



POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION

JCIE

**THE JCIE PAPERS**

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**A NEW DIMENSION IN  
ASEAN-JAPAN RELATIONS?**

Edited by Frances Fung Wai Lai  
and Charles E. Morrison

Japan Center for International Exchange, Tokyo, Japan



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4-9-17 Minami-Azabu, Minato-ku, Tokyo 106 Japan

Cover design by Ikko Tanaka  
Printed in Japan by the Komiyama Printing Co., Ltd.



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## *Foreword*

THIS JCIE paper is a companion to our recently published *Presence and Perceptions: The Underpinnings of ASEAN-Japan Relations*, which consisted of a series of papers originally presented at the 1984 ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Conference in Oiso, Japan. Another ASEAN-Japan Dialogue task force examined the political and security dimensions of ASEAN-Japan relations and presented its papers at the same conference. These papers, since updated, are included in this volume, the first comprehensive study I know of dealing with this evolving area in ASEAN-Japan relations.

The ASEAN-Japan Dialogue program is institutionally sponsored by the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), the East-West Seminar based in Tokyo, and the Institute of Southeast Studies, which is based in Singapore. The National Institute for Research Advancement has joined in sponsoring aspects of the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue program, although not the task force examining the political and security dimensions of the relationship.

The sponsors are deeply indebted to Dr. Somsakdi Xuto, of the National Institute for Development Administration of Thailand, who directed and coordinated the task force's effort. Dr. Frances Fung Wai Lai and Dr. Charles E. Morrison edited the papers on behalf of JCIE. Others who contributed materially to this volume include Shohei Muta and Makito Noda, program officers at JCIE. The copyediting was done by Pamela J. Noda.

June 1987

Tadashi Yamamoto  
President  
Japan Center for  
International Exchange





## *ASEAN-Japan Political and Security Relations: An Overview*

CHARLES E. MORRISON

A SYSTEMATIC analysis of ASEAN-Japan political and security “relations” might appear premature. It is only within the past 10 years that Japan has articulated a political role for itself in Southeast Asia, and formally there are no direct security relations. Japan makes no commitments to the defense of other countries, even that of its ally the United States. The member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which were invaded and occupied by Japan during World War II, have been traditionally suspicious that Japan retains political ambitions toward their region, fearful of larger Japanese defense forces, and opposed to a regional Japanese military role.

Nonetheless, as the chapters in this volume show, the political dimensions of Japan’s regional role have been growing, and there is increased acknowledgment of the security relationship between Japan and ASEAN, even if many aspects of that relationship remain indirect. It seemed appropriate, therefore, that when the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue program began to examine complementarities in ASEAN-Japan relations, the political and security dimensions of these relations be included. A task force was convened to explore the forces behind the evolution of diplomatic and security cooperation and the extent to which there were perceived needs or

potential benefits from further cooperation. The group examined constraints and potential dangers.

The task was not easy, since the political and security aspects of ASEAN-Japan relations have been deliberately left ambiguous by the governments concerned. The task force adopted no uniform methodology in dealing with its subject. Some ASEAN members of the group chose to examine their own country's political and security needs and how Japan seemed or did not seem to be relevant to these. Others looked primarily at Japanese diplomatic activity and changing defense policies and the reactions to these within the ASEAN countries. Nearly all the authors examined perceptions of the relationship, and one, Masashi Nishihara, focused on misperceptions.

The results must be regarded as preliminary. The volume does not contain a chapter devoted specifically to Indonesia-Japan political and security relations. More fundamentally, because ASEAN-Japan political and security relations are in an early stage of evolution, they defy definitive treatment. Despite these limitations, the authors have provided a valuable and interesting portrait of existing relations, the prospects for their further development, and the issues that may arise in the future. This introductory chapter is intended to highlight and integrate some of their basic points.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF ASEAN-JAPAN POLITICAL AND SECURITY RELATIONS

Perhaps the greatest area of common understanding among the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue analysts lies in their interpretations of the reasons for the beginning of open discussion about a regional Japanese political and security role. Although the interests underlying some such role have existed for a long time, it was only in the 1970s that new conditions drew attention to them. The most clear-cut of these conditions, mentioned by all authors, was an external one—the collapse of the U.S. position in Vietnam and intimations of a more extended U.S. withdrawal from the Asian rim area. Since the ASEAN and Japanese governments shared, to different degrees, a dependency on the U.S. security presence, the changed strategic environment created the prospect of unmet security needs and generated discussion about alternative sources of security. Shigekatsu



Kondo shows in chapter 2 how the new external environment contributed to the celebrated August 1977 speech in Manila by former Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, in which he articulated a Japanese political role in Southeast Asia for the first time since World War II. Other external factors helped sustain security concerns and with them discussion of a possible Japanese role into the 1980s. These included the Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea, the growth of the Soviet military presence in the region, and the American pressure on Japan to increase its self-defense capabilities, including sea-lane defense for 1,000 nautical miles southward. Those ASEAN countries most willing to entertain a Japanese security role in the region were those most affected by the new security environment—Thailand because of its “frontline” position and Singapore because of its very small size.

An internal factor, one that must be evaluated differently for each of the countries concerned, was the gradual fading of wartime memories and the development of a new set of images of Japan. For most of the post-World War II period, discussion of a Japanese overseas political and security role has been taboo in Japan and in Southeast Asia, except as a specter to be avoided. The topic continues to be a very sensitive one, but from the mid-1970s it could be discussed openly and analytically.

To help grasp the nature of current Southeast Asian attitudes toward Japan, some of the authors (Zakaria Haji Ahmad in chapter 3, Frances Fung Wai Lai in chapter 5, and Sukhumbhand Paribatra in chapter 6) supplemented their analyses with the results of surveys. Although the groups questioned were not nationally representative, the survey questions were not standardized, and the Thai data cited is dated, the responses broadly suggest that Southeast Asians continue to be fearful of Japanese domination but not of military aggression. Two of the Southeast Asian misperceptions that Nishihara seeks to correct in chapter 7—that militarism is growing in Japan and that Japan might invade Southeast Asia—seem to have less and less currency in much of Southeast Asia. It appears that many Southeast Asians give credence to Japanese assertions that Japan will never again become a military power, although some would argue that this is partly because Japan has found other more effective and less expensive means of dominating the region.

The existing economic relationship, widely perceived in Southeast

Asia as inequitable, has limited the attractiveness of increased ASEAN-Japan political and security ties in the eyes of Southeast Asians. In chapter 4, Carolina Hernandez refers to two aspects of this with respect to Filipinos. One is the argument that should Japan's economic power be backed by increased military capabilities and a regional military role, Japan would be a much more formidable and dangerous power in comparison to its Southeast Asian neighbors. The other is the Filipino perception that a closer politico-security relationship with Japan would develop in the same unequal fashion as the economic relationship. Other Southeast Asian authors find similar sentiments in their countries. Thus, if Southeast Asian fears of Japanese militarism or an eventual Japanese military invasion seem to be dissipating, there remain constraints on entering into deeper politico-security ties, based largely on dissatisfaction with recent Japanese interactions with the region, not those of 45 years ago. Zakaria, in particular, urges Japanese to be sensitive to the political implications of inequitable economic relations and to strive to ensure that future political or security ties be regarded as being between equals.

#### JAPAN'S REGIONAL POLITICAL AND SECURITY ROLES

How does Japan affect the political order in the ASEAN region and ASEAN security? Members of the task force delineated a number of roles, some appreciated within the region.

The first is the politico-security role that is derived from Japan's economic interaction with the region. Since Japan is the largest economic partner of the ASEAN countries as a whole and of most of the ASEAN countries individually, its trade, aid, and financial and investment activities cannot fail to affect the security of ASEAN governments. The ASEAN governments have made economic development their highest priority and rely heavily on the external sector as an engine of growth. Sukhumbhand, for example, writes that the Thai government sees Japan as a vehicle for extracting economic resources from abroad that can be used for strengthening itself, and Hernandez describes the need for economic assistance in meeting internal threats in the Philippines arising from Muslim and Communist insurgencies. Several authors note ASEAN appreciation of the Japanese concept of "comprehensive security" with its em-



phasis on economic assistance. The survey data also suggest overwhelming support for Japan to define its regional security role in terms of economic assistance.

Some important qualifications are needed, however. Hernandez remarks that Japanese aid to the previous Philippine government was not appreciated by a growing number of Filipinos opposed to that government. Moreover, not all Japanese economic interaction benefits the security of either governments or societies in Southeast Asia. Where relations are perceived as inequitable, they may bring controversy to those who engaged in them. For example, Zakaria notes the skeptical attitudes toward Malaysia's "Look East" policy by some within the Malaysian public and bureaucracy because of unhappiness with the existing economic relationship.

Second, Japan is playing a larger diplomatic role on regional issues, notably Kampuchea. As described by Kondo, this role currently involves several elements: political support for ASEAN's positions, the denial of economic assistance to Vietnam, and—as a concrete supplement to its diplomacy—Japanese financial contributions to refugee relief and resettlement. Because Japan's Kampuchean positions have been closely coordinated with the ASEAN governments and Japan has supported ASEAN positions, this role has been appreciated by the Southeast Asian grouping. The Thai government especially, Sukhumbhand shows, has been happy to welcome Japan as a partner in a loose coalition of forces opposed to Vietnamese aggression. Japan has also been diplomatically active in other ways—for example, by acting as a spokesman for ASEAN in the large power economic summits.

Once again, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting the Japanese diplomatic role. To date, Japan has been supporting positions agreed upon by the ASEAN group and retreating from positions opposed by ASEAN. For example, Japan abandoned the Fukuda Doctrine concept of building bridges between ASEAN and the Indochinese states in part through assistance to Vietnam. Should Japan develop a stronger politico-diplomatic role in the region touching upon more issues, this role might not always be as compatible with the interests of ASEAN or some of its member countries as its Kampuchean diplomacy has been.

The third role arises from Japan's position as a factor in the regional and global balances of power. The chapters suggest that



Japan is basically regarded by the ASEAN governments as a friendly country whose self-defense efforts contribute to regional and global stability. Zakaria, Lai, and Sukhumbhand refer to belief in the Malaysian, Singaporean, and Thai governments that Japan is an important element in the global balance of power and can help compensate for reduced American power.

An important connection between Japanese and ASEAN security lies in the fact that both rely upon a strong regional American security presence. Leadership in Japan and ASEAN want that presence to continue. The ASEAN authors show that there is considerable awareness in the governments of the region that improved Japanese self-defense may relieve the U.S. burden and encourage the United States to remain militarily strong in the region. Kondo also suggests that if Japan and ASEAN consult directly on U.S. force levels and regional commitments, they might jointly encourage a desirable American presence. Hernandez remarks that Japan and the Philippines already contribute substantially to the American presence and regional security by hosting American forces on their territory, and she regrets that these contributions are often unappreciated.

A fourth role, although only a potential one, is that of Japan as partner in military cooperation with ASEAN. Zakaria speculates that should the United States abandon the region, a Japanese military alliance might be more desirable than similar arrangements with the People's Republic of China or the Soviet Union, but he and the other ASEAN-Japan Dialogue political and security analysts reject a significant overseas military role either as currently impractical or undesirable. This view may be stated even more strongly on the Japanese side than the ASEAN one. Nishihara devotes much of chapter 7 to arguing that Japanese military power is inadequate to support overseas commitments and that the political forces supporting a strict interpretation of the peace Constitution remain paramount. Kondo explores the potential for Japanese arms sales to ASEAN countries, the transfer of military technology, and joint military exercises and concludes that political constraints virtually rule out any such direct contributions to ASEAN military strength.

In this environment, the authors can envision a possible expansion of exchanges of students at staff colleges and of consultations on political and security issues but no direct military cooperation.

## THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL AND SECURITY RELATIONS

The authors in this volume reach a similar conclusion—that political and security dimensions are being added to the ASEAN-Japan relationship, but only very slowly. Constraints are often referred to in the following chapters. Fear of domination is most frequently cited by Southeast Asians, while Japanese contributors cite domestic political constraints. More fundamentally, however, there no longer appears to be any clear-cut or imminent need for stronger ASEAN-Japan political and security relations. Both sides seem to be meeting security needs adequately with current internal, bilateral, and other international efforts. The specter of a vacuum of power, so vividly present in the middle and late 1970s, has faded with the Reagan administration's reassertion of American military presence. Although another of the external conditions that drew attention to security—the U.S. pressure on Japan to increase its defense spending—continues, this pressure appears to be more clearly cast in terms of increased self-defense needs and as a complement to rather than a substitute for the American presence. In the absence of major upheavals, such as those that set in motion the beginning of the discussion of ASEAN-Japan political and security relations, there is little incentive for either side to try to expand these relations dramatically.

In the current environment, ASEAN and Japanese officials appear to be uncertain how their relationship should develop. Sukhum-bhand comments that even those Thai policymakers who favored more extensive political and security ties with Japan seem unable to think of specific ways in which these could be promoted. Yet it seems inevitable that a gradual evolution of some political and security dimensions will continue, given Japan's large economic weight and the tendency that as wartime memories recede so will Japan's position as something of a pariah state in the Asia scene.

The ASEAN-Japan Dialogue analysts are in agreement on two further points regarding the future. One of these is that the growth of mutual trust in ASEAN-Japan relations will have an important bearing on the scope of future political and security cooperation. Most authors include specific suggestions on how to improve trust. In this regard, a theme reiterated through the chapters is the need for greater appreciation in both ASEAN and Japan of mutual securi-

ty interests and for attention to each other's sensitivities. To achieve this, Kondo, Zakaria, and Nishihara favor broader consultations on political and security issues. Zakaria points out that this is especially important now that Japan has made commitments to defend sea-lanes reaching toward Southeast Asia. To prevent misunderstanding and build confidence, Japan should consult the ASEAN governments on its defense plans. Nishihara adds that Japan requires clearer policy definition so that its policies can be better understood by friendly nations. This includes clarifying defense needs, Japan's plans for protecting its security interests, and the legal and political constraints on its defense policies.

The other point, stressed by Hernandez, Lai, Sukhumbhand, and Zakaria, is that it is most acceptable to Southeast Asians and more feasible for Japan if Japan defines its contribution to regional security primarily in terms of economic support. This view endorses the current Japanese emphasis on comprehensive security. The authors offer or take note of other suggestions ranging from increased cultural interaction and increased educational exchange programs among military personnel to assistance in the suppression of piracy and the expansion of sea-lane defense beyond 1,000 nautical miles, but clearly their recommended emphasis is on nonmilitary Japanese contributions to ASEAN's security.



*Political and Security Cooperation  
between ASEAN and Japan*

SHIGEKATSU KONDO

At present, Japan and the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations enjoy an unprecedentedly close relationship. However, owing to large disparities in national power between Japan and the ASEAN group, the latter is understandably wary of Japan. The gross national product of Japan is approximately 8.5 times that of the ASEAN countries combined. Moreover, although Japan spends only 1 percent of its GNP on defense, its defense budget is the world's eighth largest and more than that of the combined ASEAN defense budgets.

In recent years, the international community increasingly has called upon Japan to assume an international role commensurate with its enormous economic power, and Japan is attempting to respond. At the same time, the United States has strongly urged Japan to increase its defense spending. These forces make timely an examination of the political and security dimensions of ASEAN-Japan relations.

THE FUKUDA DOCTRINE

On August 18, 1977, Takeo Fukuda, then prime minister of Japan, delivered a speech in Manila that articulated a new Southeast

Asian policy. This policy, later called the Fukuda Doctrine, expressed Japan's willingness to play an active political role for the peace and prosperity of Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Fukuda Doctrine is an appropriate starting point for consideration of Japan's role in Southeast Asia.

This does not mean that Japan did not try to take any political initiatives before 1977. In the mid-1960s, Japan sought to promote regional economic cooperation. It played an important role in the establishment of the Asian Development Bank in December 1966 and, along with the United States, made the largest contribution to its capital fund. Japan also proposed the Ministerial Conference on Economic Development of Southeast Asia, which held its first meeting in Tokyo in April 1966. Moreover, Japan sought to resolve conflicts in the region. When tensions arose over the creation of Malaysia in the early 1960s, Japan tried to facilitate a settlement by arranging a conference in Tokyo in June 1964 for the leaders of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In 1970 following the outbreak of conflict in Kampuchea, Japan, together with Indonesia and Malaysia, explored ways to stabilize the Kampuchean situation. Despite these initiatives, however, Japan's diplomatic activity was intermittent. In general, before the Fukuda trip the Japanese government was reluctant to play an active political role in Southeast Asia and preferred a low posture.

The Fukuda Doctrine established three principles of Japan's Southeast Asian policy:

1. As a nation committed to peace, Japan rejects the role of a military power.
2. Japan will build mutual confidence and trust based on heart-to-heart understanding with the Southeast Asian countries in the political, economic, social, and cultural fields.
3. Japan will cooperate positively with the efforts of the ASEAN countries to strengthen their solidarity and resilience and at the same time will seek to foster relations based on mutual understanding with the countries of Indochina, thus contributing to peace and prosperity throughout Southeast Asia.

Japan's willingness to play a positive political role in Southeast Asia is based on the third Fukuda Doctrine principle. Japan had made a political commitment to the strengthening of the ASEAN countries. As a concrete expression of this commitment, Fukuda

promised \$1 billion in assistance to five ASEAN industrial projects. Japan also was willing to act as an intermediary between ASEAN and Indochina.

Three factors prompted this new Japanese policy. First, there had been a major change in the strategic environment in Southeast Asia, created by the victory of communism in Indochina in 1975 and the ASEAN response. The United States, until 1975 the bulwark of support for the noncommunist governments in Indochina, hastily retreated from the region, deepening the anxiety of the ASEAN governments. These governments reacted by holding their first ASEAN summit in Bali in February 1976. At the summit, the ASEAN leaders emphasized that they would strengthen national and regional resilience and adopted the Declaration of ASEAN Concord to establish a broader framework of regional cooperation among themselves. The active involvement of the economic ministers in ASEAN for the first time also breathed new life into the regional association.

The second factor was the strategic and economic importance of Southeast Asia to Japan. The region occupies a strategic position connecting the Indian and Pacific oceans. A large part of Japan's international trade passed through the Strait of Malacca, including 79.3 percent of Japan's imported oil in 1976.<sup>1</sup> In the same year, the ASEAN countries accounted for 9 percent of Japan's total exports.<sup>2</sup> They supplied 14 percent of Japan's raw material imports, including almost 100 percent of those of rubber and tin, 43 percent of lumber, 39 percent of copper ore, 30 percent of bauxite, and 16 percent of petroleum.

The third factor was that the international community had increasingly urged Japan to assume greater international responsibilities. Until then, Japan had pursued "economic diplomacy," seeking to separate economics and politics and shying away from the latter. However, it gradually became more difficult for Japan to avoid the growing pressures from other countries to play a more active political role. For this reason, Japan's blue book on diplomacy, published in the fall of 1977, stated that Japan must make appropriate contributions in the field of international politics as well as international economics in order to assure peace and economic development.<sup>3</sup> Because the United States and the Soviet Union were preoccupied with other regions of the world and China was still



recovering from the turbulence caused by the Cultural Revolution, Southeast Asia seemed an appropriate arena for Japan to make its special contribution to world peace and prosperity.

These factors, in fact, had been pushing Japan to reassess its role in Southeast Asia for more than a year before Fukuda's Manila speech. When officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan held a meeting in Hong Kong in March 1976 to discuss the situation in Southeast Asia after the ASEAN summit, it was already agreed that Japan should contribute to ASEAN resilience and to peaceful coexistence between ASEAN and Indochina.<sup>4</sup> A perfect opportunity to publicly articulate the new policy came when Fukuda was invited to visit the ASEAN countries and meet their leaders following the second summit in Kuala Lumpur in August 1977.

#### JAPAN AND THE KAMPUCHEAN PROBLEM

In the period after the Fukuda Doctrine, the main regional issue in Southeast Asia centered on the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea in late 1978 and the continued presence of Vietnamese forces in that country. Hence it is useful to look at Japanese policy toward the Kampuchean problem as an indication of the nature of Japan's evolving regional diplomacy.

The Fukuda Doctrine had presumed that Japan's economic power would provide effective leverage for its political goals. Japan was considering not only large economic assistance to strengthen ASEAN solidarity but also a substantial program to assist the Indochinese countries to restore their war-damaged economies. Because of Japan's economic importance to both groups, it would be able to establish friendship with both, facilitating an intermediary role between ASEAN and Indochina.

This vision proved too optimistic. The Kampuchean struggle brought big-power rivalry back to the political landscape of Southeast Asia, this time in the form of Sino-Soviet conflict. Vietnam was supported by the Soviet Union, and the remnants of the Khmer Rouge fled toward the Thai border areas, where they mounted a resistance movement supplied mainly by China. The Kampuchean crisis also effectively terminated Japan's aspiration to act as an intermediary among the rival Southeast Asian groupings.

### **Supporting ASEAN Diplomacy**

Forced to reconsider its approach, Japan from the first supported the ASEAN position on Kampuchea. The ASEAN countries regarded the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea as a serious violation of international law and continued to recognize the government of Democratic Kampuchea as the sole legal government of that country. They also sought a comprehensive political settlement based on the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops and the right of the Kampuchean people to self-determination. Japan supported these positions.

ASEAN sought to put diplomatic pressure on Vietnam by isolating it internationally. Since 1979, the ASEAN countries have successfully upheld the Democratic Kampuchean government's right of representation in the United Nations General Assembly and have continued to introduce resolutions backing their notion of a Kampuchean settlement. Japan firmly supported the ASEAN positions in the United Nations, cosponsoring ASEAN resolutions and lobbying for support for them.<sup>5</sup>

Japan also supported ASEAN by initiating proposals of its own consistent with ASEAN positions. For example, at the expanded ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in Bali in July 1979, Foreign Minister Sunao Sonoda proposed that the countries concerned should hold an international conference to seek a way to restore peace in Kampuchea.<sup>6</sup> This proposal led to the convening of the UN-sponsored International Conference on Kampuchea in 1981, although on a scale somewhat larger than anticipated by Sonoda.

When Sonoda made this proposal, he avoided suggesting a date or a list of participants, asking ASEAN to take the initiative in these respects. The first UN resolution on Kampuchea, which was pushed by ASEAN in the fall of 1979, requested the secretary-general to explore the possibility of holding a conference. The following year, the UN resolution on Kampuchea urged the secretary-general to prepare for a conference to be held in early 1981, to which should be invited all parties directly involved and others concerned. The International Conference on Kampuchea was finally convened in July 1981. The ASEAN foreign ministers later gave Japan credit for its initial proposal, which led to the holding of the conference.<sup>7</sup>

At the expanded ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting held in

Manila immediately before the Kampuchean conference, Sonoda presented a detailed blueprint for a Kampuchean settlement.<sup>8</sup> Japan hoped thereby to pave the way for a comprehensive political solution to the conflict either at the forthcoming conference or in the future. Thus, Japan has given positive support to ASEAN efforts without seeking to dominate them.

### **Relations with Vietnam**

In April 1978, as part of its efforts to develop parallel relations with Vietnam, Japan had settled the outstanding issues with Hanoi involving the debt of the previous Saigon governments and promised economic assistance in the amount of ¥16 billion in grants for four years and ¥20 billion in credits for two years.<sup>9</sup> The Kampuchean invasion therefore raised questions about this aid package. To continue aid would assist the Hanoi government, but to cancel it would damage Japan's influence with the Vietnamese. When Nguyen Duy Trinh, the Vietnamese foreign minister, visited Tokyo in December 1978 just prior to the invasion, Sonoda warned him that Japan would restrict aid to Vietnam if Hanoi threatened peace in Southeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Japan froze economic assistance, promising to resume it when the Kampuchean problem was settled.

Japan has tried to persuade Vietnam through diplomacy to withdraw its forces from Kampuchea, and Vietnam has strongly criticized Japan's suspension of economic aid. It may have been a reflection of their bitterness that the Indochinese foreign ministers in a July 1982 meeting did not list Japan as a possible participant in a proposed international conference on Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, Japan intends to cooperate when possible in the reconstruction of Indochina.

### **Refugee Assistance and Aid to Thailand**

Japan's aid diplomacy also supported ASEAN through the extension of humanitarian support to Indochinese refugees and the augmentation of assistance to Thailand, the so-called frontline ASEAN member. The refugee problem was more than a humanitarian concern; it also became a major political concern in the ASEAN countries in 1979 as tens of thousands of refugees fled in boats across the South China Sea or crossed the Thai borders with



Kampuchea and Laos. The decline in the outflows since 1980 and the institutionalization of international relief activities have lessened the problem, but refugees still place a heavy economic and social burden on Thailand. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 1 March 1986, 125,047 Indochinese refugees are in Thailand, in addition to 200,000 to 300,000 Kampucheans concentrated in camps along the Thai-Kampuchean border.

Japan's contribution to alleviating the burden on the ASEAN member countries and providing relief has been mainly a financial one.<sup>11</sup> Japan's financial assistance has taken the form of contributions to international organizations, such as the UNHCR, the World Food Program, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, or of bilateral assistance to Thailand. Between 1979 and the end of 1985, a total of \$502 million in refugee assistance was provided, making Japan the largest donor of international financial support for the Indochinese refugees. Japan's assistance to the UNHCR has covered approximately half that organization's Indochinese refugee expenditure since 1979. Bilateral refugee-related assistance to Thailand amounted to another \$475 million between 1979 and the end of 1985. Japan has been actively assisting the Thai population, for example, in the construction of "new villages" for Thais along the border region. Japan, however, was very reluctant to accept refugees for final settlement in Japan's highly homogeneous society. Nevertheless, by April 1986, some 4,624 Indochinese refugees had been admitted to Japan.

Japan regards its refugee assistance not only as humanitarian aid but also as an important contribution to stability and security in Southeast Asia. The protracted fighting in Kampuchea and the massive refugee concentrations along the border place a heavy security burden on Thailand. Alleviating this burden strengthens Thai security and has strategic implications for the entire ASEAN region. This rationale for assistance was made explicit when Japan adopted a policy of increasing economic assistance to "countries near troubled areas of the world,"<sup>12</sup> in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Thailand, with Pakistan and Turkey, was regarded as such a country. In April 1980, Japan pledged economic assistance to Thailand in the amount of ¥57 billion for that fiscal year, an increase of 28 percent over the preceding year. Assistance at this

augmented level has continued since. In 1984, it amounted to ¥82 billion.

### **Aid to Laos**

When Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe accompanied Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone on his ASEAN tour in the spring of 1983, he proposed in talks with Thai Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila that Japan should increase its economic aid to Laos for strategic reasons.<sup>13</sup> Japan had continued to provide small-scale grant aid to Laos since it became communist in 1975. For example, this aid amounted to about \$3 million in 1983. Abe apparently hoped that increased aid to Laos could help bring indirect pressure on Hanoi to move in the direction of a political settlement in Kampuchea. It was reported that the proposal was made impromptu.<sup>14</sup>

The ASEAN countries, however, reacted negatively to this proposal on the grounds that it might indirectly help Vietnamese activities in Kampuchea.<sup>15</sup> However, in July 1984 it was reported that Japan would extend ¥1.7 billion in grant aid to Laos for two years for construction of a medicine manufacturing center.<sup>16</sup> The strategic implications of such a modest increase in aid are uncertain, but the proposal is indicative of Japan's continuing interest in having some influence in Indochina and its aspiration to facilitate an eventual *modus vivendi* between ASEAN and the Indochinese nations. The reluctance of ASEAN to agree to this very modest increase in aid also shows the difficulty Japan faces when it tries to take an independent initiative on the Kampuchean problem.

### **THE FUTURE OF JAPAN'S POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH ASEAN**

What does Japan's position on Kampuchea indicate about Japan's future political role in Southeast Asia? As outlined above, Japan mainly contributed by helping mobilize international support for the ASEAN positions on Kampuchea and by extending financial assistance to Thailand and the refugees. This suggests that any political role that Japan can play in conflict settlement is very limited and indirect because of the narrow range of Japan's options and bargaining tools. Since China has given military equipment to the Kampuchean resistance and placed heavy military pressure on Viet-



nam along its northern border, China has much more influence on the future settlement of the Kampuchean conflict.

Nevertheless, there may be more scope for Japan to contribute to a comprehensive political settlement in Kampuchea by exercising its influence with the United States and perhaps by helping persuade Vietnam to take a less rigid stance. It is through its assistance programs that Japan can most effectively play a constructive role in strengthening the security of the ASEAN states. The strategic implications of its 1980 aid policy of expanding assistance to countries near troubled areas have continued to become clearer. In May 1981, when Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki visited the United States, he and President Ronald Reagan agreed that "the political, economic, and social stability of developing countries are indispensable for the maintenance of peace and stability of the world." In the U.S.-Japan joint communiqué, the Japanese government stated that it would increase its aid to "those areas that are important to the maintenance of the peace and stability of the world."<sup>17</sup> As "a member of the Western alliance," Japan clarified its intention to actively expand financial support to countries important to the security of the Western world, even if those countries were located outside the East Asia and Pacific region. Thus, Japan's economic assistance increasingly acquired the character of strategic assistance.

This new aid posture was well received in the West. The United States reportedly requested that Japan extend strategic assistance to about 20 countries.<sup>18</sup> Of course, the United States does not think that Japan's expanded aid will supplant its defense efforts. In recent years, Japan has periodically consulted with the major Western countries to coordinate its economic assistance policies.

In the Fukuda Doctrine, Japan made a political commitment to strengthen the resilience of ASEAN. This corresponded with the aspiration of the ASEAN governments to underpin political stability by economic development. In 1985, ASEAN accounted for 31.2 percent of Japan's bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Japan provided 44.9 percent of all ODA received by the ASEAN group in the 1972 to 1981 period.<sup>19</sup> In the past, Japan had placed high priority on assistance to ASEAN countries not only because they were neighbors but also because of their economic importance to Japan. Under the new economic cooperation policy, ASEAN is regarded as one of the areas important to the maintenance of world



peace and stability. Therefore, Japan will continue to give a high priority to its ODA in this region.

Since Suzuki's 1981 visit, Japan has increased its emphasis on the development of human resources as a basis for nation building, rural and agricultural development, energy, and the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises.<sup>20</sup> This policy seems to point in the direction of furthering ASEAN's political, economic, and social resilience. Needless to say, Japan also must increase its efforts to promote private investment in ASEAN and to open its markets to their exports.

#### PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN'S SECURITY COOPERATION WITH ASEAN

##### **Japan's Defense Buildup and Nakasone's 1983 ASEAN Trip**

When Nakasone visited the ASEAN member countries in the spring of 1983, one of his main purposes was to reassure those in Southeast Asia who were concerned about the possible revival of Japanese militarism. These new concerns had arisen as a consequence of the U.S. request that Japan make a "steady and significant" defense buildup to help cope with the growing Soviet threat and alleviate the burden on overextended American forces. Japan's effort to respond, especially its assumption of sea-lane defense up to 1,000 nautical miles from its coast, revived concerns in Southeast Asia. President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines and President Suharto of Indonesia expressed concern about this buildup when they separately visited the United States in the fall of 1982. This concern may have been heightened by reports in the summer of 1983 that the Japanese government tried to distort accounts of Japan's war-time activities in Asia in school textbooks.

Nakasone seemed to have succeeded in obtaining the understanding of the ASEAN leaders about Japan's defense plans. In a speech in Kuala Lumpur, he reaffirmed Japan's rejection of a role as a military power:

In improving its self-defense capability, Japan is determined to commit itself solely and exclusively to self-defense and not to become a military power threatening neighboring countries, as has been repeatedly declared by the Japanese government on numerous occasions. I, too, shall make every effort faithfully to adhere to this basic defense policy, which has been consistently upheld

throughout Japan's postwar history. This is more than a matter of policy: It is deeply rooted in strong and unchanging Japanese national sentiments deriving from our sincere contrition at the past.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear that Japan cannot attain the military capacity to play a military role in Southeast Asia in the near future. At present, Japan is building its defenses with the aim of achieving the capabilities required to repulse "limited and small-scale aggression" in principle without outside help. This force level objective was established by the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) of 1976, which assumed that Japan would receive support from the United States. Despite the changes in the international environment since 1976, the target has remained the same. The Japanese government will not revise the NDPO until this force level has been achieved. Owing to its severe financial difficulties and continuing public opposition to a big increase in the defense budget, Japan's defense buildup has been so modest that even the capabilities to achieve this limited objective will not be obtained until 1990 at the earliest.<sup>22</sup>

### **Potential for ASEAN-Japan Security Cooperation**

Given Japan's lack of interest or capability in developing a military role in Southeast Asia, are there any possible areas of security cooperation between Japan and the ASEAN governments? In the past, some ASEAN countries have privately conveyed their desire to purchase weapons from Japan and to engage in joint naval exercises.<sup>23</sup> Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and especially after the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, the ASEAN countries have strengthened their military forces and developed security cooperation among themselves, mainly on a bilateral basis. However, Japan consistently refused to contribute to these efforts. In the face of Japanese policies and domestic constraints, this situation will not change soon. Nevertheless, it is useful to examine some of those areas where military cooperation has been proposed.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Japan exported quantities of arms, mainly ammunition such as bullets, shells, and pistols, to Southeast Asia. The largest item was a bullet-manufacturing plant worth \$6 million, exported to the Philippines as part of reparations payments.<sup>24</sup> In the 1960s, however, as the Japanese defense industry developed the

capability to produce and supply the main weapons systems for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), the Diet frequently took up the question of arms exports.<sup>25</sup> As a result of these debates, arms exports were severely restricted on the grounds that they were inconsistent with the aspiration of a peace-loving and responsible country. In 1967, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato established the Three Principles on Arms Exports, banning exports to communist countries, countries subject to embargoes of arms exports under UN resolutions, and countries that were involved in or likely to become involved in international conflicts. In 1976, these principles were expanded to virtually prohibit all weapons exports. The export of equipment related to both arms production and arms technology is also practically banned.

Because of this policy, the prospects for Japanese arms sales to the ASEAN countries in the near future seem virtually nonexistent. When Nakasone visited Jakarta in 1983, it was reported that Suharto had requested technology transfer to the Indonesian defense industry but that Nakasone had immediately rejected the proposal.<sup>26</sup>

In January 1983, the Japanese government decided to permit the transfer of arms technology to the United States, but this decision should be regarded as exceptional. The transfer of technology to Japan's ally will be implemented within the framework of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement and will not be subject to the Three Principles on Arms Exports.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, it will be very difficult to hold joint military exercises in the near future because of restrictions imposed on the operation of the SDF. Since 1979, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) has participated in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises with U.S., Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand naval forces. The MSDF is not allowed to take part in exercises to train for joint operations with foreign navies because the Japanese government takes the view that Japan is constitutionally banned from exercising the right of collective self-defense. The MSDF participation in RIMPAC is justified as merely a good opportunity to improve tactics and ways of fighting.

At present, therefore, Japan cannot make a direct contribution to strengthening the military forces of the ASEAN countries. It is true, however, that as the international environment has changed, the Japanese have begun to debate defense issues in increasingly



realistic terms. This trend was reflected in the agreement to permit transfer of military technology to the United States and MSDF participation in RIMPAC. Future security cooperation between Japan and ASEAN should not be ruled out entirely.

Indirect security cooperation is developing between ASEAN and Japan in the field of military training. Between 1958 and October 1985, the ASEAN countries sent 144 students (86 from Thailand, 46 from Singapore, 10 from the Philippines, one from Indonesia, and one from Malaysia) to various education institutions of the Defense Agency.<sup>28</sup> This is not a large number, but Thailand and Singapore have begun to send students to the National Defense Academy on a regular basis, and there are few constraints to Japan's expanding cooperation in the area of military training by accepting more students.

Given the very limited scope for military cooperation in the near future, probably the most important step to be taken at this stage is for Japan and ASEAN to deepen their understanding of each other's defense requirements. Three areas appropriate for security consultations can be defined:

1. Japan's defense policy. Japan should keep the ASEAN governments informed of its defense policies. By so doing, Japan can minimize misunderstandings of the kind that occurred in 1982.

2. The strategic environment in East Asia. Japan and the ASEAN governments can deepen their understanding of each other's threat perceptions by exchanging views on the strategic environment. This will promote understanding about each other's defense needs and serve to define areas of possible future cooperation.

3. The U.S. military presence in Asia. Japan and the ASEAN member countries have similar interests in maintaining a necessary level of American military presence. By discussing the U.S. commitments and force levels, they will be able to more effectively cooperate in guaranteeing an appropriate American presence.

The annual discussions with the Japanese foreign minister and his ASEAN counterparts can be utilized as a forum for expanding personal contacts among the appropriate officials and for developing broader understanding of each other's security concerns.

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*Political and Security Dimensions  
in ASEAN-Japan Relations:  
A Malaysian Perspective*

ZAKARIA HAJI AHMAD

JUST a little more than 40 years ago, Japanese military forces swept through East Asia down to Southeast Asia and subjugated the peoples in these lands under the imperialism of the Rising Sun. For many people, especially those in Southeast Asia, this conquest and the subsequent four-year “Japanese occupation” was unforgettable. In many respects, it not only signaled the demise of a phase of their colonial past but also was to be a turning point in their respective modern national histories. Although the Japanese occupation overlords espoused the idea of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere between Japan and the peoples of these countries, they ruled harshly and committed atrocities so that the Japanese interregnum is remembered today as having been an extremely difficult period by those who experienced it.

Nevertheless, for many Southeast Asians who were subjected to the Japanese yoke, the wartime experience is now only a memory, and few would recount with bitterness or hostility the pains and suffering they endured. This might be explained by the fact that the generation that experienced the Japanese occupation has diminished in number, and there is a prevailing sentiment that bygones may be best left as bygones. However, this does not dispel a lingering notion that Japan, when unfettered and unchallenged, can be a



militaristic nation that will try to dominate those with whom it has relations. Children of the Japanese occupation generation, who now constitute the emerging elite in Southeast Asia, are not unmindful of the potential of a militarily assertive Japan. Its harsh, military aspects are salient in present-day Southeast Asian memories of the occupation. Brutal as the Japanese might have been, they are also credited with having shown that Asians can defeat the "white man" and that Europeans were not invincible. In much of Southeast Asia, the Japanese occupation was also a time when the forces of nationalism were encouraged and were subsequently crystallized as movements for independence against returning colonial powers. Thus, brief as the Japanese occupation was, it was an indelible episode whose effects were both positive and negative.

Although Japan was defeated in the last war, it may be argued that it won the peace after 1945. In virtually every noncommunist Southeast Asian country today, Japanese consumer goods, especially electronics products and automotive parts and automobiles, are ubiquitously found in ever-increasing quantities. If Japan could not conquer East and Southeast Asia militarily, it has done so economically. Defeated in war, Japan has arisen to become today the free world's second largest economy. On a global level, it has often been said that Japan is now an economic superpower without military might.

The noncommunist countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are now independent but are still in quest of socioeconomic modernization. They not only have to continually adjust to both domestic and external circumstances threatening their national interests and integrity but must overcome obstacles to economic development and social progress. Interestingly, the leaders of at least two of these countries, Malaysia and Singapore, openly advocate that their countrymen learn from the Japanese "economic miracle."

Japan's role in the ASEAN region in the postwar period has been overwhelmingly economic in nature. The economic relationship is an interdependent one whereby Japan supplies industrial goods and the ASEAN countries provide raw materials and natural commodities. Within this general pattern there are many bilaterally specific issues.<sup>1</sup> Most of these, however, involve market access to Japan; the ASEAN countries find that there are restrictions on the

sale of their manufactured products to the Japanese market.

In the late 1970s, however, new factors that are beginning to bring political and security dimensions into more prominence began to affect ASEAN-Japan relations. First, the growing Soviet military presence in the Pacific area may become a threat to the economic lifelines between Japan and the ASEAN member countries. The context of this problem—the rapidly changing international environment involving the United States and China as well as the Soviet Union—is itself very complex.

Second, the growing U.S. pressure on Japan to increase its military role and share in the Pacific defense burden has precipitated international debate, and a domestic one in Japan, on the nature of this role. Especially relevant to the ASEAN countries is the notion of a Japanese role in sea-lane protection extending 1,000 nautical miles south of Tokyo and Osaka.

Third, within the ASEAN countries, there has emerged a feeling that Japan's potential political role should not be disregarded. This phenomenon was demonstrated when ASEAN successfully sought Japan's suspension of aid to Vietnam as a response to Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea. There is also an emerging feeling that trade and economic relationships between Japan and ASEAN may need to be buttressed by political imperatives. Japan itself has espoused the notion that it can be the "champion" of ASEAN and purports to represent the grouping in the annual summit meetings of the seven major industrialized free world nations.

Thus, ASEAN-Japan relations in the late 1980s and 1990s may be transformed from being almost exclusively economic in nature to including significant political and security elements. With a probable decline of the United States and its reduced role in the Pacific, in spite of assertions that it continues to be "top dog,"<sup>2</sup> Japan may well have to play the role of a "surrogate" in East and Southeast Asia.

This chapter will discuss the issues in ASEAN-Japan political and security relations from a Malaysian perspective. What are the viewpoints of various interested groups in Malaysia on these relations? Would an increased Japanese security role be welcome? Why would there be a need for a Japanese political and security role, if any? What problems might arise from increased ASEAN-Japan ties, especially political and security links?



## MALAYSIAN SECURITY PERCEPTIONS

Malaysia's own experience and conceptions about security are an important element underlying Malaysian assessments of regional security issues in the future and a possible Japanese role. Therefore, it is useful to describe this context briefly.

Until 1978-79, Malaysia emphasized the domestic rather than the external aspects of security. It had had to deal with a communist insurrection, which to some extent still lingers,<sup>3</sup> and to face challenges arising from racial chauvinism, social inequities and unrest, religious and political extremism, and social problems, including a high incidence of drug addiction and abuse. Although Malaysia had achieved a fairly high degree of political stability and economic progress, promoting national resilience continued to be a top priority.

Since the invasion of Kampuchea by Vietnam in 1978, there has been increased defense spending in the ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia and Singapore, to prepare for a threat from a country "up north" (meaning Vietnam). This growth of military expenditures has recently lessened in Malaysia. The dominant view now is that Malaysia should adopt a program of "comprehensive security," complementing military strength with economic, political, and social measures. This approach rests on three pillars. The first is a secure Southeast Asia; the second is a strong and effective ASEAN community; and the third, stressed by former Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam as "most basic," is the necessity for a sound, secure, and strong Malaysia.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the changing external configurations of power and shifts in alignments in the Asia-Pacific region, there is an overriding fear of China as the long-term threat to Malaysia and Southeast Asia. In part, this is because of China's continuing relationships with the outlawed Communist Party of Malaya, in spite of the establishment of normal diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China. The most important cause of this perceived threat is the proximity of China as a regional power and its potential ability to project power into the area.<sup>5</sup> China, however, is regarded as currently not able to project power externally but rather as having the potential to affect the domestic security of Malaysia, which has a significant Chinese minority and where the communist challenge has been viewed as a Chinese-dominated one.



At the same time that there has been a recent emphasis on defense and security, the Malaysian government has consistently advocated that Southeast Asia become a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). Accepted nominally by ASEAN, the concept of ZOPFAN does not mean that there cannot be security relationships between the countries in the region and external actors, such as Australia, Britain, and New Zealand with Malaysia and Singapore in the Five-Power Defense Arrangement; that there can be no foreign military bases, such as the U.S. ones in the Philippines; or that there must be no foreign military contingents, such as the Royal Australian Air Force units stationed in Malaysia.

Although Malaysia has steadfastly insisted that ASEAN is not a military pact, this has not prevented Malaysian participation in bilateral and trilateral military exercises and cooperation on police and intelligence matters with the other members of ASEAN. Malaysia and other ASEAN countries have also carried out military exercises with non-ASEAN friends and allies. Although political factors, such as the Philippine claim to Malaysia's Sabah, have made more extended security arrangements impossible, the existence of these military exercises and bilateral agreements indicates that Malaysia seeks security both within ASEAN itself and without. Linkages with ASEAN and non-ASEAN partners to foster security are, therefore, not impossible.

These aspects of Malaysian security thinking and experiences should be borne in mind when discussing ASEAN-Japan political and security relations. Apparently, there is flexibility in Malaysia's security policies that allows for adjustments to changing external and domestic circumstances, present positions notwithstanding.

#### JAPAN'S ROLE: GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVES

There is as yet no serious consideration within the Malaysian government of a possible Japanese role in ASEAN security or a political relationship going beyond normal bilateral friendly relations. Should such a role materialize, the Malaysian government's preference would probably be for an indirect one as, for example, foreshadowed in Japan's existing policy to strengthen ASEAN's Kampuchean position by withholding economic aid to Vietnam.

There are those who advocate a closer linkage with Japan—which

presumably implies a more direct Japanese role—to enable Malaysia to extract benefits or concessions in what is now perceived as an unequal relationship. Japan is seen as having the upper hand in this relationship, but it has technological and financial resources that can benefit Malaysia. Those who support this position believe that Japan, as a strong friend in a closer relationship, will provide more economic assistance, helping to strengthen the foundations of Malaysia's political system. At the same time, however, they warn that the relationship should not become symbiotic in a way that makes Malaysia dependent on Japan. A variant of this school of thought contends that a stronger bilateral linkage will help to overcome problems in Malaysia-Japan ties that otherwise would remain unresolved. Moreover, closer ties may allow for the mutual airing of views and for discussion of ways to strengthen the relationship.

Japan's economic role can be significant because Japan offers a model for Malaysia's modernization and industrialization. Since Mahathir Mohamad became prime minister, Malaysia has embarked on an explicit policy of "Looking East," specifically seeking to emulate the experiences of Japan and, to a lesser extent, South Korea in achieving economic and social progress. The main emphasis of the "Look East" policy has been on inculcating Japanese work ethics and discipline, although buying and doing things Japanese or *à la japonaise* has also followed in its wake.

Although this policy does not explicitly touch on matters of politics and security, the Malaysian police and armed forces have taken the cue and have increasingly turned to Japanese products and technology in their hardware and software acquisitions. The Malaysian armed forces acquired a fleet of Japanese trucks, and the police recently changed over to Japanese patrol cars—as opposed to the earlier usage of and preference for European vehicles. The police have also been studying the concept of the *koban* (police box) system with a view toward introducing elements of that practice into Malaysia. Were it not for Japan's own restrictions against the export of military products, it is not inconceivable that the Malaysian armed forces would consider buying them. Certainly, during the period of the special modernization program of the armed forces beginning in 1979–80, in which part of the effort was on the introduction of armor, the Mitsubishi-made tank was considered for purchase. It is not clear, however, if there has been any focused think-



ing on the usefulness of Japan's experience in defense and security and whether Malaysia should "Look East" in these matters as well.

In some quarters, the Mahathir Look East policy has been criticized, and it is not certain that it has been wholeheartedly supported in the bureaucracy. In this regard, it is apparent that the Malaysian Foreign Ministry has been cautious and hopes that Look East will not result in Malaysia going overboard for things Japanese. In particular, it is felt that there are many bilateral issues, especially in the trade and economic fields, that require resolution before going into deeper relationships.<sup>6</sup> These issues include limited access for Malaysian manufactured goods in the Japanese market and unsatisfactory performance in transferring technology in joint venture arrangements. Underlying this sentiment within the Foreign Ministry is a feeling that the Japanese have not been completely sincere. These sentiments have not been mitigated by past negotiating experiences with the Japanese; especially in the official ASEAN-Japan dialogues, the Malaysian side has felt that the Japanese, at least prior to Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, remained rigid toward ASEAN in spite of rhetorical expressions to the contrary. From this bureaucratic viewpoint, then, Malaysia-Japan relations are not equal, and it is premature to think about further political and security linkages. It is probable, therefore, that Japanese leadership or a Japanese initiative in political and security relations with ASEAN and Malaysia would not be welcomed.

The prevailing conception, however, is that Japan can help Malaysian and ASEAN security, especially in the economic field. For example, Japanese protection of sea-lanes may be a positive contribution to East Asian security by helping ensure the safety of trade lifelines between the rapidly developing and highly trade-oriented ASEAN economies and their economic partners—Japan, South Korea, and the United States. Nevertheless, it is recognized that Japan's sea-lane policies would be implemented according to Japan's interpretation of its own interests and only secondarily for the interests of other countries.

Government sentiments do not necessarily see a rearmed Japan as bad and do not necessarily associate rearmament with renewed militarism of the World War II variety. A Japanese military role is not necessarily unwelcome should it compensate for a reduced American presence in the area. In this regard, U.S. pressure on



Japan to spend more on defense and to assume Pacific defense responsibilities alongside the United States and other countries is watched with considerable interest in Kuala Lumpur. Foreign and military analysts are not unaware of some of these implications, such as whether U.S.-Japan security deliberations could ultimately lead to a "nuclear Japan." These same analysts are aware of the larger constellations and events in the Asia-Pacific region that may justify a Japanese security role; on the other hand, there is also uneasiness that a condominium of security interests could be developed between Japan, the United States, and China.

Although there is some appreciation of the need for Japan to assume a larger role in East Asia-Pacific security and not take a "free ride" under the U.S. umbrella as before, the concerned sections of the Malaysian bureaucracy see a continuing U.S. security role in the region as necessary irrespective of what Japan does. The complex economic-security linkages in the U.S.-Japan relationship, however, are not well understood. One simplistic notion in Malaysia is that Japan will do U.S. bidding on security issues to lessen criticism of Japan's balance of trade surplus with the United States.

Despite the uneasiness mentioned above, little systematic analysis seems to have been given to the evolving trilateral political and security relationship beginning to develop between Washington, Tokyo, and Beijing. Part of the problem in assessing this relationship is uncertainty about its connection with the Soviet role in the Pacific. Malaysia espouses an equidistant foreign policy between China and the Soviet Union and clearly sees the U.S. and potential Japanese roles more positively, and therefore preferable, as strategic alternatives.

Malaysian and Japanese strategic analysts may well want to ponder the implications of a stronger role to be played by China and the Soviet Union in the closing years of this century. As long as Japan does not emerge as an actual or even potential military power, a reduced U.S. political and security role may force ASEAN countries to consider looking toward China or the Soviet Union as their allies or friends. A country like Malaysia, which may want to avoid being drawn into the ambit of China's influence, might regard the Soviet Union as the more welcome alternative. However, if Japan became an alternative, it might be more attractive than either the Soviet Union or China.

#### OTHER MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVES

Malaysian media comments on Japanese defense policies demonstrate considerable ambivalence. Kuala Lumpur's leading English-language daily, the *New Straits Times*, has expressed a fear that any significant increase in Japanese military expenditure might affect Japan's economic aid to ASEAN:

Southeast Asian nations must view with some concern, however, the opinion of a top official of the LDP that this increase in defence spending may necessitate an attendant slowdown in economic aid to Southeast Asia. . . . we must . . . hope that our countries will not be too adversely affected by any trimming of Japan's aid programmes.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, the same newspaper envisioned a Japanese role in ASEAN security and regards it as inconceivable that Japan would harbor expansionist dreams again, especially with three decades of ever-improving relations between ASEAN and Japan.<sup>8</sup>

A Kuala Lumpur business daily, the *Business Times*, referring to U.S.-Japan defense discussions in June 1984, noted that Japanese rearmament spelled dangers and fears in ASEAN, but that a military buildup was being resisted in some Japanese quarters and that the pace was certainly behind schedule. It concluded on a cautionary note that:

. . . However the pendulum of Japanese public sentiment swings, it is clear that other countries in the region, including ASEAN members, would be assured if it was further away from rapid armament. For despite little justification for anxiety, memory of Japan's aggressions during World War II has yet to evaporate entirely.<sup>9</sup>

These memories are felt most keenly within the Chinese community. The generation of Chinese that suffered most from the Japanese occupation experience reacted negatively to the Japanese Ministry of Education rewriting of school texts issue of 1982 (the issue here was why the term "advance" was used instead of "invasion"), but the younger generations appear more open to considering the possibility of a Japanese security role in the Asia-Pacific region. This view in the younger elements recognizes the need for larger Japanese defense spending and sees the Japanese role as purely for counter-ing the Soviet threat and more generally "the communists."<sup>10</sup> "Com-

munists" presumably include the Vietnamese and the Chinese communists.

Among the Malaysian Chinese, who see the Japanese as borrowers of a more superior Sinic culture, there is the sentiment that little can be learned from the Japanese. After all, it was the Japanese who learned from the Chinese. The Look East policy is sometimes regarded as a slap in the face for the Chinese since it looks to the outside to a country that is seen as culturally inferior. It has also been interpreted by some as representing a collusion of Malay ("bumiputra") interests with the Japanese in economic ventures—the Malaysian car project being a major example—to the detriment or exclusion of Chinese businessmen. Nevertheless, there is considerable Chinese participation in business joint ventures with Japanese firms.

The Malay reaction to the Look East policy has been more difficult to gauge, in part because Malays as a whole suffered less during the occupation than the Chinese (albeit this is relative). But the policy does have its Malay critics, and some Malays have warned that because the Japanese regard Southeast Asia as being underdeveloped and "inferior," they should not be embraced too closely. It should be noted, though, that Malay critics predominantly come from the business and construction industry and are probably mainly those who lost out on contracts to Japanese companies.

Another group, the more critical/radical sector of the intellectual community, rejects Japan as a model for Malaysia. For this group, a Japanese security role, however defined, is quite logically viewed as unacceptable.

#### A SURVEY OF MALAYSIAN MILITARY VIEWS

To provide insights into Malaysian views at the micro level, the author sent a questionnaire to a small sample <sup>11</sup> of officers from the two military staff colleges as well as a handful of security specialists. The results of this questionnaire are described in this section. Reference is also made to another study of urban middle-class views on Malaysia's external relations, with some emphasis on Japan's role, <sup>12</sup> which provides additional information on public attitudes.

In contrast to the common notion—propounded officially in the



Look East policy—that the Japanese are superior in terms of organization and performance of their economy, less than half (roughly 45 percent) of the respondents rated the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) as excellent. Ten percent gave them a poor rating. The evaluation criteria were not specified in the question, but the respondents' comments included observations that the SDF were still to be tested and that they were established to restrain adventurism and could be deficient when evaluated against larger defense needs. Despite these qualified ratings, most respondents were concerned that Japanese intentions are unclear, and hence caution is needed when thinking about future Japanese military roles or the future potential of the SDF. In other words, whether or not the Japanese armed forces are currently highly rated, they should not be dismissed nor should Japanese intentions be neglected.

Japanese military equipment also received a lower rating than one might expect. About 45 percent thought that Japanese equipment was excellent, and 7 percent rated it as poor. Another 31 percent did not evaluate it as exceptional either way, and 17 percent stated that they did not know. Those who gave an excellent rating said it was comparable to equipment manufactured by the United States and the Soviet Union, and some even offered the view that the Japanese excelled in light weapons, electronics, and shipbuilding. Other respondents noted that equipment evaluation is subjective and depends on one's own requirements.

Should Malaysia purchase Japanese equipment if permitted by Japan? More than half the respondents—55 percent—agreed that Malaysia should purchase Japanese equipment, and 7 percent disagreed. Thirty-eight percent were not sure and thought it depended on factors such as price, competitiveness, quality, circumstances, needs, and, ultimately, the government. The views obtained from the Malaysian sample indicate that there is no overwhelming opinion in favor of seeking Japanese equipment and may be construed to mean that a Japanese role as a supplier has not yet been seriously regarded as an option.

Another question concerned the capacity of the SDF to provide sea-lane security extending 1,000 nautical miles south of Tokyo. Again, the answers of the respondents were somewhat mixed. The prevailing view seemed to be that such a role was necessary and would complement that of the United States in Pacific maritime security.

However, another view was that it was impossible for Japan to acquire the capability to play such a role. On the negative side, some respondents questioned if it would be wise for Japan to assume a "policeman's role," and, if Japan did, should not its protection cover Japanese shipping only.

Apart from sea-lane protection, most respondents believed that Japan can act as a bulwark against Soviet expansionism and potential military threat. Sixty-two percent of the respondents thought Japan needed to assist the United States as its ally and to help counterbalance the growing Soviet presence in the Pacific. This rationale was supported by the viewpoint that a Japanese role is a means of countering communism and is "for our own good." Japan was seen as being able to play this role because it has the "capacity and the money." Only about 7 percent of respondents felt that Japan should not play such a role. But a high proportion—24 percent—cautioned that the Soviets should not be portrayed as being expansionist since Soviet actions were probably taken out of fear. Another viewpoint expressed was that Japan could not be a bulwark because it did not have the capacity.

A series of questions posed the issues of Japan's possible roles in Southeast Asian security, defense spending, militarism, and potential military cooperation with ASEAN. The answers to these queries showed some inconsistencies and reflected the respondents' uncertainty about how these roles should be played. Thus, although a large number—72 percent—felt that Japan should play a security role in Southeast Asia, a lesser number—52 percent—thought that such a role was relevant to the Kampuchean problem. Only 14 percent thought that Japan should not play a role in Kampuchea. Only a very small proportion—7 percent—did not hold strong views on either of these questions.

These answers may suggest a difference in interpretation by the same person on two similar or related questions, or it may be that the general role question is more abstract, less direct, and perhaps more acceptable psychologically than the specific Kampuchean question. Those respondents who supported a Japanese role in Kampuchea referred to humanitarian and developmental considerations, regional stability, and Malaysia's—and ASEAN's—own interests. Those opposed explained that they thought a Japanese involvement would complicate the situation, invite greater Soviet interest and in-

tervention, and that it may be "best to keep the Japanese out." As for a more general role for Southeast Asia, it was seen that a (greater) Japanese role could compensate for the lack of a U.S. role and presence, aid ASEAN in its peace efforts, be an indirect form of military assistance, and promote regional peace and stability.

On the issue of increased Japanese defense spending, 79 percent agreed that this is necessary as Japan is already a strong economic power. Military power thus was seen as related to economic strength. On the issue of a possible reassertion of Japanese militarism, more thought there would not be (48 percent) than thought there would be (28 percent). Some reasons given included public opposition and Japan's memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those who feared militarism referred to militarism as a "part of the Japanese way of life" and as an inevitable consequence of Japan's economic success.

The muted fears of a resurgence of Japanese militarism apparent in this small sample is corroborated by respondents of a different and larger sample drawn from a more mixed group of civilians and other middle-class persons but not excluding police and military personnel. Asked whether Japan and six other countries are aggressive, these respondents ranked Japan and Australia as the least aggressive (see Table 1). Indeed, the respondents in this study thought that rela-

Table 1. Ranking of Countries by Order of Aggressiveness (N-299) (%)

Countries	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
China	4.7%	4.8%	3.3%	13.1%	22.8%	16.9%	16.7%
Japan	1.2	1.7	1.0	6.7	12.8	27.3	14.0
Australia	4.6	5.2	5.0	8.7	12.3	14.6	27.6
United States	17.6	18.3	32.3	13.9	10.3	8.5	6.7
Soviet Union	40.0	31.0	30.7	18.8	10.0	8.5	6.3
Vietnam	26.3	32.4	20.7	18.8	13.7	8.4	14.1
Indonesia	5.6	6.8	7.0	20.0	18.1	15.8	14.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Zakaria, Haji Ahmad and Paul Chan, "Development and Diplomacy Perceived: A Study of Malaysian Urban, Middle-Class Attitudes," a study submitted to the Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo, 1984.



tions should be enhanced with Japan as Asia's most developed country.

Despite their optimism about Japanese militarism, a majority of the sample of Malaysian officers and security specialists thought it wise that there be a countervailing force to Japan. Fifty-five percent thought the United States should act as a check on an increased Japanese defense role. On the other hand, 28 percent felt that there was no need for the United States or any other power to be a countervailing force as there was nothing to fear since Japan would concentrate on self-defense needs.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents favored some form of cooperation between Japan and ASEAN. The remainder disagreed except for one respondent who did not care either way. Those who favored cooperation attached qualifications, for example, that cooperation is possible only within limits and that as an initial step ASEAN cooperation itself should be enhanced.

As to the forms of cooperation, exchange of information (62 percent) was emphasized more than common or shared training (52 percent), joint consultation (41 percent), or bilateral exercises (24 percent). Thus, there did not seem to be great enthusiasm for cooperation that would involve Japanese troops, although a majority favored common or shared training. It may be that common or shared training was seen as training carried out by the individual partners sharing common facilities. Some respondents felt that cooperation between Japan and ASEAN should be encouraged, but it should be in the area of economics first and foremost and in defense only as a last resort. A few remarked that cooperation would be possible only if there were no differences between systems or if some form of standardization existed, prospects not likely in the foreseeable future. Despite these negative comments, however, it is clear that the majority view in this sample could support ASEAN-Japan discussions on the means and mode of future cooperation in the security arena.

If Japan is to play an increased security role in the Asia-Pacific region, it is highly probable that it will have to enter into some arrangements with other countries in the area, either bilaterally or even with groupings like ASEAN. How would Japanese cooperation with particular countries be viewed by Malaysians? The views were generally favorable, except in the case of China. Here there were

21 who were opposed and only five who supported.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the respondents' perceptions of Japanese cooperation with other ASEAN countries were not overwhelmingly positive. There were 16 positive and 10 negative answers in the case of Singapore and Indonesia, 14 positive and 12 negative answers for the Philippines, and 17 positive and nine negative responses for Thailand.<sup>14</sup> This would indicate that there is some unease among respondents about the possible intentions of their ASEAN neighbors if supported by some kind of bilateral defense cooperation with Japan. Indeed, some respondents felt that if Japan cooperates with any one ASEAN member, then it must also cooperate with Malaysia. On the other hand, there were very few negative responses about defense cooperation between Japan and the United States or potential cooperation between Japan and Taiwan or South Korea.

From the above, it should be clear that the postulated issues concerning possible Japanese political and security relationships with ASEAN are very complex and subject to an array of positive and negative reactions. The sample consisted of a small elite group of professional military officers and security specialists, but since the majority of the officers are destined to go on to high command and control positions in the armed forces hierarchy, their views may foreshadow future predispositions in their actions and policy advice. Their comments often reflect impressions rather than deep knowledge about Japan or even about other ASEAN countries. It should be mentioned here that about 35 percent of the respondents thought that Japanese view Malaysians negatively, while 24 percent thought otherwise. The remainder did not know or thought that there is still room for the improvement of Japanese images of Malaysians.

#### THE PARAMETERS OF POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION

Both the macrolevel views discussed at the outset of this chapter and the microlevel views described immediately above seem to allow for a possibility of future ASEAN-Japan cooperation in the political and security arenas. What would seem to be the likely parameters of such cooperation?

First, it seems highly desirable that any political and security cooperation be conducted between Japan and ASEAN as a grouping. As a first step, it may be best pursued in the official dialogues



that already exist between ASEAN and Japan by gradually extending the agenda of these meetings to include security and political concerns. Since the Jakarta ASEAN ministerial meeting in July 1984, ASEAN third-country dialogues have included the discussion of Pacific Basin issues with the dialogue partners as a group, but this does not invalidate the centrality of Japan in ASEAN's relations with its friends or dialogue partners. The new format for such dialogues will presumably highlight economic questions—specifically, human resource development—but it is not inconceivable that with the passage of time political and security matters could also be discussed. In fact, the substantive contribution of economic discussions will undergird the long-term security sinews of ASEAN and the Pacific countries. However, on the ASEAN side, there are bound to be national differences of opinion, and both sides must be cognizant of these sensitivities. Also, it may seem desirable for ASEAN, through some form of institutional network, to conduct a series of seminars involving public leaders and researchers on the question of ASEAN-Japan relations as well as on issues of Japan's defense and military postures so that a basis for deeper analysis may be achieved.

Second, as Japan assumes some responsibilities for sea-lane protection, there may be a need to inform relevant ASEAN leaders and security officials, on a "need to know" basis, of the developments and progress on the Japanese side. By so doing, any fear of a resurgence of Japanese militarism may be mitigated and the information may serve to bolster a sense of security within ASEAN itself. A related approach is to extend such transfers of information on a broader basis to include the United States so that no suspicions are raised on the intent of these exchanges. The ASEAN countries may have to accept the reality of Japanese sea-lane protection, and instead of fretting about it should take steps to ensure that it does not escalate tensions among other Pacific powers, especially with the Soviet Union.

Third, it seems clear that a sense of inequality, even dependence, exists within ASEAN concerning the group's economic and trading relationships with Japan. There is fear that this experience would be replicated in any future political and security ties. Therefore, Japan should understand that economic issues have political ramifications and that political relationships are sensitive in the eyes



of ASEAN. As an example, Japan should avoid unilaterally proclaiming to represent ASEAN interests at the summit meetings of the seven major industrialized free world nations. Instead, new approaches that give a sense of genuine and sincere representation of ASEAN interests should be explored—for example, prior and later consultations with ASEAN member countries in relation to the meetings of the seven major industrialized free world nations.

Going one step further, Japan will have to strive hard to ensure that any political or security linkage that develops between itself and ASEAN be perceived as that between equals. It may well be that such a relationship becomes one of *primus inter pares*, but it should not be construed as one between lesser and major powers. Japan may find it in its interest to share some of its knowledge about defense and security with the ASEAN countries. A conscious step could be the opening up of its defense command and staff colleges for participation by ASEAN military officers. There has been some initiative in this direction that could be built upon. Air surveillance technology is another area in which Japanese expertise could be shared with the ASEAN countries.

Fourth, as Japan and ASEAN begin deliberations in the political and security arenas, it is important to ensure that these do not become intertwined in U.S.-USSR superpower rivalry or U.S.-China-Japan, interrelationships. Admittedly, this desideratum will be difficult to carry out in practice, but the potential interrelationships between the ASEAN-Japan relationship and the larger power rivalries and alliances in the region need careful evaluation. In this regard, Japan itself may find it necessary to avoid being identified as a partner in an anti-Soviet coalition involving the United States and China.

Finally, three other areas require thought and follow-up action. First, that Japan's role in ASEAN security should be as low-key and indirect as possible. In this regard, Japan's support for ASEAN is a *sine qua non*. As such, Japan must avoid trying to play a godfather role to both ASEAN and Vietnam on the pretext of attempting to promote peace and stability in Southeast Asia. As long as ASEAN-Vietnam differences exist, Japan will find it in its best interests to support the ASEAN position, diplomatically and otherwise. Second, any linkage in security and politics may best be approached by adopting an economic strategy. In the final analysis, the challenges to ASEAN security may be more domestic than ex-

ternal, and hence the first priority is to lay the foundations for social peace, economic progress, and political stability in the ASEAN countries. Japan's role may best be to provide economic aid and economic opportunities for the ASEAN countries to enable them to achieve their economic and social goals and a higher level of national resilience. Once that is done, ASEAN-Japan security relationships can proceed on a more solid base and will be more easily attained. Third, it seems reasonable to posit that ASEAN-Japan security relations could be at least partly based on the advocacy of not using nuclear weapons in the defense programs of both sides.

### CONCLUSION

The subject of this study is terra incognita in that it deals with the possibilities in an arena in ASEAN-Japan relations that does not now exist except at the most limited level. This chapter therefore has been subjective, drawing on soft data and making preliminary statements as to the direction and implications of ASEAN-Japan political and security relationships. In spite of an earlier historical experience of Japanese militarism, and some present-day Southeast Asian fears of a resurgence with the increasing demands for bigger Japanese defense spending, there does appear to be scope for Japan to play a role in security and political relationships with the countries of ASEAN. Obviously, there are also great impediments, but it seems justifiable to assume that such relationships can be nurtured if both parties approach and develop them carefully and gradually.

The future role of Japan's international political life and the security of Southeast Asia needs to be considered in a broader regional context. This context, including growing Soviet power and a reduced U.S. role, may force Japan in the coming decades to become a reluctant military power, like the United States before World War II. It may be that a Japanese regional defense role is necessary to protect the fruits of economic growth in an uncertain world. If these circumstances force Japan to assume a major regional security role, the sensitivities of ASEAN should also influence how that role is developed.

NOTES

1. Narongchai Akrasanee, ed., *ASEAN-Japan Relations, Trade and Development* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1983).
2. The assertion that the United States will remain the "top dog" Pacific power was made by Bernard K. Gordon in his paper "Pacific Futures for the USA," presented at the National University of Singapore-Singapore Institute of International Affairs conference, "Moving into the Pacific Century: The Changing Regional Order in the Asia-Pacific," Singapore, 5-6 November 1983.
3. Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Zakaria Hamid, "Violence at the Periphery: A Survey of Armed Communism in Malaysia," Lim Joo-Jock and S. Vani, eds., *Armed Communism in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Gower for the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984).
4. Noordin Sopiee, "Malaysia's Doctrine of Comprehensive Security." Paper read at the Conference on East Asian Security: Perceptions and Realities," 25-27 May 1984. Organized by the Asiatic Research Center, Korea University.
5. For an elaboration, see Zakaria Haji Ahmad, "Malaysian Security in the Mid-1980s: Shifts or Continuities?" *International Area Studies* (Japan), forthcoming.
6. For a discussion, see Zakaria Haji Ahmad and K. C. Cheong, "Malaysia-Japan Trade: Issues and Prospects for the 1980s," Narongchai, *ASEAN-Japan Relations*, 57-78.
7. Editorial, *New Straits Times*, 1 August 1984.
8. Ibid., 8 August 1984.
9. Editorial titled "Arms and Tokyo: Slow and Steady," *Business Times* (Malaysia), 26 June 1984.
10. Interview with a leader writer of *The Star* newspaper group. *The Star* is owned largely by the Malaysian Chinese Association, the leading Chinese political party in Malaysia.
11. The sample size was 29. It included respondents from the various races as well as from the three armed services. Military respondents were of the rank major and above.
12. See Zakaria Haji Ahmad and Paul Chan, "Development and Diplomacy Perceived: A Study of Malaysian Urban, Middle-Class Attitudes." Mimeo submitted to the Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo, 1984. The sample total was 299 respondents.
13. On this issue, the total responses did not, for various reasons, tally with the sample total.
14. At the time the survey was carried out, Brunei had not yet joined ASEAN.



*Political and Security Dimensions  
in Philippine-Japanese Relations*

CAROLINA G. HERNANDEZ

UNTIL 1977, relations between Japan and the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including the Philippines, were almost exclusively centered on economic issues—trade, investments, and aid. Since the 1977 Fukuda Doctrine, the political and security dimensions of these relations have grown in importance as the consequence of several regional and global developments. While these new dimensions are nowhere as significant as the economic dimensions, they attest to a broadening of Japan's international role and are of significant interest to the ASEAN partners. As this chapter will show, there is considerable ambivalence in the Philippines, as in the other ASEAN countries, toward the expansion of Japan's role in these areas. Should Japan emerge as a military power, it would further complicate an already problematic economic and cultural relationship.

PHILIPPINE AMBIVALENCE TOWARD JAPAN

Historical, geopolitical, and economic considerations shape Philippine perspectives on politico-security relations with Japan. Of all the ASEAN countries, the Philippines is geographically the closest to Japan and suffered the most from the Japanese imperial forces

during the Pacific War. For these reasons, it has been the most sensitive to the potential resurgence of Japanese military power.

Even today, Bataan and Corregidor can still evoke, and may even provoke, strong and militant nationalist sentiments among Filipinos. Those who are 50 or more years old personally experienced wartime difficulties, which often influence their opinions and beliefs about Japan and its people. Many lost relatives or friends during the war. The succeeding generation of Filipinos—between the ages of 34 and 49—grew up at a time when many Filipino movies were devoted to wartime story lines depicting the Japanese in their worst light. While this generation did not personally experience wartime atrocities and injustice, the images and stereotypes of Japanese people and their behavior that they saw in the movies affected their perceptions. These Filipinos are the contemporary opinion makers in Philippine society. They now occupy prominent places in government, business, and the professions.

Its proximity to Japan has made the Philippines especially concerned about Japan's commitment to defend the sea-lanes to 1,000 nautical miles south of Japan; it was initially feared that this distance would intrude into Philippine waters. Given the limited capability of the Philippine navy to patrol its territorial sea and archipelagic waters, any such intrusion could be considered threatening to national security. Moreover, apprehension has been expressed that Japan might provide protection to Japanese fishermen who cross into restricted Philippine waters. Although there may be insufficient basis for these apprehensions, the fact that they have surfaced is a reflection of Filipino fears of its powerful northern neighbor and is a complicating factor in Philippine-Japanese relations.

There is also a popular notion that because Japan is already an economic giant, it would be dangerous to the security of the Philippines and other ASEAN countries if it were to become a major military power as well. This fear rests in the belief that Japanese economic interests can be more effectively pursued if supported by military power. Hence, the thinking goes, Japan must not be allowed to develop into a military power. Former Foreign Affairs Minister Carlos P. Romulo, an aide-de-camp to General Douglas MacArthur during World War II, expressed the argument in this way:

We must avoid strengthening Japan so much that with the economic power they have now, coupled with military power, it becomes dangerous to the world. . . . If you study the rise of Japan as an economic power [you will conclude that] it is extremely dangerous to give them the offensive power of the armed forces like the air service and the navy.<sup>1</sup>

Economic issues enter into politico-security relations in another way. Filipino perspectives are colored by a concern that an unequal politico-security relationship would develop in much the same fashion as did the economic relationship.

These considerations have resulted in a cautious attitude on the part of the Filipino government toward political and security relations with Japan. This cautious attitude is classically reflected in the statements made by former President Ferdinand Marcos on the issue of Japan's defense buildup. Invariably, his statements stressed Philippine apprehension of a military resurgence in Japan but emphasized that Japan could contribute to regional security by not only strengthening its self-defense but, more important, by contributing more to regional economic development. For example, Marcos has said:

There are still a good number of victims of the last war among us. Naturally, a militarily resurgent Japan brings memories of the Japanese invasion and occupation. Our people are one with the peoples of the ASEAN in expressing legitimate concern and apprehension that Japan may once again employ its military might to dominate the region.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that on the issue of Japanese military resurgence, many of the more vocal critics of the Marcos government found themselves in agreement with Marcos. One was Renato Constantino, an ardent nationalist who authored many books on the Philippine political economy and who was once a professorial lecturer in political science at the University of the Philippines. On the visit of a Japanese naval squadron to the Philippines in 1983, Constantino contended that the extension of Japan's perimeter, revisions in school textbooks to soften descriptions of prewar aggression, and administrative and educational changes which he believed would encourage militarism and statism are evidence of "Japanese remilitarization." According to Constantino:



Obviously, Japanese leaders feel that the strong economic presence of Japanese business in the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries should be buttressed by a credible military force. Only then can the Japanese attain full status as a major power. Filipinos must recall the days when she [Japan] tried to establish her so-called Co-Prosperity Sphere in Asia. Today the same economic ends are a reality. Once the military opened the way for Japanese business during the Pacific War, today the military will follow the peaceful economic penetration to guarantee the consolidation of former war aims which have seen fruition during the postwar period.<sup>3</sup>

#### POSITIVE ELEMENTS IN THE POLITICAL AND SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

If there is opposition to the idea of a rearmed Japan, there are other more positive elements in the politico-security relationship between Japan and the Philippines. One of these is the appreciation of Japan's diplomatic support since 1979 for the ASEAN position on Indochinese issues. In that year, Japan terminated bilateral assistance for Vietnam after the latter's invasion of Kampuchea, and the ASEAN countries have been assured that this cutoff will continue until Vietnamese troops are withdrawn from Kampuchean territory.

Japan's emphasis on "comprehensive security," recognizing the interrelationship between security and economic assistance, has been generally well received in ASEAN, as other chapters in this volume attest. The Philippine government has traditionally regarded internal security threats, such as the armed insurgencies posed by the Communist party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, and the Moro National Liberation Front as more imminent than any threats from external sources. The insurgency situation has worsened partly as a consequence of the deepening economic crisis confronting the country. In this situation, economic assistance can obviously have important security implications. As pointed out above, Marcos urged Japan to define its regional security support of Southeast Asian development. In one statement on this subject he said:

Japan could play a significant role in the efforts to establish a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality within ASEAN. Taking on the

burden of its own defense may already contribute greatly to regional security and stability. Yet Japan's contribution to regional security is not necessarily based on military considerations alone. To the extent that it is determined to bear its responsibility as a major economic force in promoting the economic well-being of the region, it ensures long-term security and stability.<sup>4</sup>

It must be recognized, however, that there were limits to the appreciation of ordinary Filipino citizens in the context of the political struggle against Marcos in the Philippines. Many groups opposed to Marcos expressed disappointment over Japan's continuation of assistance to the country, believing that it helped to legitimize and support the Marcos government. The Japanese Embassy in Manila reportedly had been the target of bomb threats from some groups opposed to foreign assistance.

#### PHILIPPINE-JAPANESE RELATIONS IN THE FUTURE

There appear to be several areas where Philippine-Japanese relations can be improved. The Philippines is keenly aware of Japan's capability to assist in the economic development of Southeast Asia. After a period of prolonged economic crisis, political authorities in the Philippines are looking abroad for increased economic assistance. Perhaps an analogous situation might be that of Indonesia in 1966. After a long period of economic mismanagement, the New Order government required massive assistance from its external friends in its early years. As Corazon Aquino's October 1986 visit to Japan underscored, the new Philippine government has high hopes of economic and political support from Japan.

Japanese assistance need not be focused on official development aid. Increased trade opportunities could be the major way for Japan to assist the Philippines and contribute to political stability there. In this regard, Japan can begin to take honest stock of the economic relations between the ASEAN countries and itself. In the case of the Philippines, the reduction of tariff and nontariff barriers to Philippine primary product and manufactured good exports is an important objective of the Philippines. The criticisms against Japanese aid policies should also be considered. By giving assistance to projects that can truly yield growth and development for the recip-

ient, Japan can demonstrate its sincerity and commitment to the economic progress of Southeast Asia.

In the diplomatic sphere, Japanese support for ASEAN's position in Indochina should continue. Japan can also enter into a broader dialogue with the Philippines and its ASEAN partners on regional issues. Despite the attendance of the major Western powers and Japan at the annual expanded ASEAN foreign ministers' conferences, Southeast Asia is not fully recognized in the foreign policies of the larger countries. Japan can take the lead in this respect.

On the ASEAN side, there should be better recognition of Japan's contribution to the regional balance of power through the bilateral security arrangements between Japan and the United States. It is unfortunate that in much of the region there is little appreciation of the defense contributions of those East Asian countries which have allowed access to U.S. bases. As Professor Masashi Nishihara has put it:

One must also consider Japan's contribution to U.S. security as an important forward base. Thus the burden-sharing should not be considered just in financial terms, but in a context of overall contributions to mutual security commensurate with political and economic powers of the parties.<sup>5</sup>

Japan and the Philippines both contribute to regional security in this way. Japan is often chided by the United States for having taken a "free ride" on the U.S. defense commitments to the region. The Philippines is sometimes thought in Southeast Asia to have made little contribution to the security of its ASEAN neighbors—for example, it has not contributed materially to Thailand's border defense. Yet, clearly, the U.S. military presence in the region has depended upon bases in Japan and the Philippines. This presence has provided cost-free security to the noncommunist countries in the region.

Japan and the Philippines need to improve the often negative images held of each other. Increased cultural exchanges are one of the best ways of achieving this objective. However, the unidirectional character of these exchanges should be changed. Efforts should also be made to screen Japanese and Filipino visitors to the other country. It is not helpful to building a better image of the Philippines to have pickpockets and prostitutes come to Japan. Nor is it a good idea for members of Japanese criminal circles to come to Manila



only to be engaged in serious crimes there. Resentment toward Japanese affluence can be reduced by stopping the sensationalized sex tours of the Philippines. Finally, Japanese businessmen should seek to better understand and appreciate their ASEAN countries.

### CONCLUSION

The developments of political and security cooperation between the Philippines and Japan faces a major problem. Japan's efforts to improve its self-defense capabilities is regarded in the ASEAN region as potentially threatening. Despite the repeated assurances of Japanese prime ministers that Japan's buildup is for defensive purposes, Filipinos are concerned, first, that it is difficult to distinguish between defensive and offensive postures and, second, that one cannot rely on pacific intention to remain pacific. Although there are many Filipinos who can intellectually appreciate the need for Japan to increase its self-defense capabilities and who do not share the average person's view that Japan is about to embark on remilitarization, these two concerns act as a constraint on their willingness to see Japan increase its defense forces or play a Southeast Asian defense role. The historical memories of Japanese aggression, the negative images reenforced by some exploitative aspects of Japanese economic presence in the region, and the behavior of Japanese in the Philippines do not help to transcend this constraint.

### NOTES

1. "Should Japan Re-Arm?" *Asiaweek*, 21 January 1983, 23.
2. "Viewpoints," *Asiaweek*, 11 February 1983, 50.
3. Renato Constantino, "The Visit of the Japanese Squadron," *Bulletin Today*, 25 July 1983, 7.
4. "Viewpoints," *Asiaweek*, 11 February 1983, 50.
5. Masashi Nishihara, "Expanding Japan's Credible Defense Role," *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter 1983-84), 195.

*Singaporean Perspectives on  
Japan's Political and Military  
Relations with ASEAN*

FRANCES FUNG WAI LAI

IN recent years, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' perceptions of Japan's growing political role in the region as well as in the world have been basically positive but cautious. While political influence may be derived from Japan's predominant economic presence in the region, Japan's political commitments have not necessarily acquired credibility. After all, in the Asian cultures a merchant known for his business shrewdness is often believed to be without moral commitment unless proven otherwise.

As for Japan's defense role, the perceptions of the ASEAN states are even more complex and perhaps more negative if its commitments extend beyond Japan's homeland and the surrounding waters. The memories of Japan's aggression in the Second World War are still alive in people's subconsciousness. And no one would like to invite an outsider to maintain peace in one's own household if he can do so himself. Some ASEAN countries, especially the more powerful ones, would ultimately like to see regional security under ASEAN countries' own control. Yet they realize that financially and technologically it will still be a long time before they can acquire adequate military capability to maintain regional security. Furthermore, many of the political leaders have come to realize the importance of domestic factors in national security. Japan's economic and

military assistance would definitely supplement and could even substitute for the American security role.

These conflicting ideas lie behind the ambivalence in the ASEAN countries' perceptions of Japan's growing defense role. The contradicting expressions reflect the influences of various extraneous factors, such as the political and security environment in the region, American global and Asian policy, and the ASEAN countries' own perceptions of threats.

When the U.S. defeat in Vietnam created a drastic change in the political and security environment in Southeast Asia, ASEAN countries tried to cope with the new environment by activating and strengthening ASEAN's own cooperative structure and by finding alternatives to the broken political order. The very fact that ASEAN invited the prime minister of Japan, together with the heads of government from Australia and New Zealand, to its enlarged summit at Kuala Lumpur in 1977 demonstrated that ASEAN leaders welcomed and encouraged the three governments playing a greater role in the support of ASEAN and ASEAN solidarity. This was a response to the partial withdrawal of U.S. military presence from the region. In 1977, Japan alone came up with a substantial economic aid package to back ASEAN's joint projects.

Four years later, when Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki, against traditional practice, made ASEAN the area for his first official visit, it was well received as a political gesture symbolizing the priority Japan had given to ASEAN. Because of the political importance Suzuki placed on ASEAN in making the trip, and because of his reaffirmation that Japan would never become a military power or play a military role in the international community, ASEAN leaders have shown understanding of Japan's desire to play a political role and have accepted in varying degrees Japan's need to increase its national military capabilities.

Leaders of both Indonesia and Malaysia were relatively the more negative in their responses to Japan's growing role in the region. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore reacted the most positively among ASEAN leaders. In an interview with *Asahi Shimbun* journalists before Suzuki's visit, Lee said, "The security and stability of the West Pacific and Indian Ocean regions cannot be ensured by the United States alone. Growing Soviet and, later, Chinese influence in the region must be balanced by that of the United States and



Japan. Japan may have to take a more active role in helping to maintain stability of areas vital to Japan."<sup>1</sup> This view, however, was even at the time being overtaken by events: the seeming resurgence of U.S. power.

As Lee's statement makes clear, changing American domestic politics and global military posture is another important influence on ASEAN thinking about the regional order. This is not surprising, since most of the ASEAN countries, with the exception of Thailand, have been, willingly or unwillingly, under the political security framework of "Pax Americana" for their entire independent existence. As in any close and unequal relation, there were irritations, tensions, and misgivings between ASEAN member countries and the United States. Nevertheless, the American presence was familiar and stabilizing; in contrast, no one is anxious to face an unknown new power in the region.

The U.S. failure in Vietnam and economic strains made it apparent that the United States was no longer capable of shouldering the security responsibility of the noncommunist world alone. It was mainly because of this realization and the need for reinforcing the existing regional order that ASEAN invited Japan, Australia, and New Zealand to its 1977 enlarged summit.

Ronald Reagan's assumption of the U.S. presidency, however, seemed to have once again changed the global calculus. He advocated a strong United States with military supremacy over the Soviet Union. Within months after his inauguration, he proposed a substantial augmentation of U.S. defense spending and military forces, including qualitative and quantitative additions to U.S. forces in the Pacific. Reagan also encouraged the export of arms to friendly regimes. These new emphases gave hope to some ASEAN leaders that the ASEAN countries might be able to take care of their own regional security with renewed commitment and military assistance from the United States.

On the other hand, the Reagan administration continued to pressure Japan to take concrete steps to upgrade its military capabilities to defend its surrounding waters and southern sea-lanes up to 1,000 nautical miles. This created considerable apprehension among many ASEAN leaders. It was one thing to have Japan politically and economically supportive of ASEAN, but it was entirely different to allow Japan to play a policing role within the region

itself. When President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines and President Suharto of Indonesia visited the United States separately in September and October 1982, both expressed their concerns over Japan's increasing military capability and especially over the question of sea-lane defense.

Subsequently, both Suzuki and his successor, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, repeatedly clarified that the 1,000-nautical-mile sea-lanes were to be measured from Osaka and Tokyo, making them definitely outside Southeast Asian waters. Even then, when Nakasone visited the ASEAN members to solicit their support in May 1983, the ASEAN leaders were far from enthusiastic. As Suharto put it, his country had no objection to Japan's defense buildup because no nation should be criticized for striving to defend itself; but ASEAN tolerance was strictly for self-defense—not for any security role beyond that.<sup>2</sup>

Singaporean views contrast sharply with those of Indonesia. Being one of the smallest states in the region and ethnically different from its immediate neighboring countries, it feels vulnerable. Maintaining a proper balance among external forces has always been seen as the most viable way for Singapore to retain its national autonomy. Singaporean leaders argue that the greater the number of countries which participate in a security system or balance, the less the likelihood that one nation can dominate. Thus, Japan has been welcomed by Singaporean leaders as a possible counterbalancing force in the region to an increasing Soviet threat, especially in light of the weakening U.S. position. Lee put it this way to *Asahi Shimbun*:

I understand President Marcos[']s and President Suharto[']s [concerns about Japan's military buildup]. I too belong to that generation that experienced the invasion and occupation of the Japanese Imperial Forces. The question in the next crisis is not whether Japan is going to repeat this conquest for a Great East Asia Prosperity Sphere. Rather, the question is whether the costs of securing the stability and security of the region can be carried solely by America.<sup>3</sup>

He pointed out that U.S. gross national product was 53 percent of that of the noncommunist world in 1950 but only 28 percent in 1980. Unless Western Europe and Japan would carry their share of the cost of balancing the forces of the Soviet Union and its East Euro-



pean and Vietnamese allies, the burden would become too heavy for the United States.

#### SINGAPORE'S PERSPECTIVE: A SURVEY OF INFORMED PUBLIC

In order to gain better insight into Singaporeans' perception of their own security and their responses to the various possible roles Japan can play in such a context, a small nonrandom sample survey of "informed public" was conducted. A questionnaire was administered to 85 respondents between October 1983 and January 1984. The informed public was identified by occupation and included journalists (25 persons); academics in arts and social sciences (30 persons); high-ranking civil servants, including military officers (16 persons); and top-level managers from the private sector (14 persons). Taking the occupational structure of Singapore into consideration, the last category was very much underrepresented.

The respondents were first asked about their views concerning Singapore's national security and regional defense in general. As we can see from Table 1, most of the respondents felt that a lack of strong political leadership, the social and political instability of neighboring countries, and an ailing economy were the three main factors that would most likely affect the security of Singapore.

The importance given to political leadership in security matters reflects a certain trust Singaporeans have for their political leaders as well as their dependency on them. This is a special feature of Singapore's citizens that is rarely found elsewhere in Southeast Asia. An earlier survey sponsored by Japan's Institute of Developing Economies (1982-83) found similar trust and dependency characteristics among the more than 300 Singaporean respondents. These special characteristics undergird a strong citizen support for government policy, but they also place heavy responsibility upon political leaders. As long as Lee, a strong charismatic leader, is at the helm, there seems to be no immediate leadership threat.

The expressed fear of social and political instability in neighboring countries reflects a sense of vulnerability especially prominent among small nations. This vulnerability is heightened in the case of Singapore because its neighbors are all facing internal problems of national development and integration, there are differences of ethnic composition between Singapore and its neighbors, and there is a large



Table 1. Factors Affecting Singapore's Security

	N1	N2	N3	Total	Weight Total
Specific factors likely to affect Singapore's security					
Lack of strong political leadership	20	15	12	47	102
Social and political instability of neighboring countries	18	16	14	48	100
Ailing economy	15	16	14	45	91
Aggression of neighboring countries	9	14	11	34	66
Superpower conflict in the region	12	6	9	27	57
Ethnic dissension	4	6	12	22	36
Communist subversion	3	4	2	9	19
External intervention in Singapore's domestic affairs	1	5	5	11	18
Lack of political freedom	2	2	5	9	15
Overall nature of the security factors					
	Frequency				
Political	39				
Economic	33				
Military	6				
Socioethnic	5				

NOTE: The respondents were asked to give three choices in order of preference. The frequencies for the first, second, and third choices are N1, N2, and N3, respectively. Weightage is given to the rank order: Weight total  $N1 \times 3 + N2 \times 2 + N3$ .

and growing economic gap between them.

While Singapore enjoyed rapid economic growth in the 1970s and early 1980s, it had much slower growth and higher unemployment during the 1960s, a time of considerable domestic political tension. Singaporeans are aware that economic problems can easily lead to social and political unrest. But unlike other ASEAN countries, Singapore is too small to rely on its own market and resources alone. Thus, most of the respondents also listed an ailing economy as an important factor likely to affect Singapore's national security.

The respondents' answers to a question about the best ways for Singapore to meet its security threats are summarized in Table 2. Skillful diplomacy and good international relations was regarded as the most popular defense for Singapore. More than half of the respondents selected either military cooperation or building up the nation's own defense as their choice of Singapore's best defense. This emphasis on military capability may be partly due to the continual attention Singapore's government has given to the building up of its military forces and the implementation of national service. Most of those who chose military cooperation as the best defense preferred cooperation with other ASEAN countries to cooperation with non-ASEAN powers.

Table 2. Ways Singapore Can Best Defend Itself

Ways Singapore can best defend itself	Frequency
By skillful diplomacy and good international relations	31
By cooperating with other countries in defense matters	23
By building up Singapore's own defense capability	20
By building up national resilience (domestic stability)	6
By means other than above	5
Preferred partners in defense cooperation*	
Other ASEAN countries	15
Non-ASEAN military powers (e.g., the United States)	5

NOTE: \*Only those who chose "cooperating with other countries in defense matters" were asked this second part of the question.

The respondents had, however, no illusions about ASEAN's or Singapore's military capability when it came to the maintenance of

regional stability. Only 17 chose regional cooperation as the most effective way to achieve regional stability (see Table 3). Forty-four respondents selected military balance between the superpowers or dominance of one major power, and another 32 preferred the political solutions of nonmilitary cooperation among ASEAN countries and establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN).

Table 3. Maintaining Regional Stability

Most effective ways of establishing and maintaining regional stability	Frequency
Military balance between the superpowers (U.S. and USSR)	34
Strong nonmilitary cooperation among ASEAN countries	19
Regional military cooperation	17
Establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality (ZOPFAN)	13
Dominance of one major power	10
Multinational military presence	2

### Japan's Role and Military Options

These perceptions of security and regional stability questions provide a background for understanding the respondents' attitudes toward Japan (see Table 4). Since an ailing economy was cited as one of the main threats to Singapore's security and political and economic threats were more frequently cited than military ones, it is not surprising to find that 89 percent of the respondents agreed that Japan should play a bigger economic role and that a majority of 72 percent supported an enhanced, larger Japanese political role in the region. The most controversial question was about a potential military or defense role for Japan. A large minority of 34 percent supported such a role, and 59 percent opposed it. A total of 70 out of the 85 respondents thought that Japan should emphasize an economic role in Southeast Asia.

Opinions on specific ways whereby Japan can best contribute to the region are summarized in Table 5. Of those who thought Japan should play a greater economic role, more than half—62 percent—thought more transfer of technology was the most desirable contribution. This closely parallels the Singaporean government's view. There



Table 4. A Bigger Role for Japan in Southeast Asia

Japan should play a bigger economic role in Southeast Asia	Frequency
Yes	76
Maybe	2
No	7
Japan should play a bigger political-diplomatic role	
Yes	61
Maybe	3
No	21
Japan should play a bigger defense role	
Yes	29
Maybe	4
No	50
Which role should Japan focus on?	
Economic role	70
Political-diplomatic role	10
Defense role	3
Other	2

was more variety among those who believed Japan should play a greater political and diplomatic role. Thirty-eight percent of these thought Japan could best play this role by supporting ASEAN at the United Nations. Twenty-one percent thought Japan should help the countries in the region by protesting against the protectionism of developed nations at international forums. Another 21 percent saw Japan's contribution in negative terms—Japan could best contribute to the region by not interfering with regional politics. Of those who thought Japan should play a bigger military role in the region, most thought Japan should increase its self-defense so that the United States could defend Southeast Asia. Only two respondents thought Japan should increase its own military presence in Southeast Asia.

Most respondents saw Japan's current defense efforts in a positive light (see Table 6). Eighty-four percent of all respondents thought Japan's increasing defense capabilities were necessary for Japan's own defense. Sixty percent saw the overall effects of Japan's increasing defense capabilities as stabilizing for the region. Forty-two percent believed they would reinforce Singapore's security. Only 19 percent thought Japan would pose a threat with or without nuclear

Table 5. Ways Japan can Contribute Most to the Region

Ways Japan can contribute most in economy	Frequency
More transfer of technology	47
Fewer trade barriers, freer market	14
More investment	9
More economic aid	4
Ways Japan can contribute most in politics and diplomacy	
Support ASEAN at the United Nations	23
Not interfere with regional politics	13
Protest against protectionism of developed nations at international forums	13
Influence China to cooperate with ASEAN	5
Aid Vietnam so as to gain political leverage in bringing Indochina with ASEAN	1
Ways Japan can contribute most in security and defense	
Increase its own defense so that the United States can defend Southeast Asia	17
Cooperate with ASEAN in military matters	9
Increase its military presence in Southeast Asia	2

NOTE: There are answers to the second part of questions that were asked only when the first part of the questions were affirmative. As a result, the total frequency of each does not add up to the grand total of 85.

weapons. A considerable number asserted that they would feel uneasy if Japan had nuclear weapons, and half of the respondents believed a revival of militarism possible.

The respondents were also asked whether they approved or disapproved of a series of potential Japanese defense or defense-related activities (see Table 7). Among these, only one received a majority approval: forming a military alliance with the United States—67 percent. Most of the respondents would be opposed to Japan giving aid to Vietnam (88 percent), producing and using nuclear weapons (84 percent), and patrolling the Strait of Malacca (77 percent). An equal number of respondents approved and disapproved protecting sea-lanes.

Since the sample is nonrandom, it is impossible to estimate the margin of statistical error or how representative the results are. But

Table 6. Perceptions of Japan's Increasing Defense Capability

	Frequency
Nature of Japan's increasing defense capability	
Necessary to Japan's own defense	71
More than necessary for Japan's own defense	9
Effects on Japan's increasing defense capability	
Contributing to regional stability	51
Contributing to regional instability	15
Threat posed by Japan's increasing defense capability	
Posing a threat to Singapore	7
Reenforcing Singapore's security	36
Nuclear option	
Not posing a threat without nuclear weapons	35
Not posing a threat even with nuclear weapons	20
Posing a threat with or without nuclear weapons	16
Revival of militarism	
Revival of militarism is highly probable	5
Revival of militarism is likely	31
Revival of militarism is conditional	7
Revival of militarism is possible but very unlikely	36
Revival of militarism is impossible	2

Table 7. Options toward Current Defense Issues Concerning Japan

Japan's Possible Defense Activities	No. of Respondents Who Approved	No. of Respondents Who Disapproved
Forming military alliance with U.S.	57	21
Protecting sea-lanes	40	40
Patrolling the Strait of Malacca	17	65
Giving military assistance to ASEAN	32	47
Cooperating militarily with Singapore	33	46
Cooperating militarily with ASEAN	37	43
Cooperating closely with China	35	42
Giving aid to Vietnam	5	75
Producing and using nuclear weapons	8	71



as Singapore is a small nation with highly developed and centralized media and very strong and articulate political leadership, it is probable that the findings reflect some of the thinking of the more informed strata in Singaporean society.

### CONCLUSION

The ASEAN-Japan relationship has evolved rapidly since 1970. Because of the changing international environment, the growing economic strength of Japan, and the inability of the United States to sustain the same level of global political and military commitments as in the earlier postwar period, Japan has been playing an increasing political role in the region. This has been gradually accepted and, in certain ways, is welcomed in the ASEAN countries. The same cannot be said about security matters. Although Japan has been very cautious in assuming any military role outside its territory, such as extending its surveillance of sea-lanes to 1,000 nautical miles, its defense programs and their potential have been regarded with caution, if not apprehension, by its ASEAN neighbors.

Singapore, having a very small territory and being highly dependent on external trade, more than any other ASEAN country appreciated a balance of external power in the region and is more open toward the military involvement of Japan in the region. But even in Singapore, a significant portion of the people surveyed expressed fear of a possible revival of Japanese militarism, and most of them did not approve direct military involvement by Japan, including patrolling the Strait of Malacca or providing direct military assistance to ASEAN. Like other ASEAN countries, Singapore sees its national security as being closely related to its economic well-being and would, therefore, like to see Japan contribute more to the region's and the country's security by contributing toward its economic growth.

### NOTES

1. *Strait Times* (Singapore), 9 January 1981.
2. *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 2 May 1983.
3. Singapore Government Press Release 02-1/83/01/01: Text of prime minister's answers to the questions submitted by *Asahi Shimbun* on 30 October 1982.

## *Thai-Japan Political and Security Relations*

SUKHUMBHAND PARIBATRA

SINCE the mid-1970s, there has been what can be termed a “structural attraction” between Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations due to parallel developments of concerns and interests on both sides. In this period, Japan’s foreign and defense policy underwent change. Faced with the United States’ diminished capacity and will to preserve its global role and commitments, rapprochement between the United States and China, growing Soviet power, self-confidence, and predisposition toward self-assertion, and the increasing importance of the question of access to resources, Japan became aware of the need to reconsider its external defense policies. Thus far, Japan’s external policy had been entirely economically oriented and its defense totally dependent on the protection of its American ally.

Out of this need came the concept of “comprehensive security,” under which Japan’s security is based not only on more capable military forces but also on efforts to consolidate the technological foundation of its power, assure adequate access to resources and markets, and broaden its diplomatic influence. In pursuit of these goals, Japan increased its defense programs and became somewhat more active and independent in the international political arena, diversifying its ties with various countries and regions in the world.

The assertion of ASEAN as a regional organization since 1975 has paralleled Japan's changing policy direction. The fall of Saigon, which took place in the context of a declining American presence in the region, changed the security environment in Southeast Asia and precipitated what became a regularized process of visits and discussions among ASEAN leaders. This injected vitality into the life and limbs of ASEAN and opened up new horizons of political and diplomatic cooperation. In the years since the February 1976 Bali summit, although the ASEAN countries individually and collectively have looked toward the West, their expressed common desire has been to diversify their external ties, limit great power rivalry within the region, and promote an independent standpoint in the international political arena. Moreover, although political considerations have catalyzed and sustained ASEAN's regional cooperation in this period, the notion that regional and individual security is also predicated on social and economic development, or "resilience," has been reemphasized time and again and continues to form one of the cardinal principles of ASEAN regionalism.

These parallel concerns and interests resulted in greater mutual attraction between Japan and ASEAN. For the former, this became evident during Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda's visit to the region in August 1977, when he offered an unprecedented amount of economic assistance and a new framework of special "heart-to-heart" relations. Although visions of a more equal and mutually beneficial economic relationship based on unbounded Japanese generosity proved illusory and fears of Japan's economic domination and military resurgence remained, Japan continued to attach great importance to ASEAN, designating over one-third of its total bilateral aid to the group,<sup>1</sup> closely coordinating its policy vis-à-vis the Kampuchean problem with it, and carefully conducting itself so as to avoid antagonisms. Indeed, during his visit to Kuala Lumpur while on a tour of the region in May 1983, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone emphasized the common spiritual and cultural heritage between Japan and Southeast Asia and reaffirmed that "close and friendly" relations with ASEAN would remain a "major pillar" of Japan's foreign policy. Speaking of youth training and cultural exchange programs, he put forward this grandiose vision: "Such exchanges of young people, who will shape our future, will be part



of the friendship program for the 21st century, and will also be a step toward realizing my long-cherished dream—Asia in the forefront of the future.”<sup>2</sup>

For ASEAN, the changes in Japan’s policy direction have provided opportunities to redress economic dependency, bargain for more economic assistance, gain political and diplomatic support for various regional positions—most notably with respect to Kampuchea—and generally to bring about a more balanced, if not yet neutral, stance in world affairs. Moreover, since some ASEAN leaders fear the Asia-Pacific balance of power has been moving in favor of the Soviet Union, a limited Japanese defense buildup has not been unwelcome.

However, while parallel interests and concerns have provided opportunities for closer cooperation, from the ASEAN countries’ point of view there continue to be a number of problems in their relationship with Japan. Among them are trade issues, the growing presence of Japan-based multinational corporations in Southeast Asia, and memories of past Japanese aggression. Because of these problems, the ASEAN countries have been cautious in developing their relationship with Japan, maintaining close and correct relations but at the same time registering some reservations, in particular on Japan’s 1,000-nautical-mile sea-lane defense plans. Thus, although there is clearly potential for a more extensive cooperative relationship between ASEAN and Japan in the future, there also are equally clear crucial constraints.

In this context, the question is how to define the scope and limitations in the present and future relationship between the two parties, especially in political and security questions. From the point of view of ASEAN, which operates on the principle of unanimity, the key variables are the individual member countries’ perspectives concerning Japan and the costs and benefits, both actual and putative, of cooperating with it in political and security issues. Analyzing these perspectives is by no means an easy exercise, for not only does one have to deal with a number of psychological factors, but one also has to make projections into an uncertain future. The conclusions arising from such an analysis can at best only serve as useful guidelines or starting points for further study.

These difficulties notwithstanding, this chapter will discuss the

political and security dimensions in ASEAN-Japan relations to 1990 from the perspective of Thailand.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, it will examine the following questions:

1. Thai conceptions of their own security and defense problems and policy requirements.
2. How the Thais perceive Japan and Japan's role in relation to these problems and policy requirements.
3. The implications of the first two questions for cooperation between ASEAN and Japan in general and between Thailand and Japan in particular, both now and in the future.

#### THAILAND'S PERSPECTIVES ON ITS OWN SECURITY AND DEFENSE<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally, Thai leaders have generally focused their attention on domestic affairs, that is, on their country's internal developments and internal power alignments and distribution. To put it another way, with the exception of a few instances in history, their aim primarily has been to mobilize the internal resources of the Kingdom for private and/or public purposes and for the maintenance or transformation of certain domestic power alignments as well as for the consolidation of the realm. The celebrated Chakri administrative and legal reforms in the late 19th century and early 20th century were aimed at strengthening monarchical power vis-à-vis nobles and outlying territories, as much as, or perhaps more than, modernization in response to Western imperialism. The 1932 revolution's overthrow of the absolute monarchy and the subsequent conflicts between the revolutionary leaders were precipitated not only by differing conceptions of the best ways to promote the country's progress but also by power struggles among groups and individuals. Similarly, measures undertaken by Field Marshals Sarit Tanarat, Thanom Kittikachorn, and Prapat Charusatien to "develop" the country in the 1950s and 1960s were aimed at extending the central government's power into the provinces and at the same time at perpetuating the army's and their own domination of Thai politics.

This historical focus on internal affairs was made possible by certain geopolitical advantages, most notably the availability of most resources in the compact and rich central plains and the relatively low population density. Indeed, despite much ill-advised and unscrupulous exploitation of resources and the quadrupling of the



population in the last 50 years, in relative terms Thailand remains a land of plenty, where "there are fish in its water and rice in its fields. Whosoever wishes to trade in elephants or horses does so; whosoever wishes to trade in gold and silver does so," as a 13th-century inscription from the Sukhotai era boldly asserted.

Wars there have been. Most of them have been for self-defense, for control over buffer or tributary states as a means of extended self-defense, or for gaining a specific resource—people—for internal development. Indeed, the historical focus on internal affairs is reflected in the fact that the Thais are not crusaders by choice or inclination; they have rarely sought to assert their *weltanschauung* and value system in the external environment.

The focus on internal affairs, however, has never precluded a strong interest in the external environment. The Thais have generally proved to be sensitive to changes in the external environment, and their diplomacy has for the most part aimed at molding an environment most conducive to internal consolidation and the preservation or transformation of internal power alignments and structure.

Although Thai diplomacy has varied in terms of its skills and in the degree of "Machiavellianism," the form of the external environment that the Thais find conducive for their purposes has remained constant. First, this environment must be such that the Thais can securely exploit external resources—raw materials, finished products, capital and technology—for internal purposes. During the early Bangkok era (from the end of the 18th century to the mid-19th century), the Thai leaders found the tributary system conducive to their own interests, for they were able to conduct lucrative trade with China that not only made Bangkok a rich and bustling metropolis but also reinforced the power of the ruling noble families. During the era of the Chakri reforms, although the country's survival was at stake and its freedom of action severely curtailed by treaties with foreign powers, there was no violent rejection of this externally imposed order partly because the Chakri kings were able to import Western expertise and technology for the modernization and centralization of the realm. Between 1940 and 1944, one of the reasons why the Thai government under Field Marshal Pibulsongkram actively participated in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was because the material benefits from participation were thought to be crucial for making Thailand a great power and at the same



time reinforcing the position of the military leaders vis-à-vis the civilians. Between 1947 and 1973, successive military regimes promoted what became an almost unconditional attachment to the United States partly because the latter could supply the wherewithal, be it aid, trade, investment, technology, or weapons, for developing the country, thus extending Bangkok's control into the provinces and reinforcing the domestic power position of the military leaders.

Second, for the Thai leaders, this external environment must be one where there is security from land-based threats, especially from the west and the east. For reasons of geography, sea-borne threats or, indeed, land-based threats from the north and south do not have the same immediacy or significance. In view of the importance presently attached by the Thais to the Kampuchean question, this threat perception should be elaborated on.

From the 13th century, Thai civilization has been based in the central plains region, which is fed by the Chao Phraya River and its tributaries. While providing immense material abundance that has nurtured Thai power, prosperity, and resilience through seven centuries of change and challenge, this region has also proved to be vulnerable to land-based threats, particularly from the west and the east. This consequently has conditioned the Thais to be highly sensitive to such threats. Although Burma, whose power reached its zenith under King Alaungpaya (1752–60) and one of his sons, King Hsinbyushin (1763–73), was the earlier nemesis, it is the threat coming from the east that has proved the most enduring.

Even more than the central plains, the trans-Mekong region comprising lowland Laos and most of Kampuchea is a rich and accessible area, with the river being a natural focus of unity between the population and the resources on either side of it. While unable to exert direct control over this area, the Thais have always had a keen interest in it, not only for economic reasons but also for strategic ones given the fact that this area and the central plains form one geographical continuum unbroken by an easily defensible natural barrier. Consequently, they have always viewed with alarm any change that might lead to the domination of this area by another power.

The rise of Vietnamese power, which had begun in the 15th century and climaxed with the unification of Vietnam by Emperor Gia Long in 1802, by its very momentum threatened the trans-Mekong

region. The Thais responded first by brutally laying waste to areas in Laos as "a defensive measure directed against Vietnam . . . [for] by emptying the country beyond the Mekong, [they] secured the river as a possible defense line for [themselves], denied it to Laotian rebels of the future and made the return of Vietnamese more difficult,"<sup>5</sup> and then by challenging Vietnam over Cambodia. The measure of the Thai threat perception can be gauged from the fact that during the reign of Rama III (1824–1851), the Thais fought four wars of varying intensity with their rival, twice campaigning well into Kampuchean and Vietnamese territories (1833–1841).

British imperialism eliminated the threat of Burma, but French imperialism accentuated the threat coming from the east, "for in building her empire France had behaved towards Siam much as a powerful Vietnamese emperor might have done and had made the same demands."<sup>6</sup> Again, the crucial importance of the trans-Mekong area in Thai perception was demonstrated when, with French power declining before and after the defeat at the hands of Germany in 1940, the Thais immediately attempted to recover territories that they were forced to cede to France in 1893, 1904, and 1907.

After the Second World War, with the French Indochinese empire being torn asunder, the fear of Vietnam reemerged. Although the Thais were initially sympathetic toward the Vietminh, the latter's successes and advances toward Luang Prabang in the early 1950s were one of the factors that induced Thailand to align itself with the United States. The traditional conflict between Thailand and Vietnam became intensified by ideological differences and Cold War power politics, and again the two rivals fought one another both directly and through "proxies" in Laos and South Vietnam.

For a brief period after the American failure in Vietnam, it seemed that Thai perception of Vietnam as well as of the importance of the trans-Mekong area was changing. Thailand seemed to be prepared to live in peaceful coexistence with its ideologically hostile rival.

However, the change in Thai perception proved to be more apparent than real. The crucial importance of the trans-Mekong area in Thailand's security perception was again demonstrated when the Vietnamese invaded Kampuchea. Although the Thai government had ample warning, the American withdrawal from Vietnam and the defeat of South Vietnam still turned out to be traumatic experiences,



and, faced with growing domestic unrest, Thailand had to accept Vietnam's domination over Laos. But the situation in 1978-79 was different: Not only had the Thais recovered a great deal of their unity and self-confidence through a policy of internal and external reconciliation, but also the problems posed by the Vietnamese invasion were of much greater significance, with a large number of Vietnamese actually undertaking combat operations on the Thais' doorstep and sending droves of refugees into Thai territory. The Thais' measured but firm and unyielding response aimed at removing all Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea indicates that, as before, for geostrategic reasons they are unwilling to tolerate the projection of Vietnamese power into the whole of the trans-Mekong area, especially when the projection of that power is supported by an external actor which is itself perceived to be a potential threat, that is, the Soviet Union.

Concern with the Soviet Union has added another complex dimension to the Thais' perception of Vietnam. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the growing Soviet military presence at the Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang bases in Vietnam have induced the Thai government to see the Indochina conflict in terms of global confrontation between the great powers. From this perspective, the Soviet Union has been and is perceived to be the crucial threat, although official Ministry of Foreign Affairs statements have remained guarded and even in some instances have expressed Thai aspirations of maintaining a policy of "equidistance." This has been reflected in a number of statements from the National Security Council concerning the deployment of SS-20 missiles in the Soviet Far East and the formation of the Soviet-backed "Pak Mai" communist party in Laos.

The Thais' fears and suspicions of Vietnam and the Soviet Union are borne out by a recent study of the Thai elite's perceptions on national security.<sup>7</sup> It was found that almost all respondents—97.9 percent—saw Vietnam as a threat in one form or another and that Vietnam ranks high in many forms of threat, such as direct military invasion, political subversion, undermining ASEAN's regional solidarity, and supporting military aggression by other countries. More specifically, there was near unanimity in the elite's opinion that the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Kampuchea has affected Thailand's security. The majority—close to 60 percent—felt that there is a grave adverse impact, while some 38 percent indicated



lesser concern. Nearly all agreed that the threat has assumed various dimensions, including armed tension along the Thai-Kampuchean border, an influx of refugees, an unnecessary drain on the national resources, the transformation of Kampuchea into a base for threatening Thailand's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and aggravation of regional tension and intensification of great power rivalry in Southeast Asia. Among these various dimensions, tension on the border, the refugee influx, and the transformation of Kampuchea into a base for threatening Thailand are the anxieties most frequently cited.

Nearly all respondents—more than 98 percent—rejected in one way or another the notion of acquiescing to Vietnam's military occupation of Kampuchea as an acceptable outcome. About one-half opted for opposition pure and simple against the Vietnamese action, and the other half wanted to reach some compromise with the Vietnamese without accepting the Vietnamese occupation. Nearly 49 percent thought that even if there is to be a negotiated compromise, Vietnam should be asked to withdraw its troops from the whole of Kampuchea in exchange for any quid pro quo from the Thai side—for example, a cessation of support to resistance groups. Only a small minority—less than 21 percent—held that a partial withdrawal, either from the Thai-Kampuchean border or up to the west bank of the Mekong River, is sufficient or feasible. The various offers made by Vietnam during the period of the survey to withdraw from the Thai-Kampuchean border or reduce its troop strength in Kampuchea as well as to conclude a nonaggression pact in return for ASEAN's withdrawal of recognition of the Democratic Kampuchean government were rejected in toto by some 62 percent of respondents and found only partly acceptable by only 33 percent.

Concerning Vietnam's ally, it was found that over 96 percent of the respondents considered the Soviet Union a threat in one form or another. As to the forms of threat, political subversion, support of military aggression against Thailand by another country, and undermining ASEAN's solidarity were ranked the highest. Moreover, while there is some ambivalence in the Thai elite's perceptions of the People's Republic of China (e.g., expressions of fear mixed with expectations that it would lend support in some instances, most notably in case of a direct military attack by Vietnam), there is little evidence of ambivalence vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Most of the

respondents—over 71 percent—believed that the most that can be hoped for from the Soviet Union is its nonintervention in Thai affairs.

To bring about an external environment that would enable the Thais to exploit external resources and to remain secure from land-based threats, Thai leaders generally have sought not to play one great power off against another in a “flexible” manner as the conventional wisdom would have it, but to promote a mutually beneficial attachment to a hegemonic power that would act as a guarantor of Thai access to the outside world and protector or benefactor of Thai geostrategic interests on mainland Southeast Asia. In this sense, as John Girling points out, the patron-client structure of domestic Thai politics is paralleled by a preference for a patron-client relationship in foreign affairs.<sup>8</sup>

This was first seen in Thai relations with China during the two centuries before the Opium War. The China connection not only provided the Thais with an overarching, though loose, security framework, but also afforded ample opportunities for highly profitable trade.

Faced with China’s decline and the inexorable surge of Western imperialism, Thai leaders, except for a brief period in the late 1850s and early 1860s, fundamentally rejected the policy of steering a neutral course between the great powers. To ward off France’s greater territorial ambitions, the Thais formed a close attachment to Britain, the hegemonic power, and utilized it as a means of protection. Without this, the Chakri reforms could never have been implemented.

The erosion of British power during the First World War and the interwar years induced the Thais to shift closer to Japan. The process culminated in the Thai-Japanese alliance and the Thai declaration of war against the Allies in the winter of 1941–42. By making the country an active part of Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Thai military leaders under Field Marshal Pibulsongkram sought to preserve and augment their own and their country’s power, including the reassertion of Thai control over the trans-Mekong area.

After the Second World War, Thai leaders, after a brief period of omnidirectional diplomacy, attached the country to the United States, the new powerful hegemonic state, and Thailand became



totally integrated in the American containment system, which guaranteed not only the leadership's and the country's security but also access to external resources for internal economic development.

In the last decade, there has been some fine-tuning in the Thais' conceptions of national security interests and approaches to safeguard them. In response to the growing complexity in Thai economy, society, and politics as well as in the international system and in response to the urgent nature of economic problems, the Thais have widened their definition of national security. Hitherto, political and military considerations were dominant, but now social and economic dimensions are regarded as the most important concern. Moreover, the Thai leadership sees a complex mixture of internal and external measures as being necessary for safeguarding Thailand's security.<sup>9</sup> However, the focus of attention remains internal as before. This is evident from the survey made by Thongdhamchart<sup>10</sup> and also from Office of the Prime Minister's Orders No. 66/2523 (1980) and No. 65/2525 (1982), which serve as a blueprint for national security measures.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, there has been some fine-tuning in the Thais' approach to promoting an external environment conducive to their own interests. In response to the post-Vietnam War decline and partial withdrawal from the region of the United States, the upsurge of Soviet and Vietnamese power, and the growing importance of non-political issues such as trade, investment, technology, and resources, the Thais have sought to orchestrate an overwhelming correlation of forces—military, political, and economic—to buttress their position and ensure their security and well-being through a policy that has been symbolically, but misleadingly, labeled omnidirectional.<sup>12</sup> Such has been the rationale for creating linkages with a wide array of countries, including China, Japan, the European Economic Community, Australia, New Zealand, the newly industrialized countries, and the oil-exporting, labor-importing Arab countries.

In this process of fine-tuning or adjustment, special focus has been placed on ASEAN. This is evident not only from Thai policy since 1975 but also from the survey of Thai elite opinions mentioned above. It was found that the Thais expect a degree of support from their ASEAN partners in times of trouble and correlate the security of the ASEAN group as a whole with their own.<sup>13</sup>

However, it is significant that the Thais have not abandoned the



traditional approach of strategic reliance on the most powerful state with a presence in the region, especially since Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea. Although Thai rhetoric and refusal to go along with the United States in small but highly publicized issues such as the Korean airliner incident and the assassination of South Korean leaders in Burma tend to have an obfuscating effect, the Thais continue to attach great significance to the U.S. connection. Time and again, Thailand has reemphasized U.S. commitments; Thai-U.S. joint sacrifices made in the past; the need for transfers of advanced weapons, especially the integrated air defense system and F-16A fighter aircraft; and the importance of the United States' strong and continuing regional presence, as evident from the number of visits by the U.S. Seventh Fleet's units and joint Thai-U.S. exercises. Also significant is the fact that the bilateral American aid package to Thailand has been impressive. For the 1985 fiscal year, total U.S. military aid was US\$107.3 million, a 300 percent increase over the 1979 fiscal year.<sup>14</sup> Also significant is the fact that between 1976 and 1980 the United States supplied 75 percent of the total arms transfers to Thailand,<sup>15</sup> a proportion that will substantially increase with the purchase of F-16As and other weapons systems.<sup>16</sup>

The importance attached by the Thais to the U.S. connection is borne out by the aforementioned survey of the Thai elite's perceptions of national security issues. It was found that an overwhelming majority of the Thai elite still cherish the relationship with the United States and expect it to lend aid and comfort in all exigencies in all manners possible.<sup>17</sup> Perforce, the "client" has to stand more on his own feet and reserves to himself the right of tactical flexibility, but strategically the "patron" remains patron and there is a fundamental continuity of approach.

#### JAPAN IN THAI PERSPECTIVES

The question to be asked now is, how is Japan related to Thailand's security and defense requirements and strategies? The foregoing conceptions of security and defense suggest that Japan has played a role of some sort in Thai thinking.

Before the Second World War, Thailand (until 1939 Siam) and Japan developed increasingly close political and economic relations that culminated in the former's declaration of war against the Allies

in January 1942 and participation in the latter's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere until 1944. Although some Thai leaders certainly felt sympathetic and attracted toward Japan,<sup>18</sup> the decisive factor contributing to this process was probably Britain's declining ability to play the role of guarantor of Thailand's access to external resources and its failure to act as promoter of Thailand's geostrategic interests in the trans-Mekong area. This stood in stark contrast to Japan's growing might and willingness to encourage Thailand's attempts to recover the eastern provinces ceded to France during the period of imperialist expansion.<sup>19</sup>

The Thai-Japanese relationship during the 1930s and early 1940s has relevance for today. First, it serves to illustrate the tactical flexibility inherent in the Thais' conceptions of their security and defense strategies and thus to put Thailand's pragmatism vis-à-vis Japan today into historical perspective. Second, it serves to remind one that, as an erstwhile ally, Thailand did not altogether have to suffer too severely from the wartime excesses of Japan and, accordingly, has probably far less negative memories than those of its ASEAN partners. This helps to explain contemporary Thailand's pragmatic approach toward Japan.<sup>20</sup>

On the strength of the survey of a number of sources conducted by the author (see Footnote 3), it can be said that at the present Japan performs three "roles" related to Thailand's security and defense. These may not be intentional on Japan's part but nevertheless are deemed useful from Thailand's perspective.

The first is that Japan acts as a conduit through which Thailand can exploit and utilize external resources for internal purposes. Since the 1960s, Japan has become Thailand's largest trade partner (about 21 percent of Thai foreign trade).<sup>21</sup> Japan is also the largest foreign investor (about 30 percent of total cumulative investment in Thailand),<sup>22</sup> and the largest government-to-government aid donor (about 40 percent of total foreign aid provided during the 1977-1981 economic development plan).<sup>23</sup> Although, as will be discussed, there is a certain ambivalence concerning Japan's economic position vis-à-vis Thailand, Thai-Japanese economic relationships often appear to be seen in a positive way. The leaders, media, and public not infrequently call for more Japanese investment, and it is significant of all the practitioners (as opposed to academics) interviewed by the author that only three should express



some concern about the consequences of Japanese economic domination.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, an official in charge of national security questions said that "the problem of economic domination is a domestic one which should not be looked at on the basis of fear and disregard of various factors. This problem is our responsibility; importing capital or technology does not automatically mean domination except if we allow it to happen."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda, during a visit to Japan, urged Japan to play a role in the implementation of Thailand's Fifth Five-Year National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982-86) through greater investment, assistance, and trade liberalization.<sup>26</sup> The positive attitude concerning Japan's economic role is underlined by the survey of Tongdhammachart—an overwhelming majority of the Thai elite think that economic assistance from Japan is generally desirable and can be expected in a number of national exigencies.<sup>27</sup>

The second role is that of a contributor to the global balance of power. Although, as discussed below, there is some ambivalence, a survey of newspapers and magazines suggests that Japan's defense buildup and greater political role in the context of the post-Vietnam War international security environment are generally deemed necessary and useful; for example, the moderate and independent *Nation Review* in an editorial, citing the threat emanating from the Soviet Union, showed approval of Japan's 1983 *Defense White Paper*.<sup>28</sup> News of Japan's defense problems often receive detailed and sympathetic report, such as in September 1983 when units of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force had to scramble against Soviet planes.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, leading Thai politicians, officials, and academics in varying degrees tend to support Japan's defense buildup and greater political role as a positive factor in the preservation of the global balance of power. Often cited as reasons are the need to fill the vacuum created by the decline of the United States and the need to put together a loose coalition of anti-Soviet forces in an era of rapidly growing Soviet might and presence, which represent a threat to the security of Asia-Pacific sea-lanes of communication. At the same time, the possibility that Japan might itself represent a military threat after a period of "remilitarization" tends to be discounted because it is believed that with respect to the Soviet challenge, Thai-Japanese relations are based on common values and interests.<sup>30</sup> As Foreign



Minister Siddhi Savetsila said in a 1984 interview, "Japan's defense will contribute to the security of this region. There were still some worries that Japan may become militarized as in the past. . . . Don't worry. Japan does not want war. But Japan now has to play a security role."<sup>31</sup>

The third role is that of a participant of the loose anti-Vietnamese coalition or correlation of forces. When Vietnam invaded Kampuchea in December 1978 and January 1979, Thailand found itself having to face its historic rival across the whole length of its vulnerable eastern boundary without the full reassurances of a patron's protection. To cope with the threat coming from a militarily superior adversary, the Thais have sought to put as much political, diplomatic, economic, and military pressure as possible to bear on Vietnam through diligently and patiently orchestrating a correlation of forces, and have generally succeeded in conjuring up a strategic stalemate out of a situation of military vulnerability.

In this endeavor, along with the United States, ASEAN, and China, Japan is deemed to be a crucial part of this ad hoc coalition because of its power to confer or withhold economic benefits. Although now and then negative or cynical remarks are expressed in the media,<sup>32</sup> on the whole Japan's suspension of aid to Vietnam and reduced level of economic relations with that country,<sup>33</sup> its financial contribution toward the alleviation of Thailand's refugee problem,<sup>34</sup> and its generally impeccable behavior in closely coordinating its policy in the Kampuchean question with Thailand and the rest of ASEAN have been appreciated both by the media and by those interviewed by the author.<sup>35</sup> In this connection, it is highly significant that an overwhelming majority of the Thai elite surveyed by Tongdhammachart (81 percent) expect Japan to provide political, diplomatic, and economic support if Vietnam should decide to invade Thailand and that there is even a small number (12 percent of the 81 percent) who look forward to some form of military assistance.<sup>36</sup>

However, from the Thai perspective these roles, as important as they are, are likely to represent the sum total of contributions made by Japan to Thailand's security, for there are a number of crucial constraints against the development of a more extensive involvement by Japan. First, there is a problem of ignorance. The Thai public seems to have a low level of knowledge about Japan and does not

seem eager to acquire more, as reflected in the fact that the mass media devote only small percentages of broadcast time to serious news on, as opposed to entertainment from, Japan.<sup>37</sup> Although modern telecommunications can quickly influence tastes, ideas, and beliefs, it seems likely that this relative ignorance will act as one of the constraints against closer Thai-Japanese cooperation in the generally uncharted fields of security and politics for the near future.

Second, many Thais have a negative image of Japan. As is evident from numerous media articles and more specifically from a survey conducted by Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Political Science<sup>38</sup> in the mid-1970s, Japan is seen as being exploitative and imperialistic, and great concern is voiced about its investments and trade surplus. This is substantiated by Tongdhammachart, who found that 69.3 percent of the Thai elite consider Japan a threat or a potential threat and over half of them (53.3 percent) cite economic domination as the main danger.<sup>39</sup> With the 1984 trade deficit exceeding Baht 43 billion, or 60 percent of the total Thai deficit, according to the Thai Ministry of Commerce, with reports of declining market shares for a number of Thai exports to Japan (natural rubber, chicken, fluorite, marine products, maize, and green mung bean), and with Japan's slowness in liberalizing access to its market for a number of products (frozen chicken, castor oil, and canned pineapples), there is likely to be a more negative image of Japan in the near future. It is not insignificant that the media and political opponents of the present finance minister, Sommai Hoontrakul, have made unflattering references to his Japanese connections,<sup>40</sup> that many who are generally favorably disposed toward Japan have warned against the politicization of the trade deficit problem,<sup>41</sup> or that in 1984 the Thai student union called for a boycott of Japanese products.

Friction over investment and trade at the same time as Japan's defense budget and political role grows may stimulate fears of a revival of Japan's militarism. Oblique but nevertheless telling references have been made to Japan's dark past in looking at Japan's increased defense role ("rebirth of the Samurai")<sup>42</sup> and its economic intransigence ("in accordance with the philosophy of 'sword-carrying samurais,' that is, being concerned only with wealth").<sup>43</sup>

If these are portents of things to come, it would indeed be unfortunate, for the revival of Japanese militarism is at present not



an issue in Thailand. This is evident from the fact that the revision of Japan's history received little attention and that, according to the survey by Tongdhamchart, of the 69.3 percent who thought Japan is a threat or a potential threat, only 2.6 percent believed the threat to be in the form of direct military aggression.<sup>44</sup> This is further substantiated by the author's independent research. Media references to Japanese militarism over the last five years are few and far between. Moreover, most of those interviewed tended to treat the question lightly and, when pressed for more definite answers, to cite "lessons from the past," "preoccupation with trade or making money," "Japan's Constitution and public opinion," "Japan's good intentions," or "common interests with the ASEAN countries" as factors that act as constraints against a revival of Japanese militarism. Only under extreme provocation or danger, some say, would it revert to its former ways. Significantly, during the recent call for a boycott of Japanese products by Thai students, the focus has been on economics and not, as might easily have happened, on the issue of Japan's revived militarism.<sup>45</sup> Thus, apprehensions about Japanese militarism do not seem to be a significant or innate component of Thai perspectives. But, as discussed above, the possibility that they may be induced by fears of economic domination cannot be overlooked, and in that eventuality, Thai-Japanese cooperation in all fields will be adversely affected.

Third, there is for the time being an inherent contradiction in the Thais' approach to foreign policy. As discussed above, the Thais are building a correlation of political, diplomatic, economic, and military forces to buttress their external and internal security, and in this endeavor both Japan and ASEAN play useful and complementary parts. However, it is clear that various degrees of "Looking East" notwithstanding, Thailand's ASEAN partners have far more negative, and perhaps even hostile, images of Japan. Therefore, as long as Thailand continues to attach importance to its ASEAN connection, which is likely for the foreseeable future, it will have to put its bilateral relations with Japan firmly in the context of ASEAN's overall fears, requirements, and aspirations and tread warily in its dealings with Japan in order to ensure that cooperation with it will not lead to stresses and strains within ASEAN.<sup>46</sup>

Fourth, and perhaps paradoxically, another constraint arises from the fact that Japan does not, and for the foreseeable future



will not, have sufficient power to induce a closer cooperative relationship with Thailand in the political and security arena. As discussed above, the Thais understand, respect, and appreciate power and what power can achieve. Due to a number of internal and external constraints, Japan's ability to confer political and security benefits on Thailand is at best marginal. It cannot offer the Thais the protection or means of protection that the United States is capable of providing, and therefore, the Thais' strategic dependence on the United States is likely to persist into the future, as evident from Thailand's current weapons procurement program.

Subtle indications of this perspective appeared in the interviews conducted by the author. While most of those interviewed were in varying degrees positive about the need for a growing Japanese defense and political role and for more extensive cooperation in the political and security sphere not only between Thailand and Japan but also between ASEAN and Japan, they were hesitant or obfuscating when asked what specific measures, over and above those being implemented, might be promoted to reinforce and extend cooperation. Usually it was only when pressed with a range of possible measures that they began to give more specific answers. One possible explanation for this is that the respondents, most notably those still with connections to the government, were reluctant to commit themselves in ways that may compromise themselves later, especially with their ASEAN friends. However, this first explanation tends to lose its validity if one considers that two of the most outspoken proponents of a greater Japanese role have been Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila and National Security Council Secretary-General Prasong Soonsiri.<sup>47</sup> A more probable explanation is that because Japan could offer little by way of political or security benefits, they were genuinely at a loss as to what to say.

This is reinforced by the findings of Tongdhammachart. When questioned what kind of role or behavior they would like to see Japan undertake to strengthen Thai national security, an overwhelming majority of the Thai elite—80.8 percent—opted for economic assistance and only a minute number—1.6 percent—favored military assistance short of direct military involvement.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, from the Thai perspective, the present, limited pattern of Thai-Japanese "cooperation" in the political and security arena is likely to endure because it is deemed useful, but at the same time

unlikely to become more intensive or extensive in any qualitatively different way.

#### PROSPECTS

It seems likely that, were it to come about, the development of bilateral cooperation in areas related directly to politics and security will be incremental and will have to take place in the framework of multilateralism, that is, U.S.-Japan-ASEAN relations. With this in mind, and on the strength of material researched from a number of sources, some possible areas of cooperation between Thailand and Japan might be identified. It must be pointed out from the outset, however, that these are not proposals emanating from any specific sources or from the majority opinion of those interviewed. Rather, it is a synopsis of many viewpoints, put forward only for the purposes of future consideration. These areas can be subsumed under five headings:

*Defense of Japan's home islands and protection of sea-lanes of communication to 1,000 nautical miles from the Tokyo-Osaka area.* This is not cooperation as such, but as discussed previously, Thais see this as a valuable component in calculations of the global balance of power.

*Limited Japanese participation in protection of sea-lanes of communication beyond the 1,000-nautical-mile limit.* In Southeast Asia, this might take the form of providing training, training equipment (e.g., T-2 training planes), radars, unarmed patrol planes (e.g., PC3s), air-sea rescue and anti-pollution material, and so on within a multilateral framework and perhaps without direct involvement of Japanese personnel.

*Thailand's antipiracy programs.* Piracy is seen to be a serious security as well as humanitarian problem by Thai government agencies, particularly the National Security Council. At present, Japan's aid takes the form of a contribution to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. From the Thai perspective, more direct Japanese assistance might be useful, for example, in upgrading a number of sea and air facilities elsewhere (not only at Songkla) or providing some hardware for air-sea rescue.

*Increased refugee aid.* Though much appreciation has been expressed concerning Japan's aid to the cause of Indochinese refugees,

criticisms abound that Japan has not done enough, and increased aid would enhance the value and extent of cooperation from the Thai perspective. It would also help to silence accusations that Japan is an "economic animal" only occupied with its own economic self-interests.

*Other forms of cooperation.* These may include provision of training and training equipment (e.g., T-2 training aircraft) by Japan; exchanges of officers in greater number and at more senior levels (at the moment, only a few a year mostly below staff college levels are exchanged),<sup>49</sup> although the language barrier may prove to be the most enduring and decisive constraint; more systematic and extensive exchanges of intelligence; and Japan's provision of technological know-how that has potential, but is not immediately intended, for military application as a means of building up "total defense" or "defense in depth and width."

Each of these possible areas of political and security cooperation is not without problems, be it from the perspective of Japan, Thailand, or ASEAN. Indeed, political risks inherent in a number of them may altogether preclude their application for the foreseeable future.

From the foregoing discussion, therefore, one might come to the conclusion that the best prospect for closer Thai-Japanese cooperation may lie in the economic field. For one thing, Japan is more predisposed to and capable of dealing with economic questions. For another, if measures are implemented wisely and cautiously, Thailand and ASEAN most likely will be receptive to them and the aforementioned constraints will be diminished or circumvented. Given the importance of economic issues in the present-day world and given Thailand's and ASEAN's compatible conceptions of national security (that is, socioeconomic factors being crucial determinants of political stability, resilience, and security), constructive economic cooperation will offer, and will be seen to offer, benefits in the political and security arena. The future of Thai-Japanese and ASEAN-Japan relations may be shaped by both sides' ability, or inability, to explore and realize this possibility in a mutually rewarding way.



NOTES

1. See Saburo Okita, "Tokyo's Emphasis on the Neighbours," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 September 1982. Between 1961 and 1983, Japan's OECF loan to the five ASEAN countries amounted to ¥1,731,893 million out of ¥3,808,737 million total for Third World countries, according to OECF figures.
2. *The Bangkok Post*, 10 May 1983, 5.
3. The following section is based on two major sources. The first is a survey of the daily *Bangkok Post*, *Nation Review*, *Matichon*, *Thai Rath*, and *Siam Rath* newspapers and the weekly *Sunday Matuphom*, *Siam Mai*, *Tawan Mai*, *Weekend Matichon*, and *Siam Rath Weekly Commentaries* magazines between 1978 and 1983. It is believed that this list represents a fair spectrum of informed media viewpoints. In conducting this survey, attention was focused on editorials, columns, articles, and news analyses by Thais, as opposed to reproductions from international news agencies' reports, on Thai-Japan and ASEAN-Japan relations.  

The second source is interviews. The list of those interviewed includes all the prime ministers in office since 1975 except General Kriangsak Chomanan, whom the author had already interviewed in 1981, and the present one, General Prem Tinsulanonda; all the foreign ministers in office since 1975, with the exception of the present one, Air Chief Marshal Siddhi Savetsila, together with one regarded widely as the most experienced in postwar Thailand, Dr. Thanat Khoman; two permanent secretaries of state for foreign affairs; and most of the top Thai academics specializing in international relations or East Asian and Southeast Asian area studies. In addition, six middle-level officers from the three armed forces were interviewed and their views incorporated in the findings. These interviews were conducted in conjunction with two other research projects presently being undertaken by the author, one on Thai foreign policy since 1975 and the other on the Thai military system. In the context of Thai-Japan relations, since a good deal of the subject of research revolves around future prospects and possibilities, the interviews were deliberately kept as unstructured as possible to allow free flows of thought and opinion.
4. This section is based on a number of previous publications by the author, most notably "Thailand's National Security Interests and the Pacific Basin Community" presented at the Hoover Institution of War Peace Studies' conference on National Security Interests in the Pacific Basin at Stanford University, California, 15-17 August, 1983; "Thailand and Its Indochinese Neighbours: The Enduring Logic," presented at the Institute of International Affairs conference on Moving into the Pacific Century: The Changing Regional Order in the Asia-Pacific, at Singapore, 5-6 November 1983; "Strategic Implications on the Indochinese Conflict: Thai Perspectives," *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. II, No. 3, Fall 1984, 28-46; "From Past to Present: Continuity in Thai Foreign Policy," presented at the Faculty of Political Science, Ramkhamhaeng University's seminar on Thai Foreign Policy: Success or Failure? in Bangkok, 24 January 1984 (in Thai). A synopsis of the latter publication is published under the title of "Toward an Understanding of Thai Foreign Policy" in *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 14 June 1984.
5. Hugh Toye, *Laos: Buffer State or Battleground* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 21.

6. Ibid., 43.
7. Kramol Tongdhammachart, Kusuma Snitwongse, Sarasin Viraphol, Arong Suthasasna, Wiwat Mungkankdi, and Sukhumbhand Paribatra, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives: Implications for Southeast Asia* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, forthcoming).
8. John L. S. Girling, *Thailand: Society and Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press), 92. Significantly, two diplomats who launched their successful careers during the heyday of the American alliance also made this point: interviews with Thanat Khoman and Anand Punyarachun.
9. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
10. Ibid.
11. Excerpts of these have been translated into English and can be found in *ISIS Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 14–18 and Vol. 2, No. 1, 17–20. *ISIS Bulletin* is a quarterly publication of the Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University.
12. See Institute of International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in National Security and Development* (Bangkok, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1983), particularly Saroj Chaovanaviraj, "Foreign Affairs and National Security," 36–55.
13. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
14. See Sukhumbhand Paribatra, "Thailand's Defence Policy in the Post-Vietnam War Era, 1975–86," a research report prepared for the Social Science Association of Thailand's Public Policy Issues Programme and presented at Pattaya, Thailand, 22 February 1986.
15. *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1971–1980* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1983), 118.
16. See Paribatra, "Thailand's Defence Policy," for the list of Thailand's weapons procurements since 1975.
17. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
18. This was the point emphasized by Edward T. Flood, *Japan's Relations with Thailand 1928–1941* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1968).
19. See Charnvit Kasetsiri, "The First Phibun Government and Its Involvement in World War II," *Journal of The Siam Society*, Vol. 62, Pt 2, July 1974, 25–28, for the latter point.
20. The differences between Thailand and its ASEAN partners in this respect have been emphasized time and again in almost all literature dealing with the subject and indeed also in many of the interviews conducted by the author. For a brief survey of ASEAN's threat perceptions which also bears out his point, see Robert O. Tilman, *The Enemy Beyond: External Threat Perceptions in the ASEAN Region* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Research Notes and Discussion Paper No. 42, 1984).
21. Department of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand.
22. Board of Investment, Thailand.
23. See Srisawang Puawongpad, "Japan's Aid to Thailand: Agenda for Research," a paper presented at the conference on Agenda for Research in Present Thai-Japanese Studies, organized by the Institute of Asian Studies, the Department

of Sociology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, the Social Science Association of Thailand, Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute, and the Japan Foundation, 30–31 March 1984, in Bangkok, Table 4.

24. Author's interviews with Kukrit Pramoj, Anand Panyarachun, and Thanat Khoman. Academics on the whole tend to be more skeptical. Nevertheless, some very strongly believe that Japan has made a strong contribution to Thailand's improvements in the quality of life: see Likhit Dhiravegin, "Thai-Japanese Postwar Relations," *Thai-Japanese Relations* (Bangkok: Thammasat University Japanese Studies Institute, March 1984), 11–27.
25. Author's interview with Sqdn-Ldr. Prasong Poonsiri.
26. Reported in the *Bangkok Post*, 4 November 1981.
27. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
28. *Nation Review*, 29 August 1983, 4.
29. For example, the *Nation Review*, 14 September 1983, 2; the *Bangkok Post*, 15 and 23 September 1983, 8 and 3, respectively.
30. The strongest advocate of this loose anti-Soviet coalition is Sqdn-Ldr. Prasong Soonsiri: interview with the author and also speech given at the Pacific Security Conference in Seoul, 20–22 January 1984, reproduced in *Bangkok Post*, 22 January 1984, 6.
31. Interview with the *Nation Review*, 25 January 1984, 5.
32. For example, the Thai-language *Thai Rath*, which has the largest circulation in the country, complained that Japan is helping ASEAN not out of altruistic reasons but for reasons of self-interest, that is, fear of the Soviet Union: *Thai Rath*, 11 January 1984, 2.
33. As seen in this table:

Japan's Trade with Vietnam and Laos 1975–1982 (¥ million)  
Amount of Total Trade

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Vietnam	20,688.8	46,928.7	65,946.2	56,913.9	35,900.6	36,275.4	32,203.2	32,179.6
Laos	1,664.0	3,023.8	4,616.1	1,926.9	4,031.9	4,179.6	2,822.3	2,683.7

34. Apart from the provision of doctors and nurses, in 1983 Japan has agreed to furnish grant aids as follows: ¥35 million for Malaria Control; ¥100 million for Supreme Command's Border Self-Defense Projects on the Thai-Kampuchean Border; and ¥50 million via World Food Program for food relief. See Srisawong Puawongpad, "Japan's Aid to Thailand: Agenda for Research," a paper presented at the Conference on Agenda for Research in Present Thai-Japanese Studies, organized by Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Asian Studies, Faculty of Political Science (Department of Sociology and Anthropology), and Social Research Institute; the Social Science Association of Thailand; and the Japan Foundation, 30–31 March 1984 in Bangkok, Appendix I (in Thai).
35. For example, Japanese Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe's three-point proposal to help resolve the Kampuchean problem, which was presented at the ASEAN foreign



ministers' meeting in Jakarta in July 1984, received generally favorable response: see *Matukphoum*, 16 July 1984, 14.

36. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
37. Faculty Members of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Political Science, Department of International Relations, *Japan in Thai Perspective* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Asian Studies Monograph No. D26, January 1980). This is confirmed by the author's own survey of the Thai media.
38. *Japan in Thai Perspective*.
39. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*. Thai-Japanese economic relations is a subject closely studied by the "dependencia school" which is fast gaining popularity in Thailand. See, for example, Suthy Prasartset, "Thailand-Japan Trade: A Case of Third World Dependency," *Asian Review*, 1, 2, January-March 1980, 138-160.
40. Hoontrakul was educated at Keio University and during his subsequent business career he maintained close contact with the Japanese public and private sectors.
41. For example, Likhit Dhiravegin, "Thai-Japanese Relations: Problems Which Have To Be Resolved," *Tawan*, November 1983-January 1984, 15 (in Thai).
42. For example, *Pathinya*, 16 May 1980, 37-39 (in Thai).
43. For example, *Matichon*, 21 June 1979, 4.
44. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
45. See the *Nation Review*, 21 October 1984, 11 and also the *Bangkok Post*, 18 October 1984, 4.
46. This point emerged time and again in interviews conducted by the author and also in the media. For example, see Banyat Surakanvit, "The Japan-ASEAN Love Story," *Weekend Matichon*, 3-9 July 1983 (in Thai).
47. Interview with Sqdn-Ldr. Prasong Soonsiri.
48. Tongdhammachart, *The Thai Elite's National Security Perspectives*.
49. Significantly, between 1925 and 1981 there have been only nine Thai Army officers who have attended staff courses in Japan, compared to 182 in the United States (1946-1984), 40 in France (1931-1984), and 29 in Britain (1937-1984). Data from Education Division, Royal Thai Army Department of Military Studies.

*Japan, A Power Misperceived in  
Southeast Asia*

MASASHI NISHIHARA

IN May 1983, when Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visited the capitals of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, one of his major missions was to alleviate Southeast Asian leaders' concern over Japan's defense buildup programs. He was not the first prime minister to stress to Southeast Asians that Japan would not become a military power. Takeo Fukuda's celebrated Manila speech of August 1977, in which he laid out the three basic principles of Japan's Southeast Asian policy, pointedly included a renunciation of military ambitions. However, that his successors, Zenko Suzuki and Nakasone, had to repeat this in their respective trips to the ASEAN region in 1981 and 1983 illustrates the persistence of latent and articulated distrust of Japan's long-term intentions.

For many years, the revival of Japanese militarism was frequently referred to in Southeast Asian media.<sup>1</sup> As far back as in 1957, the elevation of Nobusuke Kishi, a former A-class war criminal, to the premiership was discussed in this context, as was the 1982 controversy over the Japanese government's alleged "pressure" to soften descriptions of wartime behavior in history textbooks. A 1983 opinion survey conducted in ASEAN countries for the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that a fairly high percentage of Southeast

Asians remains apprehensive about possible Japanese remilitarization: 54 percent of Thais, 37 percent of Malaysians, 35 percent of Singaporeans, 28 percent of Filipinos, and 19 percent of Indonesians.<sup>2</sup> In early 1983, M. S. Kapitsa, former Soviet deputy foreign minister, visited ASEAN capitals, warning against the "revival of Japanese militarism."<sup>3</sup> Hanoi predictably echoed this warning. The intention of Soviet and Vietnamese statements was clear: to weaken the ASEAN-Japan relationship. The danger is that Moscow had thought Southeast Asian fears of Japanese military potential to be strong enough that such warnings could have effect.

In fact, there is a critical gap between some common Southeast Asian perceptions of Japanese power and intention and the reality. This gap needs to be closed because those perceptions are an obstacle to the strengthening of the ASEAN-Japan relationship, preventing more effective cooperation to realize complementary security interests. In this chapter, three common broad misperceptions shared by some Japanese as well as Southeast Asians will be examined. These are that Japan is a strong military power, that militarist thinking in Japan is on the rise, and that Japan might once again attack Southeast Asia. The purpose of this chapter is to show that these are truly misperceptions.

#### MISPERCEPTION 1: JAPAN IS A STRONG MILITARY POWER

Southeast Asians maintain that Japan's military capabilities are impressive because its defense budget ranked the ninth largest in the world in 1984 at \$12,018 million. The 1983 defense expenditures of the five larger ASEAN member countries (Brunei joined in 1984), totaling \$7,719 million, are significantly smaller than Japan's (see Table 1). In 1985, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) had 34 destroyers, 18 frigates, and 15 submarines, while Indonesia, the largest maritime nation in the ASEAN region, was equipped with only two submarines, 13 frigates, and no destroyers.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) possessed 270 combat aircraft, including advanced fighters such as the F-4EJ, the F-104J, and the F-15J, whereas the Royal Thai Air Force, perhaps the strongest air force in ASEAN, had 183 combat aircraft, of which the most advanced aircraft was the F-5E, not the F-4 or the F-15.<sup>5</sup>

These figures give the appearance of strong Japanese military



Table 1. Defense Expenditure in 1970 and 1984

Country	Year	Overall Expenditure (\$ million)	Per Capita Expenditure (\$ per capita)	Percent Expenditure of GNP
Indonesia	1970	\$272	\$2	2.3%
	1984	2,420	15	3.0
Malaysia	1970	186	17	4.7
	1984	1,997	131	5.9
Philippines	1970	136	3	2.3
	1984	504	9	1.5
Singapore	1970	158	75	8.7
	1984	1,046	415	5.8
Thailand	1970	260	7	4.3
	1984	1,752	35	4.2
ASEAN total	1970	1,012	—	—
	1984	7,719	—	—
Japan	1970	1,864	18	0.9
	1984	12,018	100	1.0

NOTE: Brunei, not included in this table, spent an estimated \$305 million on defense in 1984, about 4.6% of its GNP.

SOURCE: Calculated from International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1971-1972* and *1986-1987*.

capabilities, and this is so relative to ASEAN capabilities. Since Japan was completely disarmed after the Pacific War, Southeast Asians' concerns about the fast rearmament of the Japanese military may be understandable. But Japan and U.S. defense specialists consider present Japanese defense capabilities as essentially weak. The Defense Agency believes that many Japanese arms need to be modernized and that the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) seriously lacks the ability to sustain prolonged combat.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. administration and Congress complain constantly about Japan's limited capabilities, urging Tokyo to spend more on defense, to modernize arms faster, to increase ammunition supplies, and to acquire the capabilities necessary to close off the three international straits aside the Japanese islands and defend sea-lanes up to 1,000 nautical miles southward.<sup>7</sup> Some critics argue that Japan is capable of resisting a major conventional attack for less than a week or perhaps for only a few hours.

More symbolically, Japanese defense circles and the American government are anxious to see Japan abandon the self-imposed political taboo against spending more than 1 percent of the gross national product for defense.

After all, the Imperial Army in 1941 had 2.1 million soldiers, compared to the present 175,000 troops. The Imperial Navy, with 320,000 men in 1941, had a fleet of 1,480,000 tons—the current MSDF's fleet is 232,000 tons. When the Pacific War started, the Imperial Navy possessed 10 aircraft carriers, 133 destroyers, and 65 submarines (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Japanese Imperial Navy and Maritime Self-Defense Force

	Imperial Navy, 1941		MSDF, 1985	
	No.	Thousand tons	No.	Thousand tons
Total forces	320,000	—	42,000	—
Total ships	385	1,480.0	164	243.0
Battle ships	10	301.4	—	—
Carriers	10	153.0	—	—
Battle cruisers	38	257.7	—	—
Destroyers, frigates	133	175.9	49	119.0
Submarines	65	97.9	14	28.0
Other ships	129	494.1	101	96.0
Operational aircraft	3,260	—	140	—

NOTE: In prewar years, there was no Imperial Air Force as such. The Imperial Army had 2,512 aircraft. The postwar SDF has operational aircraft in the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and ASDF as well as the MSDF. The GSDF has some 380 aircraft and the ASDF some 360. *Boei Handobukku*, 1985, 96.

SOURCE: Collected from Saburo Toyama, *Nihon Kaigunshi* (Kyoikusha, 1980), 188; *Boei Hakusho* 1985, 295; and *Boei Handobukku*, 1985, 96.

Those Southeast Asians worried about present Japanese military power tend to compare Japanese arms with their own, and they say,

"No ASEAN nations have destroyers, but Japan does!" Those Japanese and Americans who argue that Japan should spend more for defense, on the other hand, compare Japanese capabilities to those of the Soviet Union. They point out that Japan should not try to balance its force level with the levels of Southeast Asian nations, but that it should try to contribute to maintaining the balance of power in the Western Pacific. The Soviet Pacific Fleet, it is argued, now has warships totaling 1,780,000 tons, which outweigh the combined naval force of Japan (243,000 tons) and the U.S. Seventh Fleet (700,000 tons). As long as Japan and Southeast Asian nations evaluate Japanese power from these different points of reference, the perception gap will continue.

No Japanese believe that their country now possesses the capability to attack any Southeast Asian nation, even if it should so wish. Unlike in the Pacific War years, Japan has no aircraft carriers and no overseas air and naval bases. Unlike the United States and the Soviet Union, it has no nuclear weapons and no long-range bombers, not to mention long- or intermediate-range missiles. In the Pacific War, Japan had 51 army divisions, of which 12 divisions were dispatched to Southeast Asia. Today, the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) has a total of 13 divisions, all home-based, of which six are stationed to the north in Hokkaido and northeast Honshu. It is thus impossible for most Japanese to imagine that their country would ever consider attacking foreign countries at all, particularly ASEAN countries, with which Japan has such close economic and political relations.

All the ASEAN nations except Indonesia increased their military manpower rather remarkably in recent years, whereas Japanese military personnel shrank slightly (see Table 3). Total ASEAN forces increased from 594,600 in 1970 to 793,700 in 1983, while those of Japan decreased from 259,000 down to 243,000 during the same period.

Furthermore, all the ASEAN forces, with the possible exception of Singapore's, have had some combat experience in the fields of counterinsurgencies against communist subversives, irredentist claims, territorial annexation, and battles against foreign invaders. The postwar Japanese forces, however, have had no combat experience. Disregarding all political constraints on the use of its military forces for aggression, Japan simply does not have adequate



Table 3. Defense Manpower, 1970 and 1986 (thousand)

Country	Year	Army	Navy	Air Force	Total
Indonesia	1970	250.0	34.0	35.0	319.0
	1986	216.0	38.0	27.0	281.0
Malaysia	1970	43.0	3.0	4.0	50.0
	1986	90.0	9.0	11.0	110.0
Philippines	1970	17.6	8.0	9.0	34.6
	1986	70.0	26.0	17.0	113.0
Singapore	1970	14.0	0.5	1.5	16.0
	1986	45.0	4.5	6.0	55.5
Thailand	1970	130.0	21.5	23.5	175.0
	1986	166.0	42.0	48.0	256.0
ASEAN total	1970	454.6	67.0	73.0	594.6
	1986	587.0	119.5	109.0	815.5
Japan	1970	179.0	38.3	41.7	259.0
	1986	155.0	44.0	44.0	243.0

SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance*, 1971-1972 and 1986-1987.

force levels or weapons for an assault on any foreign country.

The constitutional provisions are an important factor in considering Japan's external behavior. Article 9 of the Constitution renounces Japan's right to belligerency "as a means of settling international disputes." The government's interpretation is that Japan can exercise its inherent right of self-defense only if attacked. The prevailing pacifist sentiment among the Japanese populace demands this narrow definition of the concept of self-defense and opposes any efforts to broaden it. Thus, although some business leaders and strategists argue that the safety of the Strait of Malacca falls within the vital interests that Japan should defend, most Japanese strongly oppose stretching the concept of self-defense so far, believing there will be no limit once the stretching has started. If Japan can justify the defense of the Strait of Malacca, it can probably also justify protecting the Persian Gulf. So runs the theoretical argument. Today, Japan is debating when it can defend sea-lanes for 1,000 nautical miles, which are entirely north of the Philippines.

## MISPERCEPTION 2: JAPANESE MILITARISM IS RESURGING

Another familiar misperception in ASEAN concerns the alleged reemergence of Japanese militarism. In the past, Southeast Asians have referred, as have leftist and pacifist Japanese, to the slow erosion of pacifism, the increasing public acceptance of the SDF, and the steady growth of the SDF's defense capability.

This misperception seems largely to stem from confusion between Japan's stronger defense posture and a resurgence of militarism. The former may be a realistic adjustment forced on Japan by a more threatening external environment and part of the process of Japan resuming a role for its own defense more comparable to that of other nations. The latter is the tendency to glorify military success, to favor a special status for the military, and to emphasize the use of force as the primary tool to protect and promote national interests.

It follows that not all advocates in Japan of constitutional revision, nuclear armament, arms exports, and even the revision of history textbooks represent signs of resurgent militarism. Many of them are seeking what might be regarded as more usual or "normal" policies on such matters, although the political left—namely, the Japan Socialist and Communist parties, the Japan Teachers' Union, and pacifist intellectuals—paints them as militarists. If the elements supporting militarism are separated out, however, it will be clear that they are few and weak. In a domestic environment where discussion of defense is no longer taboo, those militaristic elements may be more vocal, but they are not necessarily growing in number or becoming more respectable.

Most of the arguments in favor of revising the current Constitution have been advanced by the conservatives, including the Liberal Democratic party, some big business leaders, and a few intellectuals. When they advocate the revision of the Constitution, particularly Article 9, most of them favor an explicit constitutional endorsement of the SDF beyond the current implicit one. They would also like to have a Constitution written by the Japanese themselves, as opposed to the present one drafted by General Douglas MacArthur's command during the Allied occupation. These arguments have little to do with militarism. There are small right-wing groups, however, who do advocate that the Emperor be given stronger political power,

as under the prewar Constitution which vested in him the rights of sovereignty and held him to be "sacred and inviolable." By contrast, the postwar Constitution makes him only "the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people." The Emperor under the current Constitution is not the supreme commander of the army and navy, eliminating the chance for military groups to ascend politically in the name of the Emperor. In contrast to the revision of Article 9, increased power for the Emperor is not a matter of any serious consideration in Japan and is not supported by any major political group.

Similarly, the "hawkish" argument supporting Japan's possession of nuclear arms is not synonymous with a militaristic trend. If it were, most Western European countries that have their own nuclear forces or that accept the U.S. deployment of nuclear arms must also be labeled as militaristic. They simply wish to avoid a nuclear war by achieving a nuclear balance in Europe. Most of the tiny majority that do support a nuclear Japan advance their view in terms of Japan's need to enhance its deterrent against the Soviet nuclear arsenal. However, influential Japanese strategists think a nuclear Japan would be no safer, and the government takes the same view, relying instead upon the U.S. nuclear deterrence. In the past, the government has stated that Japan's possession of tactical nuclear arms would not be unconstitutional but that this is only theoretical. Politically, it does not pay to be pro-nuclear, given the strong antinuclear sentiment deriving from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki holocausts.

A certain right-wing group of intellectuals, whom some observers label as "Gaullists," favors nuclear arms for Japan and has a tendency to use militaristic rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> For instance, defense analysts Ikutaro Shimizu and Tetsuya Kataoka maintain that it is only natural for a highly industrialized power like Japan to have nuclear weapons and that having them would enhance Japan's prestige as a big power. Shimizu even believes that partly because of Japan's failure to go nuclear, it is not really a sovereign state. However, he has been strongly criticized by moderate groups as being "a utopian militarist."<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, a few prominent business leaders have urged the government to relax its restrictions on arms exports. Japan holds three principles on arms export control, adopted by the Eisaku Sato



government in April 1967. They are no arms exports to Communist bloc countries, no arms exports to nations to which a UN resolution has opposed arms exports, and no arms exports to countries currently or likely to become involved in armed conflict. This tight control policy has weakened the international competitiveness of Japan's arms industry. The late Shigeo Nagano advanced this argument in 1980, when he was chairman of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, saying that consideration of revisions in the arms export policy should not remain forever a political taboo. Big business is seeking profit, not trying to advance militarism. Its call for arms exports might in the long run lead to the development of an industrial-military complex, which would in turn serve as a domestic advocate for strengthening Japan's defense programs and encouraging militaristic tendencies. But such a complex is not likely to emerge in the foreseeable future; in 1982, defense-related production was only 0.46 percent of the country's total industrial production.<sup>10</sup>

The Ministry of Education's attempts to revise school textbooks on Japanese history have been condemned by pacifist historians, the Japan Teachers' Union, and the opposition parties. The Beijing and Seoul governments also charged such attempts as efforts to justify Japan's past military behavior. It became a serious diplomatic issue in the summer of 1982, although just how valid their criticisms of the Japanese government were remain debatable. While some ministry officials and their political patron, the conservative wing of the ruling party, might have wanted to justify Japan's past militaristic conduct, most seemed genuinely eager to correct what they regarded as an unbalanced treatment of Japan's past in school textbooks rather than to reindoctrinate pupils in the glory of the militaristic past and for the necessities of a militaristic future.

Another alleged sign of growing militarism are calls to improve the status of the SDF. These calls reflect the very low social, political, and legal standing of the SDF, which is in sharp contrast to the status of the military in many Southeast Asian countries. Despite the fact that popular support of the SDF has increased from 73 percent in 1972 to 83 percent in 1984, the SDF continues to face recruiting difficulties. The SDF's authorized strength in fiscal 1984 was 272,162, but actual manpower stood at 243,527, or 89 percent. The average ratio for the GSDF units in 1982 was only 70 percent.<sup>11</sup> Families

of SDF members are occasionally treated badly. In a 1984 poll, 31.4 percent of the respondents said in varying degrees that they do not want their children or relatives to be related to the SDF.<sup>12</sup>

These problems are allegedly related to the ambiguous and politically controversial status of the SDF under the Constitution. There is no constitutional reference to the SDF. This reflects the strong antimilitary sentiment among the Japanese in the immediate postwar years.

Typically, in October 1977, when General Hiroomi Kurisu was chief of staff of the GSDF, he complained about the low status of SDF officers. He remarked that the chairman of the Joint Staff Council (JSC), the highest post in the SDF, should be attested by the Emperor, as all cabinet ministers are. After General Kurisu became JSC chairman, in a magazine interview in July 1978 he also complained of the inadequate legal support for SDF operations. Under the current legal arrangements, no SDF officers can use force to defend themselves against an armed attack unless they have obtained the prime minister's specific order. There is no "rule of engagement" for Japanese GSDF and MSDF officers. General Kurisu then maintained that "in emergencies, the SDF would have no choice but to take extralegal actions," thus implying that it might engage in fighting without waiting for the prime minister's order. This remark, which undermines the principle of civilian supremacy, angered the civilian director-general of the Defense Agency, who forced Kurisu to resign.

SDF frustrations are understandable. While not all of its demands may be warranted, SDF should be given normal and respectful treatment as a vital national service group. The current SDF call for such treatment should not be confused with a new militarism.

More relevant to the argument of growing militarism may have been the decision in 1985 for cabinet ministers, including the prime minister, to pay official visits to Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, the day of Japanese surrender in the Pacific War. This shrine, from 1869 to 1945 the symbol of state Shintoism, played a vital role before the war in promoting Emperor worship and the spirit of militarism. For a long time after the war, it was a political taboo for government leaders to visit the shrine.<sup>13</sup>

In August 1975, Prime Minister Takeo Miki became the first to break the political taboo and visit the shrine, though he said he did



so in a private capacity. His successor, Fukuda, did the same, whereas Masayoshi Ohira, a Christian, refrained. In August 1980, 18 ministers from Suzuki's 21-member cabinet visited Yasukuni Shrine. Then in July 1981 under intense pressure from conservative lobbying groups, the Liberal Democratic party requested Suzuki himself to pray at the Shrine in an official capacity. Suzuki chose a compromise position, praying there in August 1982 but refusing to specify whether he had done so in a private or an official capacity. This subtle change, however, was criticized by socialists, communists, and liberal social critics as another step toward the revival of militarism on the grounds that official visits to the shrine glorify those who fought for the war and the spirit of nationalism. In August 1983, Nakasone followed Suzuki's precedent, but with still another subtle modification. Without referring to whether his visit was private or official but referring to his official position, he remarked of himself: "I, the prime minister, went to pray."<sup>14</sup>

The following year, Nakasone repeated this formula. He also set up a private consultative group to look into the constitutionality of a prime minister's official visit to Yasukuni Shrine. In early August 1985, the group recommended that the prime minister could visit the shrine constitutionally. On the strength of this recommendation, Nakasone and all but two of his cabinet ministers (they were abroad) visited Yasukuni Shrine for the first time in their official capacity. In order to erase the religious color of the visit, the omitted the Shinto style of praying—bowing twice, clapping twice, and bowing once again—and instead simply bowed once. But in order to make their visit official, they used public funds to cover the cost of flowers rather than the traditional fee for a sprig branch of the Shintoist sacred tree to be offered to the spirits of the war dead.<sup>15</sup>

This visit caused an uproar not only among the opposition parties and liberal critics but also from China. Students in Beijing charged the act as insensitive to the feelings of those who had suffered from past Japanese militarism.

Should the prayers of political leaders at Yasukuni Shrine be a cause of alarm? It might be argued that these prayers have now become politically possible for Japanese cabinet members because the public is basically confident in the strength of Japan's many constitutional and legal devices, which ensure the principle of civilian supremacy and make it difficult for the military to play a strong



political role. Unlike the prewar constitution, the present Constitution stipulates that "the prime minister and other ministers of state must be civilians" (Article 66). Thus, unlike Southeast Asia, where military officers often assume the position of defense minister and other cabinet posts, an SDF officer cannot be appointed director-general of the Defense Agency (the equivalent to the minister of state). The Self-Defense Force Law also gives the prime minister supreme power over the SDF (Article 7). To give orders for the SDF to conduct military operations, the prime minister must obtain the consent of the National Diet (Article 76). In wartime, neither the chiefs of staff of the three services nor the chairman of the JSC can command SDF troops; it is the civilian director-general of the Defense Agency, with the prime minister's approval, that commands them. Thus, the Diet has the ultimate power over the use of the SDF. In contrast, under the prewar Meiji constitution, the Emperor exercised "supreme command of the army and navy" (Article 11). There was no constitutional clause preventing a service officer from taking a ministerial position. In fact, the Imperial Army and Navy were the Emperor's armed forces and in theory and practice independent from the civilian leadership. Acting on their own, they undermined civilian political leadership, eventually controlling the cabinet and even assuming the prime ministership. This cannot happen to today's Japan. Theoretically, it is possible to revise the Constitution and laws, but such a possibility is in reality highly remote.

### MISPERCEPTION 3: JAPAN WILL THREATEN SOUTHEAST ASIA

If Japan's military capabilities remain far from strong and if there are no significant symptoms of militarism in the country, Japan should pose no threat to the security of Southeast Asia. Yet some Southeast Asians believe that Japan is still potentially a dangerous power.

Actually, most Southeast Asians acknowledge that Japan's present military capability is not so formidable. However, they think that no major power would simply forego the use of military means to protect vital overseas economic interests and that, despite its pacifist Constitution, in the long run Japan would be no exception.

These Asians prophesize that to protect their economic interests abroad, the Japanese are bound to develop military power. Also, they claim that Japan, because it possesses advanced technology in many fields, can become a formidable military power rapidly, should it so choose, with many technological options ranging from computer-applied, precision-guided munitions to nuclear arms.

Japan can produce almost all of the GSDF's armaments, including tanks, armored cars, and command and communications cars, by itself. It also builds its own warships, destroyers, and submarines, as well as support fighters (F-1), transports (C-1), and antisubmarine aeroboats (PS-1). All attack fighters such as F-15 and antisubmarine warfare patrol planes like the P-2 and P-3C are produced in Japan under license from foreign manufacturers. Besides manufacturing its own rockets, Japan now has developed and deployed sophisticated air-to-surface missiles (ASM-1), which are supposed to be even more accurate and cheaper than the celebrated French *Exocet*.

A Japanese electronics firm recently developed an electronic countermeasure (ECM) device to be deployed in F-15J fighters after 1985.<sup>16</sup> This allows fighters to conceal their own location and flight course by sending out their own electric waves to jam an adversary's. This technology is said to rival the American ECM in quality. The ASDF is also developing an aircraft that can shift its nose direction without changing its flight path and move laterally without changing its flight direction. This technology, called control configured vehicle, will improve fighting ability and in-flight refueling techniques.<sup>17</sup>

In a few years, Japan will have fully computerized underwater sound detectors similar to the sophisticated American devices. The SDF is examining the feasibility of utilizing a communications satellite for communication among widely dispersed mobile units, such as ships and planes.

Having completed its first submarine capable of launching U.S.-made *Harpoon* missiles, Japan plans to construct eight more in the next five years.<sup>18</sup> By 1990 or so, the Japanese naval tonnage will have increased from the current 243,000 tons to 320,000 tons. When this is achieved, Japan's naval power is likely to approach that of England, the third largest in the world in terms of total tonnage.

These facts may sound formidable to those Southeast Asians who fear that Japan will some day protect by force its economic interests in their own region. It is important to remember, however, that Japan has chosen to be an ally of the United States. This has two important implications. First, under the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, Japanese military operations are to be conducted only in consultation with the United States. Consequently, the United States can discourage and even deter Japanese military moves. Second, because, as a practical matter, Japanese security depends upon U.S. power, Tokyo cannot act independently of the wishes of Washington. Since Japan considers its relations with its partner vital in almost every respect, Japan would not benefit from acting in Southeast Asia in direct opposition to U.S. interests, even if Japan should develop a stronger military capability than now. There is an entirely different situation from prewar days when Japan had autonomous military power.

There is little prospect that Japan will seek an autonomous defense policy, thus threatening ASEAN and other Asian nations. The success of Japan's basic strategy for survival has depended and will depend upon how well it and its ally, the United States, can maintain the balance of power, conventional and nuclear, with a primary adversary, the Soviet Union. Japan's defense policy is to build a credible conventional deterrent while relying on the United States to maintain nuclear and conventional capabilities on a global scale. This strategy suggests that Japan benefits more from the current option of an alliance with the United States than from any alternative, such as unarmed neutrality, armed neutrality, or becoming a satellite state in the Soviet empire.<sup>19</sup>

Japan also depends on its present good relations with the ASEAN countries to continue mutually beneficial trade and to ensure a secure route for Japan's oil supplies from the Middle East. The safe supply of Middle East oil requires not only a stable Strait of Hormuz but a stable and friendly ASEAN region. The ASEAN countries in turn benefit a great deal from close political and economic association with Japan. The polemics of the economic "overpresence," which triggered student riots in Bangkok and Jakarta in 1973 and 1974, have disappeared. This does not mean so much that the overpresence itself has disappeared as that it has lost its salience because of overriding issues, such as Cambodia. The growing rivalry among



Moscow, Beijing, and Hanoi has required a stronger political and economic presence of Japan. Neither Japan nor ASEAN gain from a weakened or tense relationship.

#### CLOSING THE PERCEPTION GAP

The misperceptions described above stem from the unhappy wartime experiences of the Southeast Asian countries. It may be difficult for Southeast Asians to believe that Japan would not seek to renew its past military ambitions. Since Japan's situation is quite different now from in prewar days, new pragmatic efforts are thus needed by both sides to close the perception gap. At least four such areas may be suggested.

First, Japan should state its defense policy and strategic concerns clearly. It should clarify that its sea-lane defense will be strictly for self-defense and that its 1,000-nautical-mile sea-lanes are measured from Osaka or Tokyo and not from Okinawa, as Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja once suspected. These clarifications may already have been quite effectively made at the leadership level, but more needs to be done to bring them to the attention of the ASEAN public.

Second, Japan should define unequivocally how it wants to pursue its security interests. The Tokyo government has adopted the term "comprehensive national security" to emphasize that Japan will pursue national security by both military and nonmilitary means. But this vague concept fails to reassure Southeast Asians about potential Japanese actions in the event of a serious security threat. For example, if the supply of Middle East oil or Indonesian oil to Japan should be halted, how would Japan behave? Would it avoid military responses? If so, how else would Japan act to protect its vital interests? The concept fails to answer such crucial questions.

Third, Japan should make clear the legal and political limits to the use of its military power. Southeast Asians are not convinced that Japan would keep its Constitution or the current pacifist interpretation of it unchanged under all circumstances. It would therefore be useful to analyze under what circumstances Japan might change its Constitution or its interpretation of the Constitution and still maintain mutually beneficial relations with the ASEAN countries.

Finally, Japan and the ASEAN countries should better appreciate

the complementary nature of their security interests. Japan needs a stable and friendly ASEAN, and a secure and friendly Japan is essential to the economic and military security of ASEAN. For ASEAN, Japan is "a forward base" against the Soviet military influence in East and Southeast Asia, as Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia once remarked.<sup>20</sup> Japan is not riding free on ASEAN's strength. If Southeast Asian fears of a resurgence of militarism in Japan can be alleviated, the ASEAN countries will better appreciate that a secure and stronger Japan, supported by the United States, acts as a buffer for themselves and plays a positive role in promoting a stable regional order.

## NOTES

1. Responding to the Southeast Asian media coverage of the issue, Tatsumi Okabe, professor of international relations of Tokyo Metropolitan University, denied in 1974 that militarism was reviving in Japan. See his *Revival of Japanese Militarism?* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Occasional Paper No. 22, 1974). For critical analyses of Japanese "militarism," see, for instance, John Halliday and Gavan McCormack, *Japanese Imperialism Today* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973); Rajaram Panda, "Security Concerns and Militarism in Japan," *Asia Pacific Community* (Tokyo), No. 20, Spring 1983, 20-34; and William T. Tow, "Japan's Rearmament: The ASEAN Factor," *Asia Pacific Community*, No. 23, Winter 1984, 11-28.
2. *Asahi Shimbun*, 4 November 1983, morning edition.
3. M. S. Kapista visited Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, and Bangkok 1-9 February 1983 and then went to Hanoi 9-12 February. From 4-7 April, he visited Singapore.
4. *The Military Balance, 1985-1987*, 124 and 125, respectively.
5. *Ibid.*, 126 and 136. Although the Royal Thai Air Force is planning to purchase F-15s in a few years, Japan is scheduled to procure some 155 F-15s within a reasonable period. The speeds (mach) and cruising radii (kilometers) of various fighters are F-5E, 1.6 and 220-1,056 kilometers; F-4EJ, 2.2 and 1,500 kilometers; F-15, 2.5 and 2,500 kilometers; and F-16, 2.0 and 925 kilometers. *Boei Handobukku 1984*, 316-317, and *passim*.
6. The Japanese defense white paper, *Defense of Japan 1980*, gives a frank picture of what has to be done to modernize the Self-Defense Force. See also Masashi Nishihara, "Expanding Japan's Credible Defense Role," *International Security*, Winter 1983-84, 180-205.
7. See, for instance, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Richard Armitage's testimony in the Congress, reported in *Asahi Shimbun*, and *Sankei Shimbun*, 13 June 1984, evening edition.
8. Mike Mochizuki, "Japan's Search for Strategy," *International Security*, Winter 1983-84, 152-179.
9. Ikutaro Shimizu, "Nihon yo, kokka tare!" (Japan, Be a State!), *Shokun*, July

1980, 22–68. He was condemned, for instance, by Masamichi Inoki, “Kusoteki Heiwashugi kara kusoteki gunkokushugi e” (From Utopian Pacifism to Utopian Militarism), *Chuo Koron*, September 1980, 62–75. See also Tetsuya Katakura, *Waiting for “Pearl Harbor,”* (Palo Alto, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1980).

10. *Boei Handobukku 1985* (Asagumo Shimbun Sha, 1985), 218.
11. Kiyoshi Hirose, *Tobaku gicho no chii to kengen* (The Position and Power of the Chairman of the Joint Staff Council), (Kyoiku Sha, 1979), 7–16.
12. *Gekkan Yoron Chosa*, August 1985, 87.
13. Yasukuni Shrine, established in Tokyo in 1869 to mourn those who sacrificed their lives for national causes, became a symbol of theocratic state Shintoism. During the Pacific War, it was dedicated to the war dead and was managed by the Army and Navy Departments. It was considered a great honor to be enshrined there because the Emperor regularly prayed at the shrine. After World War II, the American occupation authorities disbanded state Shintoism. The shrine was deprived of state protection and became simply a religious organization accredited by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Concurrently, the concept of the separation of religion and state, stipulated in the 1946 Constitution, has prohibited government officials from going there to pray in an official capacity. But in the 1960s, Shintoist and political groups, such as the Japan Association of War Bereaved, began to advocate state protection of Yasukuni Shrine. Since 1969, there have been about 10 unsuccessful attempts to pass national legislation placing the shrine under the government’s control and protection. A total of over 2.4 million people are enshrined there. See *Nihon kingendaishi jiten* (Dictionary of Japan’s Modern and Contemporary History) (Toyo Keizai Shimpō Sha, 1978), 661.
14. *Asahi Shimbun*, 16 August 1983, morning edition.
15. *Asahi Shimbun*, 16 August 1985, morning edition.
16. *Sankei Shimbun*, 7 April 1984, morning edition.
17. *Defense of Japan 1980*, 190–198.
18. “Shiren boei” (Sea-lane Defense), *Asahi Shimbun*, 18 May, 1984, morning edition.
19. Hisahiko Okazaki, *Senryakuteki shiko to wa nani ka* (What is Strategic Thinking?) (Chuo Koron Sha, 1983), 235–275.
20. *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 January 1983, morning edition.



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JCIE receives no government subsidies; it is funded through private foundation grants, corporate contributions, and contracts.



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