Japan's Role in the Forthcoming World Order

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Strengthening Cooperation in Asia: Japan and India

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Introduction

The dramatic political realignments at the end of the twentieth century signalled the beginning of political and economic changes but equally important are the technological and economic changes that have driven and helped to alter our world in very significant ways. Subsumed under the rubric of globalisation are diverse and often conflicting visions that seek to understand and give meaning to these changes. It is important to note that realignment in global politics has been accompanied by a very significant shift within national politics that gives strength to local forces and allows them to become part of and further global agendas. This was made possible by the emergence of new communication technologies that not only increased the speed of our interaction but also in fact, have profoundly affected the nature of this interaction. New forms of mobility have emerged as now it became possible not just to relocate industry but to utilise skills from different parts of the globe.

This integrative movement of globalisation has been accompanied by another of opposition to the forces of globalisation and a strengthening of national or religious identities. The questioning of a market driven and U.S. dominated globalisation has brought diverse groups to resist the global by re-asserting the local and the national. The world of jihad and the world of the World Social Forum represent two important faces of this resistance. How we understand this new global context and its impact on Asia and the way Asian countries are responding will determine ways of visualising Japan's role. It is my argument that the history of an emerging Asianness can sustain cooperative regional associations and networks and that Japan and India, given their democratic systems can play a role in shaping these associations. It is, I feel, imperative to strengthen cooperative networks to counter rising nationalism that can become aggressive. I take the example of development NGO's in Japan as one way of actively helping to create the right environment for cooperation. In the case of India I take the example of how law can be used to strengthen grass-roots democracy. I will look at civil society to show that a new sense of regional and global identity has the possibilities of shaping a more democratic world.

Gloabalisation and increased mobility have also sharpened the need to integrate environmental, health and other so-called soft issues into our consideration. It has become imperative that we make these concerns an integral part of any analysis. Perhaps even more than national boundaries intellectual and cultural boundaries are hardening and religious and cultural ideas are being used in a variety of ways to underline difference and exacerbate tensions and these issues need to be addressed.

Central to any analysis of Asia is the emergence of China and India as countries with an effective global agenda. Japan's role in this interaction is a vital element for

Japan had, till the 1980's, been expected to be the dominant state in the twenty-first century. While now it has to contend with China and India it is still the dominant economic power in the region but the question is, can it play a political role to shape the new configuration. At the core of the reconfiguration of Asia is the relationship between China-Japan and India. Japan has been a firm ally of the U.S. while China has been the enemy for much of the postwar period but since the 1970's the relationship has changed to a mixture of cooperation and conflict. India has been a core member of the Non-Aligned Movement but from the mid1970's it has moved to more pragmatic policies and has taken a greater interest in strengthening its relationship with Japan and East Asia.

Defining Asia

The premise of a regional identity is based on a conception of Asia that is debatable. What is Asia? I would argue that while Asia was in many ways a creation of colonialism, the "Other" of Europe, since the early twentieth century the movement of people and ideas, the search quest for independence and development have forged bonds that have laid the basis for a possible regional identity. It has not yet developed and we can only conjecture what form this identity will take but it is being forged in the process of increased interaction..

Asian nations have, during their long and complex histories, forged a sense of self and territory that cannot be homogenised. These evolving identities have changed and developed passing through three broad periods, the pre-modern period when Asian nations came into contact with European powers and their knowledge of the world increased and began to alter under the growing hegemony of the Western powers. The second period was marked by the colonisation of large parts of Asia but even the countries that were not fully colonised or independent, such as Japan, worked within a colonial environment where the superiority of Western civilisation, and power, was a widely acknowledged fact. Japan, within this structure, created its own colonial empire, and therefore had to redefine its relations with its neighbours, as well as its own sense of being Japanese.

In the third phase, after World War II, as the process of de-colonisation strengthened, the old verities of Asia and Asianness were questioned and discarded as new principles, such as Marxism or Non-alignment, bound nations together in their search for equity and dreams of progress. The last two decades have seen a growing expression of Asianness and an assertion of difference based on values, cultures and religions that replay the colonial denigration with pride. This notional place has become embodied.

India and the Idea of Asia

India relationship with its neighbours has a long and complex history but its modern sense of Asia is perhaps best indicated by Jawaharlal Nehru's statement to the Asian Relations Conference, he convened in Delhi in 1947 where he said, "Apart from the fact that India herself is emerging into freedom and independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia. Geography is a compelling factor, and geographically she is situated as to be the meeting point of Western and Northern, Eastern and South-east Asia. …Streams of culture have come to India from

the West and the east and been absorbed in India…..At the same time, streams of culture have flowed from India to distant parts of Asia. If you would know India you have to go to Afghanistan and Western Asia, to Central Asia, to China and Japan and to the countries of South-East Asia. There you will find magnificent evidence of the vitality of India's culture which spread out and influenced vast numbers of people." [1] Here, as in the writings of earlier leaders India is the natural centre of Asia because it is the influence of Indian civilisation that has shaped and formed the other parts of Asia. There is never any sense of how these beliefs and ideas changed and transformed in their travels, and what entered India is seen to be absorbed without changing the essential elements that form India. It is not how these inward flows have re-shaped the South Asian region nor how ideas emanating from here have, in turn, been reshaped as they were taken up by people in other parts of the world.

The Asian Relations Conference (March-April, 1947) held in New Delhi sought to chart a course for the newly emerging nations and idealistically hoped to build new bonds of Asian brotherhood. One strand in the conception of a newly independent India was that just as India had been the key of the British empire so its independence would be the fulcrum around which the independence of the other countries in the region would be achieved. A nation founded on the ideals of a secular democracy putting its faith in science and modern rationality sought to create the ideological infrastructure of factories and large scale projects –power generation, steel plants –ally with those still caught in the colonial embrace, and chart a free and independent future; dreams that would sour, as the very conceptual basis of these ideas were threatened by ghosts from the past.

The fading of this vision of a modern Asia lies in the questioning of the modernist conception that underlay this conception and in the Cold War politics that divided the world into camps. Alternative paths to national and regional security were sought: India found its future in non-alignment, China in Marxism, as interpreted by Mao, and Japan within the U.S. military alliance. These positions generated their own compulsions and rivalry for leadership within the region. The U.S. presence in Asia and its war in Vietnam further polarised the region and shaped social and political agenda's. The collapse of the USSR has helped to attenuate some of these compulsions but the emergence of the United States as a preponderant power and the combination of economic and military policies that seek to define new rules of subjugation have generated a variety of responses. The spread of a global cultural practice that subsumes differences within the dominant Euro-American system creates the context within which assertions of Asian or other cultural /civilisational identities must be understood.

Japan: An Asian Agenda
The end of WWII with the defeat of Japan and its occupation by a U.S. led allied force marked a new chapter ushering in dramatic changes that rewove Japan's social and political fabric transfiguring a former enemy nation into an integral military ally of the United Sates. These close ties helped Japan to rebuild its economy and surpass prewar levels but it suppressed or attenuated attempts to come to terms with its prewar past.

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[1] Quoted in Stephen N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China and India*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.,1970), Ibid. p.294.

The single-minded concentration on economic development did lead to a remarkable improvement in the lives of Japanese and made Japan a global economic power. However, it continued to remain quiescent in the diplomatic arena, or in the words of the Asahi journalist Yoichi Funabashi, 'smiling, silent and sleeping'. The policies of Yoshida Shigeru, the so-called Yoshida doctrine, which laid the basis of post-war development was based on the idea that by situating Japan within the United States alliance would allow Japan to concentrate its energies on re-building its economy and not waste its resources in building its military capabilities. Yoshida had long felt that military expansion in the continent had been a grave mistake.

The growth of regional trading blocs and their transformation into more closely linked groupings has also spurred the Japanese to cement their ties within the Asian region. As trade and investments increased in the post-war years Japanese industry and business came to establish a greater presence in east and southeast Asia and from the nineties in south Asia as well. The importance of oil supplies from west Asia also made the region particularly important for Japan. Japanese economic interests, as well as a growing need to build a more independent foreign policy that was not reactive or dependent provided the basis for a gradual shift in Japan's dealings with the world. The sudden change in United States policies when it recognised China, after the secret diplomacy of Nixon made Japan painfully aware that its interests could be put on the back burner. The so-called "oil shock" jolted Japan into realising both the finiteness of natural resources and the need to reduce energy consumption and the need to articulate it's own national interests. These multiple objectives lay behind the attempts to build ties with the Asian region.

The crucial adjustments to foreign policy were made under the Fukuda Takeo cabinet (December, 1976-December, 1978) when Asia became the focus of Japan's diplomacy and to sustain and develop this Japan launched an ambitious Overseas Development Programme (ODA). Japan was also forced because of the U.S.-China rapprochement, as well as the anti-Japanese riots in Southeast Asia, to conclude a peace treaty with China after Tanaka Kakuei visited Beijing in 1972 that was finally signed in August 1978. This trajectory has developed so that today Japan has played a decisive role through trade, investments and aid to help develop countries in the region. It has been a major donor to China and its economic assistance during the balance of payments crisis in India in the early nineties was of crucial importance. Its role through multilateral agencies such as the Asian development bank and through the UN in peacekeeping operations has given form to its emerging political voice.

In some ways even more important has been the fact, in the last two decades or so, of the enormous influence that Japanese culture has begun to exert on the world. As Brian Moeran argues, Japanese influences on Asian popular culture are pervasive and need to be understood in the context of transnational flows.[2] He adapts Arjun Appadorai`s classification of four scapes: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes to ask how deterritorialised are Japanese people, technologies, capital, information, images and ideologies in the Asian context. His arguments are that Japan by defeating the colonial powers showed Asia that it was possible to stand up against the West and today's flow of labour, as well as students, has created a group of cultural brokers who influence the socioscapes in their own

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[2] Brian Moeran, "Commodities, Culture and Japan's Corollanization of Asia" in Ibid.,pp.25-50

countries. In the field of popular culture the Japanization of Asian culture has become evident. The popularity of Japanese popular music, anime films, film stars, fashion as well as commodities is amply visible. The media is dominated by advertising images from Japan and Japanese food has become very popular. This enormous influence plays a vital role in defining perceptions as well as creates constituencies on which Japan can build the basis to further cooperation.

Reinscribing Japan into Asia is not a simple process and is being debated. Many scholars see the arguments for an Asian community as an extension or a natural growth of the Japan as unique or *Nihonjinron* genre. Writings with the *Nihonjinron* genre have been predicated on the insurmountable differences arising out a different history, culture, and even genetic make-up between Japan and the rest of the world. These writings, immensely popular, were as much about explanation as they were ways of creating the basis for an ideological community. Kobayashi Yotaro wrote in 1991 that it is vital for Japan to return to Asia, to re-Asianise to meet the challenge of a West that has unified. Similarly, Ogura Kazuo, a diplomat and major figure in redefining Japanese identity within an Asian community argues that despite changes Japan still maintains universal values such as diligence, strong family ties, respect for the elderly, the individuals submission to larger group interests and spirituality. These values have been lost in the West and it is the mission of Japan and Asia to re-Asianise the West.[3]

Civil Society and Shaping a Regional Identity
One of the ways that the region is being reconfigured is through the changing relationship between the people and the State. In China after the reforms a greater openness in the political system has created a climate where different voices can be heard. In Japan the postwar period saw the dominance of the Liberal-Democratic Party from 1955 to 1993. The social consensus that seemed unshakeable was brought into question. In India the movement away from a planned economy has unshackled the energies of the people and allowed for a higher rate of growth but it has also brought into question the problem of an excessive reliance on the market and need to provide a safety net for those adversely affected. For many globalisation has come to represent the dominance of Western nations and culture and resistance to this has taken many forms giving rise to movements based on essentialist notions of identity often linked to wider regional and global movements.

In the interaction between global forces and the nation often more than outright resistance change is negotiated in complex ways. This is not a question of undermining national sovereignty but of redefining global norms. The state –civil society relationship offers a good example of how global influences have helped to shape and alter the relationship between governments and civil society groups. The question of civil society often revolves around the degree of autonomy, or the levels of restrictions placed on it that determine its health. Its appearance as a widely debated intellectual construct was, it should be noted, within the rise of dissident movements in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the 1970's

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[3] Kenn Nakata Steffensen, "Post Cold War Changes in Japanese International Identity Implications for Japan's Influence in Asia" in Ibid. p.149-150

In Japan the International Development Non-Governmental organisations (IDNGO) movement is of relatively recent origins, most of the boom starting in the 1980's and these groups also offer a contrast to Indian organisations, and reflect the symbiotic relationship between state and civil society. How have state policies provided an enabling environment both in terms of institutional structures as well as in subsidies and grants.[4] Earlier legal and tax requirements made it very difficult to establish legal organisations and collect contributions. From 1989 ministerial budgets began to include funds for IDNGO projects. Similarly Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) programmes also expanded to increase projects for relief aid, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) launched the Development Partnership Programme which provides funding to implement JICA technical assistance projects.

There has been a greater focus on how international norms and structures influence the way states define their national interests. For instance, NGO's found legitimacy in pushing for the rights of immigrant workers and environmental legislation received a boost because of international opinion in the 1990's. The international trend of including IDNGO's in overseas aid projects, as well as the greater involvement in multilateral agencies has also become widespread. Japan came under pressure to build up it's NGO and IDNGO sector from the international community but also from sections within its owns society. These pressures from within the country combined with global expectations that Japan should make greater contributions to international society provided the push to Japanese efforts.

The MOFA NGO Project Subsidies Program and Grassroots Grants Program rose in the mid-1980's when Japan decided to include NGO's in their international aid projects largely because of the international climate where this had become widely practiced. There was also criticism that Japan's aid policies were too narrowly linked to commercial and trade interests and were environmentally destructive In 1987 prime minister Nakasone Yasuhiro established an advisory council to examine this issue and this led to the stated goal of 'economic cooperation with public participation'.

The US also actively helped to promote Japanese IDGNO's in the 1990's through the so-called Common Agenda started in 1993 which tried to coordinate US-Japan policies on global projects and foreign policy. Projects promoted under this include health and environmental projects such as in 1992 a biodiversity project was promoted in Indonesia. Similarly the Global Fund for the Environment came because of the effect of the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The IDNGO's do not fall into any ideological category as most of them focus on delivery rather than advocacy but there are advocacy groups such as Japan International Volunteer Centre (JVC) and Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA). These groups while receiving state funds have been critical of ODA programmes. Similarly the strategic use of IDNGO's seems also to be minimal. In this case, Kim Reiman argues that international pressure that led to the formation of IDNGO's had a

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[4] Kim Raiman, "Building Global Society from the Outside In? Japanese International Development NGOs the State, and International Norms" in Frank J. Schwartz and Susan J.Pharr (Ed.), *The State of Civil Society in Japan*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp.298-315.

transformative effect on state policies and state-society relations and this represents a step in the evolution of a global civil society.

India: Ways of Empowering the People
The collapse of the Soviet Union and the cold war structures also influenced India in a variety of ways leading to an intense debate about future directions. One of the areas where change was visible was in the increasing importance of non-party groups. A variety of social associations spanning the ideological range were formed. These worked in providing social services where the state was deficient, as advocacy groups to counter state policies and some with the state to reinforce and support state policies. The legal requirements made it relatively easy to form such associations but two significant developments that have given a great boost to the effectiveness of public interest action and in increasing widespread participation extending across social boundaries. One is the right to information act and the other the concept of public interest litigation (PIL).

The right to information was first enunciated by the Supreme Court in 1975 but a demand for it gained momentum with the movement led by a group called the united force of workers and peasants, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghathan (MKSS). This group in the early 1990's used an innovative method to demonstrate the importance of information for the people through "public hearings". Such grassroots movements spread in various parts of the country and a National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) was formed, and this broad based platform helped to bring a wide range of groups together to realise their demand. After much struggle the Indian Freedom of Information Act was enacted in 2002 and subsequently modified in 2003 and 2005.

The Act defines the right to information rather than just records and documents to permit the inspection of public works including taking samples of materials and also includes "information relating to a private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any law". This places the onus on the government to collect information from private bodies, rather than requiring the public to chase private bodies themselves. It requires the government to actively publish and disseminate information such as the budget allocated to each agency, including plans, proposed expenditure and reports on disbursements, the manner of execution of subsidy programmes, including the amounts allocated and beneficiaries, recipients of concessions, permits, licenses, and relevant facts while formulating policies or announcing decisions. The Act requires that Public Information Officers (PIO's) have to be appointed in local bodies so that applicants for information do not have to travel to the city. There are time limits within which the information has to be given, processing fees are kept low, and there is a mechanism for appeal if there is a dispute. While the Act has problems, in the limits it places on information that cannot be disclosed it has introduced a great measure of transparency and given power to the ordinary people.

Since it is a central government law, given India's federal structure, it is up to the states to enact similar legislation but while the campaign for national legislation was going on Tamil Nadu became the first state to enact a right to information law, in 1997,

it was followed by Goa and then Rajasthan (2000), Karnataka (2000) Delhi (2001), Maharastra (2002), Assam (2002) and so far a total of eight states have similar acts.

The history of public interest legislation (PIL) began in the 1980's in the post Emergency period when the Supreme Court under Justice P.N. Bhagwati and Justice V.K.Iyer moved away from the concept of locus standi (standing in law) in litigation, which meant that only the aggrieved party in a case could move the court. As a result of the changes any citizen of India or any consumer group or social action group can now approach the apex court of the country seeking legal remedies in all cases where the interests of the general public or a section of the public is at stake. Further, public interest cases can be filed without investment of heavy court fees as required in private civil litigation. The PIL opened the way to a host of court cases that sought redress of wrongs in a range of issues: environmental problems, conservation of heritage buildings, re-location of industries from residential areas, introduction of CNG in public transport in the capital Delhi and so on.

While allowing for individuals or groups to intervene for the public good it also opened the door to frivolous litigation. However, any constraints on PIL need to be carefully considered so that it does not restrict or hamper the intent of PIL. Supreme Court Justice Sujata Manohar, in a landmark case (Raunaq International Limited v/s IVR Construction Ltd) ruled that when a stay order is obtained at the instance of a private party or even at the instance of a body litigating in the public interest, any interim order which stops the project from proceeding further must provide for the reimbursement of costs to the public in case ultimately the litigation started by such an individual or body fails. This right to compensation will act as a check on frivolous cases as does the amendment to the Consumers Protection Act, 1986 to compensation to opposite parties in cases of frivolous complaints made by consumers.

The Indian case shows the strength of private associations backed by a legal system that allows them to intervene in public life. The state also plays a role in building strong civic institutions and is proactive in removing inequalities. People who are defined as suffering from social injustice because of their caste or those who are from marginalized groups such as tribal people or economically backward are given benefits by law in education and government employment. Tribal people's property rights are protected from exploitation by developers. The last few decades as globalisation and liberalisation have changed the regulatory regime. These measures have been strongly debated and there are opposing views on the need for such legislation but there is a strong body of opinion that feels it is necessary to retain a strong role for the state to build social capital whether through education, or preservation of the environment or provide a safety net for workers and peasants and which sees the need to protect public goods from being turned into private commodities.

Concluding Remarks
The emergence of the idea of Asia and a sense of regional identity is shaped both by developments predating this period of globalisation as well as the different historical experiences of the countries. Therefore to understand the basis of this change it is necessary to understand that this process of globalisation carries with it the possibilities of strengthening the emergence of a global civil society as well as its

opposite that of hardening intellectual and political boundaries. To further democracy and cooperation it is necessary to craft a common agenda based on building multiple networks.

Multilateral cooperation can take many forms. One is the various conferences and groups that have been established to remove trade barriers and integrate the region economically. These include the East Asian Economic Community These proposals for expanded free trade agreements and tariff reduction are grounded in a belief that economic integration will lay the basis for a regional community. They have undoubted benefits but it is also imperative to recognise the need, as some have, to build a multi-ethnic and multi-regional community defined by "civic categories " rather than race and religion to build a common bond on the basis of shared values. Such networks that sustain and expand the space for democratic participation will encourage cooperative regional forums and allow us to think of an Asia conceived as not only a geographical region but also as offering a credible alternative to prevailing systems in the social, political and cultural sphere. We need what Arlif Dirlik has called a "critical regionalism".

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