



Sino-Japanese Relations & The Impact on ASEAN

Angel Damayanti
Jakarta, 8 June 2016

Sino-Japanese Relationship

- China – Japan relations has been marked with both tension and cooperation.
- Their tension is resulted from:

1. Historical legacy → The WW II has provoked the anti-Japanese sentiment in some Asian countries, including China.

- It is the reason why a visit to Yasukuni Shrine from Japanese PM will be perceived differently by China and Japan.
- For Japan it is:
- “*to express respect and gratitude to many people who lost their lives in the war.*” (former Japanese PM Junichiro Koizumi)
- a freedom of religion → Shinto Shrine in the area.
- But for China, Japanese PM’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine irritate them as a total of 1,068 convicted war criminal by *International Military Tribunal for the Far East* are enshrined there.
- In addition, the shrine published a pamphlet stating that “[war] was necessary in order for us to protect the independence of Japan and to prosper together with our Asian neighbors” and that the war criminals were “cruelly and unjustly tried as war criminals by a sham-like tribunal of the Allied forces”.

2. Territorial dispute → **Overlapping claim on ECS**

- **From Japan’s perspective:**
 - The 1968 academic survey area from UN Economic Council for Asia and the Far East, reporting a large oil and gas reserve that may exist under the seabed near the islands, has triggered China to claim the islands in early 1970s.
- **From China’s perspective:**
 - Japan took control of the islands from China in 1895, during the First Sino-Japanese War.



- The Postdam Declaration stating that “Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we (the victors of WW II) determine.” → an intention to return the islands to China along with other territories taken by Japanese aggression.

3. Threat Perception from Sino-Japanese military/defense strategy

- **From Japan’s perspective** → China’s rise and arms modernization, particularly its PLAN, has been perceived as a threat
- **From China’s perspective** → the U.S – Japan alliance has provoked insecurity and instability in East Asia region.
- Sino-Japanese relations continue to be very tense and challenging for East Asia & Southeast Asia, and their tension provokes instability in the region.
- However, China and Japan are both rivals and partners, refraining from wider conflicts.
- China–Japan economic partnership is one of the biggest in the world.
- Their bilateral trade relationship is the third-largest in the world, with a US\$340 billion in 2014.
- China is Japan’s largest trading partner, accounting for one-fifth of its trade, and Japan is China’s second-largest.
- Japan is the largest investor in China, with a stock of direct investment at more than US\$100 billion in 2014 or US\$30 billion more than the next largest source, the United States.
- (Source: East Asia Forum 28/9/2015)

The Impact on ASEAN (Institution)

- China and Japan are to be among partners with the most active interest in wider strategic and economic spaces in ASEAN since 1970s.
- Japan: Fukuda Doctrine (1977), ASEAN-Japan Summit/ARF (since 1994), Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund established by PM Taro Aso, Japan contributes US\$70 million (2006), ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (2008) , Japan’s FDI to ASEAN reaches 1.5 trillion Yen making ASEAN the second destination for Japanese enterprises (2011), Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity Implementation” (2012)



Faculty of Social and Political Sciences – Christian University of Indonesia In collaboration with Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and The Indonesian Union of Christian Intelligentsias.

- China and Japan are to be among partners with the most active interest in wider strategic and economic spaces in ASEAN since 1970s.
- China: ASEAN's Dialogue Partner (since 1991), DOC (2002), becomes ASEAN's top trading partner (2009), ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (2010), Establishment of ASEAN-China Centre and ASEAN-China Maritime Cooperation Fund (2011), "OBOR" Initiatives (2014).
- Yet, the interdependent competition between China and Japan presents both challenges and opportunities for ASEAN and its member states.
- Sino-Japanese rivalry could consequently cause divisions within ASEAN, as its member states are likely to be swayed by their respective bilateral relations with China and/or Japan.
- Japan-Philippines conduct naval exercise in SCS, while China and Thailand pledge to increase cooperation in joint-military exercise and defense, railway construction, law enforcement, and tourism.
- Thus, it is important for ASEAN to continue and maintain its central role in Southeast Asia region by putting an effort to balance its overall ties with Japan and China.
- Besides, the increasingly and inevitably interdependent nature of bilateral and regional relations among countries encourage ASEAN:
 - to remain on constant vigilance to ensure that regional processes benefit from Sino-Japanese interdependent competition,
 - to adopt a deep and close partnership but with cautious approach towards China's and Japan's proposals to ensure the regional peace and stability.