INTRODUCTION

JAPANESE RELATIONS WITH ASEAN SINCE THE FUKUDA DOCTRINE

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BACKGROUND TO THE FUKUDA DOCTRINE
By the time of the Fukuda Doctrine of 1977, Japan had already established an economic relationship with ASEAN whereby extensive investment and trade from Japan, an industrialized power, with ASEAN, a group of developing countries, were not accompanied by Japanese military and political domination. This was something quite different from what obtained in the prewar colonial relationship between the Western powers and the Southeast Asian states. Such a situation was not an accident of history but resulted from developments since the end of the Second World War. When the Japanese resumed economic relations with Southeast Asia after the war, their primary aim was the rebuilding of their war devastated economy. They simply had little or no capacity, even if they wanted, to play any major military role in the region, let alone dominate it militarily. Moreover, Japan emerged from the American occupation that followed their defeat with a constitution that had an article nine which forbade them from using or threatening to use force to settle international disputes. While this article had not prevented the Japanese from establishing a force for self defense, such as the Self Defense Forces (SDF) they have now, the Japanese government had interpreted this article as forbidding the deployment of Japanese forces overseas for offensive purposes. But most important, their economic involvement in Southeast Asia, specifically non-communist Southeast Asia, had been made possible by a political order friendly to market forces that was greatly backed up by the Americans. It was then the era of Pax Americana. There was no American demand from Japan in the early years after the war for the sharing of any security responsibilities in the region even if Japan profited handsomely from economic relations with the region. So keen were the Japanese to avoid political and military entanglements that they propounded and abided by a policy of the “separation of economics and politics”, seikei bunri in Japanese.

To be sure, the economic structure of the bilateral relationship between Japan and Southeast Asia was not necessarily one that was pleasing to the Southeast Asians. The primary Japanese aim of extracting raw materials from Southeast Asia and exporting manufactured goods in return suggested a classical colonial economic structure. This was particularly apparent in the early decades after the war. This structure however provoked no violent Southeast Asian reaction until the anti-Tanaka riots of 1974, in part because the volume of bilateral trade until the mid 1960s between Japan and the five countries that were to constitute ASEAN then as a percentage of the total trade of these ASEAN countries was rather small. As such, Japanese trade with the region did not attract much attention. Moreover the nationalist energies of the economic variety that were evident then were directed at the Western countries which still held substantial economic interests in their former Southeast Asian colonies. Examples of such were the Indonesian nationalization of Dutch economic interests in the 1950s and the Filipino agitation against the Laurel-Langley agreement, an agreement which had greatly favored American economic interests in the Philippines even after the Philippines was given independence.

Southeast Asians however did not remain quiescent over the structure of the economic relations with Japan for long. From the mid 1960s onwards, Japanese trade with the five ASEAN nations increased dramatically as to make Southeast Asians acutely aware of their increasing economic dependence on Japan, a dependence made all the more galling for its neo-classical colonial economic structure. Added to this sense of dependence was the perception that the Japanese had remained indifferent to the social and political consequences of their economic involvement in Southeast Asia. The Japanese on their part did little to address Southeast Asian grievances by insisting that they practiced a policy of non-interference in the political affairs of other nations, the very policy of seikei bunri. The Southeast Asian pent-up resentment against this Japanese attitude led to anti-Japanese demonstrations when the then Japanese prime minister, Kakuei Tanaka visited the five countries of ASEAN in 1974. The demonstrations took...