



4 ASEAN–JAPAN RELATIONSHIP AS A SIGNIFICANT PARTNER*

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SUMMARY: I. Introduction II. Examination of ASEAN–Japan Relationship III. The Future of the ASEAN–Japan Relationship IV. Conclusion V. Bibliography

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I. INTRODUCTION

ASEAN and Japan have their half-century relationship, and both parties have cultivated their partnership in the multi-dimensional aspects, including political security, economic, and socio-cultural matters. In 2018, ASEAN and Japan celebrated the 45-year anniversary of friendship and cooperation, and committed to enhancing their strategic partnership.¹ According to the Japanese government, “ASEAN has also been strengthening its presence as an important partner of Japan in the area of the economy”.² However, the relationship was not always right and amicable from the beginning because of the suspicion toward Japanese militarism before the WWII and the pollution exports by the overseas expansion of the Japanese industry. However, the nearly 50-year history of ASEAN and Japan strengthened their relationship in terms of not only the mere economic cooperation but also the significant partnership to the development of East Asian regional architecture (Yamakage, 2016).

The paper intends to briefly explain the relationship between ASEAN and Japan, and understand how Japan has developed a significant partnership with ASEAN as well as how ASEAN has played a pivotal role in the mega-regional development, such as the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific region. Since its inception, ASE-

¹ ASEAN Secretariat (2018).

² MOFA of Japan (2019), p. 81.

AN has increased its member countries and expanded its functions on a regional and global scale. The half century of the relationship building was characterised as a series of history, in which Japan has identified itself as a part of East Asia (Sudo, 2009). ASEAN has also reinforced its closer regional interaction by establishing several international fora, particularly since the 1990s. Such an effort of ASEAN has not slowed down even after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997.

We would also like to touch upon the concept of “ASEAN centrality”. It is a relatively new term to explain the position that ASEAN intends to take. This “term” appeared in the ASEAN Charter and the chairman’s statement of the East Asia Summit in 2007.³ The chairman’s statement of the ASEAN Summit held in Hanoi, Viet Nam, on 28 October 2010 also explicitly mentioned ASEAN centrality.⁴ Indeed, several studies point out the concept of ASEAN centrality to understand the development of ASEAN to date (Caballero 2014, Fukunaga 2015, Shoji 2017, Acharya 2017, Tan 2017, Tay 2019, Ishikawa 2019). To sum up the such studies, we can depict four critical characteristics of ASEAN centrality: (1) ASEAN’s geographical location in the region, (2) facilitator of the process of ASEAN conferences (3) substantial driver of the regional issues, and (4) negative discourse not to decline its status in the region.

The first characteristics is related to the physical location of ASEAN. In 2010, ASEAN released the Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), one of the instruments for ASEAN to connect physically with external partners. While the connectivity elements are not limited to hard infrastructures, the maximum impact of the connectivity is closely related to the ASEAN integration processes that enhance the relationship with other external powers (Ho 2012).

The second explanation means that ASEAN plays the role of initiate, host, or chair meetings with dialogue partners. ASEAN has successfully invited the other external powers to have meetings and fora that have framed the regional architecture (e.g. Post Ministerial Conference, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN plus-three and East Asia Summit). Fukunaga (2015) indicates that ASEAN has successfully been the component of regional FTA evolution by providing various opportunities for discussions.⁵

The third explanation is the most meaningful. Not only has the ASEAN’s approach to multilateralism brought great powers to the discussion table, but it has also helped legitimise roles of great power and given ASEAN the

3 ASEAN Secretariat (2007).

4 The statement stressed the importance of enhancing and maintaining ASEAN centrality in the evolving regional architecture.

5 Fukunaga (2015).

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opportunity to claim a small power “voice”. The message, “the group, moving from neutrality to centrality”, is also an example to explain ASEAN’s motivation that encourage to add definite meanings. As Surin Pitsuwan, the former Secretary-General of ASEAN, described, the meaning of ASEAN centrality is to set the agenda, provide directions, and resolve disputes.⁶

The fourth explanation is the negative discourse of ASEAN centrality. A variety of scholars frequently point out that ASEAN centrality has faced challenges, or the position of ASEAN’s centrality is eroding (Tsjeng 2016). One of the occasions where ASEAN watchers found the decline of ASEAN centrality was the failure of issuing the joint communique regarding the South China Sea dispute in 2012 Cambodian chairmanship (Ho, 2016). Acharya (2017) mentions that ASEAN centrality is a product of both ASEAN and external players, which implies that the centrality is not autonomous for ASEAN as a group.

Based on East Asian regionalism to reflect the primacy of political motivations in concluding intergovernmental agreements, ASEAN centrality was formed due to this complex architecture of FTAs. With a view to understanding relationship between ASEAN and Japan, the strategic importance of ASEAN for Japan is characterised by several factors. Before starting to agree to form FTAs with ASEAN, as well as each ASEAN member state, Japan has promoted economic and industrial cooperation, which currently enebles a driving force of economic integration consolidated by ASEAN and East Asia economies.

This paper patches fills the gaps within some previous researchers, reviewing history of the ASEAN-Japan relationship. We emphasise the significance of continuing and renewing the reciprocal economic and industrial cooperation between the two partoners, mainly in terms of Japan’s role in ensuring and strengthening ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture. As we survey, ASEAN’s economic strength and vibrancy will be at the heart of ASEAN centrality, and Japanese cooperation has encouraged such function. As we mentioned in our previous paper (Nishimura et al., 2019), the future robust relationship should be escalated from existing economic and industrial cooperation to a more socio-cultural aspect, where Japan has faced several socio-economic issues. Based on Japan’s experience, it is hoped that this cooperation will contribute to bolster ASEAN centrality associated with conventional heart-to-heart diplomacy.⁷

This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 examines brief history of the ASEAN–Japan relationship by dividing it into four periods. Section 3

⁶ Mueller (2019), p. 181.

⁷ Japan established so-called heart-to-heart diplomacy built on relations of trust by reflecting on the past WWII when it restarted the relationship with ASEAN.

presents the two examples of ASEAN-Japan cooperation, namely, Indo-Pacific and coronavirus challenge, to briefly discuss the future cooperation in line with ASEAN centrality. Finally, Section 4 concludes.

II. EXAMINATION OF ASEAN–JAPAN RELATIONSHIP⁸

Firstly, our paper intends to review the history of the ASEAN-Japan relationship with a viewpoint of the community building process, partnership, and ASEAN centrality. In this paper, we would like to focus on the development of the relationship by focusing on the four periods: (1) the inception of the heart-to-heart relationship and intercommunication between ASEAN and Japan (creation phase of ASEAN: 1960s–1980s); (2) the development of the alliance between the two parties, focusing on industrial cooperation from Japan after the Cold War (early phase of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC): 1980s–1990s); (3) emphasis on a mega-regional community in the context of China’s emergence; and (4) the establishment of AEC and further enhancement of the cooperation (2010s–present). Through a historical overview, we present agenda items to enhance the relationship towards the future, mainly from industrial cooperation, which has been the most considerable contribution of Japan to the consolidation of ASEAN centrality.

PERIOD OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ASEAN (THE 1960S–1970S)

ASEAN was established in 1967 by the foreign ministers’ agreement of five countries. The Bangkok Declaration proposed the purpose of the establishment of ASEAN, such as accelerating economic growth, social progress and cultural development, promoting regional peace and stability, and maintaining close and beneficial cooperation among member states.⁹ In the relation between Southeast Asia and Japan, the Southeast Asian Development Fund Initiative by Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi was one of the starting points that Japan was willing to engage in the development of Southeast Asia and its economic rehabilitation. However, Japan’s plan established the yen-loan finance system (the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund) in 1961 to provide long-term credit to developing countries differently from post-war reparation. Despite its explicit objective to advance economic cooperation through the stable provision of finance, the fund intended to increase manufacturing exports, especially the chemical plant industry, and strengthen these Japanese industries’ global competitiveness through “tied loans”.¹⁰

⁸ We develop this part by relying on our previous paper (Nishimura et al. 2018).

⁹ ASEAN Secretariat (1967).

¹⁰ In general, a government provides a tied loan to a foreign borrower in return for the promise that the borrower will purchase goods and services from the lender’s country using such loan.

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One of the objectives of establishing ASEAN as a small and medium-sized countries group was to avoid unnecessary regional conflicts among large nations regarding security interests.¹¹ Considering this founding principle of ASEAN and reflecting on the WWII, Japan's initial relationship with ASEAN emphasised “heart-to-heart” intercommunication not to impair ASEAN's regional autonomy. Nikai (2017) recounts the anti-Japanese riots that took place when Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka visited Indonesia in 1974 and states that ASEAN member states (AMS)'s strong opposition signalled an opportunity to reconsider the relationship and promote a better understanding of Japan among the people of ASEAN.

The formal relationship between ASEAN and Japan was started by establishing the 1st ASEAN-Japan Rubber Forum in 1973. Subsequently, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda was invited to the Japan-ASEAN summit on the sidelines of the 2nd ASEAN Summit in 1977. In August 1977, Mr Fukuda delivered a famous speech in Manila, known as the ‘Fukuda Doctrine’, which formed the fundamental Japanese policy towards ASEAN.¹² In 1978, Japan obtained the status of dialogue partner with ASEAN and started the Japan-ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (known as Post Ministerial Conference [PMC]).

EARLY PHASE OF THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (THE 1980S–1990S)

At the moment of the Plaza Accord in 1985, the Japanese yen's appreciation encouraged Japanese firms to increase their foreign direct investment (FDI) towards AMS. Although ASEAN faced the global recession at the beginning of the 1980s, each member state has started to relax the FDI restriction in the mid 1980s to catch the flow of investments. In line with the trend, the 3rd ASEAN Summit, held in Manila in 1987, formally authorised the transformation of their economic policies outward-looking export-oriented development strategy (Shimizu, 1998). Japan also started to cooperate along with the policy shift of ASEAN. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Japan proposed the New Asian Industrial Development Plan (New AID Plan) in 1987 to promote the development of export industries in Asian countries. The rapid appreciation of the Japanese yen, caused by the Plaza Accord in 1985, accelerated this change on Japan's side.¹³

11 This concept of security interests was reflected in formulating the 1971 Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality and the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

12 The Fukuda Doctrine advocates the three principles of Japan's foreign policy: (1) Japan rejects the role of a military power; (2) Japan increases mutual confidence and trust; and (3) Japan is an equal partner of dependence, i.e. mutual dependence.

13 Japan experienced a severe trade war with the United States and the European Community. The trade environment surrounding Japan was another reason for the change in its attitude towards ASEAN.

The 3rd ASEAN Summit in 1987 decided to utilise FDI to strengthen the economic development for ASEAN.¹⁴ In line with the policy change, the private sector pushes regional integration. Mitsubishi Motors Cooperation proposed the Brand to Brand Complementation (BBC) scheme to ASEAN to take advantage of scale economies and regional trade within ASEAN.¹⁵ This scheme allows foreign firms to complement the manufacturing parts intra ASEAN scale under the same brand. The ASEAN Industrial Cooperation (AICO) scheme in 1996, based on BBC, provided an opportunity for multinational firms to carry out trade with tariff rates of less than 5% within the region to promote effective division of production bases and facilitate complementation of manufacturing parts.¹⁶

The end of the Cold War in 1989 was also one of the critical moments of ASEAN's regional integration. As clearly described at the 4th ASEAN Summit statement, ASEAN proposed to create the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and started to expand their membership to CLMV countries (i.e. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam). The AFTA forms a basis of the AEC building established in 2015.

In the 1990s, ASEAN started to expand its economic integration and deepen its production networks by establishing the division of labour. One of the critical elements was the efforts toward peace of Cambodia and Indochina. In 1991, the Cambodia Civil War ended, and the Japanese government started to cooperate with Indochina countries to foster economic and social development in the region. Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa proposed the Forum for Comprehensive Development of Indochina (FCDI) in 1993 to reconstruct the region's development. Asian Development Bank also proposed the concept of Greater Mekong Subregion to enhance Indochina countries' development at the same time. One of those moves' aspirations is to assist the accession of Indochina countries to the member of ASEAN.

In 1992, ASEAN and Japan launched the ASEAN Economic Ministers–MITI of Japan (AEM–MITI) Ministers Meeting, held every year since. MITI of Japan proposed the CLM Working Group on economic cooperation under the AEM–MITI to facilitate the market economy in CLM countries and promote the division of labour in collaboration with AMS. CLM-WG was reformed as the AEM–MITI Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee in 1997 to promptly support ASEAN's industrial policies (Maeda, 2005).

14 ASEAN (1987).

15 The memorandum of the BBC scheme was signed among economic ministers at the 20th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in October 1988.

16 The AICO scheme was proposed at the 5th ASEAN Summit in December 1995, signed as the Basic Agreement on the ASEAN Industrial Cooperation Scheme at the informal ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in April 1996, and became effective in November 1996.

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The committee held regular vice-ministerial-level consultations that needed intensive efforts concerning technological development, supporting industries, and to promote the dissemination of Japanese knowledge and skills to Asian firms and capacity building of human resources in the manufacturing industries. In conjunction with deliberate support for manufacturing industrial development, Japan played a significant role in forming an infrastructure foundation in several AMS.¹⁷

Additionally, ASEAN and Japan sought to form a new regional economic partnership in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1989. Japan's leadership towards the Asia-Pacific region incorporated ASEAN in economic development and established the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC) and APEC (Terada 2001). In this regard, it is worth noting that the 1st ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, and Korea) Summit was held in 1997 on Japan's initiative, and it has become a regular meeting every year since. Although the Asian financial crisis inflicted severe economic damage on ASEAN, Japan provided financial support amounting to \$80 billion to AMS (New Miyazawa Initiative) and took leadership of developing the Chiang Mai Initiative for monetary cooperation in the ASEAN Plus Three framework.

DEVELOPMENT OF FTA PERIOD (THE 2000S)

After the Asia Financial Crisis experience, ASEAN started the ASEAN Community building process at the beginning of the 21st century. In 2003, ASEAN announced the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali Concord II). ASEAN declared to establish the Community building by 2020. Among other things, the AEC aimed to “create a stable, prosperous and highly competitive ASEAN economic region in which there is a free flow of goods, services, investment and a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities in the year 2020” (ASEAN Secretariat 1997). The Tokyo Declaration for the Dynamic and Enduring ASEAN–Japan Partnership in the New Millennium was also published at the 2003 ASEAN–Japan Special Summit in Tokyo to reconfirm fostering close and cooperative relations.

The government of Japan gradually shifted its policy from multilateralism (GATT/WTO) to bilateralism (FTA) at the begging of the 2000s. Since the

17 One conspicuous example is the development of the East-West Economic Corridor in the Mekong region. There, Japan's support ranged from conceptualising and conducting a (pre)feasibility study of the economic corridor to constructing physical infrastructure (via Japan International Cooperation Agency), including roads, bridges, seaports, airports, and electricity facilities. Another contribution is Japan's involvement with industrial estates such as the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate in Thailand, established in 1996, where many Japanese manufacturing firms brought automobile and machinery production infrastructure. This helped Thailand to realise export-oriented industrialisation.



signing of the FTA with Singapore in 2001, Japan promoted the agreement of FTA/EPA with each AMS respectively (see Table 1). In 2008, the ASEAN–Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement went into force with newly acceded CLMV countries.¹⁸

The drastic shift from multilateralism-centred policy to FTA approach prescribed Japan’s active engagement with the economic development of ASEAN as a region (Kim, 2015). Kim (2015) points out the importance of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi speech, “Japan and ASEAN in East Asia - A Sincere and Open Partnership” for the policy shift of Japan towards ASEAN.¹⁹ Prime Minister Koizumi proposed AJCEP and created a “community that acts together and advances together” for achieving this through expanding East Asia cooperation founded upon the Japan-ASEAN relationship (MOFA Japan 2002). This speech was epoch-making to the link between Northeast and Southeast Asia and provided the starting point of the regional economic partnership in 20 years (Kim, 2015).²⁰

ASEAN was intended to provide common institutional platforms involving considerable external powers. In particular, China has become a fast-growing power in East Asia in the 21st century and established the position of the “factory of the world”. Economically, China reformed a more market-oriented economy (i.e. socialist market economy). ASEAN has also deepened the relation with China by establishing the ASEAN-China FTA, signed in 2002. ASEAN-led architecture in East Asia region, including the ASEAN Plus Three Summit, the East Asia Summit, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) gave ASEAN a good opportunity to utilise the huge economic potential of China. Although the position of Japan in East Asia has slightly declined as a regional economic power, Japan actively promotes the free trade and investment in this region and deepens the partnership with ASEAN.

Finding the Chinese economy more attractive, Japanese investors increased FDI in China during this period. In contrast to ASEAN and Japan’s continued close political relations, Japanese firms’ interests in ASEAN dropped off. China’s rise caused changes in the regional order both economically and politically in East Asia, which could be a threat to ASEAN centrality.

As East Asia’s power balance changed with the lower position of Japan in the region, Japanese policies for ASEAN were also dramatically modified.

18 The EPA between Viet Nam and Japan went into force in October 2009.

19 MOFA Japan (2002), Japan and ASEAN in East Asia -A Sincere and Open Partnership, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0201/speech.pdf> (Access 21 November 2020)

20 China and Korea had signed FTAs with ASEAN in November 2002 and December 2005, respectively, before Japan concluded the AJCEP.

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Japan's ODA achieved above \$1 billion in 1997 and has been decreasing to about \$0.5 billion. Japan has tried to continue the ODA to promote visible support to the world.

NEW PHASE OF ASEAN-JAPAN COOPERATION (THE 2010S–)

The relationship between ASEAN and Japan has further deepened since 2010 in line with ASEAN's community building process. In 2011, Japan's mission to ASEAN was formally established in Jakarta, Indonesia, as the second diplomatic mission by the non-AMS. ASEAN and Japan launched the Joint Declaration for Enhancing ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership for Prospering Together (Bali Declaration) at 14th ASEAN-Japan Summit held in 2011. The declaration intended to promote further "the longstanding friendship and strategic partnership based on the Tokyo Declaration" and presented the five strategies and cooperation activities in the political-security, economic, and socio-cultural fields.

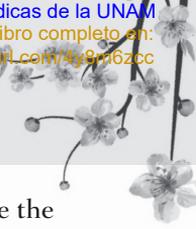
At the end of 2012, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe started the most extended administration in the history of constitutional politics of Japan (December 2012–September 2020). Prime Minister Abe selected ASEAN as his first destination of diplomacy. He announced the Five New Principles for Japanese diplomacy in 2013 (Abe Doctrine), in the face of the 40-year anniversary between ASEAN and Japan. Notably enough, the third principle of the Abe Doctrine states "...is pursuing free, open, interconnected economies as part of Japan's diplomacy. We must secure the power of networking by bringing our national economies closer together through flows of trade and investment, people, and goods", which would lend support for the realisation of the AEC.²¹

Furthermore, 2013 was the year that ASEAN and Japan faced the 40-year anniversary of the diplomatic partnership in 2013. The two parties pledged to deepen further cooperation in terms of the political-security (e.g. peace and stability, ASEAN centred architectures, and freedom of navigation, Japan's proactive contribution to peace), economy (e.g. AJCEP, RCEP, ASEAN connectivity), as well as socio-cultural issues (e.g. tourism, disaster management, Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths [JENESYS 2.0]).²²

Indeed, the most significant event during this period was the establishment of the ASEAN Community with the three pillars, APSC, AEC and

21 The speech of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on 18 January 2013, titled 'The Bounty of the Open Seas: Five New Principles for Japanese Diplomacy', is available at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201301/18speech_e.html.

22 See chairman's statement on 16th ASEAN Japan Summit in 2013, and Joint Declaration for Enhancing ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership for Prospering Together (Bali Declaration) in 2011.



ASCC, at the end of 2015. Japan also gave substantial support to realise the ASEAN Community in multi-dimensional ways. Japanese firms have also rediscovered the ASEAN market's attractiveness since the 2010s, and Indonesia and Viet Nam have increased their inflow FDI dramatically. The movement boosted the inflow of FDI to ASEAN from all over the world, too. These include efforts to build the AEC; the low wages of ASEAN compared with China; developing ASEAN centred the economic partnership network; the large-scale market with increasing middle classes; and the rise of CLMV countries (Ambashi, 2017).

Prime Minister Abe presented the concept of “quality of infrastructure” as a principle of exporting infrastructure development, intending to help enhance ASEAN connectivity. The focus of the programme is not only to increase infrastructure investments in the ASEAN region but also prevail in the international standard regarding infrastructure investment.²³ After launching the “quality of infrastructure” programme, Japan has made efforts to disseminate its initiative in various international fora, such as G7 Ise-Shima Summit in 2016, G20 Hangzhou Summit in 2016, Osaka Summit in 2019, and the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) in 2019.²⁴ Japan also expressed its new plan to provide ODA loans focusing on infrastructure development that reinforces ASEAN connectivity. In this regard, an additional contribution of \$100 million to the Japan–ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) was also made public as JAIF 2.0.²⁵

The ASEAN-led economic mechanism, such as the AEC Blueprint 2025 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015), promotes RCEP. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) also includes some AMS, and another AMS has the interest of its accession. The RCEP was finally concluded in November 2020; however, it is desirable to promote it toward a higher liberalisation level and strengthen ASEAN-centered architecture. Moreover, further expansion of the CPTPP also significant to complement other regional economic ties (AEC and RCEP) and to provoke improvement of the RCEP and AEC toward the CPTPP level.²⁶

In addition to the mega-regional trade systems, region-wide efforts for development are expanding from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific region.

23 See “Summary: Partnership for Quality Infrastructure: Investment for Asia’s Future”, available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000081298.pdf> (accessed on 28 September 2020).

24 See the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, which lists speech on quality infrastructure made by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/bunya/infrastructure/index.html> (accessed on 28 September 2020).

25 The JAIF was established in 2006 to help ASEAN achieve economic integration and narrow development gaps for the ASEAN Community.

26 China expressed their intention to join CPTPP on occasion of the APEC summit in November 2020. https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20201121_04/ (Access 21 November 2020).

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Whereas Japan launched the initiative of Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy to promote the rule of law and pursuit economic prosperity, ASEAN declared its original “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” in 2019 to lead the shaping of ASEAN-centred and ASEAN-led mechanisms in Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region or Indo-Pacific.²⁷

Although security and economic cooperation have an enormous portion of the ASEAN-Japan cooperation, so-called non-traditional issues have become a significant element. Issues such as healthcare, environment, and disaster management are essential fields of further cooperation. For example, Japan launched Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN), which aims to promote regional cooperation that fosters a sustainable and self-reliant healthcare system in Asia. The initiative mainly focuses on AMS in particular. Moreover, in 2019, ASEAN and Japan agreed to sign the ASEAN–Japan Technical Cooperation Agreement, enabling the two parties to carry out technical cooperation for ASEAN as a community. This is how Japan has worked closely with ASEAN and its member states at bilateral and multilateral levels.

In 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic provided negative economic and social impacts around the world. While the number of patients is relatively small compared with western countries, both ASEAN and Japan struggle with severe economic challenges by lockdown or other policies for virus prevention. ASEAN and Japan launched “ASEAN–Japan Economic Ministers’ Joint Statement on Initiatives on Economic Resilience”, the statement of which refers to the development of the resilient supply chains, diversification of production bases, and encouragement of the use of digital technology (see the next section for details).

To summarise, the East Asia region is one of the most dynamic and competitive regions where many countries are growing to be significant regional powers. China is a leading country, but other countries are also growing dramatically in the last 20 to 30 years. Although facing much difficult situation to maintain its influence in this region, as an old friend of ASEAN, Japan needs to seek various kinds of cooperation and enhance equality of partnership with ASEAN and its member states. On the other hand, as an institutional hub of East Asia, ASEAN needs to continue its efforts to develop the competitive and equitable ASEAN centred regional architecture in the future.

III. THE FUTURE OF THE ASEAN-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP

As we described in the previous chapter, ASEAN and Japan have been evolving their relationship built on economic and industrial cooperation, deepening economic integration by concluding bilateral FTAs/EPAs and entering

²⁷ ASEAN Secretariat (2019).

the mega-regional FTAs. The cooperation between ASEAN and Japan has resulted from this trend of economic integrations and an increasing number of FTAs, which have led to a series of investments from Japan to ASEAN and thus the growth of ASEAN as a manufacturing and production base. As economic integration has deepened, ASEAN has achieved high economic growth and development of the middle-income class. Consequently, the ASEAN region has developed one of the most resonant production networks globally (Kimura and Ando, 2005). Repeatedly, this has been due in large part to the activities of Japanese affiliated firms in the region. The establishment of the AEC in 2015, as well as the removal of preferential custom measures in the CLMV countries in 2018, have been along with the institutional development in ASEAN.

But when it comes to the future of ASEAN, we recommend that the cooperation should be reinforced in line with so-called “socio-economic industrial cooperation” so that ASEAN can address not only further industrial development but also increasingly emerging socio-economic challenges, which include various kinds of issues related to the improvement of quality of lives, city amenities, environment, ageing societies, etc. (as is described in Nishimura et al. [2018]).

The other recommendation is that cooperation should be more reciprocal flows between the two parties. Economic and industrial cooperation will also expand the manufacturing sector and other fields, such as services. Asian digital transformation (frequently abbreviated as “Asia DX”) initiated by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan is one of the activities that encourage business relationship flows from ASEAN to Japan.

With respect to the future relationship between ASEAN and Japan, the growing neighbouring countries with Japan will be relatively significant. For example, as Wallace (2019) describes, “Tokyo’s strategy towards Southeast Asia, on the other hand, accepts the reality of growth in China’s regional influence and that, provided the regional military balance is maintained, Japan is better off attempting to mediate the way the PRC converts its hard power into influence rather than seeking to contain or diminish it”. As the economic and diplomatic power of Japan will be relatively declined, a more reciprocal relationship between ASEAN and Japan will be necessary for themselves.

In this section, we would like to discuss the future direction of ASEAN-Japan cooperation by picking up the current important issues: 1) the Indo-Pacific Cooperation Initiative; and 2) cooperation to tackle with COVID-19 pandemic. These two issues illustrate what is the future reciprocal relationship between the two parties and possible socio-economic cooperation while maintaining the importance of ASEAN centrality.

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INDO-PACIFIC COOPERATION INITIATIVE

The history of the Indo-Pacific Initiative can be traced back to the first administration of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.²⁸ However, the important occasion was built upon his speech at the Tokyo International Conference of African Development (TICAD) meeting in August 2016. He proposed the concrete concept of the Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP) strategy for the first time.

“What will give stability and prosperity to the world is none other than the enormous liveliness brought forth through the union of two free and open oceans and two continents. Japan bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion and making it prosperous. Japan wants to work together with you in Africa in order to make the seas that connect the two continents into peaceful seas that are governed by the rule of law. That is what we wish to do with you. The winds that traverse the ocean turn our eyes to the future. The supply chain is already building something quite like an enormous bridge between Asia and Africa, providing industrial wisdom. The population in Asia living in democracies is more numerous than that of any other region on Earth. Asia has enjoyed growth on the basis of the democracy, the rule of law, and market economy that has taken root there. It is my wish that the self-confidence and sense of responsibility spawned there, as a result, come to envelop the entirety of Africa together with the gentle winds that blow here”.²⁹

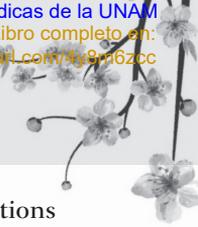
In October 2017, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Taro Kono, announced the concept of a strategic dialogue among the four countries of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India. Subsequently, a series of director-general level meetings were held, including the foreign minister meeting in 2019 (Nikkei 2017, Shoji 2018). That movement was, therefore, materialised as the quadrilateral security dialogue (QUAD).

The United States also expressed its support for the FOIP at the 2017 APEC Summit during the US President Donald Trump’s visit to Asian countries and articulated its support for the FOIP in its National Security Strategy, which was released in December 2017 (White House, 2017).³⁰ Australia

28 One of the examples is Prime Minister Abe’s speech at the Parliament of India, “Confluence of Two Sea” in 22 August 2007, available at <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> (Access 26 February 2021).

29 Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) on 27 August 2016, available at https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201608/1218850_11013.html (access 26 February 2021)

30 “I’ve had the honor of sharing our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific — a place where sovereign and independent nations, with diverse cultures and many different dreams, can all prosper side-by-side, and thrive in freedom and in peace”.



and India also agreed with this security cooperation, leading to consultations among diplomatic and defence ministries launching in 2018.

Initially, ASEAN expressed concern about this concept around FOIP by the four countries. One reason for this is that joining QUAD, which involves four major powers outside of ASEAN, would undermine the effectiveness of ASEAN centrality, and the other is while the QUAD has the ulterior motive to contain China, some AMS were hesitant to join such a framework (Shoji 2018). ASEAN, in particular Indonesia, sought an open, inclusive, and consensus-building approach of the Indo-Pacific rather than exaggerating military and security aspects (Acharya 2019).

ASEAN was very cautious about the Indo-Pacific initiative. However, this trend to some extent changed with the release of the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)” at the 31st ASEAN Summit in June 2019. The document of the AOIP was the statement of ASEAN to maintain the position of ASEAN centrality. It documents that the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions are amongst the most dynamic in the world as well as a centre of economic growth for decades (ASEAN, 2019).

“Southeast Asia lies in the center of these dynamic regions and is a very important conduit and portal to the same. Therefore, it is in the interest of ASEAN to lead the shaping of their economic and security architecture and ensure that such dynamics will continue to bring about peace, security, stability and prosperity for the peoples in the Southeast Asia as well as in the wider Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions or the Indo-Pacific” (ASEAN, 2019).

The AOIP implies the ASEAN-centered regional architecture to strengthen the ASEAN-centered regional mechanism and enhance the ASEAN community building process (ASEAN, 2019). Although the AOIP is not characterised as a legal document but a guide for the member states, it illustrates the ASEAN’s comprehensive security approach (Acharya, 2019).

Japan has expressed its full support for this AOIP concept.³¹ At the occasion of delivering policy speech in January 2020, Japan’s Foreign Minister, Toshimitsu Motegi, said, “ASEAN is destined to be the hub of the Indo-Pacific, and in the AOIP, it has clearly expressed its will to enhance further cooperation in connectivity and maritime security, which correspond to the roles to be played by ASEAN”, and at the same time expressed the full support for the AOIP which the Japanese government would provide as a part of regional cooperation developed under the initiative of ASEAN centrality.³²

31 A lot of external countries welcomed the launch of the AOIP. Recently, the European Union (EU) and some member countries have gained their importance of the cooperation with ASEAN and Indo-Pacific region (Nikkei, 2021).

32 ASEAN Policy Speech by Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu, “Towards a new stage of cooperation

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Alongside this trend, the “Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific”^c was released at the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit in November 2020. The ASEAN and Japan leaders acknowledged “the ASEAN’s central and strategic role in developing and shaping an open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based regional architecture”. They reaffirmed that AOIP encourages “external partners to work with ASEAN to undertake practical cooperation on the four key areas identified in AOIP” (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020a). The four areas of AOIP were defined as maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and economic and other possible areas.

The strategic partnership includes various socio-economic fields as possible cooperation, including maritime security, marine plastic debris, quality infrastructure, digital economy and 4th Industrial Revolution, environment and disaster management, public health emergencies, economic resilience and human capital development (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020a). At the same time, Japan launched the “Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative” with a particular focus on the ongoing quality infrastructure projects that amount to 2 trillion yen (approximately 20 billion USD) worth. This initiative aims to strengthen both the connectivity through infrastructure development and the human resource development of ASEAN people. Additionally, while Japan recently announced that it would reduce its overall greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050 to facilitate good connections between the economy and the environment through innovation, ASEAN and Japan can cooperate in various fields such as abovementioned climate change, to achieve mutual trust, benefits, understandings, peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

ASEAN-JAPAN COOPERATION CONCERNING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

One of the indispensable perspectives when it comes to international relations these days is corona infection. In addition to security and economic issues, the ASEAN-Japan relationship has also been deepened by the recent corona pandemic.

The corona pandemic that began in Wuhan, China, in early 2020 has spread around the world. Even now (when we write this article), we cannot find any signs of the pandemic coming to an end. ASEAN and Japan are no exceptions, and dealing with COVID-19 spread domestically has become a top policy priority for the two parties, especially healthcare and employment. Physical human interactions between ASEAN and Japan have also been drastically reduced due to introducing the current quarantine system.

in the spirit of Gotong-Royong” on 21 January 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/sa/sea2/page3e_001148.html (access 26 February 2021).

In April 2020, ERIA released a policy brief detailing policies that ASEAN needs to take to recover from the adverse effect of COVID-19 (ERIA, 2020). This paper indicates that sustained connectivity should be an integral part to maintain the competitiveness of regional production networks. It also emphasises that “several innovative and workable mechanisms to facilitate public-private partnerships can lend support for infrastructure development, as countries are still” in a recovery mode after huge stimulus packages during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the aggressive adoption of new technologies such as Industry 4.0 (e.g., artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and robotics) would give manufacturing firms a better chance to rapidly increase production when the economy recovers and demand picks up. To deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, many firms tend to install the newer technology much earlier than it would have been. It could provide manufacturers with a permanent change in technology (ERIA, 2020). Furthermore, not only the COVID-19 crisis but also the U.S.-China confrontation have made the debate on the resilience of supply chains in the region very significant. ASEAN needs to find better ways to take advantage of this opportunity in the midst of the global movement of decoupling.

At the ASEAN-Japan Special Economic Ministerial Meeting held in April 2020, the ASEAN-Japan Cooperation to Address COVID-19 was discussed. In the ASEAN-Japan Economic Ministers’ Joint Statement on Initiatives on Economic Resilience in Response to the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak, the ministers stressed the importance of economic resilience and sustaining the supply chains in this region.

“(Paragraph 4) the Ministers call for united and concrete efforts between ASEAN and Japan aimed at achieving these three objectives: (i) sustaining the close economic ties developed by ASEAN and Japan; (ii) mitigating the adverse impact of COVID-19 on the economy; and (iii) strengthening economic resilience”.

At the sideline of the ASEAN-Japan Summit in November 2020, the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases was officially announced by the leaders. In retrospect, Shinzo Abe proposed the centre at the Special ASEAN Plus-Three Summit on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in April 2020.³³

33 Prime Minister Abe stated that “nations must confront this virus spreading infection across borders through solid cooperation, such as by establishing an ASEAN Centre for emerging diseases and public health emergencies (tentative), and supported by participating countries.” See the website of MOFA of Japan as follows. https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_0/tp/page4e_001059.html (Access 26 February 2021).

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“We welcomed the official announcement of the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases and appreciated Japan’s commitment of USD 50 million, through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and Japan’s intention to further support human resources through JICA. We looked forward to the full operationalisation of the Center and encouraged ASEAN Japan cooperation to maintain sustainability of the Center, which will further support ASEAN’s capabilities and efforts in countering public health emergencies in the region (ASEAN 2020b)”.

As the current Prime Minister, Yoshihide Suga, mentioned, “Japan will spare efforts to develop the Centre as a hub for the region’s fight against infectious disease”, and “Japan hopes to work hand in hand with ASEAN countries and continue cooperating with them on an ongoing basis” at the ASEAN-Japan Summit.³⁴ ASEAN also developed the “ASEAN Strategic Framework for Public Health Emergencies” in November 2020, which will be the core document to guide ASEAN initiatives for public health emergencies, and enhance ASEAN’s preparedness, detection, responses and resilience to public health emergencies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020c; p. 2). Based on the strategic framework, this region will promote regional cooperation on the issue of infectious diseases and enhance the synergy effects of the various existing and proposed initiative.³⁵ In response, Japan can also collaborate in tandem with ASEAN through this ASEAN-centred initiative.

In the current COVID-19 spread, it is necessary to seek a different kind of ASEAN-Japan cooperation in general. While physical contact between people in both regions is difficult, the key will be employment of technologies. As telework or “work from home” is being promoted in many countries, the recent evolution of the Internet and digital technology has enabled new ways of living and working that do not involve physical contact. The use of such remote digital technologies will also allow people to keep human interaction, for example, cultural exchange among students. The technology also makes it possible to establish a new international division of labour. In other words, by using cross-border telework, intellectual workers in ASEAN member states can undertake high-level service works (e.g., product design, legal, and accounting) from Japanese multinational companies. Moreover, Japan’s developed digital technology can be transferred to other countries. For example,

34 See the website of MOFA of Japan as follows. https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page3e_001075.html (Access 26 February 2021).

35 On October 2020, there are 11 existing, 8 new health initiatives, 5 non-health sector-initiated efforts, and 3 new cooperation with development partners as the ASEAN health interventions. See the presentation by ASEAN Secretariat, “ASEAN Health Sector Collective Response to Address COVID-19 and Future Public Health Emergencies & Pandemics,” on 15 October 2020, available at https://aric.adb.org/pdf/rcipod/episode_14/01%20FMFernando_ASEAN.pdf (Access 26 February 2021).

the digitalisation of education using personal computers (so-called EdTech) is being implemented in Indonesia. On the other hand, what Japan can learn from ASEAN is the social implementation of digital technology. ASEAN's ride-sharing services can provide hints for solving economic and social problems in Japan.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 spread is still a major crisis for the economy and society, including Japan and ASEAN. However, as we mentioned above, even in the midst of the crisis, there are potential opportunities for a new evolution of ASEAN-Japan cooperation. For the sake of the next generation, we must take full advantage of this opportunity and elevate the ASEAN-Japan relationship to a new stage.

As examples of future deepening of ASEAN-Japan relations, the authors examined the Indo-Pacific Initiative and ASEAN-Japan cooperation in combating new coronavirus spread. In both cases, it can be pointed out that ASEAN-Japan cooperation has expanded in traditional security and economic areas and in a wide range of areas such as environment, energy, health-care, and disaster management human capital development. The expansion of socio-economic cooperation, which we emphasise, can be emerged here. In these two cases, ASEAN-Japan cooperation has paid respect to the centrality of ASEAN. In addition to economic and industrial cooperation, the relationship between the two sides around socio-economic cooperation will need to be developed by more significant and equal partners.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the partnership between ASEAN and Japan with respect to ASEAN centrality. While discussing history of ASEAN and Japan since the 1960s, we pay attention to the fact that industrial cooperation has played a vital role in the relationship. Japan's industrial cooperation has contributed to reinforcing local manufacturing industries in each AMS, provided incentives to conclude several FTAs/EPAs, and led to multilateral trade agreements in this region. At the same time, ASEAN could successfully achieve industrialisation through nurturing local manufacturing industries and firms as a significant production base. As we shown by introducing two cases, cooperation between ASEAN and Japan is expected to expand the socio-economic field through our past experiences.

Due to the spread of COVID-19 in 2020, the relationship between ASEAN and Japan should be closer and more assertive regarding socio-economic cooperation. To address the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan provides medical supplies and equipments, technical assistance, as well as extended foreign loans, including the COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020b). ASEAN officially declared establishing the

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ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases in response to COVID-19 and other possible health emergencies in the future, with the support of the JAIF program. It is stated that leaders “looked forward to the full operationalisation of the Center and encouraged ASEAN Japan cooperation to maintain the sustainability of the Center, which will further support ASEAN’s capabilities and efforts in countering public health emergencies in the region” in the ASEAN-Japan Summit statement (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020b).

ASEAN and Japan also launched the “ASEAN-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan”. Supply chain management and re-location of production bases in the East Asia region will be a significant policy issue (ERIA, 2020). The plan emphasises the close economic relations between ASEAN and Japan, mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, and strengthening economic resilience by promoting the ASEAN-Japan economic integration through the full implementation and utilisation of AJCEP, harnessing digital technologies for the challenges brought by COVID-19, and ASEAN-centered supply chain developments (ASEAN Secretariat, 2020a).

The ASEAN–Japan relationship has relatively weakened compared with the past during the rapid growth of South Korea and China in the East Asia region. Nevertheless, the ASEAN–Japan economic, industrial, social, and political relationship is still one of the significant core for ASEAN to balance the region’s economic and political aspects amid dramatic structural changes in the global environment. In future, even after the COVID-19, ASEAN and Japan are expected to build a resilient and robust relationship to help East Asia become central, economically, and politically in the world.

TABLE: EPAS/FTAS CONCLUDED WITH JAPAN

COUNTRY/ REGION	COMMENCED	SIGNED	ENTERED INTO FORCE	NOTE
Singapore	January 2001	January 2002	November 2002	Amendment in September 2007
Mexico	November 2002	September 2004	April 2005	Amendment in April 2012
Malaysia	January 2004	December 2005	July 2006	
Chile	February 2006	March 2007	September 2007	
Thailand	February 2004	April 2007	November 2007	
Philippines	February 2004	September 2006	December 2008	
Indonesia	July 2005	August 2007	July 2008	
Brunei Darussalam	June 2006	June 2007	July 2008	
AJCEP	January 2007	March and April 2008	December 2008	Substantial conclusion of Chapters on Trade in Services, Movement of Natural Persons, and Investment in November 2017.
Switzerland	May 2007	February 2009	September 2009	

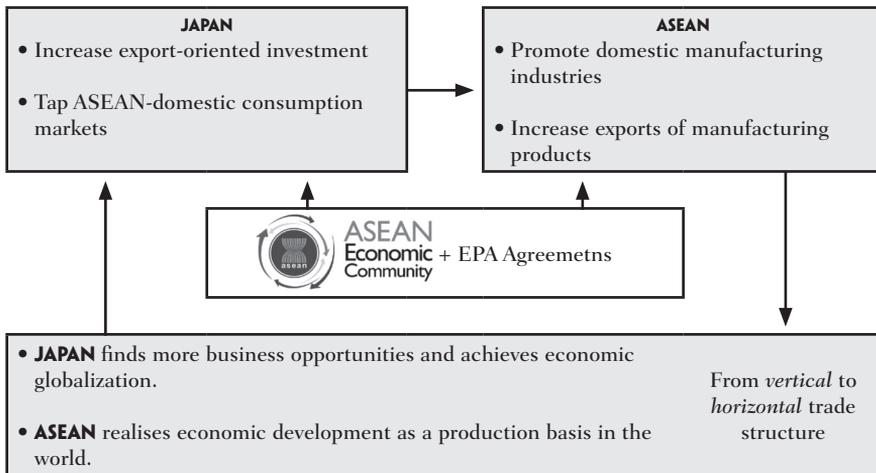
IWASAKI / AMBASHI / NISHIMURA

COUNTRY/ REGION	COMMENCED	SIGNED	ENTERED INTO FORCE	NOTE
Viet Nam	January 2007	December 2008	October 2009	
India	January 2007	February 2011	August 2011	
Peru	May 2009	May 2011	March 2012	
Australia	April 2007	July 2014	January 2015	
Mongolia	June 2012	February 2015	June 2016	
TPP	July 2013	February 2016		
CPTPP	May 2017	March 2018	December 2018	
EU	April 2013	July 2018	February 2019	
United Kingdom	June 2020	October 2020	January 2021	

SOURCE: Compiled by the authors.

AJCEP = ASEAN–Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership, **CPTPP** = Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, **EPA** = Economic Partnership Agreement, **EU** = European Union, **FTA** = Free Trade Agreement, **TPP** = Trans-Pacific Partnership.

FIGURE: ASEAN–JAPAN ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP



SOURCE: Compiled by the authors.

ASEAN = Association of Southeast Asian Nations, **EPA** = Economic Partnership Agreement.

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