

BOOK REVIEW

The Japanese and Sukarno's Indonesia: Tokyo-Jakarta Relations, 1951-1966 by Masashi Nishihara, Monographs of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, East-West Center Books, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1976, xvii + 244 pp.

This is an impressively detailed account of the bilateral relations between Japan and Indonesia, beginning with the San Francisco Peace Conference and terminating with Sukarno's removal from the presidency. The book begins with an overview of relationships between Indonesia and Japan, covering diplomacy, trade, official visits, and exchanges of persons. Following this, five key issues of Japanese-Indonesian relations are examined in close detail. These include: (1) The protracted war reparations negotiations from 1951 to the Reparations Agreement of 1958; (2) The politics of reparations funding between 1958 and 1965; (3) Japanese involvement in the Indonesian-Malaysian "Confrontation" of 1963-65; (4) the activities of pro-Sukarnoist groups in Japan and their influence on Japanese foreign policy towards the West Irian dispute of 1960-62; and (5) the role of anti-Sukarnoist groups in Japanese policies concerning the Sumatra Rebellion of 1958 and the Indonesian military's assumption of power after 1965. Much of the emphasis is on the actions of specific individuals and their functions as lobbyists in the policy-making processes of the respective countries. The study is based on both Japanese and Indonesian sources, including extensive interviews with officials, diplomats, wartime officers, correspondents, and businessmen, as well as published materials.

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I

The first chapter of the book provides an overall survey of Japanese-Indonesian relations and the intensity of their contacts over the fifteen-year period. After a brief resort to earlier history, Dr. Nishihara proceeds to trace postwar Japanese policy lines towards Southeast Asia generally, and towards Indonesia in particular. There follows a similar treatment of Indonesian external behavior, with particular reference to policies towards Japan. The author then examines bilateral trade patterns, the flow of nationals, and exchange visits of leaders. Apart from a wealth of information, this discussion allows some fascinating insights into attitudes and expectations of Japanese and Indonesians involved in their bilateral relations. One is struck, for example, by the remarkable continuity of Japanese business interests in, and prescience for the development of Indonesian natural resources. Thus, prewar notions of developing North Sumatra's Asahan Valley hydroelectric capabilities and tying this in with an

aluminum scheme based on nearby Bintan Island bauxite resources, were reiterated already in 1953 by Kubota Yutaka, (builder of the Suihō hydroelectric complex on the Yalu River), a prodigious financial and engineering undertaking that may yet, one day, be realized.

Again, Dr. Nishihara cites a high-ranking official at the Ministry of International Trade and Industry reasoning that Japan's perseverance with politically inspired credits to Indonesia, even during the most unstable, turbulent years of the Sukarno era, in effect lubricated the mechanism for rapid increase in the volume of trade and payments after 1965 (p. 15). Japan consciously became the "Western" lynchpin of Sukarno's foreign relations through deliberate extensions of political financial aid, with a calculated eye on longer-run commercial and investment possibilities.

Surprisingly, Dr. Nishihara's survey of Japanese involvements with Indonesia ignores one factor with which he himself has been personally associated. I refer to Japanese university scholarship on Southeast Asia in general, and on Indonesia in particular. While giving details of tourist traffic, official visits, and other inter-personal contacts, the book does not refer to the role of Japanese universities and scholars in the bilateral relationship. Of itself, Japanese scholarship surely must have constituted a substantial point of contact with Indonesia and Indonesians. Furthermore, the work of academics had its effects on attitudes, and perhaps on policies as well. Regretfully, these are nowhere incorporated in the study.

Considerable attention is paid to the expansion of commercial linkages as a factor inducing increasingly close relations between the two countries. The volume of trade had grown substantially since the end of the Pacific War, and especially since the military "New Order," so that by 1970 Japanese exports to Indonesia amounted to over 1.5 per cent of total exports, while imports from Indonesia were some 3.3 per cent of total imports; for Indonesia, Japan figured in well over half of total exports, and over a third of total imports (Table 3). This trend Dr. Nishihara terms the growing "economic inter-dependency" between Japan and Indonesia. To this reviewer, at least, "dependency" and "inter-dependency" are words that seem overly strong, in the circumstances, and perhaps too emotive. If Japan had become a major market for Indonesian petroleum and timber exports, these commodities were after all readily marketable elsewhere and, in any event, the balance of trade since 1965 overwhelmingly favored Indonesia (it is a relevant though moot point whether domestic value added—and net product—for these multinationally dominated export sectors was also favorable). While trade was thus fickle, bilateral payments have tended to be more consistently contingent on political considerations. Indonesia has made continual resort to Japanese governmental and private credits, Dr. Nishihara's "political yen," as well as reparations, whereas Japan in turn counted on regular debt servicing and respect for asset holdings in Indonesia. These considerations may have produced a certain reciprocity in economic transactions, but this appears to be less symmetrical than the dependency relationship postulated by Dr. Nishihara.

In tracing postwar Japanese trading patterns it is argued (p. 4) that the shift in importations to the United States during the late 1940s, early 1950s, operated at the expense of trading ties with Asia. While the figures supplied do back up this assertion, underlying economic considerations render the conclusion dubious. The high ratio of

postwar Japanese imports from the United States reflected, in fact, capital requirements for the reconstruction of Japanese industry. The subsequent shift in favor of an increasing ratio of imports from Southeast Asia denoted the return to "normalcy" once industrial rehabilitation was complete. Nor can it be said that export ties with the United States "restricted" (p. 4) Japanese access to Asian markets such as China's, since anyway Chinese ideology and policy limited trade possibilities during the 1950s even with those countries that had formally recognized Peking, e.g., Britain and the Scandinavians.

II

The major portion of Dr. Nishihara's study is concerned not so much with economic relations as such, but with political interaction between foreign policy elites, and counter-elites, in Tokyo and Jakarta. There is abundant detail on the activities of individuals, organized "lobbies," and quasi-conspiratorial "groups," with regard to both policy-making and the conduct of bilateral relations. In the chapters on postwar reparations, we see how negotiations reached an impasse as Indonesian grievances and expectations encountered Japanese disclaimers and strategic disinterest. The formation of a Japanese "Peace Lobby," composed of persons and corporations having nostalgic or commercial interests in Indonesia, contributed to the eventual achievement of the Reparations Agreement and the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Subsequently, a "Reparations Lobby," similarly composed but more dominated by commercial interests, functioned to cement bilateral ties even as ideological distances grew. We catch glimpses of leadership styles and mercantile machinations, which came together in the part played by Ratna Sari Dewi, in ensuring Japan's economic position in Indonesian development. Dr. Nishihara concludes that the Japanese government used reparations funding to promote trade and prop up the Sukarno regime, while the latter utilized the funds placed at its disposal for projects involving conspicuous public and private consumption designed to propagate Sukarnoism.

Ironically, the venality and waste accompanying Sukarnoism contributed to the eventual overthrow of the regime, though without detriment to Japanese interests, indeed the contrary. The adroitness and latitude in Japanese relations with Indonesians assured Japan's interests on all quarters, Sukarnoists, anti-Sukarnoists, outer-islanders, and military. Also on the shadowy left, Japanese socialists and communists evolved ties with their Indonesian counterparts. If the Japanese government failed in its attempt to mediate the Indonesian-Malaysian confrontation, nevertheless even in failure it succeeded in not alienating either of the parties so that Japan could ultimately play a significant role in forging the post-1965 settlement. Japan astutely respected Indonesian sensibilities, as in the *Karel Doorman* and *KLM* incidences connected with the West Irian dispute, and over the Sumatra Rebellion. However, Japanese involvement in Indonesian affairs had a subtle though nonetheless effective political bent. Through Dewi, Japanese officials and lobbyists worked together with related Indonesian groups to keep Sukarno on their side, and away from communist grasp. Ongoing close contacts between certain Japanese and Indonesian anti-Sukarnoists and military prepared

the groundwork for Tokyo's rapid moves to extend support to the Suharto regime following its takeover of March 1966.

The wide-ranging review of the Japanese position also casts some fascinating side-light on the GESTAPU coup of October 1965 itself. Controversy still exists about the origins of the coup, and about the degree of external communist involvement in the attempt. In the course of his discussion Dr. Nishihara provides a translation of a secret Japanese Communist Party report of a leadership mission to Peking, claiming that the Indonesian Party had embarked on the coup attempt "according to Mao's instructions and failed" (p. 170). (Mao apparently also urged the JCP to initiate a guerrilla insurrection, but this had been refused, recalling the lessons of the PKI.) The report was leaked and published by the anti-communist press, and Dr. Nishihara supplies an English abstract together with a verbatim translation of pertinent parts (pp. 170-71).

III

In treating the various facets of Japanese-Indonesian relations, the author provides the reader with an imposing repertoire of information, focussing on down to the micro level. The presentation combines historical method with case (or, issue-by-issue) study, revolving around an intensely atomistic perspective of bilateral relations. All this amounts to immensely detailed description, which is itself a valuable contribution though not a substitute for analysis. In other words, particulars about the toing-and-froing of diplomats, emissaries, and businessmen, or references to Sukarnoist financial shenanigans and Swiss bank accounts (vide, pp. 152-54) may be interesting, and even significant in policy terms, but it is precisely this analytical quality linking political events to policy formulation to policy consequences, that is lacking in the text. There is a gap between the detailed case study, and the application of political science method to the data revealed by the study. Details in the text would have provided material for data based theorizing, or for hypothesis-testing, but the opportunity was unfortunately not grasped. In the end, we are left with much of politics, however too little of political science.

In treating topics such as these, involving a multitude of facts and interpretations, it is always difficult to uphold clarity and coherence of purpose. Dr. Nishihara skillfully achieves both. His descriptive abilities slice through complex situations like a surgeon's knife, extracting events in sequence and context. Yet, occasionally there are slips into inaccurate terminology. Discussing confrontation, for example, there are references to "Malaya's plan to form the Federation of Malaysia..." (p. 8) which is too simplistic an interpretation of the decolonization process devised for the northern Borneo territories and Singapore; or to Malaysia having "intensified its military attack on Indonesia" (p. 133), when Malaysians were in fact on the defensive against Indonesian guerrilla forces operating within their territory; or to the alleged "anti-Indonesian posture" of Malaysia's 1964 elections (p. 134) which is unsubstantiated. These instances of terminological partisanship seem to arise out of Dr. Nishihara's strong sympathies for the Indonesians, but tend to prejudice his treatment of the confrontation issue somewhat.

Dr. Nishihara has produced an important and valuable study of Japanese-Indonesian relations during the critical Sukarno years. This book will doubtlessly become a basic reference work on the subject, particularly for the English-reading world, including Indonesian scholars and officials. Many will find the comprehensive bibliography that is provided, covering Indonesian, Japanese, and English language materials, especially useful.

(Martin Rudner)