

ASEAN AND JAPAN AS AN EXAMPLE OF STRONG REGIONAL COOPERATION IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA *

Doğu ve Güneydoğu Asya'da Güçlü Bölgesel İşbirliği Örneği Olarak ASEAN ve Japonya

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Abstract

Regional organizations are increasingly pivotal in international systems, prompting even powerful states to actively seek cooperation with them. ASEAN, originating modestly, has evolved into a prominent regional organization in Southeast Asia and stands as the sole diverse structure in the Asia Pacific. Meanwhile, Japan maintains its status as one of the world's leading countries. Strengthening collaboration with ASEAN, Japan is formulating programs and initiatives beneficial to both parties across economic, social, political, cultural, and other spheres. This article delves into the historical significance of ASEAN's impact on Japanese politics, focusing on Japan's role in cooperative efforts with ASEAN.

Key words: ASEAN, Japan, Fukuda Doctrine, ASEAN-Japan economic cooperation.

Öz

Bölgesel örgütler, uluslararası sistemlerde giderek daha önemli oyuncular haline gelmiş, hatta güçlü devletler bile onlarla işbirliği yapmanın yollarını aramaya başlamıştır. ASEAN, Güneydoğu Asya'da aktif bir bölgesel örgüt olarak mütevazı bir başlangıçtan ortaya çıktı ve Asya Pasifik'teki tek çeşitlilik içeren yapı olmaya devam ederken, Japonya dünyanın önde gelen ülkelerinden biri olmaya devam ediyor. ASEAN ile iş birliğini artıran Japonya, ekonomik, sosyal, politik, kültürel ve diğer alanlarda her iki tarafa da fayda sağlayan programlar ve girişimler geliştiriyor. Bu makale, ASEAN yönünün Japon siyasetindeki tarihsel önemini ayrıntılı olarak incelemekte ve Japonya'nın ASEAN ile işbirliğindeki rolüne odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ASEAN, Japonya, Fukuda Doktrini, ASEAN-Japonya ekonomik işbirliği

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern system of the world order, one of the main roles is played by international and regional organizations. They have become not just new actors of the International Relations, but also turned out to be instruments for conducting the foreign policy of world states. Each region is represented by several integration associations operating in different spheres. If in Europe such an association is the European Union, in South America – Mercosur, then in Southeast Asia this role is performed by ASEAN. In addition to multilateral relations, the bilateral relations between ASEAN and other countries have been important. By exploring the existing relations between ASEAN and Japan, the main factors which facilitated or worsened the current state of Southeast Asian organization will be identified. The topic is also justified by the fact that East and Southeast Asia are one of the most unique and diverse regions in the world. Countries of these regions actively partake in the world processes influencing and contributing to the economic, social, cultural and political realms in international relations.

ASEAN – The Association of Southeast Asian Nations first began functioning in 1967, when foreign ministers from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines signed the Bangkok Declaration. From this period, a new stage in the development of the Southeastern states begins. One of the uniqueness is the heterogeneity of the participating countries. This list includes economic, social, political and cultural aspects. Singapore, for example, is considered the most developed country in this region due to its economic miracle that came in the 1980s and 1990s. Myanmar, on the other hand, is the most underdeveloped country, where there are not only political contradictions, but also economic regression. Thus, ASEAN serves as a support between states with different levels of development through negotiations, forums, cooperation and establishing contacts between people.

ASEAN pursues its policy not only within the region and the organization, but also sets priorities beyond the borders of Southeast

Asia. First of all, ASEAN intends to develop cooperation with its Asian neighbors, such as China, South Korea, and Japan. East Asia is unique in that there is no single regional structure in this region that would unite China, South Korea, and Japan. This is due to historical problems and conflicts that continue to exist today. Nevertheless, China, South Korea and Japan are able to expand their geopolitical ambitions through establishing contacts with ASEAN and other organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. One example is the signing of Free Trade Agreements between ASEAN and East Asian countries.

The issues analyzed in this work are closely related not only to the historical aspect of the development of relations, but also to the main benefits that certain countries receive. The aim of this paper is to evaluate the existing state of relations between ASEAN and Japan and to identify the peculiarities of its partnership. The following questions will be covered in the article: The Fukuda doctrine as the beginning of multilateral cooperation. What is ASEAN-Japan dialogue today? How different is the ASEAN approach to Japan from the ASEAN approach to other countries? What is meant by beneficial cooperation between Japan and ASEAN? What areas does it affect? Such issues arise primarily because of the rapid pace of development of international relations. Accordingly, it is impossible to stay up-to-date with the existing as well as unseen problems, such as the coronavirus pandemic, the growth of Chinese influence, the internal problems of the ASEAN states, etc.

Answering the questions, it is worth to mention that Japan is one of the important partners of ASEAN. Tokyo takes an active part in various cooperation mechanisms, such as ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit. Japan is also being of the biggest initiators of several programs and projects functioned within ASEAN. The second question shall explain the historic side of the cooperation in order to understand the development and changes that this dialogue had witnessed. We argue that it is important to note the features of the development of ASEAN as a regional organization and the influence of regionalism in the East Asia region. Since there is no single regional structure in the East Asian region, as there is in Europe in the form of European Union, Japan pays special

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attention to neighboring organizations in its foreign policy doctrine.

At the same time, it is necessary to understand that Japan is a developed state that is highly in demand in the world arena thanks to local production and established contacts with the outside world. The island state is strengthening its position in almost all possible spheres: education, technology, medicine, culture, economy, politics, etc. Thus, the partnership within the framework of ASEAN-Japan is contributing to the development of both sides. The methodology of this article is the single case study but the comparative analysis is also employed. It mostly consists of qualitative data; however, in order to understand the economic side of the problem the quantitative data provided by the official statistics is utilized.

The first section of this article covers the historical side of the cooperation existing between ASEAN and Japan. This will include the Fukuda Doctrine and the first steps and projects the countries faced. The second section consists of two subsections and demonstrates the current state of the relations providing the data and statistics including comparisons of the approaches given to Japan direction and other countries by ASEAN; and explored areas of cooperation and the most successful projects nowadays.

THE FUKUDA DOCTRINE AS THE FOUNDATION OF ASEAN-JAPAN RELATIONS

After the end of World War II, Japanese foreign policy was in the process of development and formation. First of all, this is due to the historical isolation that Japan has chosen as its main concept. Nevertheless, the significant growth of sovereign states and the gradual development of bilateral relations has led to another type of introduction of foreign policy. This includes non-state actors in international relations – international organizations. After its formation in 1967, ASEAN significantly strengthened the position of the Southeastern states in the world community as the only integration of this kind in East Asia. In this section of the article, the main prerequisites for the development of the

southeastern direction of Japan's foreign policy will be considered.

After World War II, the main task of the Japanese government was to restore and improve economic indicators, which was prescribed in the "Yoshida Doctrine" which was proposed by Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida (1946-1954). As a result, these indicators were improved thanks to close cooperation with the United States, which also was perceived as the main foreign policy direction. If earlier Japan was heavily dependent on the United States, then in subsequent years the island state was looking for new directions that could significantly improve political interaction in the region.

The decision to move away from American dependence was found by Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda (years of premiership 1976-1978), who, after visiting the capitals of the ASEAN countries in August 1977 in Manila, declared the principles of Japan's relations with these countries, called the "Fukuda doctrine" or the "Manila Declaration". It is since 1977 that the era of positive relations between ASEAN and Japan begins. In addition, geographical proximity greatly contributed to this decision. The doctrine contained the main statements of Japan's foreign policy in the Asian direction: First, Japan will never become a military power; Japan will carry out constructive non-military relations with ASEAN members. Second, Japan undertakes to promote cooperation relations between ASEAN and the Indochina states.

Thus, the importance of the development of this direction in Japanese politics is emphasized. Among the tasks, Japan also set itself to improve relations between the two ideologies that were present in Southeast Asia. Communist Vietnam is on the one hand, while non-communist ASEAN states are on the other. The official development assistance (ODA) provided by the Japanese side to Vietnam in order to cure it to the non-communistic area did not bring any positive results. This was followed in 1978 by the invasion of Cambodia, after which Japan also assumed the role of a mediator with a new policy. "ASEAN Support" is a policy aimed at stabilizing the situation in Southeast Asia (Yeo Lay Hwee 2006, 260). Thus, by helping and financing the region Japan demonstrated its political interest in this region.

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Every year, ASEAN organized various meetings, visits and forums at which the importance of Japanese support in ASEAN policy kept growing. The other partner countries also play an important role in the development and strengthening of multilateral relations, but experts say that it is the relative “closeness” that is a distinctive feature of the ASEAN-Japan interaction. This fact is also confirmed by the annual visits of the Prime Ministers of Japan in subsequent years and their unceasing support for the “ASEAN Policy”. This very support, in my opinion, seemed more like a promise from the Japanese side to strengthen the position of ASEAN. This included a number of financial assistances: \$2 billion was transferred to ASEAN by Prime Minister Takeshita, \$1 billion by Fukuda (Sudo 1988, 121). Takeo Fukuda became the founder of the Asian direction of Japan’s foreign policy.

Fukuda’s predecessor was Masayoshi Ohira, who took the post of Prime Minister in 1978. Despite concerns from the public because of his inclinations towards China, he intended to continue the Fukuda’s course. With the same promise, the post of Prime Minister was taken by Zenko Suzuki in 1981. His contribution to the development of the ASEAN direction has significantly expanded the area of influence including the following statements: Japan will continue to be a non-military state, meaning it will not form its own army; Japan will promote the development of the global political community; Economic cooperation with ASEAN will cover 4 areas: Development of agricultural industry, development of energy industry, development the human source potentiality, development of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it was under Suzuki’s premiership when one of the first initiatives was implemented – the ASEAN Training Centers, which mainly formulated and promoted educational flourishment. Adding to this project, Japan has allocated another \$100 million for the development of future projects (Sudo 1988, 119).

In addition to the economy, cooperation has also developed in the field of culture. In 1978, Takeo Fukuda initiated the ASEAN Cultural Foundation, based on Ohira’s initiatives and plans, an ASEAN Youth Scholarship was proposed in 1980, and the Regional Studies Promotion

Program was launched in 1982 (Sudo 1988, 120-122). From the very beginning of establishing relations with ASEAN, Japan has supported regional cooperation through the years (Imagawa 1989, 332-334):

Table 1: Japan-ASEAN Programs over the years

Years of realization	Programs	Prime-Ministers
1977-1986	«The Fukuda Doctrine»; Fertilizer production in Malaysia and Indonesia; Provision of US\$23 million to the ASEAN Cultural Fund	Takeo Fukuda
1981-1983	Provision of grants and assistance in the technical field in the amount of US\$100 million; Establishment of training centers in the ASEAN countries	Zenko Suzuki
1984-1988	Friendship program for the 21st century. Young people from ASEAN countries had the opportunity to meet with Japanese youth and participate in educational events.	Yasuhiro Nakasone
1985-1986	32 action programs	Yasuhiro Nakasone
	Plant renovation program	Yasuhiro Nakasone
1983(85)	Programs including biotechnological, microelectronic areas and material science	

Thus, it's safe to state that it was Takeo Fukuda who became the founder of the southeastern direction for Japan's foreign policy. In 1997, the Prime Minister of Japan Hashimoto Ryutaro offered an idea to widen and deepen the dialogue between the ASEAN countries and Japan in all spheres and at all levels. The ASEAN +1 Cooperative Mechanism was finally implemented to expand and spread ties in East Asia. The previous irregular ASEAN-Japan summit became an annual event. The ASEAN-Japan Summit has been held 21 times since it was first held in the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur in 1997. During these meetings, specific action programs were approved for building joint friendly and effective

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relations between the ASEAN countries and Japan. The next stage, which significantly transformed the ASEAN-Japan relations, started with the beginning of the 21st century. In search of an opportunity to expand the potential of multilateral cooperation, the Tokyo Declaration was issued in 2003, the purpose of which was to create an East Asian Community and its long-term development.

THE CURRENT STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ASEAN AND JAPAN

Since the beginning of the 21st century, ASEAN and Japan have gradually deepened their cooperation. Nevertheless, the main mechanism of influence continued to be the partnership in the field of economics. ASEAN, as a regional organization, acted as a major market for Japanese manufacturing. In addition, the ASEAN countries continue to receive investment support from Japan.

Today it is obvious that both sides continue to create favorable platforms for the realization of their ambitions. They also continue to develop the most beneficial areas of cooperation, formalizing binding agreements. ASEAN and Japan are primarily strategic partners shaping policy in the Pacific region. In 2019, at the end of the 34th ASEAN Summit, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific was adopted. It is important to touch upon the concept of Free and Open Indo-Pacific, which was proposed by Japan in 2015 and continues to develop to this day.

In 2020, the parties announced the issuance of the "Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", in which the countries pledged to work together to promote the Strategic Partnership of ASEAN and Japan, maintaining the principles specified in the AOIP, namely, UN SDG 2030, connection and cooperation strengthening, improving maritime security and cooperation, increasing other fields of partnership. The cooperation of these countries in the field of maritime security is most important in the region, since not only territorial conflicts periodically raise their importance, but also organized crime, developed in Southeast Asia in the

Strait of Malacca, threatens economic stability. This is primarily due to the fact that the Strait of Malacca is an extremely important corridor for China and India, and other countries.

In addition, there are a number of threats and challenges that ASEAN continues to face. If in Japan the main problem is considered to be the aging of the population, then in the ASEAN countries it is considered to be the difficulty of achieving sustainable development. After the pandemic, the Southeastern organization may again recover its monetary and fiscal policy, and to facilitate the financial area which was negatively influenced by the COVID-19. The second step towards achieving sustainable development should be the equalization of income, education, and qualifications. As mentioned earlier, different levels of development significantly affect the overall performance indicators. In order to exclude such issues new policies should be introduced in education, health care industry. In economics, there is such a term as a "middle income trap". The essence of this concept lies in the fact that states that experience a middle-income trap may face difficulties of competition in the world arena in the future. Wages may be high, but labor productivity remains at a low level. Thailand and Malaysia are currently facing such a problem. How to overcome this challenge? It is necessary to continue to improve the level of education and working conditions. An important factor in Southeast Asia remains the climatic factor, which negatively affects the overall ecological environment. Despite the fact that many Asian countries are actively showing interest in this area, nevertheless, the workload of manufactories and industries have a strong weight in this issue. Surprisingly, the foreign policy factor also affects sustainable development. This can be explained by the fact that there is a confrontation between China and the United States in the Asian region itself. ASEAN's reaction to this trade conflict should in no way affect internal processes. ASEAN, in turn, should not face a choice of political sides. The political stability of the ASEAN member states to be the last element in the successful implementation of sustainable development. The military coup in Myanmar, which took place in 2021, significantly shook the balance within ASEAN. Such sudden contradictions should be excluded from the general agenda. Thus, Japan will be involved

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in the ASEAN regional processes to further improve policy measures (Nakao 2021, 3).

In 2020, a development strategy was also formulated, called “The New Growth Strategy”. As part of this strategy, the countries have planned to create a powerful digital base, which will further contribute to the implementation of “Society 5.0”. What is Society 5.0? During the premiership, Shinzo Abe created the concept of a society where scientific research, technological breakthroughs and innovative ideas, shortly STI, will become part of the overall political program of Japan (UNESCO). Since the state itself is developed and has sufficient funds to implement such goals, Japan intends to help the southeastern states achieve digitalization and modernization. Special attention was paid to digitalization during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unforeseen difficulties have led to close cooperation in this area. ASEAN indeed have a developed system of digital technologies; socio-economic aspects have already been digitized in some countries. Thus, in this process, there is an exchange of experience between states. Japanese firms and large companies intend to supply products and technologies to ASEAN, as well as receiving advanced ASEAN technologies in exchange. This includes projects such as the implementation of smart cities, remote operation, contactless interaction caused by the pandemic, the protection of biometric data, authentication protection, “smart agriculture village”, which is designed to improve labor performance, the introduction of 5G of network, the promotion of cybersecurity in general. To contribute to the creation of the new values aiming at the successful implementation of a sustainable society and collectively usher in a new era, it became more crucial for the Japanese business sectors to strengthen its cooperation with ASEAN in terms of free trade, foreign direct investment and official development assistance.

The coronavirus pandemic had negative effects on the development of ASEAN and global processes in general. Nevertheless, this experience has led to the launch of the following initiatives:

- Boosted development of digital technology including remote working opportunities;

- Televised health care systems;
- Education remote access;
- Platforms that organize video-conferences;
- Stable functioning of e-commerce for active users;
- Cashless payments (including non-contact transfers);
- Video and games online streaming (entertainment industry);
- Effective transport systems with digitalized elements.

Thus, combining the peculiarities of the development of Japan and the South-Eastern impetuosity towards the concept of potential, cooperation is expressed in spectacular and fruitful aspects.

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EXISTING PROJECTS AND MAIN GOALS

Table 2: Current Projects between Japan and ASEAN

#	Project	Details
1	Training Program for Strategic Port Administration and Management	To increase the potential of the responsible bodies and agencies; To assist in solving and identifying problems in order to strengthen port administration.
2	Training Program for Waste Management Training to Address Marine Litter	To help developing countries to experience and achieve the goals of environmental security and protection.
3	Japan-ASEAN Connectivity Initiative	To develop ties in land, sea, air corridors by constructing needed logistics; To develop human resources potential
4	Thailand “Eastern Economic Corridor Independent Power Project”	Financing the construction of cycle gas turbine power plant (US\$180 million)
5	Viet Nam “Gulf Solar Power Project”	Financing the construction of a solar power plant (US\$37,8 million)
6	ASEAN-Japan Transport Partnership	transport facilitation, transport infrastructure, quality and sustainable transport, human resource development
7	JENESYS	Japan initiated exchange program among students aiming at increasing the awareness and knowledge about Japan and the free and open Indo-Pacific
8	ASEAN-Japan actions on sports	Sport cooperation
9	Support for the establishment of the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases	Effective response to public health emergencies and its prevention. Also includes possible pandemics and its consequences
10	Japan-ASEAN Invitation program on Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief	Disaster prevention and Humanitarian Assistance development

Source: Progress Report, October 2021.

In the table above, only few projects were listed that have impact on different areas and in different directions. But it is already quite obvious that the initiatives are serious. Japan finances some ASEAN countries, cooperates with non-regional states (USA, UK) to achieve FOIP goals. Thus, the cooperation between ASEAN and Japan is not limited only to these countries, but on the contrary expands the geography of the partnership.

As for the provided FDI, Japan is among the four countries in terms of investment flows to ASEAN countries after the United States, ASEAN itself and China. According to the report from 2022, Japan contributed US\$24 billion in total over 2 years (2020-2021), while the leader – the United States – invested US\$68 billion over two years. One example of the direction of FDI can be MINE and automotive industry, where Japan excels in promoting Toyota, Honda, Mitsubishi and Suzuki in Indonesia (ASEAN Investment Report, 11).

Another area of cooperation is the enhancement of human potential. This includes the interaction of companies, firms, agencies, educational institutions and even government organizations, both local and state. In addition, it is necessary to note the role of the tourism industry. It is quite noticeable that Japan and ASEAN are a popular tourist destination for each other. This is primarily due to geographical proximity, rich nature, religious and cultural diversity, and historical memory (Keidanren 2021, 15-16).

In terms of the latest data on the number of tourists, 1,025,508 people visited Japan from January to September, of which only 206,500 visits were made in September. The top ten includes such ASEAN countries as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, having made a total of 62,100 trips (JTB Tourism).

The ASEAN-Japan summit held on November 12, 2022 also bore some fruitful results. The Prime Ministers of Japan, Kishida Fumio, and Cambodia, Hun Sen, announced the further development and recovery of the economy, projects in the field of sustainable development, innovative initiatives, and strengthening trade relations. Japan has also

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allocated a financial sum of 295 million yen to the ASEAN states to support the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (Khmer Times, 2022). In addition, the Japanese side has put forward a number of proposals, mainly related to the 50th anniversary of relations between Japan and ASEAN:

- “Strengthening ASEAN-Japan Economic Relationship toward ASEAN-Japan 50th Anniversary in 2023”
- “Renewed ASEAN – Japan 10-year Strategic Economic Cooperation Roadmap (2016 – 2025)”
- “ASEAN-Japan Economic Resilience Action Plan”
- “Future Design and Action Plan of an Innovative Sustainable ASEAN-Japan Economic Partnership”
- “ASEAN-Japan Economic Co-Creation Vision” (Chairman’s Statement of the 25th ASEAN-Japan Summit, 2022, 1-2)

As for regionalism in this cooperation, Japan has repeatedly supported and encouraged the so-called ASEAN-centricity within the framework of building a regional foundation. At the same time, ASEAN values Japan’s significant involvement in the regional structures of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN+3, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). The importance of Japan during the 1997 Economic Crisis needs to be highlighted, after which many southeastern countries faced financial and economic problems. In this situation, Japan has managed to become a donor and help the states affected by the crisis. Such an act had a positive impact on the development of further ASEAN regional institutions and East Asia in general, in particular the ASEAN+3 meetings.

In addition, Japan has been improving its multilateral relations by playing a significant role in the development of the world processes. Its cooperation with ASEAN facilitates the regionalization in the given region and stimulates the creation of new projects and partnership with other regional plans and concepts, including the Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

ASEAN AND THE CHOICE OF JAPAN

From the very beginning of its existence, ASEAN has been looking for ways and directions of possible cooperation. First of all, the foreign policy of the regional organization covered the really big powers: the USA, the USSR and China. With such existing ties, ASEAN has gained experience in developing diplomatic cooperation, forming regional structures, and so on. Each country contributed to the organization's development in its own way. The problem was that all the countries were so different that in the future ASEAN experienced some difficulties. These difficulties were revealed during the Cold War, when Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia were forced to face threats emanating from China. The main reason is the strong influence of the United States in regional politics. According to the Chinese, the presence of American forces is too idealized and is perceived too positively by the other states in the region. Nevertheless, the ASEAN countries continued to support the United States and hoped that the major powers would not leave the region. Since 1971, ASEAN has prepared a declaration in which the countries promised to achieve non-regional recognition in the world and gradually increase their domestic potential for equal participation in world processes. The year 1975 should be considered a truly new stage in the foreign policy concept. After the US withdrawal from Vietnam, ASEAN added to the list of its partners: Japan, Australia, Great Britain. Of course, these countries could not be compared with the already existing effect from China, the USSR or the USA (Ciorciari 2021, 255). Nevertheless, the ASEAN member States have gradually strengthened ties with external actors. So, in 1992, after the end of the Cold War between the USSR and the United States, the Singapore Declaration was formulated, which stated the following: the ASEAN member countries intend, on the one hand, to improve cooperation with the United States, Japan and other US partners, on the other hand, to weaken China's position within ASEAN and the Southeast Asian region.

In the future, for the sake of regional development, ASEAN intended to create additional structures. Institutionalization in this case directly affected external forces, but at the same time united internal ones. In

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1997, the Southeast bloc created the ASEAN+3 cell, which included Japan, China and South Korea. Then the list of participants expanded to New Zealand, Australia and the representative of South Asia – India. By doing so, ASEAN has promoted regional cooperation within the regional architecture (Ciorciari 2021, 257).

Despite the fact that other East Asian countries are also actively participating in the above-mentioned regional mechanisms, Japan's role is more pronounced at the present stage than ASEAN's relations with South Korea. For example, in 2014, Japan's trade turnover with ASEAN exceeded South Korean exports. While Japan then mainly pursued its policy with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Thailand, South Korea was able to exceed these indicators only in cooperation with Vietnam and Cambodia (Buckalew 2016, 11). In 2020, Japan entered the top 3 in the list of ASEAN trade partners, once again exceeding Korean trade turnover.

Table 3: ASEAN Trading Partners (in million US\$)

No	Trading partner	2020	2021	2022
1	China	518,618	669,200	975,300
2	USA	309,089	364,456	360,100
3	EU-27	226,783	268,819	271,800
4	Japan	204,981	240,389	266,000
5	South Korea	154,967	189,594	124,890

Source: ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2022, 60

Taking into account all the mentioned programs, initiatives and financial assistance, the role of Japan continues to be as prominent as possible. Despite the fact that the rising hegemon China is also present in the region, which affects not only local processes, but is also a leading player in the global economy, Japanese policy is not trying to aggressively compete for benefits from the cooperation with ASEAN.

In this section of the article, it's presented how extensive the projects in cooperation between Japan and ASEAN have been. Both sides are in quite favorable conditions for each other, continuing to develop in

narrow directions, as well as solving problems of sustainable development. In East Asia, Japan considers ASEAN to be the core of regional cooperation, hinting at a unique structure and internal level of development. Despite many problems stated in this section, the states actively support each other. The most beneficial areas of this partnership are: FDI, logistics, person-to-person interaction, digitalization, free trade and its promotion, conflict resolution, maritime security, sustainable development, tourism, interregional projects, such as FOIP and AOIP, and the cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, the ongoing initiatives that come from Japan in support of ASEAN needs to be highlighted. Every year, the states hold meetings in order to assess the current situation, which allows them to plan a further course and fix existing problems. ASEAN is the only regional structure in East Asia that actively promotes itself and shows its growing potential. Japan's participation in its processes has a positive impact on the overall activities of the member states. In the article, the historical beginning laid in 1967 by Prime Minister Fukuda is stressed, which is still considered to be fruitful. Obviously, the powerful role of China cannot be denied, which is also a representative of the East Asian region, in the ASEAN processes. China is expanding its sphere of interests and absorbing the whole world, while Japan remains true to its principles and focuses on regional stability and positive cooperation. Among the rest of the states of East Asia, Japan remains the leader. It is worth to note the significant role of Japan in the regional construction of ASEAN through a separate forum and meeting and incredible contribution to its further development.

The various areas where this cooperation is widespread were also touched upon: economic, social, technological, industrial. Japan supports not only the already developed countries within ASEAN, but also invests in the economies of weak states such as Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia. Through cooperation in these areas, Japan is trying to achieve an equal distribution of opportunities and services.

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