

Japanese Diplomacy in ASEAN and Its Relevance to Indonesia¹

Syamsul Hadi²

Abstract

This article analyzes Japanese increasing interest in its relations with ASEAN in the contemporary era, with the emerging of Chinese economic power, the withdrawal of substantive parts of the US presence in East Asia, and the intensification of economic integration in ASEAN. It will be argued that Japan continually uses its method of “checkbook diplomacy” in dealing with ASEAN, due to its inability to reformulate a new position to adjust the international dynamics. As the *de facto* leader of ASEAN, Indonesia should address Japanese policies towards ASEAN in line with its national interests, as well as its regional visions.

Key Words: regional integration, Japanese diplomacy, Indonesian interest, bilateral relations.

Background

The end of the Cold War and the rise of China have caused Japan to adopt adjustment measures in international and regional diplomacy. Chinese progressivity to advance its relations with the Southeast Asian region, both collectively with ASEAN and bilaterally with each respective countries, has posed serious challenges for Japan as one of the most important partners for ASEAN countries.

Japanese interest in preserving and, if possible, strengthening its relations with ASEAN was reflected very clearly at the 10th ASEAN-Japan Summit in January 2007, where Japan recommended the establishment of a Japan-ASEAN Eminent Persons Group (EPG). This EPG would elaborate the Joint Statement on Deepening and Broadening the ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership, which was signed in Kuala Lumpur, 13 December 2005. The Joint Statement emphasizes that Japan will fully support ASEAN’s active contribution toward East Asia regional cooperation, especially in its role as the driving

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² The author is a lecturer at International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia. He received MA and Ph.D degree from Global Politics Department, Hosei University, Tokyo. His dissertation has been published entitled *Strategi Pembangunan Mahathir dan Soeharto: Politik Industrialisasi dan Modal Jepang di Malaysia dan Indonesia*, Jakarta: Pelangi Cendekia, 2005. He also received the “HI award 2008” as well as “FISIP UI award 2009” as the most productive lecturer. He was formerly a researcher and guest lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Kyushu University (2008), and is now the head of Research Cluster of Global Awareness FISIP-UI.

force to advance regional integration.

This article will analyze some dimensions of Japanese interest in relations with ASEAN in historical, political, as well as economic aspects in accordance with Japanese ODA-based diplomacy. The end of the Cold War, regional dynamics in ASEAN after the Asian Crisis, and the rise of China constitute important variables in these relations, besides Japanese own domestic political dynamics. Subsequently, this paper will explore relevances and challenges from these Japan-ASEAN relations in regard to the Indonesian position as the biggest country in ASEAN, as well as one of Japan's most important raw material suppliers in the region.

ASEAN, Checkbook Diplomacy, and Japanese International Role

During ten years after the Japanese loss in World War II, the country was under the occupation of the United States (US), which laid the constitutional foundation of Japanese post-war society. Article 9 of this constitution forbids military usage and Japanese troop missions abroad, hence practically puts Japan under the US protectorate. Faced with these demilitarization measures, the government of Japan has ever since adopted the Yoshida Doctrine,³ which concentrates fully on economic development limiting its politics and military role in international relations. Intimately engaging private sectors, the huge government role in the economy has enabled the country to receive "Japanese miracle" status (Johnsons, 1982),⁴ and to position itself as the world's second largest economy since 1980s.

Japanese military history and invasion in East Asia inflicted very deep wounds on her neighbouring countries, especially China and Korea. This not-too-harmonious relationship with Northeast Asian countries has caused the country to choose Southeast Asia to be its basis for foreign policy in Asia. Although in the early 1970s there were some protests in several Southeast Asian countries including in Indonesia, anti-Japan feeling seems only moderate in this region. Southeast Asian countries tend to overlook Japan's murky history, although her past invasion indeed caused huge fatalities. Even in the Cold War era, these Southeast Asian countries became partners of Japan and the US in order to contain the influence of the Soviet Union and China.

This is completely different from Northeast Asian countries, especially China and Korea, which constantly blame Japan for its colonial "sins." The issue of *jūgun ianfu* (comfort women), for example, is still raised by these two countries. Another issue, Japanese historiography, is also the source of diplomatic tension and protests. The situation is about the same to some other issues, such as Junichirō Koizumi's frequent visits to Yasukuni shrine, a site for the commemoration of Japanese military who died in the World War II.

These backgrounds are important for Japan to define its position and role in international

³ The "Yoshida Doctrine" was after the name of Japanese post World War II Prime Minister, Shigeru Yoshida, who emphasized national priority on economic development and simultaneously chose to be low profile on international diplomacy. The doctrine was aimed to focus all efforts on post-war economic reconstruction and development. See, for example, on Jun'ichi Kyōgoku. *The Political Dynamics of Japan*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1987.

⁴ Chalmers Johnson. *MITI and Japanese Miracles: The Growth of Industrial Policy in Japan 1925–1975*. Tokyo, Charles E Tuttle Company, 1982.

politics. A report by the Ohira Government (1978–1980) on comprehensive security explicitly stated that, due to Japan's limited military capability, the country should seek compensation by some non-military instruments, such as economic cooperation and technology. The usage of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and foreign aid as the main instrument of foreign policy has been called “checkbook diplomacy,” which departs firstly from security-sensitive domestic condition and political-military limitation on Japanese constitution.⁵

To be sure, the massive flow of Japanese ODA to Southeast Asia cannot be just viewed from a security perspective; it must also be seen from an economic one. As shown by Wendy Dobson (1993),⁶ Japanese ODA activities in Southeast Asia have decreased investment costs to Japanese companies, as they provide access to the infrastructure of each countries. In this context, Kit G. Machado (1992)⁷ stated that Japan has in a real sense already established and widened its economic hegemony in Southeast Asia. For government and private sector interests, Japan has always put concern on agreed specialization principles with its economic partners, so that it can optimize complementary relations of international division of labour and transnational industry.

Whereas ASEAN as a regional economy has been engaged in the “Japanese embrace,”⁸ international dynamics over the last two decade have given new causes for concern related to Japan's international role and identity. In *Japan Rising* (2008),⁹ Kenneth Pyle figured the decreasing effectiveness of the Yoshida Doctrine on the post-Cold War era. Thereafter, Japanese economy reached saturation, due to the bubble economic bondage and prolonged economic recession. Economically, the “big government” strategy is no longer effective, yet politically engrained cooperation between the government and private sector has made it hard to break the habit.

On the other hand, the US wants Japan to play a bigger role as its partner to maintain regional and international security stability. Nevertheless, prolonged economic stagnation, the bubble economy, and the rising of China seem to cause Japan to lose some of its self confidence. Politically, after the Gulf War (1991), Japan looked troubled to take any initiative beyond that of “blind supporter of the US.” According to Soeya Yoshihide (2003),¹⁰ the feeling of Japanese international humiliation coming from its lack of maneuvering in international politics was the main driving factor behind the establishment of the

⁵ Haruko Satoh. “Japan: Towards a Future-Oriented Relationship with China?” Paper presented in the international workshop “East Asia Facing a Rising China,” East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, in cooperation with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 11–12 August 2008.

⁶ Wendy Dobson. *Japan in East Asia: Trading and Investment Strategies*. Singapore: ISEAS, 1993, p. 20.

⁷ Kit G. Machado. “ASEAN State Industrial Policies and Japanese Regional Production Strategies.” In Cal Clark and Steve Chan, eds. *The Evolving Pacific Basin in the Global Political Economy: Domestic and International Linkages*. Colorado and London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1992, pp. 169–201.

⁸ Related to Japanese strategy on establishing production chain in Asia, see Walter Hatch and Kozo Yamamura. *Asia in Japan's Embrace: Building a Regional Production Alliance*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁹ Look on Kenneth Pyle. *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, New York: the Century Foundation, 2007.

¹⁰ Soeya Yoshihide. “Japan as a Regional Actor.” In Narongchai Akrasane et al., *ASEAN-Japan Cooperation: A Foundation for East Asian Community*. Tokyo, New York: JCIB, 2003, p. 49.

International Cooperation Law on June 1992. By this law, the government of Japan is justified to send Self-Defence Forces (SDF) abroad on peace-keeping missions, which have already been implemented in Cambodia, Zaire, and the Golan Heights.

Japanese diplomacy after 9/11 shows that Japan does not have alternatives in responding to the hawkish US foreign policy other than following the superpower. The government of Japan was actually oppressed by unilateralist policy brought by the Bush administration, and deeply hoped that the United Nations (UN) would give justification to attack Iraq (2003). Nevertheless, when this proved impossible, Japan had no other choice than once again to follow the US.¹¹

Japanese interest in gaining a better international image, especially amongst developing countries, is manifested in its efforts to distribute ODA more equally across the globe. As stated by Dennis D. Trinidad (2007),¹² in the decade of 2000s geo-economic importance was no longer the sole driver of Japanese ODA consideration, but Japan started to respond to its need to increase soft power over developing countries in general. Nevertheless, the amount of Japanese ODA tended to decrease after 1995 (Table I), whereas it seemed to correlate heavily with prolonged Japan economic recession.

Table I. Japanese ODA Regional Distribution
(in US\$ Million)

Region	1985	1990	1995	1998	2000	2002	2004
Asia	1732	4117	5745	5372	5284	4085	2544
ASEAN	800 (46%)	2299 (56%)	2229 (39%)	2356 (44%)	3129 (58%)	1748 (43%)	897 (35%)
Middle East	201	705	721	392	727	209	1031
Africa	252	792	1333	950	969	585	647
Latin America	225	561	1142	553	800	592	309
Oceania	24	114	160	147	151	94	42
Europe	1	158	153	144	118	121	141
Total	2557	6941	10557	8606	9640	6726	5954

Source: *Statistical Handbook of Japan 2002; Diplomatic Book 2004*

Table I above shows that, until 1990s, more than half of Japan's ODA was distributed to Asia, where almost half went to Southeast Asian countries. Nevertheless, since 2000 ODA to Asia has decreased significantly. In 2004, the ODA gap between Asia and Africa narrowed more than ever. Yet, as stated by Trinidad (2007), this did not necessarily mean that ASEAN was no longer important nor significant for Japan.¹³ Otherwise, as emphasized in the Japanese Diplomatic Bluebook 2004, preserving Japan-ASEAN relations remains top priority for Japan's foreign policy.¹⁴ Japan's concerns will not change, yet its ODA to ASEAN will be more directed to reducing the gap between old ASEAN members (the ASEAN-6) and the new ones (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam). This is due to efforts to consolidate more

¹¹ Ibid., p.53.

¹² Dennis D. Trinidad. "Japan's ODA at the Crossroads: Disbursement Patterns of Japan's Development to Southeast Asia." In *Asian Perspective*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2007, p. 107.

¹³ Ibid., p.108.

¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. *Diplomatic Book 2004*. In <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/index.html>, p. 54.

on ASEAN integration and regional stability.¹⁵

China Factor, Domestic Dynamics, and International Changes

Japanese diplomacy in ASEAN after the Asian Crisis tends to be reactive. When Japan tries to widen its influence to developing countries by distributing more ODA to other regions, China intensifies its diplomacy toward ASEAN. This can be seen from the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreements (CAFTA) in November 2001, when it was very clear that China wanted to widen its influence here. In ASEAN, China's positive image has been improving after the Asian Crisis, when China did not devalue her currency, and gave US\$ 4 billion aid through IMF and in bilateral ways. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in six ASEAN countries (2008) concluded that China's influence in ASEAN exceeded that of Japan.¹⁶

In security, China has abandoned its coercive approach in South China Sea territorial disputes by signing the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in 2002, which it then followed by signing ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2003. China's aggression in ASEAN cannot be matched by Japan; this can be seen from the very fact that Japan has only signed the ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in the beginning of 2004. Japan seems to be only reactive to China's proactive behavior in ASEAN, indicating the lack of Japanese grand strategy in dealing with regional and international dynamics.

In January 2002, PM Junichirō Koizumi visited five ASEAN countries: the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. On 13 January 2002, Koizumi signed the Economic Partnership Agreement with Singapore, which was to be followed by negotiations and agreements with other ASEAN members. On 14 January 2002, during his visit, Koizumi released a statement entitled "Japan and the ASEAN in East Asia—A Sincere and Open Partnership," which was then widely known as the "Koizumi Doctrine." The doctrine emphasized the need to act and advance together as "candid partners" in the following endeavours: (1) to undergo reforms and to increase prosperity; (2) to strengthen cooperation for stability; (3) to cooperate more in the future, especially on (a) education and human development; (b) enacting the year of 2003 as "Year of ASEAN-Japan Exchange"; (c) initiating Japan-ASEAN Economic Partnership; (d) launching "an Initiative for Development in East Asia"; (e) intensifying security cooperation between Japan and ASEAN, including on transnational issues.¹⁷

The "Koizumi Doctrine" (2002) once again constituted the "instant response" of Japan in facing the same measures taken by China through the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) on November 2001. The so-called "Koizumi Doctrine" was basically no different from the "Fukuda Doctrine" (1977), delivered by PM Takeo Fukuda, which stated the importance of ASEAN as a Japanese partner in international relations based on equal partnership. The doctrine also emphasized that Japan, in order to improve its relations with Southeast Asia, would employ cultural measures, as expressed in the phrase "heart to heart relations." The "Koizumi Doctrine" advocated intensifying ASEAN-Japan

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Syamsul Hadi. "Menyikapi Kebangkitan China." In *Kompas*, 2 September 2008.

¹⁷ The National Institute of Defense Studies, Japan. *East Asian Strategic Review 2003*. Tokyo: Japan Times, 2003.

economic relations as well as transnational security issues. The doctrine also stated an initiative to start negotiation on Japan-ASEAN Economic Partnership Agreement. Thus, Japan had a specific strategy in accruing this “free trade plus” (EPA) agreement. On the one hand, Japan used regional measures, in which ASEAN countries negotiated collectively with Japan, and on the other hand, Japan negotiated the EPA bilaterally with each ASEAN country. This strategy had a deliberate ambiguity in order to avoid commitment in liberalizing its agriculture sector.¹⁸

Nevertheless, when Japanese economy fell into recession, China’s economy was rising, and the US expected Japan to contribute more actively to the East Asian security arrangement. It was clearly seen that checkbook diplomacy lost its relevance. Moreover, international discourse after the Cold War went increasingly beyond the conventional wisdom of stark Westphalian concepts of security and power. Concepts such as “soft power” and transnational society afforded a wider understanding of current international affairs than a traditional realistic approach. In these circumstances, on the contrary, Japan still struggles over the need to equip its nation-state with military power to be a mere “normal state.” This is in accordance with Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution which limits Japanese manoeuvres in international relations. Next, it was actually the main agenda of PM Shinzō Abe (2006–2007), to proclaim the need for constitutional amendment, called the Diet to pass a law which regulates procedure for a national referendum to amend the constitution. Abe stressed that Japan would create its “own constitution,” a phrase referring to the fact that the Japanese constitution was a demilitarization product of the US Occupation Forces after World War II.¹⁹

Uniquely, Abe’s campaign faced strong resistance from the Opposition, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) led by Ichirō Ozawa. Ozawa responded to Abe’s campaign on military “normalization” and Japan’s increasing international role by insisting that more efforts be placed on Japan’s own economic development (the “life first” slogan). The Japanese themselves seemed to be not too interested in Abe’s campaign. A poll conducted by *Mainichi Shinbun* in 2007 showed that only 6% of respondents supported changing the constitutions’ pacifist clause. Abe was even forced to resign in September 2007, only two months after the LDP was totally defeated by the DPJ on the Upper House Elections. Abe resigned after he failed to receive support from the Opposition, who ruled the Upper House, on the issue to extend Japan’s support on anti-terrorism cooperation in the Indian Ocean.²⁰

Due to its ruling majority in the Lower House, the LDP still retained power. Yet, Abe’s successor, Yasuo Fukuda, faced the same political situation; such strong opposition caused political paralysis so that political initiatives by the government would always be halted. Fukuda’s successor, Tarō Asō, seemed to face the same situation. Japan’s political dynamics nowadays is characterised by power struggles in the Diet, causing Japan to lose direction on economic development and in the international arena.

It is interesting to note that although competition between China and Japan has been very keen, especially in the Koizumi era (2001–2006), Japanese ODA to China also increased pretty significantly.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 211. As one of the main proponent of ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Japanese farmers enjoy special political treatment, such as protection in agriculture sector against foreign products.

¹⁹ Syamsul Hadi. “Ambivalensi Politik Internasional Jepang.” In *Kompas*, 21 March 2007.

²⁰ Syamsul Hadi. “Jepang Pasca Abe.” In *Kompas*, 14 September 2007.

As can be seen in Table II, China became the second largest recipient of Japan's ODA in 2003 and 2005 after Indonesia, and even received first position in 2004. Despite political tensions between these two countries, Japanese ODA to China increased from US\$ 760 million in 2003 to US\$ 965 million in 2004 and US\$ 1,064 million in 2005. This indicated that in many cases Japanese political interests would always be overlooked by economic interests. According to the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japan investment to China boomed in 2001–2005, covering 14% of all Japan foreign investment.²¹ In 2004, Japan investment to China amounted to US\$ 5 billion, whereas Japan investment in ASEAN only amounted to US\$ 3 billion.²² In China's case then, what had been proposed by Wendy Dobson (2003) that Japanese ODA is a complementary element to Japanese investment, was once again confirmed.

Table II. Japanese ODA Distribution 2003–2005
(in million US\$)

Country	2003	2004	2005
Indonesia	1,142	-319	1,223
China	760	965	1,064
Vietnam	484	615	603
Sri Lanka	172	180	313
Philippines	529	211	276
Cambodia	126	86	101
Pakistan	266	134	74
Afghanistan	134	173	71
India	326	-82	71
Kazakhstan	136	131	66
Total of developing countries	6,014	5,954	10,485

Source: MOFA, 2006.

Indonesia and Japanese Diplomacy in ASEAN

After Japan signed the Economic Partnership Agreement with ASEAN, many said that ASEAN would again become the first priority of Japanese investment, most of its investment having since gone to China. One important clause of this agreement was tariff reduction and various facilities for Japanese investment in ASEAN countries. Individual²³ and collective agreement with ASEAN countries are indeed advantageous for Japan. Those EPAs are not only FTA liberalization in nature, but also include facilitation measures such as trade procedure efficiency, adjustment mechanisms for the business environment, and cooperation on human resources development and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). All these measures are expected to boost Japanese investment in ASEAN.

²¹ "Japan's Investment in China Changing." In *People's Daily Online*, 6 February 2007.

²² "ASEAN to be Focus for Japan Investors." In *The Nation*, 26 November 2005.

²³ Bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between Indonesia-Japan has been concluded at 20 August 2007 and would come into force at 1 July 2008. Despite of this individual agreement, Indonesia also committed to collective EPA between ASEAN-Japan. For critical analysis on this agreement, see Syamsul Hadi. "Kerjasama Indonesia-Jepang." In *Kompas*, 20 August 2007.

ASEAN countries' commitment to an ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, which is basically to form a single market and production base, would arguably boost ASEAN competitiveness against China (and India) and so attract more foreign investment. Japanese advantages from all this FTA with ASEAN countries, even compared to those with China, are related to booming Japanese investment in this region in the past. Besides having regional production networks in ASEAN, Japan also has had human resources networks with local companies for decades. In the China context, the market is indeed remarkable with 1.3 billion people living there. But in the ASEAN context, one might consider ASEAN's importance as due to its huge population of 500 million people, the enforcement of ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 2003, which has substantially reduced tariffs between ASEAN members, and a well-treated market for decades.²⁴

Regarding a more progressive tariff reduction and various trade facilitation resulting from the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, the ASEAN vision is indeed in line with the interests of Japan which, as has been stated before, also wants ASEAN to be a single market and single production base. Giant Japanese companies will not only be eased in terms of trade and investment, but also enjoy advantages on various facilities, such as a single window in customs, so that producing in ASEAN resembles producing in a single country.

Despite all this economic-strategic thought, political consideration such as the Japanese interest in preserving its engrained influence has made ASEAN much more significant for Japan. Due to its position as the biggest country in the region, Indonesia can be seen as the most important partner for Japan in ASEAN. This means that Indonesia will play a big role in determining where these relations are going. Indonesia is also the most populous Muslim country in the world, making it an important partner not only to other Muslim countries, but also to Western countries that are traditionally supported by Japan. Indonesia has plenty of natural resources needed by Japanese industry, besides having the Malacca Straits which are considered the main trade channel in Southeast Asia. Indonesia's geographical position, which is very strategic both economically and politically for Japan, is also an important factor that contributes to Japanese consistency in preserving good bilateral relations with the country.²⁵

The Malacca Straits are the most dense waters in the world which contribute to 25% of all world trade, and are the channel for half of world oil shipping, approximately 50,000 ships every year.²⁶ These straits are also a route from and to Japan, especially related to Japanese trading, industry, and investment activities. Moreover, they become the channel for oil shipping from the Middle East to Japan, which is essential for Japanese industry. Let alone cargo shipping containing Japanese products to all around the globe. Almost 80% of Japanese energy needs are shipped through these straits.

They are so important as a hub for Japanese economic security interests that at the end of 2004 the Japanese minister of trade, Shōichi Nakagawa, proposed offering military hardware during his visit

²⁴ Atsuo Kuroda (President of JETRO Thailand). "Japanese Companies' Response to FTAs in ASEAN (Summary)." In <http://www.asean.or.jp/invest/archieve/speech>.

²⁵ Abdul Irsan. *Budaya & Perilaku Politik Jepang di Asia*. Jakarta: Grafindo, 2007, p. 248.

²⁶ Syamsul Hadi. "Jepang dan Beberapa Isu dalam Hubungan Internasional di Asia Pasifik." In *Nihon shakai bunka kenkyu*, Center for Japanese Studies, Universitas Nasional, vol. 1, no. 1, May 2008, p. 43.

to President Yudhoyono. Nevertheless, the offer was hard to realize because the Japanese government emphasized that it should be in full recognition of three countries sharing responsible for the Malacca Straits, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The motive behind this offer was Japanese deprivation due to piratical activities in the straits. In March 2005, mass media also reported that Japanese citizens were being held hostage here. Moreover, the Vice Ambassador of Japan stated that there were still no concrete formulations to manifest Japanese willingness to involve in Malacca Strait security arrangement.²⁷ Clearly the offer was not in the form of dispatching Japanese troops, because this would have violated the constitution.

Next, in regards to its importance in ASEAN, Indonesia should play a more positive role, and take as many benefits as possible from its relation with Japan. Achieving technical support and continuing cultural exchange programs are, indeed, a not-too-difficult endeavour, because until now Japan has not moved from its main pillar of foreign policy, checkbook diplomacy. Moreover, whatever assistance it delivers to Indonesia, Japan will gain benefits both economically and politically, considering its huge interest in Southeast Asia. Thus, in the period when Japan faces “stagnation” in formulating a new identity in international relations, Indonesia can provide a more measurable definition, as well as more concrete benefits in its relations with Japan, both bilaterally as well as regionally.

Concluding Remarks

ASEAN is still regarded as one of the top priorities in Japanese foreign policy, although there are many dynamic changes that have taken place in East Asia, such as: (1) the rise of China as a new big power willing closer relations with ASEAN; (2) the growth of a new pattern in Japan-ASEAN relations, as can be seen from the Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and ASEAN countries; and (3) the agreement amongst ASEAN countries to establish the ASEAN Community in 2015, which will further integrate the Southeast Asia region.

These changes have in fact provided a new chance for Japan to deepen its relations with ASEAN. Japanese economic and business interests, which have been engrained here in the region, will be promoted more intensively due to a clearer form of ASEAN regional integration. Japanese interest in this aspect is balanced with the emerging of new political aspects in Japan-ASEAN relations, which are the rise of China and substantive US withdrawal from East Asia. Japanese leaders’ failure to convince their domestic constituents on the issue of restoring Japan’s international profile, by meeting economic with military power, has made it hard for Japan to escape from repeating its pattern of “checkbook diplomacy”.

Regarding Indonesia’s central role in ASEAN, the main challenge for Indonesia concerns how to direct that Japanese role in accordance with Indonesia’s own national interests as well as the vision of ASEAN regional integration. Related to its domestic interest, for instance, Indonesia should direct Japanese aid to empower the lower levels of society, such as farmers, fishermen, and SMEs. Meanwhile, in relation to the vision of ASEAN regional integration, Indonesia should involve Japan on programs aimed at “ASEAN Awareness,” especially those programs that engage ASEAN youngsters and people at the

²⁷ Ibid, p. 44.

grassroots, in order to make ASEAN a more people-oriented and less elite-driven regional organization. Hopefully, Indonesia can maintain its constructive leadership in ASEAN, without giving up its truly basic national interest, namely just and equal prosperity amongst its people.

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