilman, "The Enemy Beyond: External Threat Perceptions in the ASEAN Region," Research Notes and Discussions Paper No. 42, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 1984; Robert O. Tilman, *Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threats* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987).

2. Tilman, "The Enemy Beyond," p. 39.

image in the economic sphere has progressed from an economic animal to a partner, as well as a leader, its involvement in the political/security affairs of Southeast Asia has consistently been viewed with suspicion and distrust. Second, the divide in ASEAN's perceptions is also becoming less apparent. ASEAN's perceptions of Japan's involvement in the political/security sphere of Southeast Asia have somewhat softened over the years. Although ASEAN countries remain wary of Japan's militaristic past, they have nonetheless shown increasing signs of receptivity to Japan's participation in Southeast Asian politics and security.

The discussion in this paper is divided into three main periods. The first period is 1967–74, where Japan's post-war involvement in Southeast Asia was solely confined to the economic arena. This period begins immediately after the 1967 formation of ASEAN and ends at the eruption of the 1974 Tanaka riots in many Southeast Asian capitals.<sup>3</sup> The second period is 1975–89, when Japan began taking an active interest in the political affairs of Southeast Asia, an era stretching from Japan's change in policy toward Southeast Asia in the wake of the riots, to the end of the Cold War. The final period focuses on the post-Cold War period (1990 to the present), as Japan was forced to reorient its general foreign policy and its role in international affairs. The redefinition of Japan's role led to the strengthening of Japan-ASEAN relations, and in turn led to a shift in ASEAN's perceptions of Japan. The second period was probably the most important, as it served as a bridge between the first and the third phases of Japan-ASEAN relations. It was during this period that ASEAN not only showed some signs of receptivity to Japan's political involvement, but also softened its perceptions. This somewhat evolutionary shift in ASEAN's perceptions has been crucial in shaping national attitudes toward Japan in the 1990s and beyond.

Japan's increasing integration into ASEAN's affairs in the third period, both economically and politically, suggests that history has diminished as a determining factor in defining ASEAN's perceptions of Japan. There are five possible reasons that may explicate this development. First, the end of the Cold War ushered in a new environment, which is propelled by economic interdependence. ASEAN's economic dynamism is dependent on the larger economies, including Japan's, the largest in Asia. With increasing economic links, ASEAN countries are accepting the view that Japan's future is tied up with Southeast Asia's. Therefore, the fear of Japanese remilitarization has been significantly reduced, and Tokyo has been increasingly allowed to participate in ASEAN's political/security affairs, as discussed below. Second, the issue of generational change has also decreased the role of history. The

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3. The Tanaka riots were violent anti-Japanese demonstrations in some Southeast Asian capitals during Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka's visit to Southeast Asia in January 1974.

generation that witnessed Japanese atrocities during WWII is gradually fading into the background in most Southeast Asian governments. As a result, Japan's involvement there is seen less through lenses clouded by the historical issue. Even the younger generation who felt frustrated with Japan's overwhelming economic might, which left Southeast Asians with little control over their own destinies, are becoming more receptive to Japan's involvement.<sup>4</sup> Third, Japan is no longer the economic giant it was. As a result, fears of a repressive "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere" arising via economic means have considerably lessened.<sup>5</sup> Fourth, the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan security alliance is seen as a positive sign by Southeast Asian countries. The alliance not only signaled continued U.S. engagement in the region, but also served to check the possible resurgence of Japanese militarism. Fifth, Southeast Asia also welcomes Japan's increasing involvement in regional political/security affairs due to the uncertainty posed by China's growing power. ASEAN's strong ties with Japan could serve as a balance against China.

This paper aims to contribute to the general scholarship in two broad areas. First, it provides a general account of ASEAN's perceptions of Japan. The main scholarship in this area has tended to focus on individual Southeast Asian countries' perceptions.<sup>6</sup> While this paper accepts that perceptions vary among ASEAN countries due to their different historical experiences, there are, nonetheless, some dominant perceptions that not only pervade the entire ASEAN region but they also define Japan-ASEAN relations. Examining ASEAN's perceptions in this manner enables us to not only trace the changes in perceptions, but also to identify the stimulus that led to these changes. More importantly, the second contribution of this paper is to add a greater political dimension to ASEAN-Japan relations. Due to Japan's policy of *seikei-bunri* (separation of politics and economics), ASEAN-Japan relations have been traditionally grounded in the area of economics. However, the political dimension is increasingly strengthening ASEAN-Japan relations, as ASEAN has gradually accepted Japan's widening political involvement in response to Japan's efforts to enhance its political credibility. This is especially true since the late 1970s, after Japan realized that focusing solely on

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4. Tilman, *Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond*, pp. 114–15.

5. The White Paper released by Japan's Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry reported that the era when Japan played the role of an engine for economies in East Asia is over. See "White Paper Says Japan No Longer Engine of Growth for East Asia," *Daily Yomiuri* (Internet version), May 2, 2001, <<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/newsc/20010502wo11.htm>>.

6. See Tilman, *Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond*; Julius Caesar Parrenas, "China and Japan in ASEAN's Strategic Perceptions," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 12:3, December 1990; Chin Kin Wah, "Regional Perceptions of China and Japan," in Chandran Jeshurun, ed., *China, India, Japan, and the Security of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

economics was no longer tenable. Japan's political involvement was minimal in the aforementioned first period, gradually increased in the later two periods, and is expected to grow in the future.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section briefly discusses how Southeast Asia was drawn into Japan's World War II plans and how Japan eventually returned to Southeast Asia in the post-war era. The second, third, and fourth sections each focus on one of the three periods just discussed. Each section highlights Japan's involvement in both the economic and political/security spheres and thereafter examines ASEAN's perceptions of Japan in reaction to Japan's policies. This structure is designed to systematically show both the changes in ASEAN's perceptions of Japan and the triggers that led to the changes over time.

## I: Origins of ASEAN's Perceptions of Japan

ASEAN's perceptions of Japan are shaped by Japan's activities during World War II.<sup>7</sup> Southeast Asia was absorbed then into Japan's policy of creating a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere so that Tokyo could extract resources in Southeast Asia to fuel its war against China.<sup>8</sup> Although the Japanese government provided righteous-sounding reasons—such as liberating the rest of Asia from oppressive Western control and hence creating a new “Asia for the Asiatics”—to justify its penetration into Southeast Asia, its true intentions became clear as the occupation wore on.<sup>9</sup> Increasing numbers of Southeast Asians became disillusioned with the Japanese due to the latter's rapacious exploitation of raw materials, and ruthless control, which was seen to be worse than that of the white colonialists.<sup>10</sup> The Japanese atrocities, cruelty, and oppression adversely affected Southeast Asians. Consequently, whenever Japan tried to assert itself in the region during the post-war years, Asian

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7. Although people in all Southeast Asian countries agree that the Japanese were cruel conquerors, it is important to note that Southeast Asia's response toward the Japanese role in the war differed among these countries. Indonesia and Burma acknowledge that Japanese rule was crucial in advancing their nationalist movements against European colonialists. Thailand did not undergo the harshness of the Japanese occupation and was allied to Japan at one stage. Only the Philippines (where the Americans had promised independence before the Japanese conquest) and Singapore (where the population had a Chinese majority) were outwardly critical of the Japanese occupation.

8. See Clayton D. James, “American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War,” in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Takashi Shiraishi, “Japan and Southeast Asia,” in Peter Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi, eds., *Network Power: Japan and Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997).

9. James, “American and Japanese Strategies,” p. 719.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 714.

leaders constantly reminded Tokyo of its war crimes, repeatedly warned the public about Japan's new ambition, and made references to Japan's perceived attempt to take "a step toward becoming a military giant."<sup>11</sup>

After the war, Japan returned to Southeast Asia as a result of two considerations. One was the larger U.S. Cold War strategy of containing communism. The U.S. strategy was to make Japan an industrial hub<sup>12</sup> in Asia and a "dynamo of wider regional recovery in Free Asia."<sup>13</sup> This led to the restoration of economic ties with Southeast Asian countries for both affordable raw materials and markets. Japan's integration with Southeast Asia served the American goals of bolstering Southeast Asia against Chinese communism and minimizing Japan's trade links with China.<sup>14</sup> A second consideration was the closure of the China market throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Since China was one of the main prewar markets for Japan, its closure meant that Japan became totally dependent on the United States for both economic survival and security, which in turn resulted in Japan establishing economic links with Southeast Asian countries for their markets and natural resources.

Japan's return to Southeast Asia occurred under its first prime minister, Shigeru Yoshida (1946–47, 1948–54). He advocated the policy of economic diplomacy, which entailed avoiding taking any political initiative in international affairs, in order to restore Japanese power in the new international configuration.<sup>16</sup> It was only in 1952 when Yoshida first made reference to Southeast Asia in a speech, saying that

[w]ith respect to trade promotion, the government shall carry out economic diplomacy, i.e., conclusion of commercial treaties, broadening and developing trade opportunities by increasing overseas merchant ships, strengthening export industries, and utilising foreign currency reserves. In so doing, we will particularly develop economic linkages with Southeast Asian countries.<sup>17</sup>

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11. Yoichi Funabashi, ed., *Japan's International Agenda* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 9.

12. Michael Schaller, "Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia," *Journal of American History* 69:2 (September 1982), p. 393.

13. Shiraishi, "Japan and Southeast Asia," p. 176. Originally cited in William S. Boden, *The Pacific Alliance: U.S. Foreign Economic Policy and Japanese Trade Recovery, 1947–1955* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1984), p. 10.

14. Schaller, "Securing the Great Crescent," p. 393.

15. Shiraishi, "Japan and Southeast Asia," p. 176.

16. This policy of separating economics and politics came to be known as the Yoshida doctrine. Its key points were: 1. Japan's economic rehabilitation must be the prime national goal. Political-economic cooperation with the U.S. was therefore necessary; 2. Japan should remain lightly armed and avoid involvement in international political-strategic issues; and 3. to gain a long-term security guarantee, Japan would provide bases for the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force.

17. Suelo Sudo, "Nanshin, Superdomino and the Fukuda Doctrine: Stages in Japan-Southeast Asian Relations," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 5:3 (Fall 1986) p. 36.

When Japan returned to Southeast Asia, it reasserted its influence through reparation arrangements first, and later through trade and aid to individual Southeast Asian countries. Although it participated in a range of regional organizations, Japan's economic penetration was predominantly carried out through bilateral means.<sup>18</sup>

## II: Japan-ASEAN Relations 1967–1974

The 1960s and early 1970s were eventful periods for both Japan and ASEAN. Japan was accepted into the Organization of Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), and granted Article 8 status by the International Monetary Fund (IMF),<sup>19</sup> while in the meantime five Southeast Asian countries established the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in search of sociopolitical stability against the Communist threat. With Japan's economy expanding rapidly and ASEAN countries embarking on economic development, trade links between Japan and ASEAN increased quite remarkably during this period. By the 1970s, over a quarter of ASEAN's total annual trade was with Japan alone, and in turn, Japan's investment in Southeast Asia had surpassed that of the U.S.<sup>20</sup> Tokyo's establishment of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1966 aided its penetration into the economic affairs of Southeast Asia.<sup>21</sup> Tokyo had total control of the running of the ADB, as Japanese have held the presidency since its inception. However, Tokyo's control of the ADB served as a double-edged sword. While the ADB allowed Japan to establish a foothold in Southeast Asia's economic activities, it also marred Tokyo's image. This was because Tokyo was seen as concentrating only on economic penetration, without paying attention to the voices of Southeast Asian countries.<sup>22</sup>

While the Japanese government promoted the expansion of trade relations with the ASEAN nations individually, it did not show any interest in the formation of ASEAN. Japan regarded the institution as ineffective for three reasons: first, ASEAN was a new institution with limited influence in a world dominated by superpowers; second, ASEAN members had vast problems both in their domestic affairs and bilateral relations; and third, Tokyo feared

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18. Frances Fung-Wai Lai, "Without a Vision: Japan Relations with ASEAN," Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore, *Occasional Paper* No. 50, p. 2. The range of regional organizations Tokyo participated in included the Colombo Plan (1954), the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE, 1955), the Mekong River Project (1958), the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC, 1966), inter alia.

19. Article 8 of the IMF's articles of agreement requires the removal of all restrictions on foreign exchange.

20. Lai, "Without a Vision," p. 2.

21. See the Asian Development Bank home page: <<http://www.adb.org/About/default.asp>>.

22. Sudo, "Nanshin," p. 38.

that ASEAN could become a collective-bargaining organization that could force Japan to reduce its growing trade surplus with Southeast Asian countries.<sup>23</sup>

During this period, Japan's participation in the political/security affairs of ASEAN was minimal.<sup>24</sup> Japan's political involvement included being part of the international peace observation team for Indochina in 1968, and in 1970, the mediation team (along with Indonesia and Malaysia) whose mission was to bring an end to the Vietnam War.

### *ASEAN's Perceptions*

During this period, the memories of WWII were still fresh in the minds of the ASEAN people. Despite the expanding Japan-ASEAN trade links, ASEAN's perception of Japan was characterized by distrust and suspicion. The resentment by ASEAN countries of Japan was expressed in the 1974 Tanaka riots. As anti-Japanese movements spread across Southeast Asia, widespread perceptions arose that Japanese investments and aid were part of a larger scheme to control Southeast Asian states by creating economic dependence on Tokyo.<sup>25</sup>

Japan's involvement in ASEAN's political affairs was outwardly rejected by the grouping as being linked to a potential resurgence of Japanese militarism. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew aptly captured the essence of ASEAN's attitudes:

My generation and that of my elders cannot forget (the Japanese WWII occupation) as long as we live. We can forgive but we are unlikely to forget. . . . The policy of our government is not to allow the unhappy experiences of the past to inhibit us from a policy which can enhance our growth rates by Japanese participation in our industry. . . .<sup>26</sup>

## III: Japan-ASEAN Relations 1975–1989

The period 1975–89 was extremely significant in setting the foundation for Japan-ASEAN relations. This period witnessed Japan taking a more active

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23. William R. Nester, *Japan and the Third World: Patterns, Power, Prospects* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), p. 123.

24. The beginning of Japan's involvement in Southeast Asian political affairs was in 1964, when Japan attempted, unsuccessfully, to mediate the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation.

25. Anny Wong, "Japan's Comprehensive National Security Strategy and Its Economic Cooperation with the ASEAN Countries," *Research Monograph 6* (Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1991), p. 103.

26. Chin Kin Wah, "Regional Perceptions of China and Japan," p. 11. Originally taken from a transcript of an interview with Lee Kuan Yew by Dr. R. K. Vasil, February 1969.

political role in Southeast Asian affairs and, in turn, the ASEAN countries responding positively to these Japanese gestures.

The Tanaka riots caught the Japanese by surprise and taught them that their separation of economics from politics was no longer tenable and a review was needed. This was accentuated by the events in Indochina during the early 1970s. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, the United States (which had been an influential factor in Japan's policy toward Southeast Asia) was looking to relieve some of its responsibilities in East Asia. Echoed by other states, Washington encouraged the Japanese government to look beyond its singleminded business pursuits and provide economic assistance to Southeast Asia.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the fall of Saigon also led to the collapse of the Ministerial Conference of Economic Development for Southeast Asia (MCEDESA), the forum through which Japan had been conducting its multilateral diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> This forced Japan to seek other channels for its diplomatic efforts.

As a result, Tokyo in 1976 undertook a large-scale *nemawashi* (laying the groundwork), which resulted in the abandonment of the naively conceived idea of staying away from political entanglements. Japan transformed its attitude toward the region from a bilateral preoccupation to a focus on links with ASEAN, and began taking a more active role in the grouping's politics.<sup>29</sup>

The *nemawashi* led to three major developments. First, Japanese policymakers strengthened economic and political connections with ASEAN members. They realized that it would be in their interest to ensure that ASEAN countries stayed non-communist, which would also enhance regional political stability.<sup>30</sup> Second, Japan reviewed its attitude toward the institution of ASEAN. Following the consolidation of the "ASEAN Spirit" at the Bali summit in 1976,<sup>31</sup> Japan began to see ASEAN as an important institution in fostering regional political stability and as a key source for economic secur-

27. This change came in the 1970s. Strained by the protracted war in Vietnam, and pressured by the anti-war movements and unrest back home, the U.S. government expressed the desire, especially via Richard Nixon's Guam Doctrine of 1969, to disengage from Vietnam and from the region.

28. Susumu Yamakage, "Japan's National Security and Asia-Pacific's Regional Institutions in the Post-Cold War Era," in Katzenstein and Shiraishi, eds., *Network Power*, pp. 283–84.

29. Wolf Mendl, *Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interests* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 103.

30. Masahide Shibusawa, *Japan and the Asia-Pacific Region: Profile of Change* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1984), p. 103.

31. The Treaty of Amity and Cooperation was signed at this summit. According to Khong Yuen Foong, "The treaty is perhaps one of the most important developments in the history of ASEAN because it stipulates a norm-based code of conduct for regional relations as well as the use of an institutional mechanism for settling disputes peacefully." See Khong, "ASEAN and the Southeast Asian Security Complex," in David Lake and Patrick Morgan, eds., *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World* (University Park, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 1997), pp. 321–32.



ity, providing resources, markets, and investment sites as well as maritime communications.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, ASEAN could also be a vital ally in the regional balance of power, as its members were anti-communist and well-integrated with other non-communist states.<sup>33</sup>

Third, the Fukuda doctrine was announced in 1977 following Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda's attendance at the ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur, and his subsequent visits to each of the five member states and Burma.<sup>34</sup> This doctrine, according to Michael Yahuda, was post-war Japan's first, and perhaps most ambitious, foreign policy initiative.<sup>35</sup> It stated that Japan would reject a military role in the region and seek equal partnerships with Southeast Asian peoples based on what it called heart-to-heart dialogues. The main contribution of the Fukuda doctrine, especially in terms of playing a political role, was to further Japan's status as a mediator between ASEAN and Indochina, helping to create a stable regional order.<sup>36</sup> Japan attempted to use aid to Hanoi to smooth relations between the two blocs. However, the Fukuda doctrine did not develop further at this stage because of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978.<sup>37</sup>

Japan-ASEAN cohesion continued to strengthen in the 1980s, complementing Japan's growing awareness of global interdependence and its desire for a commensurate world status.<sup>38</sup> Tokyo, by implementing the Comprehensive National Security Strategy in the 1980s, was able to ensure that extending aid and economic cooperation was not aimed at only benefiting Japan per se, but was also designed to contribute to the overall security and economy of the recipient countries. The Japanese government paid considerable attention to ASEAN, providing aid, among other incentives, as it sought ASEAN's support for its policies and positions on international issues in the context of seeking a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.<sup>39</sup> Japan's visible role in international politics, sustained by its stunning economic

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32. Shibusawa, "Japan," p. 46.

33. Lai, "Without a Vision," p. 3.

34. On the Fukuda Doctrine, see Suelo Sudo, *The Fukuda Doctrine and ASEAN: New Dimensions in Japanese Foreign Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992).

35. Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of Asia-Pacific: 1945-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 243.

36. As Nester points out, another reason for Japan to serve as an intermediary between ASEAN and Vietnam was to wean Vietnam away from Soviet and Chinese influence and to tie both ASEAN and Vietnam securely to Japan's geo-economic sphere of influence in East Asia. See Nester, *Japan and the Third World*, p. 126.

37. Ruth Talpin, "Japanese Foreign Policy towards Southeast Asia," in Richard Grant, ed., *The Process of Japanese Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1997), p. 82.

38. Wong, "Japan's Comprehensive National Security Strategy," p. 53.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

growth, allowed it to act as an ASEAN spokesman in international summits as well as an intermediary between Hanoi and ASEAN.<sup>40</sup>

The changing situation in Southeast Asia and the resultant *nemawashi* saw Japan playing a more active role in ASEAN's political affairs. There were two important developments that had a direct impact on Southeast Asia. First, in 1982, the U.S. proposed that Japan should assume responsibility for the defense of Japanese sea lanes. The U.S. proposed establishment of a 1,000 nautical mile-long sea-lane zone to be protected by Japan. If enacted, the zone would likely encroach on the territorial waters of the Philippines. Second, Japan was heavily engaged in seeking a resolution to the Cambodian conflict. This was the most important involvement by Japan in ASEAN's political affairs during this period, and arguably, until the present. Japan viewed Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 with considerable concern for two reasons. First, it threatened the political stability of the ASEAN region, and by implication, Japan's economic interests. Second, the strengthening of Vietnamese-Soviet ties resulted in the opening of military bases by Vietnam to use by Soviet forces. Japan reacted by aligning itself with the U.S.-ASEAN-China camp. It halted an economic assistance program to Vietnam, endorsed ASEAN's Cambodian policy, and consistently voted for the ASEAN-sponsored resolution, brought up at the United Nations annually since 1979, calling for Vietnam to withdraw all its troops from Cambodia.<sup>41</sup> Although Japan initiated several other political moves in an effort to contribute positively to the dialogue between ASEAN and Indochina, it was also prepared to allow ASEAN to take the initiative.<sup>42</sup>

### *ASEAN's Perceptions*

During 1975–89, ASEAN's perceptions toward Japan changed considerably. Although ASEAN countries continued to distrust Japan, their fears concerning its imperialist tendencies were reduced, which allowed genuine dialogue to follow. ASEAN countries widened business and economic links and enhanced trade interactions with Japan. There were several reasons for this

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40. Franklin B. Weinstein, "Japan and Southeast Asia," in Robert A. Scalapino and Jusuf Wanandi, eds., *Economic, Political and Security Issues in Southeast Asia in the 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 185.

41. Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Japan and Southeast Asia: Searching for Acceptable Roles," in Harry H. Kendall and Clara Joewono, eds., *Japan, ASEAN, and the United States* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1991), p. 176.

42. According to Sueo Sudo, the Japanese were of the view that further isolation of Vietnam would only result in more adventurism on its part, such as the invasion of Cambodia. Although Japan heeded ASEAN's call to halt economic assistance to Hanoi, Japan maintained a dialogue with Hanoi and came up with several proposals in search for a solution to the Cambodian problem. Sueo Sudo, "From Fukuda to Takeshita: A Decade of Japan-ASEAN Relations," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 10:2 (September 1988), pp. 125–26.

change. First, ASEAN eventually recognized the need for a constructive Japanese role in Southeast Asia, since the United States was cutting back on its commitments there.<sup>43</sup> Second, this period saw ASEAN countries embarking on their own economic developmental programs; they needed support for markets and investments from an economic giant. Southeast Asia became one of the four largest markets for Japanese exports. Moreover, there was a natural complementarity that existed between resource-poor Japan and the resource-abundant ASEAN states.<sup>44</sup> Third, ASEAN, as an institution, could serve as a useful platform from which to protect the interests of member countries if Japan should exercise too much economic muscle.

Not only did the ASEAN countries accept Japan as their voice in international meetings, they also accepted Japan as an economic model and a crucial partner in their economic development. They imported Japanese management skills and talent to boost domestic economic growth. Policies such as Malaysia's "Look East," Laos's "Learn from Japan," and Singapore's "Learn from Japan" campaign reflected ASEAN's perception that Japan had much to impart to those seeking to follow its path of achievements.<sup>45</sup> Another example was the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) in 1981, Malaysia's alternative to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. This was proposed by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to include Japan in furthering the interests of the region, while excluding the U.S.<sup>46</sup> Although the EAEC did not take off, it clearly illustrated the enhanced willingness of ASEAN countries to allow Japan to play a greater role in the economic sphere. Mahathir's comments at the time summed up general sentiments among ASEAN countries:

As we approach the year 2000, it is our hope that Japan will initiate changes in its policies that will effectively bring about an enhanced political, socio-cultural role in not only the Southeast Asia region but also in the global context.<sup>47</sup>

However, Japan's heightened political role in the region remained contentious in some ASEAN quarters. ASEAN's complaints centered on several issues. First, the issue of Japan assuming responsibility for the defense of its sea lanes raised concerns. Since the sea-lane zone came to within 200 nautical miles of the northernmost boundary of the Philippines, then-President Ferdinand Marcos expressed reservations, stating that he was "wary, very

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43. Nester, *Japan and the Third World*, p. 125.

44. Khatharya Um, "Southeast Asia and Japan: Political, Economic, and Security Implications for the 1990s," in Kendall and Joewono, eds., *Japan, ASEAN, and the United States*, p. 188.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

46. Talpin, "Japanese Foreign Policy," p. 95.

47. B. A. Hamzah, "ASEAN and the Remilitarisation of Japan: Challenges or Opportunities," *Indonesian Quarterly* 19:2 (1991), p. 159.

wary” of the possibility of an enhanced Japanese military role.<sup>48</sup> Other ASEAN representatives argued that Japan was arrogant and chauvinistic and saw itself as a superior and a part of the industrialized West when dealing with other Asian peoples.<sup>49</sup> Southeast Asian countries were also still wary of Japan-led initiatives that promoted the idea of regionalism. When Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda of the Masayoshi Ohira cabinet proposed a ministerial conference to work out the idea with ASEAN leaders, the latter responded negatively as they feared Japan’s hegemony. ASEAN countries were also against Japan taking a lead role in the resolution of the Cambodian conflict.

However, Japan’s widening political role both at home and abroad was not totally rejected, as ASEAN countries showed signs of receptivity to Japan’s involvement in regional political affairs, especially in the 1980s. The change in ASEAN’s perceptions was evident after Japan’s alignment with the ASEAN countries during the Cambodian conflict. Japan’s support of ASEAN’s political and economic boycott against Vietnam was regarded as a sign of Japan’s sincerity in its support of ASEAN.<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, the appointment of the hawkish Yasuhiro Nakasone as prime minister (1982–87) failed to raise much alarm from ASEAN leaders, although some anxieties were expressed, particularly from President Marcos and President Suharto.<sup>51</sup> Nakasone’s explanation that Japan’s intentions were defensive seems to have placated ASEAN leaders.<sup>52</sup> As a result, this period signaled the beginning of ASEAN’s becoming more receptive to Japan’s expanding role in regional political affairs.

#### IV: Japan-ASEAN Relations 1990-Present

The end of the Cold War forced Japan to redefine its role in the new international environment. The perceived decline of American power, coupled with the emergence of China, led to increasing calls, both from outside and inside Japan, for Japan to assume a more active and responsible role in global and regional affairs. The severe criticisms of Japan’s political immobilism resulted in a reorientation of Japan’s foreign policy.<sup>53</sup> This led to two main developments in Japan-ASEAN relations. First, there was increased empha-

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48. *Far Eastern Economic Review* 118:43, October 22–28, 1982, p. 25.

49. Wong, “Japan’s Comprehensive National Security Strategy,” p. 105.

50. Chongkittavorn, “Japan and Southeast Asia,” p. 178.

51. Sudo, “From Fukuda to Takeshita,” p. 122.

52. *Ibid.* Originally cited in Hideo Matsuzaki, “Future of Japan-ASEAN Relations,” *Asia Pacific Community* 21 (Summer 1983), pp. 11–22.

53. This reorientation in Japanese foreign policy came after Japan’s much-criticized role in the 1991 Gulf War.

sis on greater interactions with ASEAN, both as a region and an institution. ASEAN assumed an almost equal-partner status to Japan alongside China and the U.S. This was suggested in a speech by Japan's Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu in 1991 to ASEAN members in Singapore. Kaifu said: "Japan and ASEAN are becoming mature partners able to look seriously at what we can do for Asia-Pacific peace and prosperity, and to think and act together for our shared goals."<sup>54</sup>

Second, in moving closer to ASEAN, Japan signalled a deeper involvement in regional affairs. This represented a marked shift from its customary focus on economic aid and investment to becoming more politically engaged in the Asia-Pacific region. As Kaifu said, "I feel acutely that Japan is expected to make even greater contributions in the Asia-Pacific region—not only in the economic sphere but in the political sphere as well."<sup>55</sup>

Japan-ASEAN economic cooperation expanded further in the 1990s. The importance of Japan's economic role was underscored during the 1997 Asian economic crisis, as Japan became the largest contributor of funds to the ailing Southeast Asian economies.<sup>56</sup> One of the main issues Japan had to address in the economic sphere was the rise of China as an economic giant. Beijing has been gradually increasing its presence in Southeast Asia through expanding bilateral trade and political relations. The relations between China and Southeast Asia have become closer, as leaders from both sides have exchanged visits to "patch up ancient differences and sign substantive agreements on everything from border demarcations to trade and even military cooperation."<sup>57</sup> As China's influence increases, Japan's leadership position is threatened. This concern was underscored during the economic crisis. Japan's inaction on banking reforms and economic stimulus measures prompted ASEAN to issue an unusually muscular diplomatic message for faster action in order to help with regional recovery.<sup>58</sup> Despite Japan's larger contribution in terms of funds and initiatives, it was China that was widely perceived in Southeast Asia as a more responsible actor due to its refusal to devalue its currency, which could have led to a worsening of the crisis. More

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54. Talpin, "Japanese Foreign Policy," p. 83.

55. Michael Vatikiotis, "Kaifu Soothes Fears over Japan's Political Plans: The Gentle Giant," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 152:20, May 16, 1991.

56. Some of the main measures announced by Japan were assistance funds totaling \$44 billion and the Miyazawa initiative, a \$30 billion support package, of which \$15 billion was to be made available for the medium- and long-term financial needs for economic recovery, and another \$15 billion was to be set aside for nations' possible short-term capital needs while economic reforms were proceeding.

57. "China Steps in Where U.S. Fails," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 23, 2000, p. 20.

58. Michael Richardson, "Asian Nations Warn Japan Its Influence Is on the Wane," *International Herald Tribune*, February 6, 1998, p. 1.

recently, China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), and ASEAN's proposal for implementing a Free Trade Area (FTA) with Beijing, both pose further threats to Japan's economic leadership in Southeast Asia.

In maintaining a strong presence in ASEAN, Japan expanded its ties with ASEAN countries beyond the economic sphere. This development was pursued through the announcement of the Hashimoto Doctrine by then-Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in 1997. Besides strengthened economic cooperation, the doctrine called for greater cultural exchanges, dialogues between leaders, and increased joint efforts between Japan and ASEAN to meet challenges faced by the international community.<sup>59</sup> The relations between ASEAN and Japan strengthened under Keizo Obuchi's term as Prime Minister (1998 to 2000). The announcement of the Obuchi Plan in November 1999 was aimed at boosting human-resources development in East Asia and promoting exchanges between Japan and other countries in the region.<sup>60</sup> In seeking to enhance Japan's stake in the recovery of the ailing Southeast Asian economies, the Obuchi Plan shifted the focus of Tokyo's aid efforts from emergency financial assistance to support for longer-term recovery and development. Under the Mori government (2000–2001), Japan promoted cooperation in the Information Technology (IT) sector, on top of promoting trade and investment between Japan and Southeast Asia.<sup>61</sup> The Koizumi government also reaffirmed Japan's economic commitment to ASEAN countries at the ASEAN summit in Brunei in November 2001.<sup>62</sup> During his scheduled Southeast Asian tour on January 9–14, 2002, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced measures to strengthen Japanese economic ties with Southeast Asia, including the signing of Japan's first-ever free-trade agreement with Singapore.<sup>63</sup>

In light of the foreign policy reorientation, the 1990s also saw a Japan that was more active than previously in the political/security affairs of Southeast

59. See policy speech by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto titled "Reforms for the New Era of Japan and ASEAN—For a Broader and Deeper Partnership," delivered at the Singapore Lecture, January 14, 1997.

60. The Obuchi Plan aimed to provide \$500 million for regional human resource development and for personnel exchanges between Japan and other East Asian countries. See Marc Castellano, "Obuchi Unveils New Aid Plan for East Asia at ASEAN Summit," *Japan Economic Institute Report*, December 3, 1999.

61. In the IT sector, Japan's expressed its willingness to work toward successful implementation of the "Comprehensive Cooperation Package" of \$15 billion dollars, in which the ASEAN region will assume an important priority. This was agreed upon during the Japan-ASEAN summit in Singapore, November 2000. See "Japan-ASEAN Summit: Press Release on IT," November 23, 2000, <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv0011ft.html>>.

62. "Asean Nations Seek Closer Economic Ties with Japan," *Dow Jones International News*, November 6, 2001.

63. Yang Qingchuan, "Koizumi's S.E. Asian Tour Mirrors Regional Cooperation Trend," *Bernama News Agency (Malaysia)*, January 15, 2002.

Asia. In June 1990, Japan organized the Tokyo Conference, where it tried to promote an agreement among the Cambodian factions to cease armed hostilities.<sup>64</sup> In 1991, then-Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama proposed the formation of a multilateral arrangement in Southeast Asia to discuss security issues and regional stability. Although the Southeast Asian countries did not initially show interest, they tacitly accepted the notion when they formed the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994. One of the key developments in the 1990s was Tokyo's sending 1,800 troops to Cambodia as part of the U.N.-sponsored peacekeeping force in 1992, following the Diet's passage of a law on peacekeeping and its new interpretation of the Japanese Constitution.<sup>65</sup> In 1994, the Japanese Defense Agency sponsored a Pacific defense seminar for lieutenant colonels and naval commanders from Australia, Brunei, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States.<sup>66</sup> In 1995, Japan tried to play mediator between the Philippines and China in the territorial disputes over the South China Sea. Following discussions with both parties, Japan approached China and urged it to resolve the dispute peacefully.<sup>67</sup> In the wake of the 1997 Hashimoto Doctrine, Japan has engaged in political and security dialogues with Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia. In 1999, the U.S.-Japan alliance was made relevant to the post-Cold War era with the implementation of major revisions to bilateral defense guidelines. This alliance has been the cornerstone of peace and security for the Asia-Pacific region, including Southeast Asia. The revisions to the alliance imply an acceptance of the U.S. presence in the region and an increased logistical role for the Japanese military alongside U.S. troops. In 2000, Japan took a serious view of the worsening piracy issue in maritime Southeast Asian waters, sending a fact-finding mission to Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore to discuss how to deal with attacks. To help deter the threat of piracy on the high

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64. Lam Peng Er, "Perceiving Japan: The View from Southeast Asia," in Derek da Cunha, ed., *Southeast Asian Perspectives on Security* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), p. 143. This meeting was attended by Prince Sihanouk and Hun Sen, who was prime minister in the Heng Samrin government. The communiqué signed in this meeting became the precedent for the half-and-half representation in the Supreme National Council (SNC) between the Heng Samrin government and the Sihanouk-led National Government of Cambodia. See Yoshihide Soeya, "Japan's Policy Towards Southeast Asia: Anatomy of 'Autonomous Diplomacy' and the American Factor," in Chandran Jeshurun, ed., *China, India, Japan*, pp. 106-09.

65. Barbara Wanner, "Japan Strives to Raise Profile on Regional Security," *Japan Economic Institute*, Report No. 8A, February 28, 1997, p. 4.

66. Tsuneo Akaha, "Japan's Security Agenda in the Post-Cold War Era," *Pacific Review* 8:1 (1995), p. 52.

67. The Philippines strongly protested China's erection of structures on Philippines-claimed Mischief Reef. See Lam Peng Er, "Japan and the Spratlys Dispute: A Case Study of Tokyo's Foreign Policy Aspirations and Limitations," *Asian Survey* 36:10 (October 1996), pp. 995-1010.

seas, Japan's Coast Guard is expected to periodically send a large patrol boat to Southeast Asia to participate in joint training sessions.

To facilitate its increased diplomatic profile and greater acceptance in regional political/security affairs, Japan has also been a strong proponent of multilateral activities in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>68</sup> It has been an active participant in the ARF and the Council of Security and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), and also a regular participant in ASEAN post-ministerial and senior officials' meetings.

### *ASEAN's Perceptions*

Despite ASEAN's severe criticisms of Japan's role during the economic crisis, ASEAN countries continue to perceive Japan as an important economic partner. ASEAN countries realize the need for the economic presence of Japan in the region, not only to help revive their ailing economies, but also to help restore their previously dynamic growth rates. Although most ASEAN countries welcome the increasing presence of China, the uncertainty of China's real intentions, and its growing economic presence, are now pushing ASEAN countries to favor Japan as their main economic ally. This was suggested in Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's speech during his recent visit to Japan, when he urged Japan to entrench ties with ASEAN. Japan's proposal for an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF), which was initially snubbed by the ASEAN countries, has drawn a recent resurgence of interest in Southeast Asia. The fund made headlines recently when Malaysia's Mahathir raised the idea again at an Asian summit organized by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Singapore.<sup>69</sup> Most recently, ASEAN ministers mooted a version of the AMF proposal at the Third ASEAN Informal Summit in Manila. Southeast Asian countries continue to view Japan as their voice in G-7/G-8 summits and international financial institutions, a point reiterated by Malaysia at the ASEAN-Japan symposium in Tokyo in September 2000.<sup>70</sup> Japan's vital role in ASEAN's future has been emphasized by Thailand's Premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who has declared that he would like to see Japan utilize Thailand "like a base" for helping lagging economies within ASEAN.<sup>71</sup>

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68. On Japan and multilateralism, see Sheldon Simon, "Multilateralism and Japanese Security Policy," *Korea Journal of Defense Analysis* 11:2 (Winter 1999), and Denis T. Yasutomo, *The New Multilateralism in Japan's Foreign Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

69. See World Economic Forum press release, October 19, 1999.

70. Ramlan Said, "ASEAN-Japan Cooperation Vital," *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), September 28, 2000.

71. "Thaksin Says Relations with Japan to Receive Higher Priority," *Kyodo News International*, January 19, 2001.



In the 1990s, ASEAN perceptions also softened somewhat toward Japan's involvement in the political/security sphere. This change coincided with the decline in U.S. force presence in Asia-Pacific after the Cold War. In the most significant manifestation of this change in perception, Thailand's former Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan said in May 1990 that to augment ASEAN defense needs, Japan should participate in joint naval exercises in the South China Sea.<sup>72</sup> And, although Lee Kuan Yew said in 1991 that letting Japanese defense forces join overseas operations was like "giving liqueur chocolates to an alcoholic," he changed his stance a year later, arguing:

Rationally, it is unlikely that the geopolitical situation in the world will deteriorate to a point where, as in the 1930s and 40s, Japan will consider military force as the solution for her problems. In the 1930s the world was divided into empires and spheres of influence. The Europeans restricted Japan's access to their empires. So long as the present system of GATT, IMF, [and the] World Bank prevails, even if the free-trade system is not functioning at optimum levels, Japan will not find military aggression either necessary or profitable. So by all reason and logic, there should be no fear of a Japanese return to military aggression. . . . Therefore, fear of Japan's remilitarization is more emotional than rational.<sup>73</sup>

The concerns expressed by Lee about Japan in 1991 were not representative of the general perception of ASEAN leaders. Such concerns were dismissed by former Malaysian Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim. During an interview with *Newsweek* in 1991, he said, "It is good to be alert and cautious. But it is not correct to be unduly worried (over Japan's intentions). This is a different world."<sup>74</sup>

Many Southeast Asian leaders did not oppose the passage of the International Peace Cooperation Law in 1992 in the Japanese Diet and the eventual dispatch of Japan's Self-Defence Force (SDF) to Cambodia. According to Eiichi Furukawa, the ASEAN foreign ministers and their dialogue partners declared their support for the bill and Japan's involvement in Cambodia.<sup>75</sup> Indonesia's then-President Suharto told Michio Watanabe, a senior Japanese politician, that it was Japan's sovereign right to decide whether to send troops overseas on peacekeeping missions under U.N. auspices.<sup>76</sup> In January 1993, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir told visiting Prime Minister Miyazawa that he hoped the SDF would, in the future, be able to participate fully in

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72. Hamzah, "ASEAN," pp. 161-62.

73. Eiichi Furukawa, "Changes in Southeast Asian Views on Japan," *Japan Echo* 20:3 (1993). This quote was from a February 1992 speech delivered by Lee Kuan Yew at a symposium in Kyoto.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 52. Originally cited in *Newsweek*, August 5, 1991.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

76. "Indonesia Accepts Japan's Right to Send Forces Overseas," *Far Eastern Economic Review* 151:11 (March 1991).

peacekeeping operations without restrictions imposed by the Japanese Diet.<sup>77</sup> In the early 1990s Japan also began actively participating in political and security dialogues with Southeast Asian countries. According to Singapore's then-Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng, Japan's active participation in political and security dialogues reflected a maturing ASEAN-Japan relationship.<sup>78</sup>

Even in 1991, when a Japanese naval flotilla arrived in the Philippines en route to minesweeping operations at the Gulf, there was general approval from ASEAN capitals for the Japanese navy's first operational mission beyond territorial waters since the end of WWII. Malaysian Defense Minister Datuk Seri Mohammad Najib Razak said his government had no misgivings about the flotilla's planned stop at Penang, while Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said Japan was acting within its rights.<sup>79</sup> In 1994, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama was given a shock when he visited Malaysia. When Murayama expressed remorse for the suffering Japan inflicted on Southeast Asia during WWII, Mahathir said he could not understand why Japan "kept on apologizing for war crimes committed 50 years ago."<sup>80</sup>

Recently, ASEAN countries have been increasingly adopting the view that ASEAN's political/security future is tied with Japan. At the ASEAN-Japan symposium in February 2000, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Domingo Siazon stressed that Japan-ASEAN regional cooperation must progress beyond economic issues to include matters of peace and security.<sup>81</sup> Countries in Southeast Asia have intensified efforts together with Japan to help maintain regional stability. This increased cooperation is especially evident for the issue of piracy, which has grown dramatically and poses a genuine risk to sea lanes.<sup>82</sup> Singapore and Japan agreed to devise cooperatively initiatives to combat increasing incidents of piracy in Indonesia.<sup>83</sup> In August 2001, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) sent a patrol aircraft to Thailand and the

77. Furukawa, "Changes," p. 47.

78. "ASEAN-Japan Ties Mature with Security Talks, Says Wong," *Kyodo News International*, August 2, 1993.

79. ASEAN's acceptance of Japan's emerging political role was dependent on Tokyo's security alliance with Washington. As Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong noted, "A Japan that remains firmly anchored to the U.S. alliance system and which is trusted by its neighbours will be a positive force." *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 16, 1991.

80. Charles Smith, "Japan: Forgive and Forget," *ibid.*, 157:36, September 8, 1994.

81. Hardev Kaur, "Ensuring We're Not Bitten by the Same Dog Twice," *New Straits Times* (Malaysia), October 3, 2000.

82. According to the International Maritime Organization, worldwide piracy cases rose to 471 in 2001 from 228 in 1996. Half of the 471 incidents in 2000 took place in Southeast Asia. See "Japan to Send Planes on Anti-Piracy Mission to Southeast Asia," *Kyodo News Service*, August 27, 2001.

83. *Straits Times* (Singapore), January 10, 2001, p. 4. For the maturing of Malaysia-China relations in the 1990s, see Joseph Liow, "Malaysia-China Relations in the 1990s: The Maturing of a Partnership," *Asian Survey* 40:4 (July/August 2000), pp. 672-691.

Philippines for a four-day mission in an effort to combat piracy in the region. In fall 2001, the coast guards of Japan and the Philippines conducted a joint anti-piracy exercise off Manila Bay. Besides bilateral arrangements, Japan's role in security affairs has been accepted by ASEAN in multilateral settings such as the ARF. Japanese initiatives in peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy, and nuclear disarmament are readily accepted by ASEAN.<sup>84</sup>

Although not totally forgotten, the image of a militarist Japan has become less prevalent in the perceptions of ASEAN countries. The recent debate on the change to the Constitution's Article 9, under which Japan renounced the use of offensive force to resolve international conflicts, and the resurgence of sentiment to adopt the *Kimigayo* (national anthem) and *Hinomaru* (national flag) as national symbols, both point to growing Japanese nationalism. However, these developments did not raise eyebrows within ASEAN, as they would have in the past. Many ASEAN countries took them as inevitable developments, or, as put by one prominent Malaysian scholar, "As in any other country, Japan's rising nationalism is normal." Blas Ople, president of the Philippine Senate, went further, saying that Japan should seriously consider arming itself with nuclear weapons.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, the history textbook issue<sup>86</sup> and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's 2002 visit to the Yasukuni shrine, did not raise much concern among ASEAN members. Only Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong commented, saying that Japan should come to terms with its history, as Germany has done in Europe.<sup>87</sup> However, this reaction was mild compared to the reactions from other Asian countries, including, most vocally, South Korea and China. Even the passing of the anti-terrorism law, which led to the recent dispatch of SDF forces to the Indian Ocean to support the U.S.-led battle against terrorism did not raise red flags for ASEAN members.<sup>88</sup> Instead, Koizumi came away from the November 2001 ASEAN meeting in Brunei convinced that leaders from

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84. Simon S. C. Tay, "What Japan Can Achieve in the Next Millennium," *Straits Times* (Singapore), December 17, 1999, p. 109.

85. The scholar was Abdul Razak Baginda, executive director of the Malaysian Strategic Research Centre. Both are quoted in *Time* magazine, August 16, 1999, p. 19.

86. The history textbook, for middle school students, deliberately downplays Japanese atrocities before and during World War II. The book fails to mention the abduction and forced prostitution of tens of thousands of so-called comfort women for Japanese soldiers during WWII and the 1937 "Rape of Nanking," China, by the Japanese military.

87. Kwan Weng Kin, "Koizumi to Outline Foreign Policy Here," *Straits Times* (Singapore), September 8, 2001.

88. As of this writing, a total of six Maritime SDF ships with 1,200 crew members have been dispatched. See "MSDF Ships Head for Anti-Terror Campaign," *Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), November 26, 2001, <<http://www.asahi.com/english/international/K2001112600219.html>>.

ASEAN, South Korea, and China understood Japan's intentions.<sup>89</sup> In an interview with Japanese media, Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin said he admired Japan's decision to provide logistical support. When Filipino Vice-President Teofisto Guingona visited Tokyo late last year, he also backed Japan's new anti-terrorism law.<sup>90</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper has highlighted two major facets of ASEAN's perceptions of Japan. First, ASEAN perceptions have tended to differ regarding the economic and political/security spheres. Although Japan's participation in the economic sphere was welcomed readily from the start, ASEAN countries have always been suspicious and distrustful of Japan's participation in the political/security sphere. The second aspect is a shift in which ASEAN countries are now gradually accepting Japan's increasing involvement in their regional political/security affairs. Ever since Japan took an active interest in the Cambodian conflict, ASEAN's doors have been opening for greater Japanese involvement.

The reactions of ASEAN members toward Japan's enhanced political presence in Southeast Asian affairs can hardly be described as unified. The variance can be partially attributed to the diverse experiences of each country under Japanese occupation. According to Ivan Hall, one example can be seen by contrasting the preferential treatment ethnic Malays received during the occupation to the harsh measures meted out to the Chinese.<sup>91</sup> Broadly put, countries with dominant ethnic Chinese populations have been more vocal against an increased Japanese political role in Southeast Asian affairs. However, as this paper has shown, voices that are critical of Japanese participation in the political/security sphere in Southeast Asia are becoming softer, especially in the post-Cold War period. This suggests that history will diminish as a determining factor in defining Japan-ASEAN relations in the future.

This exercise of identifying the two trends in ASEAN's perceptions of Japan is valuable as it gives us a comprehensive insight into the way Japan-ASEAN relations are likely to develop in the future. First, relations will continue to strengthen through greater integration of Japan into ASEAN's eco-

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89. Koizumi was quoted as saying, "I won the understanding of other nations (on the SDF deployment) as long as those troops do not engage in combat." See "ASEAN 'Understanding' on SDF Plan," *Asahi Shimbun* (Internet version), November 8, 2001, <<http://www.asahi.com/english/politics/K2001110800552.html>>

90. "Philippines Reassured by New Japan Antiterror Law," Jiji Press English News Service, November 26, 2001.

91. Ivan P. Hall, "Japan's Asia Card," *National Interest* (Winter 1994/1995), p. 24. For an insightful account of the treatment, see Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle Is Neutral* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1997).

conomic affairs. Although China's economic presence in Southeast Asia is expected to grow, especially in the wake of Beijing's entry into the WTO, China is unlikely to topple Japan from its leadership position in the near future. Second, the level of suspicion and fear of Japan will continue to decrease among ASEAN countries. As a result, we will witness greater Japanese involvement in Southeast Asian security or political affairs through both bilateral and multilateral security dialogues and defense exchanges. The likelihood of a more active political/security role for Japan is accentuated by the accession of the Bush administration in the United States. President George W. Bush sees Japan as America's most important strategic ally in Asia.<sup>92</sup> There have already been suggestions that the U.S.-Japan alliance will be strengthened, and Japan will assume greater responsibility in this arrangement, as illustrated by its recent participation in the U.S.-led campaign against terrorism. As such, the presence of Japan in the political/security affairs of the ASEAN region is also expected to expand.

Although in the post-Cold War period Japan-ASEAN relations have improved considerably, compared with the darker days of anti-Japanese demonstrations in the 1970s, much could still be done to forge a stable, mutually beneficial, enriching partnership. Both parties could implement policies that not only strengthen relations but also increase the level of confidence in each side's intentions and activities. The most important task for Japan is to come to terms with the history issue back home, which would once and for all mitigate, if not completely extinguish, existing fears of Japan remilitarization on the part of the ASEAN countries. Japan-ASEAN ties would also be greatly improved by greater cultural exchanges, political/security dialogues between leaders, and the opening up of Japanese society and academic institutions to people from ASEAN and vice versa.

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92. Murray Hiebert and Susan V. Lawrence, "Bush's Looming Asia Challenges," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 21, 2000.