

(Draft Only)

**ASEAN-JAPAN CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS:
From Selective Engagement to Comprehensive Japanese Involvement-
With Focus on the Dynamics and Prospective Interface**
By
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I. INTRODUCTION

This research is on contemporary ASEAN-Japan relations with focus on the comprehensive dynamics and prospects of the interface. The emergence of new concepts and evolving factors and processes that are shaped by the domestic and regional and or global environments of Japan and the ASEAN as inter-relating players in Asia and in the world have ushered in some complexities that need to be understood and analyzed in order to grasp the evolving relationships.

The main interest of the study is to theoretically identify the *loci* and the *evolution dynamics* of contemporary interface between the ASEAN and Japan. The presentation and the analysis involve a multi-disciplinal approach that is not limited to one academic discipline in order to capture a comprehensive view of the relationships. In the realm of international relations, this research attempts to present an interface map of ASEAN and Japan, which could be used to generally clarify the location of interaction components, process dynamics, transitional phases, and the linkages between local and global elements in the relationships. This paper is an attempt to conduct a comprehensive theoretical navigation of contemporary ASEAN-Japan relations.

The changing pattern and manner of ASEAN-Japan interactions occur in accordance with the principle that foreign affairs (foreign diplomacy and foreign interactions) are the extensions of domestic affairs. The form, contents and dynamics of relations between the ASEAN and Japan have been the outcome of the interplays between and among the various factors, events and changes within and outside the two interacting entities in the economic, political, security, and socio-cultural fields. The theoretical framework from which the discussion proceeds will be in consideration of the evolving and expanding ASEAN-Japan interface considering the distinct regional and global relations or international relations environment of both ASEAN and Japan. The *Metanation state* interface will be adapted to illustrate the comprehensive and transforming character of ASEAN-Japan contemporary relations.

Japanese foreign relations evolution and dynamics could be seen in the nation's involvement and participation in Asian affairs, specifically with the ASEAN region as a single and collective entity. Japanese interaction with the ASEAN in the last four decades saw a clear transition from *selective engagement to comprehensive involvement*.

The stance and involvement of postwar Japan in Asia, and in the Southeast Asian region in particular have graduated from passive to a more active position following the era of concentrated economic advancement in the region. Along this line of evolving pattern, the governments and policy leaders in both sides of the equation began to realize the emergence of deliberate and naturally occurring widening of the limited and selective engagements that started with earlier economic interactions to include the political, security, social,

and cultural engagements. Thus, the channels of interaction are a mix of state and non-state actors and players.

Regarding the ASEAN response to Japanese overtures, there is also a gradually emerging reciprocity from Japan's counterpart countries and entities. The Asian neighbors in general, and the ASEAN member countries in particular, have graduated from mere venues of economic playing grounds and foreign investments receptacles for former Western colonizers, and for the so-called advanced nations including Japan. Since the 1960s, the ASEAN embarked on the long and winding road to regional integration even as the member countries are faced with domestic and intra-regional economic, political and social developmental disparities in varying degrees. The ASEAN individually and collectively currently adapt a more pragmatic and realistic acceptance of the effects of globalization and the roles of regional and global partnerships with Asian and Western powers. This pragmatic acceptance of outside partnerships is further developing with ASEAN's conditional and heightened expectations from the more economically powerful and technologically/industrially-advanced countries like Japan to play and fill in the gap in the field not only of economic development, but in the area of comprehensive regional and global social and human security. Recently, this posture become more evident in the face of threats from natural and human-made phenomena like environmental problems, natural disasters, health, and terrorism. It is important to note that institutionally, the responses of ASEAN to external developments has also been expanding or being elevated on a higher scale.

The patterns and manner of reactions of ASEAN, in its individual member countries positions and in its collective nature as a regional bloc and interacting regional entity, vis-à-vis Japan's evolving approach towards the region, will be the subject of a separate study.

II. IN THE MIDST OF THE META-NATION STATE RELATIONS

Before further discussing the stages, the dynamics, and the expanded evolution of ASEAN – Japanese interface, I would like to introduce the theoretical and practical framework upon which the discussion could be premised. This is the Metanation state relation (Mahiwo).

In brief, the Meta-nation state relations concept, postulates that inter-nation state relation has been evolving and shifting from the conventional mono-channel mode of exchanges and interchange to a multi-strata, multi-channeled structure and mode of interflow between and among nation states. It views interactions in a multi-level and multi-dimensional broad prism that encompasses the components within and outside the nation state. The scope of conceptual subjects and objects in inter-state relations is further expanded from the traditional nation state-dominated channel and mode of inter-relations, which has been the main and core of international exchanges. The Metanation state concept still retains the nation state as the core and central foundation of international relations from which most if not all sub-interactions radiate. The concept gives the appropriate emphasis on the roles and importance of components and interface at the secondary and sub-level loci within and outside the nation state.

In terms of structure, the Metanation state concept model comprises of the nation state strata, which are categorized into three levels: (A). the nation state level (core or principal stratum), (B). the intra-nation state level (sub-nation state stratum), and (C). the extra-nation state level (nation state peripheral stratum). These three basic strata are the levels and or channels where all forms of exchanges particularly nation state players cross-interact regardless of stratum location of players. The directions and correspondence of the levels or strata could be in variable or flexible matching and combinations. Thus, the basic variations of the strata or levels of international and global relations and interactions can as follows in any order: (1). Nation state-to-nation state strata of interactions, (2). Nation state to intra-nation state strata of interactions, (3). Nation state to extra-nation state strata of interactions, (4). Intra-nation state to intra-nation state strata of interactions, (5). Intra-nation state to extra-nation state strata of interactions, and (6). Extra- nation state to extra-nation state strata of interactions.

Based on the Meta-nation state model, the structure and the loci of relationships and interactions extend below the nation state (sub-nation state) and beyond the nation state (peripheral strata) exclusive jurisdiction. The model encompasses the flow dynamics and directions of interactions in both state and non-state interface (players and channels).

Moreover, the individual strata in the metanation state model are not limited to their counterpart strata in the interacting partner country. The individual strata can interchangeably crisscross any or all strata in the interface, e.g. state players can interact with non-state players located at the state strata, intra-nation state strata, and the extra-nation state strata.

Through the prism of the Meta-nation state concept, contemporary ASEAN-Japan interactions can be observed and understood from wide-ranging depictions, angles and perspectives. Multilateral and bilateral relations are analyzed, as they emerge in multi-level venue, in multi-player participation, and in multi-dimensional dynamics.

The Metanation state paradigm embraces comprehensively the economic, political, security, cultural, and other dimensions of inter-relationships. Within and through this model all possible forms of interactions crisscross one another regardless of level and categories.

The Metanation State Structure of Global Interaction Channels

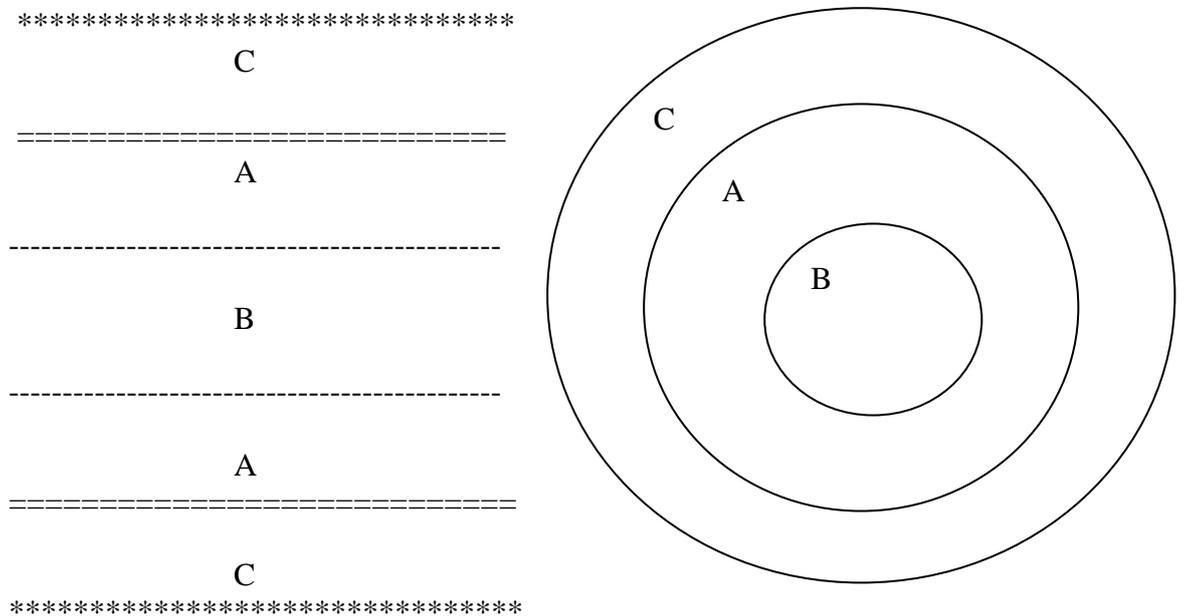


Fig. 1

Legend:

(A)= Nation state strata (B) = Intra-nation state strata (C) = Extra-nation state strata

Fig. 1 is the *Metanation state* model, which illustrates the levels and channels through which interface occur between and among entities in global interactions:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| (1). <i>Nation state = Nation state interface</i> | A-----A |
| (2). <i>Nation state = Intra-nation state interface</i> | A-----B |
| (3). <i>Nation state = Extra-nation state interface</i> | A-----C |
| (4). <i>Intra-nation state = Intra-nation state interface</i> | B-----B |
| (5). <i>Intra-nation state = Extra-nation state interface</i> | B-----C |
| (6). <i>Extra-nation state = Extra-nation state interface</i> | C-----C |

The Metanation state paradigm could illustrate and reflect the global and local nature of present day international relations. Being local and being global are not contradictory phenomenon in the Metanation state interface as can be observed in the ASEAN –Japan contemporary relations. Interactions between the two can be decided, can be initiated, and can be implemented in the “town meeting level” or in “international or regional conferences”.

In the Metanation state paradigm, the ASEAN and Japan could be treated as actors / players and as venues / environments of the ASEAN-Japan interface.

The Quadruple I of Bilateral, Regional and Global Relations

The contemporary ASEAN-Japan relations (bilateral, regional, multi-lateral) are subjected to the phenomenon of regionalism and globalization. The phenomenon is characterized by the nature of interface, which can be described in the **Quadruple I: Intensifying, Inevitable, Inter-cultural, and IT-propelled**. This simply means that quantitatively, ASEAN-Japan interactions in the Metanation state type of relations are in the increasing directions, that by geographical and geopolitical destiny, the relationship is inevitable, that the expansion from mere interflow of raw material goods, industrial products, money and finance, information and technology, ASEAN-Japan

interface involves the movement of natural persons and therefore brings about the interactions in the human, social and cultural dimensions. Moreover, the present age of information technology (IT) has pushed the ASEAN-Japan partnership interactions into the IT highways and crossroads that span national and regional boundaries which revolutionized the speed, the quantity, quality, contents, control, and directions of the interflows in the relationships in almost every form and level.

The author attempts to navigate contemporary ASEAN-Japan interface in the light of the Metanation state paradigm in juxtaposition with the quadruple I phenomenon of globalization.

III. EVOLVING ASEAN – JAPAN INTERFACE

The pre-occupation in Japan and the Southeast Asian countries during the immediate post-World War II years have been devoted to national reconstruction and neighborly reconciliation between the two entities. The Japanese one-track emphasis on economic development in its relations with Asia resulted in the unintentional neglect of other aspects of the relationship, i.e., political, cultural, and such dimensions that are not directly related to economic pursuits. The extent of this economically lop-sided relation with Southeast Asia earned the label “economic animal” to describe Japan in its involvement in the region. Moreover, the so-called “anti-Japanese” sentiments that were manifested during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka in the ASEAN capitals in 1974 was attributed to the dominant economic thrust of Japan into the region without showing interest in non-economic concerns in the relationships, although the reasons of the demonstrations that greeted the Japanese Prime Minister’s visit were not

solely anti-Japanese sentiments but were also attributed to domestic issues and internal problems of the countries visited.

As a reflection on the part of Japan regarding its selective economic engagement in the region, non-economic ideas and concepts of pursuing diplomatic relations with the ASEAN started to evolve.

In connection with transition, from the Japanese perspective, the approach towards the ASEAN-Japan interaction has slowly changed from a passive or reactive stance to an initiative-taking posture. Understandably, when the interaction involves the mainly economic interplay, Japan has the upper hand and the relations are a one-way traffic direction. In many cases, it was a directional flow from a developed industrialized country to a developing country direction. However, some couple of decades later, some changes in the interactions started to show. At present, the concept of *partnership relations* is emerging.

A. PHILOSOPHICAL & CONCEPTUAL DIMENSION

This conceptual evolution, particularly from Japan's side regarding its views of the ASEAN-Japan relations could be traced to the not so distant past starting from domestic policy changes and foreign relations perspectives in Japan in the latter half of the 1970s. The offshoots of the event of the so-called anti-Japanese sentiments triggered drastic changes in Japanese mode and perceptions of its relations towards the region. Subsequently, Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda launched the "*KOKORO TO KOKORO NO FUREAI*" (heart-to-heart-diplomacy) in 1977 also labeled as the Fukuda Doctrine announced in his Manila speech. In terms of ideas regarding Japan's security, which includes Japanese foreign relationships Prime Minister, Masayoshi Ohira introduced the "*SOGO ANZEN HOSHO*" (Comprehensive Security Policy). This was an important

conceptual transformation of Japanese then selective engagement to a broader and comprehensive involvement and initiatives in the region. Although not particularly addressed to ASEAN-Japan relations, the comprehensive security concept, some decades later, expanded and developed to include the mode and coverage of Japanese foreign policy views towards the region to include non-economic relations. The development and growth of Japanese foreign relations policy concepts could be mirrored at present in the expanding and pro-active dynamics of Japanese involvement in external affairs, not only in the ASEAN but also in the other Asian regions and beyond.

The Japanese involvement in the area of peace and security in ASEAN has been shown with the sending of the Japanese PKO in Cambodia in the 1990s. For the first time in postwar Japan, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces contingent joined the PKO in foreign soil. This was a historic event in Japanese postwar foreign policy (Imagawa).

In other words, as new changes and developments are taking place, commensurate evolving responses in Japan in terms of policy coverage and policy stance are emerging. Some of the major changes are the extension and graduation from purely “SHIGEN GAIKOU” (natural resources diplomacy), dependence on economic and investment relations to foreign policy concerns that involve non-material, non-economic interactions. These can be seen in today’s Japanese human-oriented, socio-cultural, and issue-focused forms of cooperation and policy interactions with ASEAN and the outside world. The “*BUNKATEKI / JINTEKI GAIKOU*” has been emerging as an expansion of the “*BUSHITSUTEKI GAIKOU*” in the arena of Japanese foreign relations.

Deeply interrelated and intertwined with the cultural and human-oriented interface in ASEAN-Japan relations is the aspect of creating the environment of trust (*SHINRAI*) relations and friendship between the interacting parties. This could not be possible with emphasis only on the material interface (commercial goods, finance, technology, and business information interflows). The material-oriented relations cannot replace the human-oriented relations. At best, depending on how they are managed and directed, the two dimensions enhance and reinforce each other.

Also relevant to the conceptual dimension of ASEAN-Japan relations is the cultivation of the relationships in the context of what is called *soft power* diplomacy. The idea of bringing and sharing development and peace in the world through non-military but soft power influence is a potential ideal role for Japan. An example of this, among many, is the sharing of the *ISSON IPPIN* (one village one product concept) by Morihiko Hiramatsu, former governor of Oita Prefecture. The pursuit of this kind of sharing is seen as soft power diplomacy. As a Japan-initiated concept for development, Hiramatsu visited Thailand, the Philippines, Mongolia and some African countries. Definitely, these enhanced expanded and comprehensive relations between Japan and the countries it interact with.

B. EXPANDING STRUCTURES & CHANNELS OF INTERFACE

ASEAN-Japan relations today have reached a stage as described in the Metanation state relations wherein the structure of interface accommodates multiplicity of players (state and non-state actors, natural persons and juridical /collective entities, etc.). In the Metanation state framework, from both sides, the players are the national government /sovereign instrumentalities at the state level interface (A-A level), the local

governments (LGUs) and instrumentalities at the sub-nation state level interface (B-B level), the entities in the interactions at the extra-nation state interface (C-C level).

The non-state and non-government players (NGOs) and private entities involved in the ASEAN-Japan interface are the MNCs, TNCs, interest groups and non-profit organizations. They are formidable in their influence on state level policies regarding the form and essence of interactions.

Relevant to the structure of the interface, the location of “influencing factors” in charting deliberate categories and types of relations and exchanges (trade, movements of natural persons, etc.) could vary depending on the channel and actors involved. As such, the so-called external pressures or “GAIATSU” that used to be the basis of Japanese foreign relations in the not so distant past may have been transformed into internal pressures or “NAIATSU” but still related to ASEAN factors. (For example in the case of the negotiation of the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), the role of the Japan Nurses Association and the Philippine Nurses Association regarding the negotiation and prospective implementation of the agreement can be viewed as both NAIATSU or GAIATSU in influencing policy-making in both countries). Such is the dynamics in the Metanation state relations structure that could apply in the ASEAN-Japan interactions. There is a confluence of the “GAIATSU” (external pressure) and the “NAITSU” (domestic pressure) factors to influence and affect foreign policy making transformation and dynamic developments depending on the strata involved. The interface structure accommodates certain change and adaptation in directions or patterns as the interactions interchangeably vary in intra-nation state strata (NAIATSU) or from the extra-nation state strata (GAIATSU) levels or channels, as the case may be.

The emergence of the multiplicity of players in the Metanation state interface entails the *multiplicity of partnerships* in the multi-channel and multi-strata relationships between ASEAN and Japan. New and innovative policy approach and negotiation styles have to be evolved for mutual partnership benefits.

C. INSTITUTIONAL STABILIZATION & EXPANSION

In the light of the evolution and transition of the ASEAN-Japan relations, the phase of institutionalization of interactions is an important component. The regularity and stability of the inter-accommodation and growing cooperation between the ASEAN and Japan in various areas of interactions could be established as institutions emerge in the process. Through these institutions, there is clearer and predictable understanding about the realities, issues, and prospects with regards to foreign policy theory and practice. The four decades of ASEAN – Japan relations (1968 - 2008) can bear witness to policy transformations from selective spheres of interactions economic-focused, trade, etc) to more comprehensive and broadened integrated areas (to include the hitherto deliberately subdued aspects like security cooperation, among others. Developments in the relations occur because ad hoc strategies are minimized when institutions are involved.

It can be said that at present, Japan is manifesting an active and even pro-active expanded view and posture in regional affairs as well as in international affairs. This is because of the strength of various institutionalized vessels of interactions.

The phase of institutionalization of ASEAN-JAPAN comprehensive interface was initiated in 1977 when Japan became one of the first Dialogue Partners of the ASEAN in the regular consultations that are held during the ASEAN summits that provide a

venue for consultation between the regional bloc and important powers in the world like the US, then followed by China, India, South Korea, Australia and others.

In economic level of interactions, the establishment of the ASEAN-Japan Centre in 1981, which has the primary goal to promote Trade, Investment, and Tourism between the two entities, was a solid illustration of the institutionalization process. As the economic interchanges between Japan and the ASEAN member countries are founded strongly on the economic ties, this Centre plays and is playing a crucial role in the comprehensive bilateral and multilateral economic relationships.

In the field of peace, security, and development relations, the most recent proactive Japanese institutionalized involvement regarding peace and security in ASEAN was the participation of Japan's Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) in Cambodia (1990s). In Japan, a recent example of the evolution of selective and limited involvement to a broader institutional involvement is the elevation of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces from just a government agency to a full-fledged ministry. This is a concrete institutional development in the sphere of security policy as the Ministry of Defense now deals with the dimension of national and regional security, which may involve both domestic and international roles.

In the area of human resources development and nation building, (*Hitozukuri* relevant to *Kunizukuri* cooperation), Japan has so far conducted one of the most intensive and extensive human exchange interface with the ASEAN in particular. The Japanese have institutionalized educational and academic, science studies grants / scholarships for foreign students and scholars (*MONBUKAGAKUSHO SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS*), training and

upgrading skills program for foreign government personnel (*JICA TRAINING PROGRAMS*), for private sector /industry-based training (*AOTS TRAINING PROGRAMS*), for culture & the arts exchange programs (*JAPAN FOUNDATION CULTURE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS*), and other types of human and personnel exchanges. In most of these exchanges, especially until the early 1990s, the ASEAN countries as a whole figure prominently. (Although recently, China shares a greater bulk of the exchanges). There are also exchange programs exclusively between ASEAN and Japan like Youth, Professional, Sector-specific, and or Issues- oriented exchange programs).

The ASEAN COUNCIL OF JAPAN ALUMNI (**ASCOJA / ASJA**) is one of the unique institutionalized evidence in Human Resources Development (**HRD diplomacy and cooperation**) between the ASEAN and Japan. To date, the ASCOJA is one of the most sustained alumni group in the ASEAN countries. The alumni associations of former students or trainees in Japan are a solid indication of the institutionalization of ASEAN-Japan relations in general, and of the human and personnel exchanges between the two parties. The ASEAN JAPAN ALUMNI that comprise the ASCOJA are as follows:

1. Brunei – Brunei Japan Alumni
2. Cambodia – Japan Alumni of Cambodia (JAC)
3. Indonesia- Perhimpunan Alumni Dari Jepang (PERSADA)
4. Malaysia- Japan Alumni Graduates Association of Malaysia (JAGAM)
5. Myanmar – Myanmar Association of Japan Alumni (MAJA)
6. The Philippines – Philippine Federation of Japan Alumni (PHILFEJA)
7. Singapore – Japan University Graduates Alumni of Singapore (JUGAS)

8. Thailand – Old Japan Students` Association. Thailand (OJSAT)

9. Vietnam – Japan Alumni of Vietnam (JAV)

“ The foreign students are the treasures (TAKARA) for Japan”. This is how a Japanese high-ranking policy maker describes the importance of ASEAN alumni who studied and obtained education in Japan. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that investing in exchanges of human persons is an investment for peace and security in the future. The human exchanges can be sources of “*CHINICHI*” (Japan-knowledgeable foreigners) and “*SHINNICHI*” (Japanophile and admirers of Japan). The human exchange interaction between ASEAN and Japan is a long-term undertaking. But there is no mistake that at the end, it is the greatest contributor to the building of human bridge institutions (*HITO NO KAKEHASHIZUKURI*).

3. PEACE KEEPING OPERATIONS (PKO)

During the 1990s, specifically during the negotiations of the Cambodian Peace, Japan for the first time showed its initiative and creative diplomacy in the region. The first sending abroad and participation of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) contingent to Cambodia marked the postwar transformation of Japanese involvement in the region from the passive diplomacy to an active policy.

This transformation is a at the same time a show of Japanese confidence to chart its own policy, more or less weaned from the influence of its allies like the US and the West. Moreover, a contemporary Japanese relation with ASEAN precedes those of its Asian powerful neighbors like China, South Korea and others. This is a clear manifestation of the emerging confidence of Japan of its position in the ASEAN.

The involvement of Japan in security and peacekeeping can also be institutionally relevant to the elevation of the former Self-Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense. The institutional presence in this sphere is greatly enhanced.

4. ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (EPA)

In the economic and expanded field, the establishment of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with the ASEAN members individually and collectively in the 2000s indicates great institutional advancement. This comprise a “new stage” has emerged in ASEAN-Japan interface. The EPA is very much distinguished from the earlier Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). First, on one hand, the FTA is focused on the flow of trade, the emphasis on trading of goods and commercial products and outputs between the parties to the agreement. The EPA, on the other hand, is an expanded version of FTA, which is a partnership agreement. Theoretically, a partnership entails a more balanced arrangement wherein mutuality in terms of responsibility / roles and benefits from the agreement is the basis of the agreement. Secondly, one of the most important distinguishing marks of EPA in most cases is the involvement and inclusion of the movement of natural persons across the national borders of the contracting countries. Hence, the interface goes beyond the flow of mere raw materials, economic goods, and finance. It involves human beings that are beyond economic commodities. In ASEAN-Japan contemporary interface, the treatment of this dimension is extremely critical and challenging in all levels of interactions.

The EPA has two levels: One is at the bilateral level between Japan and the individual ASEAN member nations; and the other one in the All-ASEAN level referred to as the Comprehensive Partnership (CP). The Economic partnerships agreements

(EPAs) are envisioned to enhance cooperation and further advance ASEAN-Japan relations in the face of new changes and challenges. The EPA and the CP are important emergent institutional developments in ASEAN-Japan contemporary relations.

In this connection, the expansion of the hitherto narrow economic relations to include other areas like politics, security, social and cultural relations, does not mean that economic relations is replaced or reduced by other emerging interface. On the contrary, the economic interface is being supported and strengthened by the other interactions.

It can be said that in the above-mentioned spheres, ASEAN-JAPAN relations has been more advanced and developed quantitatively and qualitatively, compared to many other comparable countries or regions with similar types of relationships because of the stabilized institutions which are the conduits of the interchanges.

IV. ISSUES AND PROSPECTS- Challenges and Opportunities

A. ASEAN-JAPAN Relations in its COMPLEMENTARY CHARACTER

Basically and generally, ASEAN and Japan relations is cemented by the commonly share Asian or Oriental cultural heritage, although manifested in diversified ways. This Asian heritage is a fundamental bind that is exclusive to the relationship.

Another complementariness in the ASEAN-Japan relations at this point in time and place, is the phase of economic and industrial development stage in Japan and the ASEAN are complementary as contrasted to the competitive nature of relations between developed and industrialized societies or between developing and developing countries wherein competition between inter-actors is the rule of the interplay. If this

complementary equation in ASEAN-Japan relations is appropriately handled, it can lead to further smooth partnership.

In terms of geopolitics and demography, compared with other relationships, ASEAN-Japan contemporary relation in general is complementary. The young population age of the ASEAN societies are in contrast to the aging population of Japan. In this respect, any form of cooperation in “social engineering” can be an ideal interface, particularly in nation building and nation-maintenance, relevant to human and social affairs.

In view of current situations characterized by the movement of natural persons across national boundaries, the human resources development interface is an emergent dimension inter-related with domestic economic, political and social conditions that influence contemporary foreign relations and foreign policy directions of interacting countries. It is evident that there is a link of the “**loci**” of the national interest to foreign lands. With focus on human resources, the movement of natural persons that are prominent in human resources flow between the ASEAN and Japan are: *seafarers, technicians and IT engineers, health and medical service personnel, agricultural help, and other industry personnel.*

Considering the above conditionality, distinctively and uniquely, there is a *meeting point of complementation* in the area of human resources diplomacy between the ASEAN and Japan. How the two sides could be bridged for mutual interest and benefits is a shared responsibility and challenge to all the players in the *human resources flow* of interaction.

B. ASEAN-JAPAN Relations in its ASYMMETRIC CHARACTER

In order to understand the prospective hurdles in ASEAN-Japan relations, it is important to factor in the gaps that are inherent in each side. This refers to the “cultural givens” like language, traditions, values, and philosophical perceptions in the ASEAN and in Japan. The “highly mono-ethnic tendency” in Japanese society when it interacts with the multi-ethnic societies of Southeast Asia is a given that will remain a challenge in the relationship that touches the political, economic, security, social, and individual as well as organizational interaction.

The asymmetric characteristics are strong in the economic spheres of society, in the wide gaps of living standards, the differences in political systems and democratic maturity, and such other aspects of human individual life and in the national life of the interacting nations.

C. ASEAN-JAPAN Relations: TOWARDS Metanationalism.

As the ASEAN-Japan relationship has evolved to new stages and planes of interactions, one of the challenges for both sides is how to give meaning to the partnership. No doubt it is a complex undertaking. The will and the ability to face the Metanation state challenges and take advantage of the opportunities is part of the interaction dynamics. The challenges entails the cultivation of a Metanation oriented value, philosophy and approach in the interface in both the ASEAN societies and Japanese society.

Finally, it is hoped that the research would arouse interest among ASEAN and Japanese policy makers, researchers, practitioners and institutions engaged in the study of the interface to pursue further search along the following suggestions:

1. Philosophical Widening: From narrow *nationalism* to *metanationalism*
values and philosophical rethinking in both ASEAN and Japan;
2. Institutional Enlargement: The improve and recondition present institutional infrastructures to meet and respond to Metanation state interface challenges and changes;
3. Institutionalization of Intercultural (*IBUNKA*) communication and management that will allow mutual enrichment of values and societies without losing the distinct cultural identity (*KUNIGARA*) which is the reason of being in international relations. SDM

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11. Interviews and Discussions:

Preliminary interviews were conducted with heads or in-charge of institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ASEAN-Japan Centre, Chambers of Commerce & Industry, JETRO, AOTS, Japan Foundation, ASEAN Japan Alumni Associations, academicians and professors and practitioners, incumbent and former diplomats, opinion makers, etc.) who are directly and indirectly involved in ASEAN-Japan affairs, both Japanese and ASEAN side experts on ASEAN-Japan relations.

Discussions and seminars have been conducted in joint undertakings with members of the ASEAN COUNCIL OF JAPAN ALUMNI (ASCOJA) and with the members of the Philippine Federation of Japan Alumni (PHILFEJA) regarding specific topics relevant to ASEAN and Japan. All insights gained from the interviews and exchanges of ideas have been very useful and shall be further confirmed for more detailed discussion in the study.

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It is my intention to refine the research with the hope of publishing it in the future.

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