

Japan's Pragmatic Security Approach to Southeast Asia

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Changing security environment, emerging new powers and Chinese initiative, OBOR in the region are influencing factors of Japan security consideration in contemporary world. To secure its national interests (security, economic and political), Japan has expanded diplomatic means both bilaterally and multilaterally particularly in the Southeast Asia region. Additionally, strategic location of the Southeast Asia region contributes to Japanese security calculations in Indo-Pacific Strategy. Hence, Japan has intensified security cooperation on non-traditional security issues as a mean to maintain its status quo in the region and contain the Chinese naval capabilities in the Southeast Asia region as well as to safeguard its national interest. To be secure economically, politically, and security wise, Japan enhances preventive diplomacy in non-traditional security cooperation which has become the holistic approach of Japanese security calculations and will bring the comprehensive and pragmatic interests in the Asia – Pacific region.

Keywords: Japan, ASEAN, Security, Cooperation

Introduction

After the cold war, the international arena has been changed and the new trend of threats, non-traditional security issues have emerged as global concerns. Any single state could not stand to fight against growing these threats of unconventional security issues and multilayer cooperation is needed as a primacy one. To secure and ensure the national interest, Japan government has initiated the new approach "*Panoramic Perspective*" to the world as multilateral cooperation with the international community. Tokyo's effort towards Southeast Asia can be assumed as the regional diplomacy which extended in the stronger relationship in the 1990s. In 1997, Prime Minister Hashimoto initiated and established comprehensive relations towards ASEAN by expanding economic and security cooperation

At present, Japan and ASEAN have been opening new chapter in cooperation and relations between them as multilaterally and bilaterally. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the five principles of Japan's ASEAN Diplomacy at 40th anniversary of ASEAN – Japan in 2013 and paid the cordial visit to all member states. Together with the development of relations, Tokyo has increased cooperation for its own security interest in

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ASEAN, one of the most important strategic partners for Japan. Consequently, Southeast Asia's geostrategic position becomes an important factor for Japan's security calculating not only in the economy but also a safe passage in navigation. In term of Japan's economic development has relied on the energy which is exported from the Middle East and domestically, the 80% of Japan's crude oil is transported from the Middle East by passing through Malacca Strait and SCS. However, there is non-traditional security threats, piracy and related maritime crimes in Southeast Asia region have threatened the maritime transportation and economy as well the human security. Hence, secure maritime domain in the Southeast Asia region plays in Japan's core security calculating. The purpose of this study is to explore Japan's foreign and security policies towards Southeast Asia, and why and how Japan concentrate to deal with Southeast Asian states and ASEAN.

Overview of Japan Foreign and Security Policies after World War II

Japan was defeated in the World War II and occupied by the United States until the early 1950s. In 1946, Japan set up its new constitution, Pacifist Constitution designed to limitation of military capability. To protect its survival and national interest, Japan signed the two treaties; "the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Japan-US Security treaty which are the basic platform of its post-war foreign policy. The San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed between Japan and allied power at San Francisco in 1951.

Japan's post war foreign policy was the economic oriented policy because of its economic situation was torn by war and economic reconstruction was the priority of Japan's government. Under the new constitution, Japan formed the first parliament government and Shigeru Yoshida was the first Prime Minister in Post war period. Prime Minter Yoshida emphasized the economic reconstruction of the domestic economy and so he extended his policy on security alliance with the United States for securing of its nation's sovereignty. Prime Minister Yoshida's post-war policy, the so-called Yoshida Doctrine had shaped after World War II Japan's foreign and security policy. During the cold period, Japan expanded its military capabilities through US-Japan Security Treaty and the Yoshida Doctrine influenced in the Japan's security until the end of cold war. There was no collective defense in that period and Japan's foreign and security policy focused on the bilateral approach.

Due to the changing international arena, end of the cold war and evolving the new form of security threats, Japan changed its foreign and security policy since 1990s and joined in peace keeping operations as multilateral cooperation under the UN's mandate. Multilateral approach has been initiated in its foreign policy since the end of cold war,

while Japan has maintained its bilateral relations with the US. To response these development, Japan applies the diplomatic means as the basic approach to the world by promoting the strategic foreign policy, “*Panoramic Perspective*” initiative to the world. Based on this scenario, Japan tried to set up the trust building and cooperation with the countries to bring the stability and prosperity of international community as well to deter the rise of threats and protect its national interest and sovereignty.

Recent Japanese foreign policy serves as the multilayer approach which extends to promoting its role by expanding networks toward international community. To be comprehensive and pragmatic diplomatic efforts, Japan’s diplomacy emphasizes six areas: (1) Strengthening of the Japan–U.S. Alliance and promote the networking of allies and friendly nations, (2) Enhance relations with neighboring, (3) Promote Economic Diplomacy, (4) Contribute to address global issues, (5) Contribute to the peace and stability of the Middle East, and (6) Promote a Free and Open Indo–Pacific.¹ Japan – U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone for ensuring Japanese security and Japan welcomed Obama administration’s policy towards Asia–Pacific region. Japan interest in Asia– Pacific region is not only for its own economic reason but also for its secure and safety maritime passage through the region to the Middle East for energy sources and defensive capability. Recently, the new Free and Open Indo–Pacific concept pushes Japan to contribute active role deeply and actively in the region Hence, Japan has tried to build strengthen relations with neighboring countries for creating the long term stable and secure environment in the region.

Sakaki (2015) stated that Japan’s security policy has three central pillars namely: (i) Japan’s own capabilities and defense measures, (ii) the alliance with the US, and (iii) cooperation with other countries.² The second pillar, alliance with the US was the corner stone of Japanese foreign and security policy. To promote the strategic interest and values, Japan and the US signed the security treaty in 1951 and revised in 1960 respectively. According to the treaty Washington guarantee the security of Japan while Japan allowed the US to military bases within its territory; Okinawa and Honshu Peninsula. Hence, Japan has considered strengthening the alliance with the US as the priority of its foreign policy.

¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Japan (2019), *Diplomatic Blue Book (2013)*, Retrieved from <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2019/html/index.html>

² Sakaki, Alexandra (2015), *Japan’s Security Policy: A Shift in Direction under Abe? SWP Research Paper, Shifting Wisenessenschaft und Politik, German Institute of International Security Affairs, Berlin, March 2015*

But, the changing the leadership in the US has become the push factor to Japan's seeking the new partnership in Asia-Pacific region.

To maintain secure and peaceful environment and ensuring for survival are major concerns for Japanese government. Hence, Japan has been practicing "Proactive Contribution to Peace" to secure its national interest and survival under the international cooperation policy due to the changing strategic environment in the Asia-Pacific region. The new policy, "Proactive Contribution to Peace", revitalize Japan's efforts to cooperate with international community for ensuring the peace, stability and prosperity.

The defense policy was adopted by the National Defense Council and cabinet in 1957 under the constitution. The policy includes the basis policy of national defense which intend to promote international collaboration for peace and security of Japan while securing the livelihood of people, set up the defense capabilities and strengthen Japan-U.S agreements (Ministry of Defense, Japan).

Regarding to promote the national security, Japanese government laid down the three objectives of national security as follows:

- *To strengthen the deterrence, thereby deterring threats from directly reaching Japan.*
- *To improve the security environment of the region, and prevent the emergence of and reduce direct threats to Japan through strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance and enhancing trust and cooperative relations with its partners.*
- *To improve the global security environment and build a peaceful, stable and prosperous international community (MOFA, 2016).*

To maintain the peaceful environment and response on changing security environment around it, Japan has established the new mechanism, the National Security Council (NSC) in 2013. Then, National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Guideline (NDG) were set up for ensuring its national interest in long term perspective meanwhile National Defense and Security Law was approved by the Diet in 2015. The strategy mainly focuses the national security by promoting the policies in sea, outer space, cyber space, official development assistance (ODA) and energy.

Japan's Security Efforts and Ties in Southeast Asia

ASEAN was founded by signing the Bangkok Declaration with core five members (Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia) in 1967 with the aims of

fostering economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region. Later the rest five members, Brunei in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999 joined to ASEAN respectively. To some extent, ASEAN intends to promote peace and prosperity in the region. In fact, ASEAN announced to establish the ASEAN Community in 2020 including three pillars; ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCS) in 2003.

Japan's post war approach to Southeast Asia was the reparation based for Japanese occupation during World War II and there were limited relations particularly in economic oriented diplomacy. As the earliest dialogue partner for ASEAN, Japan started the formal relations with ASEAN in 1977 after Prime Minister Fukuda trip around Southeast Asian countries and adopted "Fukuda Doctrine" which extended to enhance the new beginning of the relations. In this doctrine, Prime Minister Fukuda stressed about Japan's diplomatic principles for ASEAN as follows;

- (i) *Japan rejects the role of a military power*
- (ii) *Japan will do its best for consolidating the relationship of mutual confidence and trusted based on "heart to heart"; and*
- (iii) *Japan will be equal partner of ASEAN.*³

Through this doctrine, Japan and ASEAN had developed relations to promote economic, social and political sectors. To take back the good image and reduce the tension upon Japan, the new concept - "heart to heart" - relations was initiated as the new form of approaching towards the region. The new concept showed that the ASEAN is the crucial one for Japan's own interest. Due to its war torn economy, Japan's interests on Southeast Asia, rich natural resources were to gain the raw materials for restructuring national economy. Hence, Japan - ASEAN relations and cooperation mainly focused on the area of economic and social during the cold war period. Based on this scenario, economics was the fundamental in terms of Southeast Asia is a major market for Japanese products. Maintaining the good relations with ASEAN is prerequisite for Japan's national interest. Following the Fukuda Doctrine, ASEAN-Japan Forum, ASEAN-Japan Foreign Minister Meeting and ASEAN-Japan Economic Conferences were established in 1977, 1978 and 1979 respectively.

³ Mission of Japan to ASEAN (2015), JAPAN - ASEAN FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION, Shared Vision, Shared Identity, Shared Future, Retrieved from <http://www.asean.emb-japan.go.jp/home.html> (Henceforth: Mission of Japan to ASEAN-2015)

On the other hand of economic diplomacy, Japan started the soft power approach, cultural diplomacy towards the Southeast Asia by establishing the ASEAN Cultural Fund in 1977. To promote better understanding between ASEAN and Japan, Tokyo initiated cultural approach to build the concrete relations among them. On the 10th anniversary of Fukuda Doctrine, Prime Minister Takeshita attended the ASEAN Summit in 1987 and declared to creating Japan – ASEAN Development Fund which aimed a new Partnership for Peace and Prosperity to support ASEAN development.

Due to the changing International system after cold war, Japan started its new initiatives towards the Southeast Asia region beyond the economic and culture areas. In fact, Japan had proposed to create the multilateral framework which will bring the guarantee for its status and interest in the region. Hence, Japan supported to develop the multilateral cooperation likes ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN +3 to contribute the regional peace and security architecture development.

In 2003, both parties signed the “Tokyo Declaration for the Dynamic and Enduring ASEAN – Japan Partnership in the New Millennium” which aimed to intensify the relations among them. With the development of relations, Japan accepted Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia in 2004. Bali Declaration and ASEAN–Japan Plan of Action 2011–2015 were adopted by the leaders at the 14th ASEAN–Japan Summit in 2011 in Bali. The leaders pledged to escalate the strategic partnership for regional prosperity and stability.

In 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited to the 10 member countries of ASEAN and announced the Five Principles of Japan’s ASEAN Diplomacy as follows:

- (i) Protect and promote together with ASEAN members states universal values, such as freedom, democracy and basic human rights;*
- (ii) Ensure in cooperation with ASEAN member states that free and open seas, which are the most vital common asset, are governed by laws and rules and not by force, and welcome the United States’ rebalancing to the Asia–Pacific region;*
- (iii) Furthermore, promote trade and investment, including flows of goods, money, people and services, through various economic partnership networks, for Japan’s economic revitalization and the prosperity of both Japan and ASEAN member states;*
- (iv) Protect and nurture Asia’s diverse cultural heritages and traditions; and*

- (v) *Promote exchanges among the younger generations to further foster mutual understanding.*⁴

The first two principles are regarding with political and security interests of Japan in the region. The second principle also mainly focuses on the open and free maritime domain in the region by promoting the international rule and regulations. To be secure and stability in the region's maritime domain, Japan has continued to encourage the legal based solutions for regional issues and desire the US to rebalancing in the Asia- Pacific region. Following the visit, the Commemorative Summit of Japan-ASEAN for 40th anniversary was held in Tokyo in December 2013. In the summit Japan and its counterpart ASEAN leaders agreed to strengthen the partnership cooperation on the four major areas: *"Partners of Peace and Stability, Partners for Prosperity, Partners for Quality of life, and Heart -to-Heart Partners"*.⁵ This four "P" initiatives is the comprehensive platform of Japan's strengthen relations with ASEAN where encompass politic, economic, social and security issues as holistic approach.

To promote peace and stability in the Asia- Pacific region and international community, Japan expanded its initiatives to ASEAN based on the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace". Hence, Japan elevates its commitment in building the regional architecture, providing hard and soft provisions for building maritime capabilities and promoting the means of combating terrorism and transactional crimes by involving in ASEAN-led cooperative framework.

Regional economic development is vital for both parties. In fact, Japan and ASEAN forge cooperation for regional prosperity by contributing in the fields of building ASEAN connectivity, narrowing the development gap, strengthening aviation and maritime linkages and promoting the economic partnership agreements. To promote addressing social and environmental issues, both parties cooperate in the areas of disaster management, healthcare and environmental issues. With the objective to promote improve mutual understanding and people-to-people diplomacy, youth exchange, cultural exchange and educational exchange are the major initiatives between ASEAN and Japan. The Vision Statement on ASEAN – Japan Friendship and Cooperation was adopted by leaders at the 40th anniversary of relations between ASEAN and Japan. Japan and ASEAN cooperation is not only for the economic development but also for keeping peaceful, stable and prosperous region which are the vital interests and forging to strengthen long term

⁴ Mission of Japan to ASEAN-2015

⁵ Ibid

relations. ASEAN Secretariat Office and both sides agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership through developing new initiatives.⁶ In addition, ASEAN appreciate the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund which aims to support enhancing the community building process while reinforcing the connectivity and narrowing development gaps projects in the region.⁷

Conclusion

As an island state, Japan has relied heavily on the sea lane for its survival both economic and security perspective. To be secure of its national interest, Tokyo's perceptive on the safe passage of sea lane communication has become a primacy for its strategic thinking in security sectors. Recently, changing security environment and power balance contribute to Japanese security concerns as well as FOIP has become the key element for Japanese foreign policy consideration not only for economic but also political and security reasons. Securing in the maritime domain is the priority of Tokyo and maritime security becomes the hub of national interest. Hence, Japan has expanded its security initiatives by promoting maritime security cooperation which has become holistic approach to contribute Japan's security efforts comprehensively.

As relying on the waterway for economic reason, Japan has started non-traditional security cooperation issues in the maritime domain as the primacy for securing its national interest and survival. To ensure the interest of safe navigation in the sea, Tokyo has intensified multilayer cooperation to responses to the challenges. Then, territorial disputes over SCS and Chinese naval capabilities have drawn Japan's attention to focus more cooperation and expand its security initiatives both regionally and internationally. The new Chinese initiative, BRI strategy particularly maritime silk road has accelerated Tokyo's security concern in the waterway which is strategic importance not only for economic but also political and security aspirations. It is undeniable that Japan response to Chinese invasion not only in East Asia but also in Southeast Asia is impossible to use direct contain and balance. Hence, Japan has applied an indirect way, maritime security cooperation on non-traditional issues has become the new approach for its comprehensive means by promoting multilateral cooperation and preventive diplomacy as a long-term pragmatic attempt.

⁶ ASEAN Secretariat News (2019), Japan reaffirm commitment to advance ties, March 2019, Retrieved from <https://asean.org/asean-japan-reaffirm-commitment-advance-ties/>

⁷ ASEAN Secretariat News (2019)

As opportunities, Japan can check and control the rise of China and its initiative by intensifying quadrilateral cooperation as well as taking the ASEAN centric role for cooperation on regional security architecture. Contrarily, the threats- lack of institutionalization of ASEAN, different interests among members (pro and anti-China), domestic political situations ASEAN states, overcautious sovereignty and own jurisdiction- that Japan cannot control and should consider putting in place contingency plans for dealing them. There are overlapping institutions, forum and mechanisms which aimed to eradicate nontraditional security issues in the maritime domain and legal framework is still controversial and weakness. Hence, the effectiveness of these mechanisms should be reconsidered and concerned parties need to formulate the effective mechanism to eradicate the non-traditional security issues. Then, Japan can contain and balance on China presence in the region by promoting diplomatic engagement and cooperation with ASEN for its economic, politic and security purposes.

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