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**THE RISE OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUPERPOWER?
EVALUATING JAPANESE ENVIRONMENTAL
AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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ABSTRACT

Environmental aid is the cornerstone of Japan's initiative in the 1990s to become a regional and international environmental power. Formidable internal and external factors, however, impede effective environmental aid. Powerful Japanese economic ministries, such as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Finance, overwhelm environmentally oriented state bodies, such as the Environment Agency. This contributes to environmental aid that stresses technological solutions, environmental exports, and corporate interests. Bureaucratic disputes and power struggles undermine policies and contribute to inefficient management. Vague environmental guidelines and weak enforcement mechanisms compound problems. Japan also relies primarily on data and information from recipients to assess environmental impacts. In addition, environmental reviews often have unclear procedures and are poorly coordinated. Even the definition of environmental aid is vague, which has allowed Japan to increase the amount of environmental aid by simply reclassifying traditional projects, such as sewage and water systems. This has also contributed to concessional loans accounting for the bulk of environmental aid. Within Southeast Asia, corrupt officials, a stress on economic growth, and inefficient and ineffective managers further aggravate the problems with Japanese environmental aid. As a result, despite large amounts of environmental aid, this aid has only contributed to marginal improvements to the environments of Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the ability of Japanese environmental aid to foster goodwill or improve Japan's environmental image in Southeast Asia is constrained by negative perceptions of Japan within Southeast Asia, Japan's environmental, economic, and aid legacy, and inconsistent effects of actual environmental aid projects. These problems and constraints suggest that Japan's environmental aid is unlikely to provide an effective foundation for environmental leadership.

THE RISE OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUPERPOWER? EVALUATING JAPANESE ENVIRONMENTAL AID TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

Peter Dauvergne^{*}

Japan is now a global power in environmental aid.¹ Since 1991, Japan has been the world's largest aid donor. In FY1996 (1 April 1996 to 31 March 1997), Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) was nearly US\$10 billion. During that period around one-quarter of ODA loans were classified as environmental aid. This paper evaluates Japanese environmental ODA, as a tool to improve environmental management, as a tool to improve Japan's image in Southeast Asia, and as a foundation for environmental leadership. The amount of environmental aid has expanded considerably in the 1990s, contributing to additional funds for environmental research and technical assistance. Yet the effectiveness of this aid has been mixed, in part because of domestic constraints, and in part because of resistance within recipient countries. Within Japan, new environmental guidelines at the loan and aid agencies are vague, poorly integrated into decision making, and rely heavily on the honesty and data of potential recipients. Environmental aid itself is in part simply a reclassification of traditional aid, such as water and sewage projects, which in the past were considered infrastructure projects. Poor coordination and rivalries within the bureaucracy further undermine environmental aid. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) has hijacked part of this aid to support corporate technology exports. Meanwhile, the Environment Agency has little input while key units, such as the Forestry Agency, have shown little interest. Mismanagement, corruption, and indifference within Southeast Asia compound these internal constraints on effective environmental aid. As a result, Japan's environmental aid has been plagued by problems and

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has only contributed to incremental improvements in environmental conditions in Southeast Asia. This aid has also done little to foster goodwill and trust or alter Japan's image as an economic and environmental exploiter. This is partially because of the limited impact of much of Japan's environmental aid; and partially because of Japan's military, economic, ODA, and environmental legacy within Southeast Asia, which has left many Southeast Asian élites suspicious of the motives behind environmental aid.

The paper begins by sketching Japan's foreign aid from the 1950s to the late 1990s. The next section explains the organisation of Japanese aid. The third section analyses the factors that have impeded effective aid, especially the ability of aid and loan agencies to internalise environmental concerns. Building on this overview, the paper then examines Japan's environmental aid program and the environmental guidelines at the ODA and loan agencies. The paper then proceeds to analyse the effects of this aid on Japan's regional image. The conclusion reflects on the broader implications of the problems with environmental aid for Japan's drive to become a regional, and perhaps even a global, environmental superpower (defined as a world environmental leader, in terms of financing, human resources, technology, and ideas). It also considers the possible impacts of administrative reforms on Japan's environmental aid.

Evolution of Japanese ODA

Japanese aid began in the 1950s as bilateral reparation payments to countries occupied in World War II. Japan became a member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1960. As Japan's economy continued to surge in the 1960s, the United States began pressuring Japan to increase aid to the Southeast Asian region.² By the end of the 1960s, Japanese aid had begun to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam. At this time, Japan was also a major donor to Indonesia, providing one-fourth of aid from 1967 to 1970. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Japanese aid financed large infrastructure and energy projects, often directly or indirectly supporting Japanese exporters and investors and helping to maintain steady and substantial natural resource imports, especially from Southeast Asia. This aid also helped gain the confidence and respect of North America and Europe and reintegrate Japan

² Apparently, the United States even linked the return of Okinawa with an increase in ODA to Southeast Asia (Shiraishi 1997:180, footnote 21).

into the Asia-Pacific region after World War II. Over this period, the amount of ODA increased steadily, from US\$116 million in 1964 to US\$1.1 billion in 1976. In 1976, Japanese reparation payments ended. After this, the quantity of aid continued to grow quickly. It also began to focus more on strategic and political concerns, as part of a comprehensive security approach (Orr, Jr and Koppel 1993:2–3). By 1989, Japan had become the largest donor, distributing around US\$9 billion.

Japanese aid was guided by fairly pragmatic and often *ad hoc* concerns from the 1950s until the late 1980s. It had a reputation into the 1980s of being linked, even more so than other donors, to self-interest. This view was particularly strong among Asian political, business, and academic élites. Among donors, the reputation of Japanese aid over this time was also tarnished by long-term support for repressive regimes with poor human rights records—especially important trading partners like Indonesia, China, and the Philippines under President Ferdinand Marcos (Hook 1995:79).

Compared to other donors, Japanese tied aid, which requires recipients to buy goods and services from the donor, is now low. The Japanese government claimed, for example, that 95.8 per cent of new loans were totally untied in 1992 (Pharr 1994:171). Even the OECD estimates that only eleven per cent of bilateral aid was tied in 1993, far lower than France (40 per cent), Germany (36 per cent), the United Kingdom (35 per cent), and the United States (29 per cent) (summarised in Fujisaki, et al. 1996/97:522). Yet, even though little Japanese aid is now officially tied, Japanese companies apparently still press recipients to request aid projects that support Japanese business interests. Moreover, as David Arase argues, tied aid ‘alone is not a reliable indicator of whether policy is strongly determined by commercial and economic interests’. Far more important in the case of Japan is the ‘structural inclusion of private sector actors in policy making and implementing structures’. As a result, even though Japanese ODA has shifted since the mid-1980s away from supporting export promotion and resource development and more toward Japanese investment in manufacturing, it still ‘continues to be closely coordinated with the commercial agendas of private sector actors and with the strategic economic agendas of the economic ministries’ (Arase 1994:171–3; also see, Arase 1995). In this context, a high proportion of Japanese aid has supported economic infrastructure and services, especially transportation and energy projects. In the 1980s, economic infrastructure and services accounted for about 40 per cent of ODA, well over the DAC average (summarised in Fujisaki

et al. 1996/7:522). In 1995, around 45 per cent of aid supported economic infrastructure projects (Johnstone 1997:9).

Japan has allowed recipients more control over ODA projects than most other donors. This partly arises because potential recipients must request assistance. It is also partly a result of a high loan-to-grant ratio. In 1988, for example, Japanese concessional loans to Indonesia reached US\$842 million, while total grants were only US\$143 million. In the Philippines, loans were US\$404 million; grants US\$131 million (Hook 1995:86). In 1995, 46.6 per cent of Japanese ODA was distributed as grants. In that year, the average for the members of the DAC was over 75 per cent (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1997:24).

The bulk of Japanese aid has been distributed in Asia, a logical extension of the commercial and strategic importance of this area for Japan. Southeast Asia has been especially important. In the 1980s, for example, Southeast Asia received 43.9 per cent of Japanese ODA. In recent years, Japan's aid has started to take a more global approach. Yet even in 1995, 54 per cent of total Japanese aid still went to Asia; and one-quarter of total bilateral aid went to Southeast Asia. In that year, China was the largest recipient of Japanese aid (US\$1380 million), followed by Indonesia (US\$892 million), Thailand (US\$667 million), India (US\$506 million), and the Philippines (US\$416 million) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1997:25–6).

Starting in the mid-1980s, Japan began to develop a more assertive, confident, and coherent aid philosophy. Officials and government documents began to stress the need to foster self-reliance among recipients and provide long-term incentives to move beyond aid. This provides a justification for the emphasis on concessional loans (although in recent years Japan has nevertheless increased the total amount of grants and humanitarian aid). Sone Kenko, a Japanese government Economic Officer, argues

We believe aid quality has more than one meaning. In our view, lending money enforces some discipline on the recipients and encourages them to use the resources more productively than if we just gave them away (quoted in Hook 1995:80).

These new 'philosophical' principles also provide a justification for a request-based aid system as well as support for large-scale infrastructural projects—such as transportation, communication, and energy projects—which are seen as essential to promote and accelerate industrialisation. The emphasis on infrastructure and energy projects in turn bolsters the argument that

Japanese corporations, which have extensive experience in these areas, are logical partners in aid projects.

Japan further clarified its aid philosophy in 1991. The government announced that future aid decisions would consider military spending, nuclear weapons development, the strength of democratic practices, the extent of market reforms, and human rights. This primarily affected authoritarian regimes with poor human rights records. For example, Japan suspended aid to Haiti after the October 1991 coup. Although sometimes for only a short time, Japan also suspended aid to Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, Guatemala, and Sierra Leone following human rights abuses. In addition, Japanese aid representatives have raised human rights abuses in East Timor during discussions with Indonesian officials (Pharr 1994:168–9). In 1992, an ODA Charter refined these principles further, adding in particular environmental concerns. The first Principle of Japan's ODA Charter states that 'environmental conservation and development should be pursued in tandem' (OECD 1993a:18).

Since the early 1990s, Japan has also promoted South–South cooperation, supplying financial and technical assistance to facilitate ties between more advanced developing countries in East Asia and less developed countries in places like Africa. Owada Hisashi, the Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations, argues that:

We have had great achievements in drafting and spreading the concept of South–South cooperation since 1993. Now we will get into the second stage of promoting the implementation of such cooperation (quoted in Wada 1997).

Japanese officials have also argued in recent years that, as a late developer and an Asian country, Japan has a particularly important role in the regional aid network, providing a bridge between Asia's developing states and richer Western ones. Japan has advocated that aid is a global duty of developed countries, partly for humanitarian reasons and partly to enhance peace and security. As part of the moves to develop a more coherent and assertive aid program in the 1990s, Japan has also tried to respond to international and domestic critics. Japan is now, for example, more receptive to coordinating aid projects with other bilateral and multilateral donors. More support is also provided for nongovernmental organisations. In FY1995, Japan allocated ¥4.5 billion in grants for grass-roots organisations, up 50 per cent from the previous year, although this still represents a relatively small amount of total ODA, and is far less than other donors.³ While the ODA Charter and more coherent aid

³ Yasutomo (1995:27–30) outlines Japan's recent aid philosophy.

principles have strengthened the intellectual base of Japanese aid, serious problems remain with the administration of aid.

Organisation of aid

By FY1995, total Japanese ODA had reached US\$14.5 billion, making Japan by far the largest donor. In the next fiscal year this fell to US\$9.7 billion, largely due to the depreciation of the yen, cuts to the aid budget, and the suspension of aid to China. It was still far higher, however, than any other bilateral donor, although it was only 0.21 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, the lowest ratio in two decades. The Japanese ODA budget will likely continue to fall over the next few years. In mid-1997, the Hashimoto government announced a ten per cent cut in the next budget. Nevertheless, the quantity of aid remains impressive and Japan will likely continue as the world's largest donor for some time.

Over a dozen government bodies are responsible for administering ODA. The most important ministries and agencies are the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Economic Planning Agency. The two implementing organisations are the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The OECF provides concessional loans. It is officially under the Economic Planning Agency, although the Ministry of Finance has considerable influence. In FY1995, the OECF made loan commitments of about ¥1.1 trillion. Over 80 per cent went to Asia (15.6 per cent to Indonesia; 13.6 to the Philippines; and 11.7 per cent to Vietnam). As in the past, most of these loans financed infrastructure and energy projects. Only 3.2 per cent financed, for example, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries projects. JICA administers grants and technical assistance.⁴ JICA is mainly under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although any ministry or agency steering funds through JICA can have considerable influence. The OECF and JICA also lend funds to Japanese companies to promote direct investment in the South, generally at low interest rates. JICA provides these loans to companies that do not qualify for OECF or EXIM Bank loans. Both OECF and JICA loans are usually part of packages of overseas economic assistance and private capital (JICA n.d.; JICA 1991).

⁴ For current information on JICA and the OECF, see <http://www.jica.go.jp> and <http://www.oecf.go.jp>.

The Export–Import (EXIM) Bank of Japan is not officially part of Japan’s ODA. The distinction between OECF and EXIM Bank loans, however, is in some respects simply definitional. A small change in the DAC definition could shift OECF ‘aid’ to EXIM Bank ‘loans’. It is therefore reasonable to consider the EXIM Bank in a discussion of Japanese aid. The EXIM Bank lends money to Japanese companies that do not qualify for ODA loans. The Bank also provides export, import, and investment credits to foreign governments and corporations. A key priority of the Bank is the ‘development and import into Japan of natural resources’ (EXIM 1994:1). The Ministry of Finance has official control, although MITI also plays a prominent role. As of March 1996, cumulative commitments of the EXIM Bank had reached ¥3 trillion (Johnstone 1997:3).

Constraints on effective aid

A fragmented aid administration impedes efforts to develop an effective aid program.⁵ Administrative struggles create unnecessary delays, and foster *ad hoc* and inconsistent decisions. MITI often supports business interests, while Finance stresses fiscal management, and Foreign Affairs advocates particular foreign policy goals. Even JICA and the OECF do not cooperate well. One OECF official complained that: ‘We get better cooperation with USAID [United States Agency for International Development] than we do with JICA’ (quoted in Orr, Jr 1990:50).

The huge volume of Japanese aid presents further difficulties. Measured in US dollars, the amount of Japanese ODA increased markedly with the appreciation of the yen after the 1985 Plaza Accord. In the 1980s and first half of the 1990s, Japan also steadily increased the aid budget. Staff hiring did not reflect these increases and there are now insufficient staff to handle aid volumes. Around 1100 people work at JICA and just over 300 at the OECF. Including staff from other ministries and agencies the total ODA administration is about 1900, far lower than, for example, the United States and Germany which both have nearly 4000 foreign aid staff (Fujisaki et al. 1996/7:532–3). Japan’s ODA staff are now overworked and are responsible for huge aid budgets. Their ability to handle complex problems, such as environmental assessments, is further hindered by frequent rotations, language

⁵ During interviews in 1994, numerous officials at the OECF and JICA mentioned their frustration with administrative procedures. For a critique of Japan’s aid administration, see Rix (1993:chapter three).

barriers, and few specialists. Many staff also have minimal field experience. Only about five per cent of JICA staff live overseas, compared to around 50 per cent of USAID staff (Forrest 1991:29). Package deals that involve aid and private capital also undercut effective environmental management by obscuring ties between Japanese companies and aid projects, thereby undermining monitoring and accountability. According to Richard Forrest,

...even if the ODA portion is covered by environmental or other restrictions, the auxiliary funding and secondary projects that often follow are outside the scope of environmental assessments, and have no policies to guide or regulate them (1991:27).⁶

Japan's support for infrastructure and energy projects also increases the difficulties of effective environmental management. By their very nature, dams, roads, and large-scale development schemes create significant environmental change. The high loan-to-grant ratio also thwarts effective environmental management. Compared to grant recipients, it is far harder to require borrowers to follow environmental guidelines. Moreover, considering that recipients frequently turn to unsustainable resource extraction to service foreign debts, and considering that the poorest countries often suffer from the greatest environmental degradation, it is questionable whether any loan should be considered as 'environmental aid'. Other internal factors also impede effective environmental management of aid projects. Project evaluations are often inadequate. Japanese ODA guidelines assert that aid decisions will consider the environmental record of potential recipients. But Japanese aid agencies rely largely on reports from these recipients, rather than on Japanese or independent studies. Technology transfers are also often inappropriate—a problem that is aggravated as recipients request, and at times insist, on the most advanced technology.⁷ Compared to other donors, Japan also has few links with nongovernmental groups, reducing the scope for alternative approaches and community involvement in projects.

Obstacles to effective aid do not, of course, only arise from within Japan. Corruption, incompetence, and indifference within developing countries are often crucial. Southeast Asian élites are often far more interested in promoting economic growth than in improving environmental conditions. Recipient actions are particularly important for Japanese aid because of the request-based system and the large percentage of concessional loans, which allow less direct

⁶ Also see Forrest (1989).

⁷ Numerous officials and analysts pointed to this problem during interviews in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia in 1994.

Japanese participation. As part of a campaign to promote 'Good Governance' in developing countries, Japan recently introduced a new aid contract clause to try and reduce the amount of grant aid lost to corruption. If a recipient country violates the 'corruption' clause, they must repay the funds or Japan will cancel the contract (*Nikkei Shimbun* 1997).⁸ It is too early, however, to assess the impact of this new clause.

In sum, formidable forces undermine effective Japanese aid projects, especially ones concerned with environmental issues. Of course, to some extent all donors face similar problems, although the fragmented administration of Japanese aid, the volume of aid, the emphasis on concessional loans and infrastructure projects, and the small and relatively inexperienced staff leave Japan with particularly acute problems. These problems are magnified by specific limitations with environmental aid and environmental management at the OECF, the EXIM Bank, and to a lesser extent, JICA.

Environmental aid: background

Multilateral and bilateral donors have not agreed on a definition of environmental assistance. Even within Japan definitions vary. The Japanese Foreign Ministry defines it as 'assistance conducive to the resolution of environmental problems' including

...the improvement of the living environment, forestry conservation and afforestation, disaster reduction, pollution control, the conservation of the natural environment (including the conservation of biological diversity) and the protection of the ozone layer (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1994:175).

JICA simply lists environmental aid projects as:

...pollution control, improving living environment (water supplies, sewage and waste management), forest conservation/afforestation, conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity, disaster prevention, capacity development and improvement for solving environmental problems, energy conservation, protection of natural resources (agriculture, fishery and soil), and countermeasures against desertification (JICA 1996:2).

In 1989, Japan announced a significant increase in environmental aid funds, promising ¥300 billion over the next three years. This sum was surpassed by over ¥100 billion. At the London Summit in 1991 and the Earth Summit in 1992, Japan announced that environmental aid priorities would

⁸ For a study of the impact of recipients on Japanese aid, see Potter (1996).

include forest conservation and reforestation, energy conservation and technology, pollution control, wildlife and soil conservation, water and atmosphere preservation, and strengthening environmental capacity in developing countries. In 1992, Japanese environmental assistance reached US\$2.8 billion, about 17 per cent of total aid (Evans 1994:40). At the Earth Summit in 1992, Japan announced a ¥900 million to ¥1 trillion target for environmental aid over the next five years. Japan reached this target a year early, having distributed ¥80 billion in environmental aid by FY1995. These figures, however, are somewhat misleading. Environmental aid partially reflects a reclassification of traditional projects to environmental ones (Potter 1994:206).⁹ Much of this aid supports environmental management rather than environmental protection. Even dams are considered environmental projects, as part of flood and disaster prevention. From FY1989 to FY1992, much of this aid funded urban water and sewage projects; and concessional loans comprised over 70 per cent (do Rosario 1992:39; Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1994:178; Murdo 1994:2).

Japanese environmental aid has contributed to some important programs and initiatives. Japanese grant aid has funded conservation centres in Indonesia, Thailand, and China. JICA has transferred important environmental technologies, including ones to monitor and control pollution and conserve energy. Environmental experts from JICA have gone abroad; and numerous people from developing countries have visited Japan for environmental training. JICA has also conducted studies to identify environmental problems in countries that may not have the experience, expertise, or political will to request environmental aid (such as in China, Macedonia, and Zimbabwe in 1995). In addition, JICA has assisted recipients with environmental plans and impact assessments. Through a bilateral cooperation framework with the United States, Japan has also supported natural resource conservation, including biodiversity projects in Indonesia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1997:58; JICA 1997:4). Yet despite these contributions, bureaucratic struggles, and vague, nonbinding environmental guidelines at the OECF, EXIM Bank, and JICA have undermined the overall effectiveness of Japanese environmental aid.

⁹ And interview, Friends of the Earth, Tokyo, 25 May 1994.

Bureaucratic politics of environmental aid

As the amount of environmental aid grew in the 1990s, various ministries and agencies jockeyed for control. Foreign Affairs has supported some of the environmental initiatives of international organisations. Most of their input, however, has been through JICA. MITI now has a major role in international environmental affairs. Through the Environmental Policy Division, MITI has stressed technological solutions and corporate technology exports to improve global environmental management, especially energy conservation.¹⁰ Under MITI's guidance, the International Centre For Environmental Technology Transfer (ICETT) was created in 1991 to transfer Japanese pollution technology to developing countries. MITI also announced a Green Aid Plan in the same year (about 20 per cent is considered ODA). In FY1992, this Plan supplied approximately ¥2.7 billion to developing countries, mostly for technological support for water and air pollution, waste treatment and recycling, and energy conservation. MITI also supports the Research Institute of Innovative Technology for the Earth (RITE). This institute, built in 1993, involves industry, academic, and government researchers. It focuses on developing environmental technologies, especially to conserve energy and address global warming (based on International Center For Environmental Technology Transfer 1993; MITI 1994; Research Institute of Innovative Technology for the Earth 1992). MITI, along with the Agency of Industrial Science and Technology, also folded together three existing projects to create the New Sunshine Program 'to develop innovative technology to create sustainable growth while solving energy and environmental issues' (MITI 1993:4).

The Environment Agency plays a minor role in environmental aid. It is also a relatively weak bureaucratic actor, especially compared to MITI, Foreign Affairs, and Finance. In 1990, it did, however, establish a Global Environment division. This division participates in some JICA projects.¹¹ It also attempts to *encourage* Japanese companies to consider overseas environmental effects.¹² Some signs suggest that the influence of the Environment Agency may be increasing, although this is inconsistent and constrained by a small budget and

¹⁰ Interview, MITI official, Environmental Policy Division, Tokyo, 27 April 1994.

¹¹ In mid-1995, the Environment Agency was involved in seven technical cooperation aid projects (Fujisaki et al. 1996/7:527).

¹² Interview, Office of Overseas Environmental Cooperation, Environment Agency, Tokyo, 5 April 1994.

staff. Some Environment Agency officials do claim, however, that informal input has increased since the early 1990s.¹³

Aid agencies and environmental guidelines

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the OECF, JICA, and the EXIM Bank developed environmental departments and guidelines. In 1989, the OECF announced guidelines to encourage potential recipients to request environmentally sound loans. These were also designed to enable the OECF to evaluate applications.¹⁴ In addition, the OECF appointed an environmental adviser and senior environmental manager, and created an Environment Committee (Rix 1993:125). In 1993, the OECF created the Environment and Social Development Division. As part of tougher environmental standards, the OECF also sent teams to evaluate possible requests. Because these teams encouraged potential borrowers to integrate environmental concerns, according to one official, in the first half of the 1990s, the OECF rarely rejected loan applications on environmental grounds.¹⁵ OECF commitments for environmental projects have increased steadily since the early 1990s. In FY1991, the OECF committed ¥6.2 billion for thirteen environmental projects (8.4 per cent of total commitments). By FY1995, this had increased to ¥18.6 billion for 25 environmental projects (20 per cent of total commitments) (OECF 1996:2). In FY1996, the OECF agreed to lend ¥18.9 billion for 32 environmental projects (especially for water and sewage), accounting for about 25.1 per cent of total OECF commitments (Uchida n.d.:13–15).

In 1995, the OECF revised their environmental guidelines. In that year the OECF also established a program to provide favourable conditions and terms for environmental projects, including interest rates that are 0.2 per cent lower than normal OECF loan rates. The new guidelines require potential borrowers to submit an environmental impact assessment for large-scale development projects. They also provide support for these assessments. They include stronger terms for resettlement and conservation projects. And they provide an

¹³ Various interviews, Global Environment Department, Environment Agency, Tokyo, 9 June 1994.

¹⁴ Interview, OECF Environment and Social Development Division, Tokyo, 11 April 1994. Also see OECF (1989), and OECF (1993b).

¹⁵ Interview, OECF official, Tokyo, 11 April 1994. For a list of typical OECF environmental loans, see OECF (1997).

environmental checklist for potential borrowers. To provide time to meet these new requirements, these guidelines only apply to loans requested after 1 August 1997. The OECF is using them to evaluate loan requests, although they still rely on materials supplied by potential recipients to assess these requests. Furthermore, as the guidelines note: 'Responsibility with regard to environmental consideration of a project rests ultimately with the recipient country' (OECF 1995:1).

The EXIM Bank developed environmental guidelines in 1989, revising these in 1991. These guidelines are confidential. The Environmental Affairs Section is responsible for reviewing loans with potential environmental implications. In theory, the EXIM Bank can reject loan applications for environmental reasons. However, this seems to rarely, if ever, occur.¹⁶ For example, from April 1993 to April 1994, the Environmental Affairs Section did not reject any applications, although apparently some conditions were set. In 1994, a Bank official also claimed that more loans were being made to promote better environmental management.¹⁷ Without access to confidential Bank records, however, it is impossible to verify these claims or definitively evaluate the effectiveness of environmental guidelines.

OECF and EXIM Bank environmental guidelines and sections appear designed primarily to appease critics. More concrete changes have occurred at JICA. JICA established an Environment Section of the Planning Department in 1989. The next year JICA announced environmental guidelines for development projects. In 1993, the Environment Section was elevated to a division and expanded to include environment, women in development, and global affairs. Since the late 1980s, JICA has worked to integrate environmental factors into grants and technical assistance. This has contributed, for example, to a greater stress on conserving old-growth tropical forests and rehabilitating secondary forests.¹⁸ In 1993, JICA established an environmental database. JICA now has twenty environmental experts, although only five are officially registered as 'environmental specialists'. In addition, JICA provides intensive environmental training courses. JICA has also added more environmental experts to development study teams (even when the

¹⁶ One EXIM Bank official claimed that loans are sometimes informally rejected to allow the applicant to withdraw and save face. Interview, senior official, Environment Section, EXIM Bank, Tokyo, 11 April 1994.

¹⁷ Interview, senior official, Environment Section, EXIM Bank, Tokyo, 11 April 1994.

¹⁸ Interview, senior JICA official, Tokyo, 12 April 1994.

project is not directly connected to an environmental issue). The number of development study teams with an environmental specialist increased from 65 in 1993 to 92 just two years later (JICA 1997:5–7). Like the OECF, JICA has also increased the amount of funds for environmental protection. In 1985, JICA allocated ¥4.4 billion to the environmental sector. In 1988, this had increased to ¥8.1 billion. By 1995, it had reached ¥22 billion, and JICA plans to increase this even further.

Despite these admirable changes, however, JICA's environmental record in the 1990s is far from exemplary. Environmental Impact Assessments are still frequently inadequate. Generally, the environment division, together with a regional division of the Planning Department, assess whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is needed. When necessary, one of JICA's sectoral departments then outlines the parameters of the assessment. Private consultants and JICA officials (often with little environmental training) generally conduct the assessment. Environmental guidelines are also often optional and nonbinding, while project details usually remain confidential. As well, there is generally no post-project environmental evaluation. Poor coordination and cooperation among aid agencies and relevant ministries and agencies further undermine JICA's environmental projects. Environmental guidelines and reviews are often poorly coordinated or inconsistent; as a result, environmental standards can shift as a project develops (Potter 1994:208).

In short, Japan's environmental aid program and environmental guidelines within the aid agencies have significant problems. Environmental aid is in part just a reclassification of traditional projects. Bureaucratic overlaps and struggles have distorted policies and implementation. Vague and nonbinding guidelines often allow aid agencies to treat environmental concerns in a superficial way, especially at the OECF and the EXIM Bank. At JICA some important changes have occurred, although even here environmental concerns are still frequently mishandled. Combined with the general problems with Japanese aid outlined earlier, as a result, significant setbacks and frequent failures have plagued Japanese environmental aid, and overall this aid has only contributed to minor improvements in environmental conditions in Southeast Asia. In some cases it has even exacerbated problems. It has supported inappropriate technology transfers and Japanese corporate interests. And in the case of environmental loans (which comprise the bulk of environmental aid), despite the OECF program to provide more favourable terms, these will eventually increase foreign debt and provide further incentives for

unsustainable resource extraction.¹⁹ In part because of these limited results, in part because of general problems with Japanese aid, and in part because of Japan's legacy in Southeast Asia, Japanese environmental aid is also doing little to build trust, goodwill, appreciation, and confidence with the governments of Southeast Asia.

Environmental aid and Japan's image in Southeast Asia

An image is a very broad concept; an image that transcends a region is even broader. It reflects a mixture of facts, misunderstandings, confusion, prejudice, and stereotypes. There are, moreover, always multiple images that vary depending on the context, time, and area. Collapsing complex and diverse views into the simple category of 'Japan's regional image in Southeast Asia' undeniably masks diverse experiences, attitudes, and fluid perceptions. It also inevitably reifies a complex set of often contradictory images and meanings. But the concept of an image also allows for an understanding of a broad set of attitudes and perceptions that consciously or unconsciously shape negotiations, reactions, and state relations (see Botchway 1989; Stronach 1995; Fry 1997).

Southeast Asians have generally perceived Japan as an adept economic manager, although this has changed somewhat with Japan's economic setbacks in the 1990s. Several countries have tried to imitate Japan's economic model, including Singapore which began a campaign in 1978 to 'Learn From Japan' and Malaysia which announced a 'Look East' campaign in 1982.²⁰ Southeast Asian leaders, officials, and corporate executives have also all sought Japanese investment, technology transfers, and aid. Yet at the same time many elites strongly resist perceiving Japan in a positive light. Positive images of economic competence and ingenuity are mixed with suspicion and distrust of Japan's political and strategic motives and goals. Japan's campaign to establish a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere left deep scars on Japan-Southeast Asia relations after World War II. Even officials born after the war still grew

¹⁹ The overall impact of Japan's environmental aid is difficult to assess precisely, in part because it is exceedingly difficult to obtain information about these highly sensitive projects. Moreover, the effects and implementation of ODA vary to some extent across projects, sectors, and areas. See Söderberg (1996). In such a short paper, it is not possible to analyse these variations across Southeast Asia. The few detailed studies that exist, however, indicate consistent and significant problems. For Thailand, see Potter 1994:211–15. For the impact on the forest sectors of the Philippines, East Malaysia, and Indonesia, see Dauvergne (1997).

²⁰ For a discussion of Japan's impact on Malaysian development, see Jomo (1994).

up hearing stories of Japanese atrocities.²¹ Japan's rapid economic recovery after the war also contributed to resentment among the post-war generation as Japan apparently prospered, in part by exploiting Southeast Asia's natural resources. Although Japan has tried to cultivate more positive attitudes among Southeast Asian élites through cultural, technical, and educational exchanges, these efforts have had only minor effects (Wong 1991:306).²² These efforts have also left little sense that Japan is generous or supportive. As Anny Wong notes,

...historical memories of Japanese hostility, notorious trade practices, and traditional aloofness from regional interests have sustained Japan's negative image as a self-centred economic animal (Wong 1991:313).

Sato Masaru argues that:

Asian neighbors need Tokyo as a source of low-interest loans and high-technology as well as being a potentially big market for their products. But memories of Japan's war-time rule and environmentally unfriendly behavior of Corporate Japan have deterred governments from hailing Japan as a benign big brother (Sato 1993).

These perceptions have contributed to an overall image among Southeast Asians of Japan as an environmental predator—that is, an image of Japan as systematically exploiting Southeast Asian resources to fuel economic growth at home, often leaving behind severe environmental degradation.

Japan's image as an eco-predator partly reflects Japan's actual impact on Southeast Asia. With a population over 125 million, few natural resources, and large industries, Japan has relied heavily on natural resource imports to fuel rapid economic growth. Japan imports over 90 per cent of its mineral and primary energy needs (such as oil, natural gas, and coal). At the height of the log export booms in the Philippines (1964–73), Sabah Malaysia (1972–87), and Indonesia (1970–80), Japan imported over half of the total combined log production of these places. Japan now accounts for around 50 per cent of log exports from Sarawak Malaysia, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.

²¹ Of course, perceptions of Japan are not uniform across Asia. As T.J. Pempel notes, 'Memories of wartime Japanese atrocities remain relatively strong in China, Korea, Singapore, and the Philippines, for example. Such memories are far less vivid or relevant in Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, or even Malaysia, and are hardly a factor in India and the rest of South Asia' (Pempel 1997:75).

²² To some extent Japan's image has improved. According to Lee Poh-ping, since the end of World War II Japan has 'taken efforts to improve its image, so that the perception of Japanese as "*samurai* in business suits" is weaker' (Lee 1994:131).

Japan is also the world's largest tropical plywood importer, most of which comes from Indonesia and Malaysia. Much of this wood has been used as panels to mould concrete (*kon-pane*), which has been commonly discarded after two or three uses. Japan is also the world's largest consumer of marine products, accounting for about fifteen per cent of the global fish catch. Again, much of this comes from Southeast Asia. About 90 per cent of Japan's shrimps and prawns are, for example, from this region. After the United States, Japan is the second largest consumer of wildlife products, and a major importer of endangered species (again, particularly from Southeast Asia). Japan has a poor record for supporting measures to conserve biodiversity. Environmentalists have strongly criticised Japan for whaling and dumping hazardous waste. And Japan has exported pollution as companies relocated factories, especially to Southeast Asia, in part to take advantage of lower environmental standards (Cameron 1996:70–1, 78, 84).

So far, Japanese environmental aid appears to have had little influence on Japan's environmental image in the region. In part this is occurring because Japanese aid projects are simply not visible to the people in recipient countries (Kyodo 1995). More important, however, is Japan's legacy and image as an economic and environmental exploiter, limiting the extent that Japanese environmental aid is seen as altruistic and supportive. This is compounded by the mercantilist past of Japanese aid, the perceived links between US interests and Japan's aid distribution, the perception that Japanese aid is a tool for economic expansion within Asia, and the limited concrete benefits of this aid for improving environmental conditions in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion: a global environmental superpower?

In the early 1990s, Japanese policy makers began to discuss the possibility of Japan becoming a major international and regional environmental power.²³ A 1995 editorial in the *Nikkei Weekly* called for Japan 'to take up the sword of leadership...to preserve and protect the global environment' (*Nikkei Weekly* 1995:6). Some scholars are optimistic about Japan's leadership in this area. Rowland Maddock predicts 'that by 2010 Japan will indeed have assumed the mantle of environmental leader' (Maddock 1994:46).²⁴ Environmental aid is a cornerstone of this initiative. The findings in this paper, however, suggest that

²³ On Japan's changing global role, see Lincoln (1993), Unger and Blackburn (1993), Steven (1996), and Drifte (1996).

²⁴ For an overview of recent environmental initiatives in Japan, see Schreurs (1997).

Japan's ambitious moves to become a global, or even a regional, environmental leader will face formidable obstacles. Various factors impede effective environmental aid. The strength of economic interests, such as MITI and Finance, compared to environmentally oriented groups, such as the Environment Agency, contributes to an emphasis on technological solutions, environmental exports, and corporate interests. Bureaucratic factionalism also distorts policies and fosters inefficient management. Current administrative reform proposals in Japan could help. In 1999, the EXIM Bank of Japan will merge with the OECF and will be placed under the control of the Economic Planning Agency. There are also proposals to make the Environment Agency a Ministry, or perhaps merge the Environment Agency with the Ministry of Education or the Science and Technology Agency.

These reforms may reduce some administrative overlap and inefficiencies; but they are unlikely to change aid fundamentally. The EXIM Bank-OECF merger has no clear vision or administrative rationale, and appears to be primarily a political compromise (*Asahi Shimbun* 1995a:3). It also does not appear to involve a change in the functions of the OECF and the EXIM Bank, although it may give Japanese aid an even greater commercial focus (*Asahi Shimbun* 1995b). The ultimate outcome for the Environment Agency is still unclear, although all of the proposals involve merging historically weak bureaucratic agencies (Shioya 1997:10). A Ministry of the Environment is therefore unlikely to have significantly greater powers, especially compared to MITI, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance. Moreover, other factors will continue to impede effective environmental aid. Concessional loans form the core of environmental aid. Yet considering the links between unsustainable resource exports and debt servicing, and considering that the poorest countries tend to have the most severe environmental problems, labelling any loan as 'environmental aid' is highly questionable. Environmental guidelines are vague and contain no effective enforcement mechanisms. Environmental evaluations rely largely on data and information from recipients. Environmental reviews are badly coordinated and lack transparent procedures. The definition of environmental aid is also unclear, and much of this aid is merely a reclassification of traditional projects, such as sewage and water systems. Factors within Southeast Asia compound the difficulties of effective environmental aid. Many environmental aid projects are managed inefficiently and ineffectively. Corrupt Southeast Asian officials often aggravate these problems. And finally, Southeast Asian perceptions and stereotypes, Japan's environmental and economic legacy, the history of Japanese ODA, and the peripheral and inconsistent effects of environmental

aid projects limit the power of environmental aid to generate trust, respect, confidence, and gratitude. All of these problems and constraints suggest that despite the substantial sums involved, Japan's environmental aid is unlikely to provide a solid foundation for either regional or global environmental leadership and is even less likely to recast Japan's image as eco-friendly.

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