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EAST ASIA LOOKS AT JAPAN

A CASE STUDY

BY

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SUMMARY

Whether Japan plays a major role in East Asia during the next decade is less likely to be a necessary consequence of its economic power than a function of its own aspirations and of the international environment in which it must seek to realize them. This study examines one aspect of that environment -- the expectations and apprehensions of various non-Communist countries in East Asia toward a larger and more active role for Japan.

Each of these countries -- the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia -- views Japan through the prism of its particular concerns and interests. Some consensus appears to be emerging, however, concerning Japan's future position in East Asia. Despite numerous apprehensions, all apparently expect that Japan will become more actively involved in the region, politically as well as economically, and believe that this could serve their particular interests. A primary condition of this receptivity to a larger role for Japan is the continued and active involvement of the United States in East Asia. In addition, there is a clear reluctance to see Japan cast in a "leadership" role or for Japan to achieve a position of predominance in the region. Finally, with the possible exception of the Republic of Korea, a military role for Japan in East Asia is not considered necessary or desirable.

Within these limits, the opportunity would seem to exist for Japan to play a larger and more active role in the region than it has to date. The pace of its greater involvement cannot be forced and Japan must continue to move cautiously. The critical factor at this point in time, however, would seem to be Japan's decision whether to move in that direction, not a lack of receptivity on the part of other East Asian governments.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Japan's emergence as a major world industrial power has focused attention on the role it might play in the complex and shifting pattern which seems likely to characterize international relations in East Asia over the next decade. Speculation on Japan's future role frequently proceeds from the fact of its enormous economic strength to an assumption that Japan "inevitably" will play a major political, and even military, role in East Asia. Whether in fact Japan does so, however, is less likely to be a necessary consequence of its economic power than, first, a function of Japan's own definition of the position it should hold in East Asia and, second, a function of the international environment in which Japan must endeavor to realize its aspirations.

Within Japan, there is as yet no consensus as to its future role in East Asia, beyond agreement on a growing economic involvement in the region, which thus far has been oriented primarily to Japan's commercial advantage. Nor, with respect to the international environment, are the factors likely to shape both the opportunities for and constraints on Japan's future role as yet clear, including the strength and objectives of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the degree of Soviet involvement in East Asia, the nature and extent of the U.S. presence and the character and cohesiveness of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia.

This study examines yet another factor in that environment -- the expectations and apprehensions present among non-Communist countries in East Asia toward Japan on the assumption that such attitudes will be important in conditioning the receptivity of these governments to a larger, more active role in East Asia should Japan decide to move in that direction.

II. THE VIEW FROM EACH COUNTRY

Each of the countries visited -- the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia -- views Japan through the prism of its particular concerns and interests. Although they share a number of attitudes -- and to this extent there appears to be an emerging consensus regarding Japan -- it is this unique perspective which in the first instance shapes the assessment each country makes of the importance of its bilateral relations and of Japan's future position in East Asia.

A. The Republic of Korea -- Historically, Korea has been a field of contention between stronger outside powers -- China, Russia and Japan -- and in the postwar period the Republic of Korea (ROK) has faced the added threat of a hostile and aggressive North Korean Communist government. At least until recently, the ROK has felt confident in relying on the United States for political and economic support and, ultimately, as the guarantor of its security against external attack. That confidence, however, has been eroded by events of the past several years, including the reduction of the U.S. military presence in East Asia and the opening achieved toward an improvement in US-PRC relations.

It is within this context that the Government of the Republic of Korea has begun to assign greater importance to Japan, not only economically and politically but in security terms as well, not so much as a matter of choice as of felt necessity. In doing so, the government hopes for a continued, even if reduced, U.S. involve-

ment in Korea as a check on assumed Japanese expansionist tendencies. The fact, however, that at least tentative overtures have been made in the direction of both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China suggests an effort to develop a more complicated balance of power strategy in order to maintain the security and integrity of the Republic of Korea against its historical antagonists. As one government party National Assemblyman put it, "Korea hopes to achieve a strong middle position as a make-weight against any one of the big powers which might be tempted to threaten it."

Within the government, the importance attached to Japanese investment and trade as essential to Korea's continued development seems clearly to outweigh concern for possible "economic domination", although here also the government's strategy is to attract increased U.S. and other foreign investment in order to preclude excessive dependence on Japan. However, worrisome signs of declining interest on the part of Japanese business, attributed in Seoul to sensitivity to PRC pressure, rising interest in trade with North Korea or declining confidence in the strength of South Korea's economy, have heightened Korea's active concern to retain a substantial and growing Japanese economic presence.

Although politically the Korean Government has moved more cautiously, here too there are signs of greater reliance on Japan. For some years, the ROK has successfully retained Japan's support in the UN debates on the Korean items. More recently, however, it has solicited Japan's help in reinforcing with the U.S. its concern for troop withdrawals and regarding the possibility of any US-PRC discussions affecting its interests. More broadly speaking, there is some reason to believe that a larger role is seen for Japan in offsetting the influence of the PRC at least in Northeast Asia. The National Assemblyman cited above, for example, remarked that Japan is likely to seek a "reasonable big power position in East Asia, remaining sensitive to the interests of smaller countries," and he regarded the achievement of a secure and stable situation in Northeast Asia as dependent upon an "equilibrium" between Japan and China.

Even in the sensitive area of security, there are some indications that at least within the government consideration is being given to a possible role for Japan, beyond that of permitting the U.S. maximum use of bases and facilities in Japan for the defense of Korea. It is far from clear what form it is expected this might take, and the ROK seems to have abandoned its earlier interest in a "Pacific Treaty Organization (PATO)". Conversations on this subject, however, revealed no serious concern for the revival of Japanese "militarism", even though there seemed to be a general assumption that over the longer term Japan would develop a substantial air and naval defensive capability. In some quarters at least, the possibility that Korea might be able to rely in part on such strength, as a supplement to not a substitute for the U.S. security commitment, apparently is not unthinkable.

Notwithstanding this rather positive view, there remains a deep ambiguity in Korean attitudes toward Japan. More negative sentiments are most clearly articulated by intellectuals and Korean youth, as well as by members of the opposition party. These reflect historical antipathies, suspicion of Japan's motives and intentions and envy of Japan's power and wealth made the more

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bitter by a sense of cultural superiority. Currently, despite criticism of President Park for being too "pro-Japanese," the government's policy toward Japan appears to be less of a political issue than it has been in the past. But it probably lies close beneath the surface and could be revived should economic relations sour or if Japan seems prepared to ignore or sacrifice Korea's interests in an effort to achieve a rapprochement with Peking or Pyongyang. Barring such developments, however, it seems likely that Korea will continue to attempt to strengthen its position by developing a more intimate and broader association with Japan.

B. The Republic of China -- Currently within the Republic of China Japan is the subject of intense preoccupation, second only to the United States. Understandably, the overriding concern is for Japan's policy toward the People's Republic of China, which the Government of the Republic of China (GRC) believes will have a major influence not only on the policies of other East Asia governments with which it still retains diplomatic relations but could weaken its position by encouraging a general move within the region toward rapid accommodation with Peking.

In its present position, the GRC feels it has little leverage on Japan's future policy. It is aware of rising pressures on the Government of Japan (GOJ) to move toward normalization of relations with Peking and of the view that Japan has discharged its obligations to the GRC by its firm support during the losing battle to retain the GRC's seat in the United Nations. Conversations with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials revealed a rather fatalistic assumption that in the not too distant future Japan probably will accept Peking's terms -- recognition of the PRC as the sole, legitimate government of China, acknowledgment that Taiwan is part of China, and abrogation of the 1952 peace treaty with the GRC -- and break diplomatic relations with Taipei. The best they apparently believe they can hope for is the retention of economic ties, critical to Taiwan's continued survival, and informal, semi-official contacts.

This preoccupation with the immediate problem of Japan's policy toward Mainland China has tended to preclude longer-range thinking about relations between the Republic of China and Japan or Japan's future position in East Asia. In discussing this subject, however, several ranking government officials did express the view that Japan should establish itself as the focal point for a cooperative association of "Free Asian" nations. One said that he has urged Japan to concentrate on developing particularly close ties with Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore, with the objective of promoting economic development and "consolidating the strength of the non-Communist area." Another argued that Japan should forge close relations with all the developing countries of East Asia "uniting against the common enemy, Communist China." He felt that Japan's initiative should be couched in terms of promoting economic development but that this would lead eventually to a larger political role for Japan.

Such speculation probably is motivated primarily by the notion that such a development would constitute an obstacle to rapprochement between Tokyo and Peking and conceivably lead to rivalry between the two which might serve the interests of the Republic of China. Presumably, therefore, the GRC would readily support any Japanese initiative along the lines indicated above. Discussion of the prospects for such a development, however, made clear that there is little expectation within the GRC that Japanese leadership is prepared to embark on such a course.

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that all countries of Southeast Asia envision a "greater role" for Japan and he expressed interest in a Japanese Self-Defense Agency "White Paper" which he thought indicated that Japan might be moving in the direction of assuming some responsibility for regional security. He concluded, however, that for the foreseeable future Japan's greater involvement in Southeast Asia will have to remain more in the economic than the political area. Further, he could not conceive of Japan's participation in any security system for Southeast Asia, although he thought Japan might assume such a role with respect to South Korea and Taiwan. Another MFA official stated that Thailand would like to see Japan play a "more active political role" and felt that Japan not only could contribute importantly to the economic development of Southeast Asian countries but add weight to their "collective political defense" against China. He believed that this could be done most effectively through political consultations within the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC) and the Southeast Asian Ministerial Conference on Economic Development "to seek a common ground and narrow the gap in understanding." He saw no need, however, to develop any special relationship between Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

These and other conversations, however, revealed an uncertainty that Japan is willing to play a more active role in the area and apprehension that it may instead seek an accommodation with the PRC which would preserve its economic interests but leave Peking a free hand to extend its political influence over Southeast Asia. As one official put it, "Thailand would hate to see Japan move too close to China." This may explain why in private conversations with Japanese leaders Thai officials on occasion seem to have actively encouraged Japan to become more deeply engaged politically in Southeast Asia, for example, in bringing about a peaceful settlement in Vietnam or in persuading Peking to adopt a less aggressive posture in the area, and have urged that Thailand and Japan consult closely on such matters. Although there also have been some indications that Thailand might welcome some security role for Japan in East Asia, with respect to Thailand itself, thinking concerning any such contribution seems limited to possible material and technical assistance to its counter-insurgency effort.

In sum, it would appear that in its search for some means of offsetting what it sees as a declining US presence in the area, Thailand's present leadership considers greater Japanese involvement preferable to an accommodation with China or a larger Soviet presence. Thailand undoubtedly hopes that the U.S. will retain sufficient influence, economically and politically, to avoid the possibility of having to rely too exclusively on Japan, but at the moment that possibility does not seem a source of serious concern.

D. Singapore -- Of the five countries visited, Singapore's view of Japan seemed the least complicated by suspicion of Japan's motives and intentions and the most favorable toward a larger and more active role for Japan in Southeast Asia. If anything, the attitude of the Singapore Government (GOS) seems to be characterized less by a concern that Japan will play a role commensurate with its present economic strength and potential power than that it will fail to do so.

In part, this may reflect the relatively limited Japanese economic presence in Singapore and Japan's cautious, "low profile" approach there. Although following a rapid expansion of trade in the period 1960-70, Japan moved from Singapore's fourth to its second largest trading partner, there is some reason to believe that the volume of its trade will level off. Japanese investment is only approximately 5% of the foreign total and, although this is expected to increase, our Embassy estimates that Japan probably will continue to rank well down the list of major foreign

investors. Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that there is little serious fear in Singapore of Japanese "economic domination."

Despite continuing resentment of Japan and anti-Japanese prejudice within certain elements of the Chinese community and expressed most strongly in the Chinese press, Singapore appears remarkably free, given its bitter wartime experience, from hostility toward and suspicion of Japan. As one Ministry of Foreign Affairs official explained, "Those wartime issues were settled peaceably and the harsh memories seem to have faded." Within the past year or so, this process may have been assisted by a quietly effective Japanese cultural and information program, as well as by the Japanese Embassy's apparent effort to rebut any suggestion that its government might ever become more actively engaged in the area politically or militarily.

Probably more important in explaining the attitude of the GOS toward Japan, however, is its overall foreign policy strategy, described by the Australian Deputy High Commissioner as "all comers in." Concerned for the envy and sometimes hostility of Malaysia and Indonesia and, above all, for the threat of subversion and insurgency inspired and supported by Peking, Singapore sees the best guarantee of its security in encouraging the major powers to develop a stake sufficiently large that all will have an interest in maintaining Singapore's integrity and in checking the efforts of any one to achieve a dominant position. Believing that U.S. involvement in the area is certain to decline -- but hoping that it will not disappear entirely -- the GOS evidently has given greater attention to drawing Japan in as a new "balancing" factor.

The GOS, therefore, has sought to encourage greater Japanese investment in Singapore, particularly in more sophisticated industry, and urged Japan to become more involved in industrial development than it has in the past. It also has not only pressed Japan to be more forthcoming with economic assistance to Southeast Asia but has made clear that it would welcome a larger Japanese political role to counterbalance Western powers and the Soviet Union and strengthen the area against Chinese pressures. The GOS has even on occasion suggested that under certain circumstances Japan might play a useful security role in the area.

It is far from clear what precisely the GOS has in mind in urging that Japan play a larger role in the area, beyond making a greater contribution to economic development. Efforts to draw out a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official on this point elicited only rather vague references to "a more active diplomacy," possibly including efforts to mediate disputes which may arise in the region, and to possible Japanese initiatives in proposing some new scheme of regional cooperation. In the security field, he explicitly rejected any role for Japan in combatting internal subversion. Rather, he seemed to suggest that should Japan become a significant military power, this would give it added weight in protecting its interests against an external threat to the area.

Consistent with its overall strategy, Singapore does not wish to see Japan assume a leadership role or achieve a predominant position. Short of that, however, it evidently looks to Japan to devise a policy of more active involvement in the area. "The major lack," as one Embassy assesment concluded, "is in Japanese initiative not Singaporean receptivity."

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E. Indonesia -- Indonesia's view of and policy toward Japan is part of a complex and rather sophisticated strategy based on a strengthened and more unified ASEAN under its leadership and designed to enable the non-Communist countries of Southeast Asia to resist the threat of Chinese-sponsored subversion and political pressure. The alignment of Japan's economic power and political influence in support of Indonesia's efforts to strengthen its own position and to promote the economic growth of the region as a whole apparently is regarded as essential to the success of that strategy. As one Indonesian scholar and policy adviser to the government explained, "Thus far we have tended to deal with Japan only in economic terms; now we must think of it in political terms as well. If Japan is unwilling to become more involved in Asian matters, we shall have to persuade it to do so."

Uncertainty as to how much longer the U.S. can be depended upon to maintain an effective presence in the region and apprehension that Japan, in the wake of the US-PRC rapprochement, may move too far and too rapidly toward an accommodation with Peking evidently have prompted the government to advance its time-table for expanding political contacts with Japanese conservative leadership and deepening Japan's economic involvement in Indonesia in an attempt to exert a counterpull on Japan. Both aspects clearly were involved in President Suharto's recent mid-May "unofficial visit" to Tokyo. At the same time, Indonesia has strengthened its ties with Australia as a counterweight to over-dependence on Japan and, more recently, has moved to persuade other ASEAN members not to make any move toward Peking without prior consultation and coordination.

This strategy, which apparently has been devised chiefly by President Suharto and his close advisers, is not entirely compatible with the government's continued obeisance to the doctrine of "non-alignment" or without risk to Indonesia's aspirations to leadership in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is aware of the great disparity between its economic strength and that of Japan and of Japan's greater potential political and military power, even though at the moment there appears to be no serious concern for a revival of Japanese "militarism." There is concern, however, that Japan may exploit Indonesia's weaknesses, and this is particularly evident in the economic area where the Japanese performance to date has not been reassuring to Indonesians. Not only have some Japanese private companies shown a casual regard for government regulations and been criticized for their exploitative attitude, but in the selection of aid projects the Japanese Government has appeared more responsive to its own commercial interests than to the requirements of sound economic development. Japanese official intervention with key political figures on behalf of its business interests also have undercut the efforts of the Indonesian bureaucracy to deal with business -- domestic as well as foreign -- on a more orderly basis.

These considerations probably underlie the apparent uneasiness of certain elements within the Foreign Ministry and the economic ministries with the government's present policy toward Japan. President Suharto's decision to seek a \$200 million loan from Japan, outside the framework of the international consortium of economic aid donors to Indonesia (the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia - IGGI) and for the purpose of oil development, has been opposed by most of the bureaucracy on the grounds that Indonesia should not become so closely tied to the Japanese market, thus giving Japan too great an influence over pricing. Others have criticized President Suharto's visit to Tokyo, in part to seek agreement in principle to the new loan and in part to undertake political consultations with Prime Minister Sato and his likely successors, as possibly prejudicing Indonesia's image with its Southeast Asian neighbors. Finally, Foreign Minister Malik evidently

disagrees with the current strategy toward Japan, preferring a more strictly non-aligned policy which probably would involve improvement of relations with the Soviet Union, including the resumption of Soviet aid, and a restoration of relations with Peking, an approach more akin to Singapore's "all comers in" strategy.

Although such criticism and resistance may require the present leadership to proceed cautiously in its efforts to draw Japan into a closer relationship, there is unlikely to be a basic change in the government's strategy barring a change in Japan's own policies or unless, despite Japanese assistance, Indonesia runs into serious economic difficulties.

III. SOME GENERALIZATIONS

For the most part, attitudes in East Asia toward Japan seem more positive than the attention which has focused on Japan's "unfavorable image" would lead one to expect.

This unfavorable image is largely a psychological and emotional phenomenon, although nonetheless real for that fact. It is compounded of memories of wartime experiences, a lack of self-confidence in dealing with an incomparably richer and more powerful country which is perhaps more envied than admired, and suspicions of Japan's long-range intentions.

To outside observers, these attitudes may appear the more striking because Japan also is an Asian nation. But few Asians feel a sense of cultural affinity, much less identity with Japan. For most, Japan seems to stand, emotionally and culturally, in the same position as Western Europe or the United States. If anything, the sense of separateness is greater in the case of Japan.

Nonetheless, despite this psychological and cultural gap, the impression which emerged most clearly from conversations in all countries visited was not only that Japan is expected by reason of its economic strength to play a larger role in East Asia, but that there is a belief -- or hope -- that more active involvement by Japan, both economically and politically, could be in the interests of the individual countries and the region as a whole.

In a very real sense, this attitude reflects a keen uncertainty concerning the future pattern of international relations in East Asia, and most particularly uncertainty concerning the position of the United States. Under these circumstances, there seems to be a rising sense of the need to insure that Japan becomes more deeply involved with the interests of the individual countries in order to enable them to resist more effectively pressures which are anticipated from China. If Japan may not be generally regarded as a potential counterweight to the expected growing influence of the People's Republic of China -- and there is even some concern that Japan not give rise to tension in the region by presenting an overt challenge to Peking -- Japan is seen by its smaller neighbors as a preferable alternative to greater reliance on Peking's favor.

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It is equally apparent, however, that a primary condition of this readiness, even desire, to rely more closely upon Japan, both economically and politically, is the continued active involvement of the United States in the East Asia region. ..

Japan is seen as a supplement to, not a substitute for, a U.S. presence in Asia, both economically and politically. And the impression, which seems to have some currency in East Asia that a consequence, if not an implicit objective, of the Nixon Doctrine is to shift to Japan a major share of the responsibilities which the U.S. heretofore has borne is a source of evident apprehension.

It is probably fair to say, therefore, that a continuing U.S. presence in East Asia is a -- if not the -- prime condition for the development of a healthy and constructive relationship between Japan and the non-Communist countries of the region. It is this presence which can compensate in real measure for the lack of self-confidence and the apprehensions which otherwise could affect adversely their relations with Japan.

In all the countries visited, despite apprehensions of possible "economic domination," the thrust of government policy quite evidently is to expand economic relations with Japan, both private and official, whether for strictly economic reasons or, as seems to be the case notably in Singapore and Indonesia, out of a mixture of political and economic calculations.

Unexpectedly, in conversations with both government officials and persons outside the government no strong preference was expressed that more of Japan's official aid be channeled through multilateral institutions, perhaps reflecting either doubt that this is likely or an expectation that a bilateral approach can be more rewarding. More important in the minds of most government officials, however, is the need to "balance" a growing Japanese economic presence by increased U.S. or other developed country investment and trade. It also seems likely that most countries will rely increasingly on law and regulation to insure that the Japanese economic presence does not prejudice and serves more directly national economic interests and will attempt to exert greater pressures on the Japanese Government for similar ends, as Thailand already has done with some success in regard to its trade imbalance.

Although much less precise as to form and substance than the role which East Asian countries see for Japan economically, the notion that Japan can and should play a larger and more active role politically came through clearly in almost all discussions in each country visited.

In discussions of a possible political role for Japan, however, apprehensions and qualifications were more generally articulated than positive conceptions of what such a role might be. Most particularly, there is no desire that Japan should play a "leadership" role. Indeed one gains the impression that, at least in the countries visited, there is a reluctance to see any major power assume a preeminent position in East Asia. In part this may reflect strengthened nationalistic sentiment, in part a concern that major powers cannot be relied upon to protect the interests of smaller

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states. In any event, any effort by others or Japan itself to cast Japan in a "leadership" role in East Asia seems certain to meet with resistance and damage the possibilities for Japan to play a constructive political role in concert with other countries in the region.

Nor is there likely to be much receptivity to Japanese initiatives to establish new institutions or forums for political or economic cooperation in the region. Discussions concerning this possibility generally elicited the comment that there already are in being a sufficient number of channels for Japan to consult and cooperate with other East Asian countries on matters of mutual concern.

Finally, among the Southeast Asian countries visited there is no desire for any formal political alignment with Japan or that any new association of non-Communist states be formed around Japan in opposition to the People's Republic of China. Although one Korean politician remarked that in his country there is "a certain nostalgia for the Cold War era," bloc politics seem to be regarded as a thing of the past in East Asia.

Perhaps unrealistically, East Asian countries hope that they can set the terms for Japan's greater political involvement in the region. Positively, they see Japan as a potential supporter of their national interests; negatively, they wish to insure that Japan's involvement not revive Japanese expansionist ambitions. Beyond that, the "terms" are not yet clearly defined and vary from country to country. At least two generalizations seem possible, however.

First, there does seem to be a willingness, even a desire, for a more active diplomatic posture on Japan's part, both bilaterally and within existing regional institutions of which Japan already is a member. There is a keen interest in Japan's views on East Asian problems and a sense that its foreign policy moves are of direct relevance to other countries in the region. This was most clearly evident in the interest expressed in every country in Japan's policy toward the People's Republic of China and the generally-held assessment that what Japan does on this issue may well set the pattern for other countries in the region. Undoubtedly all governments in these countries would respond to a willingness on Japan's part to exchange views on these matters and would be favorably impressed if Japan would take them into its confidence in such a manner.

Second, the countries of the area would seem to prefer that Japan's involvement in efforts to deal with regional problems be at the invitation of and in participation with other countries, as in the case of the Djakarta Conference on Cambodia in May, 1970. Tentative offers by Japan in the past to mediate disputes, as in the case of the Indonesian-Malaysian "confrontation" proved unrewarding and there is no reason to expect a different reception in the future.

With the exception of the Republic of Korea, where some thought apparently is being given within restricted government circles to a possible Japanese contribution to future security requirements, a military role for Japan in East Asia is not considered either necessary or desirable.

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This attitude is scarcely surprising given Japan's past record of military aggression. What is more surprising, however, is that few with whom this subject was discussed seemed seriously concerned for the possible revival of Japanese "militarism." Nor does it appear to be generally assumed that Japan necessarily must become a military power, either to secure its status as a major world power or to protect its overseas markets and sources of raw materials.

At least in the Southeast Asian countries visited, however, a direct Japanese military role is not regarded as relevant to the security threat as presently perceived. That threat is seen primarily as one of internal subversion and insurgency, supported by China, and not of overt, across-the-border aggression. There seems to be a general recognition in these countries that the burden for meeting this threat rests almost entirely with the individual countries themselves, perhaps in cooperation with their neighbors, both in developing effective internal security forces and in achieving a measure of domestic social and economic development which will command popular support for the government, or at least hold dissatisfaction to tolerable limits. Apart from the possibility of assistance in acquiring certain types of equipment required for counter-insurgency operations, the only contribution generally seen for Japan is the indirect one of assisting these countries in their economic development efforts.

IV. CONCLUSION

In sum, the overall impression gained from conversations in these five East Asian countries is that the opportunity clearly exists for Japan to play a larger and more active role in the region, politically as well as economically, than it has to date. Among these countries there currently seems to be as much concern that Japan will not play such a role, either because of an unwillingness to accept the responsibilities involved or because of too close an accommodation with China, as that Japan once again may seek to revive the dream of a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.

The pace of Japan's greater involvement cannot be forced, however, either by Japan or others. Suspicions of Japan's long-range intentions are still too strong and nationalistic sensitivities too well developed for that to succeed. The cautious, "low profile" approach which Japan has followed to date in its political relations with the countries of East Asia seems well suited to these present attitudes.

But if Japan demonstrates a reasonable regard for the national interests of these countries and for their desire to shape their own destinies, and if Japan is willing to treat with these governments as responsible members of an Asian community and not as inferiors or dependents, then there is ample room for it to play an important and constructive role in the region. The choice would seem to rest with Japan.

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