

KDI-TAF 2018  
Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation  
**Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Asia:**  
Lessons in South-South Cooperation

*edited by*  
Anthea Mulakala

**KDI**



The Asia Foundation

KDI-TAF 2018

Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation

# Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Asia: Lessons in South-South Cooperation

*Edited by*  
Anthea Mulakala



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## Foreword and Acknowledgements

Asia's remarkable growth has substantially improved the economic and social well-being of people in the region. At the same time, Asia has hosted some of the world's most violent interstate and subnational conflicts. The latter count among the world's longest running, averaging 40 years (Parks *et al.*, 2013), and most intractable, often fueled by uneven resource distribution, ethnic and religious tensions, violent extremism, and/or urban crime. When such conflicts spill across national borders, they affect neighboring societies, economies, and politics in devastating ways.

Aid and development-cooperation actors — governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, and others — have recognized the nexus between conflict and development, leading many Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) donors to fund programs that address the underlying causes of conflict while building the necessary conditions for peace. However, the actors of South-South cooperation (SSC) have not historically addressed conflicts in the Global South, preferring to respect national sovereignty and not interfere in a country's domestic affairs. As SSC and particularly Asian-led development cooperation expands, its actors can no longer ignore intra-Asian conflicts because they create challenges that impede sustainable development and prevent shared prosperity in the region. Therefore, developed and less-developed Asian countries increasingly support or participate in various peacebuilding activities, ranging from economic development projects to conflict mediation and humanitarian assistance, often acting in concert with or alongside international and Asian NGOs and regional bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Since late 2010, the Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation (AADC) series — jointly hosted by the Korea Development Institute (KDI) and The Asia Foundation (TAF) — has provided a forum for Asian officials, experts, policymakers, and practitioners of development and South-South cooperation to explore and debate ways of confronting the challenges and opportunities that the region faces. In annual dialogues and resulting publications, participants from Asia and beyond have shared their experiences, strategies, and actions in addressing contemporary concerns, ranging from gender-inclusive growth to climate change mitigation. In 2018, the series focused on how Asian development cooperation is addressing conflict challenges in the region.

Despite the complexities of Asian conflicts, Asian actors demonstrate some exemplary conflict-prevention and peacebuilding practices. During the 2018 AADC dialogue in Kathmandu, participants from Afghanistan, ASEAN, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, South Korea, and the United Nations shared experiences of navigating, mediating, and programming in conflict-affected partner countries. This volume captures these rich and varied experiences and offers lessons in conflict prevention and peacebuilding for policy-makers and practitioners.

The collaboration between KDI and TAF rests largely on the vision and leadership of KDI's Director Cheonsik Woo and Professor Wonhyuk Lim, and of TAF representatives, Senior Vice President Dr. Gordon Hein and Senior Director of International Development Cooperation Ms. Anthea Mulakala, the volume's editor. We acknowledge their ongoing support and commitment to the partnership. We also extend thanks to The Asia Foundation office in Nepal for hosting the 2018 dialogue. We would also like to thank individuals working at KDI and TAF who provided

invaluable assistance: Ms. Hyemin Yoon from KDI, and Mr. Kwang Kim, Ms. Kyung-sook Lee, and Ms. Kyoungsun Lee of TAF for providing their skills in coordination, research, editing, and logistics in support of the dialogue participants, authors, and editors. Finally, from BlueSky International, we thank Ms. Laura Pierson and Ms. Leila Whittemore for their meticulous editorial work and Ms. Suzan Nolan for her patient yet persistent project management.

Jeong Pyo Choi  
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeong Pyo Choi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Korea Development Institute

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The Asia Foundation

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## Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BAPA	Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
DAC	Donor Assistance Committee
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdka (Free Aceh Movement)
GDP	Gross domestic product
INGO	International nongovernmental organization
KDI	Korea Development Institute
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIC	Organization Islamic Countries
Pak	Pakistan
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSC	South-South cooperation
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UN	United Nations
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
US	United States
USD	United States dollars

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# INTRODUCTION

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*By*  
*Anthea Mulakala*

Despite rapid economic growth across Asia, international and subnational conflicts are still prevalent in many parts of the continent. In recent decades, half of the countries in South and Southeast Asia have experienced subnational conflicts (The Asia Foundation, 2017). Many countries also face rising tensions between diverse ethnic and religious communities. Local conflicts over land and natural resources and urban crime rates have also risen in many places as Asia continues to urbanize. Additionally, regional conflicts have negatively impacted the regional and national development and growth of multiple Asian countries.

Conflict management and peacebuilding are not new areas of development cooperation; however, many lessons from international peacebuilding evaluations are not easily applicable to South-South cooperation (SSC) (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2012). Many international peacebuilding initiatives have previously focused on how Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation Donor Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) donors or multilateral bodies can support statebuilding and development in order to build peace (Haider, 2014). Asian countries, however, face atypical peacebuilding challenges because many conflicts in Asia occur in capable, functioning states or middle-income countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

The focus on statebuilding results in limited analysis of the intersection between Asian SSC and conflict prevention. Additionally, the international community has not drawn lessons from SSC peacebuilding efforts within Asia. A report from The Asia Foundation, “The State of

Conflict and Violence in Asia,” identifies the critical need for country-to-country learning within Asia about peacebuilding (2017). SSC’s emphasis on a country sharing its experience with development partners is particularly crucial for supporting peacebuilding efforts. Alongside OECD-DAC member-countries Japan and South Korea, other Asian countries, such as China, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, increasingly provide peacebuilding support to other Asian countries by facilitating peace talks and sharing lessons learned through overcoming conflict in their own countries, in addition to underwriting economic or cultural programs.

However, the predominance of subnational conflicts in Asia poses challenges to the core principles of SSC, which prioritize noninterference in other countries’ domestic affairs, respect for sovereignty, and no political conditionalities (Mulakala and Wagle, 2016). Adhering to these principles may result in countries disengaging from cooperation efforts or turning a “blind eye” to conflict because the country assumes their activities will have no impact on the conflict. As SSC expands in scale and scope, these challenges only continue to mount.

In the face of these principles, which have been pillars of SSC for decades, how can SSC develop a more proactive approach to peacebuilding? This volume explores this question and presents Asia-to-Asia cooperation cases, in conflict situations or with peacebuilding potential, that have had positive and negative results from interacting with peacebuilding initiatives. In doing so, the volume challenges SSC’s assumptions and boundaries.

The volume opens with Morel’s warning that, despite rapid development and growth in Asia, conflict will likely increase rather than decrease over the coming decade. Chapter 1 presents examples of how growth tends to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities between social classes, ethnic groups, or geographic regions. Morel notes the need for increased infrastructure investments in Asia and provides suggestions for how Asian development cooperation can support peaceful growth in the region.

Knowledge-sharing is key in SSC. Often countries in the same region or at similar levels of development can learn more from each other than from distant, wealthier donor countries. Chapters 2 and 3 by Xavier and

Alexandra discuss how India and Indonesia, countries with expanding and diversifying SSC programs, can share their own experience with peacebuilding while avoiding the liberal peace models pursued by most Western countries. In Chapter 2, Xavier asserts that India should be more proactive in sharing its experience with democratization and good governance with partner countries in the region. In Chapter 3, Alexandra introduces Indonesia's "sharing-based" approach to peacebuilding, garnered through its own experience dealing with domestic conflicts and external assistance, as a soft power alternative to more interventionist approaches.

External actors are rarely neutral players when they engage in peacebuilding in partner countries. This is especially true for SSC and Asian development cooperation. Chapters 4 and 5 present the challenges of effective peacebuilding cooperation when countries have, either official or unofficial, economic and security interests that override peace efforts. In Chapter 4, Khan explains how Pakistan's security and political interests in the region have negatively impacted its efforts to support economic and social development in neighboring Afghanistan. Forty years of conflict in Afghanistan have led to transborder military activities and refugee flows which have transformed Pakistan's tribal areas and raised Pakistan's security thermometer. In Chapter 5, Oo outlines how Myanmar's porous borders with China and Thailand have allowed for illicit and unofficial "cooperation" channels between these countries and Myanmar's insurgent groups. Oo discusses 15 ways insurgent groups utilize Thailand and China to sustain their fight against Myanmar's government.

While Asian development cooperation and SSC are traditionally state-led and government-to government, Asian civil society plays a larger and increasingly important role in peacebuilding efforts (Mulakala, 2017). In Chapters 6 and 7, Moon and Takahashi describe how South Korean and Japanese nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) created and expanded spaces for peacebuilding in response to constrained government channels. In Chapter 6, Moon presents the critical advocacy and trust-building role played by South Korean NGOs in maintaining public support for providing humanitarian aid to North Korea and sustaining channels of cooperation and communication when inter-Korean government relations

were strained. In Chapter 7, Takahashi explains how Japanese NGOs navigated complex humanitarian crises in conflict-affected areas in Pakistan and Indonesia and how success or failure in these areas depended on the level of trust afforded to NGOs by the respective authorities.

Several chapters also address the issue of state sovereignty, a key pillar of SSC. Alexandra, in Chapter 3, reflects on Indonesia's struggle to maintain its sovereignty in the face of external intervention during the peacebuilding process in Timor Leste and compares this experience to Indonesia's more confident sovereign stance during the Aceh peace process. In Chapter 7, Takahashi maintains that external assistance is usually necessary in humanitarian crises, and that finding the balance between exercising sovereignty and accepting external intervention is key to successful recovery. In Chapter 8, Nkala delves further into the history of SSC's principle of noninterference and the tension between it and the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect.

Lastly, a few authors consider the geopolitics of SSC peacebuilding. In Chapter 2, Xavier explains how India's approach to conflict resolution has evolved alongside its foreign policy realignments. Once more closely positioned with the Soviet Union and China, India's interests increasingly converge with those of Western powers, particularly over concerns about the security implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative. In Chapter 4, Khan explains how the fact that India and Pakistan – two countries that have historically fought one another – support opposing factions in Afghanistan contributes to Pakistan's overly securitized approach to peacebuilding. Khan asserts that Pakistan's peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan will be more successful if Pakistan can ride the coattails of a peace agreement brokered by the United States. In his discussion of regional organizations, Nkala, in Chapter 8, attributes the relative success of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in maintaining peace in the region to the exclusion of global superpowers' interventions in the affairs of its member states. This contrasts with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), where dominant powers including the United States, India, and Russia have intervened in subnational conflicts.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 states that peace, justice, and strong institutions are preconditions for



sustainable development. Conflict affects every country and achieving SDG 16 requires the efforts and attention of all actors (Asia Foundation 2017). This volume charts new territory in peacebuilding concerns for Asian development cooperation. The experiences shared are often messy, political, risky, and sometimes unsuccessful. This volume, however, contributes Asian perspectives to an evolving discourse on conflict and peacebuilding that has been dominated by Western donor experience. We hope the authors' insights narrow the knowledge gap on the intersection of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and SSC.

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# CHAPTER 1

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## Making Growth Work for Peace in Asia

By  
*Adrian Morel*

### Introduction

Development interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts often assume a positive relationship between economic development and peace. While developed nations tend to be more peaceful and better equipped to prevent and mitigate conflict, the process of growth and development itself often proves contested and conflictual. This is especially true of fast-growing Asian nations where progress on governance, the rule of law, and the development of social safeguards does not keep pace with economic development. *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia*, a recent report by The Asia Foundation, provides an overview of historical and emerging conflict trends in the region (The Asia Foundation, 2017b). While it acknowledges achievements in reducing poverty and improving billions of lives, it warns provocatively that development “will likely increase rather than decrease violence in the coming decade.”

We will explore three mechanisms through which economic growth and development can lead to political and social tensions. First, growth tends to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities between social classes, ethnic groups, or geographic regions. Second, a growing economy requires infrastructure investments. Building roads, bridges, and dams means acquiring land and displacing people. When the management of this process neglects the rights of affected populations, tensions become inevitable. Third, urbanization may lead to increasing levels of violence

and crime in fast-growing Asian cities.

Finally, we will discuss the implications for Asia-to-Asia development cooperation at a time when China's Belt and Road Initiative has raised immense hopes across the region — but also very serious concerns. To optimize their chances of creating positive outcomes, Asian investments in economic development must take into account their possible unintended social and political impacts. Asian development actors who have learned from experience that conflict-sensitivity principles and tools have value could play a role in promoting them among their peers. Furthermore, economic development must eventually coincide with governance reform and redistributive policies if it is to reduce exclusion, inequality, and injustice. Documenting and disseminating the successes and failures of Asian nations in navigating similar transitions can help promote peaceful change in countries that continue to lag behind.

## **Economic development as a tool for peace**

In 2018, the ten most peaceful countries in the world were Iceland, New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, Denmark, Canada, the Czech Republic, Singapore, Japan and Ireland, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI) (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019).<sup>1</sup> These countries all belong in the high-income category, and boast a GDP per capita (adjusted by purchasing power parity) superior to USD 30,000. With the bottom ten countries, the picture becomes more muddled: we find low-income countries, such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Syria; however, three of the world's least peaceful nations — Russia, Libya, and Iraq — rank among the upper middle-income economies. While the GPI hardly constitutes evidence of a direct causal link between economic development and peace,<sup>2</sup> it by and large vindicates the view that an

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<sup>1</sup> Each year, the GPI ranks countries based on their level of societal safety and security, exposure to ongoing domestic and international conflict, and the degree of militarization.

<sup>2</sup> The GPI also includes counter-examples: low-income countries such as Sierra Leone or Liberia rank high on the Peace Index, while Israel, a high-income country, just misses the list of the 15 least peaceful.

improving economy will increase a nation's chances of avoiding conflict.

This commonsense assumption has underpinned post-WWII multilateral institutions and development economics. The creation of the Bretton Woods system rested on the belief that WWII resulted partly from a failure to address the economic damage caused by the First World War, and that providing economic assistance to struggling European nations might help avoiding a repetition of the past (while at the same time containing creeping Soviet influence).<sup>3</sup>

A broad consensus in the current development literature holds that peace and economic growth entertain a complex but overall positive relationship.<sup>4</sup> I will cite two mechanisms that are often proposed to explain how an improving economy leads to peaceful outcomes. First, economic growth can divert attention from the grudges and grievances that led to conflict in the first place.<sup>5</sup> This holds especially in situations where all strata of the population experience the benefits of growth — or at least those more likely to support or engage in violent action. Another hypothesis is that economic growth increases the resources and capacity of the state, while at the same time shoring up its legitimacy. More capable and legitimate states tend to better manage — or suppress — political dissent and social tensions.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps because they are particularly well-placed for measuring the

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**3** John Maynard Keynes, leader of the British delegation in the negotiations that established the Bretton Woods system, developed this argument in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (Keynes, 1919).

**4** For a short but useful overview of the literature on the relationship between economic growth and peacebuilding with a focus on examples from the Asia Pacific region, see Strachan (2013).

**5** Of the Ireland conflict, The Portland Trust notes that economic disparity was a principal aggravating factor, and that international mediation began around economic issues. It concludes: “The importance of economics in conflict resolution is that it sets aside the question of motive, of grievance, of historical rights and wrongs, and focuses instead on the question of economic opportunity: what conditions — economic conditions in particular — have made the conflict possible? For if these conditions can be removed, progress to end the conflict might be made, just as surely as if the motives had been removed” (Portland Trust, 2007).

**6** The World Bank's 2011 World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development, with its emphasis on supporting state capacity and building legitimate institutions, vindicates this narrative (World Bank, 2011).

political benefits of an economic growth burst, state officials often tend to think that they can resolve domestic conflicts, even those explicitly rooted in political or cultural grievances, through increased spending and economic assistance to restive social groups and provinces. To choose a few examples from the Asia region, successive Thai governments have long responded in this fashion to the Malay insurgency in the southern border provinces (Parks, Colletta & Oppenheim, 2013); the Indonesian state has also sunk massive amounts of special autonomy funding into West Papua, with mixed results (Indonesian Institute of Sciences, 2005). Promoting private investment and economic development also stands front and center in the response of the Myanmar government to communal violence in Rakhine State (Htwe, 2017). Spending money on roads, bridges, and livelihood assistance often seems an easier path to peace than addressing seemingly intractable issues related to identity, political representation, or center-periphery relations.

Aid agencies often join governments in promoting the merits of infrastructure spending and job creation in conflict-affected regions. Jonathan Goodhand warns against a tendency in the industry to assume that “economic incentives can somehow override or short-circuit complex political processes” (2010). In fact, considerable internal tension often characterizes the decision-making process of development agencies. Social development or conflict specialists will typically argue that no durable economic recovery can take place in the absence of a political settlement or governance reform. However, institutional incentives make it hard to push national governments into reforms they do not want to make, especially when it gets in the way of signing large development loans.

## **Economic growth as a conflict driver**

As discussed in our introduction, economic growth does not always contribute to mitigating conflict. In fact, it can have the opposite effect and inflame social and political tensions. Asia, a region that has experienced very rapid growth over the past decades, abounds with examples. The Asia Foundation cites three mechanisms through which economic growth has led to violence in the past and will continue to do

so in the future: rising inequality, disputes over land and infrastructure development, and urbanization (2017b). We will now examine each of these in turn.

### *Unequal growth*

Many developing Asian countries continue to struggle with internal conflicts despite their steadily improving economic performance. In the two decades between 1992 and 2012, one half of the countries in South and Southeast Asia experienced subnational conflicts (Parks, Colletta & Oppenheim, 2013).<sup>7</sup> They remark that the majority of these conflicts took place “in generally-stable, middle-income countries, with relatively strong governments, regular elections, and capable security forces.” They cite Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan as examples. Why has economic growth failed to solve subnational conflicts in these instances?

One answer is that the benefits of growth are rarely shared by all. Free market advocates will argue that some degree of inequality is necessary to a functioning economy. However, a functioning society also requires a fair degree of inclusiveness and wealth redistribution. Douglass North uses the concept of “limited access order” to define societies where elite pacts grant political factions “privileged control over parts of the economy, each getting some share of the rents” (North *et al.*, 2011). Limited access orders do mitigate conflict insofar as they reduce inter-elite competition and therefore elite incentives to use violence. However, in such societies, a booming economy may well further expose patterns of exclusion and aggravate tensions between social classes, ethno-religious groups, and geographic regions. For those groups denied access to the dividends of growth and development, violence might seem the only pathway to change. Such outcomes prove especially likely in countries where ethnicity or religion defines who benefits and who is excluded: identity becomes a powerful mobilization tool. North

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<sup>7</sup> The authors define “subnational conflict” as an “armed conflict over control of a subnational territory within a sovereign state”. Most of the examples they refer to are ethno-nationalist conflicts.

considered that most developing countries in 2011 qualified as limited access orders. The model certainly applies to a varying degree to most South Asian and Southeast Asian countries.

This relationship between growth, exclusion, and violence convincingly explains why so many of the region's ethno-nationalist wars endured and even gained momentum as their host countries graduated from low to middle-income. Take Aceh, for example. The historical roots of the Acehnese independence struggle were political and cultural rather than economic (Aspinall, 2009). However, the Free Aceh Movement emerged in the late 1970s very much in reaction to the discovery of gas reserves in Lhokseumawe; it argued that the Indonesian state had siphoned local resources to fuel a national economic miracle while excluding the Acehnese from its benefits.<sup>8</sup> Similar stories of state neglect and predation, and feelings of missing out on national economic improvement, form part of the insurgent narrative in most other contested peripheries of Asia, from Mindanao to Rakhine and from West Papua to Northeast India.

The same logic helps to explain why transitions from authoritarianism to democracy are often marred by episodes of large-scale ethno-nationalist or communal violence, as in the early years of Indonesia's Reformasi period or in today's Myanmar. Analysts often cite the sudden release of pent-up frustrations previously suppressed by a strong state. One might also note that regime transitions constitute periods of rapid and profound political, social, and economic change. As such, they generate opportunity but also anxiety among groups who fear they could end up on the losing end of the bargain. Violence can become a way to maintain or acquire leverage as the cards of political and economic power are being reshuffled.<sup>9</sup>

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**8** Each year between 1974 and 1982, Indonesia experienced at least 5% economic growth. GAM was founded in 1976. Tellingly, the very first attack by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) targeted Mobil Oil engineers in Lhokseumawe, not the military or government officials. Hasan Tiro, GAM's founder, had unsuccessfully applied for a pipeline contract with the Mobil Oil gas plant.

**9** Wilson gives a detailed investigation of the North Maluku conflict, which claimed nearly 4000 lives in this remote corner of the Indonesian archipelago between 1999 and 2000. It was the most intense violence of Indonesia's Reformasi period, which



## *The cost of infrastructure development*

Inequality and exclusion manifest most palpably in disputes related to land and extractive resources. Asia's economic dynamism has increased the demand for land and infrastructure investment. Better roads and bridges are needed to connect markets; dams must be built to power factories and bring light to shopping centers. Land must be freed for large-scale development projects and industrial needs. These pressures have reduced the security of land tenure for many of Asia's rural poor and led to mass displacement and environmental damage. Neglecting the rights of those affected fuels a narrative of injustice that can lead to violent conflict.

Infrastructure projects planned in conflict areas prove particularly sensitive. Development is a contested process: what the state calls "progress," local residents may regard as abuse or oppression. In Myanmar in 2016, twelve out of 26 existing hydropower dams, and 42 out of 50 planned dams, were located in areas affected by subnational conflict (The Asia Foundation, 2017a). In the states of Kayin, Kayah, Kachin and Shan, where vast areas remain disconnected from the national electricity grid, hydropower dams have become a symbol of state exploitation and have become targets of frequent attacks by ethnic armed groups (The Asia Foundation, 2017a).

In land-scarce regions of India with high population density, the acquisition of land for infrastructure and commercial needs has led to mass displacement, often without compensation. Those particularly affected include poor peasants, lower castes, and indigenous people from the mineral-rich and forested areas of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Assam. Their anger and frustration fueled the Naxalite insurgency. This Maoist movement originated in 1967 in a peasant uprising over land reform in a West Bengal village; in 2006, Prime

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saw communal violence also erupt in Maluku, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan and separatist insurgencies gain intensity in Aceh and Papua. Wilson shows how the North Maluku conflict, which quickly adopted the language of Jihad and pitted the North Maluku's Christian and Muslim communities against each other, originated in a land dispute and had much to do with local political elites competing to fill the vacuum left by the end of the New Order regime (2008).

Minister Manmohan Singh declared it “the single biggest internal security challenge ever faced by our country”, and by 2014 the insurrection had spread to 20 of India’s states. Land also comprised a major theme in the political narrative of the Nepalese civil war. *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia* (Asia Foundation, 2017) notes a rising risk of violent conflict as looming food and environmental crises make land an increasingly scarce and valuable commodity.

### *Urbanization*

Asia’s fast growth in the past decades has led to rapid urbanization. 200 million Asians left the countryside for the city in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nine of the world’s ten largest megacities are located in Asia.<sup>10</sup> This shift from agrarian to urbanized societies has long been associated with a positive development narrative: as people move away from villages, join the ranks of the urban working class, and start receiving pay stubs and paying taxes, they also begin to demand greater transparency and accountability in state institutions and services.<sup>11</sup> However, that narrative requires nuance. Largely inspired by the experience of western countries and the development successes of Northeast Asian states such as Japan or South Korea, it has proven a less easy fit for much of the developing world.<sup>12</sup> For most rural migrants, securing formal employment and joining the ranks of an empowered middle class remains a distant dream. Nancy Birdsall argues that as cities expand, so does a new social class of “strugglers” (Birdsall, 2018). She defines them as a group wedged between the “traditional” poor (living on

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**10** The term “megacity” typically refers to metropolitan areas with a population exceeding 10 million. In 2016, the world’s ten largest megacities were Tokyo (38,1 million), Shanghai (34 million), Jakarta (31.5 million), Delhi (27.2 million), Seoul (25.6 million), Guangzhou (25 million), Beijing (24.9 million), Manila (24.1 million), Mumbai (23.9 million) and New York (23.8 million).

**11** This idea of economic growth generating momentum for better governance and greater democracy is central to the Modernization theory. For example, see Lipset (1960).

**12** For a great comparative account of successes and failures in economic development across Asian countries, and a compelling discussion of the factors that explain the relative success of Northeast Asia compared to Southeast Asia, see Studwell (2014).

USD 1.90 a day or less) and the middle class. Most inhabit settlements at the peri-urban edge and eke out a living in the informal sector. They do not enjoy job security and hardly benefit from social protection programs; but unlike the poor, they are net payers to tax systems. Strugglers have seen their income grow in the 1990s and 2000s, and Birdsall notes they aspire to middle-class status, for their children if not themselves. However, they face a high probability of falling back into poverty. Birdsall estimates that this “forgotten majority” today represents 60 percent of the population of developing countries. By 2030, the median voter in many Asian countries will belong in this demographic.<sup>13</sup>

How does this relate to conflict and violence? First, as the population of Asia becomes predominantly urban, urban problems require closer attention: crime, gangs, and drug-related violence tend to thrive in fast-growing cities. While Asia has lower homicide rates than other parts of the developing world, they have increased in recent years. In 2012, the two Asian cities with the highest homicide rates (close to 12 per 100,000 people) were Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia, and Dili, capital of Timor Leste, two cities that have urbanized rapidly in the past two decades and have significant youth bulges and high rates of unemployment (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). Second, if ‘strugglers’ now represent over half of the population of developing countries, failure to support their aspirations for a better life might have tragic long-term consequences. Birdsall cites the example of Muhammad Bouazizi, whose self-immolation in 2011 became a symbol for the Arab Spring. Bouazizi chose to sacrifice himself, but disappointed peri-urban youth may prefer other methods of protest. They form an ideal pool of potential recruits not just for gangs, but also for violent political actors and extremist groups.

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**13** This paragraph borrows extensively from the content of a panel discussion on the topic at the 2018 World Bank Fragility Forum, Washington DC. The panel, chaired by Annette Dixon (World Bank), included Saku Akmeemana (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), Tanya Hamada (fellow at the International Forum for Democratic studies), Sofia Shakil (The Asia Foundation), and the author of this chapter.

## How can Asian development cooperation support peaceful growth in the region?

The previous sections lead to a logical conclusion: economic development will only contribute to peace under certain conditions, when complemented by investments in the mechanisms and institutions that ensure more equitable sharing of the benefits of growth. This is not breaking news. Most leading development organizations recognize this and have incorporated these principles in their current strategies. Pathways for Peace, a joint report by The World Bank and the United Nations published in 2018, states that a surge of conflict in recent years “calls into question the long-standing assumption that peace will accompany income growth” (United Nations & World Bank, 2018). The report emphasizes addressing inequality and exclusion through redistributive policies; it also stresses the need for risk-informed development strategies.

Asia-to-Asia cooperation plays an increasing and well-needed role in diversifying the options of Asian countries as they look for financing to meet their development needs. However, Asian development actors tend to prioritize infrastructure. While they may recognize the importance of balancing economic development with support to governance reform, they have been less active in that field. In 2016 and 2017, 50 percent of Japan’s official development assistance (ODA), and 37.6 percent of Korea’s ODA, went to economic infrastructure (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018).<sup>14</sup> This stands in stark contrast to the average portion of ODA spent on infrastructure by all OECD-DAC members (17.3 percent). The bulk of China’s foreign assistance famously focuses on economic infrastructure, in particular transportation.<sup>15</sup> There are legitimate reasons for this. First, many Asian

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**14** By comparison, during the same time period, Japan spent 5.9 percent of its ODA on education and health and 10.8 percent on other social infrastructure (including governance). Korea spent 25.2 percent on education and health and 14.3 percent on other social infrastructure.

**15** According to AidData, infrastructure represents about three-quarters of China’s official commitments (AidData, 2019). China does not classify its assistance in terms of ODA or non-ODA flows, and does not recognize AidData as a credible source on

developing nations certainly need better roads and dams. In defense of its focus on water, transportation and energy, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) argues that the USD 900 billion spent each year on infrastructure in Asia still falls short of the USD 1.7 trillion needed annually until 2030 to keep pace with economic growth and climate change (Asian Development Bank, 2019). Second, South-to-South development cooperation has largely positioned itself as an alternative to a western development paradigm perceived as post-colonial and interventionist; in contrast, Asian development actors emphasize respect for national sovereignty and non-interference.<sup>16</sup> There is value in a cooperation model that focuses on the most pressing economic needs of neighboring nations while respecting their right to reform at their own pace. However, as the previous section established, considerable danger may arise in ignoring the unintended social and political consequences of interventions designed to support economic development. At the very least, Asian development actors should ensure that their investments do not overlook those risks.

Few initiatives better illustrate these concerns than China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Under this rather loose policy umbrella, China has begun to pour a trillion dollars into roads, rail transportation, ports, logistical hubs and other infrastructure investments in over 60 countries across Eurasia and Africa. While the BRI clearly seeks to open new markets for China's economic ambitions, the rationale that Chinese authorities have built around it includes a peacebuilding element: by improving connectivity and fostering economic integration, the BRI will bring prosperity and peace to the regions it traverses.<sup>17</sup> And yet the policy has received intense reproach for doing the exact opposite: Chinese projects receive harsh criticism for their blindness to possible negative impacts on social, political, and security dynamics.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, there are

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Chinese development assistance.

**16** Critics might argue that the Asian countries advocating most stridently for non-interference are those most badly in need for political reform. Also, while infrastructure investments might appear apolitical, they can obviously serve as instruments of geopolitical influence.

**17** For example, see State Council 2015.

**18** China has also faced charges of pushing beneficiary countries into a debt trap, and of

plenty of ways that BRI investments can go wrong as they roll out through some of the most fragile and contested regions of Asia, such as the borderlands of Myanmar or Jammu and Kashmir. Proposed dams in the Kachin, Kayah, and Shan States of Myanmar have already led to considerable tensions, leading to the suspension of billion-dollar projects such as the Myitsone dam in Kachin (The Asia Foundation, 2017a). A road construction project in the Himalayas led to a border standoff between China and India (Panda 2017) and further brushes have occurred between the two regional powers over Chinese expansion in Sri Lanka and plans for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Crisis Group, 2018). As the Crisis Group puts it, “China’s basic premise is that economic development will alleviate these problems. In some ways it may, but if prosperity is unequally shared, local communities are not consulted on projects that affect them, and reforms of institutions and systems of governance fail to keep pace with inflows of investment, then the Belt and Road could make fragile situations worse” (Crisis Group, 2017).

To be sure, any development bank or state agency has a natural interest in ensuring that its foreign investments do not create unintended tensions and trouble. The delays that inevitably ensue have a price, and China has no more desire than anyone to lose billions in sunk costs over cancellation or suspension of a controversial project.<sup>19</sup> What actions, then, can ensure that Asian investments in economic development lead to peaceful outcomes, and what role can regional development cooperation play?

The reasons that sometimes push Asian development actors to overlook risks and consequences of their large-scale investments do not differ fundamentally from those of Western development agencies who make the same mistakes (arguably more often than they should): they include geopolitical pressures to help allies or contain the regional

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hiding aggressive imperialist ambitions under a veil of good intentions. Ironically, much of today’s BRI criticism recalls the criticism historically addressed to western development policy from southern actors.

**19** China had to pay a steep price for the way that it gained control of the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka. Faced with severe criticism, China cut the price for its multi-billion dollar railway project in Malaysia by a third. It drastically scaled down plans for the expanded port of Kyaukpyu in Myanmar. The Maldives are seeking a renegotiation of the loans granted by the Yameen government (Joshi, 2019).

influence of competitors, and the internal incentives of development banks and firms, reluctant to turn down large loan or contract opportunities. In addition, since Asian investors hesitate to interfere in the political affairs of their neighbors, they tend to leave the domestic fallout of development projects to the national governments involved. However, experience increasingly shows the limits of this model. Even China will likely put more pressure on its clients to prevent criticism and delays. As it seeks to reduce the exposure of its investments to social, environmental, and political risks, China may also start paying more attention to global experience in mitigating those risks, by integrating conflict-sensitivity and social and environmental safeguards into development projects. Toolkits and lessons abound that deal with harnessing local knowledge, assessing risks and the possible spillover effects of infrastructure investments, improving community engagement, and generally applying simple principles such as informed consent.

Of course, China and other Asian actors will prove more amenable to these tools and lessons when they come from their peers, rather than from Western bilateral or multilateral agencies. In this respect, agencies such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have a role to play. Both organizations have learned lessons from their engagement in conflict-affected countries, and have made considerable progress in mainstreaming conflict-sensitivity principles and tools through project design and implementation. In Myanmar, the ADB began working with experts and civil society partners to develop a more solid understanding of local social and political dynamics. It also improved efforts to engage in genuine consultation with affected communities to build support for its projects (Wicklein, 2017).

Making individual projects more context-informed and conflict-sensitive is a useful first step, but more needs to be done. Broader reform will often be required in order to ensure that economic development supports peace instead of perpetuating tensions. Economic development that supports peace instead of perpetuating tensions in beneficiary countries will often require broader reform. As discussed above, Asia-to-Asia development cooperation has proven reluctant to engage in that area because it frowns on interventionism. However, it could play a useful and non-intrusive role in promoting the lessons of successful institutional

reform in the region. Multiple countries in Asia have navigated difficult political and economic transitions, and successfully used governance reform to tame secessionist tendencies and reduce conflict.

Ample space exists for sharing these lessons more broadly and effectively. Let us take the example of Indonesia. Following the fall of the 30-year New Order regime in the late 1990s, communal riots raged across the Indonesian archipelago in the islands of Kalimantan, Maluku, and Sulawesi, and a separatist conflict in Aceh gained intensity. Faced with a real threat of disintegration, the Indonesian state set out to implement fast and sweeping decentralization reform, devolving considerable fiscal and political power to the district level. By and large, this project succeeded. Decentralization contributed to spreading development more evenly, increasing political participation, and (partly) addressing local grievances over natural resource management. It was certainly not an unmitigated success. Many criticisms have arisen about the reform's shortcomings, with some observers highlighting how economic and political benefits tended to empower local elites more than local populations.<sup>20</sup> However, Indonesian decentralization, combined with additional concessions and special autonomy arrangements in conflict-affected provinces, undeniably contributed to bringing peace and stability back to the country.<sup>21</sup> Regional development cooperation should support the documentation, promotion, and dissemination of regional knowledge and experiences.

## Conclusion

Today's conflicts arise out of perceived or real exclusion and injustice,

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**20** Some authors have argued convincingly that the primary intent of Indonesia's decentralization reform was always to buy off "spoilers" rather than bringing services closer to the people (Smith, 2014). Either way, it did succeed in bringing peace and stability back to the archipelago after the violence of the early 2000s.

**21** West Papua is a notable exception, although the same arrangements probably contributed to keep the separatist insurgency there at a very low and manageable level. West Papua is certainly the most blatant example of decentralization and special autonomy arrangements being wasted on local elites and failing completely to improve the welfare of local populations (Anderson, 2015).



rooted in inequality across groups (United Nations & World Bank, 2018). Broad-based economic development can contribute to creating conditions for durable peace; on the other hand, imbalances in the distribution of the benefits of growth can aggravate exclusion and perpetuate conflict. For growth to contribute to peace in developing regions, investments must be made not just in the economic infrastructure but also in institutions that will ensure that power and wealth are shared more equitably across geographic areas and social strata. In parts of Asia where rapid growth continues to coexist with high levels of inequality and conflict, economic development may well fuel violence in the coming decade. This paper discussed three pathways to negative outcomes, through further exclusion, tensions related to land and extractive resources, and urbanization.

Asia-to-Asia development cooperation plays an increasingly important role in the region, with billions spent every year to meet growing infrastructure needs. However, Asian development actors tend to shy away from pressing national governments on social and other safeguards, not to mention broader governance reform. In fact, China's so-called "no-conditionality" approach<sup>22</sup> has generated competition for Western development agencies, pushing the latter to tone down demands for economic and political reform. But things are changing. Asian voices have joined Western critics in pointing out that China's aid does in fact come with strings attached and long-term consequences. In response to mounting criticism, stalled projects, and accusations that the BRI intentionally lures developing neighbors into debt and financial dependency, China has already adjusted course. Last April in Beijing, on the opening day of the second Belt and Road Forum, Finance Minister Liu Kun announced that China would draw upon World Bank and International Monetary Fund standards for better appraisal of financial risks (Tang, 2019). During the forum's opening ceremony, President Xi Jinping presented his vision for a "people-centric" BRI that will adopt international environmental and transparency standards (Joshi, 2019). He

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**22** In fact, Chinese aid does come with some conditionality, including political preconditions. In order to receive aid and loans, recipient nations must adhere to the one-China principle. They must also agree to the use of Chinese labor and resources (Xuefeng *et al.*, 2012).

also reiterated China's invitation for other development actors to collaborate in the implementation of BRI projects as part of the "third party cooperation" model.

Only time will tell if this overture is sincere. Third-party cooperation, at least, has already begun. In 2018, Japan and China agreed to a joint execution of 50 infrastructure projects across the region. This offers a fine opportunity for regional development actors such as JICA and the ADB to underscore the importance of the political, social, and environmental consequences of development projects. This is not just about doing the right thing; it is also about protecting long-term investments. One could make a similar argument about economic development and institutional reform: in countries where one advances at a much slower pace than the other fault lines will only deepen and inevitably lead to violent change. Asia-to-Asia cooperation could play a greater role in documenting Asian experiences with negotiating institutional reform, especially when they diverge from the dominant Western narrative. Many Asian countries have learned the hard way how to navigate rapid economic and social change, and how to reform to survive. Shedding greater light on these stories, so as to inspire rather than judge, might just offer the best way to promote change while respecting regional sensitivities around political interference.

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## CHAPTER 2

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### India's Reluctant but Democratic Approach to Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

*By*  
*Constantino Xavier<sup>1</sup>*

#### **Introduction**

India is in a region marked by protracted political violence, yet it has been reluctant to engage in conflict mediation and peacebuilding beyond its borders unless the conflict threatens its domestic stability. India's government is skeptical about the benefits of conflict mediation and generally considers external interventions to be counter-productive. Despite such caution, it is within India's best interest to play a more proactive role in peacebuilding as changing environmental, economic, and geostrategic factors will aggravate regional conflicts. External conflict mediation requires expertise and institutionalized systems, something India, with its traditional focus of informal conflict mediation, does not have. Increasingly unsustainable, India's informal approach and preference to work in isolation also hinders - much-needed dialogue and greater cooperation with like-minded democracies and multilateral organizations invested in peacebuilding.

This chapter reviews India's approach to conflict resolution and its important role in a shifting regional and global context. The first section discusses India's principled tradition of non-interference and explains how India's position differs from more active approaches in other developed countries. The second section outlines how, when India does

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<sup>1</sup> The author gratefully acknowledges Nidhi Varma for her insights and research assistance.

engage in conflict resolution abroad, its approach tends to be informal, secretive, and isolationist. India's modus operandi abroad also reflects its democratic experience at home, based on the understanding that pluralist institutions, the rule of law, and an electoral system that accommodates diversity result in sustainable peace and development. The third section discusses how greater capacity and self-confidence, regional democratization, and improved relationships with other democracies, including Japan and the United States, are mitigating India's traditional reluctance and incentivizing greater interest in external conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The fourth and final section argues that, to effectively pursue its new foreign policy interests, particularly in South Asia, India will have to invest in greater institutionalization, expand its external peacekeeping experience, and deepen cooperation with other actors that share India's cautious but democratic approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

### **Reluctance and informality**

There is significant research about the broader contours of India's foreign policy, including its non-alignment during the Cold War. Relations with Pakistan, China, and the United States drive a burgeoning scholarship based on new archival materials (Bhagavan, 2019). There is also growing knowledge about India's economic assistance to Asia and Africa, mostly through "South-South" development cooperation since the 1950s (Chaturvedi & Mulakala, 2016). There is little known, however, about how India addresses conflicts beyond its borders.

This knowledge gap is particularly striking given the vast body of research on conflict management and peacebuilding approaches in other democratic powers, including the United States, the European Union, Japan, and Australia. Cases relating to India and contributions by Indian officials or scholars are absent in this vast literature (Zartman, 2007). This knowledge gap perpetuates narratives about Indian non-interference and exaggerates the differences between India and other states engaged in conflict resolution. The sparse scholarship that does exist concerning India's conflict interventions focuses largely on inter-state conflicts in South Asia, especially various Western or Soviet attempts to mediate in

the India-Pakistan dispute. India's involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict since the 1980s has also attracted some attention, but this research lacks primary evidence, historical depth, and comparative insights.<sup>2</sup>

The lack of academic research and knowledge reflects the Indian government's traditional disinterest in publicly acknowledging and discussing the idea of conflict resolution beyond India's borders. Adhering to "non-interference" as a key foreign policy principle, some Indian officials even refer to peacebuilding efforts as a Western obsession.<sup>3</sup> India's government is particularly skeptical about the effectiveness of third-party involvement due to the concern that geostrategic, economic, and other interests can impact mediation attempts and further aggravate conflicts. These concerns are particularly prevalent in the South Asian region, where cross-border ethnic links and multiple security and geostrategic factors complicate conflicts. Constrained by this difficult neighborhood, India often chooses non-interference as its default approach. Shyam Saran, a former high-ranking diplomat, illustrates the logic behind Indian reluctance to intervene: "There are moments in history when it is better to step aside and let whatever transformation that is taking place, take place, and not try to interfere with it nor try to interpose yourself in that transformation that is taking place" (Saran, 2006, p.680).

Even when India pursues political involvement abroad, as discussed in the following section, it has mostly done so in isolation, through informal channels, and in secrecy. This informal approach served India well in regions where a variety of cross-border ethnic links limited India's capacity to intervene without the risk of inter-state and social repercussions. India's failed military peacekeeping mission in Sri Lanka

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**2** Exceptions to the lack of literature also include a broad overview of India and conflicts in South Asia and case studies on Indian involvement in Sri Lankan conflicts during the 1980s and Nepali conflicts in the 2000s (Bajpai, 2003; Silva, 1994; Rupesinghe, 1998; Muni, 2012).

**3** This is why India has opposed most American interventionism in conflict zones since the end of the Cold War. A retired Indian ambassador notes that "India adheres to its benign and noble policy of non-interference into internal affairs" and believes that "the choice of the form of government is best left to the people of the country concerned" (Malhotra, 2014).



in the late 1980s only reinforced doubts about the benefits of involvement. Domestic conflicts, including in Kashmir, Punjab, and the Northeast region, also drive India's concerns that mediation attempts abroad will backfire and expose its conflicts at home to greater international scrutiny and mediation (Biswas, 2017).

Former officials dismiss institutionalization, often arguing that the specific nature of each domestic conflict does not permit a single, blueprint approach; they further claim that India's informal approach offers flexibility. This popular line of thought cautions against interventionism (as best articulated by Shyam Saran above), arguing instead for a case-by-case policy and maximum discretion, especially when India deals with conflicts in neighboring countries concerned that India may use a mediation mandate as a pretext for intervention in their domestic affairs (Bajpai, 2003).

## **Lessons learned**

Despite India's principled and reluctant approach to interventionism, it has its own history of military and political conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution in multiple countries. India's history of conflict resolution goes back to the 1950s, when it played a critical role in mitigating several crises during the Cold War's early stages. Under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, India also deployed military peacekeepers and made significant mediation efforts during the Korean war (1950-1953), the first Indochina conflict (1954), the Suez crisis (1956), the Lebanon crisis (1958), and the Congo war (1960s). India's peacekeeping efforts often succeeded in reducing tensions, limiting conflict escalation, and, in some cases, even helped resolve conflicts (Nayudu, 2015; Singh, 2019).

India also focused on conflict prevention in its more immediate neighborhood, South Asia. During the 1950s, India engaged in what was likely the first non-Western democratic state-building mission in Nepal. After mediating a Nepali domestic rebellion that took place from 1950 to 1951, India deputed hundreds of officials to assist in Nepal's democratization, which included modernizing the economy, reforming the feudal bureaucracy, designing the first constitution, and holding free

elections (Bhasin, 2005). Political mediation, in particular, played an important role in India's approach to conflict resolution in South Asia. India played a determinant, albeit reluctant, role in the political developments of Nepal and Sri Lanka (Xavier, 2016).

Between 1983 and 1987, Indian officials tried to find a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, one marked by the radicalization of the Tamil minority fighting for a separate homeland. Delhi facilitated talks between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil insurgents; it also held a formal mediation process in Bhutan. Indian political envoys and experts also proposed amendments to the Sri Lankan constitution, which eventually led to an agreement and the deployment of an Indian military peacekeeping mission (Xavier, 2016).

India's former national security advisor, J. N. Dixit, defined conflict management and peacebuilding as a strategic priority during India's military intervention in Sri Lanka. Dixit warned the Indian government that the Sri Lankan conflict could spill over India's borders and cautioned that a strict adherence to non-interference was "neither desirable nor practical." Instead, Dixit emphasized the need for "practical corrective action" to solve the conflict, including peacebuilding through diplomatic mediation and military intervention. (1998, p.163). While driven by this interventionist impulse, the Indian peacekeeping mission suffered heavy casualties and withdrew in defeat in 1990, unable to enforce a political agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil insurgents.

India's role in Sri Lanka's conflict resolution was overt, but often India's conflict mediation can also be more discreet. In Bangladesh, for example, Indian officials played a critical, but invisible, role in the adoption of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in 1997, signed between the Bangladesh government, the Chakma, and other minority insurgents (Saha, 1999). Similarly, in 2005, India also played a crucial role in the end of Nepal's civil war by facilitating talks between the democratic parties and Maoist insurgents in Nepal. India continued to work in the background to ensure a peaceful transition towards a new republican constitution in Nepal (Jha, 2014).

India's experience in conflict prevention and resolution reflects five patterns. First, there is an extraordinary knowledge gap about India's contributions. India's involvement remains mostly undocumented

because the country operates informally and discretely. Lack of declassified official sources and the political sensitivity surrounding secret mediation activities hinders the study of India's contribution, which remains largely unknown internationally. Lack of scholarship also contributes to the narrative of India's non-interference and prevents India's experience from being compared to Western and other Asian countries' peacebuilding approaches.

Second, the Indian government employs a wide range of tools that shape the political environment beyond its borders, including diplomatic mediation, technical assistance, targeted aid, limited sanctions, and military force. Under India's Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, for example, the Indian government has hosted thousands of foreign government officers since the 1960s. India's training is mostly in technical domains, but it also focuses on the political angle of good governance and the rule of law from a South-South development cooperation perspective (Chaturvedi & Mulakala, 2016).

Third, Indian efforts abroad have a strong democratic component. India often shares its internal peacebuilding experience, which has succeeded through inclusive institutions that accommodate ethno-linguistic, religious, and ideological diversity. In 2003, former Prime Minister Atal B. Vajpayee emphasized that democracy was an "effective instrument for fulfilling people's aspirations and resolving conflicts and contentious issues [because] history has proved time and again that free and democratic societies are the ones that are creative, self-corrective and self-regenerative" (Vajpayee, 2003). Through special programs at the Indian parliament and electoral commission, for example, thousands of foreign officials have been trained to strengthen their countries' capacity for conflict prevention and resolution through democratic institutions and processes.

Fourth, India's conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts are mostly informal and lack specific institutions. Despite its rich experience, there is no specific training, doctrine, agency, or toolkit for Indian officials to monitor and mediate conflicts and support state-building initiatives abroad. Indian government officials often argue against institutionalizing conflict resolution policies because the specificity of each domestic conflict does not lend itself to rigid guidelines.

Finally, India rarely cooperates with other countries and multilateral agencies to exchange information, share best practices, or pursue joint activities during peacebuilding initiatives. In some cases, India even opposed involvement from the United Nations (UN) in its neighboring countries, fearing that it would lead to multilateral “mission creep” at the expense of India’s influence and interests. This explains why, after Nepal’s 2006 transition toward a republic, India only reluctantly allowed a limited UN presence in the country and kept UN intervention solely focused on monitoring the disarmament process of the Maoist insurgents (Martin, 2012).

## **New stakes and interests**

In some cases, India followed Dixit’s “corrective action” approach to promote peace, stability, and order beyond its borders, but such instances are infrequent and informal. India’s reluctance to engage in peacebuilding has hindered Indian practice, formalization, and articulation in the past, and such passivity is no longer sustainable. India’s growing self-confidence, regional democratization, and global realignments now make a stronger case for Indian investment in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. These changes are encouraging India to play a more proactive role in shaping the South Asian political environment.

### ***Democratic self-confidence***

India’s growing self-confidence at home contributes to the country’s new willingness to share its experience abroad. In 2004, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh articulated this growing appetite for external political activism, noting that India had a special responsibility to support other countries in overcoming conflict and other challenges:

*“...the experience of a democracy like ours can be of some help in enabling ‘Societies in Transition’ to evolve into open, inclusive, plural, democratic societies. ...we should not shy away from opportunities to strengthen the institutions of democratic pluralism whenever we are called upon to do so.” (Singh, 2004)*

India has a historically turbulent relationship with the democratic government it inherited from the British. In 1949, India's independent constitution adopted the parliamentary, electoral, and judicial institutions that were initiated under colonial rule. India often viewed the democratic system as an accident of history, and considered it alien to local traditions or bound to fail.

India's democratic system is now seventy years old, and it has adapted to local realities and succeeded in addressing a variety of developmental and political conflicts. Indian citizens now claim that this political system is an Indian achievement. India's democratic system has had great success in solving internal conflicts and maintaining peace and unity. Since the 2000s, India defused a variety of ideological and ethnic insurgencies through a mix of political inducements and economic development, leading to a dramatic reduction of political violence (The Asia Foundation, 2017).

There are lingering and new conflicts emerging in India, but the principles of secularism, federalism, the rule of law, and free elections are key to India's successful union and relative peace despite extraordinary diversity, separatist forces, and external pressures. In contrast to several other multi-ethnic countries that fragmented due to internal conflicts, India now recognizes that it succeeded not despite but because of its democratic system (Kohli, 2004).

Speaking in 1978, in Sri Lanka, India's Prime Minister Morarji Desai first articulated India's new self-confidence: "our [Indian] way ha[s] indeed proved its superiority [because] our pursuit of economic growth and social justice is continuous, sustained and yet subject to public opinion and pressures and cannot therefore be derailed by the cycles of extremism and violence" (Bhasin, 2001, p.127). India's democratic success at home encouraged India to think about the utility of democratic systems in neighboring countries and supported Prime Minister Singh's call for India to be more involved in peacebuilding. In 2011, Singh's government set up the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), which has trained thousands of electoral staff from around the world. In terms of India's development assistance, monitoring, and evaluation processes, India now focuses more on spelling out normative objectives for its economic assistance. This is the case for

the new Development Partnership Administration (DPA), established in 2012, that engages with a variety of stakeholders to assess how political context and values should shape Indian aid projects (Aneja & Ngangom, 2017).

### ***Regional democratization and new conflicts***

The second change to India's peacebuilding initiatives relates to the political environment in South Asia, which has experienced a considerable period of democratization. Until the 2000s, absolutist kings ruled India's neighbors Nepal and Bhutan; Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar remained mostly military autocracies; dictatorships governed the Maldives; and Sri Lanka remained engulfed in a civil war due to ethnically discriminatory policies. In 2013, India remained the only "free" democratic state in South Asia and was exclusively surrounded by "partially free" or "unfree" authoritarian states. New Delhi's geographically closest free capitals were Ulan Bator in Mongolia, Jakarta in Indonesia, and Tel Aviv in Israel (Freedom House Index, 2013).

In 2015, however, for the first time in almost seventy years, there were democratically elected governments in all of India's neighboring countries, except for China. Democracy has made progress in South Asia, but the region is still one of the world's least peaceful regions, hosting a variety of internal and inter-state conflicts. The high levels of conflict in South Asia reflect the risks and instability of democratic transitions (The Centre for Systemic Peace, 2015). Also, Nepal's new federal constitution faces a conflicted implementation phase, with opposition from various minorities. Sri Lanka struggles to find mechanisms to heal the wounds of thirty years of civil war. Bangladesh's current political stability, in turn, hides a rising crisis with Islamic extremist forces. Finally, the violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state and subsequent refugee outflow encourages serious doubts about the chances of Myanmar's political reform. Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Maldives, and several other countries in South Asia and across the Indian Ocean, face similar challenges due to political transitions or weak governance institutions.

Increasingly exposed to political instability in neighboring countries, India is beginning to move away from its traditional reluctance and

becoming increasingly involved in supporting sustainable order and peace beyond its borders. In some cases, Delhi's rising activism has resulted in India taking the lead in crisis response as a regional "leading power" and "first responder" to natural and manmade disasters, including the Nepal earthquake and the Myanmar refugee crisis (Xavier, 2017). Additionally, Manmohan Singh's insistence that India step up to assist "societies in transition" indicates Delhi's increasing willingness to support neighboring countries with India's institutional and governance experience in order to address both old and new external conflicts.

There has also been an economic incentive for India to focus more on the preventive aspects of peacebuilding in its neighborhood. Delhi's focus on economic integration and regional interdependence in recent years, enshrined in its "neighborhood first" policy, hinges on its capacity to ensure a peaceful and stable periphery. For example, in order to ensure the success of its connectivity plans with Southeast Asia, India involved itself more actively in Myanmar's internal peace process. In 2018, India deployed its National Security Advisor to Myanmar as an observer, which was India's first formal involvement in Myanmar (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018a).

### ***Global realignments***

The third change to India's conflict resolution policies involves India's ongoing foreign policy realignments, which focus on a new range of democratic partners. As an ally of the Soviet Union during the majority of the Cold War, India was cautious about emphasizing the advantages of its democratic system abroad. Even in the 2000s, India frequently sided with Russia and China to reject Western and other international attempts to pressure states into democratization and conflict resolution. In the United Nations, India opposed formalizing the "Responsibility to Protect" principle, proposed by the United States and European states, which argued for a legal right to intervene in cases of genocide or human rights abuses. India voted against sanctions to support Myanmar's pro-democracy movement in 2007 and against pressuring Sri Lanka to end its military offensive against Tamil insurgents in 2009. India's opposition to Western interventionist efforts often placed it on uneasy footing, where it

took principled exception to Russian or Chinese positions but often ended up siding with them against Delhi's democratic peers (Hall, 2013).

With China's rise over the last ten years, especially in the South Asian region, India is slowly converging with other democratic powers on how best to address domestic conflicts. In its refusal to join China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for example, India emphasized concerns that massive infrastructure development projects could destabilize political, social, and environmental conditions in host countries and increase conflicts over resources (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017). India is particularly concerned about the BRI's security implications for its neighboring countries, especially Pakistan and Myanmar, where Chinese projects have previously instigated unrest, exposed institutional fragilities, and reactivated latent conflicts (Hallgren & Ghiasy, 2017). In its own external infrastructure and connectivity projects, India emphasized principles of sustainability and stability (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018b).

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding have assumed greater salience in India's foreign policy priorities. India emphasizes democracy and good governance in its deepening partnerships with like-minded democratic powers across the Indo-Pacific, including through quadrilateral dialogues and infrastructure financing initiative with the United States, Japan, and Australia. Bonded by their common vision for a "free and open Indo-Pacific," India and Japan have "welcomed the prospects of cooperation between the two countries for promoting peace and prosperity in South Asia and [the] neighboring region" (Ministry of External Affairs, 2016).

## **The role of institutions and cooperation**

South Asia's protracted tensions and political violence increasingly affect India. Environmental degradation, refugee flows, resource competition, and extremist agendas have always operated in the region but will likely become more frequent and fuel new conflicts over the next decades. The Indian scholar Sunil Khilnani emphasizes that "making assessments of human catastrophes, and judgments about interventions to alleviate them, will therefore remain an important responsibility for Indian policymaker[s]" (2013). Such assessments, judgments, and



interventions will require a formalization of India's response mechanisms and an increased cooperation with other countries.

### *Institutionalize best practices*

India must work toward institutionalizing conflict management systems, rather than relying on the informal systems it currently has in place. The lack of coordination and communication between political, diplomatic, military, and intelligence agencies often hinder India's peacebuilding initiatives. Greater investment in training, intra-governmental cooperation, and formalization of contingency plans would enhance India's preparedness in international crises and support stabilization in peacebuilding initiatives. In order to enhance effectiveness, the Indian government should take the following steps:

- Support policy-oriented studies at universities and think tanks about India's experience in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, particularly in South Asia. Such research would increase knowledge about India's past approach to conflict management and contribute to a positive narrative about India as a regional and global peacemaker, which would also enhance domestic support for a more activist foreign policy.
- Create capacity-building courses in conflict resolution for Indian government officials, including courses that focus on mediation. Courses at administrative and military training institutions should focus on non-traditional security threats, area studies, regional languages, and country-specific modules that emphasize historical and social dynamics, especially in South Asia
- Appoint special envoys for crisis response and mediation attempts. A high-level envoy can centralize bilateral and multilateral efforts and improve coordination across different Indian agencies.
- Adopt a peacebuilding strategy that establishes standard operating processes for Indian relief, rehabilitation, and

reconstruction in post-conflict environments.

- Expand preventive efforts through capacity-building programs that support stability and resilience, particularly in the South Asian region. ITEC and other South-South programs should place a greater emphasis on institutional and democratic governance, beyond technical assistance.

### ***Initiate international cooperation***

Even when India overcomes its reluctance to engage in conflict resolution or mediation abroad, it often operates in isolation. India's recent geostrategic realignment towards the United States, Japan, and other like-minded Asian countries indicates a growing comfort with international cooperation in multiple areas, including humanitarian disaster relief operations and joint infrastructure development in third countries. Beyond solely economic-connectivity initiatives, India should consider the following political steps for international cooperation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding:

Focus on the democratic dimensions of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including "effective, accountable and transparent institutions" and "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making" as described in India's commitment to realize SDG Goal 16 (United Nations, 2019).

- Expand support for multilateral initiatives that endorse peacebuilding, including the UN Democracy Fund and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation.
- Create a roster of current and retired diplomats, military, and other government officials with language, political, and mediation expertise in countries and regions of interest. Such experts can support Indian, regional, and multilateral efforts, including in peacekeeping, stabilization, and mediation missions.
- Deepen bilateral dialogue and exchange of best practices for conflict resolution and peacebuilding with like-minded partners,

especially in Asia and other developing countries.

- Participate regularly in international dialogues on good governance and conflict resolution, especially with fellow democracies at regional and multilateral initiatives, such as the Bali Democracy Forum and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. India's involvement should not be restricted to its government but should, instead, include a variety of political parties and civil society representatives that have experience or stakes in conflict resolution.

## **Conclusion**

While India's foreign policy remains committed to non-interference and is skeptical about external involvement, it has often engaged in political crisis response, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. India's history of conflict resolution has been overlooked and requires greater understanding. India's growing regional power and economic openness has encouraged the country to take on a greater role in peacebuilding efforts. The increased democratization in South Asia also rises demand for India to share its unique development experience with democracy and political inclusiveness.

India's new foreign policy focuses on achieving greater regional interdependence. International connectivity relies on a peaceful and stable periphery, especially in countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. To respond to this increasingly challenging regional environment, India will have to invest in its capacity to prevent, manage, and solve conflicts beyond its borders. This can only be achieved by institutionalizing its experience and best practices and by increasing cooperation with other Asian countries that share India's democratic approach to international involvement.

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# CHAPTER 3

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## The Indonesian Sharing-based Approach to Peacebuilding

*By*  
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### **Introduction**

In 1992, the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, introduced the Agenda for Peace to the United Nations. The international community has since accepted peacebuilding as an important part of conflict mediation and rebuilding. Traditionally, peacebuilding involves a predominantly liberal approach defined by the West, which includes promoting free and fair elections, political participation, human rights, good governance, and free markets. The liberal approach to peacebuilding, however, faces increasing criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Amidst this criticism, the international community begins to consider alternative peacebuilding approaches. These approaches still largely focus on liberal agendas, but they differ from Western conventions. Emerging peacebuilding actors, mainly from the Global South, rely on soft power, which involves sharing ideas and knowledge gleaned from experience, rather than the more a more forceful peacebuilding approach

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**1** Various critiques for international peacebuilding focus on its inability to create sustainable peace and likelihood of contributing to further destabilization in host states. The critiques also question the effectiveness of liberal values, i.e. democratization, liberal-market economies, and the often hierarchical approach toward local actors that imposes a peacebuilding “formula” without understanding local cultures and political situations (Paris, 2004; Newman, Paris & Richmond, 2009; Tadjbakhsh & Richmond, 2011, pp.221-239).

that risks trespassing on a host country's sovereignty (Richmond & Tellidis, 2014; Alexandra & Lanteigne, 2017; Mathur, 2014).

The idea of sharing experiences is key in this new peacebuilding approach. Countries gain knowledge from hosting external peacebuilding interventions, during which they develop their own peacebuilding approaches. Sharing peacebuilding experiences, rather than forcing peacebuilding ideals onto a host country, helps build trust between countries, which, in turn, fosters more sustainable peacebuilding efforts (Tschirgi, 2015, p.80).

This chapter elaborates on Indonesia's role as one of the Global South's emerging peacebuilding actors. After a turbulent democratic transition, one marred by ethnic and separatist conflicts during the late 1990s and early 2000s, Indonesia undertook an external peacebuilding role, using its experiences with internal conflict and external intervention in order to encourage peacebuilding in regional and global conflicts. Indonesia embraced a "sharing-based" approach to peacebuilding, which involves sharing ideas and knowledge sourced from its own internal peacebuilding experiences and granting a partner country space to pursue its own peacebuilding process.

The first section begins with a definition of a sharing-based peacebuilding approach and elaborates on Indonesia's key peacebuilding initiatives. The second section explores how Indonesia's domestic experiences created the basis for its peacebuilding initiatives and includes two case-studies: East Timor's separation from Indonesia and the Aceh peacebuilding process. The third section elaborates on the lessons and challenges Indonesia encountered in its external peacebuilding role and concludes with recommendations for improving Indonesia's peacebuilding efforts.

### **Indonesia's sharing-based approach: Some key peacebuilding initiatives**

The Asian financial crisis struck Indonesia in 1997 and forced President Suharto to accept international intervention in order to save the country from economic collapse. Suharto, under the recommendations of the United States and the International Monetary Fund (IMF),



implemented a 50-point economic reform plan in order to receive USD 43,000,000,000 in foreign assistance (Sanger, 1998). Suharto considered the 50-point plan to be a threat to his monopoly on the economy (Blustein 1998). Despite Suharto's efforts, the Indonesia government could not bolster the crumbling economy, and Indonesia entered a political crisis that resulted in a regime change in 1998, when the country transitioned from an authoritarian government to a democratic republic.

After partially recovering from the economic and political crises, Indonesia's new president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, hoped to expand Indonesia's global role. Indonesia implemented its soft power through a sharing-based approach, focusing specifically on its political transformation, in order to inspire other countries to undertake their own peacebuilding processes (Agensky & Baker, 2012).

### ***Bali Democracy Forum (BDF)***

Indonesia initiated the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) in December 2008 as an intergovernmental platform to promote democracy in Asia. The BDF is an annual gathering of state leaders that aims to provide a "non-threatening learning environment" that focuses on democracy, especially for non-democratic states (Erawan qtd. in Acharya, 2015, p.111). The BDF grew from 32 participating states in 2008 to 58 states in 2018 (Bali Democracy Forum, 2018).

Indonesia established the BDF as a response to the many democratization challenges in the Southeast Asia region (Sukma, 2011a, p.115). Indonesia also wanted to create an alternative to the United States-led Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP), an existing democratization platform that Indonesia considered to have a Western bias (Karim, 2017, pp.394-395). The BDF believed that inclusive engagement with both democracies and non-democracies, including the controversial "illiberal" states, such as China, Saudi Arabia, and Brunei Darussalam, could inspire more democratic change than only interacting with dominant Western democracies (Brigg *et al.*, 2016, p.418). The BDF especially focused on building and consolidating democracy, and the relationship between democracy and the promotion of development,

peace, and pluralism.<sup>2</sup>

President Yudhoyono emphasized that the BDF wanted to share democratic experiences rather than impose democratic values:

*“We have all come here as equals. We are not trying to impose a particular model on any of us. We are not here to debate on a commonly agreed definition of Bali Democracy Forum democracy – for which I believe there is none. We have come here not to preach, not to point fingers. Indeed, we have come here to share our respective experience, our thoughts and our ideas for cooperation to advance democracy.”* (2008)

Critics of the BDF, however, accused the BDF of being a “talk shop” instead of a forum that could inspire non-democracies to transition into democracies. Critics also said that the BDF allowed authoritarian regimes to use their participation in the BDF to misrepresent their democratization progress (Karim, 2017, p.397). Nonetheless, the BDF continues to progress.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Bilateral sharing***

The Indonesian government also shared its democratic experience through bilateral initiatives. One such initiative is Indonesia’s partnership with Myanmar. Driven by its 2003-2004 chairmanship of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), during which Indonesia promoted democracy and human rights, the Indonesian government attempted to engage with new ASEAN members and undemocratic CLMV states

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**2** The topic of the first BDF meeting, in 2008, was “Building and Consolidating Democracy: A Strategic Agenda for Asia.” The third BDF meeting, in 2010, discussed the topic “Democracy and the Promotion of Peace and Stability.” BDF IX, in 2016, addressed the topic of “Religion, Democracy and Pluralism.” The BDF-Berlin chapter, with the support of the Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES), discussed democracy and migration in September 2018 (Institute for Peace and Democracy, 2019).

**3** The BDF expanded its cooperation through BDF chapters. In October 2017, prior to BDF X in December, the BDF organized the BDF-Tunisian chapter so Tunisia could share about its successful democratization (Institute for Peace and Democracy, 2019).

(Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam). Indonesia especially focused on Myanmar because of Myanmar's disengagement from the outside world after a military coup in 1988. Indonesia also focused on Myanmar because of Indonesia and Myanmar's history of bilateral relations. In the late 1940s, when Indonesia was consolidating its new independence, the Myanmar government (then Burma) supported Indonesia by allowing Indonesia to open an Indonesian Office in Rangoon (now Yangon) and to land Indonesia's first official aircraft, *RI-001*, in the Mingladon Airport. Additionally, Myanmar's Prime Minister, U Nu, and India's Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, organized the Conference on Indonesia to support President Sukarno's struggle against Indonesia's former colonial power (Indonesian Embassy, 2001). Myanmar also showed interest in studying the dual-function of Indonesian army, which controlled both defense and political affairs (Sundhaussen, 1995, p.768). Indonesia's democratization efforts in Myanmar were unsuccessful, however, despite President Yudhoyono's visit to Myanmar in 2006 and his later deployment of one of Indonesia's leading reformist military generals, Agus Widjojo, to Myanmar in 2007 (Piccone & Yusman, 2014).

After Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar in May 2008, Indonesia intensified its engagement with Myanmar. As a neighboring country and non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Indonesia, persuaded Myanmar's military junta to accept ASEAN's international relief (*Antara News*, 2008; Belanger & Horsey, 2008). Indonesia's former Foreign Minister Natalegawa asserted that Indonesia's approach in Myanmar was particularly influenced by Indonesia's own experience with external support after the 2004 tsunami in Aceh (2018, p.113).

It is unclear how much the ASEAN-led mechanism influenced the receptiveness of Myanmar's military junta toward democratization. Indonesia's experience as an authoritarian regime that underwent a democratization process, however, helped Myanmar have a more open attitude toward Indonesia's peacebuilding role (Renshaw, 2013, pp.44-47). Additionally, Myanmar's acceptance of humanitarian relief from ASEAN paved the way for further bilateral interaction between Myanmar and Indonesia, including opening channels for more substantive issues, such as democracy.

## *Political assistance in Myanmar*

Indonesia implemented various peacebuilding initiatives in Myanmar centered on democratization. The Indonesian Foreign Ministry initiated the Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD), which operated multiple programs in Myanmar about democratic transition, sustainable peace, decentralization, leadership and political party reform, parliamentary building, and Indonesian election observation (Alexandra & Lanteigne, 2017, p.206). One of these programs supported Myanmar's own idea of how to achieve democracy, the so-called "Seven Steps to Democracy" roadmap (Nyunt, 2003).<sup>4</sup>

Indonesian non-state agencies, particularly think-tanks, also contributed to Myanmar's democratization process. From 2013 to 2014, one of leading Indonesian think-tanks, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) conducted workshops with Myanmar counterparts on security sector reform and civil-military relations. Indonesian retired generals, parliament members, NGO activists, and experts involved in Indonesia's reform process shared various experiences with senior Myanmar military and police officials on democratization issues, including transitioning from a military-led to a civilian-led government, the development of human rights mechanisms, and the role of law enforcement in sustaining peace in conflict-prone areas. Other Indonesian think-tanks, The Habibie Centre (THC) in collaboration with the Henry Dunant Centre (HDC) Singapore, facilitated a study tour for Myanmar Union Election Commission (UEC) members to learn from Indonesia's experience in conducting peaceful elections in post-conflict areas, such as Aceh and Ambon (Alexandra & Lanteigne, 2017, pp.207-208). Indonesia's experience with ethnic minority and separatist groups also drew Myanmar's interest. For example, the International Center for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies, an inter-

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**4** Myanmar General Khin Nyunt created the "Seven Steps to Democracy," translated as the "Roadmap to Discipline-flourishing Democracy," in 2003. The roadmap, which basically emphasized on the junta's own path to democracy, contained seven steps for Myanmar's democratization process, including reconvening the National Convention which was suspended in 1996, drafting a new constitution, holding free and fair elections for the legislative body, and establishing a democratic state.

university center in Banda Aceh, welcomed a delegation from Myanmar's Karen ethnic groups to learn from Indonesia's peace process in Aceh (Nur Djuli, 2016).

Following the massive attacks launched by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya Muslim minority group in 2012, which led to a humanitarian crisis, Myanmar asked Indonesia to help find solutions to the crisis. Indonesia also had domestic stakes in Myanmar's crisis as Rohingya refugees reached Indonesia's shores.<sup>5</sup> Indonesia, as home to the largest Islamic population in the world, faced pressure from various Indonesian Islamic organization to intervene in Myanmar.<sup>6</sup> Indonesia sent the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to Myanmar on a fact-finding mission and to establish a humanitarian liaison office in Rakhine, but Myanmar perceived the OIC as a threat to Myanmar's sovereignty and accused Indonesia of being biased toward Muslim interests.<sup>7</sup>

In September 2017, under President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) administration, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi, met with Myanmar's State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Commander in Chief of Defense Services, Senior General U Min Aung Hlaing, to offer a "4+1 formula"<sup>8</sup> for the Rohingya conflict, which emphasized the need to restore stability and security, prevent the use of force, protect all Myanmar citizens regardless of their ethnicity and religion, and open

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**5** The Rohingya refugees mostly arrived in Aceh, the northern province of Indonesia (Missbach, 2017).

**6** The pressures for the government to intervene in the Rohingya crisis came from various Islamic organizations. Moderate Islamic organizations, such as Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, led the initiative to provide humanitarian aid through a coalition, the Indonesian Humanitarian Alliance (IHA). Radical Islamic groups used measures ranging from public demonstrations to bomb threats and attacks. In 2013, some protests turned violent as Muslim extremists sent bomb threats against the Myanmar embassy and Buddhist religious facilities in Jakarta (Hariyadi, 2013; Otto & Sentana, 2013; Greenwood, 2013).

**7** Myanmar Buddhist monks demonstrated against the OIC's delegation (Aung, 2013).

**8** The 4+1 formula comprised of four pillars: restoring stability and security, self-restraint and committing not to use violence, protecting all persons in the Rakhine State regardless of race and religion, and immediate access for humanitarian assistance. The "+1" included recommendations from the Kofi Annan's Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (Tashandra, 2017).

access for international assistance (*Myanmar Times*, 2017; Suryo, 2017). Myanmar's government positively responded to the proposal in late 2017 but did not heed Indonesia's recommendations, and massacres against the Rohingya worsened (*South China Morning Post*, 2017). Nevertheless, Indonesia continues to assist Myanmar. President Joko Widodo and Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi have visited Myanmar multiple times between 2016 and 2018, including to Rohingya refugee camps in Cox Bazaar, and Myanmar has sent delegations to Indonesia to learn about ethnic conflict management and combatting radicalism (*The Jakarta Post*, 2016; *Bdnews24*, 2017; Rahman, 2018; *Asia News Monitor*, 2017; *Channel News Asia*, 2018).

### **Origins of Indonesia's peacebuilding approach: experiences in East Timor and Aceh**

Indonesia fixed its sharing-based approach in its own internal peacebuilding experience. The fall of Indonesia's 32-year-old authoritarian Suharto regime in May 1998 resulted in years of intrastate violence and ethno-religious and separatist conflicts (Ghoshal, 2004, p.506). The international community pressured the Habibie government that rose in Suharto's place to pursue a democratic path. Two cases that occurred during Indonesia's political transition – the separation of East Timor from Indonesia and the peacebuilding process that took place in the Indonesian province of Aceh – demonstrate how the Indonesian government handled external intervention in its internal affairs and how this experience shaped its peacebuilding approach.

#### ***East Timor***

In 1976, under Suharto's leadership, Indonesia annexed and integrated East Timor as its 27<sup>th</sup> province. The United Nations and the wider international community, however, regarded Indonesia's integration of East Timor as an aggressive military act and called for Indonesia's withdrawal from East Timor. Indonesia retained its occupation of East Timor for two decades despite sustained international criticism. In 1999, however, Indonesia's Suharto regime fell, and the Indonesian government

transitioned from an authoritarian system to a democracy. In 1999, Indonesia's new president, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, offered East Timor a referendum between special autonomy or separation from Indonesia. East Timor chose to become independent.

In the interim period between the referendum and the Indonesian Consultative Assembly's acceptance of East Timor's independence, the United Nations deployed peacekeeping forces to East Timor. Indonesia accused the United Nations of violating Indonesia's state sovereignty. The Indonesian government eventually agreed to the involvement of the United Nations' International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), but this dispute increased Indonesia's resentment toward the international community, a resentment that began when the international community first resisted Indonesia's occupation of East Timor (Alatas, 2006, pp.208-209; Marker, 2003, p.165; Djajamihardja, 2000, p.101).

Indonesia's negative experience with international intervention in East Timor particularly shaped Indonesian's peacekeeping approach. Indonesia expressed its wariness toward external intervention when it proposed an ASEAN Peacekeeping Force in order to shield intra-regional affairs, including intrastate crises, in Southeast Asia from extra-regional powers (Sukma, 2004, p.82).

### *Aceh*

Indonesia's longest separatist conflict was between the Indonesian government and an insurgent group, the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM), which fought for Aceh's independence from Indonesia. The conflict lasted from 1976 to 2005. Prior to 2005, Indonesia's post-authoritarian government carried out two attempts, the Humanitarian Pause in 2000 and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) in 2002, to end the conflict through peaceful negotiation. However, these efforts were short-lived because both parties were not fully committed to the peace process, and the HDC, as a non-governmental organization, was not strong enough to act as a monitoring body for the parties' compliance with the peace agreement (Aspinall & Crouch, 2003; Barron & Burke, 2008, p.20).

Ultimately, the Indonesian government and the separatist GAM signed

the Helsinki Peace Accords in August 2005, facilitated by the Finnish-based Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), which marked the beginning of a peacebuilding process in Aceh (Sukma, 2012). The CMI's success was based several factors, including the fact that Indonesia's military operations had significantly reduced GAM's forces, GAM had not received support from the international community, and the CMI's negotiations between both parties (Schulze, 2007, pp.3-5).

The previous peace processes failed because of violations of the peace agreements. Therefore, it was necessary that a third-party monitored Indonesia's and GAM's compliance with the Helsinki Peace Accords. The European Union and ASEAN established the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) to monitor the disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion (DDR) process, human rights situation, and legislative change process (Sukma, 2012, p.246). The AMM included balanced representation from the European Union and ASEAN, including Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines in order to foster more sensitivity toward the situation, political context, and local cultures (Feith, 2012, p.219). The AMM, aware that Indonesia's conflict in Aceh was an internal conflict, was careful not to threaten Indonesia's sovereignty (Aspinall, 2008).

When a disastrous tsunami struck Aceh in December 2004, the Indonesian government maximized international humanitarian assistance but was made sure to protect the domestic conflict from international intervention in order to maintain control over Aceh during its separatist conflict (Barron & Burke, 2008, p.17). During the AMM's monitoring work, the Indonesian government rejected the presence of armed peacekeepers in Aceh (Kingsburry, 2006, p.79). Indonesia's government was also cautious of foreign militaries within international volunteers for humanitarian assistance, and Vice President Jusuf Kalla asked that all foreign militaries leave the country before March 26, 2005 (Sukma, 2006, pp.216-217). Furthermore, Indonesia avoided internationalizing the domestic conflict by setting a timeframe for international reconstruction efforts after the tsunami and establishing a national Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (BRR) to coordinate all international humanitarian assistance. Indonesia later transitioned the BRR into the Aceh Reintegration Agency (BRA), which ensured Indonesia's sovereign control over Aceh (Burke, 2008, p.61).



Indonesia managed to gradually overcome its suspicion of international intervention. First, AMM's impartiality when monitoring the Indonesian peace negotiators, encouraged Indonesia's government to trust the international community (Schulze, 2007, p.49). Second, the critical humanitarian needs of Aceh after the 2004 tsunami, helped Indonesia to accept foreign intervention (Sukma, 2006, p.217). Therefore, for the sake of Aceh's recovery and peacebuilding, Indonesia conceded that external intervention was necessary and effective.

### **Indonesia's sharing-based approach: Lessons and challenges**

Through a sharing-based peacebuilding approach, Indonesia offers its democratic transition as an "open book" to other countries. Although Indonesia has experienced positive results from its sharing-based approach, it has also encountered challenges.

One challenge Indonesia encountered is that, because a sharing-based approach is a long-term exercise, it often lacks immediate results and those results can be difficult to measure, which can give the impression that the approach is ineffective. For example, in the context of Myanmar, although the growth of Myanmar's friendly attitude toward Indonesia's initiative is an indicator for success, it is difficult to record that indicator through data. Evidence of Indonesia's success in Myanmar include Myanmar's President Thein Sein's invitation to Indonesia's President Yudhoyono to interceded in the crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine state, despite ongoing opposition to the OIC's intervention in the Rohingya crisis (Reuters, 2012; Santosa, 2012). Additionally, during the 2014 ASEAN Summit in Naypyidaw, Indonesia's President Widodo was the first ASEAN leader received by President Thein Sein. Myanmar also invited Indonesia to expand its investment in the country (Otto, 2014).

Another challenge presents itself in the emphasis on "sharing" rather than prescribing solutions. The international community, and internal Indonesia stakeholders, often see merely sharing experiences as giving countries too much leeway in the face of internal conflicts, especially in the case of Myanmar. During Myanmar's Rohingya crisis, Indonesian legislative members pressured the Indonesian government to consider

tougher diplomatic consequences if Myanmar's government allowed the humanitarian crisis to continue (Septiari, 2019). Additionally, a sharing-based approach allows the recipient country to choose the specific lessons it considers suitable. For instance, while Indonesia shared its military reform process with Myanmar, Indonesia worried that the Myanmar military was more interested in the "dual-function" of the Indonesian military during the New Order era from 1966 to 1998, which conflicted with a democratic system (Alexandra & Lanteigne, 2017, p.212).<sup>9</sup>

The third challenge lies in the sustainability of a sharing-based approach. Because peacebuilding is a long-term process, there is no guarantee that subsequent administrations will sustain peacebuilding efforts. This challenge presented itself in Indonesia's government shift from the Yudhoyono to Jokowi administrations in 2014, which resulted in a declining interest toward international peacebuilding. Yudhoyono focused on regional and global peacebuilding, but Jokowi focused on domestic initiatives, including building the economy and infrastructure, rather than foreign policy (Nawacita, 2014).<sup>10</sup> There was also increasing public demand in Indonesia to measure all diplomatic activities, including peacebuilding, by a cost-benefit calculation – as exemplified by a member of parliament who asked, "what's in it for Indonesia?" (Yahya, 2015). The Jokowi administration also delayed the legalization of drafts for the Grand Design and Blueprint of Indonesian South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC),<sup>11</sup> in which peacebuilding is one of the key programs.

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**9** Indonesia implemented the dual-function (*dwifungsi*) system during the New Order era under the Suharto presidency and gave the Indonesian military, known as the *Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia* (ABRI), a socio-political function along with a security function. Indonesia could appoint active military officers in civilian positions, including parliament and ministries (Sebastian & Iisgindarsah, 2013).

**10** *Nawacita* is the political manifesto proposed by Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla during the 2014 presidential campaign. It contained seven missions to implement once they were elected, and now serves as a guideline for government policies. Six missions focus on domestic issues, including restoring national security, safeguarding territorial sovereignty, and building a strong Indonesian society. Only one mission mentions implementing an active foreign policy and emphasises building Indonesia into a maritime country (Nawacita, 2014)

**11** The Grand Design and Blueprint of Indonesian South-South and Triangular Cooperation are drafts developed by the Indonesian government in 2011 that provide

Finally, Indonesia has an insufficient budget to support peacebuilding initiatives. The IPD financed most of Indonesia's peacebuilding activities through a triangular framework that involves external donor countries and institutions, rather than solely funding efforts through the Indonesian government.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the budget for Indonesia's sharing-based approach, undertaken primarily by the Directorate of Public Diplomacy of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), is limited. In 2007, the Directorate for Public Diplomacy only received USD 2,800,000, which accounted for 0.5 percent of the USD 510,000,000 allocated for MOFA (Sukma, 2011b, p.109).

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

This paper explains how Indonesia, as an emerging peacebuilding actor, applied a sharing-based peacebuilding approach as an alternative to a conventional Western approach to peacebuilding. It analyzed several key points in Indonesia's experience, such as the origins of its sharing-based approach, how it used its own internal peacebuilding experiences to develop its approach, its general and bilateral peacebuilding initiatives, and the challenges that come from a sharing-based approach.

As a country that has experienced its own internal conflict and external peacebuilding processes, Indonesia is sensitive to a host country's responses toward external intervention. Indonesia's sensitivity, afforded to it through its experiences, has been instrumental in formulating its own peacebuilding strategies and overcoming the challenges that are often presented when a host government does not accept external intervention. As explained above, Indonesia shared its internal peacebuilding experiences with Myanmar in order to demonstrate its sensitivity toward external intervention, which encouraged Myanmar to be more open to the international community and take its first steps toward democratic change.

Finally, there are several ways Indonesia can overcome the challenges

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legal frameworks and policy instruments for peacebuilding. The documents elaborate Indonesia's policy, strategy, and implementation of development cooperation until 2025.

**12** Erawan, I. K. P. interviewed by Lina A. Alexandra in Jakarta, 17 June, 2015.

of its sharing-based approach. First, to deal with the technical issue of compiling evidence for Indonesia's peacebuilding engagement, the government should require project reports from peacebuilding institutions in order to track progress in peacebuilding initiatives. Either Indonesia's Ministry of State Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or National Development and Planning Ministry should undertake this task. The Indonesian president should give the designated ministry the authority to enforce these requirements.

Second, Indonesia must address the funding gap for peacebuilding. Indonesia must continue to pursue a triangular framework within its South-South Cooperation, especially through collaborating with external funding agencies. In order to ensure the cooperation empowers Indonesia's peacebuilding initiative, the Indonesian government should be selective when it comes to which external actors it engages with. Indonesia should also gradually develop its own capacity to fund peacebuilding efforts. Indonesia's government should provide legal frameworks for Indonesia's peacebuilding in order to allocate funding from the national budget. These formalizations, however, remain as drafts, which suggests that Indonesia's government lacks the political will to move forward.

Third, Indonesia should also more firmly establish governmental frameworks for peacebuilding so that peacebuilding initiatives are not threatened by shifting policy attitudes. In 2017, Indonesia's government suggested a single aid agency, IndoAID, that would be modeled after other aid agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development. Surprisingly, after waiting for two years, on October 19, 2019 – only one day before his vice presidential term ended – Jusuf Kalla launched IndoAID at the Foreign Ministry. It is meant, according to him, to be the body responsible for managing an endowed international assistance fund and thus further extend Indonesia's contribution to global peace and development (Pinandita, 2019).<sup>13</sup> While IndoAID should be

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**13** Vice President Jusuf Kalla disclosed the idea in the press release at the United Nations headquarter in September 2017 (Kalla, 2017). Indonesia's foreign minister planned to lead the agency's planning, which involved coordinating with the Ministry of Finance, the National Development Planning Ministry, and the State Secretariat

celebrated, nevertheless it remains to be seen how the agency will actually work.

Fourth, there is no way that Indonesia can guarantee that a country learns the lessons Indonesia wants it to learn from Indonesia's peacebuilding experience. What Indonesia's government can do, however, is to continue to manage Indonesia's internal peace in a way that sustains the country's peacebuilding credibility and will inspire other countries to learn positive lessons from its experiences. By doing so, Indonesia's experiences demonstrate that all parts of a country's history contribute to its development and future.

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(Sheany, 2019).

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## CHAPTER 4

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### Geostrategic Policies and their Impact on Human Security: Lessons from Pakistan's Peacebuilding Approach to Afghanistan

*By*  
*Simbal Khan*

#### **Introduction**

Afghanistan's forty-year cycle of war has had tremendous human security costs for its neighboring country, Pakistan. The conflict along Pakistan's border has led to an inflow of millions of Afghan refugees, which has reshaped the political economy of Pakistan's border provinces (Asian Development Bank, 2010). More recently, Pakistan's military operations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province) against trans-border militants have resulted in the displacement of millions of Pakistani citizens and the destruction of Pakistani infrastructure (Zulfqar, 2017). Afghanistan's conflict has also impacted the transition of Pakistan's border areas from tribal territories into a mainstream governance structure like the one that operates in the rest of Pakistan (Khan & Apunen, 2016). For years, Pakistan has stressed that peace in Afghanistan is critical for the long-term stability and prosperity of Pakistan's border regions (Vestenskov & Johnsen, 2015). Pakistan's approach to peacebuilding, however, has remained security-centric. Additionally, Afghanistan's continuous conflict has created a deep distrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan, especially within Pakistan's border populations. The environment of distrust limits Pakistan's peacebuilding role in Afghanistan.

Peace talks between the United States and the Taliban offers Pakistan

an opportunity to support the reconciliation process between the Afghan government and the Taliban and to reexamine Pakistan's overall approach to peacebuilding in Afghanistan (*The Frontier Post*, 2019). Pakistan's peacebuilding in Afghanistan could help end the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan and improve Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan's government. A peace settlement between the Taliban, the United States, and Afghanistan's government would also allow Pakistan to focus on the human development crises unfolding in its own border zones (International Crisis Group, 2018).

This chapter examines Pakistan's peacebuilding approach in Afghanistan. The first section analyses various elements of Pakistan's regional and domestic security dynamics, which have dominated Pakistan's peacebuilding approach in Afghanistan. The second section describes key elements of Pakistan's dual security and political approach, which has negatively impacted the human security of Pakistan's border populations. The third section highlights Pakistan's current opportunities to better align its peacebuilding approach with its internal development goals related to merging the tribal districts along the Afghan border. The fourth and final section briefly lists recommendations for how Pakistan can coordinate its peacebuilding approach with Taliban peace negotiations.

## **Pakistan's peacebuilding approach in Afghanistan: The security lens**

Years of war and conflict in Afghanistan, including the Soviet military intervention in 1979 and the United States-led coalition in 2001, reinforced Pakistan's securitized perspective toward Afghanistan (Grare, 2006; Haqqani, 2013). Pakistan has always supported political reconciliation between the Taliban and Afghanistan's government, and it has remained unconvinced that war led by international forces will bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan (Hansen & Giustozzi, 2009). Based on Afghanistan's resistance to the Soviet Union's military intervention in the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistan's security establishment does not believe that the United States' military intervention in Afghanistan will result in sustainable peace. Instead, the United States' military intervention

increased the power of the ethnic factions, Tajik and Uzbek, and also resulted in armed resistance, specifically from the Pashtun tribes that straddle the Pak-Afghan border.<sup>1</sup> Pakistan believes that, like the Soviet Union eventually left Afghanistan, the United States will also leave the region. Once the United States' military leaves, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-intervention will also fade, and Afghanistan will be left without support.

Three elements of the geopolitical environment have predominantly shaped Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan: trans-border populations, the hosting of millions of Afghan refugees, and India's growing influence in Afghanistan.

### ***Geopolitics of border spaces: trans-border communities and support for Taliban***

Particular geo-spatial features of the Pak-Afghan border, including the presence of large co-ethnic, Pashtun trans-border communities and the presence of millions of Afghan refugees, have shaped Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan and affect the structure of Pakistan's security (Khan, 2016).

Many of Pakistan's insecurities stem from the "Durand Line" (Bajoria, 2009) and subsequent disputes with Afghanistan. After Pakistan achieved independence from Great Britain in 1947, Pakistan inherited a British-era border between India and Afghanistan, the "Durand Line," which cut through the Pashtun territory. This border decision was contested by Afghanistan. The dispute began in the nineteenth century, when India, was still a British colony and before the birth of Pakistan as an independent country. In 1893, in order to strengthen its control over northern India, Great Britain drew the 2640 km borderline between Afghanistan and India. Sir Mortimer Durand, the Indian Foreign

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1 Author interview with Ambassador Retired General Asad Durrani, July 2019, Islamabad, Pakistan. Durrani served as the director-general of the Inter-Services Intelligence and was a former director-general of Pakistan's Army's Military Intelligence. He is a commentator and analyst on Afghanistan and regional security issues.

Secretary, and Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, the ruler of Afghanistan, signed the agreement (Rubin, 2018; Schons, 2011; Rahi, 2014). Currently, Afghanistan does not officially recognize the Durand line as an international border with Pakistan. Instead, Afghanistan claims the territory from the Pak-Afghan border to the Indus River on the border of the Punjab Province in Pakistan. Afghanistan's claims on Pakistan's frontier regions have shaped Pakistan's relationships with its border communities and with Afghanistan (Khan, 2016).

An important legacy of the 1979 Soviet invasion in Afghanistan is the continued presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. There are almost 3,000,000 registered and unregistered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and there are approximately 80 Afghan refugee settlements scattered along Pakistan's western border (The New Humanitarian, 2012; The UN Refugee Agency, 2015). Most of the registered Afghan refugees live close to the Pak-Afghan border. Hosting Afghan refugees for the last 40 years has resulted in changes in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces and Pakistan's perceptions of peace and security. The refugee populations have impacted transborder militant networks and solidarity groups that extend across both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border spaces. These militant networks originated in refugee camps, schools, and madrassas attended by Afghan refugees and local Pakistani tribesmen. For example, the Shamshatoo Refugee Camp, run by the mujahedin leader, Hizb Islami, has become a small city with more than 64,000 inhabitants, with mosques, madrassas, high schools, a university, a hospital, and two local newspapers (Marzban, 2007; Moreau, 2011). This camp, and others like it, have played an important role in the recruitment strategies of militant organizations and the genesis of Afghan Taliban movement.

Although the Afghan Taliban primarily operates in Afghanistan, over the past three decades, it has also become embedded within the social, political, and economic landscape of Pakistan's border zones, including the Baluchistan province, parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and key cities in the Pakistani heartland (e.g. Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta). The Afghan Taliban stemmed from Deobandi "Madaris" (madrassahs) in Pakistan, and have retained a nearly exclusive ethnic Pashtun and Deobandi sectarian orientation, which they

share with a large number of Pakistani Pashtun tribesmen (Fair *et al.*, 2010). These solidarity networks have emerged from the common experiences of war, conflict, and migration and have resulted in a closely-knit network of contacts across the Pak-Afghan border (Davin & Majidi, 2009).

### ***The India factor: Impact on Pakistan's peacebuilding approach***

India's growing influence in Afghanistan has complicated Pakistan's relations with successive political governments and factions in Kabul since 2001 (Peters & Dickens, 2005; Khan, 2010). Since the partition of British India in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought two conventional wars and several border skirmishes over the disputed Kashmir territory. During the 40 years of conflict in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan have supported opposing Afghan factions (Howenstein & Ganguly, 2010). India's involvement in Afghanistan over the last 17 years has been predicated under the security of United States-led NATO forces (Pant, 2013). Using its expanded presence and substantial aid of USD 2,000,000,000 to Afghanistan, India successfully undercut Pakistan's political influence in Afghanistan (Khan, 2018).

Pakistan has long asserted that India uses its diplomatic facilities and aid programs in Afghanistan to recruit anti-Pakistan insurgents and increase anti-Pakistan influence. Since 2001, India has invested significant resources in training Afghan police, army, and intelligence officers and supporting Afghanistan's government (Pant & Paliwal, 2019). Due to India's influence, there is now a new cadre of Afghan civilian and military bureaucracy with institutional links to the Indian military and that view Pakistan as a destabilizing, hostile neighbor (Masood, 2017).

Since 2014, Pakistan's military has accused Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) of colluding with Indian intelligence agencies in Afghanistan that support militant factions related to the Taliban Movement of Pakistan, or Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (Hassan, 2017). Also Pakistan believes that the Indian Intelligence Agency (RAW) is funding and arming separatists in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, where a low intensity insurgency has raged since 1947. Pakistan responded to these threats by hardening the Pak-Afghan



border and constraining normal transit trade. This has over the years negatively impacted the transit of Afghan consignments of goods through Pakistani territory and the free movement of people across the Pak-Afghan border. Pakistan's reactions have further contracted Pakistan's normal relations with Afghanistan's political and economic elite (Hakimi, 2012).

### **Pakistan's two-pronged strategy: Political engagement and security approach**

Two opposing poles have defined Pakistan's foreign policy approach to Afghanistan since 2001: it has attempted to maintain normal relations with Afghanistan's government and supported the United States' war effort, while it has also offered support and sanctuary to the Taliban (Yusuf, 2013; Felbab-Brown, 2018; Eggers & Tellis, 2017). Pakistan has internally rationalized its approach with its understanding of a post-9/11 Afghanistan as a political system struggling to survive a three-way contest of power; between the International coalition, Afghan state, and the Taliban (Yusef, 2010; Perkovich & Musharraf, 2011). Pakistan's security and political elite doubt the sustainability of a power balance between the Afghan state and the Taliban once foreign troops withdraw from Afghanistan (Hasnat, 2009).

Many observers, both inside and outside Afghanistan, believe that Afghanistan's governance structures after the United States' intervention function as a hybrid system; a precarious interplay between liberal institutions and top down neo-patrimonial structures (Hamidzada, 2013). Afghanistan's president and his closest allies exist at the core of this top-down system, which continues to survive under the security umbrella provided by the international forces. The joint United States-NATO mission to Afghanistan continues to provide active combat, counter terrorism forces, air power, and training for the Afghan National Defense Forces (ANDF) (Federation of American Scientists, 2019).

Pakistan fears Afghanistan's hybrid system will collapse under greater bottom-up pressure from the Taliban, other insurgent groups, and power networks within the government after the international troops depart. Pakistan worries that Afghanistan's political and security systems will

collapse without first negotiating a peace deal between the Taliban and the Afghan government that centers on a power-sharing formula. Pakistan believes that the withdrawal of United States' military forces before a peace deal can be put into place will result in the return of civil war and push another wave of Afghan refugees into Pakistan's borders. Therefore, Pakistan hopes that maintaining links with both the Afghanistan government and the Taliban will allow Pakistan to manage its bilateral relations with Afghanistan while also preparing for the day when international military forces withdraw from Afghanistan.

### *Political approach*

Immediately following the collapse of the Taliban government in late 2001 and in the face of United States' military intervention in Afghanistan, Pakistan tried to convince the United States and other stakeholders to consider a peace deal with the Taliban (UN, 2001). However, the United States and the Northern Alliance factions that had taken over Kabul after the fall of the Taliban refused the peace deal because they believed that the Taliban was no longer a military threat (Wittmeyer, 2013).

Political relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan became acrimonious as the Taliban regrouped in Pakistan's borderlands and began launching attacks against United States' and Afghan forces inside Afghanistan. The Karzai-led government in Kabul and United States' policymakers blamed Pakistan for playing a "double game" by continuing to provide sanctuaries and covert support to the Taliban while overtly supporting the United States-NATO war against the Taliban (Lynch, 2018).

By 2006, relations deteriorated between the two countries to such an extent that at a White House Iftar dinner meeting in September 2006, Pakistani President Musharraf insulted Afghan President Karzai, describing him as "an ostrich," who "doesn't want to tell the world about the real facts in Afghanistan" (Press, 2006).

Pakistan reinvigorated its political and diplomatic outreach to non-Pashtun Afghan political leaders in 2008.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan invited President

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<sup>2</sup> Author interview with former Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir, December 2018, Islamabad, Pakistan. Former foreign secretary accompanied Foreign Minister Khar

Karzai to Pakistani President Zardari's inauguration (Siddique, 2008). The phrase "Afghan owned, Afghan-led reconciliation" was first used by the Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar during her visit to Kabul in February 2012 and it has become a part of Pakistan's diplomatic jargon (Baker, 2012). The phrase reinforced the idea that Pakistan's vision of peace in Afghanistan was inclusive and that Pakistan supported any peace process between all Afghan stakeholders, including the Afghan state, civil society, and the Taliban.

Pakistan's political initiatives failed to salvage Pakistan-Afghan relations, however, because the Taliban continued to expand their control inside Afghanistan, and Pakistan remained reluctant to act against Taliban sanctuaries inside Pakistani territory (Katzman & Thomas, 2017).

### ***Security approach***

Pakistan's security approach to Afghanistan has two key elements:

*Provide consistent covert but low level support to the Taliban:* Pakistan managed to balance two conflicting objectives: sustaining the Taliban as a cohesive resistance force against the United States' military intervention, and partnering with the United States on counterterrorism initiatives against Al Qaida and logistically supporting the United States' military in Afghanistan (Yusuf, 2010). Therefore, Pakistan's support of the Taliban had to remain indirect, and Pakistan could only supply the Taliban low-level weaponry through arms markets in the tribal belt of the Pak-Afghan border.<sup>3</sup>

*Containment and hardening of Pak-Afghan border:* Pakistan's military also hardened the Pak-Afghan border in order to protect against

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on several visits to Kabul beginning in 2010. The author had the opportunity to accompany Foreign Minister Khar's delegation on one of these visits in 2011.

- 3** Note: Comments by former Director, Inter-services Intelligence, Retd. Maj. Gen. Sahibzada Isfandiyar Pataudi at a dinner reception in honor of the visiting United States' under-secretary of State, Amb. Alice Wells, in Islamabad. The Author was present at the dinner hosted by the United States' Ambassador in Pakistan, David Hale, in April 2018.

the threat of the TTP and curtail drug traffickers. Pakistan implemented the ambitious plan of fencing the 2,600-kilometer-long border (Gul, 2019a). In December 2018, Pakistan's military spokesperson announced that Pakistan had already fenced 802-kilometers of the border and built approximately 843 border security forts and check posts along the border (Desk, 2018).

### **Pakistan's two-pronged approach and its fall-out on human security in the region**

For the past 17 years, Islamabad and Kabul's relationship has been characterized by mutual mistrust and suspicion. Kabul consistently accused Pakistan's government and intelligence agencies of supporting and harboring the Afghan Taliban (Mashaal, 2019). Pakistan's security-centric view of Afghanistan also diminished the important economic relationship between the two countries and led to decreased bilateral trade relations and revenues for Pakistan. In the 2016-2018 fiscal year, Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral trade dropped from USD 2,700,000,000 to USD 1,200,000,000 (Iqbal, 2018).

The Political and security elements of Pakistan's Afghan policy have also eclipsed the impact of Pakistan's development aid to Afghanistan. Pakistan has provided modest levels of development assistance to Afghanistan (USD 500,000,000 since 2001) (Thomas, 2019). Most of Pakistan's development assistance focused on supporting economic and transport infrastructure and social sector projects, such as building hospitals, schools, clinics, and roads. A growing distrust in the Afghan government toward Pakistan led to the official restriction of any communication regarding Pakistan-assisted development projects in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, Pakistan's security-centric policies towards Afghanistan over the decades have destabilized Pakistan's own border spaces. The

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<sup>4</sup> Note: This author has been part of several track 1 and Track 11 dialogues since 2001. It is very rarely that Afghan government or civil society interlocutors ever acknowledge Pakistan's development assistance. It is usually mentioned by the Pakistani delegates and grudgingly acknowledged by Afghan participants.

presence of Afghan mujahedeen factions and the Taliban on Pakistani soil brought the Afghan war inside Pakistan's borders and radicalized a generation of Pakistani citizens (Gul, 2008). Using a combination of force, economic incentives, and faith-based indoctrination, local militant organizations took control of Pakistan's tribal belt in the former Federally Assisted Tribal Areas (FATA) region. The rise of these new actors disrupted Pakistan's administrative system built around the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) and the informal traditional tribal system of governance (Jirga) in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Asian Development Bank, 2010)

In 2007, multiple militant organizations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tribal belt formed an umbrella organization called Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (Yamin & Malik, 2014). TTP intended to unify groups that had supported the Afghan Taliban against United States' and NATO forces (Khattak, 2012). The TTP extended its control into the settled areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly the Malakand division and Swat Valley (Khattak, 2012). The TTP consisted of local tribal actors that aimed to control Pakistan's border areas, impose sharia, and provide full military and material support to the Taliban inside Afghanistan (Tankel, 2013). In 2009, Pakistan's military launched the first of several large-scale anti-militant operations to reclaim Swat valley, Malakand, and other tribal areas from militant control (Shams, 2011). In 2014, Pakistan's military launched the Zarb-e-Azb<sup>5</sup> operation in North Waziristan to destroy the TTP's last stronghold and its associated terrorist groups, which were pushed across the border into Afghanistan (Zulfqar, 2017).

The long-running conflict in the border areas has also negatively impacted the social conditions of vulnerable groups, such as women, children and youth. Pashtun tribes that straddle the Pak-Afghan border traditionally practice patriarchal social norms that place extreme limits on women's rights. Conflict in Pakistan's border regions further impacts the constrained rights, freedoms, and mobility of women. All national and

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**5** Operation Zarb-e-Azb, meaning "the strike of the sword the Holy Prophet" (PBUH) or "the sharp strike" was a large military operation involving more than 30,000 soldiers launched in North Waziristan, one of the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas that form Pakistan's northwestern border with Afghanistan.

local movements for safeguarding women's rights, including safeguarding health and education services, became associated with a "Western agenda." During the Soviet invasion and after the 2001 United States and NATO intervention in Afghanistan, militants on both sides of the border targeted girls' education, resulting in hundreds of schools destroyed and closed down (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Additionally, civil society organizations working for women's and children's health in the Tribal Belt ceased operations due to direct threats from militants targeting women (Crisis Group, 2015).

Youth in the tribal areas were similarly impacted by conflict. Tribal youth had low literacy rates, low economic prospects, and were exposed to extremist narratives. Militant organizations also targeted tribal youth for recruitment (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Military operations resulted in thousands of young tribal men detained or killed during the conflict, and many missed education opportunities because their schools were destroyed (Khan, 2018).

Pakistan's response to the rising militant threat was security-led and has resulted in massive destruction to Pakistan's border areas, which led to humanitarian crises and the displacement of 3,000,000 people (International Organization for Migration, 2019). Pakistan's narrow focus on security also delayed the constitutional reforms required to mainstream and develop the marginalized areas near the border. The draconian British-era law known as the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) governed Pakistan's tribal areas until 2018 (Zubair, 2018; Ali, 2018). The FCR denied the residents of the FATA region access to Pakistan's legal systems and constitutional protections (Ali, 2018). Although Pakistan extended adult franchise to the FATA in 1997, and its people participated in two consecutive general elections in 1997 and 2002, Pakistan did not allow political parties to operate in these areas until 2002 (Ullah & Hayat, 2019).

Until 2018 the FCR Law allowed the federal government, through the office of the Provincial Governor, to directly govern the tribal territories. Pakistan's security establishment handpicked tribal elders who supported their security agenda of providing sanctuary to the Taliban and other militant organizations fighting in Afghanistan (White, 2008).

The successive military operations have also devastated the border zones' local economies. The outmigration of millions of Temporary

Displaced Persons (TDPs) has destroyed subsistence agriculture, livestock, food security, and the livelihoods of Pakistan's local populations (Asian Development Bank, 2010). The Pakistani military has also started fencing, placing land mines, and creating new check posts along the border with Afghanistan to prevent the movement of militants (Hashim, 2017). This hardening of the Pak-Afghan border has impacted the livelihoods of border communities, which survived on small trans-border trade, labor movement, and smuggling goods into Pakistan.

## **New opportunities for peace: Reconciliation with the Taliban and the mainstreaming of newly merged tribal districts in Pakistan**

### *The Taliban peace talks*

The most striking development for Pakistan was the sharp turnaround of United States' policy for Afghanistan in 2018. Since the middle of 2018, Washington used substantial political and diplomatic capital to push for a political settlement with the Taliban (Thomas, 2019). The Kabul government and the Taliban declared overlapping cease-fires over the Eid festival and at the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan (Shah & Nordland, 2018). Following this development and in a reversal of long-standing policy, which rejected direct United States-Taliban negotiations without including the Afghan Government, the United States' Deputy Secretary of State, Ambassador Alice Wells, held the first direct United States' talks with the Taliban without the presence of the Afghan government delegation (Mashaal, 2018).

Following the talks, President Donald Trump sent a letter to Pakistan's newly elected Prime Minister, Imran Khan, which requested Pakistan's support for the peace process (Yousaf, 2018). By late 2017, Pakistan, faced with a spiraling relationship with the United States on the back of President Trump's hardline Afghanistan Policy, made more vigorous diplomatic efforts to repair its relations with Afghanistan (Khattak, 2018). As part of its bilateral diplomacy, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Qamar Javaid Bajwa, and current foreign minister, Shah Mahmud Qureishi, visited Kabul several times from 2017 to 2018. Encouraged by growing

interest in the region and hoping to salvage a withering bilateral relationship with the United States, Pakistan moved quickly to revive its peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan (Mcleary & de Luce, 2017).

***Mainstreaming of Pakistan's tribal areas: Commitment to a human security approach***

While the peace process unfolded in Afghanistan, Pakistan's tribal areas underwent a historic transition. On May 24, 2018, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the Federally Administered Tribal Areas Reforms Bill, which merged FATA and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Ali, 2018). Previously, the federal government directly administered FATA through the FCR,<sup>6</sup> which deprived locals of rights and subjected them to harsh punishments (International Crisis Group, 2018). Under the 1901 FCR law, the Political Agent, the senior-most federal bureaucrat in FATA's seven tribal agencies, wielded unchecked executive, judicial, and revenue authority (Ali, 2018). The FATA Reforms Bill 2018, in essence the 31st Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution, abolished this provision and repealed the FCR (Press, 2018). Pakistan currently plans to launch a Ten-Year Economic Development Plan for the newly merged tribal districts to align them with the economic development of the rest of the country (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

Through the recent constitutional amendments and reform agenda in the tribal districts, create Pakistan hopes to interrupt the circular dynamic of conflict in the tribal belt. The Tribal Areas are now a part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, which allows Pakistan to settle its insecurity over the Durand Line border dispute with Afghanistan (Jamal, 2018). The merger plan also promises to bring transformative changes to key governance, political, and security structures in the tribal districts (Ali,

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**6** The Frontier Crimes Regulations were a special set of laws of British India (1902), and later Pakistan, which were applicable to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. They were enacted by the in the nineteenth century and continued to remain in effect in Pakistan until 2018 (Government of North Western Frontier Province, 1973).



2018).

The Tribal Area plans its first-ever local government elections for December 2019. These elections will likely bring unprecedented changes in how local governments wield political power, and will likely transform the patronage-based governance structures (Ashfaq, 2018). This will hopefully address the political exclusion of underprivileged, youth, and women's voices within the government (Castillejo, 2012).

For the first time, local governments (LGs) in Pakistan's tribal areas can be used as entry points for women and youth perspectives in governance institutions. Women in the tribal areas have been traditionally excluded from public life and the marketplace, severely limiting their access to health and education services and denied recourse to justice. Tribal political structures built around the political power of the Malik and the tribal elders have also marginalized youth voices and agency. The youth and women councilors elected at the LG level will bring more inclusive perspectives to Pakistan's government (Castillejo, 2012).

Peace and stability in Afghanistan is a critical variable in the reform process of Pakistan's border zones. Policymakers in Pakistan believe that the tribal areas' reform process will be seriously set back if another cycle of conflict breaks out in Afghanistan (Sustainable Development Policy Institute, 2019; Ali, 2019). There are fears that in the event the United States withdraws its forces from Afghanistan and stops the flow of economic aid to the Afghan government, Afghanistan will plunge into internecine conflict and refugees will again flood into Pakistan's border areas.

### **The end game in Afghanistan: Challenges and opportunities for Pakistan**

As of 2019, the situation in Afghanistan is extremely fluid. President Trump called off the US-Taliban Peace negotiations in September 2019 (*BBC News*, 2019) in response to the Taliban's continued attacks that killed a US soldier in Kabul. However, recent signs indicate that the two sides are getting ready to restart peace negotiations (Syed, 2019). Progress so far has stalled on two key issues: the Taliban's refusal to talk to the Afghan government and announce a ceasefire. Although the United

States appears confident that it is closer to a peace deal with the Taliban than ever, an inclusive peace, which would have a workable power-sharing agreement at its heart, is still elusive (*BBC News*, 2019). In this context, Pakistan must move beyond tactical security containment strategies and focus on alternative policies that can strengthen a United States-Taliban peace process.

***Amplify the United States-Taliban peace process and political transitions in Afghanistan***

Afghanistan is currently undergoing important political transitions after its 2018 parliamentary elections and the presidential election held on September 28, 2019 (United Nations, 2019). After several rounds of United States-Taliban talks, the Ghani-led government in Kabul appears increasingly excluded from the peace process. Pakistan's peacebuilding agenda is best served if the United States-Taliban talks expand to include all key Afghan political factions (Gul, 2019b). Therefore, Pakistan must reach out to all political factions within Afghanistan. For example, several Pakistani think-tanks recently organized a conference in Murree,<sup>7</sup> which brought together 50 delegates from various Afghan political groups and factions. Some of the groups that attended the conference had been deeply critical of Pakistan's partisan role in the Afghan conflict and blamed Pakistan for aggravating ethnic rifts by supporting only Pashtun political groups. It has become evident that, in order to encourage peace negotiations, Pakistan must not support one single group or ethnic faction in Afghanistan (Saleh, 2012).

***Strengthen sub-national linkages between provincial governments in Afghanistan and Pakistan***

After the merger of the tribal areas into the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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**7** Note: The author attended the Murree meeting and engaged with some of the Afghan politicians. For more details of the meeting see, e.g., Qazi, S. 2019, 'Peace deal is near: what we know so far,' *Al Jazeera News*, 13 August, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/taliban-talks-peace-afghanistan-190510062940394.html>.

Province, local ethnic and cross border linkages now have the opportunity to transition into the sphere of provincial governments. Provincial governments in Pakistan are more empowered today than ever before (Shah, 2012). Recently key functions such as education, health, and industrial-sector policies have been transferred to the sub-national or provincial level. Enhanced Pak-Afghan provincial-level engagement in health and education sectors can expand people-to-people linkages. Greater interaction at the provincial-governments level can also de-securitize the relationship by increasing the number and points of interaction between provincial-level civilian bureaucracies and by reducing the role of security sector actors on both sides

### ***Revive cross-border economic linkages***

Pakistan has implemented a Ten-Year Economic Development Plan for its tribal areas along the Pac-Afghan border. The Economic Plan outlines a broad development strategy for aligning the region's 5,000,000 population with the rest of the province. A key component to the Economic Plan is expanding trans-border trade with Afghanistan in order to provide livelihood opportunities to the local populations (The News, 2019). Reengaging with Afghanistan at the national and sub-national level in order to discuss common strategies for the economic rehabilitation of border areas can shift the negative perspectives both countries hold for the other by creating a common vision of mutual prosperity.

### ***Resuscitate a well-resourced and reinvigorated diplomatic initiative***

Pakistan's diplomatic approach to Afghanistan is led by the Foreign office under the Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Given the critical importance of Pakistan's role and the importance it attaches to peace and security in Afghanistan, nominating a high-level Special Envoy for Afghanistan may better serve Pakistan's needs. An envoy with political and military support can operate with more flexibility and dedicate more time and focus to Afghanistan than Pakistan's foreign minister. The envoy's office is better suited to diplomacy in order to

reestablish dialogue with the various ethnic factions inside Afghanistan, which are traditionally opposed to Pakistan's role in Afghanistan.

Growing military tension between Pakistan and India threatens to thwart the nascent peace process underway in Doha Qatar (Khan, 2019). In February 2019, just as the United States' peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, and high level Taliban delegations prepared to begin a decisive round of negotiations, a military altercation occurred between India and Pakistan (Wilson & Saetren, 2019). This crisis was resolved, but rising military tension create complications within peace process negotiations. There is a possibility that India's new Modi government, recently re-elected into power, will open a dialogue with Pakistan, but tensions over the disputed Kashmir territory in 2019 discouraged the hopes of early normalization of relations between India and Pakistan (*India Today*, 2019). In the absence of normalized relations between India and Pakistan, a sustainable peace in Afghanistan will remain beyond reach.

## **Conclusion**

Currently Pakistan is responding to the imminent signs of United States' military withdrawal from Afghanistan by supporting a political settlement in Afghanistan (Pakistan Today, 2019). Since 2018, Pakistan has reinvigorated its political approach in order to broker a peace process in Afghanistan. The legacies of its long-term security-led policies, however, threaten to derail Pakistan's efforts through multiple challenges. The distrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan's government constrains Pakistan's ability to play a more direct role in mediating talks between the Ghani government, the Taliban, and various other power brokers in Afghanistan (Rafiq, 2019). Pakistan continues to increase its security architecture at the Pak-Afghan, but the ongoing internal conflict and instability in Pakistan's tribal areas and complications with its security approach create new vulnerabilities. These issues constrain Pakistan's ability to deliver services to, develop, and rehabilitate conflict-affected areas inside its border spaces (Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2019). Ultimately, the success of Pakistan's peacebuilding approach in Afghanistan depends on how successfully it is able to build trust with stakeholders on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border.

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## CHAPTER 5

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### Neighbors Matter: How Armed Groups Utilize Neighboring Countries to Sustain Armed Conflicts in Myanmar

By  
*Min Zaw Oo*

Myanmar (previously Burma) gained independence from Britain in 1948. Since then, it has experienced sustained internal conflict with multiple ethnic- and ideology-based armed groups. Most major armed groups base themselves along Myanmar's borders with Thailand and China, where the groups rely on Myanmar's neighboring countries for logistical support. Myanmar's situation with its neighbors is an example of "Neighborhood effect," where a weak state creates a spillover effect in its neighbors through various factors, including refugee flow, drug and weapons smuggling, and contagious instability (Herbst, 1996; O'Loughlin & Raleigh, 2007). Multiple studies demonstrate how insurgent groups often take advantage of neighboring countries to sustain their armed struggle (Salehyan, 2007; Byman *et al.*, 2001). This is often a mutually beneficial relationship, in which insurgent groups gain resources and logistical support from neighboring countries, and the latter gain illegal natural resource imports, political leverage, and other benefits by aiding the insurgency.

Thailand and China have a long history of formal cooperation with Myanmar. Myanmar has received official support from China since the 1960s. Under the Belt and Road Initiative and China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), China plans to make massive investments in Myanmar's infrastructure (Yhome, 2019). Thailand and Myanmar also

have a history of economic cooperation and foreign aid, focusing on infrastructure in Myanmar that promotes trade and connectivity between the two countries. China and Thailand have also hosted dialogues between Myanmar's government and its insurgent groups in order to support the peace process in Myanmar (Burke *et al.*, 2017; Han, 2018).

Although Myanmar's long histories of formal cooperation with Thailand and China have been well-documented and understood, the ways in which informal and unofficial cooperation between Thailand, China, and Myanmar's insurgents – a support that often undermined the objects of formal cooperation – has not been sufficiently explored. In addition to seeking a political settlement with insurgent groups, Myanmar must strengthen its formal cooperation with China and Thailand to further restrict logistical and material support between the rebel groups and Myanmar's neighbors.

This chapter explores the different ways insurgent groups use Thailand and China to sustain armed conflict in Myanmar. The first section reviews the history of Myanmar's internal armed conflict and the threats that conflict poses to both Myanmar's government and relationships with its neighbors. The second section outlines 15 ways insurgent groups utilize Thailand and China to sustain their fight against Myanmar's government. The third section explains that, in order to achieve peace, the Myanmar government must construct political settlements with insurgent groups, and the fourth section continues to describe how effective development cooperation with border regions, coupled with tighter border controls, can contribute to sustainable peace in Myanmar.

## **Background of the Myanmar armed conflict**

After achieving independence in 1948, Myanmar experienced years of civil war between communists and ethnic armed rebels. Until the late 1960s, various armed groups occupied the country in different geographical and ethnic areas, and the government controlled patches of population centers (Myoe, 2009). The military gradually contained the insurgent groups in Myanmar's mountainous and thinly populated border areas. The Myanmar military, led by General Ne Win, overthrew the elected civilian government in 1962 and governed the country under a

one-party dictatorship, the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) (Callahan, 2005). The insurgency, made up of multiple minority groups, remained a potent threat to the new BSPP regime.

Over 60 insurgent groups operated in various border areas: ethnic armed groups fought for autonomy, and communist insurgents threatened to overthrow the government until 1989 (Myoe, 2009; Smith, 1999). All major armed groups were situated on Myanmar's north, south, and east borders, which border China and Thailand. The mountainous and forested border areas provided the rebels with a perfect sanctuary for military bases and operations. Neighboring countries became a critical logistical resource for these insurgent groups.

Myanmar experienced a mass uprising in 1988 that toppled the BSPP. Myanmar's Armed Forces, the Tatmadaw, however, rose to power after a bloody suppression of nationwide protests (Lintner, 1999). The new military junta struggled to legitimize itself at home and abroad while it pursued ceasefire arrangements with 40 of the ethnic armed groups (Oo, 2014). The regime forced some smaller groups to either disarm or join the People's Militia, a paramilitary force controlled by the Tatmadaw. In 2009, the Tatmadaw forced fifteen of the remaining groups into the People's Militia and forced five well-armed groups to become Border Guard Forces (BGFs). Five groups, however, refused to transform into either the People's Militia or BGFs (Oo, 2014).

In 2011, a new government, led by President Thein Sein, came to power. The new government emerged from a 2010 election, run according to a controversial constitution implemented by the Tatmadaw in 2008.<sup>1</sup> Despite domestic and international doubts, President Thein Sein pursued ceasefire agreements with 13 ethnic armed organizations, including those that had refused to transform into BGFs (Oo, 2014). After 17 months of negotiations with 16 groups,<sup>2</sup> eight groups signed the Nationwide

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1 The constitution guarantees that the military retain a strong grip on Myanmar's government. The constitution required that 25 percent of Myanmar's parliament seats be filled by Tatmadaw's nominees, and the constitution cannot be amended unless over 75 percent of Myanmar's parliament vote to do so (Banyan, 2014).

2 Not all 13 groups that signed bilateral ceasefire agreements were part of the 16 groups that participated in the original NCA negotiation. For example, the UWSA, NDAA, RCSS, and NSCN-K signed bilateral ceasefire agreements, but they were not part of

Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on October 15, 2015 (Slodkowski, 2015). As of July 2019, four ethnic armed groups, the KIA, AA, TNLA and MNDAA, are still fighting the Tatmadaw. Seven ethnic armed groups (consisting of the four still-fighting groups and three groups<sup>3</sup> that signed bilateral ceasefires) that did not sign the NCA are based along the China-Myanmar border. Most of the NCA signatories were from Myanmar's south border with Thailand (Figure 5-1).

The relationship between Myanmar, China, and Thailand changed significantly after the military's takeover in 1988, especially in commercial relations. Myanmar's official trade with Thailand was USD 2,500,000 in 1988, but it increased to USD 612,000,000 in 2000 (International Monetary Fund 2019). The trade volume with China in 1988 was USD 24,500,000, which increased to USD 1,750,000,000 in 2000 (International Monetary Fund, 2019). The improved economic relationship with Myanmar made China and Thailand realize that Myanmar's interior conflicts, especially with insurgent groups near the border, could hamper mutual economic interests. Thailand and China, however, could not see a clear-cut military victory over the insurgent groups in Myanmar. China, especially, realized that a ceasefire in Myanmar was the most viable solution to reducing violence near its border. In the absence of a clear path for victory for Myanmar's military, China resolved to maintain its connection with insurgent groups to use as political leverage against Myanmar's government and thus prevent Myanmar from launching an all-out offensive against ethnic armed groups along the China-Myanmar border.

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the 16 armed groups that made up the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT). The NCCT also included armed groups that were still fighting with the government, such as the KIA, AA, TNLA, and MNDAA. Although the RCSS did not participate in the NCA negotiation, it signed the NCA in October 2015.

- 3** UWSA, NDAA, and SSPP signed bilateral ceasefires with the Thein Sein government in 2011.

**Figure 5-1** | Headquarters of 17 ethnic armed groups in Myanmar along its borders (2019)



Source: Ne Lynn Aung (2019)

## 15 ways armed groups use Thailand and China<sup>4</sup>

China and Thailand have supported Myanmar's insurgent groups tacitly and explicitly since the 1970s,<sup>5</sup> but both countries also began to

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**4** The author conducted 52 interviews with members of armed groups, Tatmadaw officials, and senior intelligence officials (active and retired) from January 2018 to July 2019, in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Shan State, Kachin State, Ching Mai, and Mae Sot. Interviews were conversational and non-structured. The author conducted a total of 21 interviews with government officials, 15 with leaders of ethnic armed groups that signed the NCA, 8 with non-NCA signatories, 6 with former members of armed groups, and 8 with other relevant actors, including businessmen and interlocutors.

**5** China also supported the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) in the 1950s and 1960s



collaborate with Myanmar's government in the 1990s in order to promote trade with Myanmar and stability along the border (Chongkittavorn, 2001).

External states' involvement in armed conflict is two-fold. External actors support insurgent groups in other countries in order to gain political or military leverage. For example, Thailand viewed insurgent groups at Myanmar's border as a buffer between Thailand and Myanmar's military (Myoe, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 1998). Insurgent groups seek resources, financial support, and political backing from external actors. This section identifies fifteen ways the ethnic armed groups in Myanmar use Thailand and China to support their fight and highlights two of those factors as the most important aspects of sustained insurgency: smuggling natural resources and procuring weapons.

One way armed groups use Thailand and China is for physical sanctuary. Although neither Thailand nor China officially allow Myanmar insurgents to use their territory as bases, the porous border and remote area facilitate easy access for the insurgent groups.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, China and Thailand provide insurgents tactical depth for troops to withdraw into during conflicts.<sup>7</sup> The third way is that neighboring countries provide Myanmar insurgents with important military intelligence regarding the Tatmadaw's activities in Myanmar.<sup>8</sup> Fourth, major armed groups in Myanmar acquire logistical support and supplies, such as rice, dry rations, cooking oil, medicine, and batteries from China and Thailand.<sup>9</sup>

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for ideological reasons.

- 6** The All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Karen National Union (KNU) hid posts, prison cells, and arms caches in Thailand for years in the 1990s (interview with former members of the ABSDF and KNU, and the author witnessed the existence of the camps). Additionally, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) built bases on the Chinese borderline to deter shelling from the Tatmadaw (interview with an officer who took part in the operation against the MNDAA in 2015, and pictures leaked on Facebook that showed bases on the China-Myanmar border).
- 7** In clashes with the MNDAA in 2015 and 2016 when the Tatmadaw overran the rebel bases close to the border, MNDAA troops retreated into China (interview with a Tatmadaw commander).
- 8** Thai intelligence officers used to exchange intelligence about the Myanmar military with the KNU (interview with the KNU and ABSDF officials).
- 9** Interview with former ABSDF members and Tatmadaw's intelligence officers.

Additionally, international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (INGOs) facilitate logistical support to the insurgents, either inadvertently or knowingly, when INGOs purchase goods from neighboring countries and channel the supplies to Myanmar insurgents.<sup>10</sup> The fifth factor involves medical sanctuary. According to the Geneva Convention's protection of the sick and wounded, China and Thailand allow injured insurgents access to hospitals in their countries.<sup>11</sup>

Sixth, although most insurgent groups rely on forced conscription inside Myanmar for recruitment, various Myanmar armed groups also recruit from the thousands of migrant workers of similar ethnic backgrounds living in Thailand and China.<sup>12</sup> Seventh, many ethnic groups and their diaspora reside on both sides of the Thailand-Myanmar and China-Myanmar borders. These diasporas can provide moral, political, technical, and financial support to insurgent groups.<sup>13</sup> The eighth way is that many leaders of ethnic armed groups in Myanmar keep their families in neighboring countries in order to benefit from the educational opportunities afforded in those countries; students often return to insurgent groups after their studies (Suksamran, 2018). The ninth factor involves the successful international relations, especially with the West, Myanmar insurgents maintain through liaison offices in neighboring countries.<sup>14</sup> Tenth, several insurgent groups in Myanmar belong to political and military alliances composed of various ethnic and ideological groups, and these groups meet in China and Thailand to foster relationships (Nyein, 2016).

Eleventh, neighboring countries provide a luxury lifestyle for

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**10** Several humanitarian INGOs knowingly allocated rice sacks, food supplies, and medicine to insurgent groups through refugees and internally displaced persons near the Thailand-Myanmar border (interview with KNU and ABSDF members who liaised with international humanitarian organizations).

**11** Interview with former ABSDF, KNU members and current KIO officer, and the author witnessed wounded rebel soldiers treated in Thailand hospitals.

**12** The Restoration Council for Shan State (RCSS) keeps closely connected with Shan migrants in Thailand and regularly enlists them into the RCSS.

**13** Karen and Shan living in Thailand provided assistance to the KNU and RCSS, and Jinghpaw communities in China are closely linked to the KIO (interviews with former members of KNU, RCSS, and KIO).

**14** Interview with former ABSDF, KIO, and KNU members.

insurgent leaders. Some insurgent leaders own large houses or collect fancy cars in Thailand and China. These luxuries reduce opportunity cost for insurgent leaders, allowing them to sustain their leadership of armed organizations without sacrificing lavish lifestyles.<sup>15</sup> The twelfth way is that, because Thailand and China support the peace process in Myanmar, the countries host formal and informal meetings between representatives of Myanmar's government and ethnic armed groups (Nyein, 2018). Thirteenth, Myanmar insurgences often finance armies through income from the illicit drug trade with China and Thailand (International Crisis Group 2019). The illegal opiate market in Myanmar has a gross value of approximately USD 1,100,000,000 to 2,300,000,000, accounting for 1.5 to 3.3 percent of Myanmar's 2017 gross domestic product (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2019). The monetary value of Myanmar's drug trade is likely in the tens of billions USD (International Crisis Group, 2019).

The fourteenth and fifteenth factors involve using neighboring countries as natural resource marketplaces and weapons dealers. These two factors are especially important because money from natural resource sales finance insurgents' operations, and weapons and ammunition sustain armed combat. Unlike drug dealing, natural resource smuggling requires a marketplace that can handle large quantities of resources. Insurgent groups benefit from both illegal and legitimate natural resource sales to Thailand and China through either taxation or operating production themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Timber, jade, and mined metals, including rare earths, are the three most lucrative markets for insurgent groups, after drugs. In the early 1990s, the KNU earned approximately USD 160,000,000 from a logging concession between the Myanmar junta and Thai companies (Sadoff, 1992). Some estimated that the total timber exported from Myanmar between 2000 and 2014 was actually 2.2 to 3.5 times the volume officially recorded (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2014). In 2010, China recorded

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**15** Pictures of the RCSS leader with a famous monk at his house in Thailand circulated on the internet. Additionally, one leader of the UWSA smuggled a Batmobile across China to his headquarters; the pictures leaked on Facebook.

**16** Interviews with a former business liaison who worked for the KIO.

that Myanmar exported USD 281,000,000 worth of timber to China, but Myanmar officially registered only USD 40,000,000 (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2012). Global Witness estimated that Myanmar's jade sales in 2014 were approximately USD 31,000,000,000 (Global Witness, 2015), while other experts estimate that such sales represent a much lower sum.<sup>17</sup> Myanmar is also the world's third-largest tin producer; it had a 4,900 percent increase in extraction from 2009 to 2014 (Gardiner *et al.*, 2015).<sup>18</sup> This spike in production came from the rebel-controlled Man Maw mine site<sup>19</sup> located approximately 90 km from Pang Kham, capital of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), the largest ethnic armed group in Myanmar (Gardiner *et al.*, 2015).

Most jade and timber smuggled into China comes through rebel-controlled areas. Smugglers bribe the Tatmadaw and police personnel guarding security checkpoints to carry timber and jade to the border.<sup>20</sup> Myanmar has requested that China curtail illegal timber, jade, and tin trade with insurgent groups, but China has ignored these requests<sup>21</sup> (Scheyder *et al.*, 2019).<sup>22</sup> Thailand receives fewer illegal imports from Myanmar than China does because illegal natural resource smuggling to Thailand declined when insurgent groups lost territory along the Thailand border due to the Tatmadaw and deforestation.<sup>23</sup>

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**17** The Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security (MIPS) interviewed a researcher currently analyzing Myanmar's jade industry, and he challenged the Global Witness to debate its estimate and methodology.

**18** Many industry experts considered this spike a "Black Swan" event (an unprecedented event that has potentially severe consequences) that impacted the global tin and tungsten prices in 2014.

**19** According to author interviews, the mine also produces rare earth elements.

**20** Interview with a Tatmadaw official who intercepted a timber smuggling operation that led to the arrests of over a dozen corrupt officials in 2014 in Shan State.

**21** Interview with a Myanmar official who attended the bilateral meeting with China in 2017.

**22** In one bilateral meeting in 2016, a Myanmar representative showed their Chinese counterpart a satellite photo of illegal timber inside China. The Myanmar representative asked China to seal off border entrances used for illegal timber. An interview with a Myanmar diplomat who attended the bilateral meeting explained that China also refused to cut off tin trade with Myanmar's Man Maw mining site.

**23** The exact amount of illegal natural resource trade in both countries is difficult to estimate.

Myanmar insurgents frequently receive weapons from neighboring countries. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) signed an agreement in 1975 that promoted mutual cooperation for ten years, which included weapons supply to the BCP until 1978 (Myoe, 2011).<sup>24</sup> The CCP helped the BCP build a weapon factory capable of producing assault rifles and ammunition (Myoe, 2011). After Myanmar's military coup in 1988, the CCP's material support to Myanmar's insurgent groups became more implicit.<sup>25</sup> The CPP encouraged the ethnic armed groups along its border to seek ceasefires with Myanmar's military junta because China wanted to maintain border stability and promote trade with Myanmar. The CPP maintained a close relationship with Myanmar's military government until it handed over power to President Thein Sein in 2011 (Egreteau, 2017).

Thailand often curtails its support to Myanmar's insurgent groups according to the relationship dynamic between the two countries' governments. Prior to the 1990s, the Thai government maintained a "buffer zone" policy in Myanmar where it provided support to the ethnic insurgents who served as a safeguard between Thailand and Myanmar's military, which Thailand considered hostile because Burmese kings historically invaded Thailand (Zaw, 2002). In the 1990s, Thailand moved closer to Myanmar's military junta and away from its buffer zone policy (Human Rights Watch 1998). Myanmar's military regime asked Thailand to restrict weapons dealing with the insurgent groups, which the insurgents managed through Thailand's black market.<sup>26</sup> In response, Thai governments attempted to crackdown on weapons smuggling since the late 1990s. In 2001, however, Thailand's support of Myanmar's insurgent group, the Shan State Army (South), increased after a border clash between Myanmar and Thailand due to a territorial dispute.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1990s, ethnic armed groups operating near the Thailand border mostly procured weapons through Cambodia (Shenon, 1993). Corrupt

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**24** As many as 60,000 rifles came from China to the BCP until the late 1980s (Myoe, 2011).

**25** 2018 interview with a Chinese official in Beijing.

**26** Interview with a former Myanmar intelligence officer in the mid-1990s.

**27** Interview with an intelligence officer and former RCSS member.

Thai army officials sold weapons to insurgent groups.<sup>28</sup> The weapon and ammunition price in the Thai black market, however, was approximately twice as expensive as those near the Chinese border.<sup>29</sup> Notably, none of the ethnic armed groups operating near Thailand maintained a factory that could manufacture assault rifles and ammunition. All major groups operating close to the Chinese border, however, controlled weapon factories.<sup>30</sup> Groups near China are larger in size and better armed than those near Thailand due to the ease and low cost of procuring weapons from China. Well financed and better armed rebel groups near China are also better able to resist signing the NCA. All seven groups near the Chinese border have not signed the NCA, despite China's official appeal for the groups to sign (Table 5-1).<sup>31</sup>

## **Political settlement is essential for peace**

During the rule of Myanmar's military government from 1989 to 2011, the Tatmadaw refused to seek a political settlement with insurgent groups because it was a "transitional government," and only the next elected government could discuss a settlement (Oo, 2014). The peace process after Myanmar transitioned to a new government, led by President Thein Sein in 2011, ignited new hope for a political settlement that could end the 70-year armed conflict between insurgent groups and the Tatmadaw.<sup>32</sup> The NCA acknowledged that democracy and federalism were the end goal of the peace process and amended the controversial 2008 constitution, including amendments for power-sharing between union and states, democratization, civilian supremacy over security forces, and

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**28** Interview with former ABSDF and KNU members who facilitated weapon procurement.

In 1993, the author also witnessed a Thai military officer drive a truck of weapons to sell to the ABASDF.

**29** Interview with members of armed groups at the Thai and Chinese borders. A new M22 at the Thai border costs about USD 900 in the Thai black market; the same gun costs USD 500 near China.

**30** Interview with an intelligence officer.

**31** Chinese officials were more explicit after 2016 that armed groups should sign the NCA (Lwin, 2019).

**32** For the first time in Myanmar history, the government agreed to negotiate a political settlement based on federalism.

increasing cultural and social rights for ethnic minorities.

Nevertheless, many ethnic armed groups doubt that the Tatmadaw will foster a federal state if it maintains the military privileges outlined in the 2008 constitution.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the NLD and the Tatmadaw have not agreed on how to negotiate federalism with the insurgent groups. In order to achieve peace between the government and the insurgent groups, the NLD and the Tatmadaw must negotiate a robust political settlement with ethnic armed groups and amend the current constitution so that power is distributed more equally among the majority Burmans and ethnic minority groups. Myanmar's government should also encourage Thailand and China to more effectively support the peace process with the insurgent groups. The first step to this peace process should include Thailand and China's support for a political settlement – not simply a ceasefire – between Myanmar's government and the insurgent groups. A comprehensive peace agreement will permanently end armed conflicts in Myanmar and significantly reduce the war economy.

### **Coordination with Thailand and China is critical for peace in Myanmar**

The dependence of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups on Thailand and China provides the neighboring countries leverage over the armed groups' involvement in Myanmar's peace process.<sup>34</sup> In order to encourage the peace process, Myanmar's government must coordinate with Thailand and China in order to prevent armed conflict and seek a political settlement with the ethnic armed groups. The second and third actions Myanmar should implement in its cooperation with Thailand and China should involve restricting illicit weapons, natural resource, and drug trading with insurgent groups.

Since the mid-1990s, Thailand has been more successful than China in containing weapon smuggling with Myanmar's insurgent groups.

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**33** Interviews in 2018 with five leaders of NCA signatories.

**34** China warned four groups in the north not to launch military offensives close to China's border, which has prevented the groups from initiating armed conflict near the Chinese border since 2017.

Thailand's weapons policies have impacted insurgent groups near the Thai border: the size of armed groups near the Thailand border are smaller and less heavily armed than those close to China, and groups close to the Thailand border are now signatories of the NCA. The insurgent groups close to the Chinese border, however, continue to be better armed and possess larger forces than those near Thailand because of China's continued support. If China does not restrict weapons trading with Myanmar's insurgent groups, the armed conflict in Myanmar will likely continue.

Both Thailand and China have restricted drug smuggling along Myanmar's border. China, however, remains the largest market for illegally extracted natural resources from Myanmar, which continues to enhance Myanmar's war economy. Both countries, especially China, can more effectively target illicit natural resource trade along Myanmar's border in order to reduce Myanmar's war economy and curtail corruption among Thai and Chinese security forces<sup>35</sup> near Myanmar's border.

The fourth action Myanmar should take with its neighboring countries in order to encourage the peace process, is that, because of China and Thailand's political leverage over insurgent groups, the neighboring countries can create development incentives as peace dividends for the insurgent groups and Myanmar's government while both sides engage in political dialogue. Possible development incentives include supporting communities affected by Myanmar's conflict and infrastructure projects that can benefit both countries. Insurgent groups depend more on China than on Thailand, so China carries more economic and political leverage over the ethnic armed organizations. Additionally, China is a diplomatic shield for Myanmar at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which affords China leverage over Myanmar's government.<sup>36</sup>

A possible avenue for peacebuilding between Myanmar and China is the development of China's Belt and Road Initiative. China encouraged

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**35** Interview with former KNU and BCP members in 2018. The insurgent groups often bribed corrupt security officials from Thailand and China in order to export illicit nature resources.

**36** China advocated for Myanmar when the UNSC tried to hold Myanmar accountable for the 2017 exodus of Rohingya refugees (Carroll, 2019).



Myanmar's government and insurgent groups to seek a ceasefire after it began pursuing the China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) which runs through the conflict-affected areas of the northern Shan State and Rakhine's Kyaukpyu (Lwin, 2018). China's plans for regional connectivity require stable borders. In the short term, the CMEC runs the risk of increasing illegal cross-border trade, but, in the long term, it will draw Myanmar into China's economic orbit and create formal jobs and income opportunities in Myanmar's conflict affected states (International Crisis Group, 2019). If the CMEC benefits Myanmar's communities and economy, the project could become an incentive for a peace process between Myanmar's government and insurgent groups.

## **Conclusion**

This paper identifies fifteen ways ethnic armed groups in Myanmar use Thailand and China to sustain their armed struggle and argues that easy access to weapons and an illegal marketplace for natural resources are important factors to sustaining armed conflict in Myanmar. The author recommends four actions that Myanmar's government should implement in its relationships with Thailand and China: (1) both neighbors must support the prospect of a political settlement via a peace process; (2) China must effectively curb weapons flow to armed groups in Myanmar; (3) Myanmar and both neighbors must work together to reduce the illegal import of natural resources, especially to China; and (4) Myanmar and its neighbors must foster development initiatives to expand peace dividends to local communities in order to reduce the legitimacy of armed groups in those communities. Since 1948, Myanmar's development and population has been significantly hurt by the sustained conflict between the government and insurgent groups. Improved coordination with China and Thailand will help Myanmar find a peaceful solution with ethnic armed groups, and that will ultimately benefit Myanmar, its population, and its neighboring countries.

Table 5-1 The 17 Major Armed Groups Operating in Myanmar (2019): Description, Weapons Procurement Capability, Bordering Country(s), Peace Process Status

Group Name	Border	Weapon Fabrication Plant	NCA Signatories	Brief Description
UWSA (United Wa State Army)	China	Yes	No	The largest armed group that sought a bilateral ceasefire in 1989 after Wa ethnic leaders broke away from the communist BCP.
NDAA (National Democratic Alliance Army)	China	Yes	No	A BCP splinter group that agreed to a bilateral ceasefire after 1989.
MNDAA (Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army)	China	Yes	No	This Kokang-ethnic group revived in 2012 after the Tatmadaw dismantled it in 2009. The group has a no-ceasefire status and is currently fighting the Tatmadaw.
KIA (Kachin Independence Army)	China	Yes	No	One of the oldest armed groups. It signed a bilateral ceasefire in 1994. The group operates in the resource-rich Kachin State. The KIA's ceasefire ended in 2011. The group was pivotal in the TNLA and AA's creation.
TNLA (Ta'ang National Liberation Army)	China	No; received weapons from the KIA, MNDAA, and UWSA	No	It was set up in 2009 after a major Palaung armed group was disarmed in 2005.

Table 5-1 | (Continued)

Group Name	Border	Weapon Fabrication Plant	NCA Signatories	Brief Description
AA (Arakan Army)	China/ Bangladesh	No; received weapons from the KIA, MNDAA, and UWSA	No	AA was established in 2009 in Laiza, the KIA's Headquarters. Its goal was to establish a foothold in the Rakhine state. In 2018, the government accused the AA of smuggling drugs to finance its war.
SSPP (Shan State Progress Party)	Inland; China border	No; received weapons from UWSA	No	SSPP is one of the oldest groups. It has a tie with the BCP. SSPP had a ceasefire with the government after 1989. The group is closely tied to the UWSA.
KNU (Karen National Union)	Thailand	No	Yes	The oldest armed group in Myanmar. It did not have a ceasefire until 2012. The KNU played a crucial role in the NCA's negotiation.
RCSS (Restoration Council of Shan State)	Thailand	No	Yes	Set up in 1996 after the Tatmadaw disarmed its predecessor, the Mong Tai Army.
NMSP (New Mon State Party)	Thailand	No	Yes	The NMSP signed a ceasefire in 1995. It signed the NCA in February 2018.

Table 5-1 | (Continued)

Group Name	Border	Weapon Fabrication Plant	NCA Signatories	Brief Description
KNPP (Karenni National Progressive Party)	Thailand	No	No	The KNPP signed a ceasefire in 1995, but the truce ended in 1996. It signed a bilateral ceasefire again in 2012, but did not sign the NCA.
Peace Council	Thailand	No	Yes	A splinter faction of the KNU, it agreed to a ceasefire in 2007.
DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army)	Thailand	No	Yes	The Buddhist Karen group split from the KNU in 1995. The group signed a ceasefire and transformed into a Border Guard Force. Its splinter group, the DKBA, signed a ceasefire in November 2011 and the NCA in 2015.
ALP (Arakan Liberation Party)	Thailand/ Bangladesh	No	Yes	The ALP is one of the smaller Rakhine armed groups and did not have a ceasefire until 2012. It signed the NCA in 2015.
CNF (Chin National Front)	India	No	Yes	Composed of ethnic Chin, poorly armed, and near the India border, it signed a bilateral ceasefire in January 2012 and the NCA in 2015.
PNLO (Pao National Liberation Organization)	Inland, Thailand	No	Yes	The Palaung armed group split into factions in the 1970s. A larger faction sought a ceasefire with Myanmar's government in 1994 and transformed into the government-affiliated peoples' militia in 2009. The PNLO signed a ceasefire with the government in 2012 and the NCA in 2015.

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## CHAPTER 6

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### The Role of South Korean NGOs in Laying the Groundwork for Reunification of the Korean Peninsula

*By*

*Kyungyon Moon*

#### **Introduction**

In 2017, South Korea inaugurated the Moon Jae-in Administration. President Moon immediately sought to resume dialogue with North Korea. He did so to encourage a peaceful dialogue between the United States and North Korea. North Korea positively responded to the Moon Administration's request. Kim Jong Un, the young leader of North Korea, and President Moon met during multiple inter-Korean Summits from April 2018 to May 2018. The Inter-Korean Summit Meeting paved the way for the first United States-North Korea summit meeting since the Korean War in 1953.

The improved United States-North Korea relationship was possibly due to a combination of factors, including the economic sanctions that the United States and United Nations imposed on North Korea, Kim Jong Un's new leadership, President Moon's leadership, and/or the completion of North Korea's nuclear weapon development program. These explanations, however, ignore the effects of South Korean nongovernmental organization (NGO) operations in North Korea. Following decades of hostile relations between North and South Korea after the Korean War, beginning in the 1990s, South Korean NGOs played a crucial role in building trust and enabling political dialogue between the



two countries. NGOs contributed to inter-Korean social and development cooperation mainly from 1995 to 2007, until inter-Korean relations declined from 2008 to 2016. Some South Korean NGOs, however, maintained their efforts during these difficulties.<sup>1</sup> While the South Korean NGOs began their movement by providing relief and assistance to North Korean famine victims in the 1990s, their humanitarian mandate has since been subsumed to some extent into the ultimate goal of reuniting North and South Korea into a single sovereign state.

This paper examines how South Korean NGOs framed aid provision to North Korea in order to advocate for and advance peace between North and South Korea. The first section identifies a prolonged mistrust and hostility between North and South Korea, which originated during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 and continued until the active intervention of NGOs in 1999. The second section analyzes how South Korean NGO intervention in North Korea from 2000 to the end of Roh Moo-hyun Administration in 2007 helped improve the inter-Korean relationship. The third section examines South Korea's struggle to sustain peace with North Korea under conservative South Korean administrations from 2008 to 2016, when inter-Korean relations ruptured. The fourth section explains the current (2018-2019) dynamic between North and South Korea in the context of South Korean NGO intervention. The fifth section explains how South Korean NGOs have focused on building trust between North and South Korea, and the sixth section elaborates upon this point, expanding upon how NGOs can be political actors. Lastly, the seventh section explains how North and South Korea's experience with

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<sup>1</sup> The author shares experience gained in his capacity as an external evaluation committee member for the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Unification. Since 2004, the author has observed inter-Korean exchange and cooperation; he received a doctoral degree for his dissertation on the role of humanitarian NGOs in state aid-decision-making towards North Korea from 1995 to 2007. For his dissertation, he interviewed most of the key decisionmakers in the South Korean government, including Ministers and Vice-Ministers at the Ministry of Unification and personnel from the Blue House (the Presidential Office). After receiving his degree, he continued his research and began serving as a policy advisor for South Korean NGOs for North Korea in 2012. From 2014 to 2015, he also worked at the Institute for North Korea Development, a government institution handling the Inter-Korea Cooperation Fund.

building trust through NGO operations can apply to peacebuilding across Asian development cooperation.

### **Mistrust between North and South Korea: From the Korean War to the early Kim Dae-jung Administration in 1999**

The regime struggle between North and South Korea during the Korean War and the Cold War era resulted in lasting hostility between both countries that continued until the late 1990s. The tension on the Korean Peninsula derived from North Korea's domestic and foreign politics that sought to bring communism to South Korea, while South Korea viewed North Korea as a continuous military threat and mistrust between North and South Korea continued to grow. Not least because in 1994, North Korea discontinued its nuclear dialogue with the United States in spite of the two countries' 1994 Geneva Agreement, which involved freezing North Korea's nuclear program.

When flooding destroyed croplands in North Korea in 1995-1996, causing a severe food crisis, North Korea requested international aid. South Korea's conservative civil and political spheres worried that providing food aid to North Korea would be perceived as support for the North Korean regime (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy 2005). The South Korean government did provide food aid to North Korea in 1995 even though conservative South Koreans considered this aid to be "irresponsible and indiscreet behavior" (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005). However, South Korea's aid did not resolve tensions: in 1995, North Korea seized the crew of the *Woosung*, a South Korean ship carrying 150,000 tons of rice to North Korea. This event, together with the nuclear stalemate, further increased hostilities between the two countries and negatively affected South Korean public opinion about providing humanitarian aid to North Korea. The Kim Young-sam Administration (YS Administration), which ruled South Korea from 1993 to 1998, eventually suspended all inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, including humanitarian aid.

Despite these tensions and the suspension of all South Korean government aid to North Korea, a number of South Korean civil society organizations recognized the extent of North Korea's severe food shortages, which lasted through 1997. Some South Korean NGOs, religious groups, women's groups, student unions, farmers' unions, labor groups, and democracy activists, volunteered to raise relief funds and commodities for North Korea through a nationwide campaign (Sarangbang Group for Human Rights, 1996; Sarangbang Group for Human Rights, 1997a; Sarangbang Group for Human Rights, 1997b). South Korean NGO trust-building in North Korea rested on three elements: aid provision (beginning with humanitarian assistance and leading up to development cooperation), people-to-people social exchanges, and advocacy.

The NGOs relied on public-awareness campaigns in order to foster support for aid in North Korea, framing such aid as “brotherly love” and “a peaceful unification movement” (Korean Sharing Movement, 2001). They framed food aid as a method of alleviating political and military tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Across South Korea, the NGOs organized civil-society lectures and street campaigns in order to increase support for the aid movement. These campaigns were referred to as a second nationwide movement, following the democratization movement in the 1970s and 1980s (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005). The NGO's humanitarian campaign was very successful. As seen in Table 6-1, only five organizations provided aid to North Korea in 1995, but their number increased to 94 by 1998 (Moon, 2012). Moreover, South Korean presidential candidates Kim Dae-jung, Lee In-je, and Lee Hoechange participated in the Presidential Candidate Discussion on Aid to North Korea, organized by NGOs – another positive result of the NGOs' humanitarian campaign. This marked a shift within the South Korean government toward a more receptive attitude about providing aid to North Korea (Korean Sharing Movement, 1999; Sung & Kim, 1997).

The NGOs' efforts, however, were not enough to entirely dispel South Korea's distrust of North Korea. Ideological and military confrontations between the two countries continued until 2002, the middle of the Kim Dae-jung Administration (DJ Administration). While the DJ Administration

Table 6-1 Increase in the Number of South Korean NGOs Providing Aid to North Korea (1995-1999)

(Unit: Number)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
NGOs approved by the South Korean Ministry of Unification for direct support to North Korea <sup>2</sup>	(5*)	(9*)	(13*)	(94**)	9

Note: \* Number of NGOs that conducted funding and resource-raising activities during the YS Administration.

\*\*Number of NGOs that participated in the “Famine 24” event to help North Korea

Source: Moon (2012), p.62.

adopted an Engagement Policy (known as the Sunshine Policy), which emphasized peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula through inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, the policy ultimately did little to dispel conflict and mistrust between the countries. Additionally, North Korean military provocations in South Korea, including the West Sea Battle in June 1999, made it difficult for the DJ Administration to execute its aid policy. North Korea’s military action broke prompted a break in inter-Korean talks that were expected to discuss humanitarian assistance between the countries.<sup>3</sup> In turn, the DJ Administration made humanitarian assistance provisional upon North Korea’s favorable behavior.<sup>4</sup>

South Korean NGOs criticized the DJ Administration’s politization of North Korean food aid. From 1998 to 2000, the NGOs reframed the issue of food aid to North Korea, claiming it was a governmental obligation rather than appealing to popular sentiment, as during the YS Administration (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005). In 1999 and 2000, the NGOs also framed food aid as a peaceful

2 The official statistical data on the number of NGOs became available after the Kim Dae-jung Administration approved the directed delivery of aid by NGOs to North Korea in 1999.

3 Author Interview with Dong-Won Lim, the Former Minister of Unification from May to December 1999 and March to September 2001, in Seoul on May 20, 2009.

4 Author Interview with Jae-Gyu Park, the Former Minister of Unification from December 1999 to March 2001, in Seoul on June 2, 2009.

unification movement between North and South Korea, but the DJ Administration still hesitated to provide large-scale government food aid to North Korea. Prior to an inter-Korean summit in 2000, the NGOs intensified their pressure on the DJ Administration to provide food aid to North Korea. Although the DJ Administration sought to achieve a political rapprochement with North Korea, the latter's lukewarm reception of the DJ Administration's engagement policy resulted in the DJ Administration applying strict conditionality when providing food aid. NGO attempts to frame food aid to North Korea as "brotherly love" began to lose their persuasive power because prolonged South Korean aid efforts had resulted in little positive change in inter-Korean relations (Lee, 2009).

Tensions between North and South Korea persisted into the year 2000: mail and telecommunication exchanges between the two countries were prohibited. Many South Koreans had a negative perception of North Korea: 43.7 percent considered North Korea worthy of mistrust and 15.9 percent considered North Korea an enemy state (Kim & Kim, 2007).

### **Trust-building through intervention: From the mid-Kim Dae-jung Administration to the Roh Moo-hyun Administration (2000-2007)**

The South Korean public's support for food aid to North Korea was crucial because it could motivate the government to change its North Korean aid policies. As seen above, South Korean NGOs frequently reframed their food aid campaigns in order to encourage more popular support, basing their campaigns around attitudes toward North Korea. For example, in 2001 and 2002, the NGOs framed food aid as a movement mutually beneficial for North and South Korea. Agricultural NGOs maintained that food aid would benefit South Korean farmers, and urged the DJ Administration to send surplus rice to North Korea (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea and The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005). In order to demonstrate support for the agricultural NGOs, humanitarian NGOs added their names to a statement issued by the Korean NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea (KNCKK). With the 1999 establishment of the KNCKK,

South Korean civil society secured an efficient coordination mechanism for NGO operations in North Korea. More NGOs engaged in aid operations as the South Korean government approved the KNCCCK as a channel for government and NGO partnerships. In addition to coordinating NGO operations in North Korea, the KNCCCK enhanced the NGOs power to negotiate with the South Korean government (Choi, 1998). Table 6-2 reveals an increase in the number of approved NGOs and KNCCCK-member NGOs from 2000 to 2007; both serve as indications of increased government support for NGO activities in North Korea.

However, in 2002, North Korea admitted to enriching uranium for nuclear warheads;<sup>5</sup> this action radically undermined South Korean public opinion about the value of providing humanitarian and development aid to North Korea. Conservative South Korean political groups denounced North Korea's behavior, criticized the engagement policy of the DJ Administration, and claimed the DJ Administration's liberal approach to North Korea would result in North Korea's development of nuclear power and probably nuclear weapons.<sup>6</sup> Despite North Korea's rogue actions, NGOs asserted that the expansion of inter-Korean cooperation through humanitarian and development aid to North Korea was the only way to establish a foundation for peaceful unification. NGOs believed that they could successfully encourage trust between North and South Korea in ways that government organizations could not. After February 1999, South Korean NGOs provided direct assistance to North Korea alongside government efforts. This allowed South Korean civic groups and North Korean officials to engage in direct exchanges.

In 2003, the Roh Administration emphasized a "Peace and Prosperity Policy" that promoted further inter-Korean exchange, cooperation, and humanitarian aid. This policy amended the DJ Administration's flaws (The 16th Committee of the Presidency Takeover, 2003). The Roh Administration's friendly policy towards North Korea, however, did

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**5** The second North Korean nuclear crisis erupted on October 3, 2002 when Pyongyang admitted to developing a nuclear warhead with highly enriched uranium despite the 1994 Agreed Framework.

**6** Author Interview with Yong-Sun Lee, the Chairman of the Steering Committee, Korean Sharing Movement, in Seoul, May 12, 2009.

Table 6-2 | Number of South Korean NGOs that Provided Aid to North Korea and KNCCCK NGO Membership (2000-2007)

(Unit: Number)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
NGOs approved by the South Korean Ministry of Unification for direct support to North Korea	13	19	25	31	33	54	65	77
Membership in KNCCCK	20	21	28	31	39	42	51	58

Source: Moon (2012)

little to resolve official tensions between the two countries. However, subsequent years of South Korean NGO humanitarian assistance and various social and cultural exchanges confirmed an ethnic homogeneity between the two countries. These years of civil-society cooperation helped build mutual trust between North and South Korea, something South Korea’s government was unable to initiate.

In 2005, the Roh Administration maintained its pro-food-aid policy, and North Korea recognized the importance of sustainable social and economic development. North Korea therefore appealed for development aid from South Korea, while refusing shorter-term relief assistance from the United Nations and other international organizations. This refusal ignited a withdrawal of UN and international NGOs from North Korea in August 2005, despite North Korea’s ongoing needs. South Korean NGOs then reframed development aid to North Korea as assistance for sustainable and self-reliant development.<sup>7</sup>

In 2006, North Korea began missile and nuclear tests, which further damaged inter-Korean relations. Some South Korean NGOs responded by again framing food aid as “humanitarianism.” The cooperative partnership between the Kim Administration, Roh Administration, and the NGOs was based on the understanding that engagement with North Korea was a method to stabilize relations and foster a peaceful coexistence, a necessary interim stage before unification. The Kim and

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<sup>7</sup> Author interview with Young-Sik Kang, the secretary general of the Korean Sharing Movement, in Seoul, May 18, 2009.

Roh Administrations had actively accepted the NGOs' requests to improve institutional measures, abolishing restrictive regulations for aid to North Korea (Korean Sharing Movement, 1999; Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005). The KNCCCK and South Korean government established the Civil-Public Council for Policies on Aid to North Korea on September 1, 2004. This was the first institutional mechanism for a cooperative partnership between South Korean NGOs and the government (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005).

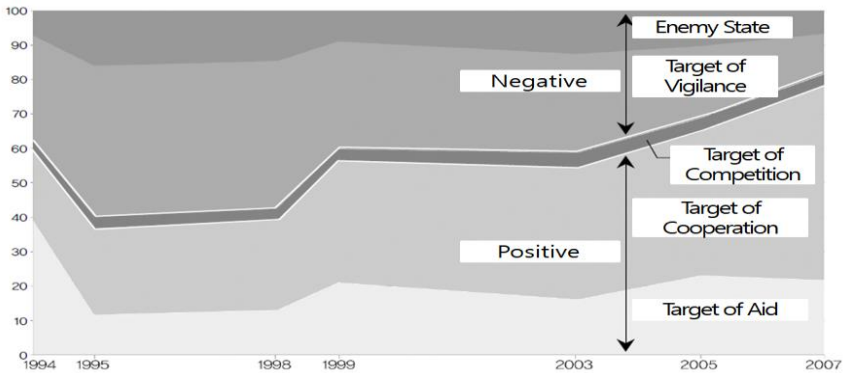
These and other modifications to government regulations for NGO aid were critical: despite North Korea's nuclear activities, in 2006, South Korean NGO aid expenditures increased from 2 to 15 percent, which allowed South Korea's Donation Restriction Act and Non-Profit Civil Organization Support Act to support the NGOs' administrative expenses. These new regulations and other actions laid the foundation for the further development of NGO aid to North Korea; they also led to the expansion of all civil society organizations in South Korea (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005).

Two decades of NGO research and public education, including campaigns for social, cultural, humanitarian, and development aid to North Korea, contributed to a more favorable South Korean public opinion of North Korea and helped facilitate implementation of North Korea-related policies. Figure 6-1 shows how South Korean opinion of North Korea gradually changed from 1994 to 2007.

It appears that as a result, North Korea also began to trust South Korea. Active inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation increased from 2000 to 2007, and the number of North Korean military provocations decreased. Inter-Korean summits and high-level meetings mitigated mutual hostility. North and South Korea held reunion events for families separated by the border. The number of North Korean officials who visited South Korea for training on market economies, advanced technologies, and the management of inter-Korean cooperation and exchange increased, as did North Korea's demands for technical cooperation (Kim, 2019).



Figure 6-1 Changes in South Korean Public Perceptions of North Korea (1994-2007)



Source: Byungjo et al. (2007)

The efforts made by South Korean NGOs encouraged the North Korean government, which responded positively in turn to the South Korean government. At first, North Korea, the “hermit Kingdom,” was reluctant to reveal the South Korean NGO aid projects to its citizens. However, the country began to disclose the South Korean NGOs’ humanitarian aid and development cooperation projects through the *Rodong Sinmun*, North Korea’s main newspaper (Figure 6-2). North

Figure 6-2 Newspaper Photographs of South Korean NGO Workers Visiting North Korea in 2003 and 2006



Source: (left) *Rodong Sinmun* (March 22, 2003), (right) *Rodong Sinmun* (November 2, 2006)

Korea also showed its confidence in South Korean NGOs by participating in multiple civilian cooperation and exchange projects. For example, from 1985 to 1989, there were only 12 non-political exchange and cooperation projects between North and South Korea. Once NGO aid and exchange cooperation began in 1995, the number of new projects rapidly increased, from four in 1998 and 1999, to 12 in 2000, seven in 2001, 12 in 2002, 13 in 2003, nine in 2004, and 10 in 2005 (Ministry of Unification, 2013).

### **NGO efforts to sustain trust despite political confrontation: From the Lee Myung-bak Administration (2008-2012) to the Park Geun-hye Administration (2013-2016)**

In 2008, South Korea's government and civil society turned their attention from North Korea's famine toward international cooperation efforts in other developing countries. Newly elected President Lee Myung-bak maintained a conservative stance toward North Korea, wary of its nuclear development program; as a result, the Lee Administration blocked most inter-Korean exchange and cooperation during its regime (2008-2012), specifically development assistance that targeted social infrastructure, including hospitals, pharmaceutical factories, schools, food processing factories, sewage systems, and tree nurseries. The relationship between South Korean NGOs and the government deteriorated during the Lee Administration.

Despite the suspension of inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation, South Korean NGOs endeavored to maintain their fragile relationships with North Korea, emerging as new actors in aid campaigns (Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea & The Government-Civilian Council for North Korean Aid Policy, 2005). They also continued to advocate to institutionalize engagement with North Korea, despite the Lee Administration's skepticism of inter-Korean exchange and cooperation. In response to the operational environment, KNCCCK adopted the "KNCCCK Code of Conduct for North Korea" on June 18, 2008 (Korean NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, 2015). The initiative aimed to overcome the Lee Administration's and civil society's concerns about the engagement policy by increasing the

accountability and transparency of NGO operations in North Korea (Korean NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, 2015).<sup>8</sup> South Korea's NGOs also began campaigns for the Humanitarian Assistance Act for North Korea in September 2007, and the Social Convention of Humanitarian Assistance to North Korea in January 2013 (Beol-Ryun *et al.*, 2007; Korean NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, 2015, pp.244-247). These two campaigns established the legal groundwork for sustainable engagement with North Korea, which was a prerequisite for trust-building between the two countries.

Although greatly diminished by the sanctions, South Korean NGO engagement with North Korea continued, nevertheless, under the subsequent Park Geun-hye Administration (2013-2017). The South Korean NGOs' operational environment worsened, and most bilateral aid organizations in South Korea were shut down. The Park Administration only approved domestic NGOs that targeted vulnerable domestic groups, such as women, elders, children, and the disabled. In order to avoid South Korea's strict regulations, international NGOs such as Sunyanghana, Green Tree International, Eugene Bell Foundation, and Caritas, sought to deliver aid via non-South Korean partner agencies (Song *et al.*, 2017). These and other NGOs persuaded the international community to engage with North Korea through a series of international campaigns that targeted the de-escalation confrontation between North Korean and the international community (Korean Sharing Movement, 2016). Since 2009, the International Conference on Humanitarian and Development Assistance to the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea), initiated by the Korean Sharing Movement (KSM), the Gyeonggido Local Government, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, has sustained humanitarian and development operations with North Korea (Korean Sharing Movement, 2016, p.352).

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**8** The conservatives in South Korea criticized North and South Korean governments and NGOs for providing aid to the upper classes in the communist country. South Korean NGOs failed to thoroughly monitor the aid distribution process in North Korea, and they could not refute the conservatives' claims. Consequently, South Korean aid groups had to assure South Korean civil society that they would adopt guidelines that guaranteed transparency and accountability for aid projects in order to ensure that aid was delivered to North Korea's most vulnerable populations.

## **Contemporary dynamics since the Moon Jae-in Administration (2017 to present)**

South Korea's inauguration of the Moon Jae-in Administration in 2017, one supported by South Korean humanitarian NGOs, provided the momentum for restoring trust between North and South Korea. Under Moon, the two countries have held a series of summit meetings, mitigated military conflict through the withdrawal of Guard Post (GP) at the demilitarized zone (DMZ), suspended nuclear and missile tests, resumed reunions of separated families, established an Inter-Korean Liaison Office in Gaesung, North Korea, hosted two United States and North Korea summit meetings, decreased American and South Korean military exercises, and resumed inter-Korean cultural and sports exchange events (Ministry of Unification, 2018).

The recovery of inter-Korean trust during the Moon Jae-in Administration and Kim Jong-un since 2017 can be attributed to the mutual exchanges and cooperation established from 1998 to 2007, which were largely heralded by South Korean NGOs. They had paved the way for peace on the Korean Peninsula, thus enabling the Moon Jae-in Administration's engagement policy towards North Korea in 2007. In addition, President Moon had served as the first secretary for former President Roh Moo-hyun, who constantly stressed the importance of dialogue and an engagement policy with North Korea. President Moon's approach to North Korea corresponded to South Korean NGO aid efforts in North Korea; he understood that development and humanitarian assistance and social and cultural exchanges were vital to building trust between the two countries.

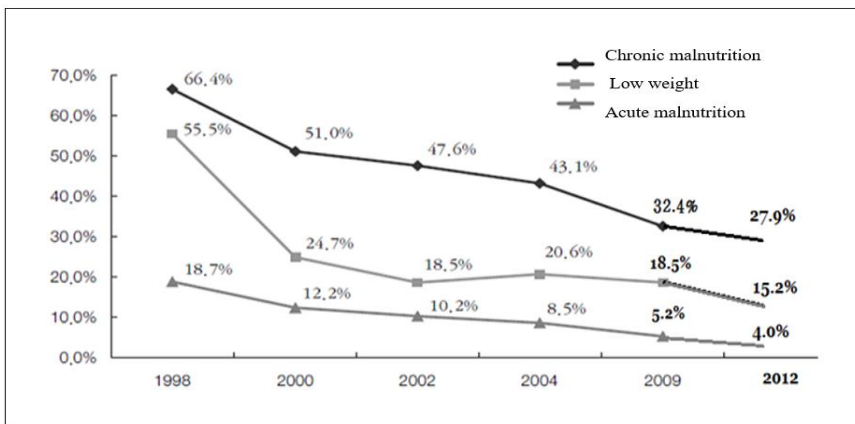
South Korean NGOs resumed aid operations to North Korea in 2018: six NGOs delivered approximately USD 4,200,000 worth of humanitarian assistance, and South Korean NGOs held 54 meetings with North Korea (Ministry of Unification, 2018). In 2019, the 114 South Korean NGOs registered as organizations with direct aid operations in North Korea continue to pressure South Korea's government to approve their operations in North Korea and welcomed President Moon's engagement policy with North Korea (Ministry of Unification, 2018).

## Trust-building as a key strategy of peacebuilding between North and South Korea

The strategy of South Korean NGOs described above promoted of mutual understanding and constructive cooperation between North and South Korea. These initiatives replaced 50 years of antagonism with brotherly love and the possibility of mutual trust. The NGOs' strategies were possible for two reasons: their emphasis on shared ethnic identity and people-to-people social exchanges between the two countries.

First, South Korean NGOs encouraged South Koreans to embrace their shared ethnic identity with North Koreans in order to support a peaceful coexistence between the two countries. From 1995 to 2007, South Korea was the largest aid donor to North Korea, largely due to national campaigns from South Korean humanitarian NGOs (Central Bureau of Statistics 2012). Approximately 1,100,000 tons of food aid, including fertilizer and rice, offset North Korea's annual 1,200,000-ton food shortage of (Kwon 2018). The South Korean government and NGOs' aid largely alleviated the North Korean humanitarian crisis (Figure 6-3).

Figure 6-3 Maternal and Infant Nutrition Improvements in North Korea (1998-2012)



Note: Nutritional improvement of 10 regions in the DPRK (including 40 clusters in each region) with 8,040 children aged 0-59 months, and 7,649 mothers.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistic (2012)

If South Korea did not actively engage in North Korea’s humanitarian crises, both countries would have lost the opportunity to recognize the importance of inter-Korean cooperation and exchanges.

Secondly, South Korean NGOs developed people-to-people partnerships between the two countries, which promoted mutual understanding, an essential prerequisite for trust-building. Even during periods when the South Korea administrations did not support inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, the NGOs sustained their operations in North Korea and increased people-to-people exchanges (Table 6-3). Various memoirs, project reports, and white papers that discuss South Korean NGO experiences in North Korea identify the impact of people-to-people exchanges as crucial to trust-building (Korean Sharing Movement 2016; Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation,

|| Table 6-3 || Number of People-to-People Exchanges Between North and South Korea (1989-2018)

	South Koreans to North Korea	North Koreans to South Korea	Sum
1989-2003	55,257	3,609	58,866
2004	26,213	321	26,534
2005	87,028	1,313	88,341
2006	100,838	870	101,708
2007	158,170	1,044	159,214
2008	186,443	332	186,775
2009	120,616	246	120,862
2010	130,119	132	130,251
2011	116,047	14	116,061
2012	120,360	0	120,360
2013	76,503	40	76,543
2014	129,028	366	129,394
2015	132,097	4	132,101
2016	14,787	0	14,787
2017	52	63	115
2018. 5	530	544	1,074
Sum	1,454,088	8,898	1,462,986

Source: Ministry of Unification (2018)

2015; Park, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2013). First Lady Heeho Lee, President Kim Dae-jung's wife, praised the KSM's advocacy for dispelling hostility and building goodwill between the two countries, which eventually enabled the Kim Administration's engagement policy for inter-Korean exchange and cooperation (Korean Sharing Movement, 2016, p.5). The white papers and personal memoirs also include various testimonies from North Korean officials and local residents about how inter-Korean exchange and cooperation projects awakened a solidarity between North and South Korea (Korean Sharing Movement, 2016; Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation, 2015; Park, 2016; Lee & Kim, 2013). The solidarity engendered trust between North and South Korea that eventually enabled policy change.

### **NGOs are political actors**

Over the past two decades, South Korean NGOs transformed their operations from simply delivering aid to North Korea to building trust, mitigating political and military tensions, and creating a foundation for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

South Korean NGOs were able to play a role as political actors because of their dedication to the idea that North Korea's humanitarian situation needed to be treated as an issue that affected the entire Korean Peninsula. They also used advocacy experience gained during South Korea's democratization movement in the 1970s and 1980s in order to garner support for providing aid to North Korea. The senior members of NGOs, who were the main advocates for North Korean aid, had been key figures in South Korea's democratization movement. They were able to turn their experience into political knowledge for the NGOs. Additionally, key international NGOs such as Good Friends, World Vision, and Good Neighbors (all faith-based organizations) formed the KSM, a coalition that supported various religious and civic groups with additional know-how.

Armed with a strong sense of mission and expertise, South Korean NGOs expanded exchange and cooperation projects with North Korea, helped change public opinion about North Korea, and built trust in inter-Korean relations. South Korean NGOs contributed to a peaceful inter-

Korean environment and collaborated with liberal South Korean governments, which in turn pursued an inclusive policy with North Korea that emphasized dialogue, negotiation, exchange, and cooperation. The achievements of South Korean NGOs suggest that promoting trust-building between two countries begins with developing mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges and caring cooperation.

### **The role of South Korean NGOs in further building peace**

In 2019, South Korean NGOs work to resume NGO- and government-aid projects in North Korea. They also continue to shift South Korean international community perceptions about North Korea in a more positive direction. South Korean NGOs do not believe that sanctions and pressure are the best course of action against North Korea; rather, they believe inter-Korean relations are better served by mutual understanding gained through exchange and cooperation. However, their efforts are impeded by the fact that the humanitarian situation in North Korea is not urgent and by the South Korean and United States governments' belief that providing aid to North Korea simply gives North Korea more leeway during nuclear negotiations.

Despite South Korean NGO limitations in the Korean Peninsula peacebuilding process, South Korea NGOs were able to help foster a peace-friendly administration in 1997 and 2002 and played a role in persuading South Korean civil society to pursue a North Korean policy based on building trust and promoting dialogue. Through the implementation of exchange and cooperation initiatives with North Korea, South Korean NGOs enabled a favorable operational environment, one where the North and South Korean governments could expand on the possibility of peace, form trust, and enhance mutual understanding between the two nations.

The example of South Korean NGOs suggests that other Asian countries can build peace through dialogue and cooperation rather than pressure and sanctions. Government pressure and sanctions often do not help encourage peace or trust, but only serve to heighten conflict. NGOs,



however, focus on humanitarian and development aid, building trust by helping another country in need. This trust encourages people-to-people social exchanges and improves the understanding between cultures and peoples. NGOs accomplish their goals through social advocacy, motivating public support through campaigns and encouraging humanitarian responses to national crises. Public response, in turn, becomes political engagement. NGOs have the power to influence a government's response to other countries – a response that will focus on further peacebuilding dialogue.

In the context of South Korea and North Korea, South Korean NGOs were able to stir public support for providing aid to North Korea by appealing to South Koreans' sense of nationalism and humanitarianism through several campaigns. The NGOs influenced South Korean administrations, which, in turn, helped develop a South Korean government that focused on building trust and cooperation with North Korea, rather than closing off inter-Korean exchange.

The South Korean NGO experience suggests that NGO-led civil society in other Asian countries can supplement the limits of government functions by providing another channel for building trust. Civil society can also play a role through criticism of and checks on certain government policies, creating breakthroughs in the face of confrontation, and decreasing misunderstanding (or increasing understanding) through expanded contact between opposing parties. In this context, Asian countries need an approach that balances the official development assistance (ODA) project in terms of governance in order to foster a healthy civil society. As shown in the successful cases of South Korean humanitarian NGOs, the power of transnational civil-society networks to enhance the influence of a country's civil society on its government cannot be overemphasized.

Finally, while it is very important for NGOs to form a collaborative partnership with their government, they need to be cautious because excessive reliance on a government's financial and relational terms negatively affects their role and status as a critical check on governmental power. In order for NGOs to secure autonomy, one unaffected by the political and economic environment of their home country, legal mechanisms that ensure the institutional acceptability of NGO activities

and a foundation for NGO financial independence must be created. In order to replicate the success of South Korean NGOs, Asian NGOs should make attaining such autonomy within and outside of government partnerships a regular policy priority.

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# CHAPTER 7

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## Balancing External Support and Sovereignty in Complex Situations: Japan's Experience

By  
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### Introduction

The world experiences multiple humanitarian crises because of conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, climate change, and other factors. Responding swiftly and effectively to these crises with humanitarian relief is of the utmost importance to a state. In the years following World War II, largely because of mass population displacement in Europe, many countries increasingly focused on international cooperation and multilateral institutions; their interventions eventually resulted (in the late 1990s) in the rise of more effective external-support systems for humanitarian relief (Davis *et al.*, 2005). There are several humanitarian relief agencies that offer external support to countries experiencing humanitarian crises, including the United Nations (UN), the Red Cross, and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). A cooperation between an external and an affected country's own relief efforts optimizes humanitarian relief efforts, where local NGOs and other relief agencies, such as faith-based organizations, can streamline aid received from the UN, Red Cross, and INGOs.<sup>1</sup> Complications arise in

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<sup>1</sup> The author bases the observations and analysis in this chapter on her work as Program Formulation Advisor to Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) India and Iraq from 2011 to 2016, and as Field Coordinator of Peace Winds Japan in South Sudan from 2010 to early 2011, as well as her work at UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, mainly in Switzerland and Pakistan, as an Associate Community Services

crisis-response efforts, however, when regions with prolonged and complex humanitarian crises, such as countries immersed in conflict, resist external support completely or only reluctantly allow international relief agencies, including the UN and INGOs to assist in relief efforts. While external support (from INGOS and others) can greatly improve short-term recovery and longer-term development in humanitarian and conflict-affected situations, recipient countries struggle to establish the necessary regulatory and policy environment – one that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the threats to sovereignty.

The World Health Organization’s (WHO) global risk analysis records that more than 22 percent of the global population live under “fragile and vulnerable settings” where “drought, famine, conflict, population displacement,” or other risks occur (2019). Additionally, humanitarian emergencies often do not occur in controlled circumstances; instead, a population may be already devastated by a combination of crises. For example, Afghanistan has experienced multiple humanitarian crises in recent decades, beginning with the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), followed by internal conflicts and Islamic jihad (1989-1996) with resulting mass displacements that combined with a severe, ongoing drought that began in 1995; these crises were compounded by the 2001 United States invasion, “Operation Enduring Freedom”, a 13-year-long war that officially ended in 2014, even as US military forces, both non-combat and combat, continue operations to this day under the name “Operation Freedom’s Sentinel” (Sisk, 2014). Unending conflicts make Afghanistan more vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquakes, nine of which have occurred since 2001. Each new emergency situation presents increasingly severe humanitarian needs as the country experiences significant shortfalls in water, sanitation services, agricultural production, foodstuffs, healthcare, infrastructure, and security.

Humanitarian relief activities, such as rehabilitation, reconstruction, peacebuilding, and development, are intertwined and should holistically respond to crises (Gómez & Kawaguchi, 2016). “Linear” relief efforts that approach humanitarian aid as a step-by-step process, moving “from

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Officer from 2007 to 2010.

relief, rehabilitation to development,” not only ignore the complexity of a country’s needs after simultaneous crises, but different aspects of relief are often led by separate specialized organizations (UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182, 1991). When multiple, uncoordinated relief agencies respond to a crisis, recipient countries often experience delays in rehabilitation, reconstruction, or even the initiation of peace talks since few crisis-afflicted countries have the capacity to recover solely through its own efforts and their having to wait for the next specialized organization or donor to respond to the next linear step of the relief process can lead to more challenges. According to United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres’s view of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, humanitarian aid from international governmental and nongovernmental organizations has increasingly become inter-connected with reconstruction, development, and peace-building support. In doing so, it has become more borderless; it also integrates strong involvement from civil society and the private sector (Stimson Centre, 2018).

Many Asian countries that experience compounded crises, including conflict and other humanitarian disasters, will often resist external support, especially from INGOs, because the countries fear in losing state sovereignty and control over sensitive areas. Asia will achieve sustainable peace if Asian countries can embrace a more holistic and multilateral approach from the beginning of humanitarian relief efforts. This multilateral approach can only be achieved through international cooperation and support, in which case it is essential to create policies that maximize the benefits of external support without compromising state sovereignty. In addition, INGOs and external support providers need to be more innovative in order to coordinate among themselves and with other stakeholders – the recipient country, neighboring countries, local NGOs, and faith-based organizations.

This chapter explains Japan’s experience with accepting external support during humanitarian disasters caused by earthquakes in 1995 and 2011 and describes how that experience shaped Japan’s humanitarian relief efforts for other countries, including the development of Japan’s NGO sector and ability to coordinate various needs and actors simultaneously during the humanitarian responses. This chapter also compares Japan’s humanitarian relief efforts in Indonesia and Pakistan,

demonstrating how Indonesia and Pakistan perceived external support in order to preserve control over the crisis-response situations. This analysis reveals that the level of a state's openness and capacity to receive external support has a direct impact on the effectiveness of that external support, as well as on levels of recovery, reconstruction, reconciliation, and development after humanitarian emergencies.

The main difference between Japan, Pakistan, and Indonesia's crisis situations is the fact that Japan was not experiencing any conflicts during its humanitarian crises. The absence of conflict in Japan simplified the process of receiving humanitarian relief and highlighted the importance of the presence of civil society organizations that could maximize the impact of external support. Ongoing conflict complicated both Pakistan and Indonesia's humanitarian relief experiences because of Pakistan and Indonesia's government and military control over external aid. During the initial humanitarian-response efforts, both governments prioritized the security of their countries over planning for reconstruction and reconciliation. The first section of this chapter outlines a brief history of the popularization of INGOs and the unique benefits external support can provide a country during a humanitarian crisis. The second section explains Japan's experience with external support during the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake and the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The next section explains how Japan's experience with receiving external support shaped its development of NGOs and policies regarding offering external support to other countries. The fourth section explains how the conflict-affected areas of Pakistan and Indonesia impacted the ways both those countries received external support, including support from Japan NGOs. The fifth section includes a summary of Japan's external support to Indonesia and Pakistan, emphasizing how conflict impacted its humanitarian relief efforts. The chapter concludes by explaining that Japan's experience as a humanitarian relief recipient and provider in conflict-affected areas shaped its humanitarian relief policies moving forward, including establishing NGOs, business communities, government funding for internal and external humanitarian relief, and a coordination mechanism for external support between Japan's government and NGOs.



## The benefits of external support

The support of civil society organizations during humanitarian crises is a relatively new idea, especially in the case of providing external support to other countries. The borderless support of INGOs became prominent during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Barnett & Weiss, 2008). Before World War I, there were 176 INGOs; the amount increased to approximately 1,000 international organizations in 1956 and approximately 2,000 in 1970. In 2017, there were more than 38,000 INGOs (Nye & Welch, 2017). The dramatic increase in INGOs is due to the emergence of non-Western INGOs, which lagged behind the development of Western organizations.

Asian countries' first experience with INGOs often occurred through receiving external support from Western organizations. For example, Japan's interest in the INGO sector rose significantly after the international response to Japan's 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. Western involvement in Asian countries often overshadowed the response of locally organized efforts. This created a distrust toward Western INGOs within non-Western countries, which considered INGOs to be "modernizers and destroyers of local economies" that imposed "Western values" onto non-Western states (Lewis, 2001, p.32). This distrust is still prominent within many non-Western countries.

INGOs are more likely to focus on a "Liberal Peace" agenda, which centers on "democracy, human rights, development and a vibrant civil society" (Richmond, 2006). If Asian countries dismiss these perspectives as a "Western value," those countries risk overlooking the importance of the reconstruction and reconciliation efforts that can be offered by external support. For example, INGOs can distribute food items and non-food items to crisis-affected areas and target assistance to vulnerable populations, including those identified by gender, age, religion, location, ethnicity, and so on. The government or conventional social hierarchy may not effectively capture the vulnerabilities of particular groups in emergency situations; coordination and collaboration with external support is the key to fair distribution of services and support to the affected communities. This perceived fairness and actual assistance may contribute to easing any escalation of existing conflicts. Such collaboration

and coordination should take place, not only with central governments, but also include provincial and local governments, local NGOs, and faith-based organizations. Although the liberal peace agenda of INGOs offers countries many benefits for future reconstruction and reconciliation, some external supporters believe that promoting liberal peace is not cost-effective because it requires additional resources for coordination and mobility in order to engage with central, provincial to local governments. Such costs are sometimes too difficult for NGOs to contribute to since aid organizations tend to prefer to focus their resources on affected areas and communities. (Campbell & Peterson, 2013). Even so, the provider of external support's contributions cannot be fully realized without such advocacy aimed at the central government level, which is usually located far away from the disaster-affected areas. The environments flooded with humanitarian relief and aid rest on the questionable assumption that the state appreciates the significance of its own openness to external support during a crisis. Moreover, one may also question whether external actors appreciate their potential role in promoting a broader perspective in humanitarian responses and for facilitating gaps in understanding with the concerned government, rather than simply confining themselves to aid and service delivery at affected areas.

Another important aspect to INGO relief efforts during humanitarian crises is the fact that INGOs can help an affected area's future recovery, reconstruction, reconciliation, and development. While Asian countries strong sense of state sovereignty prioritizes restoring law and order to a crisis-affected area (Lewis, 2001). INGOs, having gained years of experience from responding to humanitarian emergencies throughout the world, can provide resources that local NGOs or other relief agencies would otherwise not have access to. This means that humanitarian responses can and sometime do become the starting or resumption points of engagement with the domestic actors responsible for a country's internal conflicts or continuous acts of violence, leading the external actors expand their roles to support reconciliation, reconstruction and development. By complementing this experience with international and regional coordination during complex humanitarian crises, local NGOs and faith-based organizations may also be able to bridge the gap between INGOs and governments; however, despite the importance of the

humanitarian relief that INGOs can provide, many Asian governments still hesitate to include INGOs in national emergencies (Yamada, 2012).

## **Japan's experiences with external support**

Japan's experience with humanitarian relief during the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake and 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake highlighted the importance of receiving international humanitarian relief during national emergencies. Japan's experience also shaped Japan's policies for developing Japanese NGOs that could provide humanitarian relief to other countries.

The Great Hanshin Earthquake on January 17, 1995 resulted in 6,343 deaths and direct damages totaling in USD 91 billion (Government of Japan, 2012). A total of 76 countries, regions, UN agencies, and various INGOs offered humanitarian support to Japan after the 1995 earthquake (Nishikawa, 1996). However, Japan was able to receive support from only 24 countries: most delivered non-food items (Nishikawa, 1996). Despite Japan's willingness to open itself to external support, many international humanitarian aid organizations viewed Japan as resistant toward relief efforts because while Japan welcomed rescue support from foreign countries and organizations, it did not supply a legal framework or technical support for those efforts. For example, there were no frameworks for English-Japanese translation services, which complicated communicating through the language barrier, and no central coordination office for internal and external support, which made implementing external support and relief operations difficult, untimely, and ill-adapted to actual needs of those affected. Relief resources, including medical supplies, were left unused because of Japan's conflicting legislative standards for imported items (Nishikawa, 1996).

Before the 1995 earthquake, NGOs in Japan were mostly considered to be social and political activists. The earthquake was the first time Japan used local NGOs for disaster relief, which was why the legal framework was not in place and other operational protocols were delayed (Government of Japan, n.d.). Japan soon realized that NGOs could effectively provide essential social services at the grassroots level and could better identify and serve vulnerable populations in the disaster areas

than government organizations. NGOs could more effectively deliver information to certain populations in the affected areas, including the elderly and foreigners, through community-founded volunteer groups. Immediately after the disaster response to the 1995 earthquake, Japan's government and multiple public-private cooperation efforts initiated a number of research studies to better define Japan's limited disaster resources, develop structural and legal frameworks for receiving logistical and relief-aid support and services during disasters, established disaster response operational procedures and coordination between local governments, and standardized procedures for accepting disaster relief from foreign organizations and experts (Government of Japan, n.d.).

On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred in Japan and resulted in 15,896 deaths and 2,537 unrecovered bodies. A total of 163 countries offered humanitarian support. Given the policies and procedures Japan put into place after the 1995 earthquake, including establishing local NGOs that could take part in disaster-relief coordination, Japan was able to receive support from 129 countries and external resources such as experts, relief materiel, funding, and thousands of volunteers. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) coordinated foreign and domestic responses and put into place proper safety precautions for humanitarian workers in the affected areas.

Japan's disaster management for the 1995 earthquake showed how a recipient country's lack of proper institutional, operational, and legislative frameworks for international humanitarian relief impeded the country's willingness to accept disaster-recovery aid from external agencies. The disaster management after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, however, which included external support, further proved the importance of laying the proper framework for international collaboration.

## **Developing Japanese NGOs**

Building on experiences as a recipient country of humanitarian assistance, Japan developed the understanding and practices of a donor country; it also learned how to provider external support through its own

national NGOs. After the 1995 earthquake, many of Japan's civil society organizations transitioned from small activism-oriented groups to humanitarian relief organizations. The NGOs developed their own policy framework for humanitarian relief, and the first time Japanese NGOs offered external support to another country was during the Kosovo War in 1999 (Japan Platform, n.d.). Japanese NGOs, such as Peace Winds Japan, quickly realized that their experiences with disaster relief did not provide them with adequate capacity to assist emergency situations outside of Japan. Would-be international Japanese NGOs lacked sustainability, a large enough scale for relief programs, and adequate funds; without these resources, Japanese NGOs wishing to contribute to humanitarian efforts outside Japan could not earn the trust of recipient countries. In order to enable more effective internal and external humanitarian relief, Japanese NGOs established a funding platform, the Japan Platform (JPF), through a collaboration with the government and the private sector. JPF supported the activities of 43 NGOs with USD 5,800,000,000 in 2017, making JPF one of the largest NGO consortiums in Japan.

## **Japanese humanitarian relief in Pakistan and Indonesia**

Humanitarian crises that are compounded by conflict impact both a government's openness to external support during times of crisis and an external actors' willingness to engage with various actors in conflict-affected areas. Although both Pakistan and Indonesia benefit from various INGO development projects in their capital regions, in humanitarian emergencies beyond the capitals, their governments, motivated by state security and sovereignty concerns, frequently restrict outside intervention in order to control conflict-affected areas. Pakistan controlled the humanitarian relief efforts in conflict-affected areas after 2005 earthquake in the Northern Areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) (formerly the North West Frontier Province); Indonesia also did so during the early stages of the response to the Aceh Tsunami in 2004.

## *Pakistan*

On October 8, 2005, an earthquake hit the North Western region of Pakistan across the KPK administrative province and AJK state, causing 73,338 fatalities. Due to the scale of the disaster, Pakistan's government immediately called for international humanitarian relief. Both the KPK and the AJK were conflict-affected areas involved in the border dispute between Pakistan and India and had a strong presence of jihadi and religious extremist groups. The disaster-affected were also located in geographically remote, mountainous areas (United Nations Development Programme & Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, 2014). Additionally, the affected areas were in need of development support after decades of hosting millions of Afghan refugees. Pakistan's then-President Pervez Musharraf established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) four days after the earthquake (on October 12) to coordinate and oversee the reconstruction and rehabilitation policies. Although the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) observed that the emergency response was successful, Pakistan's government received criticism for its slow response in the mountainous areas, suboptimal resource management, and inefficient coordination with external actors, including the UN, INGOs, and donor governments (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2005; Kronenfeld & Margesson, 2005; Montero, 2005; Rashid, 2005; Qureshi, 2006; Wilder, 2008).

An army official became the Deputy Chief of the ERRA (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, 2014), allowing Pakistan's civil-military to have more control over the humanitarian relief coordination., and external support had to heavily rely on the Pakistani army for logistical resources. The Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) participated in relief operations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) under the government of Pakistan. Japanese NGOs also participated in humanitarian relief operations coordinated by the UN, INGOs, and ERRA. Most of Japan's NGO activities concentrated on selected communities within the affected areas (Japan Platform, 2019). For some reason never made evident, the authorities constantly delayed Non-Objective Certificates (NOCs) for NGOs (certificates that grant

external support the permission to provide relief aid and services for designated areas), which hindered INGO access to the affected areas and their operational effectiveness (United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Pakistan, 2006). The multiple delays and hindrances for humanitarian relief (Kronenfeld & Margesson, 2005), resulted in the INGOs experiencing difficulties in cultivating relationships with local governments, communities, and civil groups, such as faith-based organizations. External support was ultimately unable to establish active engagements within Pakistan's government and civil society organizations in the affected areas; instead INGOs could only operate where they were allowed to (Rashid, 2005).

Limited operations left a vacuum of needed support that Pakistan filled through local organizations, some of which had strong affiliations with violent radical and extremist groups (Kronenfeld & Margesson, 2005; Montero, 2005; Rashid, 2005; Qureshi, 2006; Wilder, 2008). Such groups and organizations had a strong presence in UN designated camps; these groups operated 37 out of 73 UN designated camps in AJK state (Qureshi, 2006). Pakistan's government and the ERRA did not reveal to external support the extent of the local organizations' affiliations with jihadi ideology. As a result, violent radical-affiliated organizations carried out the disaster relief and reconstruction activities (Kronenfeld & Margesson, 2005; Montero, 2005; Rashid, 2005; Qureshi, 2006; Wilder, 2008). The organizations often threatened the activities of INGOs whose operational principles did not follow the organizations' customs, but instead promoted equal representation and opportunities that the radical-affiliated organizations considered to be "Western ideas." Equal representation and opportunities included employing female workers, and many INGOs had to close or reduce operations because of the restrictions the violent radical-affiliated groups placed on aid workers (IRIN, 2005; IRIN, 2007).

Rising crime rates, coupled with Pakistan's border conflict with India, made restoring law and order a priority for Pakistan's government; jihadi and violent radical-affiliated organizations helped authorities restore order in many of the affected areas (Kronenfeld & Margesson, 2005; Rashid, 2005; Qureshi, 2006; Wilder, 2008). Local organizations operated more effectively in Pakistan than did INGOs because of Pakistan's reluctance to implement the INGOs' ideas into local contexts. The

government's apparent distrust of INGOs in disaster-affected areas, regardless if from Western or non-Western countries, hindered a productive working relationship between the government and INGOs; it also made local organizations suspicious of INGOs (IRIN, 2005; IRIN, 2007). Japanese NGOs nonetheless managed to develop relationships with a few local communities, but were ultimately unable to alter Pakistan's overall view of external support. Neither the Japanese nor other INGOs were able to make comprehensive connections for coordination with Pakistan's local NGOs or its network of faith-based organizations.

Thus humanitarian relief efforts suffered because a few local partner organizations were unable to mediate communication between INGOs and the Pakistani government. Decreasing external support and the growing influence of religious extremists resulted in conflict between the Pakistan Army and the Taliban from late 2007 to 2009, therefore the disaster-affected area did not recover to the extent that General Musharraf hoped it would. Had local NGOs and faith-based organizations been able to facilitate efforts between the government and INGOs, Pakistan's disaster-affected areas may have seen higher recovery rates, as demonstrated by the Indonesian example below.

### *Indonesia*

On December 26, 2004, an earthquake caused the Indian Ocean Tsunami, which resulted in devastation across 14 countries and more than 227,000 dead or unrecovered. In Indonesia, the cities of Banda Aceh and Meulaboh took the brunt of the damages. Fully 110,229 people were reported missing in Aceh and approximately 12,000 people were reported missing in North Sumatra (Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia & World Bank, 2005). The Indonesian Army, UNOCHA, other UN agencies, and some international organizations, such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent, carried out initial disaster relief responses. The scale of disaster resulted in several complications for humanitarian relief, including difficulty in accessing affected areas, obtaining necessary permissions from Indonesia's government, and communicating and coordinating with various UN agencies, donor



governments, 124 INGOs, 430 local NGOs, and numerous networks of faith-based organizations. Local government agencies were also devastated by the disaster, further complicating intergovernmental communication and coordination (BRR & International Partners, 2005).

The tsunami struck while Indonesia was embroiled in a three-decade-long armed conflict, which began in 1976, between the Indonesian government and the insurgency group, the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM), which hoped to grant the Aceh province independence from Indonesia. In April 2005, Indonesia established the Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi (BRR) agency in Banda Aceh to oversee, coordinate, and implement recovery initiatives. The conflict between Indonesia's government and GAM limited INGOs' access to disaster-affected areas until May 2005 (Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia & World Bank, 2005). Indonesia's local governments heavily relied on UNOHCHA, UN agencies, and military support from various countries, including the Japanese Self-Defense Force. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) also supported the BRR's efforts (International Organization for Migration, 2005).

Despite the flood of INGO and NGO disaster relief, many organizations, including Japanese NGOs, were not experienced with working in conflict-affected areas like Banda Aceh and Meulaboh. Both the Indonesian military forces and GAM insurgents attempted to influence external support organizations, asking for aid and recovery programs in accordance with their own interests and in exchange for secure passage to disaster-affected areas. Instead of engaging with Indonesia's military or GAM to secure safe passage for disaster relief, the majority of INGOs, including most Japanese NGOs, avoided relief operations in conflict-affected areas altogether (Nishi, 2014). Populations that lived in conflict-affected areas therefore received limited services and relief.

As needs in conflict-affected areas escalated beyond food or non-food items, the Indonesian military forces and GAM realized that they could not provide specialized medical, educational, and infrastructure support to their affiliated communities. This meant that populations in conflict-affected areas would therefore not receive any disaster relief if the conflict

continued (Nishi, 2014). Because of the lack of services and recovery projects, the military and GAM eventually lifted the “in-danger” alerts and no longer required security escorts for humanitarian relief efforts, allowing external support to access conflict-affected areas; they also eventually established working relations with national and local NGOs (Nishi, 2014). The government’s strict control of relief efforts was gradually replaced by centralized coordination of the military, regional government, UN agencies, foreign military support, INGOs, local NGOs, and GAM. JSDF and Japanese NGOs carried out several coordinated efforts under UNOCHA, especially concerning transportation through alternative routes for INGOs from Singapore and Malaysia rather than relying Indonesia’s military routes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). In so doing, Japanese NGOs established working relationships with INGOs, national and local NGOs, faith-based organizations, Indonesia’s local governments, military forces, and GAM. The humanitarian responses to the tsunami in Indonesia altered social perceptions of both the military and GAM and fostered new international relationships for Indonesia. Indonesia’s government and GAM, through facilitation talks in Helsinki, eventually consolidated an 11-month peace process by signing a peace accord which allowed Aceh special autonomy from Indonesia (May, 2005).

### **Summary of Japan’s external support in Pakistan and Indonesia**

In the cases of Pakistan’s 2005 earthquake and Indonesia’s 2004 tsunami, neither government was immediately open to the idea of external support, although both had INGOs working in their capitals prior to the humanitarian emergencies. However, very few INGOs worked in Pakistan at the KPK provincial and AJK state levels because of the borderland’s security situation. Nonetheless, faith-based groups had strong presence in these border areas. In Indonesia, Banda Ache’s local civil society had working relations with Western donors, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). At the operational level of aid and relief, humanitarian efforts in Pakistan relied heavily on Pakistan’s military for logistics, permissions to provide

humanitarian aid, and coordination between multiple organizations, including religious extremist affiliated groups. In Indonesia's case, however, aid agencies did not have to depend on the Indonesian military for logistical support because the Indonesian government, UN agencies, and various foreign militaries provided alternative routes for humanitarian support. The BRR, UNOCHA, and other aid partners were able to coordinate and consolidate aid efforts through an open database of services providers, which helped provide aid to affected areas more effectively and enabled INGOs and other humanitarian agencies to work independently in Indonesia, rather than having to channel operations through the military, as was the case in Pakistan (World Bank, 2005).

Another essential contributing factor to maintaining the independence of INGOs was sustainable funding for INGOs. Throughout the humanitarian response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, private donations to INGOs, UN agencies, and the Red Cross reached approximately USD 5,491,000, and donor governments (both under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee and the non- Development Assistance Committee members) contributed USD 5,917,000 (Telford & Cosgrave, 2006). The substantial funds flowing to INGOs allowed many organizations to continue their support activities from the initial humanitarian emergency phase through reconstruction; they could also coordinate response efforts with the central and provincial governments. Funds also allowed INGOs to foster relationships with local organizations by providing local grants and technical support (Telford & Cosgrave, 2006). The financial support of INGO activities, therefore, played an essential role in the emergency response and reconstruction work during the conflict-affected humanitarian crisis in Indonesia, as was pointed out by Gomes and Kawaguchi (2016).

INGOs can be more effective if they are able to communicate and coordinate with the recipient government at all levels (central, provincial, state, and local) and with other key actors, including other INGOs, and the recipient country's military, religious groups, faith-based organizations, and local NGOs. In Indonesia, Japanese NGOs actively contributed to other INGOs' collective efforts to engage with various actors, which helped establish a reliable working relationship with

Indonesia's government and other INGOs. This collaborative effort resulted in more effective humanitarian efforts; it may also have helped Indonesia's military and GAM find a path toward conflict resolution.

## **Conclusion**

Japan, Pakistan, and Indonesia's experience during humanitarian crises compare in that all three countries exercised their sovereignty during times of crisis, which, in some cases, negatively impacted the countries' willingness to accept international relief efforts. Japan, Pakistan, and Indonesia's responses, like those of many Asian countries, follow a trend of asserting sovereignty during national emergencies. No country, however, is able to manage a humanitarian crisis alone. Countries, therefore, must accept external support from INGOs and other humanitarian response agencies in order to take advantage of those agencies' financial and operational capacities.

Multiple negative effects can come from not immediately opening a crisis-affected country to external support, as evident in the cases of Pakistan, Indonesia, and Japan. Indonesia and Japan ultimately altered their disaster response strategies, allowing for more cooperation with external support. They accomplished this by finding a balance between accepting external support and maintaining state sovereignty, a balance achieved by using local civil society organizations as mediators between INGOs and the central government. Other aspects vital to successful external support include ensuring continuous communication between external support agencies and the host country's government and raising awareness of the benefits of external support among the authorities and population. Such advocacy, however, requires financial and human resources to instigate and maintain, resources equally important for sustaining INGO operations on the ground.

Japan's experiences with external support during the 1995 and 2011 earthquakes cemented the importance of Japan accepting international humanitarian relief during national crises. Japan modified its policies and legislature, coordinating policies with civil society in order to guarantee more access to external support during future crises. Motivated by Japan's experience with external support during humanitarian crises, the Japanese

government established a collective financial platform for NGOs and the private sector so that they could offer relief to other Asian countries during humanitarian crises. However, Japanese NGOs and Japan's government have learned that in conflict situations, such as in Pakistan and Indonesia, providing external support can be challenging because aid may be perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of the recipient country, for which the primary goal is restoring law and order in affected areas.

Conflict may complicate the provision of humanitarian relief in crisis situations even as it increases the need for external support. The benefits of external intervention in such situations may be maximized without threatening the security of affected areas. Over the past 15 years, disaster- and conflict-affected areas in Pakistan and Indonesia have experienced various levels of external support and have adjusted government policies to make their countries more open to receiving assistance. We have seen how Japan successfully navigated humanitarian crises in the conflict-affected areas in Indonesia, but not in conflict-affected Pakistan. Both Indonesia and Japan have used their experience to expand international cooperation; the Indonesian government further leveraged Aceh's experience with disaster preparedness and reconstruction into a platform for South-South cooperation. These responses suggest that a state, once it becomes open to external support, will use that experience to foster its own external support capacities in order to assist other countries (Nishi, 2014).

Japan provided successful rehabilitation initiatives at the community and local levels in Pakistan and Indonesia. Moving forward, Japan, and other Asian countries, should implement policy changes for providing and receiving external support from INGOs, including flexible coordination mechanism to maximize aid and service, and to continue to improve the effectiveness of external support in conflict-affected areas.

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## CHAPTER 8

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### Sovereignty, Non-Interference, and the Right to Protect: Enablers or Effective Impediments to Peacebuilding in Asia?

*By*

*Denis Nkala*

#### **Introduction**

An effective tool for maintaining peace among neighbors is upholding the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries in the interest of respecting state sovereignty. The principle of non-interference, however, means that neighbors' hands are tied when it comes to intervening in intrastate conflicts, even if those conflicts involve crimes against humanity, such as genocide or other war crimes. Intervening in the face of humanitarian atrocities is a mandate of the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect. In the context of protecting state sovereignty at all costs, the Responsibility to Protect and the principle of non-interference can often be at odds. The principle of non-interference is a priority in South-South cooperation (SSC), and, to strike a balance between non-interference and protecting people in the midst of intrastate conflict, the Global South must pursue effective regional cooperation arrangements.

This chapter delves into the history of SSC's principle of non-interference and the tension between non-interference and the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect. It expands upon the subject of Chapter 7 in this volume on the importance of neighbors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The first section explores the historical context of the principle of non-interference and explains how the principle became

central in SSC. The second and third sections use case studies from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Pacific Region to demonstrate how and why non-interference principles have been used successfully or unsuccessfully during interstate and intrastate conflicts. The fourth section argues that the Global South must strike a balance between upholding the South-South principles of sovereignty and non-interference and the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect within the context of intrastate conflicts. The fifth section and conclusion explain how the principles of SSC, as outlined in the Second United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, provide a pathway to this balance that involves more effective regional cooperation and institutional policies.

### **The centrality of the principles in South-South cooperation**

Non-interference in domestic affairs in order to safeguard a country's sovereignty is a principle as old as the United Nations (UN) Charter. This principle, however, is largely recognized as a SSC principle due to the emphasis given to non-interference in the 1978 Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA). BAPA became a major expression of the hopes, aspirations, and fears of the Global South. Many subsequent Global South documents and meetings have solidified non-interference principles and emphasized the centrality of these principles in SSC.

BAPA emerged during the decolonization process, during which several newly independent states demanded a revised political and economic order that could better represent the entirety of the world's population. This new order departed from the previous system of a few industrialized countries controlling the distribution and use of resources, and, instead, required a global participation in international affairs. BAPA also hoped to increase the inter-dependence between developing countries by internationally applying national capabilities. BAPA's main thrust stated that "Interdependence [...] demands sovereign and equal participation in the conduct of international relations and equitable distribution of benefits" (Buenos Aires Plan of Action, 1978).

In 2019, the BAPA + 40 Outcome Document restated the principles of non-interference and respect for sovereignty wherein it explained that “South-South cooperation and its agenda have to be set by countries of the South and should continue to be guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit” (BAPA + 40, 2019).

## **Preventing interstate conflict in ASEAN**

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has mitigated multiple interstate conflicts while upholding its principles, which included non-interference, and its economic, social, political, and cultural cooperation modalities. ASEAN, however, had to work hard in order to guarantee the cooperation of all its member countries. The former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Musa Hitam explained ASEAN’s initial obstacles: “When ASEAN was formed in 1967, we were almost strangers to one another. Some of us were almost adversaries and did not even want to know each other. Many of us were deeply suspicious of each other. Some of us frankly distrusted each other. There was goodwill, but there was ill will too” (1987). The tension within ASEAN stemmed from the discord within the Southeast Asian region. The 2002 Secretary-General of ASEAN, H. E. Rodolfo C. Severino, described Southeast Asia as “deeply and severely fractured in many ways” during the time of ASEAN’s 1967 founding. The Southeast Asian region struggled to survive amidst Cold War tensions, and the majority of Southeast Asian countries were in disputes with one or more neighbors over territorial boundaries<sup>1</sup> (2011).

Today, ASEAN is one of the most successful regional intergovernmental

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1 In 1967, Indonesia emerged from a confrontation with Malaysia and Singapore. Malaysia and Singapore had just dissolved their federation and gone separate ways. Malaysia and the Philippines disputed over Sabah boundaries. Vietnam struggled with a conflict between the North and South, each backed by a global superpower. Laos and Cambodia were also involved in the Vietnam War. Additionally, the Philippines and Thailand backed South Vietnam along with the United States of America. Communist insurgents were a serious threat to governments in the region.

organizations at maintaining peace within its region. ASEAN transformed from an organization riddled with conflict to a bastion of peace and prosperity through its strong reliance on the principles of mutual respect, equality for all member countries, unanimous decision making, and non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbors. ASEAN's ability to maintain interstate peace can be attributed to its respect for diversity and exclusion of global superpowers from intervening in the affairs of its member states (Mahbubani & Sng, 2017).

Most interstate disputes between ASEAN's members in more recent years (notably, between Cambodia and Thailand) have been "low-level and non-violent" (Bercovitch, 2011). Interstate conflicts have also persisted in the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, China, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines (Reilly & Graham, 2004). The extent of damages and casualties in these interstate conflicts, however, do not compare to the losses in some of the intrastate conflicts in the region, which are much higher. Although ASEAN's non-interference approach has helped sustain interstate peace and prosperity in the region, it may have ineffectually addressed intrastate conflicts.

### *The challenge of intra-state conflicts to Southeast Asia*

In the modern age, most conflict now takes place within countries rather than between countries. Most of these intrastate conflicts are driven by religious or cultural identity issues, control over resources, social or ethnic inequalities, and political disagreements (Reilly & Graham, 2004). ASEAN applies the central principles of SSC, including respect for sovereignty and non-interference, in its international relations. The application of these principles seems, in some instances, to have resulted in the neglect of intrastate conflict mediation because of ASEAN's emphasis on non-interference.

Examples of intrastate conflict within ASEAN include the Aceh, Timor Leste, and West Papua insurgencies in Indonesia, the Khmer Rouge Regime's genocide of as many as three million people in Cambodia, and multiple protracted conflicts within the Philippines fueled by territory disputes and religious differences (Bercovitch, 2011; Sukarno, 2017). Other intrastate conflicts in the Pacific, such as in the Solomon Islands,

Papua New Guinea, and other states have required external interventions from Australia and New Zealand (Bercovitch, 2011). The following case studies demonstrate how the non-interference principles of SSC has kept neighbors from involvement in intrastate conflicts, even at times when external mediation could have diminished intrastate conflict and encouraged peace.

One example of ASEAN member states' reluctance to address intrastate conflicts occurred in the Sulu Zone conflict between the Sulu and Celebes Seas. The Sulu Zone was the center of violence for non-state armed groups (NSAGs) for multiple years. This violence and transnational terrorism particularly affected Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In order to protect the sovereignty of the area and uphold the principle of non-interference, ASEAN did strongly intervene to stem the conflict (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017).

In 2002, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines signed the Trilateral Agreement on Information Exchange and Establishment of Communications Procedures in order to establish a framework for multilateral relations and promote cooperation and communication between the three countries (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017). The security threats within the Sulu Zone, however, mounted despite the Trilateral Agreement, and, in May 2016, the three countries began a new process to address these security threats. Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines initiated higher levels of cooperation at the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting in Vientiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, including coordinated maritime patrols and joint air patrols. In the interest of protecting national sovereignty and upholding the principle of non-interference, each country agreed to only patrol its own territorial waters. Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines agreed that they would enter another of the three countries only in emergency situations and if the country involved was informed. On several occasions, Indonesia proposed security operations in the Philippines' territory, yet the Philippines rejected these proposals (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017). Many factors go into a country's decision to accept or offer intervention in conflict situations. The potential host country should be prepared to accept mediation from another country, even if those countries share cultural, religious, or other identity disagreements. When

deciding whether or not to intervene, a country should consider economic concerns, weigh cost-benefits, and establish institutional systems that are strong enough to support conflict intervention.

Indonesia has experienced multiple intrastate conflicts. Indonesia's experiences with insurgencies in the Aceh, Timor Leste, and West Papua provinces demonstrate how external mediation is most effective when the host country is prepared for and willing to accept external mediation. The Aceh province experienced violent insurgencies from 1990 to 1991 and 1999 to 2005. In 2005, following the devastating effects of the December 24, 2005 tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia's government and the Aceh insurgents hoped to rebuild the province (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2017). The Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), an independent center that promotes conflict resolution through informal dialogue and mediation, takes credit for mediating the peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Aceh insurgents, which both parties signed in Helsinki, Finland (Crisis Management Initiative, 2015). A former President of Finland, Marti Ahtisaari, founded the CMI in 2000 and was instrumental in the success of the mediation between Indonesia's government and the Aceh insurgents. The European Union and ASEAN also became major proponents for the peace agreement. In this context, external conflict mediation in an intrastate conflict succeeded because the peace initiative was led by Indonesia, and ASEAN did not directly engage in the mediation process. Therefore, Indonesia was able to protect its state sovereignty while also accepting external mediation.

Another example occurred in the Philippines during the Mindanao conflict, which demonstrates that solidarity between a group of neighbors can effectively support external conflict mediation. In 1972, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) declared its intent to engage the Philippine government in order to guarantee the "safety and property of Muslims" living in Mindanao (Organization of Islamic Countries, 1972; Abhoud, 2006). The OIC defined this mandate as a pan-Islamic organization with the objective to "promote Islamic solidarity and peaceful settlements of disputes" (1972). The OIC's interests were also supported by Malaysia, which is a predominantly Islamic state and a neighbor of the Philippines. The OIC's connection to Malaysia uniquely qualified the OIC to be a mediator for Filipino Islamist groups and the

Philippine government (Abhoud, 2006). ASEAN maintained a distance from this intrastate conflict and was able to respect the sovereignty of the Philippines, even though one of its members, Malaysia, was deeply involved. ASEAN was able to do so because of the OIC's strong connection to Malaysia, which demonstrates that solidarity between two countries forged by a common interest can help find peaceful solutions to intrastate conflicts.

Myanmar has experienced multiple intrastate conflicts, ranging from secessionist disputes, communist insurgencies, and ethnic conflicts. Although ASEAN frequently called for reconciliation in Myanmar during Myanmar's decades of conflict, ASEAN was reluctant to directly intervene because of their principle of non-interference, something some ASEAN members criticized as an "over-sensitivity" to Myanmar's sovereignty (Severino, 2011). Therefore, ASEAN had little effect on Myanmar's intrastate conflicts. The Myanmar example once again demonstrates that ASEAN cannot intervene in intrastate conflict prevention or peacebuilding unless invited by the host government.

## **Conflict prevention and peacebuilding challenges in SAARC**

Another major regional intergovernmental organization in Asia is the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The SAARC region is a compact unit without natural frontiers between the countries. During the colonial era, SAARC was a peaceful region, but, after the withdrawal of colonial rule, new interstate and intrastate conflicts erupted across the region (Bimal, 1989). A major difference between ASEAN and SAARC is that, although SAARC member states apply the same non-interference principles to intrastate conflicts, they also apply non-interference principles to interstate conflicts. In 1981, President Zia of Pakistan asserted that each sovereign state in South Asia had a right to "judge its own problems of security in realistic terms and adopt measures to ensure it" (Bimal, 1989). Unlike ASEAN, countries in SAARC perceive each other as threats. SAARC countries frequently contest borders, notably between Pakistan and India (Deo, 2014).

Because of the dynamics within SAARC, the organization experiences



less collective responsibility for peace and security than ASEAN has established between its member states. The trust that exists between ASEAN member states has prevented the involvement of superpowers in interstate and intrastate conflicts in the Southeast Asian region. There has been no external involvement from superpowers in ASEAN since the Vietnam War. In SAARC, however, superpowers will frequently involve themselves in the interstate and intrastate conflicts of member states. For example, both the Soviet Union and the United States of America have intervened in Afghanistan's intrastate conflicts. SAARC's member states have suffered because they have not upheld the principle of non-interference in the context of allowing superpower intervention within regional conflicts. Additionally, SAARC member states do not share a consensus for what constitutes regional security risks, so member states frequently also do not act to mediate in intrastate conflicts.

The Nepalese Civil War between the communist insurgency, the Maoists, and the Nepali government from 1996 to 2006 is one example of external intervention in a SAARC member state. The peace process between the Maoists and Nepal's government began in 2006, after the Maoists took over 80 percent of the country and contained the Nepali military to their barracks but were unable to gain control over the entire state (Suresh, 2016). The conflict came to a stalemate, and the Maoists and Nepali government orchestrated a largely internally driven peace agreement, but the international community also supported the conflict resolution, and the UN mediated the peace process. Under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Nepali government and the Maoists, the UN supervised the confinement of 31,000 Maoist fighters in camps and the containment of the Nepali army in barracks. The UN also took custody of the Maoist's weapons (Suresh, 2016). No other SAARC member states intervened in Nepal's peace process.

Another example from SAARC is the peace process in Sri Lanka, which, like the Nepalese Civil War, also illustrates that a stalemate in an intrastate conflict can lead to an invitation for external mediation. The fifth peace process between the militant insurgent group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the Sri Lankan government came about when the Sri Lankan government recognized that many Sri Lankan Tamils considered the LTTE as a representative for the Tamil people. The

LTTE had been fighting for Tamil's independence from Sri Lanka since 1983. India intervened in the first peace process in 1985 and the second in 1987, illustrating how a powerful neighbor can intervene in intrastate conflicts despite SAARC's principles of non-interference; however, no other SAARC member state was involved in Sri Lanka's intrastate conflict mediation. The government of Norway facilitated the fifth peace process in 2002, supported by the governments of the United States of America, Japan, India, and the European Union (Shanmugaratnan & Stokke, 2004).

The Afghanistan conflict, which began in 1979 and continues today, is an example of how external interests can fuel a protracted conflict. The conflict started as a proxy war between two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The conflict later shifted its focus, but it remains an externally supported civil war. External support for the Afghanistan government, insurgent groups, and other actors provides the Afghanistan conflict with fuel to persist (Pradman, 1989). Afghanistan's intrastate conflict demonstrates how, without staunch regard for the principle of non-interference, external support can embolden a conflict rather than encourage peace.

The examples of intrastate and interstate conflict mediation in Southeast Asia demonstrate how ASEAN has successfully preserved interstate peace by refusing external intervention. ASEAN member states, however, still experience intrastate conflicts, which persist. Unlike ASEAN, SAARC member states have not established solidarity between themselves. The lack of trust between SAARC countries has left the region vulnerable to multiple interstate and intrastate conflicts. The SAARC region is fragmented and has not developed a regional identity, leading to persisting tensions, conflict, and distrust that negatively impact bilateral relations. Many SAARC members are overly-dependent on the external intervention of "extra-regional powers," which accounts for inconsistent policies where external alliances with SAARC member states overshadow regional principles (Pradman, 1989).

SAARC and ASEAN are two regions traveling in opposite directions. ASEAN, which has often upheld the South-South principles of state sovereignty and non-interference, has experienced few interstate conflicts. SAARC, however, although it has attempted to incorporate South-South

principles into its regional interactions, has failed to build trust between its member states, which has left the region vulnerable to external intervention from global superpowers. External intervention in SAARC member states has exacerbated intrastate conflicts within the region. The next section analyses the Global South's debate between a country's right to sovereignty and the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect.

## **Governance and sovereignty and South-South cooperation**

State sovereignty is the idea that a sovereign state possesses absolute control over its territory and people. External actors cannot share the absolute power of a sovereign state because that power is indivisible. Even if the sovereign does not have total control over its country, the claim of sovereignty is sufficient and implies that its power cannot be shared (Lake, 2012). Therefore, because the sovereign authority of most developing countries is absolute and not answerable to any higher power, internal conflicts within those countries “are primarily matters of internal concern” (Deng *et al.*, 1996). In SSC, upholding a state's sovereignty through the principle of non-interference is a priority when addressing intrastate conflict. This principle, however, can be at odds with a country's Responsibility to Protect citizens of another country from grievous forms of violence or persecution.

### ***Responsibility to Protect***

In 2005, at the High-level United Nations World Summit, the UN member states established the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (United Nations, 2005). The UN defines the Responsibility to Protect as “a political commitment to end the worst forms of violence and persecution. It seeks to narrow the gap between Member States' pre-existing obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and the reality faced by populations at risk of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” (2005). The Responsibility to Protect was a controversial decision, because many nations were wary of any action that threatened a country's sovereignty.

In 1999, in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan challenged the United Nations to “uphold the UN Charter principles in Acting in defense of humanity” (United Nations, 2019). In 2000, Annan asked the UN, “If humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, a Srebrenica [...]?” (United Nations, 2019). A Canadian institution, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, developed the concept that protecting state sovereignty should not only include protecting a state from external interference, but it should include protecting the state’s citizens, which would also include an obligation for other countries to act in the interest of the overall welfare of a state’s people (2001). This meant that, in the event that a state was unwilling or unable to protect its people, the Responsibility to Protect passed to other countries. The UN agreed that this responsibility could be exercised through diplomacy, humanitarian aid, or other peaceful means (United Nations, 2019). The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document states:

The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In this context, we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We stress the need for the General Assembly to continue consideration of the Responsibility to Protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and its implications, bearing in mind the principles of the Charter and international

law. We also intend to commit ourselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out (United Nations, 2005, para. 139).

The negotiations for finding a balance between the principle of sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect involved all UN member states, but it is unclear whether the Global South unanimously agreed with the charter. In 2005, Reform the UN released a State-by-State analysis of member states' positions on the Responsibility to Protect. In general, developed states in the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and New Zealand approved of the Responsibility to Protect. Among developing nations, Sri Lanka endorsed the Responsibility to Protect, and Malaysia agreed to some aspects of the document. China, Fiji, India, Iran, and Pakistan opposed the Responsibility to Protect draft, because they wanted another paragraph that emphasized a strict adherence to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity (Reform the UN, 2005).

### ***Responsibility to Protect in application***

Since its enactment, application of the Responsibility to Protect has presented more challenges than solutions. The UN Security Council intervened under the Responsibility to Protect in Libya in 2011. The UN called for “all necessary measures” to protect the civilian population in Libya from the perceived threat of Colonel Muammar Gadhafi’s Libyan government (Brockmeier, Stunkel & Tourino, 2016; Weiss, 2011). This was the first time the UN approved the use of force against a country in order to protect its citizens from “imminent atrocities” (Brockmeier, Stunkel & Tourino, 2016). The use of force to overthrow the Libyan government encouraged critics of the Responsibility to Protect, who argued that the Libyan example demonstrated how the Responsibility to Protect could be abused because it had been used to enforce a regime-change agenda rather than to strictly protect Libya’s citizens (Brockmeier,

Stunkel & Tourino, 2016).

It can be difficult for countries to intervene in another country's intrastate conflict without becoming too involved in that conflict. For example, when the Economic Community for West African States deployed forces to Liberia in 2003 to prevent rebels from taking over Monrovia, the Liberian capital, the peace-keeping force was challenged by the rebels and had to engage in conflict. Because of the danger of either engaging in a nation's conflict or making that conflict worse, countries are often hesitant to intervene in intrastate conflicts.

The Responsibility to Protect is also impacted by the following:

1. It is difficult to create a unified approach to external intervention if multiple external actors are involved in the peace-keeping initiative. Some neighboring countries may have contrasting sympathies for the groups involved in a country's intrastate conflict, separated by ideological, religious, or cultural difference. A current example of this challenge is in Venezuela, where countries in the region are unable to decide on a universal approach for conflict prevention (The Guardian, 2019).
2. A fallout between neighbors supporting different groups in a country's intrastate conflict can destabilize the region and increase distrust between neighbors. Regional instability can increase a conflict's need for superpower intervention, which can further escalate the conflict through greater weapons availability and additional resources. This occurred in the Afghanistan conflict, when neighboring countries failed to agree on peacebuilding strategies and global superpowers became involved (Adam, 1992)
3. Distrust between neighbors will also affect neighbors' economic, social, and cultural cooperation, which can lead to further regional instability.
4. Conflict intervention requires financial and other resources for peace-keeping forces, provisions, training, and other needs, which neighbors may not have.

## **Lessons learned and recommendations for the Global South**

The Global South can learn multiple lessons from the individual case studies and the regional analyses of interstate and intrastate conflict mediation.

1. The ASEAN case studies reveal that upholding the South-South principle of non-interference is important for keeping peace between developing countries. Upholding sovereignty, non-interference in the domestic affairs of member states, equality, and acting for the mutual benefit of neighboring countries are all South-South principles that will help maintain peace.
2. Building trust between South Asian countries is of the utmost importance. One reason for the lack of trust among SAARC member states is the fact that some member states are aligned to external powers. Alignment with global superpowers can impact the decision of countries when it comes to conflict mediation.
3. When a country interferes in the affairs of another country, it risks reciprocation from that country. Such interference frequently results in fractured relationships that impede economic cooperation and people-to-people connectivity. Prior to ASEAN's establishment, Southeast Asia experienced these negative results.
4. It is often the case that, when in conflict, the two parties may be searching for a solution to the conflict, but are not able to move forward with peace proceedings without the help of a mediator. An impartial mediator that has not attempted to intervene in the conflict without the express permission of the parties involved can help the conflicting parties come to a settlement. In this context, it is important that countries uphold the principle of non-interference; this prevents conflict escalation and any possible prejudice during mediation. Conflicts in Nepal, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka had positive mediation experiences through external peacebuilding.

5. According to South-South principles, countries should not interfere in the affairs of other countries, but the Global South still needs to uphold the UN principle of the Responsibility to Protect. In order to improve peacebuilding in the Global South, governments should strengthen institutions for peace. The Global South should analyze interstate and intrastate threats and warn leaders in the case of potential violence. The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) is mandated to research, build capacities, and develop expertise for peacebuilding and conflict avoidance in Southeast Asia (ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, 2019). Although it is still in its infancy, the AIPR may offer a model for sustainable peace in the South.
6. The Sri Lankan, Indonesian, and Nepali case studies reveal that external mediation can be an extremely effective tool for peacebuilding. The mediations of Finland, Norway, and the UN most likely were effective because all parties involved in the conflicts trusted the mediating actor. However, if the countries in the Global South continue to rely on and engage external powers as allies, the Global South will find it difficult to access impartial mediators that can be trusted by all parties.
7. Lastly, as in the case of the Rwandan conflict in 1994, challenges can arise in conflict situations if those conflicts are not brought to the attention of other countries. Governments may prevent other countries from becoming aware of conflict because the government is committing crimes against humanity or other atrocities. This means that, despite Libya, the Right to Protect, still has a place in preventing conflict.

## **Conclusion and way forward**

In 1978, newly independent countries in the Global South yearned for a stronger role in international relations. Many developing countries in the Global South steadfastly supported non-interference in order to assert their state sovereignty. Case studies from ASEAN member states indicate



that non-interference builds trust between neighbors and prevents regional destabilization. Non-interference leads to less external interference and fewer interstate conflicts. This principle, however, can also lead to paralysis in the face of intrastate conflicts.

In 2005, countries in the Global South agreed to the Right to Protect, which advocated for a shared concept of sovereignty across the region and international community rather than absolute sovereignty. The Right to Protect appeared to breach the divide between South-South principles and the Responsibility to Protect. Some in the Global South insisted on building safeguards into the Right to Protect, including its application only strictly in the face of crimes against humanity. It continues to be important for the Global South to work toward intrastate conflicts prevention. Often, a country will not allow conflict mediation unless the conflict reaches a stalemate or a catastrophic incident interrupts the conflict. Waiting for a country to permit conflict mediation results in lives lost and ruined development opportunities.

The Global South must find a balance between the principle of non-interference and the Responsibility to Protect. The UN should support regional organizations in the Global South through resources or spearheading appropriate responses to conflicts. In 2019, the Second United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (Buenos Aires Plan of Action, BAPA+40), recognized the need for peaceful and inclusive societies and recommends the bolstering of regional organizations such as ASEAN and SAARC.

The BAPA + 40 Outcome Document (2019) states:

We recognize that developing countries tend to share common views on national development strategies and priorities when faced with similar development challenges. The proximity of experience is therefore a key catalyst in promoting capacity development in developing countries and, in this regard, it accentuates the principles of SSC. It is important to enhance SSC in order to fulfill its full development potential.

The BAPA +40 Outcome Document (2019) offers a way forward for SSC to embrace solidarity and move toward a more peaceful and

inclusive Global South. The Document suggests that countries in the Global South should develop institutional and financial means for conflict intervention, which will save lives, avoid negative fallout from neighbors, and achieve intrastate and interstate peace.

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# CONCLUSION

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*By*  
*Anthea Mulakala*

Conflict is a longstanding and persistent element of Asian domestic and international relations. As development and development cooperation increasingly focuses on connectivity between nations, regions, and continents, interstate and intrastate conflict becomes a critical variable of sustainable development. In order to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, as well as the other global goals, resolving conflict and supporting peacebuilding should be a shared responsibility and commitment for all Asian actors.

This volume exposed the contours of Asia's complicated geopolitical landscape from the perspective of Asian countries affected by conflict, as well as countries trying to provide support to conflict-affected areas. The analysis revealed seven lessons relevant to policy design.

First, the benefits of economic growth and infrastructure investments in Asia are often delayed by a failure to address conflict dynamics. Economic growth can create tension within and between countries because of contested land acquisition, resource extraction, or poor community consultation. Morel, Oo, and Xavier emphasized that stable borders and regions are necessary for successful interregional economic cooperation. Asian donors and providers should apply a conflict-sensitivity framework to their investments in order to prioritize peacebuilding within countries. Asian countries with extensive experience managing and mitigating conflict in their own territories can apply Morel, Oo, and Xavier's lessons to their bilateral and regional connectivity partnerships. For example, China's Belt and Road Initiative extends to almost every country in the Asian region. As a multilateral

initiative, it holds the potential for conflict transformation and economic development, especially if its design and implementation draw on the conflict experience and abilities of its many partners. In order to ensure that economic development leads to sustainable peace, development partners should consider long-term investments in governance and the rule of law. This is particularly relevant for China, India, and Japan as they expand connectivity and infrastructure initiatives across Asia.

Second, Asian countries should share their own peacebuilding experiences and global expertise with neighboring countries. For example, Indonesia prioritizes peacebuilding in its South-South cooperation (SSC) activities and draws on its own conflict-management and peacebuilding experiences in Aceh, Poso, Ambon, and Borneo to advise and support countries, including Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Myanmar.

Third, nongovernmental organizations are political actors. Asian civil society organizations (CSOs) and religious organizations have played significant roles in Asia-Asia peacebuilding. In South Korea's engagement policy with North Korea, for example, humanitarian CSOs significantly influenced conflict mitigation on the Korean Peninsula and increased openness between South Korea and North Korea. Moon and Takahashi explain how, despite the fact that nongovernmental organizations are often overlooked Asian actors, the strategies employed by such organizations can often be effective peacebuilding tools.

Fourth, regional economic projects can build political bridges in conflict situations and provide opportunities for a region's dominant powers to work together. For example, supporting Afghanistan's regional connectivity can offer an opportunity for cooperation between India and Pakistan through shared bilateral and multilateral trade and investment.

Fifth, neighbors matter. Oo discusses how the laws and policies of neighboring countries can influence a country's conflict dynamics. Asian countries should examine how their policies, particularly border regulations, may either aggravate or mitigate neighboring conflicts. In Myanmar, border areas near Thailand and China are strategic launching pads and sanctuaries for rebel groups, which take advantage of cross-border arms and resource trading. Thailand and China both initially supported rebel groups as a buffer policy against Myanmar's government. Thailand, however, halted support in the 1990s and began restricting

weapons smuggling and illegal natural resource exports. China, however, continues to supply Myanmar rebels with arms and other resources. As a result, Myanmar's Thai border has achieved some measure of stability through improved regulations and a nationwide ceasefire agreement, but Myanmar's northern, Chinese border continues to be riddled with conflict between insurgent groups and Myanmar's armed forces.

Sixth, the development-security nexus in many Asian countries threatens development cooperation efforts. In Afghanistan, for example, conflict prevention and peacebuilding may have to become a second priority to the country's larger national security situation. Constant terrorist attacks thwart peacebuilding efforts and divert development resources. Often, peace processes offer Afghanistan hope for reconstruction and development, but these hopes later collapsed in a cycle of conflict and destruction. Khan observes that security concerns often override development priorities because parties to the conflict lack trust; however, development efforts can also help rebuild that trust, which, in turn, increases a state's security and stability.

Finally, the question of sovereignty resonates within many of the examples throughout this volume. Respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of partner countries are longstanding principles of SSC. However, the prevalence of subnational conflicts, where state legitimacy is challenged by its own citizens, compels Asian countries to rethink the boundaries of SSC principles. Takahashi and Alexandra discuss how Japan and Indonesia found the balance between external intervention and respecting state sovereignty in crisis situations. Nkala explains how the United Nation's principle of the Right to Protect advocates for an expanded concept of shared sovereignty across regions and international communities. Influenced by the Right to Protect, Nkala calls for regional institutions to adopt a stronger stance in conflict management and mitigation.

In an increasingly connected world, Asian development cooperation expands at a rapid pace and affects regions and countries that struggle with conflict. The new demands of development cooperation stretch and adapt the norms, practices, and principles of SSC in order to ensure that Asia-Asia cooperation builds peace instead of fueling conflict. The observations and suggestions supplied in this volume provide insights on



how Asian countries can learn to better support peacebuilding initiatives and encourage sustainable development across the continent.