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The Japan Digest

FORUM

December 1, 1993

Japan's Reviving Pan-Asianism: A Strong Dissent

By Ivan P. Hall

The contemptuous tone of much of Tokyo's press toward Bill Clinton's strong performance at the APEC summit in Seattle was captured by an Asahi cartoon showing him standing on a dogsled, whip in hand. The Asians had all broken their husky harness to scamper away muttering, "Can you really expect *him* to understand Asia?" The same theme of an Uncle Sam clumsy about Asian sensibilities and needing help from Japan appeared in Prime Minister Hosokawa's reported cultural plan for APEC (Digest, 11/18)—not in his useful suggestions for youth exchanges and cultural asset preservation, but in the underlying premise that a proposed Asia-Pacific cultural conference would help remove a "psychological wall" separating the U.S. and developing Asian nations.

This was strikingly similar to a cultural panel report, prepared over a year's time with input from high Japanese officials, for the Second Asia-Pacific Conference, Tokyo, in May 1991. I was the sole foreign panelist, invited by the chairman to comment on the final recommendations for Japan's future cultural diplomacy towards Asia. I was unpleasantly surprised, not by the run-of-the-mill exchange proposals, but by the philosophical framework which seemed a throwback to the old prewar Co-Prosperity Sphere ideology. That report spoke of a need to create a new cultural bloc, appealed in places to anti-Western resentment, talked of the limits of Western rationalism, and proposed a new press center in Tokyo to limn the "ABC's of Asian coverage" to Western journalists.

Roadblocks: Both economic and ideological needs are served by this warmed-over Pan-Asianism. The old canard that trade frictions derive not from economic differences, but from a cultural-psychological roadblock that only the Japanese can fathom, helps Japan to enlist the rest of Asia against U.S. market opening pressures. And as those pressures mount, as they will under Clinton, there are old mental grooves into which the Japanese slip in periods of frustration or contempt towards the West—namely the (largely unsolicited) patronization of Asia, as in the 1930's.

There is no need for U.S. negotiators and opin-

ion makers to swallow Tokyo's fantasy of a cultural divide down the mid-Pacific. U.S. political, intellectual, and human ties span the region like a freeway cloverleaf compared to Japan's tightly hoisted draw-bridges, put down only to let the economic samurai out. Not only did American political sponsorship bring Japan back into the postwar order, but the Japanese and East Asian economic miracles are unthinkable without the military security, open market, and world free-trade system provided by the U.S. Indeed it is America's cultural, intellectual, and personal ties with the region that have been the stronger, warmer, and more open—in immigration, intermarriage, refugees, university ties, and in professional receptivity towards Asian artists, scholars, and journalists.

Discrimination: If Japan seriously wants cultural and intellectual exchange with APEC, it could start by opening up its own notoriously insular university faculties, media reporters' clubs, and scientific laboratories to outsiders. It could tackle the housing discrimination that embitters so many of its young Asian students. And almost fifty years late it could try to dispel the hurts and suspicions left among its Asian neighbors by World War II—by far the deepest "psychological barrier" in the APEC region.

The U.S. shed blood and treasure in Korea and Vietnam to save Japan and Southeast Asia for democracy and capitalism—a Japanese brand of capitalism that has beat the pants off ours, and that may have served primarily to facilitate Japan's economic takeover in Asia. What an irony it would be if we now watched Asians link arms to reduce American participation under the culturalist rubric that U.S.-style free markets, democracy, and human rights don't really suit their tastes after all!

Japan's effort to strengthen cultural ties with Asia is long overdue. But the Japanese should forge them on their own merits, not by gratuitously denigrating American ties to the region or by seeking to gain points by painting the U.S. as a common economic and cultural threat.

Ivan P. Hall is a former professor on the Law Faculty, Gakushuin University, Tokyo.

Riding with Japan's cultural blitz

Heng Pek Koon hones in on the reasons for a more recent cultural assertiveness by Japan in the Asia-Pacific region

ALREADY the predominant economic power in Asia, Japan is now seeking to assert cultural leadership through an ambitious series of initiatives in the field of cultural diplomacy. Concerned initially with the promotion and preservation of Asian cultural assets, Japan is also seeking to promote cross-cultural dialogue between Asian nations and other non-Asian countries of the Pacific Rim.

Late this year, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs played host to two major international conferences on Asian culture in Tokyo: the Angkor Wat Restoration Conference (Oct 11-13) and the Conference on the Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture in East Asia (Nov 4-5). And it is now laying plans to hold a high profile Asia-Pacific "mutual understanding" conference next autumn.

At the first of the 1993 conferences, attended by 150 official representatives from 30 countries, Japan pledged an initial sum of US\$2 million over two years for three restoration projects in Angkor Wat. Participants in the second conference, from the Asean countries, as well as from China, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Mongolia, received Japanese pledges of financial and technical assistance for cultural preservation projects in their countries, the details of which are to be worked out in several other planned meetings in the future.

Japan's desire to promote closer ties with Asian countries through cultural diplomacy stems primarily from three considerations: (1) its rapidly increasing integration into and economic dependence on Asia; (2) recognition that Asian political support is vital to its aspirations for a global leadership role; and (3) the opportunity the Clinton administration's interest in the region offers Japan to assert itself as the spokesman for Asian nations in their dialogue with the US, especially within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum.

The remarkable economic success of Asia — particularly of the Asean countries, Hongkong, Taiwan, South Korea and, most recently, China — has made the region more than just Japan's economic backyard. Its fast expanding opportunities

for Japanese foreign trade and investments have made it even more attractive during a time when Japanese businesses are suffering from the country's most severe recession since the oil shock of the mid-1970s. Statistics released by the Asian Development Bank in October this year showed a threefold increase since 1985 in Japan's exports to the region, which currently stand at 30 per cent of the nation's total. With bright growth prospects forecast for the region for the remainder of the decade, Japan's economic reliance on Asia is bound to increase even more.

Cultural diplomacy gives Japan broadened scope for furthering its post-Cold War regional and global foreign policy goals at a time when it has cast off its previous reluctance to address difficult po-

litical and security issues. Japan has been greatly encouraged by the success of its well-executed and well-received contribution to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (Untac) peace settlement process in Cambodia. While recognising that US support remains the essential underpinning for Japan's global aspirations, of which gaining a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council has assumed high priority, Asian endorsement of such goals is also clearly necessary.

Cultural diplomacy gives Japan broadened scope for furthering its post-Cold War regional and global foreign policy goals at a time when it has cast off its previous reluctance to address difficult political and security issues.

Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa's public statements since coming to power in June 1993 have helped rehabilitate Japan's unfortunate image in the region as an unrepentant perpetrator of ghastly war crimes. His unprecedentedly direct apologies for the "intolerable pain and sorrow" inflicted by Japan's aggression have paved

the way for Japan to deal with former war victims on a more solid footing. Even South Korea, the country which suffered the longest under its 35-year subjugation to Japanese colonial rule, was clearly mollified by Mr Hosokawa's forthright efforts to promote closer ties between the two neighbours during his state visit last month.

Japan's current promotion of cultural co-operation in the region seeks to consolidate the gains made by Mr Hosokawa's vigorous efforts at redressing Japan's World War II record. The strengthening of a more well-rounded multilateral relationship with its Asian neighbours will also serve Japan's bilateral relationship with America that currently seeks a multilateral structure to anchor it more firmly in the

region. In his Waseda University speech in Tokyo in July 1993, President Clinton called for a "New Pacific Community". It is clear that the US President is greatly interested in developing the Apec forum into a more formal institution with a broad mandate to deal with issues beyond the economic realm, though given the expressions of caution by Asian countries at the Seattle Summit last month, momentum towards integration of an Asia-Pacific community built around Apec will probably proceed at a relatively leisurely pace, one agreeable to all its 17 members.

The American focus on Apec provides an opportunity for Japan to play an active double role, first as the spokesman for Asian countries concerned about supposedly "culturally inappropriate" or "overly aggressive" US initiatives in the region, and second as America's primary Asian

partner and thus the lynchpin for engaging the US in the region in all fields, including the cultural realm.

Some Japanese officials and intellectuals argue that the US has an important role to play in Asia's cultural renaissance since America is the principal force behind the shaping of modern Asian culture. In an article published this month, Yoichi Funabashi, the Washington Bureau chief of the *Asahi Shimbun*, goes so far as to argue that the "Asianisation of Asia" — increased intra-Asian ties and co-operation — will occur only when the region's cultural streams combine with those of America. The flow of people, ideas and pop culture from the West has been sharply accelerated by television programmes propagating Western values and lifestyles, beamed down into the region by satellites that Asian countries find hard to keep out.

Is Asia likely to accept a Japanese leadership role in the articulation of a common Asian (or Asia-Pacific, for that matter) cultural identity? Statements made by Asian scholars, journalists and public figures on the subject show a mixed response. Arifin Bey, a leading Indonesian scholar on Japan currently at Kanda University in Tokyo, says that while "Japan and South-east Asia may be geographically close to each other, they have virtually no shared cultural heritage".

Bey argues, perhaps over-emphatically, that Japan does not share in the core religious values of the region and that its unique Shinto legacy acts like a cultural cordon sanitaire that separates the country from the rest of the region. Others, like Sithichai Yoon, editor of the Bangkok-based *Nation* newspaper, while conceding the growing influence of Japanese pop culture in the region as reflected in the spreading popularity of Japanese television programmes and Nintendo games, sees Japan as basically "culturally spineless".

Even Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, one of Japan's most ardent supporters in the region, has perhaps unwittingly raised doubts about the efficacy of Japan's cultural diplomacy in remarks made in his Dec 9, 1993, letter to the *International Herald Tribune*. While pointing to the importance of an Asian-

centred organisation like the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) in the face of economic challenges presented by the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) and the European Community, Dr Mahathir says that no one need fear an Asian grouping because the region is so divided by culture, language and religion that "the idea of an integrated Asian Community borders on the ridiculous".

Japan's previous major attempt at cultural diplomacy in Asia, which accompanied its World War II aggression, was



Prime Minister Hosokawa: his apology for Japan's aggression 50 years ago has gone down well in the region

spectacularly unsuccessful. Whatever the anti-colonialist appeal of its "Asia for the Asiatics" slogans, the attempt to articulate — and impose — an ideology placing Japan at the pinnacle of indigenous Asian culture within the Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere was met with hostility and contempt.

Since the war, Japan has carried out several high profile but discrete cultural

initiatives in South-east Asia, such as building the Bangkok Cultural Centre and giving large sums to the Borobudur restoration project. However, as late as 1992, Japan's Asian neighbours gave the cold shoulder to former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's proposed "grand Pacific Common House for Cultural and Economic Cooperation". The initiatives of the current Japanese government offer more promise because they are presented in less grandiose terms by an administration that has shown considerable sensitivity to Asian feelings.

While some may be uneasy with this increasingly important dimension of Japanese diplomacy, Asia stands to accrue many benefits from Japan's efforts at fostering closer cultural ties within the region. Most importantly, Japanese financial and technical assistance can boost the sagging fortunes of cash-strapped museums and historical preservation projects. In addition, Japan's more overt emphasis on Asia's cultural commonalities — for example, social principles of harmony which place group prerogatives above individual needs, non-verbal communication and strong emphasis on education — invites greater attention to it as a model of how Asian countries can modernise without either losing their traditional identities or succumbing to anti-Western cultural nationalism.

Finally, this new emphasis may give impetus to the expression of original, distinctly Asian ideas on a host of issues: human rights, the debate over democracy versus economic development and the respective relationships of corporate enterprises to the state, individuals to society and society to the state.

Whether or not the coming years will witness the emergence of a more closely-knit Asia-Pacific community embracing the US and other non-Asian nations of the Pacific Rim, it is clear that Japan has begun to assert impressive leadership in helping define the cultural dimensions of such a community.

● Dr Heng Pek Koon is a Visiting Professor at the Institute for Pacific Rim Studies, Temple University, Japan

Emergence of neo-Asianism reflects Japan's identity search

January 17, 1993

Nation alters focus from West to East

BY NOBUYUKI OISHI
Staff writer

Since 1991, when Japanese exports to other parts of Asia outpaced exports to the U.S. for the first time, Tokyo's economic future has become ever more closely intertwined with that of Asia.

But these days, economic ties are but one part of Japan's complex new relationship with its Asian neighbors. From politics to popular culture, Japan is increasingly looking East rather than West. Its search for an identity and for a role in the fast-growing Asian region is one of the key megatrends of the 1990s.

To be sure, Japan's feelings about Asia are difficult to decipher or quantify, and are complicated by a history of conflict and colonization.

But the shift of emphasis from West, usually meaning the U.S., to East is noticeable at virtually all levels and sectors of society. As the nation's familiarity with other Asian peoples grows and as Asia asserts its economic prowess, an increasing number of Japanese appear to see themselves as part of, rather than peripheral or superior to, Asia.

According to political scientists and other analysts, the new trend owes its growth to, among other things, Japan's



search for a post-Cold War identity, the U.S.'s relative economic decline, Asia's dynamic economic and political maturation and feelings of Japanese vulnerability thrown up by the long recession.

While many bureaucrats, politicians and analysts acknowledge and embrace the trend, others downplay its importance or worry about its long-term impact.

"Neo-Asianism is emerging," said Mineo Nakajima, a professor of international affairs at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. "It is very dangerous when Japanese insularity and a new Chinese world order are combined. It would be better for the Japanese not to

have any particular identity."

"I think Asia is just an illusion that the Japanese have," added Naohiro Amaya, former vice minister of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and chairman at Dentsu Institute for Human Studies. "From an economic point of view, creating a sense of unity is important. But without economics, we have nothing to share."

To Haru M. Reischauer, wife of Edwin Reischauer, former U.S. ambassador to Japan, neo-Asianism should not be seen as a sinister move.

"Japan has learned much about the

See NEO-ASIANISM on Page 22

these shares are the main reason why the Nikkei Stock Average is rising, newly released figures show.

Many non-Japanese investors are buying stock because they believe the ailing Japanese economy will bottom out soon. Others are shifting funds from booming Asian stock markets, trying to profit from Tokyo's relatively low prices.

In all, foreign investors were net purchasers of ¥367 billion of Japanese stocks in December. That was the sixth successive month of net purchases and the largest amount so far this fiscal year, according to the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

The trend sharply contrasts with that of Japanese non-financial corporate investors, many of whom are selling stock to boost their performance before March 31, the end of fiscal 1993. Such investors were net sellers of ¥174 billion in December, the 38th successive month of net sales.

An estimate by one of the Big Four brokerage companies showed foreigners have bought a net 200 million shares between the beginning of this year and last week.

Largely thanks to foreigners' purchases, the Nikkei Stock Average closed last week at 18,973.70, up 18% from last year's low of 16,078.71 on Nov. 29, 1993.

"Foreign investors are not buying Japanese stocks because the stocks are

See STOCKS on Page 23

MINISTRY REBUKES FIRM FOR CUTTING RETIREMENT AGE

GOVERNMENT FEARS LIFETIME-EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM THREATENED

BY MASATO ISHIZAWA
Staff writer

The decision of a financially troubled machine-tool manufacturer to reduce its mandatory retirement age to 56 from 60 has sent shivers through Japan's work-

ECONOMISTS SEE NO FULL RECOVERY UNTIL '95

Toyota head expected to become Keidanren chairman

NEO-ASIANISM

JAPAN LOOKS EAST FOR NEW IDENTITY

Continued from Page 1

West but at the same time she has a deep understanding of other Asian nations," said Reischauer, a granddaughter of Masayoshi Matsukata, a former Japanese prime minister. "Therefore, Japan can perform the valuable function of bringing Asia and the West together."

Where propagators of Western culture once advocated *datsua*, or breaking away from Asia, many these days advocate *nyua*, entering Asia. Three areas — pro-Asian groups in the bureaucracy, trade with other Asian nations and school textbooks' new emphasis on the region — illustrate neo-Asianism's impact.

Pro-Asia bureaucracy

Once focused primarily on ties with the U.S., the powerful bureaucracy is shifting its focus closer to home these days.

The reason, wrote Kazuo Ogura, director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Economic Bureau, is that "in many aspects, negative values, which Asia had for a long time, have finally changed into positive ones."

"Asia has entered a new era in search of a common direction and a common fate in terms of politics and economy," Ogura, considered a leader of neo-Asianism in the bureaucracy, wrote in *Chuokoron* magazine last July.

Within the Foreign Ministry, an increasing number of pro-Asia bureaucrats support the establishment of the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), advocated by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, which excludes Western members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

The Foreign Ministry last August set up a new office, the Foreign Policy Bureau, to oversee 10 other bureaus, a change that diminished the importance of the North American Affairs Bureau, which used to authorize most important decisions.

The Ministry of Finance also has witnessed the emergence of pro-Asia groups. Since July 1991 the position of vice minister for international affairs has been occupied by two so-called pro-Asia persons — former Vice Minister Tadao Chino and current Vice Minister Kousuke Nakahira.

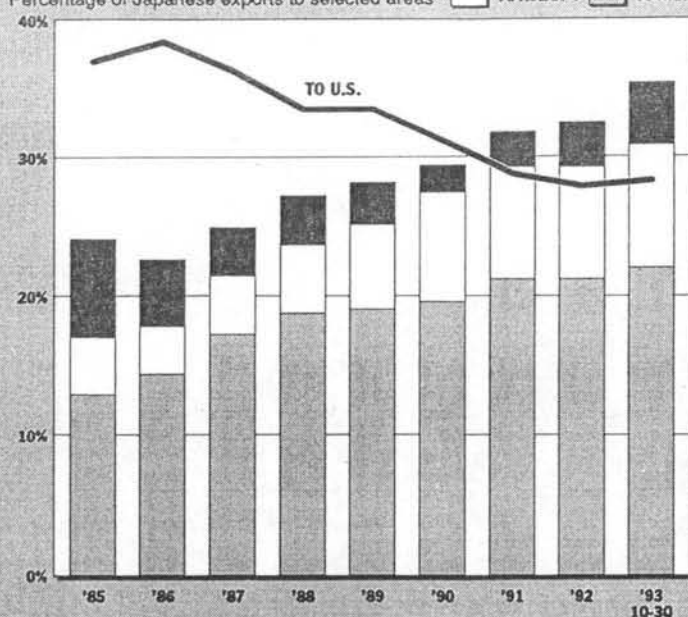
Before Chino took over the office in 1991, it was headed by bureaucrats who had studied at U.S. universities and worked at Japanese embassies in the U.S. or Europe or in international organizations based in Western nations.

Chino's and Nakahira's experience, in contrast, was in helping set up the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines.

Said former Administrative Vice Minister of Finance Hiroshi Yasuda, "The Ministry of Finance has to keep a watchful eye on Asia. A new Asianism

Changing export destinations

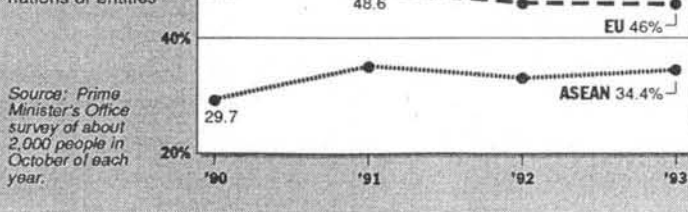
Percentage of Japanese exports to selected areas



Note: ASEAN 4 comprises Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand; NIEs comprises South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. Source: Nomura Research Institute

Feelings of familiarity

Percentage of Japanese who said they "feel familiar" with specific other nations or entities



Source: Prime Minister's Office survey of about 2,000 people in October of each year.

is emerging as we review our past activities."

Eisuke Sakakibara, deputy director general of the Ministry of Finance, added: "Japanese history since World War II is a history of Americanization. It's time to think about post-Western civilization. We have to stop being afraid of conflicting with the U.S."

Sakakibara, in charge of the financial sector of ongoing Japan-U.S. framework talks, said that the talks would reflect "a new Japan."

"I will not avoid some kind of breakdown" with the U.S., he said.

Some Diet members are also looking East more. For example, Taro Nakayama, former foreign minister and a Liberal Democratic Party member, and hundreds of national and local Diet members, are setting up a federation to promote the EAEC. Members will likely visit member nations to exchange ideas about the caucus.

Others noted that Prime Minister

last summer of Japanese wartime responsibility for "invasion activities" and "colonial rule" in Asia had paved the way for Japan to ponder its Asia role and for other Asians to reevaluate Japan's regional situation. Hosokawa's statements were the first time a Japanese prime minister has admitted such guilt.

Trading places

Clearly, Japan's recent search for an identity regarding Asia has been largely prompted by economic motives.

In trade, the U.S. accounted for 28.5% of all Japanese exports in 1992, down from 38.9% in 1986, according to a Nomura Research Institute survey. At the same time, exports to Asia rose from 22.7% in 1986 to 33% in 1992.

Further, Asian nations' export dependence on the U.S. fell from 34.1% in 1986 to 24.2% in 1992 and inter-Asia exports grew from 30.9% to 43.1% during that period.

Asia's dynamism will ensure that such trends continue, said Kenji Mizutani, deputy president at Tokai Research & Consulting, an affiliate of Tokai Bank. He said that Japan has no option but to turn toward Asia because Japan will be unable to export to the U.S. in the future if the yen remains so high against the dollar.

Mizutani said he expected the yen to rise sharply again because of the U.S.'s massive external debt, which will likely exceed \$1 trillion in five years compared with \$521 billion in 1992.

C.H. Kwan, senior economist at Nomura Research Institute, said that Asian nations will increasingly come to depend on the yen as a key currency.

In turn, he said, "Japan has to increase its commitment" to create a yen bloc "regardless of its will."

He said that if Asian nations decided to peg their currencies to the yen, it would benefit them by reducing currency fluctuations and lead to an expansion of trade with Japan and direct investment from Japan.

According to a 1992 survey by Shojiro Tokunaga, professor at Kyushu University, 57% of 130 Japanese machinery firms used the yen as an export settlement currency in East Asia, compared with 38% for the dollar.

School textbooks

Asia is also in the minds of school textbook publishers and the Ministry of Education, which has long been criticized for avoiding mention of Japanese wartime atrocities in the region.

This spring, many Japanese high schools will begin using history textbooks completed since the ministry liberalized its textbook checking system in 1989.

For example, a new world history textbook published by Hitotsubashi Shuppan covers for the first time details about such controversial issues as the Nanking massacres in China in 1937 by the Japanese army, the use of Asians as "comfort women" or sex slaves in World War II and current Japanese sex tours to Southeast Asia.

The book closes: "As a member of Asia, establishment of peaceful and mutual respectful relations with Asian peoples is the first hurdle for we who live in Japan (so that we can) live as citizens on Earth."

To Dentsu Institute's Amaya, Japanese thinking about its world role has fallen into two basic groups since Japan was opened in 1853.

One group, *kaikoku*, aimed to introduce Western technologies. The other, *sakoku*, wanted to maintain Japan's seclusion and exclude Western influences.

The *sakoku* group lost power during the Meiji era but regained it near the end of the Taisho era (1912-1926), prompting the philosophy that led to the idea of a Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, and to World War II.

Since the war's end, the *sakoku* group has been moribund, said Amaya. But with the Japan-U.S. relationship in flux, the group has begun regaining its power, he said.

"Current (neo-Asian) moves remind me of the end of the Taisho era," he said, adding that he does not support the



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