

## REMEMBERING TADASHI YAMAMOTO: He was 'Asia's Jean Monnet'

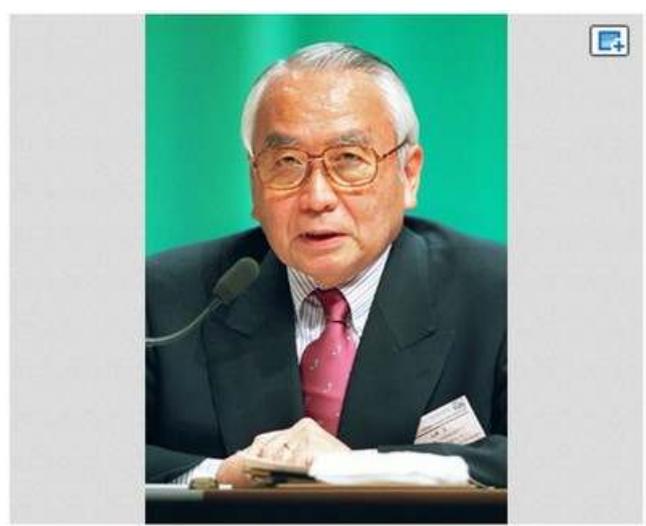
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By YOICHI FUNABASHI/ Special to The Asahi Shimbun

Tadashi Yamamoto was a truly international individual who personified how much a private-sector person in Japan could accomplish through deep dialogue with the world, and his initiatives for joint efforts toward a common vision.

He was involved in a long list of endeavors, such as the Shimoda Conference, a forum for policy dialogue between Japanese and U.S. leaders, the U.S.-Japan Parliamentary Exchange Program, the Trilateral Commission, the Korea-Japan Forum, the ASEAN-Japan Forum, a cooperative project involving Japan, the United States and China, and the Global Health and Human Security Program.



Tadashi Yamamoto (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

From an independent position and perspective in the private sector, he undertook international exchange with leaders and other influential people abroad while seeking out the role that Japan should play in the world.

I believe his accomplishments can be compared to those of such outstanding individuals as renowned industrialist Eiichi Shibusawa, who was deeply involved in international exchanges in the prewar period, and Shigeharu Matsumoto, founder of the International House of Japan, in the postwar era.

I first met Yamamoto in a small office in the Akasaka district in the mid-1970s.

Ever since, I have been given countless opportunities to participate in the intellectual exchanges that Yamamoto strove for.

I still vividly recall being invited to attend a gathering in Hawaii in 1983 where the participants announced and discussed the results of a joint research project related to economic friction between Japan and the United States. While I remember being hugely impressed by the array of U.S. Congressmen who earnestly read the released report, took notes and commented on the research, I also felt deep respect toward Yamamoto who made possible the policy dialogue that contained such substance.

His calling in life was to give to others, and that has given opportunities to an incredibly large number of people, myself included.

While he is rightfully known for serving as a bridge between Japan and the United States, Yamamoto also was a bridge to Asia.

In the late 1990s, at an international conference in Paris on the theme of Europe and Asia, I dined with Yamamoto and other participants from Asia.

When a South Korean diplomat said, "What Asia needs from now is a Jean Monnet," a number of other individuals at the table said in unison, "Tadashi is Asia's Jean Monnet."

They were referring to Jean Monnet, who is considered the father of European integration. He came from a family of cognac exporters and never sought a government position. He freely met with the leaders of

European nations and their aides, and using a practical imagination as his main tool, lobbied for European integration and turned a dream into a vision.

Likewise, Yamamoto pursued such a vision throughout his life. Above all else, he was humble.

Such humility was an important condition for Japan as it sought to rebuild after World War II. It should also have been an even more necessary characteristic after Japan became an economic power.

Jusuf Wanandi, a friend of Yamamoto's and vice chairman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, said, "The attraction of Tadashi is his humility and that is where the appeal of Japan in the postwar era also appears."

With the passing of Yamamoto, I cannot help but also feel a sense of losing such an aspect of Japan.

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