



The Role of Adaptive Peacebuilding in Japan's Assistance of the Mindanao Peace Process in the Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Liberal peacebuilding in the context of the post-Cold War era, which was designed to achieve multiparty democracy, a free-market economy, and the rule of law (Richmond 2006), has failed to resolve the issue of conflict and violence in the contemporary world. Despite the high level of attention paid to the local in the post-liberal peacebuilding discourse, called hybrid peace (Boege et al. 2009; Richmond and Mitchell 2012; Roberts

The views addressed in this chapter are the author's own and do not reflect the views of the JICA.

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2012), it is still unclear how the concept of hybridity in two contested disciplines—universalism and particularism—can be transformed in practice. Besides, the existing debates are inadequate to deal with the current political reality. Many cases in a post-conflict setting, as observed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Angola, Tajikistan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan, and elsewhere, have been inclined to be illiberal or authoritarian (neither liberal nor hybrid) despite significant efforts to introduce liberal peace, to construct a hegemonic order and elite stranglehold over the political economy (Soares de Oliveira 2011; Piccolino 2018).

Within this global context, there has been a growing recognition that: (i) peacebuilding is complex and that linear diagnostics and predetermined solutions, typical of the liberal peace approach to conflict resolution, are too simplistic and generic; and (ii) peacebuilding is a political activity that must avoid templates, formulas, and a one-size-fits-all approach to solutions (de Coning 2018; Randazzo and Torrent 2020; Paffenholz 2021). Call and de Coning (2018, 262) articulated, “the era in which peacebuilding was synonymous with pursuing a liberal peace end-state is coming to an end, and the next phase in the transition seems to be characterized by a more open-ended or goal-free approach toward peacebuilding, where the focus is on the means or process, and the end-state is open to context-specific interpretations of peace.” On the basis of this argument, de Coning (2018) defined adaptive peacebuilding as a process where local, national, and international peacebuilders, together with the societies, communities, and people affected by the conflict, actively engage in a structured collaborative process to sustain peace and resolve conflicts by employing an inductive and iterative process of learning and adaptation.

From the results of the literature review on peacebuilding, several main problems can be identified, namely, (i) there is a lack of academic argument from a non-Western perspective, especially from Japan, despite its engagement over the last three decades; (ii) few case studies of peacebuilding efforts have been done by bilateral donor agencies, especially major Indo-Pacific powers; instead, they tend to be done by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) or UN agencies; (iii) the arguments are inclined to piecemeal not comprehensive, with the view of synchronizing efforts on peacemaking and peacebuilding or development, diplomacy, and defense (3D); (iv) the scope of the timeframe is rather short against the protracted and complex peace process in reality; and (v) few cases have proved the effectiveness of an adaptive peacebuilding approach despite the attention it has received.

To fill the gaps, this study examines an alternative approach to peacebuilding that is context-specific by taking up a Japanese peacebuilding approach, as in the case of Mindanao in Southern Philippines, to cover the period from the late 1990s to 2019, from a non-Western perspective. For that, key questions are asked: (i) Who are the local, national, or international peacebuilding actors who have implemented deterministic or context-specific approaches to peacebuilding? (ii) How effective or not has each approach been in contributing to sustainable peace? (iii) How have they been adapted? and (iv) How are context-specific and adaptive approaches interlinked? Throughout this process, it is important to elucidate how Japanese policies, approaches, and practices in peacebuilding have been shaped by external and internal factors. This then becomes the basis of verification to identify the particularities and universalities in adaptive peacebuilding efforts and leads to further contributions to the arguments in the literature.

The reasons to take up the Mindanao case are as follows. First, Japan's contribution to peace in Mindanao is considered part of the expanding global engagement underpinning the diplomatic principle of proactive contributions to peace. This case illustrates one way of embodying "proactive pacifism" by one of the major Indo-Pacific powers. Second, success factors through international cooperation, based on the Japanese experience, can be extracted from the recent progress in Mindanao's peace process, such as the creation of a new autonomous region and transition government in 2019. Third, Japan has incrementally been evolving the forms and contents of assistance in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao over the last 30 years by strengthening the development–diplomacy–security nexus without dispatching the Japanese self-defense forces (SDF) for peacekeeping operations (PKOs). By elucidating the synchronizing mechanism in a non-UN-Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) setting through collaborative efforts with diverse international, national, and local stakeholders, new lessons can be learned, and policy implications can be further addressed.

To this end, this study: (i) describes the evolution of policy and practice on Japan's contribution to peace in the post-Cold War era with the expansion of global engagement repositioning Japan in the global context; (ii) provides an overview of Japanese assistance to peace and development in Mindanao, specifying peacebuilding architecture in the form of the

development–diplomacy–security nexus; (iii) examines how Japan’s assistance to peace and development in Mindanao has evolved incrementally by identifying four phases of assistance by nature and content; and (iv) elucidates the effectiveness of “adaptive” peacebuilding approaches in the Japanese context, by underpinning the norms and values, and proposes policy implications in conclusion.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts analytical concepts from de Coning’s defined adaptive peacebuilding approach as described in Chap. 2. Based on complexity theory and a system approach, it includes non-linearity, self-organization, and process facilitation with an emphasis on local and national ownership that would result in increasing resilience and consequently sustainable peace. In fact, all these concepts have a high affinity for Japan’s aid principles such as request-based, self-reliance, ownership, and capacity development. Thus, the study seeks to verify how these aid principles have been conceptualized and how they can be inserted into the adaptive peacebuilding discourse.

The survey methods that were applied are individual or semi-structured interviews, literature reviews, secondary surveys, process tracing, and the context analysis of narratives. The field survey in the Philippines was conducted from February 16 to 29, 2020. Interviews were conducted with 28 informants, including government agencies, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), donors, civil society organizations (CSO), and academic institutions. To probe further, online interviews with ten informants, including diplomats and non-governmental organizations (NGO) staff in charge of mediation, were conducted from December 2020 to February 2021. For the interviews, each narrative was respected and understood as the interviewee’s own perception through active listening and oral history methods. Prior to the field survey, other interviews were conducted with 72 personnel who had been involved in assistance in Mindanao since the 1990s. These interviews were primarily undertaken by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) study team for the “Comprehensive Review of the JICA’s Assistance in Mindanao” (JICA 2021) from May 2019 to January 2020. All the interviews were recorded and coded for context analysis, the basis for synchronizing all the results to derive a reliable and persuasive conclusion.

JAPANESE ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING: POLICY AND PRACTICES

Evolution of Concept and Policy on Japan's Contribution to Peace

The end of the Cold War spurred inter- and intra-state conflict in many parts of the world and disrupted the international order. In response to these international security challenges, the UN, or equivalent multinational forces, took on peacekeeping. In this context, the so-called Gulf War erupted—led by the United States (US) and a multinational force in reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 (Dobson 2003). As a part of its participation, Japan contributed US\$ 13 billion to the US-led multilateral coalition. Later, Japan became more active in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) through the enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Act in June 1992. This allowed for the dispatch of the SDF on UN-PKO missions. The first dispatch was to Cambodia in 1992–1993 as part of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), followed by involvement in other post-conflict states including Iraq through the enactment of the Iraq Special Measures Law in 2003. Japan has, until recently, been a regular financial and human contributor to the UN-PKO since 1992.¹

Besides contributions to international peace to restore order, Japan has also been engaged in peacebuilding through official development assistance (ODA) and its evolving concepts, developing policies and practices to this end. On the basis of the human security concept addressed by Prime Minister Obuchi (1998–2000) in 1998, which later became one of the pillars of Japan's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era (Kurusu 2011), the term peacebuilding first appeared in Japan's Medium-term Policy on ODA in 1999 and identified “conflict and development” as one of its priority issues. Prime Minister Koizumi (2001–2006) first articulated in May 2002 that Japan would increase its international role by focusing on the “consolidation of peace” and “nation-building” in conflict-affected countries.

Simultaneously, the JICA, as a development agency, undertook its own initiatives to examine the role of development assistance in peacebuilding on the basis of human security. In October 1999, a study acknowledged

¹Japan contributed 8.56% of the total UN-PKO budget in 2020-2021 after the US (27.89%) and China (15.21%) (MOFA 2022).

the importance of the JICA's peacebuilding activities based on the principle of "Do No Harm," covering conflict prevention, emergency humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction (JICA 2001). Based on the study, the JICA defined it as the process of preventing the outbreak and recurrence of conflicts, revitalizing societies, economies, and people's lives destroyed by conflict through a seamless response leading to sustainable development (JICA 2003). As part of subsequent ODA reforms, this view was incorporated into the succeeding JICA guidelines and ODA policies, notably, the ODA Charter in 2003, stipulating peacebuilding as one of the priority issues.

In response to the changing nature of regional and global geopolitics and security environments, and with the rise of China, Japanese (passive) pacifism, shaped by the notion that disarmament is the road to peace (Kitaoka 2014, 6–7), reached a milestone toward breaking free from the postwar regime (constitution) under the Abe administration (2012–2020) when it adopted proactive pacifism. Prime Minister Abe took strong initiatives to undertake doctrinal, institutional, and legal changes in security (Nakanishi 2015). In 2013, the National Security Strategy (NSS) was formulated as the first document to set a course for Japan's security policy and diplomacy, presenting a "proactive contribution to peace" and "international cooperation" as its central concepts (Kitaoka 2014, 2).

Japan's foreign aid policy was also revised from the ODA Charter of 1992 and the 2003 revision to the Development Cooperation Charter of 2015, which includes the "strategic use of ODA," as specified in the NSS. In addition to contributing to peace and prosperity through cooperation for non-military purposes, human security—a concept that pursues the right of individuals to live happily and in dignity, free from fear and want, through their protection and empowerment—is the guiding principle that lies at the foundation of Japan's development cooperation (MOFA 2015, 4). One of the noticeable changes lies in its name, reflecting the reality that international cooperation is carried out not only by ODA but also by non-ODA organizations, including the private sector, civil society, and academia.

The other significant change can be observed in the views on the international landscape and domestic conditions. The ODA Charter in 2003 was framed on the basis of a worldview in the post-Cold War era when a liberal-based international order became dominant. In response to the ethnic or intra-national conflicts that emerged after the Cold War, peacebuilding was situated as one of the priority agendas. Alternatively, the

views in the Development Cooperation Charter reflected the changing balance of power and the acceleration of multi-polarization in world politics due to the rise of emerging countries, including China. Consequently, the term “security” was added to “peace” in the new charter to promote the liberal order based on universal values that was reframed into the concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).

Based on the above, it appears that, at a concept and policy level, Japan has geared itself toward adopting an “All Japan Approach,” by strengthening the development–diplomacy–security nexus. Influenced by external and internal factors, Japanese pacifism has incrementally changed its concepts, synchronized national and human security concepts, and shifted the context from the postwar to the post-Cold War. The next section will discuss how the above concepts and policies on international peace cooperation and peacebuilding have been translated into practice.

Evolution of Practice on Japanese Contribution to Peace

In the Japanese government’s review of all practices influencing international peace since the early 1990s, there are three main approaches: (i) participation in the UN’s PKO abroad by the SDF and regulated by collective security; (ii) participation in non-UN peace operations by the SDF determined by collective self-defense within the framework of the US alliance; and (iii) the provision of peacebuilding assistance in conflict-affected areas/countries by the JICA and the MOFA through ODA. Despite the separate lines of activities related to “international peace cooperation” and “peacebuilding assistance,” the coordination between the Ministry of Defense(MOD)/SDF, MOFA/Embassy of Japan in the Philippines (EJP), and the JICA, the synchronization efforts are undertaken on a case-by-case basis. This resulted partially from the changes in the SDF’s mission in PKOs in accordance with the expansion of UN and non-UN-PKO missions, from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and counterterrorism.

After the legalization of Japan’s participation in UN-PKO in 1992, about 12,500 personnel (SDF, police, and civilian) have been dispatched to 28 UN and non-UN missions in 14 countries as of March 2021(MOFA 2021). Among them, the first dispatch to UN-PKO under the PKO Law was to the UN Angola Verification Mission II as election observers in 1992; this was followed by a dispatch to UNTAC (1992–1993). Other missions included Mozambique (1993–1995), El Salvador (1994), Golan

Heights (Syria) (1996–2003), East Timor (1999, 2002–2004, 2007–2008, and 2010–2012), Nepal (2007–2011), Sudan (2008), Haiti (2010–2012), and South Sudan (2012 to the present). Non-UN missions formed by US allies included Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Sinai Peninsula (Egypt). While adhering to the principles for participation in PKO in compliance with Article 9 of the Constitution, these missions were non-military activities such as monitoring elections, engineering, and humanitarian assistance.

On the other hand, peacebuilding assistance through ODA has also evolved since the late 1990s in response to a growing need for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The basic principles and features are described as follows: (i) consolidation of peace- and nation-building; (ii) respect for local communities and their ownership; and (iii) emphasis on the perspective of human security (MOFA 2007). The first peacebuilding support project through ODA was undertaken in Cambodia and extended to Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Bosnia Herzegovina, Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), and Iraq when expanding its global engagement. Aside from country-based assistance, Japan has taken a leading role in peacebuilding in Africa through the Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD) since 1993, underpinned by the three principles of consolidation of peace, human-centered development, and poverty reduction.

Over the years, synchronizing efforts on the development–diplomacy–security nexus have been observed in Timor-Leste, South Sudan, and other countries (cf. Uesugi 2016). After Cambodia, the “All Japan Approach” initiative through the SDF, MOFA, and JICA took off in Timor-Leste in 1999 through the first donor conference organized by the Japanese government, followed by the dispatch of the SDF to the UN mission (UNTAET) in 2002, where the SDF was in charge of infrastructure construction. This was followed by the JICA and Japanese NGOs and private companies. In the case of South Sudan, soon after the establishment of the UN Mission here (UNMISS) in 2011, the SDF (330 personnel) was dispatched to the UNMISS for infrastructure development around Juba. With the establishment of a coordination center between the UNMISS and Japan, the “All Japan Approach” was reinforced through the strategic integration of the SDF with the ODA projects and JICA/NGO activities (Tana 2021). As such, South Sudan is considered to embody a proactive contribution to peace on the basis of the human security principle. Based on the above, the next section takes up the case of Mindanao with a detailed analysis.

OVERVIEW OF THE MINDANAO CONTEXT: CONFLICT, VIOLENCE, AND THE PEACE PROCESS²

Over the last decades, the peace process in Mindanao, as the conflict resolution with the Moro (mainly Muslim) secessionist movement, has partly resulted from changes in the government's policies and commitment to peace under the influence of international and domestic stakeholders. The political reality in the Philippines, which lacks guarantees regarding the continuity of the administration's public policy, has significantly affected the status and length of the peace process. In this sense, peacebuilding in Mindanao is seen to be a non-linear process.

In the peace process between the government of the Philippines (GPH) and the MNLF, both parties signed a peace agreement in Tripoli in 1976, which stipulated the establishment of an autonomous government exercising judicial powers (Sharia) and possessing special security forces and an economic system under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. A partial by-product of the agreement resulted in a provision in the 1987 Philippines constitution, which allowed for the creation of an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1990 through a referendum without the participation of the MNLF. Eventually, a final peace agreement (FPA) was concluded in 1996 that led to the election of Nur Misuari, the then MNLF chairman, as the governor of the ARMM.

Peace negotiations between the GPH and the MILF formally started in 1997, immediately after the signing of the FPA. Since then, the negotiation process has been interrupted three times—in 2000, 2003, and 2008—by outbreaks of high-intensity violence in response to changes in the government's direction and policy toward the peace process. Under the Aquino administration, both parties signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014 to replace ARMM with a new political entity called Bangsamoro, now with a larger territorial scope and broader autonomy. However, the CAB could not be legislated at the Philippine Congress. With the strong initiative of then President Duterte (2016–2022), the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was enacted in 2018, creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and subsequently the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA)

²This section is mostly based on Taniguchi (2019, 2020).

in 2019, initially planned to govern the region until 2022, and extended to 2025.

In addition to the above vertical conflict, feuds among prominent Muslim clans over political power, land, and resources, called *rido*, have also been rampant in this region. These horizontal conflicts are characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory violence between families and kinship groups as well as between communities where the local government or central authority is weak (Torres III 2014). In a historical sense, the “divide and rule” policy introduced by the US colonial government has prevented the Moros from unifying against the state. The government provided the local leaders, mostly *datus*, with vested interests or official positions to pacify the region. As a result, clan feuds and political violence have intensified, with links to numerous violent Islamic extremist groups since the 2000s, as typically seen in the Marawi Crisis in 2017. Conflict and violence are by their nature complex in the Mindanao context.

Moro society is intrinsically divided by diverse affiliations such as kinship (clan), ethno-linguistic groups, and political positions (separatist rebels or state collaborators). Thus, it should be understood that the complexity of the Bangsamoro context is both vertical and horizontal, resulting in considerable conflict and violence (Taniguchi, 2019, 2020; Lara 2014).

OVERVIEW OF JAPANESE ASSISTANCE TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MINDANAO

In the early 2000s, assistance toward peace and development gained momentum in response to the global security threat in the aftermath of the New York terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As US allies, both Japan and the Philippines supported the US government’s “Global War on Terror,” with both sharing the US anti-terrorism agenda, depicted as “new security challenges,” to push forward their own security challenges, and strengthen the US and Asia–Pacific alliances (Hughes 2007, 327). Under these circumstances, in December 2002, the then Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi announced a “Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao” during President Arroyo’s visit to Tokyo.

The next momentum came in July 2006 during an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan. During the meeting in Manila, the

then foreign minister Aso expressed Japan's commitment to peacebuilding in Mindanao in the form of the following: (i) dispatching a development expert to the International Monitoring Team (IMT), a Malaysia-led cease-fire monitoring team; (ii) establishing the Mindanao Task Force (MTF) at the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines (EJP) to coordinate with the JICA and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for effective peacebuilding; and (iii) implementing the "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project" (MOFA 2006). This assistance was soon integrated into one initiative, called "Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BiRD)," to contribute to the peace process and development in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao (CAAM) so that people could experience the dividends of peace at a grassroots level (EJP 2014). To date J-BiRD remains the overall framework for Japan's ODA in Mindanao.

PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE

GPH-MILF-Third Party: Peacemaking-Peacekeeping-Peacebuilding

Since the start of the peace process between the GPH and the MILF in 1997, the peacebuilding architecture has also evolved, adapting to the non-linear process. Making, keeping, and building peace in Mindanao is characterized by its "hybridity" (Rood 2016), with international, national, and local actors, and its "multi-layered nature" that includes diverse international, national, and local (state and non-state) actors with roles and functions that strengthen the relations among the diverse local actors, who have their own constituencies in a divided society (Fig. 10.1).

To resume the stalled negotiation after the military operations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Malaysia came into the picture as a facilitator at the request of President Arroyo, and this led to the Tripoli Agreement in 2001. To realize this agreement, the Joint Coordination Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (JCCCH) between the GPH and the MILF was created in 2003. The following year, Malaysia led a (multilateral-hybrid) International Monitoring Team (IMT) composed of Libya (withdrawn in 2011), Brunei, Japan (2006), Norway (2010), the European Union (2010), and Indonesia (2012). The IMT was dispatched in 2004 for ceasefire monitoring. Further, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) under the MILF

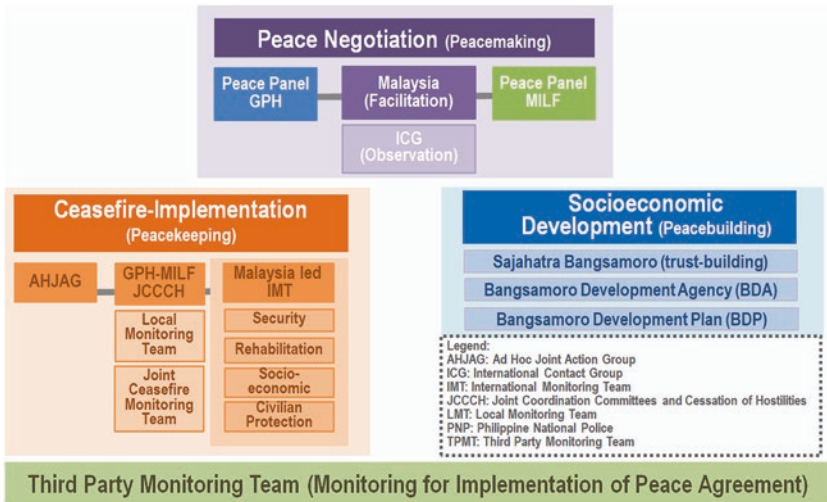


Fig. 10.1 Peacebuilding architecture: GPH–MILF–third party. Source: The author modified from Rood (2016)

was set up to coordinate humanitarian, rehabilitation, and development assistance for trust-building between the parties through collaborative works and capacity development on the MILF side for future governance.

After the failure to sign the framework of the peace agreement in 2008, called the Memorandum of Agreement for Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), due to a challenge filed by Moro leaders on its constitutionality in some provisions on exclusive jurisdiction, the International Contact Group (ICG), composed of four countries and four international NGOs, was established in 2009 to rebuild trust between the parties and act as a guarantor mechanism. In 2013, the Third-Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), composed of an EU diplomat (head), and international and local NGOs, was set up to monitor the mechanism of the implementation of the peace agreement and to help in the crafting of a final “exit document.”

To summarize, all new mechanisms were not designed at the beginning. Rather, they were incrementally adapted and developed to break through the stalemates and to resume successive negotiations based on inputs from specialized NGOs, such as the Coalition of Resources and Humanitarian Dialogue, which were globally involved in conflict resolution. In particular, the engagement of a third party is inevitable for the

cessation of hostilities between parties. Further, diplomatic delegates, especially from Japan, also played a crucial role, exercising leverage due to socio-economic, political (diplomatic), and cultural ties from a historical perspective. Looking back at how third-party engagement in the peace process in Mindanao evolved over time, and at the diversity of countries and agencies involved, we can consider the process as “adaptive,” in that it evolved from experience and in response to setbacks, challenges, and breakthroughs (Taniguchi, 2022).

The “All Japan Approach”: Development–Diplomacy–Security Nexus

In line with the above peacebuilding architecture, Japanese peacebuilding is characterized as adopting the “All Japan Approach” by synchronizing all efforts in a development–diplomacy–security nexus (Fig. 10.2). More specifically, it can be explained as: (i) all efforts by phases have overlapped with the non-linear peace process over the last 50 years; (ii) it started through development (peacebuilding), even before the signing of peace agreements to promote peace momentum, security (ceasefire monitoring), and diplomacy (mediation); and (iii) the whole process of providing assistance is by nature adaptive rather than predetermined due to the aid

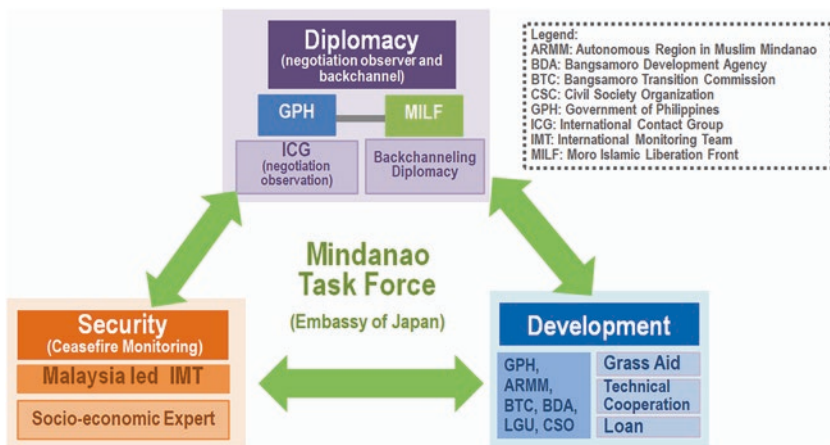


Fig. 10.2 Japan’s peacebuilding architecture in Mindanao (the GPH–MILF Peace Track). Source: Author

principles of self-help, ownership, and on-request basis from recipient countries. The overall direction and the contents of assistance are aligned and realigned in response to the changes in the status of the peace process.

Under the rubric “assistance,” the main actors on the Japanese side were the EJP, JICA, and JBIC (JICA since 2008), while other actors included the private sector, NGOs, and academics who were also involved in implementing specific projects and studies. Aside from the above diplomatic contribution through participation in ICG and backchanneling facilitation between the parties by the EJP, JICA provided financial and technical assistance in the areas of infrastructure, socio-economic and community development, and governance capacity development. Notably, Japan dispatched an expert seconded from the JICA to the IMT to be engaged in monitoring socio-economic and security conditions and implementing small-scale projects at a community level to deliver peace dividends through the EJP. All these efforts were synchronized by sharing information and experiences with the MTF to determine effective and timely assistance in alignment with the status of the peace talks and security on the ground.

EVOLUTION OF THE JAPANESE ASSISTANCE TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MINDANAO

Japanese assistance to peace and development in Mindanao from the 1990s to 2019 can be categorized into four phases by the content and amount of assistance: (i) from 1990 to 2002 under the Aquino and Ramos administration in alignment with the development agenda; (ii) from 2002 to 2006 in relation to the Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao; (iii) from 2006 to 2011 after JICA President Sadako Ogata’s visit to the MILF military base in Darapanan; and (iv) after the first summit meeting between President Aquino and MILF Chairman Murad held in Narita from 2011 to 2019 until the BARMM and the BTA were created as part of the peace agreement.

Age of Search for Assistance (from 1990 to 2002)

After the final peace agreement between the GPH and the MNLF in 1996, Japan started to provide assistance for Mindanao to support the peace process, although it was not undertaken as “peacebuilding.” The

assistance was mainly done through concessional loans to the national government for infrastructural development in the areas of agriculture, electrification, and roads to correct disparities between regions in the Philippines, in line with the direction of the Philippine government, as the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao were among the most impoverished areas in the Philippines. Despite the first attempt toward improving economic development in the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, the conflict between the GPH and the MILF erupted into a full-scale war under the Estrada administration in 2001. This resulted in the suspension of all projects in the region.

However, the peace process slowly moved ahead in accordance with the transition of the administration from Estrada to Arroyo in January 2001. In September of the same year, when President Arroyo was invited as a guest of honor to Japan, the MOFA included the phrase “Support for Mindanao” in a joint press statement that consequently became the trigger for Japan’s agreement to support the peace process in the succeeding years.

Initial Stage of Full-Fledged Support Under the Koizumi Initiative (from 2002 to 2006)

In 2002, assistance was explicitly framed as “peace and development” in Mindanao. In addition to infrastructure projects, Japan’s commitment started to materialize in two ways: (i) implementing a joint loan project with the World Bank for poverty reduction and strengthening social cohesion through small-scale infrastructure projects with the use of participatory methods; and (ii) dispatching a high-ranking retired JICA officer as a senior advisor (2003–2005)³ to the ARMM regional governor, then Parouk Hussin (2001–2005) of the MNLF. In 2003, it was initially to build working relations and later to identify the JICA’s assistance. The JICA officers were generally of the opinion that in parallel with the quick delivery of peace dividends to the people, the ARMM government needed to enhance its administrative capacity.

The advisor was the first travel-based expatriate among the other donors. At the time, the Japanese ambassador strongly supported the dispatch with the idea that Japan should assist peace in Mindanao in consideration of the history of the war between the countries, which was beyond

³The senior advisors were four and were dispatched by 2013.

the US-initiated “War on Terror” discourse. Consequently, the work undertaken by the advisor, especially the Comprehensive Basic Study of the ARMM in 2003, became the basis of Japanese peacebuilding assistance to Mindanao in terms of content in the areas of governance, community development, agricultural extension services, and infrastructure.

On the Tokyo side, 2003 became a landmark for JICA’s peacebuilding for the following reasons. First, the ODA Charter 2003 stipulated “peacebuilding” as one of the priority agendas for the first time. Second, as part of the government’s administrative reform from the mid-1990s, JICA became an independent administrative institution from a special corporation under the MOFA in October 2003, with the new JICA Establishment Law that included “reconstruction” for the first time to clarify the efforts of peacebuilding (JICA 2019). Upon the establishment of the “New JICA,” Dr. Sadako Ogata took office and promoted operational reforms within the JICA with the principles of “field-centered” and “human security.” All the above enabled the JICA to push forward in expanding assistance to peacebuilding in Mindanao.

*From Ogata’s Initiative to Non-linear Peacebuilding Assistance
(from 2006 to 2011)*

Despite the momentum created through diplomatic initiatives under Prime Minister Koizumi and Foreign Affairs Minister Aso, this phase typically demonstrated that the peace process is non-linear. It started with Ogata’s visit to the MILF military base in Darapanan in September 2006. During the meeting with MILF Chairman Murad, Ogata expressed the JICA’s commitment to active support for socio-economic development in conflict-affected areas to promote the realization of peace from a human security perspective. At that time, the Japanese delegate headed by Ogata was welcomed by the MILF leadership, as they perceived that the MILF would gain political legitimacy for its claim in the international community, thanks to the trust and political leverage of Ogata. Simultaneously, Ogata directly requested President Arroyo to reach a political resolution during her visit (Taniguchi 2020).

Before the visit, diplomatic efforts had intensified behind the scenes since 2005, with a series of meetings with the MILF leadership to show Japan’s commitment to contribute to peace in Mindanao. This was largely initiated by Minister Taeko Takahashi at the political desk of the EJP,

based on her idea that Japan should be actively engaged in a “true peace” in Mindanao that would contribute not only to the Philippines but to the entire Asian region and Japan. The idea was widely shared not only by embassy officials but also by the MILF and the government side. Further, the minister had actively worked on the MOFA and the JICA in Tokyo to synchronize efforts for peace as Japanese diplomacy through engagement in peace process and reconstruction that would later evolve into J-BIRD. All of the above eventually created the MTF at the EJP and led to the dispatch of a JICA representative as a socio-economic specialist to the IMT based in Cotabato. Importantly, the view was well shared with Ogata, who enabled the JICA to undertake a “seamless assistance” before signing a peace agreement to minimize the gap between emergency/reconstruction and development phases. With Ogata’s visit, Japan’s contribution to peace in Mindanao began in full swing.

As envisioned, the synchronizing efforts were incrementally institutionalized. The effort started with the IMT expert: (i) conducting advocacy activities for the peace process and Japan’s assistance to local leaders with frequent field visits; and (ii) gaining information on the socio-economic, political, and security status at the grassroots level. This experience and knowledge were shared with the EJP, JICA, and then JBIC (JICA since 2008) and contributed to: (i) gaining the people’s trust in Japan through its physical presence; (ii) improving Japan’s level of understanding of the local situation, including the political dynamics; and (iii) identifying appropriate projects. On the JICA side, a fast-track system was introduced to respond quickly to the immense need for assistance in conflict-affected areas by simplifying certain procedures to accelerate decision-making. Using this system, the JICA conducted the Study for Socio-economic Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (SERD-CAAM) (2007–2009) through collaborative work with the BDA that was extended to other assistances such as: (i) community-targeted assistance for people to benefit from the dividends of peace; (ii) assistance for the BDA to underpin the peace process through capacity development for future governance; and (iii) assistance for the ARMM to improve its administrative capacity for effective governance.

Simultaneously, assistance for the ARMM government also continued in the areas of economic development, agricultural extension services, and human capacity development in the form of loans, studies, and technical cooperation. In particular, the JICA directly assisted the ARMM

government in developing the capacity of mid-career officials in the areas of administration, management, economic development, and infrastructure development through the ARMM Human Resource Development Project (2004–2007). The rationale behind this assistance was as follows. First, as the ARMM government was the legal entity until the new autonomous government was established, it was required to deliver public goods and services effectively. Second, once it was established, the new government would replace the organizational structure, system, and employees of the existing government to some extent. Thus, the new autonomous government would require an organizational and institutional foundation.

The momentum for peace, however, did not last long. The recurrence of violent conflict between the GPH and the MILF resulting from the ruling of the Philippine Supreme Court on the unconstitutionality of the MOA-AD in 2008 led to a temporary suspension of all JICA's assistance to Mindanao. Yet, while all other donors withdrew from their operations in Mindanao, the continuous presence of a Japanese expert in the IMT, even adding one JICA official to show the diplomatic commitment determined by Ogata, consolidated the GPH and MILF's trust in Japan. In addition, the so-called Maguindanao Massacre in 2009—clan feuds were driven by political competition over local elections and power—was conducted by the Ampatuan clan and included the then regional governor of the ARMM government. In the wake of these incidents, the peace process entered a period of stagnation.

Despite the impasse, Japan played a significant role in moving the peace process forward through backchannel diplomacy. The failure of the MOA-AD forced Malaysia to withdraw its peace brokering role, and this effectively brought the peace talks to a close. To bridge the gap, the EJP took the initiative to get the peace talks back on track by continuously sending messages to both sides, exchanging ideas, and building trust. With other foreign delegates in Manila, a new hybrid mechanism for mediation, the ICG, was established in 2009 to rebuild trust between the parties and act as a guarantor mechanism for the MILF. In this sense, more direct involvement in peace negotiations by Japan was formally institutionalized. This led to a more systematic synchronization of all efforts and played a mediating role between the government and the community. As described, Japan's diplomatic position to support peace in Mindanao based on the Tripoli Agreement in 2001, as requested by the GPH, was consistent despite its non-linearity.

A New Dimension of Peacebuilding for Bangsamoro (from 2011 to 2019)

The stagnant peace process had a breakthrough because of a meeting between the then President Aquino III and MILF Chairman Murad in Narita, Japan, in August 2011 (Rood 2016). It was the first summit meeting since the peace negotiation between the GPH and the MILF began in 1997 and was secretly arranged by Japan at the request of both parties. This first face-to-face meeting helped to build trust, and all the efforts of the parties and international and national actors resulted in the signing of the FAB in 2012 and CAB in 2014, which eventually led to the creation of the BARMM and the BTA in 2019.

In accordance with the progress of the peace process, Japan diversified its assistance in terms of counterpart agencies, target beneficiaries, areas, and contents. After the signing of FAB, JICA launched a new project in 2013, the “Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro (CCDP)” (2013–2019). The project included two implementation agencies: the ARMM government and the MILF led by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) that were primarily authorized to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which would be the legal basis for creating the new entity. The project’s objectives were to: (i) promote the organizational reform process of the ARMM government; and (ii) promote the transition process toward a Bangsamoro autonomous government. Covering these two entities, the project included sub-projects in the areas of governance, community development, and economic development that were mostly carried over from previous projects. The ideas behind this integration lay in: (i) reducing administrative and transaction costs; (ii) bringing about synergetic effects among sub-projects; (iii) hedging risk by having small-scale projects in consideration of the non-linear peace process; and (iv) achieving a balance between the existing government (ARMM) and the expected MILF-led government.

The CCDP was launched in 2013 when there was neither a *de facto* peace agreement nor a legislation to create a new autonomous government. This implied that there was no guarantee that the MILF-led transition government would take over the ARMM government. Under such circumstances, the JICA proposed that the GPH and the BTC should co-chair a joint coordinating committee that would establish its own coordinating committees as sub-projects, assuming that the MILF-led transition government would take over the ARMM government upon the

legislation of the BBL and its ratification. However, this was not agreed by the Governor. As a result, the project was divided into two parts—one with the BTC as the counterpart and the other with the ARMM government as the counterpart.

Based on the fact that the CCDP consisted of sub-projects from previous assistance, JICA's assistance had evolved, transforming from piecemeal assistance for the ARMM government and the MILF-affiliated agencies to more integrated and comprehensive assistance for the BTA. All the achievements through both channels of the ARMM government and BTC, and BDA had created a solid foundation for building institutions for the new transitional government, the BTA. The process will be explained in greater detail in the next section.

From ARMM Government and BTC to BTA

With the dispatch of the advisor to the ARMM governor, assistance was extended to the ARMM Human Resource Development Project (2004–2007) that was contracted out to the Asian Institute of Management in Manila, accredited by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), due to travel restrictions on Japanese personnel. It was valuable for the mid-career managers to learn the basics of administrative management and to raise their awareness as civil servants since few had received any training before entering the service, especially those from the island provinces. Besides, it was also important for the JICA to build a relationship with the ARMM government, assess their baseline capacity for future assistance, and learn about formal and informal (customary) institutions shaped by patronage and nepotism based on the local political culture (Bacani 2004).

Based on the above, the JICA expanded its assistance to the ARMM Human Development Project (2008–2013), which was implemented by a team of Japanese experts. Besides continuous training for middle and top management, the memorable achievement was the enactment of the ARMM Administrative Code that provided the legal basis to exercise its autonomy. The absence of a code resulted in dysfunctional and non-accountable government due to unclear roles and authorities among departments. In fact, assistance was eagerly requested by some career officials who wanted to improve governance. In response to the request, the Japanese expert allocated a knowledgeable local lawyer to work on the code and provided the officials with a venue to work together in technical working groups. Despite political pressure, the Code was approved at the

Regional Legislative Assembly in 2009, although only after Governor Ampatuan was arrested for the Maguindanao Massacre. The Code became the legal basis for budget allocation that increased transparency and accountability.

The Administrative Code of ARMM also became the basis for crafting an Administrative Code for the transitional government. After the signing of the CAB, all the stakeholders in charge of transition in both MILF and GPH felt the need to draft an administrative code for the BTA that would be functional by its establishment. As part of capacity development in the CCDP, a Japanese expert on institutional and organizational development was dispatched in 2014 to provide reference material to design a new organizational setup for the BTA. To avoid political discussion (power struggle), the expert prepared a matrix that stipulated all the related laws, roles, and functions related to the powers that would be given to the new autonomous government in addition to the powers that would be given to the ARMM government. Logically, the ARMM Administrative Code would be the basis of crafting the BARMM Administrative Code, as the latter would add more powers than were stipulated in the CAB. The idea behind this assistance was that those in the future government would be able to discuss issues based on legality, not politics, to consolidate the rule of law.

Adhering to the noninterference principle, the JICA would neither directly craft a law nor assist in the passage of a law. Instead, the CCDP assisted the BTC to conduct public hearings on BBL in diverse communities through the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, based in Cotabato. The opinions of over 3000 participants were consolidated and submitted in a report to the BTC. In particular, the inclusion of the island provinces in the process was important to raise people's awareness and sense of unity as part of the Bangsamoro created under the MILF during the peace deal. As a result, the BTC submitted a draft of the BBL to the Philippines Congress. The support for the drafting of the BBL not only facilitated the passage of the law but also increased the momentum for peace at a community level by connecting the BTC and the people at a grassroots level.

From BDA to BTA

The JICA extended its assistance from the SERD-CAAM to the Capacity Development Assistance for Community Development in Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (CD-CAAM) Project (2012–2016) to: (i)

support livelihood improvement; (ii) promote collaborative work between the BDA and the local government unit (LGU); (iii) strengthen the BDA's capacity to implement and manage community development for future governance; and (iv) build a model for community development planning and implementation. All these community-based activities had political implications for peacebuilding. First, a community profiling that covered all (more than 3500) the affected barangays/villages through the SERD-CAAM in collaboration with the GPH and the MILF sent a political message to the people in conflict-affected areas that the public service would be extended as one of the dividends of peace. The field visits by the project team gave the people some hope for the future, as it was the first time the people in remote areas were able to voice their concerns and needs. In this context, the JICA played a mediating role in the sense that the team visited areas where people had not received any public service or rejected it due to distrust in the government.

Second, during the implementation of quick-impact projects, the community requested the BDA to conduct orientation meetings and not just build infrastructure. After some trial and error, it was framed as "social preparation" that includes: (i) the identification of development needs; (ii) the prioritization of necessary projects; (iii) the formulation of a community investment plan; and (iv) the identification of specific projects. As people were wary of outsiders due to protracted conflict, they needed to enhance their ability to accept external actors, increase their sense of ownership, and create a space for self-organization, and network with external actors. As such, social preparation was considered a process of: (i) building relationships; (ii) promoting mutual understanding and trust-building among stakeholders; (iii) strengthening social cohesion within the community; and (iv) developing resilient institutions. It was also effective for the JICA side to gain knowledge on the complexities of power structures and social relations in a local context, which contributed to an awareness of needing to be politically sensitive when interacting with stakeholders and identifying the scope of assistance.

Third, a CD-CAAM model through a community-driven approach, introducing new norms such as transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability, was characterized as being fully engaged in a livelihood, unlike others that were mostly associated with small-scale infrastructure. The model was turned into a set of guidelines for replication that was applied to sub-projects in agricultural extension. As a product of livelihood activities, some groups formed into an organization that was registered as a cooperative for further business activities under their own initiative.

Fourth, the BDA took the lead in formulating the Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP) under the CCDP. On the JICA side, there was a consensus that Japan should start working on projects that could be implemented to deliver tangible peace dividends. In the latter half of the project, as part of the promotion of the implementation plan, capacity development training on project formation and the management of the BDA was held to strengthen relationships with other stakeholders in Mindanao development, such as local government, the ARMM government, other government agencies, and universities to further effective governance. The process itself was effective in the sense that stakeholders from diverse sectors discussed the future on a common theme, visioning how development should be, creating a network and social capital among stakeholders.

When implementing projects, the BDA, as the coordination body, focused on the following: (i) bolstering the hopes of the people at a grassroots level during the protracted peace process; (ii) delivering peace dividends in the form of small-scale infrastructure projects, livelihood activities, basic services such as education and health; and (iii) connecting people with other actors, including the government, private sector, and NGOs. Working closely with the BTC under the CCDP, all of these roles and functions ultimately led to: (i) creating a sense of social coherence in a divided society through collaborative work; (ii) adopting new norms of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the public service; (iii) increasing the legitimacy of the MILF at a grassroots level; (iv) keeping people's hopes alive; and (v) consequently preventing conflict and stabilizing the region. From JICA's perspective, support for the BDA and the BTC, which are related to the MILF, contributed to maintaining or improving the momentum of peace in the midst of the non-linear peace process, sending a diplomatic message that Japan had been robustly supporting peace and development in Mindanao.

CONSTRAINTS TO ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING IN THE JAPANESE CONTEXT

Due to aid principles, that is, request-based, self-reliance, ownership, and capacity development, Japanese assistance is by nature adaptive to non-linearity rather than being predetermined. However, when it comes to the operational level, adaptation is constrained in such a way that Japan, as a member-country of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of

the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has to follow DAC evaluation criteria, that is, relevance, effectiveness, impact, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability. The guidelines, based on a predetermined, simple linear causal framework, are not necessarily applicable to conflict or fragile settings shaped by non-linearity (cf. Brusset, de Coning, and Hughes 2016). In this setting, simplistic understanding and narratives might mean practitioners do not pay attention to the principle of “Do No Harm.” In the Japanese ODA context, policy-makers and practitioners are primarily bound to the predetermined simplistic framework to fulfill accountability, as all assistance is subject to national auditing that does not necessarily allow for context-specific settings, even if they understand the irrelevance of such auditing. This chapter elaborates this point, but it should be further explored to enable Japan to promote effective assistance for peacebuilding.

CONCLUSION: JAPANESE ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

In the post-Cold War era, the frequent occurrence of inter- and intra-conflict provided Japan with the impetus to open up new diplomatic horizons by expanding into geographical areas and contents and means as a contribution to peace and security through the dispatch of the SDF to UN-PKO missions and non-UN-PKO missions, and the provision of ODA. Despite constitutional constraints in Japan, the government has operated adaptively and incrementally changed the legislation to allow greater flexibility to take on active roles in contributing to peace and security in the international community. In this sense, the case of peacebuilding assistance in Mindanao has been positioned as a focus of Japanese global engagement, based on socio-economic, diplomatic, and historical ties between the Philippines and Japan that affects the peace and stability not only in the Philippines but also in the whole Indo-Pacific region under the current situation where the rules-based international order has been challenged.

Given the above context, Japanese assistance to peacebuilding in Mindanao was explicitly launched with the Koizumi Initiative in the early 2000s as part of Japan’s foreign policy and subsequently diversified its assistance in terms of counterpart agencies, target beneficiaries, and areas, and contents in accordance with the non-linear peace process. Simultaneously, the incremental expansion of networking and

trust-building with diverse stakeholders along the way became the basis of progressive assistance in conflict-affected areas where people tend to be wary of outsiders. Besides, the initiative was framed into the J-BIRD, underpinning the human security principle to publicize all of Japan's assistance and synchronized efforts in development, diplomacy, and security. The mechanism at the MTF located at EJP allowed Japan to assess the status of the peace process, national and local politics, and security to plan short-term assistance through effective and appropriate timing in response to a fluid and complex situation and formulate a longer-term program based on foreseen scenarios.

At an operational level, exerting diplomatic leverage on the basis of infrastructure loan projects since the 1990s, Japanese assistance with elements of peacebuilding has been undertaken mostly through technical cooperation with the emphasis on capacity development through face-to-face interaction with the ARMM government, BDA, BTC, CSO, and others. In particular, dispatched experts (mostly Japanese), who had internalized the aid norms in respect of their self-reliance and ownership, applied them to enhance capacity for self-organization that contributed to increasing the level of resilience for sustainable peace. Besides, Japan, as the third party, played an intermediary role in all aspects of intervention, thus providing diverse stakeholders with a space to share ideas, needs, issues, and vision for the future, while easing tensions, building trust, and bringing about a sense of unity, thus creating new norms and values and formulating a new political order in fragmented societies. This mediation/facilitation role through collaborative work to strengthen vertical and horizontal ties with diverse stakeholders in the Mindanao context can be expressed as "process facilitation" in the adaptive peacebuilding discourse. It can be applied to other situations, especially when adjusting interests among stakeholders.

To summarize, the case of Japanese peacebuilding assistance was considered adaptive rather than predetermined, while having some deterministic elements in aid principles aligned with the OECD-DAC. It has proven that the adaptive approach, which has intrinsically a high degree of compatibility with Japanese aid principles and norms, has been effective in the Mindanao context, where conflict and violence are complex and protracted and intermingled over time with other new elements such as violent extremism. In this sense, the context-specific is interlinked with the adaptive in the Mindanao context.

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