

to what ASEAN commonly refers to as preventive diplomacy. It seems that ARF works and if it does, Japan's contributing role here again can not be denied.

# THE ASIAN HUMAN RESOURCE APPROACH IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

**William K. CUMMINGS**

State University of New York at Buffalo

Several recent studies indicate that the educational and research institutions of all modern nations are becoming increasingly similar in response to common global economic and political forces, and, moreover, that these institutions are taking on an increasingly Western form. This paper challenges the prevailing Westernization proposition by asserting that several Asian nations<sup>1</sup>, radiating from Japan through East Asia and Southeast Asia, have and are developing a distinctive approach to human resource development and utilization that contrasts in important respects with the Western model.

This paper provides a preliminary identification of the core components of the Asian approach: (1) the state coordinates education and research with a firm emphasis both on indigenous value transmission and the mastery of foreign technology; (2) high priority is placed on universal primary education while state investment at the secondary and tertiary level is limited primarily to critical areas such as engineering and the sciences; (3) individual students, their families, and the private sector are expected to provide critical backup for the education provided by the state. (4) The Asian state in seeking to coordinate not only the development but also the utilization of human resources involves itself in manpower planning and job placement and increasingly in the coordination of science and technology.

This paper outlines the sources and nature of the Asian approach; Japan, which virtually alone among Asian nations avoided the shackles of Western imperialism, is portrayed as the chief initiator and diffuser of the Asian approach. Other Asian states have rankled at the Japanese influence, or as in the recent cases of Singapore and Malaysia announced official policies of "Learning from Japan." But the regional processes leading to the emergence of the Asian approach are complex, and at this stage, only partially understood.

The paper also reflects on several global implications of the Asian approach, including social stability and Asia's human resource edge. Two other implications deserve special note:

**Pacific Rim Connection** A third set of implications could be described as the Pacific Rim Connection. Over the course of the past three decades, Asian human resources have

become extensively developed and diffused throughout the Pacific Rim.

One facet of the rapid expansion of Asian human resources has been a fostering of a new level of competitiveness as Asian corporations seek to outdo each other in the international marketplace. This competitiveness, often fueled by feelings of chauvinism, as between Korean and Japanese construction firms competing for the same contract, pushes Asian human resources to ever higher levels of productivity.

But an equally interesting and virtually unexplored theme is the extent of cooperation that emerges between Asian scientists, particularly when they are located in foreign settings. For example, a recent study documents that many Asian-born scientists working in American research universities retain relatively fluid scientific ties with colleagues in their countries of origin. This cooperation across national boundaries may provide an important impetus to the quality of Asian scientific and technical work.

Yet another feature of the Asian connection is the rapidly expanding level of communication between scholars and scientists within the Asian region, particularly stimulated by Japan's new commitment to Overseas Development Assistance. Over the past five years, Japan has trebled its intake of students from other Asian countries. Even more impressive has been the fivefold increase in the number of Asian scholars spending short study visits in Japan.

There still remains the question of the Asian Limit, particularly in the area of research. Will there be an Asian Research Edge? Can the Asian approach move beyond knowledge seeking to indigenous knowledge creation? This may be a false question — for if Asian corporations can buy the other brains and labs of overseas competitors, why do they have to do the work on their own? Thus an extension of the Pacific Rim Connection analysis would be to look into Asian (and non-Asian) strategies for securing control of off-shore knowledge/value production. In the new era of weaker states, the nationality of knowledge workers has reduced meaning — but there still is interest in who benefits.

**Human Rights.** Yet another area where the Asian approach challenges Western perspectives is with respect to human rights. The Asian approach places considerable emphasis on the family group and the community, often urging the individual to subordinate personal interests so as to advance the welfare of these broader collectivities. Even more, the individual identifies his/her well-being with the well-being of the broader collective. The welfare of the broader group, it is proposed, results in a better situation for each of the members. Harmony and the consensual negotiation of differences are emphasized as means to reconcile individual and social rights.

In contrast to the Asian approach, in recent years Western ideologues have urged Asian states to make greater efforts to conform to universal (or are they Western?) concepts of human rights. The Western critics insist that Asian nations should foster greater personal freedom and institute more representative forms of democratic government. Issues such as Timor and Tianamen Square have sharply polarized Western critics and Asian leaders. The Asian statesmen argue that the Asian approach places its first priority on social welfare or

development, and only as these conditions are realized does it become meaningful to encourage democracy and Western concepts of human rights. Sometimes the Asian leaders go so far as to point out how much more stable and crime-free are their societies than are the societies of those Western nations that place such high priority on human rights. It may be that these differences in the notion of what constitutes the good society will lead to sharp conflicts between the Asian and Western approaches to human rights over the next decades.

### Notes

- 1 In speaking of Asia, we mainly refer to Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. China, Hong Kong and Singapore as well as other of the rapidly developing nations of Southeast Asia share many but not all of the attributes of the Asian model.

## TOKUGAWA JAPAN: THE CHINA CONNECTION

**Harold BOLITHO**

Harvard University

I should like to begin my introduction to this paper with an apology. The title I have given it — “The China Connection” — is somewhat misleading, since the paper itself is by no means the exhaustive analysis of what China meant to the people of Tokugawa Japan that the title promises. Instead, it is my way of raising some questions about the part played by Confucianism in the Tokugawa Period because that’s a subject with which I have a certain amount of difficulty.

It’s almost impossible to read anything on Tokugawa Japan — whether in Japanese or English — without encountering the assertion that it was a Confucian society, that it was a society in which Confucianism — and by extension the Chinese example — was of peculiar importance. Further, there is a very strong implication in much of this writing that insofar as Tokugawa Japan failed to conform to Confucian/Chinese standards that failure is to be deplored.

I have to confess that I find all this hard to understand. Just what is a Confucian society? How do you know one when you see one? I can’t say with any certainty, but from the writings of those who claim that Tokugawa Japan was one it is possible to distill certain markers.

- a) A Confucian society is one which subscribes to the standard Confucian values —