Japan and the Asia-Pacific in the 1970s: From an economic to a ‘heart-to-heart’ relationship

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Abstract

This article deals with the relationships Japan has built in the Asia-Pacific region in the aftermath of decolonization. In post-war historic studies, the emphasis has been on issues such as paying reparations and providing economic assistance as Japan’s means of rising to become a world power, at least from an economic point of view. The article explores, from a historical perspective, Japan’s efforts with regard to development aid, but focuses on its transition to taking a more active role in Asia. This became more evident from the mid-1970s, when some crucial events related to the Cold War altered the balance of power in the world. Hence, it investigates how Japan faced and took advantage of the situation in this area, and how it modified its approach to providing foreign assistance to Southeast Asia. Finally, it meditates upon the meaning of the Fukuda Doctrine as an enhancement of Tokyo’s regional policy.

Introduction

After the Western system of sovereign nation-states, grounded on the relationships between Western and non-Western nations, ceased to exist with the end of the Second World War, the major goal of Asian nations which had been European or Japanese colonies was to regain their independence, at least in a political sense. Once political independence was achieved, those countries shared a desire for economic autonomy and thereby the creation of an international system of cooperation among the newly independent nations. Within this framework, and aware that Asia was the only place where it could assert its power, Japan tried to maintain its position as a member of Asia using war reparations to develop its economy through
the improvement of regional prosperity. In the 1950s and 1960s it strengthened its ties with Southeast Asia to an unprecedented degree, but for many reasons it chose to act only via, mostly bilateral, economic cooperation, even when the birth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) launched an international forum aimed at implementing regional foreign policies.

From the early 1990s, many in-depth studies have been done on Japan-Southeast Asia relations, but it is only in recent years that a literature has flourished which focuses on the changing nature of that relationship. A particular focus has been on the Fukuda Doctrine in terms of epistemological perspective, as a policy enunciation that offers clues to the present and future development of Japan-Southeast Asia interactions. Within that revival of interest, however, there has not been sufficient emphasis on Japanese strategies towards the so-called ‘post-Vietnam period’ or Japan’s foreign policy adjustment to the changes in the international system in the 1970s. Indeed, as Japanese and overseas declassified documents and other primary sources demonstrate, the possibility of Japan playing an active role in Asia became more evident by the mid-1970s, when some world events ushered in a new and more autonomous political strategy, for example, the rapprochement between the United States and China, the oil crisis which made Japan’s foreign policy more aggressive and created, in the final analysis, friction with Southeast Asian countries, and particularly the collapse of Saigon. In this article these three events will be examined, especially in terms of the way in which they created a vacuum in the Asia-Pacific area, pushed Japan to take into consideration the emergent regional framework, and shaped its own identity as a unique power able to bring about world peace not only through economic prosperity but also cultural and social harmony. This article sets the events as the framework for the erosion of the post-war nanshin (southern expansion) and the building of a new approach, aimed at mending relations with Southeast Asia and forging a new regionalism.

1 Nanshin means ‘southern expansion’ and has been traditionally defined as the expression of Japan’s aggressive interest in Southeast Asian countries, mainly from an economic point of view, starting in the Meiji period. This interpretation can be found in Yano, T. (1993). Nanshin no keifu. Tokyo: Chûkô Shinsho, pp. 186–187. Recently nanshin has been used in a more specific way to indicate Japan’s energy investment in Southeast Asia after the Bandung Conference, when Tokyo explicitly expressed its willingness to ‘come back to Asia’. See Miyagi, T. (2008). ‘Kaiyô kokka’ Nihon no sengoshi. Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho, pp. 58–61.
The 1970s was dominated by the general feeling that Japan should change its attitude towards the region, and aim at strengthening regional solidarity rather than pursuing its own economic self-interest. However, within the Japanese government, there was no agreement on what that change should be. Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo (1976–1978) finally made it clear and worked on a foreign policy based on three principles: Japan’s exceptional experiment to be a great power without great military power; Japan’s commitment to respond to the sensibilities of the Asian people through ‘heart-to-heart’ relations; and Japan’s responsibility as a great power in the new multipolar world. The enunciation of the Fukuda Doctrine will be studied here within the context of great international change. It highlights how Japan took advantage of the political situation in Asia, and how it modified its approach in undertaking foreign assistance to Southeast Asia. For Tokyo, the most urgent task was to keep supporting South Vietnam economically in order to strengthen it against collapse, but also to play a major role in the whole of Indochina and create links with ASEAN countries in order to promote regional dialogue. Japan’s ambition was to inspire trust within those countries by stressing the importance of the group, and thereby act as a superpower in a regional system within a multipolar world.

By analysing the Fukuda Doctrine—the very first enunciation of Japan’s foreign policy—in relation to its contents and the rhetoric, we can understand how important it was for Japan to change its attitude towards the region to which it belonged in order to shape a constructive role in its own geopolitical area. Fukuda himself conceived of it as one aspect of his ‘omnidirectional peaceful diplomacy’, set within a framework of development aid in the aftermath of decolonization and geared towards the search for autonomy, a leitmotif in Japan’s post-war policy.

**Post-war Japan and Southeast Asia**

Approaching the last phases and legacies of decolonization in Asia means making clear, first of all, what kind of ties exists between the former colonies, and between them and the former colonial powers. Hence there are two viewpoints from which to pursue this study. The first is to investigate the concept of integration which, in Asia, as pointed out by Pekka Korhonen, is ‘mainly functional, characterized by slowly deepening co-operation between
economies—rather than states—in various fields, accompanied by a continuous process of discussion among various professionals, which has only occasionally come into the spotlight at the same level.\(^2\) The second viewpoint involves assessing how Japan, a country which, because of its past imperialism, had been perceived as an external power in Asia, has been involved in the Asian integration process. On an ideological level, it is imperative to examine pan-Asianism, a concept that appeared before and during the war, then disappeared from Japanese political statements and was transformed by the intellectual climate of the time.\(^3\) However, since attention here will be focused on the second viewpoint, the analysis will follow the evolution of relationships within Southeast Asia in the post-war era, which is usually divided into three phases. The first phase follows the process of independence for Southeast Asian nations immediately after the San Francisco Peace Treaty (1951), which allowed Japan to pursue a more autonomous foreign policy. The second involves the reaction of Japan’s foreign policy to changing regional politics during the governments of Satō Eisaku (1964–1972) and Tanaka Kakuei (1972–1974), largely influenced by the intensifying Vietnam War. The last phase sees the concrete attempt by Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo to build a solid intra-regional relationship among Southeast Asian countries made at a time when Japan’s foreign policy became increasingly synchronised with Southeast Asia’s quest for regional stability and peace.

The first two phases were dominated by Japan’s economic presence—sometimes with political ramifications—with the purpose of deleting the legacies of war and traces of imperialism, exploitation, and mistreatment. This problem was resolved along with, or through, war reparations, negotiations over which were concluded relatively quickly.\(^4\) Japan’s return to Asia, which overlapped with decolonization and the Cold War, was characterized by a search for a close relationship through economic means and acting as a member of the


free world, on the one hand, and attempting to meet the growth of nationalism and support the struggle for independence by relying on an ‘Asian identity’ (in contrast to Western colonial countries), on the other hand. However, most Japanese leaders, who had been trained in policy making before and during the war, persisted in thinking of their relationship with Asian countries in terms of ‘guidance’, which was completely at odds with the slogans of the time (decolonization, anti-imperialism, and so on), even as they tried to build a positive national image. At the same time, Japan was compelled to follow the United States as a member of the free world. It was not allowed to pursue a completely autonomous policy, but was encouraged to play an economic role in Asia and create the so-called ‘soft wall’ against the spread of communism.

Therefore, from the 1960s, Japan adopted a strategy that was focused on giving up major political initiatives that could revitalize its political power, while trying to avoid any involvement in the storm of Asian revolution, which could have exacerbated political contrasts domestically. Its semi-autonomous foreign policy was based on financial instruments, for example, the Official Development Assistance policy. The first phase of this policy was grounded substantially on the settlement and payment of war reparations. Later, reparations became a form of aid that could also secure raw materials. However, starting from the mid-1960s, with the first surplus in the balance of payments, foreign aid became a means of supporting economic development in Asia as well as for promoting Japanese exports.

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5 Japanese leaders often used the word ‘shido’ meaning ‘guidance’ or ‘instructions’ in their speeches when referring to those countries they considered to be in need of trustworthy advice in many fields (agriculture, industrial, etc.). ‘Shido’ perfectly translates the vertical relationship traditionally respected and cultivated in Japan, but was not accepted by its neighbours, who were frightened at the prospect of the rebirth of Japanese imperialism.

The peculiarity of Japanese assistance to less-developed countries is reflected in the annual reports of the Development Assistance Committee, formed in 1960 within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, as a forum for consultation among aid donors. The report made in November 1966, one of the most articulate, focused on the lack of an appropriate economic analysis of Japan’s aid recipients and blamed Tokyo for its superficiality and for refusing to be embroiled in aid recipients’ internal affairs, leaving too much space to private export credits. Another vexed question was that of geographical distribution. As a note from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Secretariat argued, the concentration of aid to Southeast Asian countries was unbalanced (totalling 95 per cent in 1972), and a larger number of developing countries outside this area should have benefited from Japanese assistance. The general impression was that there was no high-level political support for an increase in Official Development Assistance within the government, and also that there was a wide dispersion of responsibilities due to the high number of institutions involved in the administration of Official Development Assistance.

Some comments need to be made here regarding a significant aspect of Japanese diplomacy: the clash of interests among different groups like the bureaucracy, the business community, and politics elites. Sudō, in his analysis of the role of Japan in Southeast Asia, underlines the importance of internal divisions in domestic policy. He states that diplomacy was also influenced by mainstream political leaders’ personal vision, the bureaucracy (that is, the various ministers), and business community leaders who, in exchange for financial aid to politicians, expected the concession of having a decision-making role. Such a contrast was particularly evident in aid policy, where the starkest clash was between Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry, one of the most powerful agencies of the government, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The former, for whom the word ‘reparation’ meant ‘sale of Japan’s goods’, emphasized economically

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oriented aid based on short-term Japanese economic interests in order to shore up, first of all, natural resources and to develop a stable world economy. The latter emphasized politically oriented aid in order to promote political stability and to enable Japan to achieve the status equivalent to that of a Western power. In other words, economic aid became a strategic instrument that some within the Japanese government tried to politicize, at a time when a group of nations—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand—joined together to form ASEAN with the aim of accelerating the process of Asian integration. However, Japan was not ready to grant foreign aid as a way to fulfil its international responsibility through a supranational structure. The prevailing opinion was that Japan should keep providing aid on a bilateral basis (rather than developing an internal market) and work on developing common economic interests. In fact, in the 1960s, less than 15 per cent of the total of development aid was given via multilateral agencies, while more than 60 per cent was given on a bilateral basis, especially to Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, India, Vietnam, Burma, and the Philippines, so much so that at the beginning of the following decade the Development Assistance Committee complained about the significant difference between the low multilateral donations (US$ 135.5 million in 1973) and the high bilateral donations (US$ 575.9 million). The birth of ASEAN as a regional forum, which is discussed in the next section, in some ways issued a challenge to Japan to modify its attitude.

Japan and the birth of ASEAN

ASEAN was created in 1967 with the following ambitions: to support the integration of a regional economy, to promote political solidarity and collective security, and to foster Asia-Pacific regionalism. At the same time it has tried to stay clear of the quarrels between

12 Some scholars analyse the birth of ASEAN from a different point of view: the evolution of pan-Asianism. Hatsuse Ryūhei argues that in Asia from the mid-1970s important internal dynamics of development were crystallized around ASEAN, bringing about the stabilisation of inter-state relationships. Thus, pan-Asianism was transformed from an impulse of opposition between the old centre represented by
the big powers while keeping Western powers and Japan engaged in Southeast Asia, for both political and economic considerations. Rodolfo Severino, former secretary-general of ASEAN (1998–2002) points out that although ASEAN has improved in consolidating the organization itself and worked to achieve its goals from its foundation to its first Summit meeting in Bali nine years later, it has fallen short of its initial ambitions because of its ‘tendency to pursue economic integration and political cohesion discretely and independently of each other, whereas the two endeavours are intimately related’. For this and other reasons, including the perpetuation of internal disputes (for example, the difference of opinion between Malaysia and the Philippines on the status of Sabah), initially the organization was seen merely as a group of countries needing capital goods, investments, and technology that only Western countries and Japan could provide.

ASEAN was not able to represent Southeast Asia as a solid geographical region, and Japan kept considering it an abstract entity. Korhonen, who makes an interesting analysis of the ideological relationship between Japan and Southeast Asia in the twentieth century, points out that, from the first, the latter ‘meant the non-Middle East, non-socialist and non-Japanese part of Asia’. The organization was mainly connected to the ideas of poverty and need for economic aid, and was not appreciated as the expression of a new regionalism. However, within Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs some officials decided to devote more political attention to this promising area, seeing it as a ground for extending Tokyo’s influence.

In the late 1960s Prime Minister Satō worked on Japan’s commitments to the economic sector as a way to influence regional politics, particularly as a policy that would avoid the expansion of the military sector in the fight against the spread of communism. In 1970 he promised to make his country three times more economically powerful within ten years, and stated that Japan, facing its ‘new responsibility as a superpower’ intended to foster peace, democracy, and stability in Asia. Furthermore, he made strong assurances that

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14 Korhonen, Japan and the Pacific Free Trade Area, p. 44.

his government would not seek to fulfil its future great international role by military means. It is important to stress the relevance and the implications of his statement because we will find, at the end of the decade, the same dismissal of military means, but in a different context. At that time the Japanese government persevered in keeping its distance from military engagement, in spite of American demands to take a more active role in Vietnam. The United States, whose involvement in Indochina peaked in 1968 when the communists launched the Têt Offensive, needed its most loyal ally in Asia to provide active support in the area. Satō, who aimed at concluding the negotiations over the reversion of Okinawa, could not ignore American expectations vis-à-vis Japan’s cooperation, but he succeeded in limiting Japan’s support to economic assistance. Therefore, by avoiding military intervention in the largest phase of Vietnam War and focusing on economic aid, the prime minister respected Asian nationalism and attempted to rise above ideological conflicts. In this sense Japan was playing a leading role in Asia.

In 1970 Ōkita Saburō, at that time a well-known scholar and economist deeply involved in economic planning, epitomized the standing of Satō’s administration:

Japan would not seek to solve international disputes by use of force (…) Japan’s contribution toward international peace, therefore, should be made not through playing a policeman’s role, but rather through efforts to constantly mitigate international tension in order to prevent conflicts from erupting. From this viewpoint, more positive economic and technical aid to assist the development of other Asian countries will be the basic posture of Japan’s policy toward Asia.¹⁶

The major aim was thus to support the development of Southeast Asian countries with expanded Japanese aid and to encourage Japanese private investments in order to spread ‘peace’, ‘prosperity’, and ‘solidarity’, three ideas that were included in several speeches made by Foreign Minister Aichi Kiichi and Finance Minister Fukuda Takeo, who also made promises about doubling Japan’s aid to Southeast Asia in the following five years. For example, during the Asian and Pacific Meeting on Cambodia in Jakarta, held in May 1970, Aichi stated:

It is the first time that the countries of Asia have gathered together in this way in the face of danger to peace in Asia. The common aspiration of the Asian peoples, namely ‘Asian problems to be solved by Asians’, has come to fruition in this meeting.\textsuperscript{17}

He also mentioned the aid provided to Laos by Japan at the request of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, stressing its fraternal rather than filial overtones. As argued in the previous section, Japan preferred to give economic aid on bilateral basis, according to Ministry of International Trade and Industry recommendations. It acted through official channels like the Colombo Plan system, war reparations, and Official Development Assistance, as well as through informal contact when it was not permitted to act officially. Only in the late 1960s did Japan start relying on multilateral channels. However, the Asia-Pacific Council, the United Nations, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, and the Asian Development Bank lived up to expectations, although they glossed over Japan’s past aggression in order to demonstrate Japan’s commitment to international peaceful dialogue. During the last years of Sato’s premiership, ASEAN began to show itself as an increasingly capable organization, receptive to foreign investments that established trade with Japan. Sato made an attempt to promote a good relationship in terms of cooperation, which was partly influenced by American policy in Vietnam. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the beginning very sceptical with regard to ASEAN’s efforts but at the same time interested in its evolution, began to take ASEAN into consideration when the situation in Vietnam worsened and the post-Vietnam issue became one of the most debated worldwide. The document ‘The Basic Policy of Japan toward North Vietnam’, issued in August 1970 by the First Asia Division, a section of the Asian Bureau, is a good example of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ strategy and shows its awareness of Japan’s own role vis-à-vis the situation in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{18} It stated that Japan needed to pay attention to American manoeuvres and increase economic and humanitarian aid to South Vietnam—and not only a bilateral aid, but also via international institutions. The document went further, arguing that once economic stability had been established in North

\textsuperscript{17} Ajiajokyoku (17 May 1970). \textit{Asian and Pacific Meeting on Cambodia}. Gaimushō gaikō shiryōkan. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (hereafter MOFA), CD-ROM 16, File No. 04-461.

\textsuperscript{18} Ajiajokyoku daiikka (14 August 1970). \textit{Kita Etsu ni taisuru wagakuni no kihonteki shisaku (shiron)}. MOFA, CD-ROM 1, File No. 01.
Vietnam, the next step should be to improve dialogue between North Vietnam and the other Asian nations in order to achieve stability in Asia. Hence in an attempt to play a more active role in the region, Japanese diplomats who were focused on the post-Vietnam issue began to think about the possibility of filling a vacuum in Asia, a vacuum that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (especially the Asia Bureau and the ambassador in Vietnam, Kitahara Hideo) had predicted when directly monitoring Indochina’s conditions. However, their efforts for a reactive policy were not put into effect until some events, examined in the next section, concretely modified the Cold War framework.

**New challenges in Asia**

By the mid-1970s, Japanese foreign policy faced crucial challenges that, in some way, triggered its move toward multipolarity and cleared the way for a new political strategy in Southeast Asia. This was later epitomized by the so-called Fukuda Doctrine, the rapprochement between the United States and China, the oil crisis (and the anti-Japanese movements), and especially the collapse of Saigon (which is examined in a separate section).

On 15 July 1971 President Richard Nixon announced the decision to visit Beijing and thus to inaugurate dialogue with the Asian communist giant. This sudden change in American strategy was received in Tokyo as a real ‘shock’ (so much so that in Japan it is called the ‘Nixon shock’). The rapprochement between United States and China represented a crucial change in the Asian international political scene, which had been, until then, dedicated to containing communism. The Nixon shock had immediate consequences for the relationship between Tokyo and Beijing. It also pushed Hanoi to accept Japanese initiatives for normalization, in order to mitigate the isolation induced by the Sino-American rapprochement. Normalization between Japan and North Vietnam started in September 1973 and involved the other Southeast Asian countries in so far as it enabled Japan to play the role of ‘mediator’ in the region once the strategic framework sustained by the United States ceased to exist.19 Asian countries themselves had shown an interest in this kind of role since the early 1970s:

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when Britain joined the European Community, Commonwealth countries started paying more attention to the geopolitical region to which they belonged and in Asia tried to strengthen ties with Japan as a regional partner. Later, in December 1972, Foreign Minister Ōhira Masayoshi, during the seventh Ministers Conference on Southeast Asian Development, stated: ‘We must focus on an international cooperation going beyond the disagreement among political systems.’ The aim was to meet the needs of and expectations for prosperity in Southeast Asian countries and, at a later stage, link this issue to the reconstruction of Indochina, the symbol of ideological and political opposition.

After the ‘Nixon shock’ another event played a part in the change in Japan’s foreign policy towards Southeast Asia. The 1973 oil crisis compelled Japan to pursue a more aggressive resource policy, which had a negative impact on the resource-rich Asian countries, who felt threatened by Japanese aggression. For the first time since re-entering the region’s economic scene, Tokyo had to temper its pursuit of economic growth with political considerations. However, the prime minister at the time, Tanaka Kakuei (1974–1976), was focusing on three major issues: namely, the conclusion of the Peace and Friendship Treaty with China, Japan’s relationship with the Soviet Union, and the economic decline, and did not show much interest in a cooperative political approach. The business community, threatened by the instability of energy supplies, pushed the government to act in the country’s interests. Tanaka’s declaration: ‘Every drop of oil is like a drop of blood: we must somehow get it’, satisfied the business community but did not take into account any other political considerations, in particular the need for cooperation in Southeast Asia. Hence, the opinion of those diplomats who thought of Japan as a ‘member of Asia’ and were aware that the changing Cold War structure was involving Japan in a reassessment of its place in Asia, was not taken into consideration. For example, in December 1973 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Research and Planning Department stated:

Since the move forward ‘détente’ is mainly made by the Big Powers. Asian countries for their part have found these moves extremely unpredictable and

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therefore taxing psychologically; they are under very heavy pressure to adapt themselves to the structural changes in the international environment in Asia.\footnote{Ajiakyoku keikakuka (December 1973). Ajia chiiki anzen. MOFA, File 2012-1483.}

Another document, ‘Asia and Japan’, issued by the Regional Policy Division of the Asian Bureau, stated that after the recent important international changes, Asian countries showed the need for cooperation, but there was still some instability and Japan was expected to be a stabilizing force in the so-called post-Vietnam problem:

Relations between the major powers whose interests intersect in Asia, also involve fluid elements. In Asia, there are no such conditions as those existing in Europe, which favour détente on the basis of a balance between the alliances of East and West. The situation here is characterized by ‘stability within instability’ [...] We have full understanding of and respect for the criticism, that is, the earnest wish of the developing countries to be economically self-reliant. The worst misunderstanding would be that Japan wants to become a military power. Japan, instead, should be promoting contacts not only among Government and business circles but also at every level and in every field of human activity.\footnote{Ajiakyoku chiikiseisakuka (1974). Ajia to Nihon. MOFA, File 2012-1483.}

Thus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials had already expressed the need for a comprehensive approach in the face of internal threats during the Tanaka administration. As stated earlier, Tanaka was not deeply affected by accusations of Japanese ‘neo-mercantilism’ and in some ways he overlooked the implications of pursuing an economically aggressive path. However, tensions finally rose, and the premier’s official visit to various Asian countries in January 1974 turned out to be a devastating failure.\footnote{See Wakatsuki, H. (2006). ‘Zenpōi gaikō no jidai—Reisen henyōki no Nihon to Ajia 1971–1980 nen. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Hyōronsha, p. 72.} The trip started smoothly in Manila on 7 January, but he was greeted by student demonstrations in Bangkok two days later. After Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, Tanaka visited Jakarta on 14 January where he was overwhelmed by violent anti-Japanese riots. The Japanese were shocked by his reception in some Southeast Asian countries, especially Thailand and Indonesia, who accused them of ‘economic neo-colonialism’.\footnote{Miyagi Taizō examines in depth the relationship between Japan and Southeast Asian countries, especially Indonesia, forsaking the traditional framework of the Cold War in favour of seeking a post-war place for Japan in international society, starting from the South Sea. See Miyagi, ‘Kaiyō kokka’ Nihon no sengoshi, passim.} Some scholars, such
as Nakanishi, highlight the link between Japan’s economic presence and its financial support for undemocratic regimes which caused political frustration and therefore an anti-Japanese backlash in the region.\textsuperscript{26} In other words, Japan was seen as responsible for the internal political situation in some countries and became a scapegoat. Indeed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had already predicted, months before, a wave of student protests against Japan, especially in Indonesia where ‘the political, social and economic situation [was] worsening’.\textsuperscript{27} However, the demonstrations organized in Jakarta and Bangkok ‘surpassed almost every expectation in dimension and content’.\textsuperscript{28} The prime minister’s speeches not only failed to reassure Asian neighbours about Japan’s willingness to pursue the ideals of solidarity and prosperity, but also intensified anti-Japanese feelings. His speeches were ambiguous and betrayed Japan’s desperate need for raw materials, especially Indonesian oil, the most important source of energy for Tokyo.

Therefore, while Satō, Aichi, and Fukuda had spoken about cooperation, equality, and a peaceful region in which Japan would play the role of a ‘bridge’, Tanaka became victim of a kind of psychological effect caused by the rapprochement between two military and nuclear powers, the United States and China, and the fear of a shortage of raw materials, which led him to fall back on imperialistic rhetoric. He tried to assert Japan’s supremacy, and addressed the heads of these countries with a patronising attitude, like many little brothers—but the backlash from Southeast Asia put an end to Japan’s \textit{nanshin} and all that this ‘expansion’ had meant.\textsuperscript{29}

In conclusion, the anti-Japanese movements were crucial insofar they showed Japan the need to replace the aggressive private business approach of government aid programmes with an emphasis on technical assistance and cultural cooperation, and to act with ‘mutual understanding’ instead of taking a ‘unilateralist approach’.\textsuperscript{30} In other words, after the oil crisis, the failure of the 1974 trip finally killed off

\textsuperscript{28} MOFA (18 November 1973). \textit{Indoneshia no gakusei demo} (From Jakarta to Tokyo). MOFA, File No. 2012-0433.
the national programme to remodel Japan, and dealt a strong blow to Tanaka’s international ambitions. It was thus the point of no-return for Japanese foreign policy in Southeast Asia. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asia Bureau officials and Japanese ambassadors to Southeast Asian countries were aware that the economic role played by Japan in the 1960s could not be maintained for much longer, and they drew attention to Asian discontent. Thus, in a memo about Tanaka’s visit to Washington, scheduled for September 1974, they introduced what they considered to be the two most important goals of American strategy in Asia: the development and maintenance of a balance between Japan, the United States, China, and the Soviet Union; and ensuring economic development and political stability in every small Asian country. They also suggested that Japan would continue to expect the United States to be a source of stability, especially in military matters, but at the same time it should be aware that, unlike Europe, stability in Asia was more linked to non-military factors (for example, political stability). Thus, Japan began to prepare for its new role in Asia, starting by setting up a dialogue, the end goal of which was American disengagement in the region.

Facing a turning point: the collapse of Saigon

As discussed above, by the mid-1970s, Japanese foreign policy came up against a series of events that altered the Cold War structure. But even more than the Nixon shock or the anti-Japanese protests, the collapse of Saigon on 30 April 1975 made it clear that Japan should drastically change from an American policy framework to ‘autonomous policies in a new, independent Asia’. One month later, Foreign Minister Miyazawa Kiichi publicly showed Japan’s will and sense of urgency to move beyond all ideological conflicts and establish a new relationship with Indochina: ‘The world is no longer divided ideologically and countries dominated in the past by super-powers and the relations among them are becoming very important.’ However, when he

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31 In 1972 Tanaka wrote the bestseller Nihon rettō kaizōron, soon after translated into English as ‘Building a New Japan: Plan for Remodelling the Japanese Archipelago’, in which he discussed his strategy to strengthen the country.


33 Asahi Shinbun, 1 May 1975, p. 2.

travelled to Washington to ask for support, he encountered American opposition to sending economic aid and diplomatic delegations to North Vietnam. Japan’s frustration pushed them to look for a new area where it would be able to play a more autonomous role.

In July 1975 the Conference of Japanese Ambassadors to the Asia-Pacific region was convened in order to study the situation in Indochina and Japan’s policy in Asia. The conference predicted that, despite their differences, North and South Vietnam would unify into one country within one to seven years. Laos and Cambodia appeared to be under China’s influence, while relations between the latter and South Vietnam were worsening. From Japan’s point of view, the most urgent task was to keep supporting South Vietnam economically in order to strengthen it against collapse, but it was likewise essential to ensure economic cooperation between North Vietnam and ASEAN. Moreover, the ambassadors agreed upon the importance of ‘cultural diplomacy’ as well as the need to rethink Japan’s close relationship with the United States ‘in order to build ties with other countries’. The general feeling was that since the United States was finding it increasingly difficult to provide leadership in Asia, Japan should undertake political responsibility ‘as a superpower’ and focus on Vietnamese and ASEAN’s nationalisms rather than the spread of communism.

Therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was already working on a strategy that went beyond the Cold War framework and focused on Japan’s role as a great power in a new scenario, gradually directed its attention towards ASEAN. For Japanese diplomats, ASEAN was not merely a product of the Cold War, but a result of regional solidarity. Thus, in order to play a major role in a regional system inside a multipolar world, Japan needed to foster trust and stress the importance of the group. The official guidelines for Japanese diplomacy referred explicitly to ASEAN:

Japan welcomes the fact that moves to strengthen the solidarity of Southeast Asia through ASEAN have intensified in recent years. Japan places much importance on such efforts on the part of Southeast Asian countries and is watching with expectation the future growth of the said organization.
Tokyo signalled its desire to participate in the ASEAN Summit that was to be held in Bali on February 1976, but this was rejected. The reason for this is a subject of debate among scholars. For many, such as Wakatsuki, it was the result of the fear of Vietnam’s negative reaction, which could explain why later Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs focused on the possible role of being a ‘bridge’ between ASEAN and Vietnam. Some scholars focus on the consideration of the feelings in ASEAN countries, which, in January 1974, had greeted Prime Minister Tanaka with a wave of protests and perceived Japan’s participation at the Rambouillet Summit in November 1975 as evidence of Japan’s endless link with Western countries.

In November 1976, the ASEAN countries’ Ambassadors Conference was held in Tokyo. The conference pointed out the reasons for instability in the area: weak economic systems, weak ties among the countries, instability among non-communist countries, and disagreements and conflicts regarding important matters between ASEAN and Indochina. The conference also outlined Japan’s goals: to help maintain the self-government of each non-communist country in Southeast Asian in order to ensure political stability, to avoid any Chinese or Soviet influence on Indochina and encourage its independence, to promote friendly relations between Indochina and non-communist countries, and to become involved in strengthening cooperation in Asia. Practically, this meant increasing economic aid to non-communist Southeast Asian countries (especially in foreign trade), developing social and cultural programmes, encouraging the independence process, and improving Japan’s image in those countries where it was seen as an ‘economic animal’.

It is important to recall presidential candidate Jimmy Carter’s public statement made on 23 June 1976 that the United States should withdraw all American troops from Korea, pull out of the Philippines, and cut assistance to Thailand and Indonesia. The general impression this created was that the Asia-Pacific region was of little interest to the United States, and this became a reason for ASEAN countries to develop a closer relationship with Japan: the former were worrying

\[38\] Wakatsuki, ‘Zenpôkai gaišoku no jidai’, p. 72.
\[39\] For more information about ASEAN’s feelings towards Japan, see Korhonen, *Japan and the Pacific Free Trade Area*, pp. 75–82.
about economic development, while the latter was looking for a leading role within a regional group of countries.\textsuperscript{41}

In December 1976 Fukuda took office and carefully formed his cabinet in order to promote this policy towards Southeast Asia, despite the discontent it created among the opposing factions in the Liberal Democratic Party. In the process of forging a new strategy, he did not involve political leaders but, for the most part, left it up to Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, in order to avoid any politicization and bureaucratic infighting. He informally established a policy group within the Asian Affairs Bureau which consisted of four policy coordinators under the supervision of his secretary, Owada Hisashi. Those coordinators were Nakae Yosuke (director-general of the Asia Bureau), Nishiyama Takehiko (director of the Regional Policy Division), Edamura Sumio (deputy director-general of the Asia Bureau), and Tanino Sakutarō (director of the Second Southeast Asian Division). The group worked with the idea that, within the framework of the new political situation, Japan (now a great power) was to ensure Asian stability beyond the Cold War rules. It carefully studied all the pro-ASEAN documents produced by the Asia Bureau in the previous few years and drafted suggestions for an active foreign policy towards Southeast Asia appropriate for the new international order.

\textbf{The Fukuda Doctrine: ideas and rhetoric}

The work of the group mentioned above aimed at dealing with three problems: how to consolidate Japan’s stance towards Hanoi, what exactly would its contribution be to ASEAN, and how to promote non-economic relations. The solutions were elaborated in the so-called ‘Manila speech’, which was to be delivered in the Philippines, at the end of Fukuda’s trip to Southeast Asia on the occasion of the second ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur (4–5 August 1977).\textsuperscript{42} The final

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} The role played by the working group has been examined in Sudō, \textit{The Fukuda Doctrine and ASEAN}, pp. 155–157. Sudō as well as other scholars, emphasizes the existence of a common perspective and, at the same time, the contribution of each member of the group. For example, Nakae and Nishiyama agreed on Japan’s political role in the post-Vietnam era and Owada suggested that the best way to explain the new Japanese policy was to present a meaningful rhetorical doctrine, instead of issuing a separate communiqué in each country. Moreover, the famous catchphrase ‘heart-to-heart relationship’ was coined by Tanino.
draft of this speech was written on 5 July 1977 and included six principles:

1. Basing a relationship between Japan and Southeast Asian countries on cooperation and solidarity in order to achieve world peace and stability.
2. Providing support to both ASEAN and Burma’s economic and social development as well as to ASEAN regional cooperation.
3. Setting up of special trade relations between Japan and both ASEAN countries and Burma.
4. Improving ‘heart-to-heart’ relations between Japan and both ASEAN countries and Burma.
5. Ensuring that official dialogue took place on a regular basis between Japan and both ASEAN countries and Burma.
6. Promoting cooperation between ASEAN countries and Indochina, and establishing friendly relations between Japan and Indochina.

The six-point draft incorporated the major issues that officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—especially the Asia Bureau—had already elaborated. It included providing support to Indochina, a controversial issue that the Japanese government generally opposed because of the tangled political situation in this area, where the possible clash of superpowers was an ongoing danger and the decolonization process was still taking place. However, the prime minister made last-minute revisions, through Owada, who summarized the draft into two principles, before adding one more (which became the first point of the so-called Fukuda Doctrine). Thus, the doctrine was delivered as a three-principle political statement on 18 August in Manila, the Philippines, the last stop in the prime minister’s tour after Malaysia, Burma, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand.

The first principle emphasized the non-military role Japan intended to play and its commitment to peace. After the events of 1975 and the sudden change in the political situation, the prime minister’s aim was to make clear that Japan’s role would not involve any military presence, as he believed that Southeast Asian nations were particularly sensitive about this issue.

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The second principle was based on the so-called ‘heart-to-heart’ relationship of mutual trust, not only in political and economic areas, but also in the social and cultural realms. This principle, a metaphor for ‘empathetic regional diplomacy’, was conceived of as the most innovative feature of the doctrine in direct opposition to the stereotype that the Japanese people were ‘economic animals’. It stated Japan’s willingness to go beyond ‘things’ and ‘money’ with the aim of ‘build[ing] a relationship grounded on mutual understanding in every field’. In other words, the Fukuda Doctrine crystallized both Japan’s understanding of and respect for local feelings and culture, and showed that it understood the need to change its approach in undertaking foreign assistance to Southeast Asia. In fact, Japan’s material aid was limited (to US$ 1 billion) but the change in its attitude (quality) was more crucial than the amount (quantity). In fact, Fukuda’s involvement in Southeast Asian affairs and his desire for a harmonious relationship among the nations had always been considerable, partly because his former factional leader and mentor, Kishi Nobusuke, had cultivated unofficial channels within the region through the reparation programme. Later, when he was serving as Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (1959–1969) and Tokyo lost the contest over the location of the Asian Development Bank’s headquarters to Manila in 1966, he remarked: ‘If we don’t develop heart-to-heart relations with the people of Asia, similar events [will] take place again.’ Moreover, as he wrote in his memoirs, the prime minister was deeply interested in cultivating cultural friendship among Asian countries, so much so that he set up an alumni association for Southeast Asian foreign exchange students who had studied in Japan before and during the war. Eventually, the second principle turned out to be the most popular in ASEAN countries, especially in Indonesia, where the expression ‘heart-to-heart relationship’ existed in native language as ‘dari hati ku hati’.

The third principle was Japan’s will to cooperate actively with ASEAN’s effort to strengthen solidarity and resilience, and to develop relations with Indochinese countries on the basis of mutual understanding, and thus contribute to the building of peace and

prosperity in the entire Southeast Asian region. The idea of playing a bridging role to reconcile communist Indochina and the non-communist ASEAN countries was innovative in diplomatic terms. First of all, it revolutionized Japan’s identity, based now on being an economic power, and stressed the unity of the region. Secondly, it proved that Japan was neither a victim of the Cold War nor a passive follower of the United States. As Nakae has often recalled, the group’s most important goal was to how to act towards Indochina after the unification of Vietnam, and it agreed with Fukuda that the real turning point for Asia’s political situation was the collapse of Saigon. Hence, the third principle offered a realistic and pacific solution to the post-Vietnam issue: establishing ASEAN as a capable organization and coexisting with Indochina. This was the new regional order conceived of by the Fukuda government.

It is important to stress also the importance of rhetoric in the Fukuda Doctrine. The Manila speech was verbally very clever and targeted Asian sensibilities. As mentioned earlier, Fukuda made a concrete offer of US$ 1 billion in aid, as well as cooperation in agriculture, health, education, and culture. However, his statement also contained some hidden messages, first of which was the principle of the renunciation of military power. In many public statements Japan had emphasized its experience as a bombarded country and the constitutional impossibility of maintaining military forces, for example, during the Bandung Conference in April 1955. However, as Edamura has recently noted, in Manila ‘this determination not to become a military power again is set forth with pride and not as an apology for its war responsibilities’. In other words, Japan intended to demonstrate that it was not a victim of its history but

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51 Edamura himself recalls that, in his view, the core idea was the ‘recognition of the importance of ASEAN as a viable organisation’, and that the coexistence with Indochina was ‘no more than a proviso added to reassure the Indochinese countries that Tokyo’s support for ASEAN does not mean a hostile attitude towards them’. In short, the search for peaceful coexistence with Indochina to achieve stability in Southeast Asia was a medium- and long-term objective for Japan, but it needed to be announced immediately in order to make the Fukuda Doctrine (i.e. the new Japan’s foreign policy) as broad as possible. See Edamura, S. (2013). ‘The Fukuda doctrine: diplomacy with a vision’, in Lam, P.E., Japan’s Relations with Southeast Asia—The Fukuda Doctrine and Beyond. London: Routledge, pp. 27.
felt its responsibility towards Asia and that it intended to fulfil this responsibility without the use of force.\(^{52}\)

Secondly, although Fukuda spoke about ‘heart-to-heart’ relations, he did not promote concrete political actions. In doing so, he cautiously avoided comparisons to the assertiveness of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere policy associated with imperialist Japan.

Thirdly, he stressed the importance of ‘equal partnership’, meaning that even though imperialism and neo-colonialism still existed, Japan was an exception to this. At the same time, by repeating the word ‘solidarity’ 12 times, he suggested a racial background reminiscent of an old-fashioned pan-Asianism: the opposition between rich colonial countries and poor Asians struggling for economic and political independence.

Moreover, he created the image of Japan as a ‘true friend’, one who ‘offers his hand in understanding and cooperation’ but was also ‘responsible to the world economy in both aid and trade’. Thus, on the one hand, he put Japan and Asian countries on the same level, while, on the other, he announced his willingness to play the role of a benevolent leader among devoted fellows, according to the traditional Asian social structures of harmony.

Lastly, he used the expression ‘mutual understanding’ not only in relation to ASEAN countries, but also to describe one of doctrine’s main goals: establishing relations with the Indochinese nations. Japan’s intention was thus to maintain the same behaviour in the whole of Southeast Asia, despite the differences in ideology among the different nations.

To summarize, the rhetoric of the Manila speech—a new trend in Japanese post-war diplomacy—helped Tokyo to lay the foundations for the political role it had sought since the 1950s. In other words, as Fukuda himself explains in his memoirs, it ‘expanded the frame of Japanese foreign policy’.\(^{33}\) His idea on how to model a new Japanese foreign policy is discussed in the next section.

### ‘Omnidirectional (peaceful) diplomacy’ and the Cold War

For Fukuda, ‘expanding the frame of Japanese policy’ was one of the two goals of his cabinet. In his view, until the mid-1970s

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 35.

Japan’s strength had already been officially recognized, but only from the economic point of view. Politically, its position had not yet been consolidated, thus he inaugurated an ‘omnidirectional peaceful diplomacy’: acting as a ‘bridge’ between warring nations and promoting a proactive strategy within the framework of Japan-US cooperative relations, keeping strong bilateral ties while improving regional ones.\(^{54}\) In his memoirs, Fukuda expresses his regret at being misunderstood. He states that his idea had usually been interpreted as an ‘unequal distance policy’ or an ‘omnidirectional diplomacy’ tout-court, but in his mind it meant emphasizing the constructive role Japan could play in its geographical area—Japan as a member of Asia—while maintaining the traditional axis of its relationship with the United States—Japan as a member of the free world. In March 1977, Fukuda met President Carter in Washington and, as he says in his memoirs, this meeting was the starting point of his trip to Asia. They agreed upon the need to promote free trade, maintain the framework of the Security Treaty, and, regarding Asia, guarantee the security of the area, with the American presence providing the basis for Japan’s more active role. We gather that the main reason Fukuda maintained a good relationship with the United States was because it would assure a good relationship with both South Korea and Taiwan. In the meanwhile, after détente, Tokyo was able to work at its relationship with both the People’s Republic of China and Southeast Asia. In fact, the Asia Bureau’s study of Southeast Asian countries’ expectations of Japan warned that it needed to act as a stabilizing factor among the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. In particular, the study on Malaysia revealed that since 34 per cent of Malaysians had Chinese origins, Tokyo should deepen its ties with Beijing rather than with Washington.\(^{55}\)

In retrospect, it is interesting to reflect on the catchphrases Japan coined when trying to describe its bilateral relationship with the United States in the post-war period. After an era of ‘equal partnership’ (1961–1976), Fukuda spoke about ‘Japan-US cooperative relations in the world’. Later, those relations became the ‘Japan-US alliance’ in 1981 and the ‘global partnership’ in 1989. Thus, as many scholars have stressed, especially in relation to the Cold War, the


Japanese government gradually learned to incorporate its autonomous efforts, which were an integral part of American policy in the Asia-Pacific, and to take advantage of structural changes in order to become more assertive.\(^{56}\)

In sum, Japan’s omnidirectional diplomacy was grounded in traditional security relations with the United States, but aimed at building a new post-Vietnam international order based on cooperative relations. It was part of an attempt to redress Japan’s sense of vulnerability caused by external threats, lack of natural resources, feeble leadership, and a weakly articulated vision of its international role.\(^{57}\) This was the most ambitious initiative towards South East Asia in the post-war era.

However, the implementation of the Fukuda Doctrine was soon compromised because of Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and the politicization of the Indochinese situation. Tokyo aligned with the Western camp in condemning Hanoi, and suspended its Official Development Assistance to Vietnamese. These new developments seemed to stop in its tracks Japan’s plan to act as a bridge between traditional antagonisms.

**Conclusion**

In retrospect, the Fukuda Doctrine was the first attempt made by Japan to present a proactive foreign policy stance since the end of the Second World War. For two decades after the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan had not been able to explore nor to exploit its links with Southeast Asian countries in order to develop a proactive strategy. In this phase, war reparations were intended to be a bridge to rebuild ties with the region, a kind of a re-engagement foothold in order to advance into Southeast Asia. The reparations were indeed an excellent boost for the Japanese economy, even when they were absorbed and replaced by Official Development Assistance in the form of grants, technical assistance, and loans. However, Japan’s policy based on development aid, which was labelled as ‘reactive’, couldn’t help in the process


of rebuilding strong regional ties. The analysis of different primary sources helps to demonstrate that the concrete attempt to build a solid intra-regional relationship among Southeast Asian countries, even if already conceived of by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, can be dated only to the 1970s, a crucial decade for changes in the international system.

It is indeed significant that proactive Japanese initiatives took shape when external events, like the rapprochement between the United States and China, the collapse of Saigon or the Pacific Doctrine, altered the world stage in relation to the Cold War, making new possibilities of autonomy real. Before 1977 Japan’s political priorities were basically domestically oriented. Internal political instability, the imperative to avoid friction with United States, and the East–West Cold War, which in Asia ran along the internal divisions caused by East–East rivalry (that is, China–Soviet Union), precluded any autonomous strategy. Thus for at least two decades Japan looked for autonomy in the form of economic cooperation, maintaining a policy of bilateralism within Southeast Asia. Later, after indigenous regionalism had emerged in the form of ASEAN, with the immediate task of creating the basis for mutual trust among member states without any external involvement, Tokyo recognized the importance of cultivating its external relations with Southeast Asia. At that time the government was dominated by conflicting views regarding Japan’s more active and political role in Asia.

However, Japanese declassified documents make it clear that the kind of policy inaugurated by Fukuda when he came to power had already been discussed within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially among those who had been observing Southeast Asia for many years. They tried to draw the Ministry’s and political leaders’ attention toward Southeast Asia, but, for many reasons, this area was relegated to the background. It was only re-evaluated when the international situation underwent structural changes, and in that moment the efforts of Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials came to the fore.

In what way were the structural changes decisive in the evolution of Japan’s foreign policy? Events like the rise of China as a major power and the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom from the region raised new problems (no longer linked to the Cold War) and led Southeast Asian countries to formulate a new regional order which Japan had to deal with. It started involving itself with this new realm when anti-Japanese movements impelled Tokyo to
set a new framework for its presence in the area, different from that which had originated with the nanshin. Moreover, the collapse of Saigon marked the end of the Vietnam War, and officially opened the doors to the post-Vietnam era. Fukuda’s official visit was the first made after Tanaka’s tour, and it was natural to take into consideration the previous experience, which had awakened anti-Japanese feelings. It was intentionally conceived of as the key event of the new era, able to open ‘a new chapter in the history of Asia’.58 More than 30 years after the end of the Second World War, Japan’s policy still mirrored the same unilateral search for prosperity and the gap in international responsibility. It was time for Japan to abandon its ‘egoistical passivity’ and usher in the new regional order based on cooperation and stability.59

Hence, this article argues that in some ways Fukuda took advantage of the external events mentioned above, and carried out a programme that would encourage linkages with both Western and Eastern sides, with the intention of making the Pacific area into an independent, non-ideological, and peaceful region. It is in this sense that the Manila speech should be contextualized, arising as it did from the remarkable work of Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials on the enhancement of regional policy, within a specific world setting. At this moment, ASEAN showed itself to be more open to multifaceted cooperation, even with a former imperialist power like Japan, when the forecasted vacuum became a reality. The doctrine is therefore a point of arrival in the setting of a proactive foreign policy towards Southeast Asia, because it represented simultaneously the aim to realize a regional order able to guarantee peace and stability, and Japan’s willingness to pursue an independent regional policy reflecting its own national interest.

59 Ibid.