

RECONSIDERING JAPANESE DIPLOMACY DURING THE COLD WAR:
THE CASE OF THE CAMBODIAN CONFLICT

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Andrea Pressello, *Japan and the Post-Vietnam Southeast Asia: Japanese Diplomacy and the Cambodian Conflict, 1978–1993*, New York: Routledge, 2018, 264 pages.

Based on thorough research of English and Japanese sources, Andrea Pressello's *Japan and the Post-Vietnam Southeast Asia: Japanese Diplomacy and the Cambodian Conflict, 1978–1993* provides a comprehensive account of Japan's role in shaping the post-Vietnam War order of Southeast Asia. Pressello mainly focuses on Japanese diplomacy regarding the Fukuda Doctrine (1977) and the Cambodian conflict (1978–1993). One of the book's greatest strengths is its wealth of primary sources, including declassified documents (mainly from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but American and Australian documentation as well), oral histories, memoirs, speeches, statements and other official documents. Notably, he interviewed most of the former foreign officials who played central roles in Japan's Southeast Asia diplomatic efforts during this period, including former ambassadors to Vietnam, a deputy foreign minister, director generals of the Asia Affairs Bureau, directors of the First Southeast Asia Division, and so on.

Since the 2000s, an enactment of the Information Disclosure Law and accelerated declassification of the diplomatic records of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have contributed to a rapidly growing historical scholarship based on Japan's declassified documents. These works have shed new light on the issues of Japanese diplomatic history which had been written in previous literature primarily based on American archives and secondary sources. Pressello's work is a welcome addition to this new body of scholarship. Most of these scholarly works which use Japanese primary sources are written in Japanese and their audience is quite limited, so the fact that this book is in English is particularly significant.

Pressello uses a historical approach to reconstruct and analyse Japan's vigorous diplomacy towards the region and the international circumstances during the period of détente and the end of the Cold War. Chapter One discusses the importance of Southeast Asia to Japan's foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter Two demonstrates Japan's gradual increase in active diplomacy towards Southeast Asia from the late 1960s through the 1970s in the context of the US' post-Vietnam War disengagement from the

region. It analyses the policymaking process of the Fukuda Doctrine, which emphasised Tokyo's willingness to promote relations between ASEAN and Indochina. Chapter Three explains Japan's tenacity as a bridge between the ASEAN nations and Vietnam, despite the outbreak of the Cambodian conflict and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Chapter Four deals with Japan's pursuit of a regional policy during the New Cold War and discusses Japan's twin-track diplomatic line. While officially endorsing Western criticism of Vietnam, Tokyo strove to maintain an active diplomatic channel with Hanoi. Chapter Five discusses Japan's diplomacy in Southeast Asia in 1983–1984 under the Nakasone Administration, and Chapter Six examines the effects of the relaxation of the Cold War to enhance Japan's efforts to achieve peace for the Cambodian conflict. Chapter Seven covers Japan's role in the final phase of the peace process in Cambodia beginning in the late 1980s.

Pressello's book significantly contributes to the historiography of Japan's diplomacy towards Southeast Asia in the 1970s through the 1990s. His most important finding arguably is that, even after the New Cold War emerged in the late 1970s, Japan continued to engage with Soviet-backed Vietnam to shrink the gap between ASEAN countries and Hanoi regarding the Cambodian conflict and ultimately to regain regional peace and stability. In contrast to the current argument that Japan only became involved in settling the Cambodian conflict when the peace process began during the late 1980s, Pressello demonstrates that Japan's peacemaker role for Cambodia and for stability in all of Southeast Asia actually began when the conflict broke out at the end of the 1970s.

This book also greatly helps readers understand the basic nature of Japan's diplomatic policy during the Cold War because Pressello covers the critical Cold War period, including *détente* between the US and the USSR, the emergence of the New Cold War, and the end of the Cold War, thereby suggesting the extent to which and how Tokyo's foreign policy was shaped by the Cold War's international environment. The continuity of Japan's foreign policy stance on Southeast Asia during the New Cold War period, which was closely examined, is striking. Japan's policy was based on Tokyo's consistent awareness of the importance of Vietnam to the realisation of the Southeast Asian architecture that Japan had envisioned in the Fukuda Doctrine. Throughout the period covered by the book, rather than isolating Vietnam (as Washington had demanded), Tokyo sought to increase the extent of its engagement with Hanoi (p. 134).

Although Pressello does not clearly characterise or define Japan's Asian diplomacy, the following conclusions emerge from his analysis. First, Japan consistently aimed to support nation building and modernisation in the developing countries of this part of Asia regardless of their political systems, because Japan recognised that nationalism and economic development, not the Cold War ideology promulgated by the US and the USSR, were the essential problems in the region. Second, the military conflict/secu-

rity tensions, such as the Indonesian-Malaysian confrontation, the Vietnam War, and the Cambodian conflict were the impediments to Japan's policies, thus Tokyo attempted to achieve peace by building bridges among the conflicting parties.

Another significant contribution of this book is that it gives readers a new perspective on the international history of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. As Hack and Wade point out, one critical issue to explore concerns the connections between global great power rivalry and regional problems and tensions of Southeast Asia¹. Recent scholarship has examined the extent of Vietnam's desire for independence from the USSR and China using newly declassified documents². Pressello demonstrates that Japan's interactions with Vietnam differed from those of the US, USSR and China, which contributes to a deepening of the discussion about the relationships between the main Cold War actors and the Southeast Asian states.

I found that Pressello's analysis could have gone further in some areas to address broader issues. First, his detailed analysis of Japan's diplomacy during the Cambodian peace process does not precisely assess Tokyo's role as peacemaker. The last section of Chapter Seven evaluates it from the perspective of Japan's expanding economic diplomacy to encompass political and security issues (p. 251). But the relative uniqueness and significance of Tokyo's role in the peace process compared with other actors such as Australia, France, and Indonesia, are not elucidated. Second, Pressello might have paid more attention to the diversity of viewpoints among the foreign officials of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He rightly points out that the decision-making on the Southeast Asian situation was mainly made by the First Southeast Asia Division (p. 122), but they may not have been able to completely ignore the diversity within the Asia Affairs Bureau or in other bureaus, such as the North America Affairs Bureau. For example, in the late 1970s, to what extent was the First Southeast Asia Division's perception of China shared throughout the Asia Affairs Bureau? No move was made within the Asia Affairs Bureau to delay preparations for the provision of ODA to China, even after the Chinese attacked Vietnam in early 1979³. This book could have broadened the foundation of discussion about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' policymaking process by analysing the internal policy coordination among divisions or bureaus.

These minor misgivings aside, *Japan and the Post-Vietnam Southeast Asia: Japanese Diplomacy and the Cambodian Conflict, 1978–1993* is clearly writ-

1. Karl Hack & Geoff Wade, 'The origins of the Southeast Asian Cold War,' *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 40, Issue 3, October 2009, p. 441.

2. See, for example, Vu Tuong, *Vietnam's Communist Revolution: The Power and Limits of Ideology*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

3. Sakutaro Tanino, *Ajia gaiko: Kaiko to kosatsu* (Asian diplomacy: Retrospect and Observation), Ryuji Hattori, Hikdekazu Wakatsuki, Amiko Nobori (eds.), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2016, p. 62.

ten, thoroughly researched, well-documented, and a valuable contribution to our understanding of Japan's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia and the international history of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. Although it presents a historical study, the work is timely in light of Japan's public support of Cambodia's controversial general election of July 2018 by providing more than 10,000 ballot boxes worth USD 7.5 million. In the current regional environment, where Tokyo's diplomatic actions are often interpreted as strategic manoeuvring to counter Chinese influence, Pressello's contribution is a welcome reminder that Japan sought peace for Southeast Asia as a region independent of global powers' influences, whether that refers to the US, China, or the USSR/Russia.