



THE ROLE OF JAPAN'S PRIME MINISTERS IN PROMOTING THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REGIONALISM THAT MADE POSSIBLE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ASEAN+3

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Arthur Le

Kimyo International University in Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

E-mail: Arthurle.2012@gmail.com

Abstract. *This article examines the role of Japan in the regionalisation of East Asia: the background of East Asian cooperation, how Japanese foreign policy towards the ASEAN countries made possible the creation of the ASEAN+3 framework, and what role the prime ministers of Japan played in regional cooperation and integration. It considers the policy of the Japanese prime ministers towards ASEAN integration, which institutions were established on their initiative, and how Japanese foreign policy evolved in the course of regional cooperation from pure economic assistance to broader cooperation and, finally, to the creation of the ASEAN+3 framework.*

Keywords: *ASEAN+3, Japanese foreign policy, Asian Development Bank, Asian and Pacific Council, Fukuda Doctrine, regionalism, prime ministers Yoshida Shigeru, Kishi Nobusuke, Sato Eisaku, Takeo Fukuda, Hashimoto Ryutaro.*

INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Cold War, when the confrontation between East and West came to an end, a new system of international relations was established. That new system opened new opportunities for regional cooperation and development, which made it possible to establish ASEAN+3.

There are many scholars of international relations – among them Amako Satoshi, Amitav Acharya, Takeshi Yuzawa, Kondo Shigekatsu and Takashi Terada – who argue that the role of ASEAN+3 in providing regional security, integration and cooperation is gradually growing. Within the framework of ASEAN+3 such considerable economic, political, military, industrial and cultural powers as Japan, South Korea and China are concentrated, and these countries play an important role in providing not only economic security but also political security, human security and non-traditional security in the region.



In the process of cooperation and development of ASEAN+3 it is vitally important to analyse the policy of the prime ministers of Japan in order to clarify the role of Japan in the regional integration and security of South-East and North-East Asia. The importance of the article lies in the fact that today many scholars of international relations are debating the new role of integration and cooperation in East Asia within the ASEAN+3 framework and Japan's new role in regional cooperation and integration for the sake of security, prosperity and cooperation in the region. The security and cooperative atmosphere of the whole Asia-Pacific region will depend upon Japan's foreign policy towards East Asia – in other words, towards its closest neighbours, namely the Korean Peninsula, China and ASEAN. In this sense it is very important to analyse ASEAN+3 regionalism from the perspective of the policy of Japan's prime ministers.

MAIN PART

Since the end of the Second World War Japanese foreign policy has been deeply influenced by the nature of the Cold War, namely by the confrontation between East and West in world politics. Under such circumstances Japanese foreign policy was constrained and deeply dependent on the United States–Japan alliance, not only in the region but also in the world. Yet the national interests of Japan in East Asia were always vital for Japan's security, stability and prosperity, which is why Japan sought to approach the ASEAN countries through gradual economic assistance. According to Sueo Sudo, Japanese foreign policy can be divided into three phases (Sudo, 1988:509–525).

The first phase is the period of “reparations”, which lasted from 1952 to 1964, when Japan employed so-called economic diplomacy through the payment of reparations. The second phase is the period of “regional development”, which lasted from 1965 to 1975, when Japan participated actively in regional economic development; in that period Japan was one of the most important countries promoting the establishment of the Asian Development Bank, the Ministerial Conference for the Economic Development of South-East Asia and the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC). The third phase is the period of the “Fukuda Doctrine”, which began with the declaration by Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda in August 1977 of Japan's positive political and economic role in South-East Asia (Sudo, 1988:509–525).

The Fukuda Doctrine is the collective name for the three basic principles of Japanese diplomatic policy towards South-East Asia, enunciated by Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda



in Manila in August 1977 (ASEAN–Japan Centre, n.d.). First, Japan is committed to peace and rejects the role of a military power. Second, Japan will do its best to consolidate the relationship of mutual confidence and trust based on “heart-to-heart” understanding with the nations of South-East Asia. Third, Japan will cooperate positively with ASEAN while aiming at fostering a relationship based on mutual understanding with the countries of Indochina, and will thus contribute to the building of peace and prosperity throughout South-East Asia.

Japan’s policy of providing regional security and stability in East Asia was based on economic interests that gradually evolved into political security. For instance, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1948–1954) was always in favour of Japan’s East Asian policy for the sake of economic benefit; another example of Japan’s deep economic interests in East Asia may be found in the initiatives of Prime Minister Kishi (1957–1960) for the establishment of a South-East Asian development fund, and in the strong endorsement of regional development by Prime Minister Sato (1964–1972) (Sudo, 1988:509–525).

Only after the end of the Cold War and the Asian financial crisis of 1997 did Japan’s foreign policy gradually shift towards promoting regionalism in East Asia by supporting the ASEAN+3 framework. Japan not only participates actively but also supports cooperation and regionalisation for the sake of the security and stability of the region within the framework of ASEAN+3, that is, together with Japan, the Republic of Korea and China. The first ASEAN+3 summit was held in 1997, and since then Japan has actively promoted regionalism between South-East Asia and North-East Asia within that framework. In this process Japan not only promotes its interests in the region, thereby reinforcing its diplomatic role in the ASEAN countries, but also enhances cooperation and strategic partnership with its closest neighbours, the Republic of Korea and China, thereby building confident, trustful and predictable relations. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, even before the first ASEAN+3 summit meeting in 1997 Japan attached great importance to the visit of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in order to take part in a new and unprecedented framework of cooperation in the history of North-East and South-East Asia, and stated that ASEAN+3 cooperation among Japan, the Republic of Korea and China was the basic idea, background and purpose of Prime Minister Hashimoto’s visit to the summit (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1997).

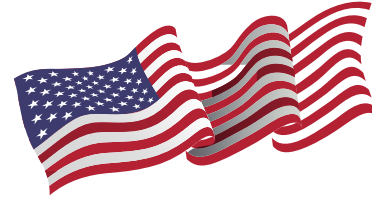
In December 1997 Prime Minister Hashimoto announced three initiatives within the framework of ASEAN+3 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1997). The first



initiative was to support cooperation with ASEAN through an international framework centred on the International Monetary Fund, enhancing support through the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and strengthening ASEAN's capacity for regulation and supervision in the financial sector in addition to bilateral technical cooperation; through launching the "Japan–ASEAN Programme for Comprehensive Human Resources Development", according to which Japan was to receive as many as twenty thousand people within five years and dispatch experts to the ASEAN nations in cooperation with the private sector; through developing ASEAN infrastructure by establishing an eighteen-billion trade insurance credit line; and through the promotion of the "Japan–ASEAN Roundtable on Development", encouraging high officials from the economic cooperation authorities of each country as well as representatives of the private sector to participate and discuss issues covering the ASEAN countries, such as human resources development, assistance to private sector initiatives in infrastructure development and Mekong River basin development, as well as global issues such as the environment.

The second initiative was to deepen the dialogues between ASEAN and Japan through meetings of Japanese and ASEAN high officials; through strengthening political and security cooperation in both multilateral frameworks, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, and bilateral ones, such as high-level officials' meetings and defence authority contacts; and through the promotion of cultural exchanges between ASEAN and Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1997).

The third initiative was to strengthen the so-called "joint efforts towards the challenges faced by the international community" through launching the "Japan–ASEAN South–South Cooperation Programme", according to which Japan would cooperate with ASEAN in its efforts to support intra-regional and inter-regional South–South cooperation through the Japan–UNDP Human Resources Fund and JICA; and through strengthening cooperation to face global challenges, in particular by preserving the environment, promoting the efficient use of energy, improving world health and welfare, combating international terrorism, the illicit trafficking of small firearms, illicit drugs and international organised crime, and enhancing such cooperative efforts as tackling forest fires and preserving forests, as well as establishing a "Japan–ASEAN terrorism information exchange network" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1997; ASEAN+3 Joint Statement on East Asia Cooperation, 1999).



CONCLUSION

The analysis leads to several conclusions. First, after the end of the Second World War, namely from 1952 to 1964, Japan began a regional approach to the East Asian countries through economic assistance and the payment of reparations, thereby conducting economic diplomacy.

Second, Japan was the key country that promoted regional development in Asia from 1965 to 1975 by playing a major role in establishing the Asian Development Bank, the Ministerial Conference for Economic Development and the Asian and Pacific Council.

Third, after the end of the Second World War most of Japan's prime ministers contributed to this process: Yoshida Shigeru (1948–1954), who argued that economic benefit always favoured Japan's East Asian policy; Prime Minister Kishi (1957–1960), who initiated the establishment of a South-East Asian development fund; Prime Minister Sato (1964–1972), who strongly promoted regional development; Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, who in 1977 announced the so-called Fukuda Doctrine in East Asia, arguing for peace without the military engagement of Japan, for a policy of trustful “heart-to-heart” relations and for a policy of building prosperity and mutual understanding in East Asia; and Prime Minister Hashimoto, who had a strong desire for Japan to play an active and leading role in the process of regional integration and cooperation within ASEAN, thereby placing Japan in a leading position in the promotion of regional integration and playing a crucial role in the regionalisation of East Asia, which created the basis for the establishment of the ASEAN+3 framework.

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