

Japan's Security Reform, Regional Expectations and Its Implications for Asia: An Analysis in the Field of Peace Operations

Tadashi Iwami

Institute of the Pacific United (IPU), New Zealand
Email: tiwami@ipu.ac.nz, iwami.tadashi@gmail.com

Abstract

Japan's security policy is changing, but how far does Japan go? What are regional implications for this changing security policy of Japan? By employing a mixed-method approach, the article presents an overview of gradual changes in Japan's security policy from the second half of the twentieth century. It shows that the Asian region shares reasonably high expectations for Japan's greater security role in the region. It is in this context that this article turns its focus on analysing Japan's security role in the case of Aceh, Indonesia. In so doing, it investigates implications of the recent reform in security legislation under the Shinzo Abe administration for regional peace and security from the perspective of Japan. Taken together, this article provides Japan's current security policy, specifically in the extent of its security role in the region. Despite the recent changes in security legislation, Japan's security role is limited to a non-coercive one.

Keywords: *Japan, security policy, legislative reform, Abe, peace operations, Aceh, regional expectation*

1. Introduction

Japan's security policy is changing, but how far does Japan go? What are regional implications for this changing security policy of Japan? The objective of this article is threefold. First, it presents an overview of the gradual change in Japan's security policy from the second half of the twentieth century. Second, this article aims at examining regional expectations in the Asian region about Japan's greater security role in the region. Third, it then turns its foci on analysing the recent reform of security legislation under the Shinzo Abe administration and examines implications of this reform. This article specifically takes into consideration Japan's involvement in Aceh, Indonesia, as a reference point. It highlights the implications for regional peace and security from the perspective of Japan. Taken together, this article provides Japan's up-to-date security policy, specifically the extent of its security role in the region.

2. Objectives

The central objective of this article is to provide an up-to-date change in Japan's security policy with particular reference to the recent legislative reforms under the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe administration. Specifically, this article argues that although the recent change in Japan's security policy continues to be the source of discussions as to what extent Japan plays a security role in the international affairs, such a role is still limited to a non-coercive one.

3. Materials and methods

To achieve these objectives, this article employs a mixed-method approach that takes into account both a qualitative and quantitative analyses. Qualitatively, it interprets a series of events and understands their meanings in broader international contexts, which help guide the policy direction of a given state, in this case, Japan. Also, this article employs a quantitative analysis in the sense that it takes public opinion poll results into consideration, and uses them as important sets of indicators about regional expectations of Japan's security role in the region.

4. Results and discussion

Gradual Change in Japan's Security Policy

Since the end of the Second World War, Japan has sought to re-establish its place in the international community. At the early stage of the post-Second World War era, it did so by carefully designing its foreign policy that would not offend immediate neighbours in the Asian region while meeting

some expectations of friends of the Western democratic bloc, particularly the United States (US). Also, the main concerns for Japan was to make sure that it would not challenge the post-war world order. Instead, Japanese leaders came up with a foreign policy, which placed significant weight on economic recovery and high growth. The remarkable improvement of its economy and living standards among the Japanese people made some scholars and practitioners portray this achievement as “Japan’s economic miracle” (Johnson, 1982). Positive outcomes of its economic-first foreign policy were that Japan regained its membership for the United Nations (UN) in 1956; acquired its membership for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1964; and secured its status as one of the largest foreign donors in the world by the 1990s (Dobson, 2003; Jain, 2016; Pyle, 2007). Thus, at first glance, Japan successfully secured its place in the international community by its contribution to international economy and development.

While a foundation of Japan’s international place in the international community has firmly been, and continues to be, cemented by such a contribution, its economic-first policy posture has arguably had some consequences on Japan’s overall foreign policy. It did result in an imbalanced foreign policy posture too. Between 1945 and the early 1990s, Japan was incapable of playing a constructive security role in the Asian region and the globe in a sufficient and a timely manner. Japan was elected to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1958 for the first time. The fact that it was elected just two years after its acquirement of UN membership was a clear testament that Japan incrementally regained trust and confidence from the international community. Yet, Japan could not make significant contributions to activities for international peace and security, such as UN peacekeeping operations. Japan’s decision to reject the UN Secretary General’s request for sending newly formed Japanese Self-Defence Force (SDF) personnel to the UN Observation Group in Lebanon was case in point (Dobson, 2003, p. 51). This self-restraint foreign policy in regional and international security affairs continued to be in place up until the end of the Cold War period. Specifically, the international community had to wait for Japan’s security involvement in even UN-authorized peacekeeping until 1992, the year when Japan finally passed the domestic law that enabled Japanese SDF personnel to join such missions (Hook, Gilson, Hughes, & Dobson, 2012, p. 322–341).

Arguably, Japan’s self-restraint security policy during the second half of the twentieth century was driven by its institutional and normative forces (Berger, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996; Oros, 2008; Singh, 2013). Institutionally, the Japanese Constitution became the most important cornerstone of its post-war security policy in this regard. Through intensive negotiations drafting processes, between the Allied occupied forces led by American General Douglas MacArthur and Japanese politicians most notably Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida in 1945 and 1946, Japan adopted the principle of pacifism into domestic politics and society. One article of the Japanese Constitution wrote:

Article 9: Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised (National Diet Library, 1946).

The Constitution gave a clear direction to Japanese politicians, bureaucrats and domestic society that the country would no longer involve any military activities and this stance inevitably encompass international peacekeeping even it would be authorised by the UN. To reinforce such institutional foundation, Japan also clarified that while the Constitution allowed it to form SDF as a means for self-preservation based on inherent rights to individual self-defence, the organised SDF would not be deployed overseas. As a result, the overseas deployment of the SDF personnel was regarded as unconstitutional even if the purpose of such a deployment was to join UN-led peacekeeping operations.

The institutional force also helped reshape social norms in Japanese domestic politics and society. Liberal politicians were supportive of the principle of pacifism institutionalised through the Japanese Constitution. Even conservatives believed that it would be tangibly and intangibly costly for Japan to commit itself into security affairs in the early post-war period when the devastating consequences of the aggressive war were still apparent domestically and internationally. Certainly, some nationalist politicians

continued to hope the re-emergence of Japan's military power, but the majority of Japanese leaders supported to rule out Japan's role in security affairs. In this domestic political climate, Japanese society was also extremely eager to accept the principle of pacifism. As some constructivists in the field of international relations sum up, Japan's foreign policy stance was influenced highly by the institutional norms of pacifism and antimilitarism (Berger, 1996; Katzenstein, 1996; Oros, 2008; Singh, 2013).

The major breakthrough of Japan's passive security stance came when the international community was about to change from the Cold-War bipolar structure to post-Cold War American unipolar one. In this changing world, Japan began to realise that its role as an economic great power alone was regarded insufficient if it wished to hold a place in the international community with trust and confidence. It was this realisation that the country passed a bill that allowed Japanese SDF troops to go abroad for UN peacebuilding purposes in 1992. This was the turning point of Japan's foreign policy history because it meant that Japan would deploy its own personnel to overseas missions as long as they were authorised by the UN. To this extent, it also signalled that Japan would get involved in regional and international security matters while maintaining the balance between the two potentially conflicting elements. One was to play a more active role in security affairs, and the other was to continue upholding the principle of pacifism and antimilitarism. There were obvious concerns in domestic and international societies that Japan would unlock its break for becoming a military power. It turned out, however, that Japan carefully crafted a balanced security policy by only allowing Japanese SDF personnel to join UN-authorised operations (Dobson, 2003).

Even it allowed them to do so, some self-restrictive principles were introduced. As noted a few times, the deployment of Japanese SDF personnel to peacekeeping operations was made possible by the first condition that the missions must be authorised by the UN. Even if the operations were led by the UN, Japan made a set of five conditions for the participation in the UN peacekeeping operations, the first three of which were adapted from the UN :

1. The parties to the conflict must have given their consent to the operation;
2. The activities must be conducted in a strictly impartial manner; and
3. Use of weapons shall be limited to the minimum necessary to protect life or person of the personnel.

Also, to make Japan's UN peacekeeping participation more aligned with the principle of pacifism, it added the following two conditions:

4. A cease-fire agreement must be in place before the deployment; and
5. Participation may be suspended or terminated if any of the above conditions ceases to be satisfied.

Although Japan revised the peacekeeping law established in 1992 twice (in 1999 and 2001) to meet regional expectations, the five conditions continue to serve as a baseline as to what extent Japan plays a security role in the field of peacekeeping.

Knowing Regional Expectations of Japan's Security Role in Asia

The development shown in the previous section gives us a good indication as to the extent of the role Japan strives to play in the regional security affairs during the second half of the twentieth century. However, the regional expectations of Japan's security role need to be taken into account when we aim to have a better understanding of the dynamics of the region. Is Japan's active involvement in security affairs what the region want?

This question is critical for three reasons. First, countries in the Southeast Asian region continue to express its serious concerns over the external intervention in their domestic affairs. They conceive the respect of state sovereignty as the cornerstone of the regional stability. Second, Japan shares this view in the context of regional security. As has been noted above, Japan would not send its SDF personnel to peace operations without an invitation or a request of the conflict parties due to the five principles of its participation. Third, regional expectations matter a lot to the legitimacy and acceptance of Japan's proactive security role in the region. Peng Er Lam suggests that the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam, along with Malaysia, were considered "four most unlikely cases to reconcile with Japan" (Lam, 2015, p. 48). The Philippines had brutal experiences of Japanese imperial military, exemplified by the Bataan death march

and the fierce fight alongside US force against Japan. In Singapore and Malaysia, Chinese is the largest ethnic group in their demography. During the wartime, the older generation of them supported anti-Japanese resilient movement in mainland China and the Malay Peninsula. Vietnam suffered from starvation and poverty led caused by Japanese imperialism during the war. The Cold War international structure led communist Vietnam to perceive the Western liberal democracies as its enemy, thereby enhancing an antagonistic view towards Japan. In contrast, as for the sentiment of Indonesia, Japan not only ended the Dutch colonial rule there, but also helped form Indonesia's own military organisation in so far as to resist the Dutch reinstallation of the colonial rule in the aftermath of the Second World War. Along with the post-war financial assistance through ODA, Indonesia's post war perception of Japan has not been overly negative. Thus, "Jakarta views Tokyo as a friend and an honest broker in the Aceh conflict" (Lam, 2009, p. 59). Unless Japan manages to ensure regional legitimacy and acceptance from those countries that share Japan's brutal history, it cannot be successful in playing a better role in the region. In this sense, the degree of positive perceptions of Japan's involvement in the region is an important determinant factor of its strategic thinking when playing a greater security role in the region.

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) conducts public opinion polls in key Southeast Asian countries every four to six years since 1978. It is worth assessing the last three results (2002, 2008, and 2014), given the development of Japan's security role in the twenty-first century. Particularly, the question, "which of the following do you wish Japan to contribute most to the region of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), including own country?" is relevant to the regional expectation of Japan's security role in the region. *Table 1* summarises the results of those opinion polls, which show a few important trends. In a nutshell, while the history of Japanese aggression and colonisation in Southeast Asia could bring about the continued sensitivity of Japan's security role, the public opinion poll results show otherwise; the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam welcome Japan's regional contribution to peacekeeping. In *2014 Public Opinion Poll on Japan in Seven ASEAN Countries*, respondents answer that the four most areas the southeast Asian countries wish Japan to contribute to the region are "economic and technical cooperation (ODA) (77%)", "trade promotion and private investment (67%)", "protecting the global environment" (59%), and "cultural exchanges (56%)". In total, 43% of the respondents say that peacekeeping is what the region wishes Japan to contribute. This indicates that Southeast Asian countries expect Japan to continue to contribute to regional development through the provision of foreign aid, recognising peacekeeping as the fifth priority for Japan's regional contribution.

However, two countries show different trends from those of the other participating countries. Both Indonesia and the Philippines have indicated positive views towards Japan's peacekeeping role. The results in 2002 and 2008 (in which the respondents answered the question in the same way by choosing two most suitable answers) show, there was a steady increase in the percentage of the respondents who prioritised peacekeeping as a country's expectation when Japan made a contribution to the region, advancing from 27% to 46.25% in Indonesia, and from 29% to 39.25% in the Philippines. In 2014, although it is not considered the top priority area, the majority of the Indonesia and the Filipino people recognises the relevance of Japan's involvement in peacekeeping for Japan's regional contribution.

Political figures also support this positive trend towards Japan's active, but peacekeeping-oriented security role in the region. For instance, the Indonesian President Iriana Joko Widodo visited the Japanese Prime Minister Abe on 23 March 2015 to enhance their strategic partnership. In the meeting, the both leaders agreed to establish a high-level bilateral maritime forum for furthering their maritime cooperation. Also, they reaffirmed that the both country would hold a joint foreign and defence ministerial (2+2) meeting aimed at discussing closer cooperation in the field of security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015). Following this initiative, the first 2+2 meeting was held in Tokyo on 17 December the same year. In the joint statement of the meeting, the both Indonesia and Japan reconfirmed that "peacekeeping cooperation has been and remains an area of bilateral cooperation" (Ministry of Defence of Japan, 2015).

Also, the former Filipino President Benigno S. Aquino III visited Abe in June 2015 to strengthen their strategic partnership for regional security. In the summit meeting, Aquino supported Abe's principle of proactive pacifism and expressed his appreciation for Japan's continued efforts in Mindanao and interest in sharing peacekeeping experiences over the years (Prime Minister's Official Residence, 2015). The

Indonesian and Filipino leaders positive views towards Japan's peacekeeping involvement coincide with the 2014 public opinion poll result.

Table 1 Opinion Poll Question: Which of the following do you wish Japan to contribute to ASEAN region, including your country? Choose multiple answers from the following list. (%)

Country	Indonesia			Malaysia			Myanmar			Philippines			Singapore			Thailand			Vietnam		
Year	2002	2008	2014	2002	2008	2014	2002	2008	2014	2002	2008	2014	2002	2008	2014	2002	2008	2014	2002	2008	2014
Economic and Technical Cooperation (ODA)	69	61.31	78	73	79.25	76	n.a.	n.a.	82	63	55.43	83	54	59.92	64	79	73.21	75	68	65.48	82
Trade Promotion and Private Investment	41	39.39	68	37	58.4	73	n.a.	n.a.	54	36	28.42	75	62	50.46	62	59	39.6	67	32	23.75	74
Protecting the Global Environment	12	14.73	51	14	24.3	63	n.a.	n.a.	40	15	31.07	72	15	29.67	60	16	45.2	56	16	16.34	68
Cultural Exchanges	17	19.92	69	10	14.61	61	n.a.	n.a.	30	11	16.76	50	21	24.89	64	12	17.18	53	16	16.8	63
Peacekeeping	27	46.25	51	29	14.4	43	n.a.	n.a.	21	29	39.25	61	20	13.01	48	12	13.81	29	39	52.01	49
Anti-Terrorism	12	7.68	18	10	6.23	29	n.a.	n.a.	13	19	20.95	45	12	14.11	35	7	8.71	23	8	19.22	21
Increased Military Presence to Maintain Peace and Security in the Region	8	10.34	19	5	2.13	14	n.a.	n.a.	5	8	8.14	29	5	7.13	16	3	2.3	21	13	6.41	28
Priority Rankings of Peacekeeping	3	2	4	3	5	5	n.a.	n.a.	5	3	2	4	4	6	5	4	5	5	3	3	5

Source: (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2008; 2014).

The 2014 opinion poll result also shows that in addition to these two aforementioned countries, almost a half of the Singaporean and the Vietnamese people (48% and 49% respectively) expect Japan to work with them in the field of peacekeeping. The change in these trends derives partly from the post-Cold War phenomenon in the region that “voice that is critical of Japanese contribution in the political/security sphere in Southeast Asia are becoming softer” (Singh, 2002, p. 295). In this sense, while it is not a universal view in Southeast Asia, the majority of the countries in the region positively accept Japanese initiatives in peacekeeping on the ground in the region. Overall, 91% of the respondents in those seven countries share the view that Japan is a trustworthy friend (with some reservations) for their countries. Thus, as Tang Siew Mun notes:

As long as Japan continues to apply its military power multilaterally, it will continue to be welcomed as contributing to international security. Clearly, Southeast Asian states see a distinction between military power as a means for national aggrandisement and a positive tool to enhance regional order and stability (Tang, 2013, p. 87).

The point to note is that the sensitivity of Japan's security role with particular reference to peacekeeping is diminishing. If Japan is serious about playing a better and a more proactive security role, then it is wise for Japan to focus on maintaining region's positive view towards its security involvement. The more positive they see Japan, the less confrontational peace operations may be in the region. Conceivably, Japan has established a good foundation for its effective and potentially successful peace operations in the region.

Japan's Recent Reform in its Security Role under the Shinzo Abe Administration

Since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe returned to power in 2012, he has been advocating a proactive approach to regional and international security affairs. Particularly, a “proactive contributor to international peace” has been a well-known banner for him to describe Japan striving to secure a place in the international community. Despite its controversy in relation to the Japanese Constitution, the recent legislative reform that has enabled Japan to play an unprecedented, but more proactive, security role has been the core means for Abe to achieve such a goal so that the country can fulfil regional expectations.

Abe has made four major changes in Japan's security policy. The first three originate from his legislative reform particularly Japan's peacekeeping law, and the fourth change comes from the renewal of Japan's foreign aid charter. First, following the revision of the peacekeeping law, Japanese SDF personnel

can legally participate in peace operations that are internationally coordinated for regional peace if there is a request from not only the UN, but also other regional organisations prescribed in Article 52 of the UN Charter such as the European Union (EU), and the countries to which the region where such missions take place. Previously, Japan's participation in peace operations must be backed up by the UN resolutions. According to the current law, however, Japan is able to join non-UN peace operations when it meets the aforementioned conditions.

Second, the reform has enabled Japanese SDF personnel to undertake a greater peace monitoring role in conflict regions. Their activities include protection of civilians, their livelihood, and properties by monitoring surrounding areas where they live. To be sure, Japan could take part in other peace monitoring missions such as 1) monitoring the observance of cessation of armed conflict or the implementation of relocation, withdrawal or demobilization of armed forces as agreed upon among the Parties to Armed Conflict; and 2) stationing and patrol in buffer zones and other areas demarcated for preventing the occurrence of armed conflict. It means that Abe has made a substantial improvement in the operability in peace monitoring missions.

The third change relates to the operability of Japanese SDF personnel during peace operations in the conflict-affected regions. Japan has revised the third principle of the participation in peacekeeping. Previously, the use of weapons was limited to the minimum necessary to protect life or person of the SDF personnel. Currently, the weapons carried by them can be used for accomplishing missions in questions. Also, this change has allowed the personnel to use their weapons for rushing and rescuing other foreign troops, civilian officials, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) staff. It points to the fact that Japan can now participate in the so-called "come-to-an-aid/*kaketsuke keigo*" missions. Shinichi Kitaoka, Chairperson of Abe's Advisory Panel on National Security Strategy and Defence Capability, argues that one of the critical features of Abe's security legislation reform is that it has brought Japan's peacebuilding standards on the ground "slightly closer to international standards" by widening the rules of engagement (Kitaoka, 2016, p. 37).

The last, but not least, Abe revised Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter to Development Cooperation Charter in 2015. By revising it, Abe aims at using ODA for strategic reasons. The substantial amount of ODA has been allocated to key countries' development of coastguard capabilities in Asia such as the Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam where there are ongoing territorial issues in the South China Sea. Japan's strategic thinking of ODA is, to a great extent, check China's power projection in the region, and in turn to help secure its national interest in the region. To take Purnendra Jain's words, Abe has begun to use ODA more explicitly as "a strategic tool to win friends and seek favours in pursuits of Japan's national interests" (Jain, 2016, p. 97).

Today, Japan is acquiring a more proactive security posture under the Abe administration. To a certain extent, the change in such a posture underpinned by the legislative reform will help resolve some limitations that Japan experienced in peace operations in the Asian region in the past. Importantly however, Japan's determination in playing a more proactive role in security affairs has an unintended, but a well-anticipated outcome. That is, it can put SDF at a higher risk of using weapons against potential spoilers, and ultimately a higher risk of being killed in an extreme situation in conflict-affected regions. This may lead to intensifying public concerns over Japan's pacifism.

A Case Study in Asia: Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) in Indonesia

The following section examines Japan's security role in Aceh, Indonesia, as a case study of the pre-Abe administration, and highlights what can be learnt from it in the current context of his current administration. The case of Aceh is an important indicator for the following reason. First, Japan was involved in peace processes in Aceh where one of the deadliest civil wars in the region (costing more than 120,00 lives) took place. Through its involvement, Japan has had accumulated knowledge and experiences of peace operations in the region. Thus, Japan can utilise them for its future role in the region. Second, Abe stated during his first administration in 2008 that the AMM would be one of the benchmarks for Japan's future participation in non-UN peacebuilding efforts in the Asian region. An analysis of Japan's involvement in the AMM gives us a good insight into the opportunities and challenges of its future role in security affairs.

Japan's major involvement in Aceh conflict began around 2001 when it attempted to broker a peace agreement between the Indonesian government and a rebel, Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM, also known as Free Aceh Movement). It was by no means straightforward. Between 2001 and 2003, Japan offered both a large sum of financial assistance (US\$700 million) as incentives to ease the tensions between them and held a conference in Tokyo to facilitate an initial peace talk. Also, the Japanese government provided the Swiss-based Humanitarian Dialogue (also known as Henry Dunant) Center (HDC) with US\$1.2 million of financial assistance for peace monitoring between the Indonesian government and Aceh (Lam, 2009, pp. 57–72).

While showing continued difficulties in reaching a mutual agreement between the Indonesian government and GAM, Japan hosted another peace talk in Tokyo on 17–18 May 2005. However, again it failed to facilitate a constructive talk. There were several reasons for its failure. According to Peng Er Lam, the both parties lacked mutual trust caused by the Indonesia's assertive move in mobilising military forces against GAM in Aceh at that time. Also, there were irreconcilable differences in the legal status of Aceh that the Indonesian central government only offered a social autonomy of Aceh to GAM while the GAM demanded independence from the former. To make matters worse, the Indonesian government arrested several representatives from Aceh in Jakarta before they left for Japan while the government sent only lower-ranked officials to the peace talk in Tokyo. This was an indicative gesture that the Indonesian side lacked its commitment to the talk (Lam, 2009, p. 65).

It is unfortunate that a massive tsunami hit Indonesia on 26 December 2004 and took approximately 166,000 lives from Aceh. However, such a devastating consequence made the Indonesian government and GAM reconsider holding another peace talk. Physical and psychological impacts of the natural disaster on Indonesia encouraged them to talk about future reconciliation once again. In response to the catastrophic event, Japan swiftly offered both financial and human contributions to Aceh, consisting of over US\$500 million as a humanitarian emergency disaster relief, followed by the deployment of around 1,000 SDF unarmed personnel, one of the largest deployments of the SDF personnel for the purpose of the disaster relief in the post-Second World War history (Lam, 2009, p. 68; Midford, 2012, p. 308).

Although Japan had helped facilitate the initial peace talk despite its failure during the early negotiation between 2001 and 2003, it lacked a political initiative to broker the talk from the Japanese side. Instead, Finland took a leadership role in reconciling them. Receiving substantial political support from the EU, the Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari invited the Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights Hamid Awaludin, and Milka Mahmud, the chairperson of the GAM negotiation team, to Helsinki, which led Ahtisaari to successfully mediate the peace agreement on 15 August 2005. In the peace agreement known as the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the both parties agreed on the establishment of Law on the Governing of Aceh that would guarantee the autonomy of Aceh and fair democratic participation by forming Aceh-based local political parties. Also, Aceh would be entitled to retain 70% of the revenues from natural resources within its territory. The MoU announced that the AMM would be formed under the collective mandate of the EU and ASEAN contributing countries for the purpose of monitoring the compliance of the peace agreement, and conducting disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of the members of GAM. The AMM consisted of approximately 230 unarmed personnel from the EU member states along with Norway and Switzerland, as well as five ASEAN members, namely Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

Japan's (in)experience of peacebuilding in Aceh highlights four important lessons for its future peacebuilding in Indonesia and possibly beyond. First, at the time of the conclusion of the MoU in 2005, Japan lacked a legal framework that allowed Japanese SDF personnel to participate in the AMM. The AMM was established by the EU as a peace monitoring mission of the Europe/Common Security and Defence Policy (ESDP/CSDP) along with the ASEAN. Therefore, no mandate of the UN was attached to the mission. It inevitably meant that the legal nature of this mission did not allow Japan to join the AMM. Because the AMM was formulated outside the UN framework, "Japan missed a golden opportunity to engage in peace monitoring in Aceh along with the EU and ASEAN" (Lam, 2009, p. 69).

Japan has learnt the first lesson from its experience in Aceh. As has been examined above, the peacekeeping law revised during the Abe administration now allows Japan to participate in non-UN peacebuilding missions like the AMM. Retrospectively, considering the institutional memory of Aceh and a

wider acceptance of Japan's peacekeeping involvement in Indonesia, Japan could have played a better peacebuilding role in Aceh. Today, there is a legal framework that supports an AMM-like mission even it is conducted outside the UN-framework.

The second lesson is that the AMM is the precedent case of DDR in Indonesia, which Japan could not conduct at the time, but it now can. According to the MoU signed by the Indonesian government and GAM in August 2005, the EU and ASEAN participating members of the AMM were assigned to implement DDR processes of GAM members. Given the earlier experience of DDR in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2005, it is not so difficult to conceive that Japan could have made an effective contribution to the AMM. Even the deployment of a small number of SDF personnel to the AMM could have been a "strong symbolic gesture that nation was committed to Aceh and eager to work with the EU and ASEAN" (Lam, 2009, p. 71). Also, Japan's experience of DDR in Afghanistan carved a niche in the field of international cooperation. Hypothetically speaking, its participation in the AMM could have enhanced Japan's niche place too. Thus, to a certain extent, Abe has managed to utilise this experience when formulating its security policy. Under the revised peacekeeping laws, Japan is allowed to take part in monitoring missions of peace agreements while implementing the DDR operations when conflict parties invite Japan to do so. In this sense, Abe's recent change in the PKO law has made Japan more operable in a peacebuilding mission.

The third lesson Japan learnt from the experience of Aceh is the importance of the linkage between the Japanese stakeholders like MOFA and Japanese NGOs. It has been pointed out that the both actors benefit from each other in that the former can often rely upon the latter's well-established local experiences, knowledge and networks so that it can develop more effective policies while safeguarding "its ODA budget in its bureaucratic battle with other ministries" (Lam, 2009, p. 66). Japanese NGOs can gain access to both funds and diplomatic channels from MOFA in order to compensate its limit. Also, they can often be perceived more positively by domestic society in which the sensitivity towards Japan's security role in peacebuilding is prevalent.

Despite their win-win situation, the close cooperation and coordination between them for facilitating a peace talk in Aceh were lacking. The lack of their integrated effort in Aceh was due partly to their different approach to the issue. MOFA tended to take a more pragmatic approach to Aceh without explicitly criticising the history of human rights abuse conducted by the Indonesian government. In contrast, Japanese NGOs were more vocal about Japanese government's ignorance of Indonesia's wrongdoing. Mutual distrust hindered a lack of the government-civil society collaboration.

Ironically, Indonesia trusted the Swiss-based HDC, not a Japanese NGO, as a peace facilitator because it skilfully deemphasised the western values of human rights while acknowledging anticolonial sentiment in the country. Moreover, the Japanese government made a financial contribution to the HDC so that it could cover the expenses of peace monitoring, not a Japanese NGO for this purpose. In fact, during the peace talk in Tokyo, May 2003, HDC staff played a key messenger role in exchanging dialogues between the Indonesia and GAM both of which were in separate rooms. Neither Japanese NGO workers nor MOFA officials could get be the messenger (Lam, 2009, p. 65).

At least, Japan stresses the importance of a close collaboration with NGOs in the field of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well as international peace cooperation like peacebuilding in the new Development Cooperation Charter revised under the Abe administration in February 2015. Given that the previous 2003 ODA Charter did not explicitly recognise this importance, such an announcement in the current Charter is a positive sign in overcoming the limit in Japan's involvement in Aceh. What Japan learnt from the experience of Aceh is the prevalence of the collaborative role of MOFA and NGOs in peacebuilding. How far Japan carves this role remains to be seen, nevertheless.

The last, but not least, lesson Japan has learnt is the critical importance of the strong and resilient political will among Japanese leaders. As noted above, Japan had initially committed itself into facilitating a peace talk between the Indonesian government and GAM in 2003. However, despite the early mediation process, Finland, *not* Japan, played a decisive role in providing the roadmap, that is the MoU, for peace. Lam observes "Helsinki [Finland] showed Japan and the world what a small country can do if it has the strong political will, ideas and tenacity to act as a peacemaker" (Lam, 2009, p. 59; see also Schulze, 2007, p. 3; Simanjuntak, 2009).

In contrast, "the Japanese displayed none of the tenacity and eagerness shown by the Finns in hosting peace talks for Aceh" (Lam, 2009, p. 71). One reason for Japan's lack of sustained attention to

Aceh was that Japanese leaders were preoccupied with domestic politics particularly regarding the postal reform under the Koizumi administration, and the subsequent dissolution of the Lower House on 8 August 2005. Another possible reason was Japanese leaders' strategic thinking that Japan was doing enough by engaging in other operations including the Indian Oceans for supporting the US-led Afghanistan War (November 2001-January 2010) and Iraq for assisting post-war reconstruction (January 2004-February 2009), along with disaster relief after the tsunami in Aceh (January-March 2005), and the participation in the UN peacekeeping in the Golan Heights (February 1996-January 2013) (Lam, 2009, p. 139 fn 50).

To be sure, Japan did contribute to the restoration of basic infrastructure in the form of financial assistance while helping 5,000 former combatants to run their small-medium businesses in Aceh. Following the provision of the grant aid programme for peacebuilding and reintegration assistance to Aceh, JICA provided Aceh with approximately US\$2.3 million for a two-year project on self-sustainable community development and empowerment.

It is difficult to compare the level of political will among Abe and his colleagues with the former Prime Minister Koizumi and his. One may argue, Abe has brought Japan's security roles closer to international exceptions by changing the legal framework through the passing of the security reform bills in 2015 as has been assessed above. In this sense, he may be expressing his positive willingness to make a more effective contribution to future peacebuilding missions. Other might suggest, Abe may not be paying sustained attention to a continued issue in the Asian region and beyond. Although the relative success of the Indonesia, GAM and other stakeholders in Aceh should be acknowledged, there is a still ongoing conflict in the world.

5. Conclusion

Over the past few years, Japan has proactively been searching for its suitable security role that can cement its place in the international community. This article has examined key changes made through the legislative reform under the Abe administration. Japan is preparing to participate in peacebuilding missions beyond the UN framework. Under the current laws, Japanese SDF personnel can join in a multilateral peace operation when there is a request from either the regional organisations prescribed in Article 52 of the UN Charter such as the EU and ASEAN, or a country in which the operation takes place. Also, Japan can participate in a peace monitoring mission, the mission Japan could not do in Aceh. The revised security laws allow Japanese SDF personnel to fulfil some security demands by monitoring, stationing and patrolling conflict-affected regions. This article has also highlighted that Japanese SDF personnel has an extended right to the use of weapons for the protection of lives and properties of those involved in a peacebuilding operation. The subjects of the self-preservation include: the SDF personnel themselves; military and civilian officials from the UN and regional/international organisations; NGOs staff; and those locals who are working with them. It means that Japan has modified the fifth principle of the participation of Japan's peacekeeping operations resulting in the stretching of the rule of engagement for the use of weapons.

Sceptics may see this change as an example of Japan taking a more assertive, high-risk approach to international security. To a great extent, Abe's security reform laws heighten the possibility of more frequent overseas deployment of Japanese SDF for security purposes (See Liff, 2015, p. 89-90). Nevertheless, as far as the field of peacebuilding is concerned, the lifting of some legal restrictions regarding Japan's participation in peacebuilding does not automatically give Japan a green light to undertake full-scale combat operations. Nor do they allow Japan to take a NATO-style iron-fist approach to peacebuilding (as Germany did in Kosovo in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001). Although pointing guns to armed groups/spoilers has to be the very last resort, there is no reason why Japan should not participate in an AMM-like peace monitoring mission in the near future.

6. Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Professor Sung Chull Kim of the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University, South Korea, for giving me an opportunity to present the early version of the article at "Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Democratization in Asia: Experiences and Models," August 25-26, 2016. Special thanks also goes to Assistant Dean Chakrit Tiebtienrat for funding me to travel to and present this article at Rangsit University, Thailand on 28th April 2017.

7. References

- Berger, T. U. (1996). Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan. In P. J. Katzenstein (Ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and identity in World Politics* (pp. 317–356). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dobson, H. (2003). *Japan and United Nations Peacekeeping: New pressures, new responses*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Glenn D. Hook, Julie Gilson, Christopher W. Hughes, & Hugo Dobson. (2012). *Japan's international relations: politics, economics and security* (3rd ed). New York: Routledge.
- Jain, P. (2016). Japan's foreign aid: old and new contests. *The Pacific Review*, 29(1), 93–113.
- Johnson, C. (1982). *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The growth of industrial policy, 1925-1975*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Katzenstein, P. J. (1996). *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kitaoka, S. (2016). Sustainable Development Goals and Japan's Official Development Assistance Policy: Human Security, National Interest, and a More Proactive Contribution to Peace. *Asia-Pacific Review*, 23(1), 32–41.
- Lam, P. E. (2009). *Japan's Peace-Building Diplomacy in Asia: Seeking a More Active Political Role*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Lam, P. E. (2015). Japan's Postwar Reconciliation with Southeast Asia. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 3(1), 46–63.
- Liff, A. P. (2015). Japan's Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary. *The Washington Quarterly*, 38(2), 79–99.
- Midford, P. (2012). By land and by sea: the potential of EU-Japan security cooperation. *Japan Forum*, 24(3), 289–316.
- Ministry of Defence of Japan. (2015). Joint Statement: First Japan-Indonesia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting. Retrieved 26 July 2016, from http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2015/12/17_js_e.pdf
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, (2008). Opinion Poll on Japan in Six ASEAN Countries. Retrieved 3 August 2016, from <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/survey/index.html>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, (2014). Opinion Poll on Japan in Seven ASEAN Countries. Retrieved 3 August 2016, from http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000271.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2015). Japan-Indonesia Joint Statement: Towards Further Strengthening of the Strategic Partnership Underpinned by Sea and Democracy. Retrieved 2 August 2016, from <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000072695.pdf>
- National Diet Library. (1946). The Constitution of Japan. *Constitution of Japan*. Retrieved from <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html>
- Oros, A. L. (2008). *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Prime Minister's Official Residence. (2015). Japan-Philippines Joint Declaration (Speeches and Statements by Prime Minister) | Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. Retrieved 26 July 2016, from http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/diplomatic/201506/1211367_9988.html
- Pyle, K. (2007). *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Schulze, K. E. (2007). *Mission not so Impossible: The Aceh Monitoring Mission and Lessons learned for the EU*. Berlin: Friedrich-Elbert Stiftung.
- Simanjuntak, H. (2009). Juha Christensen: Committed to peace. Retrieved 30 July 2016, from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/08/21/juha-christensen-committed-peace.html>
- Singh, B. (2002). Asean's Perceptions Of Japan: Change and Continuity. *Asian Survey*, 42(2), 276–296.
- Singh, B. (2013). *Japan's Security Identity: From a Peace State to an International State*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Tang, S. M. (2013). Japan in the Foreign Relations of the ASEAN States. In *Japan's relations with Southeast Asia: the Fukuda Doctrine and beyond* (pp. 84–103), Oxford, Routledge.