

PM Kaifu's Asean Trip: Learning from the Past

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Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Toshiki Kaifu's visit to Manila on May 4, 1991 was the fourth state visit of Prime Ministers of Japan in about a decade. There was PM Zenko Suzuki's ASEAN tour in 1981, Yasuhiro Nakasone's visit in 1983, and Noboru Takeshita's visit that coincided with the ASEAN Summit held in Manila in December 1987. For the Japanese, four is the number of mortality but the number promises to grow as Japan firmly entrenches itself in the global landscape.

The ASEAN trip of PM Kaifu which began last April 27 finally fulfills the goodwill mission of Japan to its ASEAN neighbors after this was postponed due to the Gulf War crisis in January. The trip coincided also with Japan's sending of four minesweepers, two escort ships and 500 personnel to help clear the mines laid by Iraq during the crisis. This was the first overseas mission of Japan's naval force after World War II.¹ PM Kaifu, during the trips to Malaysia and Thailand allayed fears about possible resurgence of militarism in Asia even as Japan takes on a key role in the Khmer conflict.² From a personal standpoint, the trip is also bound to boost the political stock of PM Kaifu in diplomacy before he hurdles another test at the electoral polls in Japan in October 1991. Mr. Takeshita who lost last

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year is staging a comeback and regarded as his closest rival. Japan's national politics has not often used foreign affairs as a launching pad for political bids but foreign trips can make one's political star shoot further.

Fukuda Doctrine: Cornerstone of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy

Kaifu's ASEAN trip continues a practice that intends to bind the region to the pioneer East Asian dragon. Manila is a significant and historic stop in PM Kaifu's itinerary. It is in this city that PM Takeo Fukuda proclaimed the Fukuda Doctrine in 1977 after the Kuala Lumpur ASEAN Summit that year. The doctrine is considered as the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy for Southeast Asia, if not for the rest of the world in the post-Vietnam War era. It enables Japan to respond properly to pressures that arise from being a super economy.

The Fukuda Doctrine is fondly referred to as the benchmark for the heart-to-heart (*kokoro e kokoro*) relations of Japan with its neighbors. The doctrine sets forth the following ideas of Japanese post-war diplomacy:³

First, Japan is a nation committed to peace, rejects the role of military power and is bent to contribute to the peace and prosperity of Southeast Asia and the world.

Second, Japan will do its best to consolidate the relationship of mutual confidence and trust based on "heart-to-heart" understanding with Southeast Asia in wide-range fields—political, economic, social, cultural areas.

Third, Japan considers ASEAN member countries as equal partners to cooperate within their own efforts to strengthen their solidarity and resilience with one another and with like-minded nations outside the region. At the same time, Japan aims to foster a relationship based on mutual understanding with the nations of Indochina for peace and prosperity throughout Southeast Asia.

Japan's Postwar Diplomatic Debacle

But before the Fukuda Doctrine could have been effectively hammered out by Japan, it met and wrestled with a lot of constraints in

its foreign relations. This was attributed mainly to its vanquished status after World War II and the phobia of militarism and risky global political involvements the Japanese people developed thereafter. The consequences of the war, attitude of the people, and massive but generally benign reforms carried out by occupation forces overseen by General Douglas MacArthur who was based in Tokyo, propelled Japan to the highly acclaimed post-war economic recovery the world has ever seen in this century.⁴

By 1954 Japan had already approximated its pre-war GNP level and the Japanese became more relaxed adopting western customs like celebrating Christmas (in a social rather than religious sense), enjoying jazz and rock and roll music, among others.

Economic Diplomacy

Japan's phenomenal economic growth is attributed by Dr. Chula-cheeb Chinwanno of Thammasat University in Thailand to the separation of economic considerations from political ones (*seikei bunri*).⁵ This was the foreign policy theme underlying the administration of Japan's postwar Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida in the 1950s. The theme enabled Japan to pursue a high-growth economy (even planned economic ties with Communist countries) and keep a low profile in international politics and security affairs.

Economic diplomacy (*Keizai Gaiko*) from the 1950s to the early 1970s got Japan a mixed image among its neighbors in Southeast Asia. Reparations payments to Burma, the Philippines, Indonesia and South Vietnam in goods, equipments and services were in full scale in the mid-fifties. These symbolized Japan's remorse for its war atrocities. But more significantly, according to Raul Manglapus (now Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary), in his book *Japan in Southeast Asia: Collision Course* (1976), the reparations programme "served to recondition the people of the region to Japanese goods, Japanese spare parts and Japanese practices."⁶ Japanese seemed poised to conquer the region in the economic dimension."

In effect, it is as if the Western colonial presence in Asia is gradually being eroded by one native to the place, an erstwhile enemy, now ally, that threatens to outpace the victorious power in critical areas. By the early 1970s, Japan was already ahead of the U.S. as foreign aid donor for Indonesia and Malaysia and was a serious

contender for top assistance to the Philippines and Thailand. But Japan consequently raked in profits from these countries in terms of sale of manufactured goods, cheap labor and as convenient sources of strategic raw materials.⁷The trade and technological ledger is now heavily in Japan's favor. The U.S. with its long-perceived role as "World Constable"⁸ inevitably contributed to the burgeoning coffers of Japan by making it skimp on security costs in part due to Article 9 of Japan's post-war Constitution that limits Japan to just having self-defense forces. But the seventies was not yet the high-point in U.S.-Japan trade frictions and made Japan maintain the validity of its economic diplomacy.

The Winds of Change: Shift to Creative Diplomacy

The consistent rise of Japan's economic star, however, left in pallor the economic state of its ASEAN neighbors. Soon Japan was exporting goods and services in heavier volume than the primary products and semi-manufactured goods and services of third world ASEAN neighbors could enter Japan's restrictive markets. With no let-up in Japan's commercialism into Southeast Asia, the scars of Japanese militarism, this time in terms of economic aggression, once more surfaced. Explicit statements spiced up scholarly analysis about Japan's being an economic animal, and Japanese traders becoming the 20th century version of traditional "samurais."⁹ The anti-Japanese sentiments had their extreme manifestations in Thailand when students had riots and organized boycott of Japanese goods in Bangkok stores, and demonstrations and street riots took place in Malaysia and Indonesia on the occasion of the goodwill visit of PM Tanaka in 1974.

The militancy by which Japanese economic affluence was initially greeted in ASEAN countries jolted Japan's leadership and the public from their complacency and political indifference. Although the ASEAN grouping is more of a political rather than economic bloc formed in 1967 among Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, with Brunei Darussalam joining only in 1984, the grouping has strong economic aspirations. Japan's economic ascendancy without commensurate political interest and responsibility in the region was scorned by its ASEAN neighbors who often referred to the exclusiveness of the Japanese expatriate community (what Japanese scholar Makoto Ooka tags as "*kurumaza*"

or "group in a circle" mentality).¹⁰ It seems hard to penetrate this circle even as the Japanese spend time abroad.

To the credit of Japan, after the riot incidents, the whole structure and rationale of its foreign relations were re-examined resulting in the historic Fukuda Doctrine. It realized that economic diplomacy is narrow and not effective in the long-run. The high regard and priority that Japan officially gives the ASEAN countries is in part generated by the solidarity and stability of ASEAN as an organization and its promise as a pillar of growth in the highly progressive Asia-Pacific Community. Population-wise ASEAN with 300 million people has a higher purchasing power than the economically undeveloped and socialist China (PROC). Most of the ASEAN countries, though still critical of Japan's economic policies from time to time, have followed Japan's post-war model of high-growth, export-oriented economic strategies.¹¹ With the exception of the Philippines and its perennial politico-economic problems, and Brunei Darussalam with its innate oil-rich territory, the rest of ASEAN countries (Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia) have relatively robust economies derived partly from Japan's model of development.

The shift to creative diplomacy from the late 1970s into the 1980s has enabled Japan to focus on political concerns of the region using its enormous trade-triggered surplus and savings to play a more meaningful and definitive role. Japan balances its role between the capitalist democratic states of the region as exemplified by ASEAN and the still problematic but nonetheless promising socialist states of Vietnam, Kampuchea, Burma and Laos.

Spin-off: Yen Diplomacy

Japan, host to a number of U.S. military facilities, tends to favor U.S. bases in the Philippines and is officially non-committal to the creation of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in ASEAN. By doing so, Japan believes it can help enhance the stability of the area and contribute to a sense of independence in each and reality of interdependence among one another in a fast-moving world. Japan may appear awkward yet in a diplomatic game that it has not mastered somehow. But one cannot fault it for not trying even if it is mainly through what others might snidely remark as "yen diplomacy." In 1976, Japan granted about Y500 million in aid to

Vietnam on top of the Y8.5 million reconstruction aid given earlier to Hanoi.¹² The flaw (as in most other forms of foreign aid) was in requiring Vietnam to purchase materials and supplies from Japan. Japan has also endeavored a role to help with the Cambodian problem in line with the interests and suggestions underlying ASEAN security. It is not a far-fetched idea to believe that Vietnam's withdrawal from the Thai-Cambodian border will find reciprocity in Japan's booming investment and trade with the country as the recent improvements in Vietnam's economy attest. But Japan's investments in ASEAN continue to increase. In 1989 Singapore had the biggest share (nearly US\$2 billion) while RP had US\$202 million, the lowest among ASEAN countries.¹³

The ASEAN countries no doubt have been spurred to and supported in their projects for economic cooperation by the valuable yen. An equivalent of US\$1 billion pledge for ASEAN industrial commentary projects was included in the Fukuda package of warmer relations with ASEAN. When PM Takeshita took part in the ASEAN Summit of 1987, Japan committed about US\$2 billion ASEAN-Japan Development Fund for the promotion of private-sector development in the ASEAN countries. The mechanics for its disbursement included an investment fund through public and private funding, use of the Export-Import Bank of Japan for securing untied loans and funds channeled through the financial institutions of member countries. This regional financial cooperation does not yet include the bilateral ties between Japan and each of the ASEAN countries. The Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) is Japan's financing agency that provides "soft loans" for development projects. In 1991 about US\$900 million has been committed to the Philippines for 17 such projects.¹⁴

Japan and the Pacific: A Broader Diplomatic Nexus

Aside from a more distinct political role and the requisite economic assistance, the previous visits of other Japanese Prime Ministers to ASEAN countries explored other areas of cooperation in the social, cultural and technological fields. In 1979, Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira was in Manila for the 5th UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) meeting and provided an occasion for the signing of a new Treaty of Peace, Amity and Navigation.¹⁵

The feasibility of a broader Pacific Community was also discussed during that trip. It is this Pacific idea that cautions Japan towards

accepting a closer East Asian Market Trading Bloc proposed by Malaysia. The Philippines even during the Marcos years already accepted the possibility of a Southeast Asian Free Trade Area for higher economic growth in the region.¹⁶

The area where ASEAN-Japan relations contains the greater promise and reward is in socio-cultural cooperation. Both PMs Nakasone and Takeshita put a great stress on friendship as the main hinge of Japan's approach to other countries in their respective ASEAN tours. The Friendship Program for the 21st century participated by youth and young adults was launched as a 5-year exchange program by PM Nakasone in 1983 and has been subsequently renewed. There are various programs launched by Japan Foundation, Monbusho (Japan's Ministry of Education) and Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Program (SSEAYP). An ASEAN Cultural Fund of Yen 5 Billion was set up.¹⁷ Likewise US\$1 million is shared every year among ASEAN member-states for scholarship purposes. Consequently the private sector has followed suit the Japanese government's creative diplomacy. Numerous Japanese multinational companies like Toyota, Mitsubishi, Japan Air Lines, and Keidanren have launched scholarships and fellowship programs to enhance people-to-people exchange in the region. This parallels the development of philanthropic U.S. institutions like Ford and Rockefeller in the 1900s. The latest news heartening to the Filipinos is the financing assistance by Matsushita Corporation to the XVth SEA Games which the Philippines will host in November 1991.

The Kaifu Visit: What's in Store for RP

One may not perceive it easily but despite the reluctance of Japan to conduct a more assertive type of diplomacy in the region, a better structure and reason are built to its efforts than other powers with stake in the region. Compared to the U.S. where RP has well-known historic ties, it is strange that no U.S. President has visited the country since the end of the Vietnam War even as all RP Presidents go to the U.S. while in office. The kind of diplomatic reciprocity we get from the U.S. is at best expressed by visits of U.S. Vice-Presidents (recently Dan Quayle and George Bush during the Reagan era). Others are officials of Cabinet rank or special envoys like Richard Armitage, the special negotiator for RP-US bases talk. A fair diplomatic exchange at the official level is thus more seriously observed by ritual-conscious Japanese than the pragmatic and power-disposed American.

**Illegal Foreign Workers Apprehended in 1988
Breakdown by Type of Work, Nationality, and Sex***

		Type of work					
Nationality and sex	Total	Bar hostess	Cons- truction worker	Factory worker	Odd jobs	Retail clerk	Waiter
Total							
Male	14,314	4,359	3,838	3,651	885	388	233
Female	8,929	0	3,807	3,486	765	283	170
Philippines	5,386						
Male							
Female	1,688	0	984	294	129	50	132
Bangladesh	2,942						
Male	2,939	0	927	1,555	278	115	11
Female	3	0	0	2	0	0	0
Pakistan	2,497						
Male	2,495	0	920	1,277	154	35	12
Female	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Thailand	1,388						
Male	369	0	100	129	77	33	5
Female	1,019	936	0	13	7	12	8
South Korea	1,033						
Male	769	0	599	112	13	6	0
Female	264	53	28	93	32	11	4
Taiwan	492						
Male	223	0	22	19	71	40	7
Female	269	163	0	10	29	38	9
Malaysia	279						
Male	265	0	221	21	18	0	0
Female	14	3	9	5	4	1	9
India	78						
Male	78	0	21	43	13	1	0
Colombia	57						
Female	57	6	0	0	0	0	0
Others	16	2					
Male	103	0	13	36	12	33	
Female	59	29	0	2	2	0	3

Source: Haruo Shimada, "A Possible Solution to the Problem of Foreign Labor," in *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring/Summer, 1990), pp. 78-79.

Type of work

Nationality and sex	Stripper	Prostitute	Cook	Cleaner	Home helper	Art self-person	Other
Total	209	140	129	79	71	68	265
Male	4	0	115	74	8	61	156
Female	205	140	14	4	63	7	109
Philippines							
Male	0	0	25	9	4	0	61
Female	143	101	5	1	52	0	58
Bangladesh							
Male	0	0	8	37	0	0	8
Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Pakistan							
Male	0	0	4	18	2	43	30
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thailand							
Male	0	0	19	4	0	0	2
Female	1	32	5	1	1	0	3
South Korea							
Male	0	0	3	1	0	1	34
Female	0	0	0	2	4	0	37
Taiwan							
Male	1	0	50	4	0	0	9
Female	1	3	4	0	4	0	8
Malaysia							
Male	0	0	1	1	2	0	1
Female	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
India							
Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colombia							
Female	48	3	0	0	0	0	0
Others							
Male	3	0	5	0	0	17	11

Add to this the guilt-ridding exercise Japan consequently undertakes during the state visits. The bitter memory of the war is not totally forgotten among Southeast Asian countries. In Singapore, Kaifu expressed Japan's sincere contrition over the past war's atrocities and resolve never to do the same again.¹⁸

This diplomatic attention however should not lure us into complacency about RP-Japan relations. Although Japan has consistently fulfilled its pledges in the Philippine Aid Plan and promises greater market access to RP goods and services, real problems remain. One is the growing expatriate labor community in Japan's society which is now more service-oriented and leisure-inclined. Despite a sprinkling of Filipino professionals who enjoy the good life in the affluent society, the majority of Filipinos in Japan today are victims of some form of discrimination owing to their manual and perceived low-status service sector jobs, not to mention their being "gaijin" (literally, "outsider" to Japanese society). Filipinos who succumb to the phenomenon of "Japayukisan" (exploited and abused foreign women working in the entertainment sector, usually of third world origin), maltreatment of manual workers and errant Filipinos who surreptitiously slip into Japan continue to plague the blotters of our embassy reports. The preceding table (pp. 74-75) indicates the growing number of problem cases among Filipinos employed in the entertainment business in Japan.

Another serious problem is the great disparity in economic status between Japan and the Philippines that creates repercussions in mutual opportunities for trade, investment and transfer of technology. Irritants to the two countries periodically arise vis-a-vis fishing and shipping rights. Until the Philippines significantly improves its political climate, upgrades the socio-economic infrastructure, and realizes that cultural understanding between the two countries should be enhanced, the Philippines can only demand so little and take in so much from the relationship.

The discussions between PM Kaifu and Pres. Aquino covered a wide range of issues on trade, investments, foreign debt, technology and migrant workers.¹⁹ Their substance deserves separate treatment beyond this article. Suffice it to say that given the tentativeness of the two leaders' political hold on their respective office (with President Aquino declaring no re-election plans in 1992 and PM Kaifu's political fate still indefinite until October), one wishes that this ASEAN trip goes beyond the rites of friendship and goodwill. Ultimately, the meaning and lasting effect of these goodwill visits will be seen on how the countries of the region approximate one another in the quality of life, dignity, and freedom among our peoples.

ENDNOTES

¹"Kaifu starts ASEAN Tour." *Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI)* (April 28, 1991), p. 3.

²"Kaifu bids for key role in Khmer conflict," *PDI* (May 1, 1991), p. 3.

³Chulacheeb Chinwanno, "Japan as a Regional Power" in Wanandi and Kaneko, *Toward A Closer ASEAN-Japan Partnership*, (Japan Institute of International Affairs, 1987), p. 125.

⁴For an enlightening and graphic view of this post-war recovery, see Takafusa Nakamura, "An Economic History of the Showa Era", *Economic Eye* (Summer 1989), pp. 1-15.

⁵Chinwanno, "Japan as a Regional Power," in Wanandi and Kaneko, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁶Raul S. Manglapus, *Japan in Southeast Asia: Collision Course* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1976), p. 4. Quoted in *ibid.*

⁷Chinwanno, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁸The term was used by Secretary Manglapus in his foreign policy speech, "The Philippine: The Strategic Center of the World," Philippine International Convention Center, February 7, 1991.

⁹James Fallows, "Containing Japan," *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 1989), pp. 40-54.

¹⁰Ooka Makoto, "Sitting in a Circle," *Japan Echo* (Winter 1990), p. 53.

¹¹Noordin Sopie, "ASEAN in the Changed World Economy," in Wanandi and Kaneko, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

¹²Chinwanno in Wanandi and Kaneko, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

¹³*Japan 1991 An International Comparison* (Keizai Koho Center), p. 56.

¹⁴A total of \$1.5 billion has actually been pledged. See "Kaifu here today, will bat for bases," *PDI* (May 4, 1991), p. 4.

¹⁵"RP-Japan Relations," (A leaflet from the Japanese Information and Cultural Center. *No date*) p. 5.

¹⁶Natalia Ma. Lourdes M. Morales, "The Philippine Position in the Formation of ASEAN Free Trade Area in the Light of Select External Organizations" (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of the Philippines, 1985).

¹⁷Natalia Ma. Lourdes M. Morales, "ASEAN-Japan Relations" (Lecture before Philippine SSEAYP Program, September 17, 1989.)

¹⁸"Japan to play major political role in Asia," *PDI* (May 4, 1991), p. 3.

¹⁹"Carry Out Reforms, Kaifu Urges Cory." *PDI* (May 6, 1991), p. 9.