Consolidating Peace in Southeast Asia: Japan’s DPJ Government, JICA and the Epistemological Community

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Introduction
Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was in power for 54 years at the national level between 1955 and 2009. The then ruling LDP introduced legislation in 1992 for international peacekeeping under the United Nations framework despite vociferous opposition in parliament and criticism by the liberal media. Shortly after, the SDF (Self Defense Force) was dispatched to Cambodia for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) – the first time Japanese troops went abroad since Japan’s catastrophic defeat in World War II. After the Cambodian dispatch, Tokyo sent its personnel to UN operations in Mozambique, Angola, Zaire, El Salvador, Golan Heights, East Timor, Nepal, Haiti and South Sudan.

Besides UN peacekeeping, the LDP government also engaged in peace-making (to prevent a violent internal conflict from erupting or end a conflict after it has arisen through diplomatic means) in Cambodia, Aceh, Mindanao and Sri Lanka, and also sought the post-conflict consolidation of peace in East Timor. A common approach by Japan to address these internal conflicts included the offer of substantial ODA (Official Developmental Assistance) as an economic incentive for peace, and the hosting of conferences in Tokyo to mobilize international support for economic reconstruction.

Other hallmarks of Japanese peace-building (broadly defined as the prevention and ending of conflict followed by post-conflict consolidation of peace) include: peacekeeping only within the UN framework, a stringent set of five principles to be met before the SDF can be dispatched for UNPKO, and the aversion to dispatching the SDF to potentially dangerous regions even for UNPKO. Not surprisingly, the LDP government refrained from committing troops to peace monitoring in Sri Lanka, Mindanao and Aceh like other “normal” countries because of at least two reasons: there is no legislation which permits the SDF’s dispatch for peace monitoring outside the UN framework, and there was the possibility that violence would erupt again despite a cessation of hostilities in these conflict areas. Simply put, Japan is not yet a “normal country” in peace-building due to its risk aversion. The only exceptions were humanitarian assistance abroad for disaster relief such as tsunami...
and earthquakes, and special legislations for the dispatch of the SDF to the Indian Ocean to assist in the “war on terrorism” in Afghanistan, and “humanitarian” help in Iraq during the Koizumi Administration.

With the “regime shift” from the LDP to the DPJ, it would be pertinent to ask: are there new developments in Japanese peace-building under the new government? Is the consolidation of peace by Japan marked by profound continuity despite the historic change of government in 2009? This article will first examine the attitudes and actions of the DPJ government towards peace-building. It will then analyse the efforts of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), the overseas developmental arm of the Japanese state, to facilitate intra-state peace in Mindanao and southern Thailand. The next section will look beyond the Japanese state and ruling party, and will focus on Japanese society --- the epistemological community of peace-building comprising of NGOs and peace research institutes and universities.

My central argument is that the historical regime shift in Japan did not impact negatively on its peace-building efforts in Asia and beyond. The new DPJ government appeared keen to support UN-centric activities in the international system. Despite the change of ruling parties and DPJ’s rhetoric for domestic political reforms at home and a new direction in international relations (such as a more “equal” relationship with the US ally, and the promotion of an East Asian Community), the consolidation of peace abroad is marked by a profound continuity in philosophy, style and practice. The DPJ government remained committed to additional roles and involvement in peace-building in Mindanao, southern Philippines. JICA, before and after the regime shift in 2009, had treaded gingerly to prepare for a possible role in the future for Japanese peace-building in the troubled southern provinces of Thailand. Regardless of political change at the national level, Japanese NGOs and the epistemological community have become more active to promote Japan’s peace-building role.

That there is an emerging consensus in Japan on the desirability of peace-building (regardless of ruling parties) is significant. Even though Japan is no longer the second largest economy in the world (since it was overtaken by China at the end of 2010), the former is eminently qualified as an upper-middle power to play a larger role in peace-building in Asia and beyond. Conceivably, such an active international role is preferable for Japan than arms-racing with a rising China in a balance-of-power game or a traditional one-party pacifism which is oblivious to the settlement of violent conflicts abroad.

**Peace-building under the new DPJ government**

In September 2011, Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko declared at the 66th Session of the UN
General Assembly: “UN peacekeeping missions are being dispatched to fragile and conflict-prone states. Japan will contribute to the efforts for peace-building by actively participating in those operations. We must further improve circumstances to this end”.

Indeed, Prime Minister Noda and his DPJ predecessors (party presidents) have committed their party to embrace peace-building as an important international role for Japan. This unambiguous commitment already took place before the DPJ became the ruling party.

In May 2005, when Okada Katsuya was the President of the DPJ in opposition, he released the party’s manifesto on Japan’s role in international affairs titled “Toward Realization of Enlightened National Interest: Living Harmoniously with Asia and the World”.

As the foreign policy blueprint of the opposition DPJ aiming for power, it deserves to be quoted at length:

In today's highly globalized world, however, the national interest that Japan's foreign policy should pursue must be an "enlightened national interest" that aims at a positive-sum result where everyone wins. Such notions as chauvinistic nationalism and one-country pacifism are incompatible with this enlightened national interest. Japan's foreign policy under the new government will pursue this enlightened national interest.

The three pillars of "enlightened national interest" are (1) a peaceful and prosperous Asia, (2) evolution of the Japan-U.S. relationship, and (3) contributing to the peace and prosperity of the world.

In the long run, the new government intends to gradually develop regional cooperation in such security matters as peacekeeping operations (PKO) and the multilateral joint patrol of sea lanes.

… In the Asian-Pacific region, the new government of Japan will deepen its cooperation with the United States in such areas as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), nation building in developing countries, and peace building. When dealing with global issues that extend beyond the Asian-Pacific region, such as in the Middle-East and Africa, Japan will send its Self-Defense Forces overseas, in principle, only under U.N. auspices. … The new government of Japan will actively extend contributions to U.N. peace-building activities, particularly in Asia. It will review and revise the current five principles of PKO participation in alignment with the international standard”.

In summary, the DPJ’s foreign policy agenda is not radically different from its LDP rival. Unlike the erstwhile number one opposition JSP in the early 1990s, the DPJ was actually supportive of UNPKO, human security and peace-building. This national consensus on peace-building became evident after the DPJ became the ruling party after its historic victory in the September 2009 Lower House Election.
In early December the same year, Foreign Minister Okada Katsuya declared that Tokyo will play a larger peace-building role in Mindanao. More than 120,000 people (mostly civilians) have died from that ethnic and political conflict in which the indigenous Moro people sought an independent homeland from the Philippines. Under the LDP government, Japan was already a member of the International Monitoring Team (with Malaysia, Libya and Brunei) to facilitate peace in Mindanao. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) affirmed its additional role as a member of the International Contact Group in Mindanao:

Upon the request from the negotiating parties (the GRP and the MILF) and the Government of Malaysia in consideration of Japan's contributions to date to the Mindanao Peace Process, Japan has decided to participate in the International Contact Group (ICG). The ICG, being comprised of Japan, the United Kingdom, Turkey and four NGOs, is expected to perform such roles as giving advice to the parties concerned on the Mindanao Peace Process and participating in peace talks as observers.

Japan has proactively contributed to the Mindanao Peace Process through the dispatch of development experts to the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and the J-BIRD projects (see below Reference 3.), which include intensive implementation of Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects in the conflict-affected areas. Japan intends to continue supporting peace in Mindanao through such assistance and the ICG.

MOFA further elaborated:

Japan recognizes that peace in Mindanao is indispensable for peace and prosperity in Asia. Japan has contributed to the reconstruction and development of Mindanao through the dispatch of development experts to the IMT socio-economic development aspect and intensive implementation of Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects in conflict-affected areas. Japan's assistance in total is called the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD), and is well-known among residents of Mindanao. (*"Bangsamoro" refers to Muslims in Mindanao).

Despite the DPJ government’s reiteration and rhetoric that Japan is committed to the peace-process in Mindanao, its role is basically limited to the provision of ODA (Official Development Assistance) and human security projects in Mindanao as economic incentives for peace. Thus far, Tokyo has yet to offer any diplomatic ideas or political strategy to break the impasse between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Arguably, the fundamental problem in the Mindanao conflict is not really a lack of economic development and impoverishment but the desire of the Moro Muslims to preserve a distinct identity and secure an “ancestral domain” --- goals which do not find much sympathy among many Catholics who are the majority religious group in the
Philippines.

Like its LDP predecessor, the DPJ government continues to be risk averse by refusing to dispatch its troops like Malaysia and Brunei for peace-monitoring in Mindanao. Just a platoon of unarmed SDF with IMT arm bands like its Malaysian and Bruneian counterparts would have sent a powerful signal that Japan is committed to take risks for peace. Indeed, there is a fundamental difference between war fighting and peace-monitoring. But the Japanese state, political parties, news media, intellectual class and civil society do not appear to have an enlightened “New Thinking” that peace-monitoring is about consolidating peace abroad and has nothing to do with war fighting or “militarism”.

DPJ Lower House member Nagashima Akihisa, who subsequently became a key advisor to Prime Minister Noda on foreign policy and national security in 2011, personally believed that it was desirable for Japan to dispatch the SDF for peace-monitoring in Mindanao in partnership with the Southeast Asian countries of Malaysia and Brunei. However, Nagashima said that a proper legislative framework is necessary before the SDF can be dispatched for peace-building if it is outside the UNPKO framework. Given the fact that the DPJ suffers from factional infighting, implacable opposition from its LDP rival, the loss of the 2010 Upper House (leading to a legislative gridlock), and lurches from one political crisis to another (both foreign and domestic), the ruling party has other priorities. Indeed, it appears to have little energy to push for a potentially controversial legislation to dispatch the SDF for peace-building outside the UN framework. The DPJ appears to be contented to embrace UNPKO in Haiti and Southern Sudan as its international peace cooperation —- regions much more distant than Mindanao and southern Thailand. To be sure, Tokyo’s UNPKO in Haiti and Southern Sudan is more visible to the international community than the pursuit of peace-building in Mindanao and southern Thailand.

Conversations with senior SDF officers revealed that many are keen for Japan to play an international peace-monitoring role within and outside the UN framework in partnership with the international society. Their provisos are that there must be a proper legislative framework for such a dispatch, and that it must be contingent on the political judgment (seijin handan) of the government. This is an acknowledgement by these senior SDF officers to abide by civilian control over such matters. Under the previous LDP government, the Defense Agency was upgraded to full Ministry of Defense status in 2008 and international peace cooperation (including UNPKO) became a primary and not auxiliary function of the SDF. The Ministry of Defense has also established a Central Readiness Force which can be speedily deployed for UNPKO and humanitarian disaster relief abroad. The problem, therefore, is not that Japan lacks the capability for international peace cooperation (including peace-monitoring) but the lack of political will and a proper and coherent
articulation of what peace cooperation is about on the part of the leadership --- LDP or DPJ --- to convince the Japanese public to take risks for peace like other “normal” countries.

Interviews with top bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense revealed their interest in a larger peace-building role for Japan. According to Ishii Masafumi, Ambassador for Policy Planning and International Security Policy, it is possible for Japan to approach the UN to legitimate the SDF’s participation in the IMT in Mindanao. But thus far, neither the UN nor Japan has explored this option. The reality is that the UN is overstretched and cannot be involved in every internal conflict including the one in Mindanao. Moreover, the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and Malaysia (the key mediator in the Mindanao conflict) do not appear keen to internationalize the problem by drawing in the UN while the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) prefers otherwise. Unless the DPJ government has the interest and takes the initiative to play a peace-monitoring role with Malaysia and Brunei in Mindanao, it makes no sense for Tokyo to approach the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) to provide a resolution and the legitimacy for an international peace-monitoring role.

According to Masuda Kazuo, Director, International Operations Division, Bureau of Operational Policy, Ministry of Defense, his “personal opinion” is that the SDF should play a more active and “flexible” role abroad for international peace cooperation including peace monitoring in places such as Mindanao. However, Masuda argued that such a role should take place only within the legal framework permitted such as UNPKO and conceivably under a general law for SDF deployment if it is enacted in future. It is apparent that top bureaucrats and high ranking SDF officers are sensitive to constitutional requirements for the SDF’s participation in peace-monitoring outside the UN framework.

While avoiding the controversy of peace-monitoring outside the UN framework, the DPJ government, just like its LDP predecessor, is happy to offer Tokyo as a venue for peace talks among erstwhile combatants. Under the LDP leadership, Japan has held peace talks and reconstruction conferences in the country to mobilize international support for Cambodia, Aceh in Indonesia, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. The DPJ government did likewise. Such an approach publicizes Japan as a peace-loving member of the international society. Holding conferences and talks in Japan is obviously risk free because the SDF is not exposed to potential crossfire in a conflict area abroad. Notwithstanding the SDF’s absence as peace-monitors, Japan had indeed committed considerable resources especially ODA to conflict areas including Mindanao.

When President Benigno Aquino and the top leadership of the MILF wanted to meet for the first time for peace talks at a neutral forum, they approached Japan which readily agreed to it. In August 2011, President Aquino and MILF Chairman Al Haj Murad
Ibrahim met at a hotel near Narita Airport, Japan to seek a common understanding on the intractable problem in Mindanao. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted with great satisfaction:

On the evening of August 4 (Thursday), an informal meeting was held between H.E. Mr. Benigno S. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines and Mr. Al Haj Murad, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the suburbs of Tokyo for the solution of the issue of the peace in Mindanao. Japan heartily welcomes that this meeting became a meaningful opportunity for smoothly proceeding with the Mindanao Peace Process. This was the first time that the President of the Republic of the Philippines and the Chair of MILF held a meeting. The Government of Japan supported the holding of the meeting as requested by the Government of the Philippines to hold it in Japan. There was an expression of gratitude to Japan in the statement of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines, and Japan is pleased to have been able to contribute to the realization of the meeting.20

MOFA then made the following commitment:

Japan strongly expects that both parties will continue sincere talks based on the result of the meeting and reach the final peace agreement at an early stage. Japan is also committed to actively continuing its reconstruction and development assistance in the Mindanao region through the dispatch of development experts to the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and intensive implementation of Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects in the conflict-affected areas (J-BIRD projects) and support to the peace process as a member of the International Contact Group (ICG).21

While it may appear impressive that both President Aquino and MILF Chairman Murad picked Japan as a trustworthy partner and the provider of a neutral forum for their peace talks, the reality is that Tokyo’s diplomatic role in the Mindanao conflict was quite passive.22 Japanese leaders and diplomats did not actively act as third party peacemakers to facilitate the peace process. This is unlike the role of former Finland President Ahtisaari who actively brokered the peace deal between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the separatist GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka) at Helsinki in August 2005. At the last lap of the Aceh peace process, Finland was the key player even though Japan had earlier chaired the Preparatory Conference on Peace and Reconstruction in Aceh in December 2002 and hosted a last ditch peace talks between Jakarta and GAM in May 2003 to prevent the resumption of civil war. At the May 2003 talks, Japanese diplomats provided a forum in Tokyo but played no active role in the negotiations. In the case of the Mindanao conflict, Malaysia is the key facilitator of the peace talks while Japan a key provider of economic
Despite the DPJ government’s tentative efforts at peace-building, some of its Diet members are interested in peace-building as a desirable international role for Japan. Take for example DPJ Lower House member Sakaguchi Naoto from Wakayama electoral district one. Sakaguchi had prior experience working at the UN and an NGO on international peace-building. When the Sasakawa Peace Foundation sponsored a “master class” on peace mediation in Tokyo by former Finnish President and Nobel Peace Laureate Ahtisaari in November 2011, Sakaguchi organized a group of 15 MPs to meet the ex-President for a dialogue on peace-building.\(^{23}\)

**Peace-building in Southeast Asia: JICA**

While the top Japanese political leadership and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulate policies on peace-building, the Japanese embassies in the target country, Ministry of Defense and JICA are often responsible for their implementation.\(^{24}\) The MOD has to “operationalize” the SDF’s deployment for UNPKO or humanitarian disaster relief. Indeed, Japan under the LDP government had dispatched the SDF to Cambodia and East Timor for UNPKO and to Aceh for post-tsunami humanitarian assistance.

In the case of JICA, it is responsible for the implementation of various ODA projects as incentives for peace and its consolidation even after the SDF has been withdrawn upon the completion of its UNPKO missions as in the case of Cambodia and East Timor. For analytical purposes, this article focuses on JICA in Southeast Asia because its role is less well known than MOFA. But JICA can play an informal role (within limits) in regional peace-building especially in southern Thailand which can be more tricky and sensitive for MOFA to handle.

JICA is very clear about its peace-building mission statement: “In line with the Medium-Term ODA Policy formulated in 2005, JICA implements its peace-building assistance to prevent the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts, alleviate the various difficulties that people face during and immediately after conflicts, and subsequently achieve long-term stable development”\(^ {25}\). Its framework of peace-building with an emphasis on development assistance is as follows:
JICA is also involved in peace-building in Mindanao and southern Thailand where the SDF has no role. When Tokyo agreed to join the IMT in Mindanao, it initially dispatched one and later two economic advisers from JICA seconded to MOFA. In September 2006, JICA President Ogata Sadako visited Mindanao (including a military camp of the insurgent MILF) for a fact finding mission and to promote her concept of “human security”.26

Less well known is JICA's foray into peace-building in southern Thailand.27 Since that ethnic conflict erupted in 2004, more than 5,000 people have perished. Ishikawa Sachiko, Senior Advisor to JICA’s peace-building efforts in Southeast Asia, intimated that JICA's informal role to sponsor workshops in Penang, Malaysia on the conflict in southern Thailand is to prepare a way for a possible peace-building role for Japan in that region in the future.28 But JICA has to tread gingerly because Thailand is very sensitive about its sovereignty and “interference” from external parties.

The 2008 JICA Annual Report notes:

To develop human resources, JICA supplements domestic assistance efforts by using the framework of third-country training implemented in other ASEAN member states. To help the five provinces in southern Thailand to which access has been blocked due to the deterioration of the security situation, JICA has been holding capacity building workshops for southern Thailand college professors and students on Penang Island in cooperation with Malaysian...
universities since 2006. Also, JICA has thus far held two seminars to which people were invited from the three conflict-stricken regions of Mindanao, Aceh and southern Thailand for the purpose of learning from each other’s peace-building and reconstruction experiences. In these ways, JICA has continued to carry out multilateral efforts to promote stability in the Southeast Asian region.29

Since 2006, JICA has supported Kamarulzaman Askandar, Coordinator for Peace Research and Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia and the Southeast Asian Conflict Studies Network (SEACSN) which sought to bring participants together from different conflict areas (Mindanao, Aceh and Southern Thailand) to share their experiences and know-how on peace-building. In February 2011, a delegation from PULO (Patani United Liberation Organization) attended the fourth seminar titled “Transforming the Conflict and supporting the peace builders in Aceh, Mindanao and Southern Thailand” in Penang, Malaysia.30

The Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs eventually got wind of PULO’s participation at the JICA-sponsored seminar in Penang and was infuriated. The Thai MOFA then lodged a protest to Japan’s MOFA and JICA was obliged to suspend its support to PULO’s participation in subsequent seminars in Penang on southern Thailand. Quoting at length the PULO delegation’s speech at the fourth seminar in Penang will explain the embarrassment and anger of the Thai government. The PULO representative declared:

[I]n 1786 … the Siamese army invaded Patani. …A large number of Patani Men, elderly ladies and children were captured and thrown to the ground to be stepped upon by herds of elephants. 4000 more men were sent back to Ayutthaya as slaves and were later used as laborers to build the new capital of Siam, called Bangkok. Sadly, more than 200 years later atrocities still occur, in 1948 known as Dusun Nyor/Rangae massacre, in 1975 in front of the Patani Provincial office, 2004 Takbai, Kersik and Sabayoi atrocities, at al-Furqan mosque in 2009 and countless assassinations, tortures and extra judicial killings. Further, we still have no idea as to what extent the Thai violent minds that end up in brutal acts such as these, will still continue or cease.31

The PULO delegate continued:

Since 1902, that marks the renewed essence of violence and brutality, the year Patani was incorporated into the Kingdom of Siam, the Patani people have been ignored, disregarded, subdued and negated. Thai political convenience has negated our Patani Malay Muslim identity, our rights and ethnicity. We have become strangers in our homeland. … It is a confrontation of wills between the legitimacy of the Patani People and the illegality of Thai occupation. It is time for declaring the moments of truth and unearthing our past glory in a fair manner towards
a contemporary self-determination scenario. … We neither search just for guilty nor revenge for past injustices or violent acts but rather a progressive action in realizing a just peace.\textsuperscript{32}

The ethnic conflict in southern Thailand appears to be stalemated with unabated violence. In February 2012, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak pledged full assistance to visiting Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to help resolve the Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand.\textsuperscript{33} It is unclear whether Thailand in future will accept a Malaysian peace-making role similar to the one undertaken in Mindanao.

It is not inconceivable that if a future Thai government were to welcome Malaysia as an honest broker for peace in southern Thailand, there might well be a role for Japan as a diplomatic and developmental partner to Malaysia as in the case of Mindanao. While Malaysia has the local knowledge and ethnic linkages to the insurgents in southern Thailand, Japan has the financial wherewithal to support the peace process including post-conflict reconstruction. Moreover, Japan has excellent relations with both Thailand and Malaysia, and is probably acceptable to the Muslims in southern Thailand given Japan’s good track record in Mindanao. In the meanwhile, JICA has to take a low profile to avoid offending Bangkok and patiently wait for the Thais to be open to third party peace-making to break the political impasse in southern Thailand.

Epistemological Community: NGOs, Research Institutes and Think tanks
Japan has also tapped the enthusiasm of civil society and NGOs to consolidate peace in Mindanao. According to the media, Japanese Ambassador Urabe Toshinao and Nomura Yukiyo, Country Director of ICAN Philippines signed the grant contract for “Peace Building Project through Education in Conflict Affected areas in Pikit, Mindanao” in November 2011. The project, valued at US$561,795 is funded through the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects, part of Japan's ODA. The municipality of Pikit lies in Cotabato province, Mindanao. Around 75% of residents of Pikit are Muslims and the remaining 25% are Christians. The media explains:

Pikit witnessed armed conflicts several times in the past, and the residents were forced to evacuate and return repeatedly. Since the security condition is relatively stable these days, more and more children want to go back to school. However, the municipality has not provided sufficient learning environments for them. There are only five classrooms in the Sultan Kudarat Memorial High School with more than 300 students. ... Many children are also suffering from trauma or stress due to the series of conflicts. They lost their family members or relatives and assets. To prevent these children from holding hostility toward people with different religions and halt the vicious cycle of violence, it is imperative to promote the peace education in this
In principle, MOFA is keen to support Japanese NGOs in Southeast Asia. But the reality is that it is difficult and dangerous for civilian volunteers to venture to unstable and violent regions. In the case of Aceh and Mindanao, it is easier for Japanese NGOs to engage there because civil war has ended in Aceh and there is a de facto cessation of hostile between the Government of the Philippines and the MILF. But southern Thailand is a different situation. There are almost daily killings in southern Thailand and the Muslim insurgents there belong to shadowy groups (including PULO) and their leaders are unknown. It is therefore very risky for any NGOs to be active in southern Thailand. Conceivably, Japanese NGOs can play a larger role if peace is restored there. MOFA explains its approach with Japanese NGOs in Thailand:

As for the Grant assistance for grassroots human security projects, Grant assistance for Japanese NGO projects, Grassroots technical cooperation and JICA volunteer program (Senior Overseas Volunteers and Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers [JOCVs]), Japan will expand its cooperation in those projects that will contribute to the realization of human security. Major issues to be grappled from the perspective of human security, such as capacity building of the local community for poverty reduction, assistance for the disabled, assistance for minority ethnic groups and measures against human trafficking, still remain in Thailand incorrigibly. Considering the fact that the Thai government itself has already actively engaged in measures in these areas and a wide range of activities is being conducted by domestic and foreign NGOs, Japan will provide cooperation through assistance to the non-government sector and volunteer programs in principle.35

Besides Japanese NGOs such as the Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP) and the Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC), universities, think tanks and foundations are part of the Japanese peace-building epistemological community. Indeed, the promotion of allied subjects such as peace studies, human security and peace-building has gathered momentum over the past ten years. Conceivably, Japan’s practical peace-building experiences in Cambodia, East Timor, Sri Lanka, Aceh and Mindanao have stimulated scholarly and civil society interests in the consolidation of peace. Arguably, this intensifying interest among scholars, students and activists will provide a more conducive intellectual and civil societal environment for the Japanese state and politicians to play a more active peace-building role abroad.

The following is a list of more prominent Japanese foundations, think tanks, research institutes and universities keen on peace-building. The caveat is that this is not necessarily a comprehensive list.
Japan Institute of International Affairs
Japan Center for International Exchange
National Institute for Defense Studies
Hiroshima Peacebuilders Center: Program for Human Resource Development in Asia for Peace-building
Hiroshima Peace Institute
Graduate Program on Human Security, University of Tokyo
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies: PCS global campus program on human security and peace-building / Peace and Conflict Studies
Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University
International Christian University Rotary Peace Center
International Peace Studies Program, Graduate School of International Relations, International University of Japan
Osaka School of International Public Policy, Osaka University
Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research
Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Germane to the article’s focus on Japanese peace-building in Southeast Asia is the Sasakawa Peace Foundation’s support for research on the ethnic conflict in southern Thailand. The Foundation notes:

Based on its policy of prioritizing the Asia and Pacific region, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation conducted surveys last year to assess local needs in the field of peace building, and interviewed experts in conflict areas and areas in the process of post-conflict reconstruction in Asia. As a result, the following were clarified; although the conflict in Southern Thailand receives little international attention, the area has great need of support. … [A]n international seminar was held in Tokyo gathering experts from regions now experiencing conflict in Southeast Asia, as well as from former conflict zones. With the aim of developing new business projects, the Foundation closely collaborated with the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN) and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Japan (AMARC Japan), thereby creating opportunities for international experts, local researchers, and journalists to discuss possibilities for resolving conflicts in Southern Thailand.  

Besides the focus on southern Thailand, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation has also commissioned a team of Japanese scholars to examine the Japanese peace-building experience in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Mindanao and Aceh and prepare a final report by end March 2012.
Epilogue

The historical regime shift from LDP one-party dominance to the DPJ has not diminished Japan’s interest to peace-building in Southeast Asia and other regions. After the collapse of the Hatoyama Administration, the succeeding Kan and Noda Administrations have calibrated their foreign policy to downplay an East Asian Community while placing emphasis on the US-Japan Alliance. However, the DPJ government has maintained its commitment to peace-building. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, there appears to be an emerging national consensus in Japan that peace-building is a good thing and that, given the country’s new identity as a pacifist state after the end of World War II, the country is eminently suited to pursue the consolidation of peace abroad. Second, the country has gained experience and confidence in various UNPKO since the first deployment to Cambodia and peace-building efforts in Cambodia, East Timor, Aceh, Sri Lanka and Mindanao. Third, is the concept of “path dependency”. Once a country has embarked on major undertakings in international affairs, it is difficult to drop commitments and promises to other countries made by earlier governments (headed by rival political parties) even if a new one is in power. It appears that a country is likely to carry on a non-controversial foreign policy commitment despite a change of party government unless serious domestic and external obstacles were to appear. In part due to “path dependency”, Japan under the new DPJ government had embraced peace-building. However, the DPJ government has did not show a “New Thinking” in its diplomacy to seriously consider a new role for the SDF as peace-monitors in regions beyond the UN framework. One reason for this lack of imagination in peace-building is due to other priorities caused by pressing domestic and foreign challenges, and the fact that the DPJ government, lacking in governmental experience, has been lurching from crisis to crisis. Unfortunately, the DPJ government had a change of three Prime Ministers in its first three years in office.

A bright spot in Japanese peace-building is that it is no longer the exclusive domain of MOFA, MOD, JICA and politicians. Indeed, the process, direction and goal of Japanese peace-building are also claimed by civil society, NGOs, scholars and intellectuals from various universities, research institutes, think tanks and peace foundations. Arguably, Japanese peace-building has broadened and deepened given a greater constellation of interested parties beyond the state, and the fact that Japan is a democracy. The road ahead for Japanese peace-building is arduous indeed. There is no guarantee of success for the consolidation of peace in Mindanao and southern Thailand. But it is better to do the right thing by pursuing peace-building and even fail than not to try at all. The Japanese endeavour for peace-building in Southeast Asia, therefore, is a major contribution to international
society and the laying of a building block for a future East Asian Community beyond rhetoric.

NOTES

1 During this epoch, the LDP was out of power for only ten months between 1993 and 1994.

2 When the LDP government first mooted the UNPKO legislation, it was opposed by the Japan Socialist Party (the then main opposition party), the Japan Communist Party, the liberal media and some civil society groups because of the profound fear that the dispatch of the SDF abroad under the “guise” of UNPKO would be a first step towards Japanese “militarism”. There were also concerns that SDF personnel may be endangered if dispatched to unstable regions. Moreover, any military entanglement (including peace enforcement) was deemed to run against the spirit of post-war Japan’s famous Article 9 of the constitution which obliges the country not to settle international disputes through war. The prevailing legal interpretation of Article 9 is that Japan is permitted to adopt a minimalist approach for self-defence of the home islands only. Although UNPKO for the SDF was controversial in Japanese domestic politics when it was first introduced, the Japanese public today has accepted Japan’s peacekeeping role. However, it is conceivable that there will be considerable public misgivings if SDF personnel were to be caught in crossfire and perish in future PKOs.

3 See Peng Er Lam, Japan’s Peace-building Diplomacy in Asia: Seeking a more active political role (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).

4 A comprehensive definition of peace-building will include the whole gamut of conflict prevention, peace-making, peacekeeping and the post-conflict consolidation of peace.

5 The five principles are:
   (1) a cease-fire must be in place;
   (2) the parties to the conflict must have given their consent to the operation;
   (3) the activities must be conducted in a strictly impartial manner;
   (4) participation may be suspended or terminated if any of the “above conditions ceases to be satisfied; and
   (5) use of weapons shall be limited to the minimum necessary to protect life or persons of the personnel.

6 Ozawa Ichiro defined a “normal country” as follows: “First, it is a nation that willingly shoulders those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community. It does not refuse such burdens on account of domestic political difficulties. Nor does it take action unwillingly as a result of ‘international pressure’ … A second requirement of a ‘normal nation’ is that it cooperates fully with other nations in their efforts to build prosperous stable lives for their people … Japan must satisfy these two conditions if it is to go beyond simply creating and distributing domestic wealth and become what the world community recognizes as a “normal nation”. Ichiro Ozawa, Blueprint for a New Japan (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994), 94-5. See also Yoshihide Soeya, Masayuki Tadkokoro and David A. Welch, Japan as a “Normal Country”? : An Nation in Search of its Place in the World, eds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

7 Although Japan was engaged in peace-building in Mindanao, Sri Lanka and Aceh, it did not dispatch the SDF for peace monitoring unlike Malaysia and Brunei in Mindanao, the Nordic countries in Sri Lanka or the EU, Switzerland and five ASEAN countries in Aceh. I argue that Japan is not truly a “normal” country unless it is prepared to follow the good examples of other countries to
engage in peace monitoring. Indeed, peace monitoring is different from war fighting --- it facilitates peace and should not be confused with military aggression.

8 Speeches and statements by the Prime Minister, “Address by H.E. Mr. Yoshihiko Noda Prime Minister of Japan at the Sixty-Sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly”, 23 September 2011.


11 On Japan’s peace-building in Mindanao when the LDP was in power, see “Japan’s Peace-building in Mindanao: Partnering the Philippines, Malaysia and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front”, Japanese Studies (Australia) 28, no. 1, (May 2008): 45-57.


13 Ibid.

14 MOFA notes: “Japan intensively implements ODA projects in the conflict-affected areas in order to bring about peace and stability; these include the construction of school buildings, water supply facilities, health centers and small-scale infrastructure including roads, human resource development, and assistance for rice farming. Japan's assistance for peace and stability in Mindanao in total is called the "Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD)" and is well known among residents in Mindanao ("Bangsamoro" refers to Muslims in Mindanao). Japan has been dispatching development experts from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the socioeconomic assistance component of the Mindanao-based International Monitoring Team (IMT), which monitors the ceasefire. They are engaged in such activities as grasping reconstruction and economic needs in the conflict-affected areas, and drawing up and monitoring assistance projects”. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan's Seamless Efforts for Peace-building: One of Japan's Key Diplomatic Initiatives”, last modified December 28, 2011, accessed February 18, 2012, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/jfpu/2011/12/1228-02.html.


16 In 2009-2010, as a NIDS Fellow, I co-taught a class of senior SDF officers (colonel level) on UNPKO at the National Institute of Defense Studies (NIDS) and also lectured the whole cohort of SDF studying at NIDS on Japanese peace-building in Southeast Asia. I benefited from my informal conversations with them.

17 When Ishii was the Director of Southeast Asia Second Division, he along with Takahashi Taeko, Director of Southeast Asia First Division, came up with the concepts including conflict prevention and eradication of poverty in Mindanao, Aceh and East Timor for Prime Minister Koizumi’s landmark speech in Singapore in January 2002. Ide Keiji wrote the draft which was subsequently revised and vetted by the Asia Policy Bureau and Director General Tanaka Hitoshi of the Asia Oceanic Division. Then Prime Minister Koizumi approved the speech which reiterated Japan’s peace-building commitments in Southeast Asia. Ambassador Ishii Masafumi, Policy Planning and International Security Policy, Interview, February 19, 2010.
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19 Political Minister Ozawa Hitoshi, then at the Japanese embassy in Manila, wrote with great satisfaction after the historic meeting: “I was in Tokyo (Narita) for a whole week to arrange and oversee the top meeting between the President Aquino and the Chairman Murad. Although we actually acted upon their request, it was one of the most memorable occasions in my career”. Ozawa Hiroshi, e-mail communication, August 8, 2011.


21 Ibid.

22 This is partly because of the fact that Malaysia has been officially facilitating the peace process and that Japan does not want to “step on Malaysia’s toes”. Japan lacks not only the intention to be a facilitator but also skills and expertise to handle the Mindanao conflict.

23 Interview with DPJ Lower House member Sasaguchi Naoto on November 24, 2011. Interestingly, Sasaguchi hired a political secretary Horiba Akiko whose PhD dissertation was on the Ambon ethnic conflict in Indonesia. Horiba is interested in peace-building in Southeast Asia and works with like-minded Japanese scholars on this topic (sponsored by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation) while working full time as a political secretary.


25 Ibid., 10.

26 JICA press release, “President Ogata’s trip to the Philippines: Travelling to Mindanao province”, September 19, 2006. The same press release noted: The highlight of her visit is a keynote speech Wednesday to a day-long seminar called ‘Peace, Development, and Human Security in Mindanao’ sponsored by the Japanese Embassy and JICA to highlight the anniversary of the half-century of normalized diplomatic relations between the two countries following World War II. The concept of "humansecurity" is being incorporated into mainstream JICA projects, particularly in such regions as Mindanao which are slowly emerging from years or decades of turmoil or war and are now trying to plan for post-conflict sustainable development. Effectively a "human security" approach which has been developed in the last decade or so, it entails a grassroots or "bottom-up" approach to problems, ensuring that the most vulnerable of people have access to such basics as education, health care, and a social safety net which in turn will empower them to better shape their own futures. Ogata will emphasize that JICA stands ready to support such programs as Mindanao continues to move towards full peace,” accessed February 12, 2012, http://www.jica.go.jp/english/news/press/jica_archive/2006/060919_1.html.


28 Ishikawa Sachiko, Conversation, September 19, 2008.

Like the movie Rashomon, there are different versions of PULO’s presence at the seminar in Penang. According to the PULO representative, he received an invitation to attend the seminar: “My thanks also due from us to the organizers for inviting us, on behalf of the PULO for the first time to participate in this 4th seminar since 2006”. However, a JICA staff intimated: “It is not correct to say the organizer invited PULO. In fact PULO invited themselves to the seminar, although the organizer could not firmly reject it. We saw it more like an academic exercise and a track two activity”. Ishikawa Sachiko, e-mail, February 23, 2012. See PULO Official Website, “Penang speech: Peaceful solution: The Challenges, Implementation and Maintenance,” last modified March 15, 2011, accessed February 12, 2012, http://puloinfo.net/Statements.asp?ID=26.


Ibid.


The same source reported: “In addition, ICAN Philippines will conduct the “School of Peace Training” for the students and teachers. In the training, students will learn how to address quarrels or fights peacefully without resorting to violence, and teachers will be equipped with know-how to deal with children with trauma or stress. The Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects started in the Philippines in 2002. Since then, the Japanese Government has disbursed approximately 156 million pesos for a total of 26 projects in the Philippines”. See “Japanese NGO supports peace-building efforts in Mindanao,” Relief Web, last modified November 4, 2011, accessed February 20, 2012, http://reliefweb.int/node/457339.


A number of Japanese scholars at NIDS (the academic think tank to the Ministry of Defense) are interested in peace-building including UNPKO. Indeed, NID’s curriculum for senior SDF officers includes UNPKO which is a key role for the SDF.

The four member universities participating in the Global Campus Program Online Lecture Course on human security and peace-building are: Gadjah Mada University (Indonesia), Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia, University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka) and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Japan).

OSIPP has a new 5-year student exchange project on peace and human security. It is collaboration between: Osaka, Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Meio (Okinawa) universities on the one hand and Rajaratnam School of International Studies (Singapore), De La Salle (Philippines), Payap (Thailand), Syiah Kuala (Aceh) and East Timor National University on the Southeast Asian side. Hiroshima Peace Institute is also part of this. The project, at least, aims to nurture the next generation of leaders and professionals in the area of peace-building.


The Foundation elaborates: “Promoting dialogue for peace-building (and conflict transformation) in Southern Thailand With the objectives of fostering opinion leaders working to promote peace in Southern Thailand, and forming a network of knowledgeable persons in Bangkok and other areas to support peace building
in Southern Thailand, activities of this project will include the invitation of about 12 persons (experts, politicians, journalists, etc.) from Thailand to Japan for dialogue meetings. Public seminars will also be held where the invitees can address participants”.


The concept paper for the “Peace-building in Asia and Japan’s Role” project commissioned by the Sasakawa Foundation reads: “With its own history, socio-political and economic position, it is imperative for Japan to make certain political commitment to Asia’s regional conflicts even at the early stages of conflicts. However, to provide effective support to peace building in Asia, a comprehensive approach is required to the challenges of the region from the stage of negotiations to post-conflict reconstruction. It is because each case of peace process is deeply influenced by its own particular history and nature of conflict. Reflecting the perspectives of Area Studies, this research project, therefore, is an attempt to analyse some of the past initiatives of Japan in Asia’s regional conflicts. It will try to learn from the past initiatives, analysing important challenges in peace mediation. It is aimed to make constructive proposal to contribute effectively toward peace building processes that Japan could make in the future”. Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Research concept for “Peace-building in Asia and Japan’s Role”, November 2011, Mimeo.

Sato Maho, program officer of Sasakawa Foundation, intimated: “(Horiba) Akiko and me flew to Southern Thailand and Aceh (earlier), and from this Friday, will visit those two areas again. I will bring 7 young human rights activists from Southern Thailand to Jakarta and Aceh, so that they can learn from the Indonesian experiences”. Sato Maho, program officer, Sasakawa Foundation, e-mail, February 22, 2012.

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