

# Comparative Connections

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## Japan-Southeast Asia Relations: Playing Catch-up with China

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In the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China is replacing Japan as the most influential Asian state in most of Southeast Asia. After barely maintaining economic steerage for much of the past decade, Japan now often trails in China's wake. Tokyo has not been blind to Beijing's sophisticated campaign to increase China's influence in this region, but its response thus far has been too little, too late.

Sino-Japanese rivalry is riveted on direct bilateral issues – the Yasukuni Shrine and other historical issues, and contention over the East China Sea. The ups and downs in dealing with these high-profile issues are charted in capitals throughout Asia. Southeast Asia is seldom mentioned. Moreover, such traditional issues as investment, trade, and aid continue to dominate Japanese-Southeast Asian bilateral relations. For Japan, these economic issues are managed, often on autopilot, by individual Japanese government ministries.

However, the Sino-Japanese contest for leadership in East Asia appears to be here to stay. Among all of China's neighbors, only Japan has been singled out as a country with which Beijing does not seek warm relations. This rivalry may be centered in Northeast Asia, but it spills over into Southeast Asia.

One reason for Japan's complacency when it looks south may be a misplaced assumption that China and the United States are locked in a strategic rivalry in Southeast Asia. But since 2001, Beijing has gone out of its way to avoid competition with the Washington in this region. As China-U.S. tensions in Southeast Asia have faded, the profile of China-Japan rivalry has become sharper.

Southeast Asians prefer quiet competition to public rivalry, though the incessant Southeast Asian refrain about Japan has been its strategic absence, often captured in the cliché describing Japan as an “economic giant/strategic dwarf” in their region. Southeast Asian elites, despite the recent revival of the Japanese economy after a decade of stagnation, tend to take their relationships with Japan for granted. They want Japan to remain involved in their region, but seldom factor Tokyo into their strategic calculations. Nonetheless, there are few contentious issues in Japanese-Southeast Asian relationships and Japan retains a massive economic stake in the region. Tokyo is well positioned to exert greater influence if and when it puts its own house in order and finally, if

reluctantly, accepts that Beijing is aiming at the nation that once called itself the “leading goose” in Asia’s V-shaped flight to stability and prosperity.

### **Japan’s interests in Southeast Asia**

Access to Southeast Asia’s resources, and the benefits that flow from the dense trade networks that have evolved over the past 30 years between Japan and the region, remain at the heart of Japan’s interests. Japan is the largest trading partner and the largest source of foreign investment for many Southeast Asian countries. It runs neck and neck with the United States to be the largest market for ASEAN states as a whole, including for products partially produced in China and Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia offers an alternative investment and export destination should Japan’s now “hot” economic relationship with China cool.

In addition, through Southeast Asian chokepoints flow the lifeblood of Japan’s modern economy. Almost 80 percent of Japan’s oil and about 70 percent of its shipping transits Southeast Asia. In recent years, Tokyo has sought to play a role in sea-lane security through cooperation between its coast guard and Southeast Asian countries’ maritime forces. But the basic Japanese approach to security is broader: it has been Japan’s self-appointed role to contribute to stability in the region primarily through economic development, particularly through massive investment in and aid to Indonesia.

Japan’s interests are not fundamentally different from those of the United States, though Washington has tended to focus on security issues and to prominently inject such global policies as human rights and more recently countering terrorism into its relationships with Southeast Asia. The congruence of Japanese and U.S. interests in Southeast Asia is not lost on Beijing. However, in the past five years China has redirected its antagonism from the United States to Japan.

### **Tokyo’s traditional roles**

In securing its interests, Tokyo faces none of the impediments that it finds in Northeast Asia. History is no longer a significant issue, even among the descendants of those brutalized by Japan’s Imperial Army more than 60 years ago, such as the ethnic Chinese in Malaya. Territorial disputes between Japan and Southeast Asian countries do not exist, and no state now threatens to use classic military means to resolve security issues in Southeast Asia. This means that Japan has been able to focus on economics, and leave traditional security matters largely to Southeast Asians and the U.S., though it has contributed money and self-defense forces to peacekeeping operations in Cambodia (1992) and East Timor (2000 and 2002).

Before the beginning of its own long economic stagnation and the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Japan appeared to stand on the threshold of complementing its economic clout with a new political role. But in the intervening decade and a half, Japan’s window of opportunity has closed. First, Japan’s prestige faded rapidly among Southeast Asian elites when the Japanese economy faltered, and especially after Japan was widely perceived to

have failed to come to Southeast Asian elites' rescue during the Asian financial crisis. Second, Japan itself has been more interested in playing on the world stage than in consolidating a role in Asia. Third, China launched a successful campaign, beginning in 1997, to woo Southeast Asia.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

Japan's economic profile is impressive. According to June 2005 IMF Direction of Trade statistics, Southeast Asian trade with Japan was \$149.7 billion, or 18.1 percent of ASEAN trade, about equal to that of the U.S. and China. The cumulative flow of Japanese foreign investment in Southeast Asia to 2004 was about \$85 billion, similar to that of the U.S. and probably about 20 times that of China. Japan is the largest source of official development assistance (ODA), providing 50.6 percent of all Development Assistance Committee ODA to ASEAN in 2003, but Japan's overall ODA has declined by a third since 1995.

Japan is also influential in other areas within the economic sphere. It plays the largest role in the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Since 1992, Japan and the ADB have pumped billions of dollars into exploiting the Mekong River for power generation and to build related transportation networks, largely to China's benefit. Decades of investment have provided Japan with a role in setting economic rules and regulations, as production networks have evolved with Southeast Asia. Tokyo has played a leadership role in Asian currency swap arrangements (the Chiang Mai Initiative) designed to prevent another financial crisis similar to the crisis that plunged Thailand and Indonesia into brutal depressions in 1997. Once existing commitments are put in place, the sum of swap arrangements will exceed \$80 billion dollars. Under these arrangements, Thailand, for example, will have access to nearly 10 times as much as its old IMF quota. More recently, Tokyo has also followed up with an Asian bond market initiative.

As a compulsive participant in the evolving Asian multilateral architecture, Tokyo distinguishes itself from Washington. It argues for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum's continued relevance and a broader interpretation of the region than China (to include not just the ASEAN Plus Three, but also India, Australia, and New Zealand). Tokyo's active participation in regional organizations is appreciated in Southeast Asia, the home of ASEAN, as is its willingness to let ASEAN take the lead in most of these organizations. Japan does not lead except on financial matters, but participates in the ASEAN Plus One (A+1), ASEAN Plus Three (A+3), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the East Asia Summit (EAS).

Japan's non-economic role in supporting regional stability has been modest. It did play a key role in the 1990s in Cambodia, but since then it has been only one of many contributors in East Timor after the vote for independence in 1999 and played a minor role in the Aceh peace process. Tokyo's assistance in the wake of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami was generous, but scarcely noticed in Southeast Asia. Most interesting has been its ambivalent approach to promoting human rights, particularly in Myanmar (Burma). The most common argument is that Japan resists Western pressures

to impose sanctions in pursuit of human rights to protect its own economic interests, though others would argue that Japan's Asian identity better explains Tokyo's consensus approach to human rights issues.

A relatively new, and fascinating, shift has been Japan's tentative steps toward carving out a role in promoting security. Attention in Japan has focused on the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq, but in Southeast Asia, Tokyo has been slowly building on its 1990s experience in Cambodia. The dispatch of SDF for peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste in 2002 was considered unremarkable in the region, and the belated arrival of SDF in Aceh in 2005 to help with the tsunami recovery warranted almost no attention. Japan also participated, for the first time, in the large U.S.-Thai *Cobra Gold* military exercise in 2005. In addition, Tokyo has hosted meetings with ASEAN designed to improve anti-terrorism capacity building.

The days of supposed Southeast Asian allergic reactions to alleged Japanese militarism are long over. Instead, Southeast Asian elites just aren't very interested in arcane arguments about changes in Japanese defense policy, though they are ambivalent about an increased Japanese military role in Southeast Asia, depending on the issue and the country. The only constant appears to be unease with the idea that Japan's contribution to security could be perceived as anti-Chinese.

The high-profile issue, however, has been Japan's plea to Southeast Asians to improve security against pirates (and potentially terrorists) in the Strait of Malacca. In this matter, Tokyo displayed incredible diffidence. In 2000, it initiated a series of training exercises between Japanese coast guard boats and planes with Southeast Asian states' maritime forces. In 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi proposed negotiations for the establishment of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) to the A+3. Five years later ReCAAP has only within the past month entered into force, leading to the establishment of an anti-piracy information center in Singapore. In short, leaving the protection of Japanese shipping to bureaucrats led to glacial movement. Malaysia and Indonesia only took action to improve maritime security, which was in their own interests, after public U.S. intervention and after Lloyd's insurance had declared the Strait to be a war risk zone.

If a June/July 2006 *Yoimui* *Shimbun* poll is to be believed, more than 90 percent of Indonesians, Malaysians, Thais, and Vietnamese feel their country has a good relationship with Japan, and between 70 and 90 percent believe Japan is a trustworthy nation. The polling is undoubtedly accurate, but the results should be taken with a grain of salt. The polling shows that more than 80 percent of those polled also had a good impression of China. Moreover, earlier polling by others suggests that when China and Japan are compared, China comes out on top. For example, polls taken in 2003 in Thailand showed that 76 percent of Thais considered China to be their country's best friend, and only 8 percent picked Japan. Anecdotal evidence of Southeast Asian elites' perceptions of Japan show no antagonism, but not much respect either.

Japan's weaknesses are less measurable than its strengths, but nonetheless real. In private, Southeast Asians can be scathing about Japan. A senior Southeast Asian diplomat recently commented privately to the author that, "Japan doesn't know what it wants. They have no consensus on what their role is." Others point to Japan's glacial consensus decision-making process, and its hesitant, poorly coordinated policy implementation when it attempts to step outside economic issues. Japanese timing, following on Chinese initiatives, has been described as atrocious. Deeper problems include the fact that the 3.5 million Japanese tourists who visit Southeast Asia annually and Japan's massive investments over the past 30 years have not left much of a positive cultural legacy. Southeast Asians are well aware of Japanese ambivalence toward other Asians, including them. Moreover, the image of Japan as Asia's economic engine is gone. Finally Southeast Asians show little appreciation for Japanese ODA, which many tend to view as either primarily support for Japanese companies or a form of war reparations.

In short, at this point, Southeast Asians are ambivalent about Japan. Nonetheless, the main impediment to an expanded Japanese political and security role in Southeast Asia would not be negative reactions from Southeast Asia, provided Japan's expanded role was not cast in anti-Chinese terms. The main difficulty would be the need at home to re-focus on Southeast Asia and coordinate policies across autonomous ministries.

### **The diplomatic dance: Japan attempts to catch-up with China**

2001 was a pivotal year in Southeast Asia's relations with the major powers. After a Chinese jet fighter and an American *EP-3* patrol aircraft collided off Hainan Island in April, it looked as if China-U.S. strategic rivalry in Southeast Asia might become a dominant theme. But the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent discovery of terrorist networks in Southeast Asia brought renewed U.S. attention to the region not to compete with China, but to forge a regional counter-terrorism coalition. At the same time, China sought to mend relations with the U.S., and in Southeast Asia reoriented its regional policy to avoid competition with the United States. As Washington and Beijing pursued their different interests in the region, they seldom bumped into each other.

Thus not China-U.S. but China-Japan rivalry came to the fore. Most government and press attention on Japan and China naturally focuses on emotional bilateral issues and on Northeast Asia, but even in June 2002 the *People's Daily* accused Japan of "coveting" Southeast Asia and having "sent out large patrol boats to the Southeast Asian water areas under the pretext of attacking pirates, thus sounding the bugle call for Japan's military advance into Southeast Asia." And then, as American attention was increasingly drawn to the Middle East with the invasion and subsequent insurgency in Iraq, Sino-Japanese rivalry for leadership in East Asia heated up.

Japan was caught flatfooted in Southeast Asia. Still trapped in economic stagnation in 2001 in Southeast Asia, Tokyo was cautiously reaching out to propose ways to deal with piracy in key maritime chokepoints and testing the limits of Japan's use of its self-defense forces by announcing plans to send several hundred troops to East Timor for a United Nations peacekeeping operation (though they didn't arrive until early 2002). But

China was already throwing down the gauntlet, proposing an ASEAN-China free trade area in 2000, and more generally courting Southeast Asians with adept diplomacy and the promise of participation in China's economic boom. The pattern was established when Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia in January 2002. For the next three years, Japan would always be playing catch-up with China, often paying Beijing the compliment of copying Chinese initiatives in Southeast Asia.

When Prime Minister Koizumi arrived in Southeast Asia in January 2002, the region was looking to Tokyo. The bursting of the technology bubble in the United States had led to slower growth in parts of Southeast Asia and China had launched its campaign to woo the region. But Koizumi traveled almost empty handed, constrained by Tokyo's decision to cut its official development aid and the Japanese agricultural lobby's fierce opposition to efforts to pry open Japan's protected agricultural market to Southeast Asian products. The result was that Koizumi and Singapore's prime minister signed an economic partnership agreement (EPA), a broader kind of free trade agreement (FTA). This was the forerunner in what would come to be Japanese "diplomacy by EPA," vehicles supposed to also promote scientific and technological links and human resource development. Blind to the diplomatic and political role of FTAs, bureaucrats in Japanese economic ministries tout their proposed EPAs with Southeast Asian countries as meeting higher, more rigorous economic standards than China's popular FTA with ASEAN as a whole. In his keynote speech, Koizumi also proposed closer economic and security ties with a broad community, essentially the ASEAN Plus Three and Australia and New Zealand. These themes, renamed bilateral free trade agreements excluding agricultural products and an enlarged community, would be pounded home over the next three years. Southeast Asians were not impressed.

In addition to proposing and then negotiating the ASEAN-China FTA, Beijing moved briskly to appeal to Southeast Asians by signing ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) and indicating that it was prepared to sign the protocol of ASEAN's Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone treaty. When China became the first non-Southeast Asian nation to accede to the TAC and signed a "strategic partnership" with ASEAN at the October 2003 Bali Summit, Japan was confined to China's diplomatic shadow. At the subsequent APEC meeting in Bangkok, the U.S. drive for more attention to counter-terrorism and China's focus on mutual economic benefits dominated. A major Japanese paper complained that Japan's diplomatic presence in Southeast Asia had never been weaker. Only in July 2004 did Tokyo follow suit by announcing that it too would sign the TAC.

Tokyo's answer was an ASEAN summit with Japan to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of formal relations, which was held in Tokyo in December 2003. At this summit, Tokyo launched the ASEAN-Japan plan of action, the heart of which appears to be the negotiation of bilateral EPAs. Thus far, these EPAs have been negotiated with Singapore and Malaysia, and the text of an agreement has been finalized with Thailand. Negotiations are proceeding with the Philippines, Indonesia, and Brunei, and have been "recommended" with Vietnam.

The rivalry was next seen over the relief effort in response to the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which devastated parts of Southeast Asia. Japan quickly pledged \$500 million to help tsunami victims and in January 2005 Prime Minister Koizumi attended the special ASEAN meeting on the aftermath of the tsunami and meet with Indonesian President Yudhoyono in Indonesia. But as Singapore professor Lam Peng-er commented, “Japan assistance will help to reclaim certain diplomatic clout it had lost to China when Tokyo has to play catch-up with Beijing over free trade agreements with Southeast Asia.” In fact, the rapid U.S. response dominated public perceptions in Southeast Asia. Japan’s monetary contribution and the belated dispatch of Japanese Self-Defense Forces were overshadowed. Moreover, though China’s pledge of \$83 million paled in comparison, Southeast Asians welcomed it as another example of China’s new role as a “responsible country.”

At the same time, Japan Defense Agency Director General Ohno Yoshinori visited Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia to explain the new Japanese National Defense Program Outline (NDPG), a visit that apparently elicited little interest or sympathy in Southeast Asia. In April 2005, Prime Minister Koizumi attended the Asia-Africa Summit in Indonesia, and met with Chinese President Hu Jintao. In the summer of 2005, Japan turned to Southeast Asia to drum up support for a permanent Japanese seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The Japanese Foreign Ministry was then shocked to learn they had almost no friends in Southeast Asia. In the end, after China intervened, only Singapore among all the states in Southeast Asia (though Jakarta was reportedly ambivalent) appears to have supported Japan’s bid for a permanent UNSC seat.

In contrast, the Malaysian-hosted first East Asia Summit (EAS) in December 2005, designed to reflect an allegedly growing sense of regionalism in East Asia, did provide Tokyo with a chance to score some points. The intellectual origins of the EAS included former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir’s proposed East Asian Economic Community, which had earlier been scotched by Washington and Tokyo. This time, the behind-the-scenes arguments within ASEAN focused on criteria to determine who would be invited to participate in the EAS. Japan, working with Singapore and Indonesia, was able to prevail over China and Malaysia in ensuring a broader list of invitees, including India, Australia, and New Zealand. Although no state’s basic interests were harmed by the eventual outcome of this summit, some Southeast Asians blamed Japan for the muddle and what one pundit told the author was Tokyo’s “refusal to move in a helpful way.” In any case, Japan emerged from this summit with some success. It had proposed a comprehensive Asian assistance plan to fund efforts to smooth the way for FTA negotiations, which was also “designed to increase Japan’s presence and leadership in Asia to counter growing Chinese influence.” It had also found a new framework, ASEAN Plus Three and India, Australia, and New Zealand, which it would use later in 2006.

Thus far, 2006 has been a quiet year in Japan-Southeast Asia relations. Prime Minister Koizumi traveled to North America, Europe, and Africa, but not back to Southeast Asia, and relations mostly seem to tread water. In August, Tokyo built on the formula of the EAS to propose a regional free trade initiative, which copies a 2004 Chinese proposal,

but adds new members. The Southeast Asian reaction has been to ask Tokyo to concentrate on completing negotiations on the EPAs before moving on to such a grand scheme. In mid-September, Abe Shinzo was elected to replace Koizumi.

### **Assessing Southeast Asian-Japanese Relations**

Japan's basic problem in Southeast Asia is that it is yesterday's story. It is an economic giant that tends to be taken for granted. Southeast Asian elites don't fear a resurgent Japan, but a Japan disengaged from everything except economic issues. Japan is now paying the price for decades of segmenting the aspects of its foreign policy, and now finds it difficult to be taken seriously outside its traditional role. If Japan is not interested in leadership in Asia, but only desires a seat at the table, then trailing in China's wake is not a major problem. If, on the other hand, it is caught up in rivalry with China for leadership in Asia, then it needs a national policy in Southeast Asia.

### **Chronology of Japan-Southeast Asian Relations January 2002- September 2006\***

**Jan. 9-16, 2002:** Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visits Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines; Koizumi proposes a "Comprehensive Economic Partnership" in his speech to Southeast Asian nations in Singapore.

**March 22, 2002:** Over 300 Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force members leave for East Timor on UN peacekeeping operations.

**April 27-29, 2002:** PM Koizumi visits Vietnam and Timor-Leste.

**July 29-Aug. 2, 2002:** Foreign Minister Kawaguchi visits Brunei for Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN meetings.

**Aug. 9-16, 2002:** Brunei, Cambodian, Indonesian, and Malaysian Foreign Ministers, and Philippine Foreign Secretary, visit Japan for IDEA Ministerial Meeting.

**Nov. 3-5, 2002:** PM Koizumi attends 6<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Plus Three (A+3) Summit in Cambodia.

**Dec. 2-5, 2002:** Philippine President Arroyo visits Tokyo.

**Dec. 12-17, 2002:** Malaysian PM Mahathir visits Tokyo.

**March 25-30, 2003:** Singapore PM Goh Chok Tong visits Japan

**June 3-6, 2003:** Malaysian PM Mahathir, Philippine President Arroyo, and Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra attend international conference on "The Future of Asia" in Tokyo.

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\* Chronology compiled by Junbeom Pyon, 2006 Vasey Fellow, Pacific Forum CSIS



**June 17-19, 2003:** FM Kawaguchi attends A+3 and 10<sup>th</sup> ARF meetings in Cambodia.

**June 22-25, 2003:** Indonesian President Megawati visits Japan.

**Oct. 6-9, 2003:** PM Koizumi attends A+3 Summit in Indonesia.

**Oct. 19-22, 2003:** PM Koizumi attends 11<sup>th</sup> APEC Leaders' Meeting in Bangkok.

**Dec. 11-12 2003:** First ASEAN Plus One (A+1) Summit with Japan to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's Formal Relations with ASEAN. All ASEAN heads of government attend the summit in Japan.

**Feb. 23-26, 2004:** Timor-Leste President Gusmao visits Japan.

**June 2-5, 2004:** Vietnamese PM Khai visits Tokyo.

**June 2-3, 2004:** Malaysian PM Abdullah Badawi attends International Conference on "The Future of Asia" and meets with PM Koizumi in Tokyo.

**June 4, 2004:** PM Koizumi meets with PM Phan Van Khai in Hanoi.

**June 30-July 2, 2004:** FM Kawaguchi attends A+3 Foreign Ministers Meeting and ASEAN PMC in Indonesia.

**July 2, 2004:** Japan signs ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC).

**Oct. 6-10, 2004:** PM Koizumi attends 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe (ASEM) Meeting in Vietnam.

**Nov. 28- Dec. 1, 2004:** PM Koizumi attends A+3 Summit and Japan-ASEAN Summit in Laos.

**Jan. 5-6, 2005:** PM Koizumi attends special ASEAN Meeting on the Aftermath of the Tsunami and meets with President Yudhoyono in Indonesia.

**Jan. 9-12, 2005:** JDA Director General Yoshinori Ohno visits Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia to explain the new Japanese national defense program outline (NDPG).

**Jan. 25, 2005:** The Bank of Japan, acting as the agent of the Japan's minister of finance, and the Bank of Thailand reach agreement on the second bilateral swap arrangement under the Chiang Mai Initiative of the A+3 Finance Ministers' Process.

**Feb. 3-5, 2005:** Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Romulo visits Tokyo.

**March 6-10, 2005:** Vietnamese FM Nien visits Tokyo.

**March 6- 13, 2005:** Malaysian King and Queen visit Japan.

**April 21-24, 2005:** PM Koizumi attends Asia-Africa Summit in Indonesia and holds side meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao.

**April 27-29, 2005:** Senior Vice-Foreign Minister Aisawa attends Asia Pacific Roundtable and signing session for the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in Singapore.

**May 1-2, 2005:** JDA head Ohno visits the Philippines.

**May 5-9, 2005:** ASEAN Foreign Ministers attend 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM Meeting held in Japan

**May 9-13, 2005:** Cambodian PM Hun Sen visits Japan.

**May 23-28, 2005:** Singapore PM Lee Hsien visits Japan.

**May 24-26, 2005:** Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi visits Japan.

**May 31 - June 3, 2005:** Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visits Japan.

**June 9-10, 2005:** Minister for Foreign Affairs Machimura visits Cambodia and Vietnam.

**July 1, 2005:** Vietnamese PM Khai visits Tokyo.

**July 19, 2005:** Minister for Foreign Affairs Machimura visits Singapore.

**July 26-20, 2005:** Senior Vice-Foreign Minister Aisawa attends A+3 FM meeting, ASEAN PMC, ARF in Laos.

**Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 2005:** PM Koizumi and Thai PM Thaksin announce that agreement in principle has been reached on all major elements of the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement in Tokyo.

**Oct. 6, 2005:** APEC Human Security Seminar is held in Tokyo, Japan.

**Oct. 12, 2005:** Tokyo extends emergency assistance Vietnam for typhoon disaster relief.

**Dec. 5-8, 2005:** Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs visits Indonesia

**Dec. 8-11, 2005:** FM Aso Taro attends A+3 Foreign Ministers meeting and holds side meetings with ASEAN counterparts in Malaysia.

**Dec. 9, 2005:** Economy, Trade, and Industry Minister Nikai attends A+3 Finance Ministers Meeting in Malaysia.

**Dec. 11-14, 2005:** PM Koizumi attends first East Asia Summit and the A+3 Summit in Kuala Lumpur. Japan-Malaysia Economic Partnership Agreement is signed.

**Dec. 24-29, 2005:** Dr. Kiyohiko Toyama, parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs, visits Thailand and Cambodia.

**Jan. 11-17, 2006:** Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Shiozaki Yasuhisa visits the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia.

**Jan. 18, 2006:** Japan attends international pledging conference in China on avian flu and human pandemic influenza, and pledges \$135 million.

**Jan. 25, 2006:** Japan hosts meeting with ASEAN states on the Promotion of Accession to the International Counterterrorism Conventions and Protocols.

**Jan. 22-26, 2006:** Indonesian Vice President Kalla visits Japan.

**Feb. 9-14, 2006:** Third round of Japan-Indonesia EPA negotiations is held.

**Feb. 16-18, 2006:** First meeting of Joint Study Group for Japan-Vietnam EPA is held.

**Feb. 19, 2006:** Japan extends emergency assistance to victims of landslide in Leyte, Philippines.

**March 3, 2006:** Tokyo announces grant aid program for Aceh, Indonesia.

**March 15, 2006:** Japan provides the Philippines assistance for “Economic and Social Empowerment of Returned Victims of Trafficking.”

**March 23, 2006:** PM Koizumi meets with PM Mari Alkatiri of Timor-Leste in Tokyo; Japan extends \$20 million in aid.

**March 27, 2006:** Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund is signed. Japan pledges \$70 million to support the integration of ASEAN.

**March 28, 2006:** Yen loan of \$800 million announced for Indonesia

**April 3-6, 2006:** Philippine Foreign Secretary Romulo visits Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and met FM Aso.

**April 10-12, 2006:** The third round of negotiations of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement is held in Tokyo.

**April 17-21, 2006:** Fourth round of negotiations on Japan-Indonesia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) held.

**May 9, 2006:** Japan-Vietnam Foreign Ministry vice ministerial meeting in Japan.

**May 12-15, 2006:** Thai FM Kantathi Suphamongkhon visits Japan.

**May 24, 2006:** Cambodian Deputy PM and Minister of Interior Sar Kheng visits Japan.

**May 24, 2006:** Malaysian PM Abdullah Badawi meets PM Koizumi.

**May 29, 2006:** Statement of concern on the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar is released by Tokyo.

**May 30, 2006:** Dispatch of JDSF units for medical assistance in the wake of earthquake disaster in central Java.

**May 31-June 3, 2006:** Toyama Kiyohiko, vice minister (Parliamentary) for Foreign Affairs, visits Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam to attend the meeting of APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade.

**June 8-15, 2006:** Japan's Emperor and Empress visit Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia.

**June 13, 2006:** Japan extends emergency aid for internally displaced persons in Timor-Leste.

**June 15, 2006:** Aid to Indonesia to construct patrol vessels for the prevention of piracy and maritime terrorism announced.

**June 28-29, 2006:** ASEAN-Japan Counter-Terrorism Dialogue in Tokyo

**June 28-29, 2006:** Fourth round of ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement Negotiations in Jakarta, Indonesia.

**July 1-8, 2006,** Vice Minister (Parliamentary) for Foreign Affairs Toyama visits Laos.

**July 18, 2006:** Japan extends emergency assistance equivalent to about ¥13 million to Indonesia in response to another Indian Ocean tsunami.

**July 18, 2006:** Governments of Japan and the Philippines reach agreement in principle on the protocol amending the Income Tax Treaty between Japan and the Philippines.

**July 22-29, 2006:** FM Aso visits the Philippines and Malaysia: in Malaysia attends foreign ministers meetings on A+3, EAS, ARF, and the ASEAN PMC.

**July 23, 2006:** Japan extends grant aids up to ¥382 million to the Philippines for the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship.

**July 28, 2006:** The 13<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum is held in Kuala Lumpur.

**July 28, 2006:** South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, the U.S., Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, and New Zealand hold 5+5 security talks in Kuala Lumpur to discuss North Korea as well as other broader regional concerns.

**Aug. 16, 2006:** Japan provides emergency assistance in kind (tents and plastic sheets) equivalent to approximately ¥10 million to the Philippines, where many evacuees have taken refuge because of the volcanic activity of Mt. Mayon in south Luzon.

**Aug. 22, 2006:** Japan dispatches Japan Disaster Relief Expert Team to Guimaras Island, Philippines in response to an oil spill disaster caused by the sinking of an oil tanker.

**Aug. 24, 2006:** Japan proposes and Southeast Asian nations consider a 16-nation Asian Trade Bloc, but Southeast Asians suggest first focusing on a Japan-ASEAN FTA.

**Sept. 9, 2006:** PM Koizumi and Philippine President Arroyo sign an agreement for economic partnership between Japan and the Philippines in Helsinki.

**Sept. 19, 2006:** Thai military carries out bloodless coup against Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra while he is attending the UN General Assembly opening.

**Sept. 20, 2006:** Tokyo expresses serious concern about the Thai coup and urges Japanese to refrain from traveling to Thailand.

**Sept. 20, 2006:** Abe Shinzo is elected president of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party by 66 percent of the vote.

**Sept. 26, 2006:** Abe Shinzo succeeds Koizumi Junichiro as Japan's new prime minister.

