# Japan – Southeast Asia Relations Prior to 1977

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern Japan's initial relations with the Southeast Asian[1] region were developed largely through trade and immigration and then through a policy of military expansion. This article is an attempt to provide a general overview of the historical relations between Japan and Southeast Asian countries prior to 1977. It will discuss how Japan managed to re-enter the region, which it once attacked, occupied and where it was eventually defeated. This article also attempts to explain the value of the region to Japan.

## PREWAR JAPAN – SOUTHEAST ASIA RELATIONS

As noted above, prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War, Japan's relations with the Southeast Asian region were largely through trade and immigration. The traditional Japanese name for the region was '*Nan Yo,*' literally meaning the 'Southern Seas'.[2] The very term '*Nan Yo*' itself reveals the maritime element in the relations that existed between Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia.

Japan's first significant interest in the region developed in the 15th century against the background of Iberian expansion into the Indian and Pacific Ocean.

In the 16th century Japan opened trade with Portugal and Spain through Malacca, Goa, Manila. However the seclusion policy adopted by the Tokugawa regime (1603-1868), against the background of fears of Spanish invasion, isolated Japan from much of the rest of the world. Nagasaki was the only trade port to remain open and trade was conducted more or less exclusively with the Chinese, the Dutch and the Koreans. Shipbuilding was restricted to construction of coastal vessels and Japanese were forbidden to travel abroad under pain of death. Yet, by the 17th century, at the height of Japan's engagement with the "Southern Seas" there had been some 15,000 Japanese living in the Philippines and 8,000 in towns of Siam, as well as a small number in Annam and Cambodia.[3]

Subsequently, there has been a tendency to view Japanese involvement in the area as centering around the activities of prostitutes (karayuki-san), and military expansionists. All this seems somewhat negative. However, Raul Manglapus has argued that there was also a positive side to Japanese involvement. In 1896, for example, various Japanese organizations helped the Filipinos in their revolutionary wars against the Spaniards and later the Americans.[4] Nevertheless, Japan's Meiji government was more interested in creating a Western Style constitution, an industrialized economy, powerful military forces and a great Western style empire under the slogan "Escape from Asia, join the West" (Datsu A Nyu O). It was in fact during the Meiji period, in this content, that the sense of racial superiority was first molded among the Japanese. During the Tokugawa period, despite Japan's closed-door policy, attitudes of racial superiority were rare. Throughout the Meiji period many young Japanese were sent abroad to learn the practical skills necessary for construction of a modern military industrial state. The primary reason was to avoid Western intervention and conquest, which was already in the rise elsewhere in Asia. Japanese later realized that in order to promote industrialization, raw materials were needed. In the prewar period, these were sought primarily in the Korean Peninsular and China, Southeast Asia being under European control. Perceptions fixed in this era have lasted to the present day. Manglapus notes:

> Southeast Asia, some Japanese economists can boast today, is not now and was not then Japanese only source of raw materials or its only market.[5]

## JAPAN, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND WORLD WAR TWO

The Second World War brought Japanese military power into Southeast Asia for the first time in history. The Southeast Asian region at this time was divided into European colonies. The British dominated Burma, Malaya and Singapore, the Dutch Indonesia and French Indochina. Only Thailand remained independent. This did not mean that Japanese economic activity was entirely excluded from the area, however. By 1924 Japan had already had capital investment in the Southeast Asian region of 130 million yen, increasing to three to four hundred million yen in 1936, which was 6 percent of Japan's total overseas investment.[6] 30 percent of Japan's iron ore between 1932-34 came from Malaya, while the Netherlands East Indies provided 20 percent of Japan's oil imports in 1932. This figure had increased to 25 percent in 1936. Japan also imported coal from Indochina.[7] In the context of the prewar international situation, it was important for Japan not only to secure access to these natural resources for the development of its own economy but also to increase the supply. This along with difficulties encountered in the attempted conquest of China and the strategic necessity of cutting Western supplies to the Chinese Nationalists through Indochina and along the Burma Road, was the background for the *Nanshin* (Southward Advance) idea. One of the primary objectives of Japan's attacking Southeast Asia was to create a self-sustaining economic and political system closely linked to Tokyo's grand design in China, Manchuria and Korea.

> In northeast Asia Japan was to build an integrated industrial complex. In the southern regions (Nampo) it was to have an empire, or at least an informal empire, which would provide markets and raw materials in much the same way it had done over the years for Europeans.[8]

After the Japanese forces succeeded in occupying almost the whole coast of China, the Japanese army went on to the South to impose the concept of the 'Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere' upon the governments and the peoples of the region. The pretext for this move was in part, the liberation of the Southeast Asian countries from European colonial control. The slogan was carefully chosen to create a picture of a liberated and independent Southeast Asia and to build a sense of unity and equality among the peoples of Asia. The strong anti-colonial and anti-Western feelings that already existed among the peoples of

Southeast Asia ought to have been a great asset to Japan. Initially these peoples welcomed Japan, seeing the Japanese as liberators, but eventually they realized that the Japanese were just another group of colonizers and their hopes were shattered.

On December 8, 1941, Japanese troops landed at Singora (now Songkhla) and Patani in southern Thailand and Kota Baharu in northern Malaysia and also attacked the Philippines. Subsequently, the states in Malaysia fell one after another into the hands of the Japanese. Penang fell on December 18, Kuala Lumpur on January 11, 1942 and Malacca on January 15. The Japanese occupied Johore Baharu on January 31, and finally crossed to Singapore killing at least 2,000 civilians daily there.[9] In the Philippines the Bataan Peninsula was captured in April 1942. The Japanese landed in Dutch East Indies on March 1 and the latter surrendered on March 5 and three days later occupied Rangoon.[10]

The three and a half years of Japanese occupation left a deep and bitter impact on the minds of the peoples of the Southeast Asian region. The legacy of the Japanese occupation in Southeast Asia can be viewed in both a positive and negative light. The Japanese occupation invoked nationalism among the people in the region, encouraging them to fight against the new invaders, which subsequently helped to free Southeast Asia from domination by the Western colonial powers. It must be also be admitted that the initial victories of Japan against the West in this region proved that Asians could assert themselves against the European powers and the United States. Recently a Burmese monk who survived the war claimed that "if the Japanese army had not come in, the British might have further delayed giving independence to Myanmar".[11] The Indochinese states, Malaysia and Indonesia, too, would probably not have won their independence without the shattering impact of Japan's initial victories in the Pacific War. Nevertheless, the negative impact of the Japanese occupation was exceedingly great and left a deeper impact among the people.

The human cost of the war was immense. In Indonesia the death toll reached 3,000,000 for Java alone and 1,000,000 for the other islands, the main causes being malnourishment, disease and lack of medical care.[12] On the construction of the Burma-Siam 'railroads of death', between 300,000 to 1,000,000 Indonesians and 73,000 Malaysians died not to mention large numbers of Allied prisoners of war.[13] In 1945, in Vietnam, forced requisition of rice by the Imperial Japanese armed forces in 1945 touched of a famine which claimed up to 2,000,000 victims.[14]

In Malaysia and Singapore, the Japanese practiced various policies in handling the people. The Malays and about 45,000 Indian troops were assembled and urged to transfer their allegiance to the Emperor of Japan.[15] Those who refused and were executed, tortured, imprisoned, or sent as forced laborers to Thailand, Sumatra or New Guinea. Consequently, about 20,000 Indian troops joined the Japanese-sponsored Indian National Army to fight for India's independence from the British. The Chinese suffered the most due to the Sino-Japanese war in China. The Chinese in Malaya and Singapore were known to be supporting the Chinese Nationalist or Communist armies in china proper. All Chinese males from ages 18 to 50 were required to report to registration camps for screening. The Japanese army or the military police arrested those alleged to be anti-Japanese, meaning those who were singled out by informers or who were teachers, journalists, intellectuals, or even former servants of the British. Some were imprisoned, but most were executed, and estimates about 70,000.[16] According to one Chinese account, "The executions were carried out in a heinous way. A large number of Chinese were tied together, loaded on a boat, taken out to a sea, and pushed overboard."[17] In the Philippines, about 80,000 prisoners of war captured by the Japanese were forced to undertake the infamous 'Death March' to a prison camp 105 kilometers to the north. As many as 10,000 men, weakened by disease and malnutrition and treated harshly by their captors, died before reaching their destination.[18] In Indonesia, the trend towards forming representative elected councils introduced by the Dutch was abandoned. The active Nationalist movement leaders were not permitted to form a cabinet.[19] Many farmers and workers from Central Java were shipped to areas not known to others and nearly all of them died.[20]

The war and the occupation also damaged the economy of all Southeast Asian countries. In the Philippines sugar plantations were given over to cotton production, as this was important for the war. Rice was rationed. The Japanese destroyed the economy by issuing military currency, which failed to supply the citizens with enough food, clothing and medical treatment. The military administration's general thinking about the place of Southeast Asia in the Co-prosperity sphere can be seen from the following document:

> Industry: The southern region for the present will be a source of raw materials and a market for our manufactured products. Measures will be

> taken to prevent the development of industry in this area. Wages will be kept as low as possible.[21]

The war also gave rise to many serious social evils. In 1992, for example, several Japanese government documents came to light exposing Japanese war crimes relating to 'comfort women'. Hayashi Hirofumi describes these as crimes against humanity in their most extreme form.[22] He notes that by 1942, out of a total of 400 comfort women facilities, 100 had been established in Southeast Asia and that by August 1942 there were 16 comfort women houses in Kuala Lumpur alone, with 150 women from various ethnic groups working there.[23] The Japanese army, apparently, would frequently enter houses and commit acts of violence or gang rape to force women through shame, to enter these establishments.

Only the Thais seem to have escaped the Japanese occupation. While all of the countries in Southeast Asia were experiencing a new form of servitude, Thailand escaped and preserved her independence through shrewd application of traditional policies. As the Japanese sponsored Prime Minister of Burma, Ba Maw remarked in his memoirs:

> I found Thailand almost undamaged by the war. Except for a broken bridge or two in the heart of Bangkok there was hardly anything to show that the country had been for several years in the most devastating conflict in history. The Thais appeared completely carefree and unconcerned with the tremendous new storms already beginning to loom over the region around them. They have a definite talent for riding a storm and emerging from it none the worse for having been in it. When all the great neighboring nations were once crushed and enslaved by Western colonial nations the Thais alone succeeded in saving their freedom.[24]

## SOUTHEAST ASIAN RESISTANCE AND COLLABORATION

The Japanese occupation did meet opposition from the people in the region. In the Philippines the Japanese were opposed by increasingly effective underground and guerrilla activity that ultimately reached large-scale proportions. Postwar investigations showed that about two hundred sixty thousand people were member of guerrilla organizations and that members of the anti-Japanese underground were even more numerous. Their effectiveness was such that by the end

of the war, Japan controlled only 12 of the 48 provinces. The major element of resistance in the Central Luzon area was furnished by the Huks or the People's Anti Japanese Army, organized in early 1942 under the leadership of Luis Taruc, a Communist party member since 1939. The Huks armed some 30,000 people and extended their control over much of Luzon. Fighting continued until Japan's formal surrender on September 2, 1945.

Although the occupation lasted only three and a half years, the number of deaths and the scale of the atrocities, which took place, were inexcusable. The ruthless management by the Japanese in the early days of the occupation undermined any later efforts to enlist popular regional support for the Japanese vision of a Greater East Asia Co Prosperity Sphere, which was to comprise Japan, China, Manchuria, and Southeast Asia. As Ba Maw perceptively pointed out:

> During the war the Japanese armed forces, convinced of their power, lived in a perpetual fantasy and tried to shape reality to fit that fantasy instead of shaping the fantasy to fit the reality. They were never able to understand that every nation lives in accordance with its own facts, and what are facts in Japan may prove to be sheer nonsense in Southeast Asia. That was the causes of their failure in the whole of that region.[25]

Perhaps, the Japanese army might have succeeded in achieving its goals at least in some parts of Southeast Asia, if they had been more moderate in their approach. Initially, after all, they had much support from many people in the region. Subsequently, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended Japan's *Nanshin* movement.

'George Santayana remarked that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. This is no doubt universally true.'[26] However in Japan's case the problem would appear to be that while many (but by no means all) high ranking public figures remember the past they refuse to think about is meaning. It has been 55 years since the war ended. Japan has paid reparations. Yet for the people of Southeast Asia the blood shed and the human losses remain unforgettable. Japan's struggle with history, be it domestic or international, is still alive. A recent flashpoint has been the Chinese American Iris Chang's 'The rape of Nanking', which details Japan's war time atrocities in China. It has been difficult to find a Japanese publisher for this book. The Japanese ultra nationalists and even some liberals have accused Chang of invent-

ing things which never took place.[27] Yet while Japan is still facing a dilemma regarding the war, the ASEAN countries, at the official level, do not seem too much concerned with this issue. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir, in response to Prime Minister Murayama's (1994-1996) apology to the ASEAN people during his 1994 tour of the region, declared that "Although Japan should learn from its past, it is hard to understand why Japan keeps apologizing so much."[28] Is this attitude widespread among the people in ASEAN countries? Public opinion polls conducted by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Japan or the *Gaimusho* in five ASEAN countries are shown in Table 1.[29] These polls show that 70 percent of Thais, 60 percent of the Malaysians and Indonesians and 50 percent of Filipinos say that do not care about the Japanese behavior during the war. Yet the results are more complex than they appear on the surface and can give Japanese no grounds for complacency. It can be seen, for example, that the number of Indonesians who say they cannot forget Japanese actions in World War II has increased from 29 percent to 33 percent between 1992 and 1997. The number who don't care at all has decreased. At the same time, the number of people who do not hold bitter memories about the Japanese years but still felt bad about them increased from 33 percent in 1992 to 43 percent in 1997 in Malaysia, from 44 to 47 percent in Singapore and from 36 to 46 percent in Thailand. Generally speaking, between 1992 and 1997, there has been increase in the number of Indonesian, Singaporeans and Thais who declare that they cannot forget the harsh memories of the war. The rise in these numbers was possibly caused by the controversy surrounding the apology for wartime atrocities given by Japanese Prime Minister Murayama in 1994. The reappearance of Japanese military forces in Southeast Asia (albeit under the U.N. flag) during peacekeeping operations in Cambodia might also have been a factor.

Table 1: Question: How do you feel about Japan during World War II? Results for the year 1997

| | Indonesia | Malaysia | Philippines |
|---|---|---|---|
| Can't forget as bad memory | 33 (29) (36) (27) | 32 (40) (25) (27) (33) | 35 (37) (35) (20) (45) |
| Don't care now, while feeling bad | 48 (52) (36) (28) | 43 (33) (42) (42) (43) | 36 (37) (54) (41) (38) |
| Don't care at all | 12 (18) (27) (36) | 17 (19) (28) (25) (17) | 14 (11) (7) (36) (14) |
| Don't know | 8 (2) (2) (9) | 7 (8) (5) (6) (7) | 13 (16) (5) (3) (3) |

| | Singapore | Thai |
|---|---|---|
| Can't forget as bad memory | 41 (31) (25) (29) (21) | 24 (18) (29) (23) (22) |
| Don't care now, while feeling bad | 47 (44) (37) (34) (38) | 46 (36) (40) (32) (29) |
| Don't care at all | 3 (19) (30) (29) (27) | 25 (27) (26) (27) (38) |
| Don't know | 9 (4) (8) (8) (14) | 5 (19) (4) (18) (11) |

1. All figures are in percentages.
2. This question was not forwarded to the Indonesians in 1978.
3. The first figure is for the year 1997, the first bracketed figure is for the year 1992, followed by 1987, 1983 and 1978.

## POSTWAR YEARS

The war also left its legacy in Japan. The end of the war brought Japan under an allied occupation dominated by the United States. The Japanese during the occupation years could concentrate on reconstructing their devastated economy. The United States guided Japanese foreign and security policies with a firm hand. The Communist victory in China in 1949, the outbreak of civil war in Korea in 1950 and the French attempt to ecologies Indochina brought the Cold War into Asia. The Cold War had its origins in Europe and was essentially an ideological war between the free market democracy championed by the U.S. and the communist bloc led (at first) by the Soviet Union. American global strategy oscillated between the concepts of 'containment' and 'rollback', with exponents of the former generally holding the upper hand. In Asia, the U.S. sought to reconstruct Japan as their chief ally and client. The Korean War contributed to Japan's military build-up. Northeast Asia was a vital link in the American global strategy to prevent the newly independent countries of Southeast Asia from "going communist". The United States was also anxious to ensure that Japan did not re-emerge as an independent center of political, economic and military power. In fact, many Americans who occupied Japan after the war did not want to see a remilitarize Japan at all. The Cold War, however, made that position difficult to maintain. The Americans developed a complex alliance structure in the region. The Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) was subsequently formed and bilateral agreements with Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines were signed. By signing the U.S. Japan treaty, Washington sought to use Japan as its proxy in the Western Pacific area.

The re-emergence of Japan as a major economic power in the late 1960s was a matter of concern to the Southeast Asian region, as it was feared that this might foreshadow a second Japanese politico-military penetration of the region. This thinking is understandable in view of the fact that bitter memories of the war were still vivid in the minds of Southeast Asian people. However, the pacifist constitution, military weakness and the security dependency on the United States were significant constraints on all Japanese governments. During the 1950s and 1960s Japan's relations with the Southeast Asian region developed principally within the structure of Tokyo's dependent alliance with the United States. The United States devised an economic recovery plan for Japan in such a way that the country would be firmly locked into Washington's regional containment of communism strategy. George Kennan, Director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, wished to link up Japan with the Southeast Asian region. Winfield explains Kennan's thinking:

> [T]he Japanese economy should be closely linked with those of the newly independent non-Communist states of South-East Asia, the great arc of resource rich territories extending through the Philippines, Indonesia and Indochina to the Indian subcontinent and Afghanistan.[30]

Article 14 of the San Francis o Peace Treaty directed Japan to pay reparations to the countries it had occupied during the war. However the article allowed Japan to deal with the countries directly in relation to the amount of the payments. Alan Rix states that from the 1950s Japan's loan assistance policy has been based on Japan's need to maintain a market in and to obtain raw materials from the Southeast Asian nations.[31] Prime Minister Kishi (1957-1960) visited the region (May-November 1957) to discuss and prepare the groundwork for the war reparation scheme. Among the recipients of the aid were Burma (1954)*, Thailand (1955), the Philippines (1956), Indonesia (1958), South Vietnam (1959).[32] Malaysia and Singapore obtained their reparations later in 1967 as they were both British colonies at the time the scheme was begun.[33] Table 2 shows the amount of grants and loans all these states secured in the context of Japan's reparations program. Technical grants were extended to Laos (1958) and Cambodia (1959). China, Japan's greatest war victim, was not given reparations because of Japan's participation in Washington's Cold War containment of communism strategy.

Table 2: Japanese Reparations to Southeast Asia[34] (in millions of U.S. dollars)

| Country | Year | Grant Amount $ | Loans Amount $ / Period |
|---|---|---|---|
| Burma | 1955 to 1977 | 351.1 | 50 / 10 Yrs |
| Thailand | 1955 to 1969 | 41.8 | |
| Malaysia | 1969 to - | 8.3 | |
| Brunei | | | |
| Singapore | 1967 to | | |
| Indonesia | 1958 to 1969 | 400 | 400 / 20 Yrs |
| Philippines | 1956 to 1975 | 550 | 250 / 20 Yrs |
| Laos | 1959 to 1960 | 2.8 | |
| Cambodia | 1959 to 1961 | 4.2 | |
| South Vietnam | 1960 to 1964 | 3.9 | 16.5 / 5 Yrs |

The war reparation scheme paved the way for Japan's active involvement in the regions' economies. Chaiwat Khamchoo notes that:

> [T]he reparations and subsequent economic aid gave Japan access to ASEAN markets which led to Japan's economic expansion in the region. By the late 1960's Japan had become a primary trading partner of ASEAN, replacing the former colonial powers of Europe and surpassing the U.S.[35]

At the same time, whatever Japan paid as war reparations came back as profits to Japanese companies. Although Japanese investment did boost the economic development of the region, it also tied the local industries to the Japanese economy. For example, Japanese machinery was exported to Southeast Asia. This subsequently obliged the local industries to purchase spare parts form Japan. In the electronics industry, Southeast Asian nations either produced the components for the items, or sent them to Japan for assembly, or obtained the components from Japan or elsewhere and assembled them locally. In either case the complete production process was kept from them. This prevented the region's economies from them. This prevented the region's economies from becoming completely independent.

To the people of Southeast Asia the reparations, paradoxically, brought back memories of the war. No amount of money could repay the damages done to their countries or bring back those they had lost. Nevertheless, the repara-

tions did help the normalization of relations between Japan and the Southeast Asian countries and facilitated Japan's economic expansion in the region.

In the period between 1965-1975, against the background of the American anti-Communist crusade in Indochina, Japan came under intense pressure from the United States to contribute more to economic development in the region. Japanese governments, however, resolutely refused to capitulate to American pressure to extend military support to the cause of the 'Free World' in the region. Prime Ministers Hayato Ikeda (1960-1964), Eisaku Sato (1964-1972) and Kakuei Tanaka (1972-1974) each visited Southeast Asian countries twice. During Sato's visit in 1966, Japan initiated the Ministerial Conference on the Development of Southeast Asia (MEDSEA). The primary aims of the conference were to establish a forum to explain Japan's foreign assistance policies, to discuss reparations to the Indochinese states after the Vietnam War and also to establish a leadership position in the region. Relations with Southeast Asia subsequently expanded and many regional development programs were established. The conference was held annually until 1974 when anti-Japanese sentiment expressed during Tanaka's visit brought about certain reluctance on the part of the Southeast Asian countries to continue the meetings beyond 1975.

Various important multilateral economic initiatives were also implemented. Perhaps the most important among these was the establishment of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) set up in December 1966 'for the purpose of regional development financing".[36] Although subscriptions to the bank's capital stock have come from a large number of countries in the Asian region and beyond, the president of the ADB has always been a Japanese national and the headquarters is in Manila. Japan's involvement in the ADB is very important with regards to its regional commitment, as it had been "instrumental in multilaterali sing a strong Japanese institutional presence."[37]

During the early 1970s, at the height of its period of extended, steady economic growth, Japan was confronted by several global and regional events that profoundly influenced its approach towards Southeast Asia. The Sino-U.S. rapprochement, the collapse of the international monetary system, to two oil crises, the Sino-Soviet rivalry and the decline of the American military presence in the region as well as anti-Japanese movements in Southeast Asia were among the many events that combined to bring about important changes in Japan's foreign policy.[38] From these developments, Japan's leaders drew the conclusion

that the Pax Americana was coming to an end and Japan would have to take more responsibility in the region.

Concerning the anti-Japanese riots in Bangkok, by the 1960s Japan's economic expansion in the region had become extremely significant. Thailand had come to experience an alarming trade deficit with Japan. In 1960 Japan's share of Thailand's automotive market was ten percent. By the 1970s, it had shot up to eighty percent.[39] More than three hundred Japanese companies covering all business sectors had been established in Bangkok.[40] Against this background serious unrest developed among the Thai people, particularly students, who staged huge demonstrations in Bangkok in October 1973, insisting that the Japanese were "economic aggressors".[41] Since the end of the war, despite American pressure, Japan had tried to stay away from becoming involved in the region politically or militarily and had focused exclusively on economic relation. However the 1973 anti-Japanese riots in Jakarta and Bangkok during Prime Minister Tanaka's tour of ASEAN nations clearly indicated to the Japanese that it was high time to develop an independent political dimension to their involvement in the region. During his visit to Bangkok, Tanaka was greeted by more than 5,000 hostile demonstrators, most of them students protesting against Japan's perceived economic dominance in their country. In Indonesia several people were killed in anti-Japanese demonstrations and more than 200 cars burned.[42] These incidents made Tokyo acutely aware of the strong repulsion felt by the Southeast Asian people against Japanese at that time.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA TO JAPAN

As already noted, Japan's initial interests and involvement in the region were primarily economic. As a country with limited land area and poor natural resources, modern Japan has been naturally very much concerned about the economic aspects of its security. After World War II, Japan concentrated on reviving its economy. Raw materials and markets for its goods were thus essential. The Cold War and American containment policies had closed the Chinese continent, with which prewar Japan had enjoyed the most intimate economic and political relations, and which had been the center of its grand regional strategy. This was the background against which Southeast Asia emerged as an important market for Japanese products, a supplier of raw materials, a trading partner, a field for investment and a recipient of economic assistance. Japan's trade with Southeast

Asian in 1965 totaled 1,382 million yen, which increased to 11,281 million yen in 1975 and 36,162 million yen in 1981.[43]

A substantial amount of Japan's raw materials come from the Southeast Asian states. By 1976, 98 percent of Japan's natural rubber, 96 percent of tin, 59 percent of copra, 37 percent of copper and 14 percent of crude oil came from this region.[44] The 1973 and 1978 oil crises and the continued turmoil in the Middle East caused Japan to reduce its dependence on Middle Eastern crude oil. In 1981, 59 percent of Indonesia's oil and 26 percent of Malaysia's oil went to Japan.[45]

Against this background, Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) came to be heavily concentrated in the Southeast Asian region. Japan emerged as the largest single bilateral donor to all these countries.[46] Between 1970-1979, Japan was the biggest donor of aid to ASEAN with its donations amounting to 33 billion dollars. In 1981, 71 percent of Japan's bilateral ODA went to Asia and 35 percent to ASEAN.[47]

Furthermore, Southeast Asia's strategic location is also of importance to Japan as it lies across the major shipping routes from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, through the Malacca and the Lombok Straits. About one third of Japan's total exports and imports, for example, 80 percent of its oil imports, pass through the Malacca Straits.[48] The importance of the shipping lanes can be seen in Japan's move to form the Malacca Straits Council, a body that carries out hydrographic surveys, navigational aid and tidal and current studies.[49] The council has as its purpose not simply improving the facilities of the routes but also ensuring the safety of the ships passing through the straits.[50]

Culturally, ASEAN, comprising a number of rich multi cultural societies, is perceived by many in Japan, a relatively homogeneous society, as providing opportunities for the Japanese people to begin the process of reintegration with Asia. The struggle between 'Asianism' and 'Westernism' remains an extremely important dimension of Japanese political, economic and cultural life. There is, of course, always the more fundamental and simple desire to make amends for World War II. All this can be seen in Japan's efforts to set up various cultural activities to enhance and expand cultural interaction with ASEAN.

## CONCLUSION

This article has examined relations between Japan and ASEAN prior to 1977. It is well known that ASEAN region has been, and remains important to Japan economically, politically and strategically. Until the 1970s, in the context of American global strategy market forces shaped the expansion of Japan's economic activities in the region. Japan's economic assistance and economic relations with ASEAN demonstrated the perceived importance of the region to her foreign policy. The economic progress and stability of ASEAN is very important for Japan's security and survival as a modern, industrial sate. This is especially true of the ASEAN countries located around important sea routes.

## NOTES

1 Southeast Asia, in this article, is defined as the ten countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, Singapore, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Philippines and Brunei. Charles Fisher, *Southeast Asia: A Social, Economic and Political Geography*, Methuen and Co., London, 1971, p.3.

2 *Ibid.* p. 95.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Raul Manglapus, *Japan in Southeast Asia: Collision Course,* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, New York, 1976, pg. 1.

5 Raul Manglapus, p.2.

6 W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, p.223.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid,* p.224.

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10 Ienaga Saburo, *The Pacific War, 1931-1945*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, p. 143.

11 "Myanmar monk recalls wartime stint with Japan", *Japan Times,* 24.3.99, p.3.

12 John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1986, pg.296.

13 *Ibid.*

14 For a detailed discussion, see Bui Minh Dung, *Japan-Vietnam Relations: French Indochina in Japanese Geopolitical, Strategic perspectives During the Second World War,* M.A.Thesis, International University of Japan, 1991, pp. 115ff. See also Ienaga Saburo, op.cit, p.178 and David Mar, "Harnessing the Whirlwind", in Robin Jeffrey (ed.), *Asia-The Winning of Independence*, Macmillan Press, London, 1981, pp.91-94.

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19 W.G. Beasley, p.239.

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21 John Dower, p.155.

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23 *Ibid.* p.214.

24 Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946,* Yale University Press, London, 1968, p.405.

25 *Ibid.* p.411.

26 *Japan Times,* 9.6.99.

27 "Chang's 'Nanking' hot potato", *Japan Times*, 20.3.97, p.3.

28 "Mahathir tells Japan to forget compensation for war victims", *Japan Times*, 28.8.94.

29 File no.97-24, *Public Opinion of Japan in ASEAN*, MOFA, April 1997. This file war provided to the writer by Foreign Ministry Official.

30 Cited in John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System*, The athlone Press, London, 1988, p.28.

31 Alan Rix, *Japan's Economic Aid: Policy making and Politics*, Croom helm, London, 1980, p.25.

* The years reparation agreement were concluded.

32 Wolf Mendl, *Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interest*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp.97-98.

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