

Northeast Asia Regional Program



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Responsible for researching and advancing policy-making regarding economic growth in Southeast Asia and specifically countries represented by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Yoshifumi Fukunanaga focuses on developing policies that strengthen and accelerate economic integration between East Asia and the Americas. On his fellowship, Mr. Fukunaga explored U.S. perspectives on East Asian economic integration; the benefits multinational corporations expect to gain from this integration; and leadership, particularly with regard to managing the challenges faced by new institutions.

To discuss ASEAN's economic integration and the many issues at stake, Mr. Fukunaga met with a range of individuals and institutions over the course of his program, including Southeast Asia specialists, China specialists and general Asian specialists in the fields of economics, law, and political science. He had meetings at universities, think tanks, corporations, and industrial associations. He encountered differing opinions as to the reasons why the U.S. has an interest in participating in the Asia Summit, but what did not vary was agreement on the importance of Southeast Asia to the U.S. As Fukunaga notes, America's "foreign direct investments (FDIs) in Southeast Asia are three times bigger than those in China, on stock basis." And, a very real challenge ASEAN must confront, particularly in challenging economic times, is the perception that foreign trade translates to fewer jobs.

The notion of leadership was not much more than an abstract concept to Mr. Fukunaga prior to his arrival to Philadelphia for the start of the fellowship. However, he was pleased to find that a keen interest in the topic emerged during the Opening Seminar of the program. Attendance at the World Business Forum provided numerous examples of leadership success stories from people with a variety of leadership styles. Mr. Fukunaga found inspiring examples of leadership from some of the corporate leaders he encountered during his fellowship, as well from other NARP Fellows. He particularly enjoyed an in-depth discussion on the topic as it relates to young organizations with USA Fellow Bob Halperin, Executive Director of MIT's Center for Collective Intelligence.

While Mr. Fukunaga enjoyed the opportunity to meet with some of the top scholars in the world on the topics of Southeast Asian economic integration and international trade, he also valued the opportunity to have an entirely new and different experience. In this regard, his visit to Oklahoma City, hosted by USA Agricultural Fellow Hope Pjesky, was particularly memorable. The visit included key discussions with state government, farmers and trade organizations to gather insight into agricultural concerns that will play an important role in future ASEAN discussions. Mr. Fukunaga's time in Oklahoma also included exposure to important cultural events, such as the all-important Baylor-Oklahoma State football game and a visit to a middle school.

Mr. Fukunaga will remain in contact with a number of people with whom he met for further discussion and possible collaboration on issues relating to ASEAN, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies, New York University, Stanford University, and the US-ASEAN Business Council. As a direct result of the leadership lessons learned on his program, he will take an active role supporting key players in the development of his organization's institutional strategy, especially in the areas of communication, media and external relations. He plans to write several articles on his fellowship findings. On a personal level, Mr. Fukunaga plans to spend more time getting to know other Asian countries. He states, "In addition to the conversations with American people, the value of NARP is in mutual communications among Northeast Asian fellows, which have an immense potential for trust-building in the region for the peace and win-win business environment in the region."

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