

**CSO Partnership**   
for **Development Effectiveness**

The Reality of Aid Network

An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance

# Assessing Aid and Militarism in Asia

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An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance

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## INTRODUCTION

Gathered in this collection are research essays along the themes of aid and militarism, of development cooperation and conflict and fragility. These articles contain case studies from various regions of Asia that illustrate the relationship between aid on the one hand, and development projects and militarism on the other. All are written in a style that is reader-friendly, as befits the importance and urgency of their content.

This collection is part of the necessary and continuing task of evaluating the concrete effects of aid on people and communities in the grassroots, as well as on the environment. For while aid has the potential to help in bringing about sustainable development and addressing the root causes of conflicts and fragility, it has time and again been used in ways that are contrary to these objectives.

Aid has in many cases been used to promote an economic development that benefits big foreign and local investors to the detriment of peoples and communities, as well as the environment. In these instances, it has not helped address the root causes of conflict and fragility but has actually aggravated the latter. It has also been used in many cases to directly worsen militarism in particular, often deployed against people and communities

that should be the immediate beneficiaries of a truly effective development cooperation.

In “Development Cooperation, Militarism and Conflict in Contiguous Areas of Bangladesh, North East India and Myanmar,” Jiten Yumnam presents the effects, mostly negative, of various development projects on indigenous peoples, the environment, and even the economies of the countries involved. He shows how powerhouse donors, primarily the US and China, operate in the region to advance their economic and geopolitical interests, especially with regard to the rich natural resources there. He presents the implications of various development projects, and the militarism that accompanies them, on the human-rights situation in these areas.

Akiyo Takayanagi, meanwhile, in “Militarization of Japanese Aid: The Northeast Asian Context” tracks the use of Japanese Overseas Development Assistance in the aftermath of a 2015 change in the country’s charter governing its international aid. Using data from Japan’s Ministry of Finance, he shows how Japanese aid does not in general go to efforts that would tend to aggravate international conflicts. At the same time, he shows that Japanese assistance to Southeast Asian countries Malaysia, the Philippines, and

Vietnam actually supports these countries' efforts to assert their territorial claim against China. He calls on CSOs to continue being vigilant in monitoring Japanese aid and preventing this from being used to worsen existing conflicts.

The essays "Development Cooperation and Development Plans for Merauke" by ELSAM and "Military and Police Interference in Land Disputes in the Agro-Industry Megaproject in Muting, Merauke" by YADUPA are actually twin articles that provide a wealth of information on development cooperation and militarism that center on the large town of Merauke in Indonesia.

The first describes the plan for developing an agro-industry megaproject in Merauke with the goal of significantly contributing to Indonesia's food security, as well as the role of the World Bank in aiding investors in the area. The second describes the impact of the megaproject on the indigenous peoples in the Muting district of Merauke, which is largely negative on two counts. The megaproject causes the indigenous peoples' displacement from ancestral lands, which are their source of livelihood and the lifeblood of their culture. At the same time, it intensifies militarism aimed at quelling the indigenous peoples' defence of their ancestral lands and opposition to the megaproject.

In "Land Grabs and State Forces: the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar," the Council for People's Development and Governance looks at the big picture of repression, carried out through the military and the police, in the three countries that continue to receive substantial aid from the US, UK, Japan and other countries. It also shows how the military's defense of aid-funded development projects negatively affects the lives and livelihood of indigenous peoples in these countries – namely, those living in northern and southern Philippines, the Kuy people in Cambodia, and the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

"Militarization in Tajikistan: Contexts and Conflicts of Interests in Central Asia" depicts the military assistance provided by Russia to Tajikistan within the context of Russia

and China's conflicts and cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It shows how the vibrant military cooperation between the said countries, while addressing real problems and threats, contrasts sharply with Tajikistan's underdevelopment. It also illustrates how this military cooperation contributes to a political atmosphere that is hostile to the free exercise of civil and political rights and actually violates people's democratic rights.

The contributions in this collection therefore present a troubling, if not alarming picture: aid is being used in ways that directly or indirectly endanger lives, communities, the environment, and economies. They are sending urgent messages to governments of both donor and recipient countries, leaders of international finance institutions, people's organizations and Civil Society Organizations all over the world, and all people concerned with human rights, the environment, sustainable development and effective development cooperation.

The papers collected here are very contemporary. While the case of the Rohingya people is the only headline-grabbing topic that is directly discussed by two essays, other essays point to important and controversial topics in today's world. Among these are: the intensifying conflict between the US on the one hand and China and Russia on the other; the destruction of the world's forests and repression of their guardians, the indigenous peoples; China's aggressive assertion of its territorial claims in the South China Sea; and the rise of authoritarian regimes in many parts of the world, including in Asia.

The world is facing very interesting times, and these essays reflect this truism in various ways and levels. Monitoring aid's impact on militarism would tend to become even more interesting in the coming years. We are getting ahead of ourselves, however; in the meantime, the reader is asked to read the following essays.

## Assessing Aid and Militarism in Asia

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# Development Cooperation, Militarism and Conflict in Contiguous Areas of Bangladesh, North East India and Myanmar

Jiten Yumnam, *Center for Research and Advocacy Manipur*

## GEOPOLITICS AND LEGACY OF CONFLICT

The history of the contiguous areas of North East India (NE India) and Bangladesh in South Asia and of Myanmar in South East Asia continues to be afflicted with conflict often induced by the colonial powers and capitalist countries. Until 1947, these regions were colonies of the British Empire. Touching the Bay of Bengal and at the crossroads of South, South East and East Asia, the strategic nature and the abundance of natural resources continue to evoke much interest from powerful countries for economic and political dominance.

Another commonality of Myanmar, NE India and Bangladesh is the persistence of armed conflict situation and related social implications. The conflict situation is multi-dimensional and multi-layered in nature, further intensified by the aggressive move for economic and political domination by powerful capitalist countries. The competition among powerful countries for dominance and the conflict between Governments and indigenous peoples, viz, in Manipur and Assam in NE India, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh, Rakhine and Kachin State in Myanmar mark the major forms of conflict in these regions.

The common feature of this region is their richness in natural resources and the existence of indigenous populations with ongoing movements and struggles for self-determination. Much of the conflict in these three contiguous regions is premised on the State's military efforts to subdue indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination over their land and resources.

The persisting conflicts in these regions are fueled by the increased effort among powerful countries to control land and resources. The three regions are now at the cross roads of India's Act East Policy, China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) and Japan's Free and Open Asia Pacific strategy, that also overlap with the respective Asia Pacific strategies of the United States (US), European Union (EU), Russia, etc. China is expanding its OBOR initiative in South and South East Asia with its initiatives on roads, railways, oil pipelines and other infrastructure financing, while India and Japan are increasing synergizing their strategies to counter China's OBOR and to control land, resources and strategic locations with similar initiatives for economic and political reasons.

Development cooperation and tacit involvement of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in financing development processes for control of land and natural resources amid situations of armed conflict spur greater conflict and fragility in these regions. Multilateral and bilateral development financial institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and financing from emerging economies like India and China are actively financing the connectivity projects and to tap the natural resources from these regions. Multinational companies and IFIs are aggressively pursuing for oil and gas exploration in these regions. The ADB's Country Partnership Strategy for Myanmar in

2017–2021 aims to support the government in laying the foundations for sustainable and inclusive economic development for poverty reduction. The ADB focus for connectivity in Myanmar will complement its connectivity financing in India's North East and Bangladesh, under the South Asia Sub Economic Cooperation (SASEC).<sup>1</sup> Myanmar is also part of ADB's Greater Mekong Sub Economic Cooperation (GMS), under which ADB financed a portion of the Greater Mekong Sub Region East-West Economic Corridor Highway Development Project in Myanmar.

ADB pursued financing of road building through the South Asia Sub Economic Cooperation (SASEC) under the North East India Strategic Plan (NEISP) to promote business friendly environment and to tap the rich natural resources in India's North East. In April 2017, the JICA signed an agreement with the Union government in New Delhi to provide over 67 billion yen (US\$610 million) for Phase I of the North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project. Phase 1 will see the enhancement of National Highway 54 and National Highway 51 in Mizoram and Meghalaya.<sup>2</sup> The DEG of Germany had also co-financed the mining operation in Meghalaya by French mining company, Lafarge. German development bank KfW financed the Pare Hydroelectric project in Arunachal Pradesh. The World Bank on 12 June 2014 approved a US\$107-million credit for the Mizoram State Roads II – Regional Transport Connectivity Project to improve transport connectivity to enhance Mizoram and other northeastern states' road links with Bangladesh, as well as with Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar.<sup>3</sup> JICA is preparing to fund the Kaladan Multi-model transportation mode in Mizoram State of

India. The World Bank is also funding the High Voltage Transmission and Distribution lines across India's NE region.

Meanwhile, the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is investing in the adjoining areas of South and South East Asia Region. In 2016, the AIIB had approved loans amounting to US\$500 million for power, housing and transportation projects in four countries. In a meeting in September 2016, the AIIB approved a project worth US\$300 million for Myanmar's Mingyan project, among others.<sup>4</sup> In Bangladesh, the World Bank, ADB and JICA coordinate to finance infrastructures geared to control strategic resources like natural gas and strategic locations such as sea ports.

The process of defining the priorities and areas of development cooperation is pursued in an environment of exclusion of indigenous peoples in these three contiguous areas and denial of their rights. Official Development Assistance (ODA) such as those mentioned above is increasingly being utilized to advance the strategic economic and political interests of donors in the region. India is cementing a stronger relationship with Japan for strategic reasons. The India-Japan relation is envisaged to further utilize Japanese ODA for strategic purposes, such as in NE India while also deepening military cooperation.<sup>5</sup> The efforts of IFIs and dominant countries for their economic and political influence also involves close coordination with concerned Governments to suppress indigenous peoples' rights and further limit their democratic space for seeking effective development cooperation and genuine development process.

1 Myanmar: Country Partnership Strategy (2017-2021), Asian Development Bank, March 2017 <https://www.adb.org/documents/myanmar-country-partnership-strategy-2017-2021>

2 JICA to Invest in Improving Transitability by Extending ODA Loan of Approximately INR 2,500 Crore for the North East Road Connectivity Project- Transforming Infrastructure in North East India - JICA Press Release, April 2, 2018

3 "\$107 Million World Bank Project to Connect Mizoram with Bangladesh and Myanmar via Roads", World Bank Press Release, June 12, 2014 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/06/12/107-million-world-bank-project-to-connect-mizoram-with-bangladesh-and-myanmar-via-roads>

4 "AIIB Looks Forward to Promoting Infrastructure in Myanmar: President", The Global Times, 1 November 2016 <https://consult-myanmar.com/2016/11/01/aiib-looks-forward-to-promoting-infrastructure-in-myanmar-president/>

5 "Japan's Investments in India Unveil Growing Economic Partnership", By Melissa Cyrill, India Briefing, September 19, 2017

## DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND MILITARISM IN INDIA'S NORTH EAST

India's North East comprising eight states bordering Burma and Bangladesh is projected as the corridor to connect with South East Asia under India's Act East Policy. Development cooperation and militarism in India's North East need to be understood in the context of ongoing indigenous peoples' movement for self-determination, such as movement for greater autonomy like in Tripura and for full self-determination in Manipur, and the consequent military responses from the Government of India. The Revolutionary Peoples Front, the United National Liberation Front, etc. battle the Indian Armed forces in Manipur in a low intensity conflict while the United Liberation Front of Assam led the armed struggle for self-determination in Assam. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA, 1958), an act introduced to counter the armed liberation movements derogates fundamental rights, viz, Right to Life, Right to Justice, remedy, etc. while legitimizing the intense militarization in Manipur and across the NE region. The militarization has led to extra judicial executions, arbitrary killings, enforced disappearances, sexual harassment, and other abuses with complete impunity conferred to the Indian Army officials under AFSPA, 1958. The Supreme Court of India continues to hear a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking probe in the 1,528 cases of extra judicial executions from 2000 to 2012 committed by the by Indian security forces and Manipur police.<sup>6</sup>

Militarization is further exacerbated by the aggressive push for large infrastructure projects, extractive industries, viz, mining,

oil exploration, etc. under the Act East Policy and with key infrastructures financed with development cooperation from multilateral and bilateral financial institutions. The Indian armed forces deployed for counter insurgency operations in NE India are also involved in protecting hydroelectric projects, mining sites, and other key infrastructure projects financed by the ADB, World Bank, JICA, etc.

The Indian armed forces launched military operations, like operation Summer Storm (2009), Operation Khengjoi (2006), Operation Somtal (2007), Operation Tornado (2005) etc in Manipur not only to clear armed liberation groups but also to control indigenous areas already designated for Tipaimukh dam construction, for oil exploration and mining of Chromium and Limestone. More than 50,000 Indian armed forces units are deployed in various military camps in Manipur alone. More than 1,500 security forces from different paramilitary units are also confirmed to be deployed for the protection of the Trans Asian Railway works under construction in Manipur.<sup>7</sup>

Military equipment purchased from capitalist countries are also used in such counter insurgency operations. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Hovercraft and other arms purchased from Israel, US, and Russia, etc. are used during counter insurgency operations to subdue indigenous resistance movement in Manipur.<sup>8</sup> Sukhoi Jet fighters purchased from Russia area also deployed in Tezpur Air force base in Assam, close to Chinese and Myanmar border.<sup>9</sup> India' effort to militarily suppress

6 Supreme Court orders CBI probe into extra-judicial killings in Manipur, PTI | 14 July 2017 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/supreme-court-orders-cbi-probe-into-extra-judicial-killings-in-manipur/articleshow/59591193.cms>

7 "Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal rail link: How Indian Railways is working on big Manipur project amid militant threats", PTI, The Financial Express, 11 May, 2018 <https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/railways/jiribam-tupul-imphal-rail-link-how-indian-railways-is-working-on-big-manipur-project-amid-militant-threats/1163847/>

8 Three American made hovercrafts conscripted into Manipur police force, March 8, 2011, The Morung Express <http://morung-express.com/three-american-made-hovercrafts-conscripted-into-manipur-police-force/>

9 Sukhoi-30 warplanes to be deployed in Tezpur by Oct, PTI | Sep 13, 2009 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Sukhoi-30-warplanes-to-be-deployed-in-Tezpur-by-Oct/articleshow/5005619.cms>

self-determination movement also involves military cooperation between Burma and Bangladesh for joint military operation against the insurgents or liberation groups operating in their respective territories. The efforts for economic cooperation at the regional level also emphasized suppression of voices of resistance in pretext of counter terrorism. For instance, the India and ASEAN Free Trade Agreement included explicit reference and focus to jointly fight terrorism.

The extensive road building pursued across India's North East with financing by the ADB, WB and JICA clearly serve economic and military purposes. The road building under various connectivity projects are all envisaged to support the construction of more than Two Hundred (200) mega dams planned across the Brahmaputra – Barak River system, to facilitate the exploration and drilling of oil and gas and to mine minerals from across the NE region. JICA and KfW are directly involved in building dams. The World Bank's approval of a US\$470-million loan on 24 June 2016 to support six states in the NE India to augment their 400 KV high voltage transmission and distribution networks will also facilitate the exploitation of energy potentials of rivers in NE region by construction of mega dams.<sup>10</sup>

The massive road construction plan across India's NE is also intended to facilitate the Indian Armed Forces to confront its internal and external security challenges. For instance, the extensive roads will facilitate the movement of Indian armed forces and intensify its counter insurgency offensives in Manipur, Assam and other parts of North East where there is an active armed movement for self-determination. Additionally, the road building in Arunachal Pradesh is also intended to improve the movement of Indian armed forces closer to the borders with China, considering the persisting tensions due to territorial disputes between India and China.

Development cooperation for infrastructure financing, primarily road projects in India's North East evokes another dimension of conflict. The potential for intense conflict in NE India is much visible when the Japanese effort to fund infrastructure projects, primarily

road projects in Arunachal Pradesh has been met with stern objection from China, that claim Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet. India and China have been in conflict over the control of Arunachal Pradesh, one of the States in India's North East. Indeed, a war between India and China had broken out in 1962, over China's claim of Arunachal Pradesh. In 2009, China protested the inclusion of a water management project in Arunachal Pradesh, as part of a \$2.9 billion loan that ADB had promised India.<sup>11</sup> China also denounced the joint statement issued between Japan and India in September 2017 to cooperate on infrastructure projects such as road connectivity and electricity in India's NE States.<sup>12</sup> With an eye on responding to China's OBOR initiative, the US Government in October 2017 also called for increasing connectivity in the South Asia region.<sup>13</sup> The tensions and conflict will escalate further at the regional level with continued Indian efforts to build hydropower projects and road infrastructure projects, as well as oil and gas exploration in NE India.

The effort to exploit the natural resources across NE India is another cause of tension in the region. The Government's effort to mine Uranium in Meghalaya has been met with strong resistance from indigenous communities. There are worries that India's agreement with Australia, Japan and Germany for peaceful Nuclear Cooperation will facilitate the mining and exploitation of natural resources in Meghalaya. Agreements were also signed between the Government of Manipur and Corporate bodies in North East Business Summit in November 2017 to commence mining and oil exploration in Manipur, much to the objection of indigenous groups. Multinational companies like Jubilant Energy Private Limited and other big Indian companies like the Oil India Limited, and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, etc. are extensively vouching for comprehensive exploitation of oil and gas from across NE India.

The ADB, European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), and several other bilateral finance institutions such as Germany's DEG have co-financed the limestone mining operation in

the State of Meghalaya with the Lafarge Group of France and Cementos Molins of Spain. The Lafarge Surma Cement (LSC) Project, run by Lafarge received a loan of US\$45 million from the IFC in 2003. The Lafarge mining involves violation of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006.<sup>14</sup>

In January 2014, the indigenous Khasi people affected by the IFC- and ADB-funded limestone mining filed a complaint with the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO), the IFC's accountability mechanism. The Khasis complain that Lafarge have illegally infringed upon their land without their consent and rights recognition. Another example is the JICA-funded 60-megawatt (MW) Tuiriial Hydroelectric Project in Mizoram state in India's North East that faced wide controversy due to inadequate rehabilitation and resettlement and eventually halted in 2004.<sup>15</sup>

Community leaders striving for defense of land and natural resource and rejecting the current exploitative and unsustainable development models, such as dam building, oil exploration, mining, etc. are often branded as anti-development, anti-national, insurgents, etc., subjecting them to human rights violations. Many are killed, jailed and tortured which is happening in Burma, NE India and in Bangladesh's CHT.

Development cooperation, including military cooperation, is an emerging phenomenon in NE India to counter Chinese influence in both South and South East Asia. India and Japan agreed to step up their defence cooperation in the Annual India – Japan Ministerial Defense Dialogue in September 2017, including on anti-Submarine Exercises and Counter Terrorism measures.<sup>16</sup>

The US, India and Japan conducted joint naval exercises in July 2017 in a clear evidence of increased defence cooperation in Indo-Pacific region, even deploying front-line warships, submarines and aircraft as part of the tri-nation Malabar exercises in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>17</sup>

The military cooperation between India and the US is also increasing marked by the Trump administration agreeing to supply long endurance high-altitude surveillance armed UAVs to India in early May 2018.

India also supported Japan's position in the South China Sea countering Chinese claims. In a joint statement in July 2016 on the South China Sea ruling, India and Japan asked parties involved in the territorial disputes to "show utmost respect" for the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).<sup>18</sup> India also joined the quadrilateral alliance with Japan, Australia and US to counter China.

10 World Bank Approves US\$ 470 Million to Improve Electricity Supply in North Eastern Region, India. World Bank Press Release, June 24, 2016 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/06/24/world-bank-approves-usd470million-improve-electricity-supply-the-north-eastern-region-india>

11 "Japan Agency to Finance Projects in Arunachal", North East Today, 8 June 2015 <https://www.northeasttoday.in/japan-agency-to-finance-projects-in-arunachal/>

12 "No third-party meddling in North East: China on Japan FDI plan", Aporva | September 16, 2017, Indian Express <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/no-third-party-in-india-north-east-states-n-e-china-on-japan-fdi-plan-shinzo-abe-narendra-modi-4845773/>

13 "US calls for increasing connectivity in South Asia", PTI, Economic Times, 18 October 2017 [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/61135171.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/61135171.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

14 "Lafarge's India-Bangladesh cement project remains frozen", Julien Bouissou, The Guardian, 20 Aug 2010 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/13/india-bangladesh>

15 NHPC's Untimely Push for 66 MW Loktak Downstream Project, by Jiten Yumnam, Imphal Free Press

16 "India, Japan to Step up Defense Cooperation", Deccan Herald News Service, 6 September 2017 <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/631725/india-japan-step-up-defence.html>

17 "US, India and Japan begin naval exercises, as China looks on", By Steve George and Huizhong Wu, CNN, 12 July 2017

18 "India, Japan Call on China not to Use Force in South China Sea Disputes", Franz-Stefan Gady, The Diplomat, 15/7/2016 <https://the-diplomat.com/2016/07/india-japan-call-on-china-not-to-use-force-in-south-china-sea-disputes/>

## CONFLICT IN RAKHINE AND KACHIN STATE IN MYANMAR

Myanmar is afflicted with multiple layers of conflict, intensifying in scale and geographic scope as capitalist countries increasingly seek to control its land and resources, economy and polity. Myanmar is at the confluence of South, East and South East Asia and hence extremely strategic for economic and political reasons. Indeed, the country has seen some of the most intense effort of powerful countries to exert their influence. Myanmar has become a last Asian frontier for current modes of development – plantation agriculture, mining, and water extraction. Myanmar is between China and India, both hungry for natural resources and influence in the country.

China is major provider of financial and military aid. The country aggressively pursued road building and laying of oil and gas pipelines. China is also heavily involved in mining of minerals and attempts to build mega dams in Myanmar. China is establishing a foothold in the Rakhine State with its promise to develop a deep-water port at Kyaukphyu at a staggering cost of about US\$7.3 billion. The oil and gas exploration by Chinese companies in Rakhine is still progressing, along with the investment by Indian and Korean companies. By providing access to the Indian Ocean, Myanmar remains a critical pillar in China's regional designs and energy security, allowing China to circumvent the Straits of Malacca by importing oil from the Middle East on a quicker route.<sup>19</sup> The effort of countries like India, Japan, US, EU, etc. to challenge China's dominance is a key factor in the persisting multilayered conflict situation in Myanmar.

The conflict in the Rakhine State and Kachin State between the ethnic Rohingyas and Kachin, respectively with the Burmese State is interpreted as fallout of ongoing efforts to control the rich natural resources and geographically strategic locations of the two States, one that had access to the Bay of Bengal (i.e., Rakhine) and the other access to the mighty China (i.e., Kachin). Myanmar's best potential hydropower sites and oil exploration and drilling sites are mostly in conflict prone areas like the Rakhine and Kachin States.

The ongoing tensions including forced displacement in Rakhine State is perceived as an attempt to regain control of areas, strategic for pursuance of extractive industries, viz, oil and gas exploration and trading points, such as the Sittwe Port and to open up the land for corporate bodies from foreign countries. Since major foreign investors entered the country under the new legal regime, demand for land has become a major factor in the conflict. Persecution of the Rohingyas and expelling them from their land is a strategy of the Myanmar Government to free up land and water for subsequent control for corporations from powerful countries.<sup>20</sup>

An estimated 655,000 Rohingya Muslims are believed to have crossed into Bangladesh after Myanmar army launched a crackdown

- 19 "Beijing's Stake in Myanmar's Peace Process", China US Focus, May 05, 2017 <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/beijings-stake-in-myanmars-peace-process>
- 20 "Is Rohingya persecution caused by business interests rather than religion?", Saskia Sassen, The Guardian, 5 Jan 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/jan/04/is-rohingya-persecution-caused-by-business-interests-rather-than-religion>
- 21 "Japan's Myanmar Diplomacy – Analysis", Dr. Rajaram Panda, Eurasia Review 18 January, 2018 <https://www.eurasiareview.com/18012018-japans-myanmar-diplomacy-analysis/>
- 22 "Dams on Myanmar's Irrawaddy river could fuel more conflicts in the country", The Conversation, 10 October 2017 <https://theconversation.com/dams-on-myanmars-irrawaddy-river-could-fuel-more-conflicts-in-the-country-84386>
- 23 "China, Myanmar Face Myitsone Dam Truths", Yun Sun | 21 Feb 2014, | Vol 2 Issue 9, Business Today <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/china-myanmar-face-myitsone-dam-truths>
- 24 "Thousands flee Myanmar's ethnic conflict in Kachin", YUICHI NITTA, Nikkei Asian Review, 10 May, 2018 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Thousands-flee-Myanmar-s-ethnic-conflict-in-Kachin>

on suspected Muslim insurgents blamed for attacks on security outposts in the Rakhine State on August 25, 2017. There are massive reports that civilians were tortured, women were raped and their homes were burnt by the military.<sup>21</sup>

The State repression in Rakhine has led to the formation of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in January 2018, an armed ethnic group, deepening the state of crisis and armed conflict situation in Myanmar. The displacement caused by the conflict in Rakhine has led to the exodus of refugees in Mizoram, Manipur, etc. in NE India, evoking another potential source of tensions.

Kachin State is one of the most conflict afflicted areas in Myanmar. The Kachin Independence Army demanding self-determination from Burma since the early 1960s clashed with the Burmese military in June 2011 ending a 17-year ceasefire agreement.<sup>22</sup>

The construction of Myitsone Dam, to be financed by China also contributed in the anger and resistance of the Kachin people and indeed the Government was compelled to cancel the dam. The controversial Myitsone dam project was first signed between Myanmar's previous military government and the state-backed China Power Investment in 2005. Construction formally commenced in 2007 but was mostly halted with the announcement of the suspension in September 2011.<sup>23</sup>

The Myanmar military has increased airstrikes and attacks with heavy weapons, forcing about 3,000 civilians to evacuate for churches in the Kachin capital of Myitkyina and 2,000 people to flee for the jungle. More than 5,000 people are estimated to be newly displaced in Kachin State following heavy fighting between the Myanmar Military and Kachin Independence Army. As noted by the UN Special rapporteur on Myanmar, "Innocent civilians are being killed and injured, and hundreds of families are now fleeing for their lives."<sup>24</sup> The escalating battle has driven thousands of residents in

northern Kachin State from their homes, creating new refugees for a country already under criticism for the Rohingya crisis.

The conflict in Kachin State is predominantly for control of its geography (wedged between South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia) and rich natural resources.<sup>25</sup> Fighting erupted again in early 2018 in amber-rich Tanai region in Kachin state and near the jade mines of Hpakant, with both sides jostling for control of these strategic areas. Jade sales primarily line the pockets of business, military elites, drug lords, armed groups, and the Chinese Business groups.<sup>26</sup>

The conflict situation in both Rakhine and Kachin State has led to the exodus of refugees in several parts of Bangladesh and north east part of India, unleashing another form of human rights violations. The provincial governments and various civil society groups have voiced concern on and objection to the increased presence of refugees in places like Manipur and Mizoram. The provincial governments also criminalized and jailed several of the refugees attempting to enter Manipur, further complicating the situation.

Powerful countries are heavily bent on influencing Myanmar militarily as well. According to 2011 figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database, China has been the major supplier of military hardware to Myanmar since 1988. China has supplied over 90% of Myanmar's military transport and has also provided warplanes and ships. China also announced in early 2018 its plan to increase military aid and cooperation with Myanmar. India is also trying to militarily influence Myanmar such as through the supply of artillery guns, radars and night vision devices to Myanmar's army. India seeks Burmese military support for its counterinsurgency operations against armed liberation groups in NE India operating along the borders of Myanmar.<sup>27</sup>

25 Kuang, Ka. "Burmese President Halts Myitsone Dam Project." The Irrawaddy, 30 September 2011. [http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=22172](http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22172)

26 "Slow genocide: Myanmar's invisible war on the Kachin Christian minority", Libby Hogan, The Guardian, 14 May 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/14/slow-genocide-myanmars-invisible-war-on-the-kachin-christian-minority>

China, Japan and India are competing for influence in the peace process between the Myanmar Government and the ethnic rebel groups. In November 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held talks with Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi and pledged 40 billion yen (US\$390 million) in aid to back Myanmar Government's peace process with ethnic minorities amid growing international concern about human rights violations in Rakhine State.<sup>28</sup> The Japanese support is also an attempt to compete with China's growing political and economic influence. However, China remains the most influential player in Myanmar's peace process. Beijing has its own peace envoy, Sun Guoxiang, the Special Envoy for Asian Affairs, who also regularly visits Myanmar for talks with all the peace actors. China even pledged \$3 million in financial support for the peace process.<sup>29</sup> Development aid has been used by powerful countries to supposedly facilitate conflict resolution but is in fact meant to influence recipients and create a favorable political environment to serve their commercial interest. The human rights dimension of conflict situations is completely sidelined in such processes. For instance, Japan in November 2016 announced nearly US\$8 billion in aid, loans and investment to promote development and reconciliation in Myanmar after talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Tokyo. The announcement however failed to denounce the military violence in Rakhine State.<sup>30</sup>

On 29 March, 2018, JICA signed loan agreements for four projects with the Government of Myanmar in Nay Pyi Tawto

provide Japanese ODA loans of up to a total of 117.04 billion yen. The loan agreements envisaged comprehensive socioeconomic development in Myanmar and include (1) the 30.469 billion yen Agriculture Income Improvement Project, (2) 14.949 billion yen Project for the Development of Finance for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Phase 2), (3) 15 billion yen Housing Finance Development Project, and (4) 56.622 billion yen Yangon-Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase II.<sup>31</sup>

China is also involved in providing humanitarian response to the refugee crisis in Rakhine, while providing aid for education, infrastructure and agriculture projects in Rakhine State and other parts of Myanmar. In February, 2018, a model project for rural poverty reduction with financial and technical assistance from China was launched in Lewe and Tatkon townships in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. China provided 33.33 million yuan (\$5.31 million) for the project, which includes social infrastructure development, vocational training, and income-generation assistance for residents.

In March 2018, China provided aid to Myanmar for the new Kunlong Bridge Project in Myanmar's northern Shan State. China is working with Myanmar Government to support the China-Myanmar economic corridor from Yunnan in China and extend to the Mandalay, and then east to Yangon and west to the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone in Myanmar. The initiative would also serve as a flagship project of the China's Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>32</sup>

27 "China eyes closer military cooperation with Myanmar as it looks to expand sphere of influence near India's borders", 23 November, 2017, South China Morning Post <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2121298/china-eyes-closer-military-cooperation-myanmar-it-looks>

28 "Japan pledges \$390mn to boost Myanmar peace", Emirates Business, 2 November, 2016 <http://emirates-business.ae/japan-pledges-390mn-to-boost-myanmar-peace/>

29 "Myanmar's peace process attracts increasing Western interest", Larry Jagan, South Asian Monitor, 17 January 2018 <http://southasianmonitor.com/2018/01/17/myanmars-peace-process-attracts-increasing-western-interest/>

30 "Japan announces a nearly \$8 billion package for Myanmar", AFP and Chan Mya Htwe, The Myanmar Times, 3 Nov 2016. <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/23451-japan-announces-a-nearly-8-billion-package-for-myanmar.html>

31 Signing of Japanese ODA Loan Agreement with Myanmar: Comprehensive support for socioeconomic development, JICA Press Release, 29 March, 2018 [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/low/news/press/2017/1803\\_29\\_02.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/low/news/press/2017/1803_29_02.html)

32 "China's poverty alleviation efforts in Myanmar help ease Rakhine State situation" By Zhang Yiqian, Global Times, 2 April 2018 <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1096305.shtml>

## DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND CONFLICT IN BANGLADESH

Connecting South and South East Asia, Bangladesh is currently at the center stage of contestations between economically and politically dominant countries for control of the Bay of Bengal and the country's strategic and economic importance. The effort to control the strategic geographic location and resources of Bangladesh has been marked by increased competition between China on the one hand and India, Japan and the US on the other hand. Bangladesh is also marked by internal political contradictions between the indigenous nationalities in the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT) and adjoining areas, and the Bangladesh Government over the control of land, resources and polity.

The CHT is one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world. According to the CHT Commission Report 1991, there is one Bangladeshi soldier behind every 6 indigenous persons in the region. The figure may have increased by now. CHT has been under a de facto Bangladeshi military rule codenamed "Operation Uttoran" (Operation Uplifting) since the early 1980s. Bangladeshi military is responsible for gross human rights violations, including 13 major genocides and crimes against humanity, against the indigenous people of the region.<sup>33</sup> The Self-determination movement in CHT is led by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti. Though a peace accord was signed in 1997, it has been marred with violations and continued human rights abuses by the Bangladeshi Army.

China and Bangladesh cooperated to connect East and South East Asia with South Asia under the aegis of the BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar) Economic Corridor. While making strategic investments in Bangladesh, China faces competition in the Bay of Bengal from regional and global power, especially the US, Japan and India. Japan increasingly tried to leverage ADB and JICA to finance key infrastructure that would deter Chinese investments and interests while consolidating its own interests in Bangladesh. In CHT, the ADB, World Bank and JICA are also financing infrastructure projects. Indigenous people's lands and their traditional decision-making processes have been undermined by the World Bank financed, Bangladesh Regional Connectivity Project, connecting CHT with Mizoram in NE India.

Financing of extractive industries and exploitation of natural resources are another source of conflict. Japan has already approved US\$1.18 billion in loans to build the coal-fired Matarbari Power Plant.<sup>34</sup> The Phulbari Coal mine funded by the World Bank and ADB has been met with wide objections in Bangladesh.<sup>35</sup> Several activists were killed and tortured for addressing the impacts of the project.

JICA, meanwhile, is to build a port along with a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal, a series of four 600-MW coal-fed power plants,

33 Chittagong Hill Tracts is one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world, johntripuraRights, 25 May, 2016 <https://johntripura.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/chittagong-hill-tracts-is-one-of-the-most-heavily-militarized-zones-in-the-world/>

34 "Bangladesh Juggles Chinese, Japanese Interest", By ASMG Kibria, The Diplomat, January 05, 2015 <https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/bangladesh-juggles-chinese-japanese-interest/>

35 "ADB Pulls Out of Controversial Coal Project", 4 April 2008 [https://www.banktrack.org/news/adb\\_pulls\\_out\\_of\\_controversial\\_coal\\_project](https://www.banktrack.org/news/adb_pulls_out_of_controversial_coal_project)

as well as rail lines, roadways, and electrical systems as part of an infrastructure package deal, under which JICA will provide a loan of \$3.7 billion to Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh Ltd. The financing also essentially restricted the influence of China in Bangladesh to a certain extent as well, as Bangladesh increasingly opted for financial assistance from Japan, as against China.

The ADB, JICA and WB financing of infrastructure and coal-fired power plants will facilitate the exploitation of natural resources in Bangladesh such as natural gas, coal, etc. while also using the port facilities to trade with other countries. The Chakma people of CHT are concerned with the impact of extractive industries being pursued in their lands.

Meanwhile, Chinese Government efforts to control strategic locations in the Bay of Bengal and plans to build sea ports have led to much tension in Bangladesh. A proposed China-backed seaport in Bangladesh has been abandoned in favor of Japan after India, the US and Japan pressured the Bangladesh Government to turn down the Chinese financing plan. Earlier, Bangladesh cleared Japan's proposal to finance and build a seaport in Matarbari, located some 25 kilometers from Sonadia, where Beijing had offered to construct the country's first deep water port. JICA also offered 80% financing on easy terms to build four coal-fired power plants of 600 MW each and a port complex in Matarbari.

In 2010, China was publicly invited to get on board with expanding and modernizing Chittagong port, and at one point the country pledged US\$9 billion for the endeavor. This

plan bodes well for China's broader ambitions of building an overland corridor from Yunnan province to a port on the Bay of Bengal, bypassing Southeast Asia. The JICA offered a loan to take care of US\$3.7 billion out of the total US\$4.6-billion price tag.<sup>36</sup> Bangladesh and Japan appear to be committed to taking the bilateral relationship to a new level since 2014 through the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt that has been key to Japan's strategy for South Asia.<sup>37</sup>

Military aid from China is another source of tension in Bangladesh as this undercuts the efforts of India and Japan to deter Chinese influence in the country. China has been the biggest military aid provider in Bangladesh.<sup>38</sup> When Bangladesh's military purchased two Ming-class type 035B submarines from China, costing around \$203 million, India and Myanmar were alarmed. While Myanmar had no official reaction, it started to speed up its own submarine purchasing program. India, on the other hand, openly showed its displeasure by sending a high-profile government representative to Bangladesh.<sup>39</sup> India also operationalized a US\$4.5 billion line of credit, its third and largest ever, to Bangladesh in October 2017 as part of its strategic efforts to wean Dhaka away from China.<sup>40</sup>

Development cooperation in indigenous territories without respecting their self-determined rights over their land and resources also turns out to be another major source of conflict. The Bangladesh Government with funding support from the World Bank has commenced works for the "Chittagong Hill Tracts Connectivity Project" in early 2016.<sup>41</sup>

36 "Bangladesh's Deep Sea Port Problem", By Wade Shepard, The Diplomat, June 07, 2016 <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/bangladeshs-deep-sea-port-problem/>

37 "Bangladesh Juggles Chinese, Japanese Interest", By ASMG Kibria, The Diplomat, 5 January, 2015 <https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/bangladesh-juggles-chinese-japanese-interest/>

38 "FOUR DECADES OF BANGLADESH-CHINA RELATIONS, What next?" The Daily Star, 2 October, 2015 <https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/politics/what-next-150247>

39 "Bangladesh's Ambitious Military Modernization Drive", By Shakil Bin Mushtaq, the Diplomat, 9 January 2018 <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/bangladeshs-ambitious-military-modernization-drive/>

40 India extends \$4.5 billion loan to Bangladesh", Live Mint, 05 Oct 2017 <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/PJNGy9mN-1sOLFqVTKKdI5L/Bangladesh-signs-45-billion-loan-deal-with-India.html>

The road would be constructed by the Engineering Core of Bangladesh army.<sup>42</sup> The main objective of the road construction project is to expand trade with the Mizoram State of India.

The CHT Regional Council has not given any consent for the Thega Mukh land port, which is part of the world Bank Project, considering its possible adverse impacts. But the government has begun implementing the project, ignoring the opinion of the CHT Regional Council.<sup>43</sup> The road building plan of the World Bank would further facilitate the control and suppression of indigenous people's right to and movement for self-determination in the CHT.

Japan is also using its ODA to further leverage its influence in Bangladesh including the conflict in Rakhine. Japan, in May 2018, announced that it will provide around US\$1.8 billion in loans to finance infrastructure and other development projects in Bangladesh to repatriate the Rohingyas refugees the country.<sup>44</sup>

On 29 June 2017, JICA and the Government of Bangladesh signed a loan agreement to provide ODA loans of up to 178.225 billion yen (approximately US\$2.05 billion) to fund six major infrastructure projects. The ADB has commenced financing plan for development for Chittagong Port to improve the intermodal transport systems and expand regional trade. The Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction is providing Technical Assistance for the said ADB project.<sup>45</sup>

The human rights violations, the threats on survival of indigenous communities and the persistence of impunity of military and the unaccountability of corporate bodies are deliberately sidelined in the pursuit of political and economic dominion of powerful countries in Bangladesh.

## CONCLUSIONS

The contiguous South Asian region of North East India and Bangladesh and of Myanmar in South East Asia today presents a continuing legacy of efforts by colonial powers and newly emerging powerful countries to pursue their economic and political interests. The process has led to much conflict and competition for control of resources and key areas for the distribution of resources and to expand and market of the corporate bodies from the foreign countries.

The assertive influence of China in South Asia through its One Belt One Road Initiatives and also through the financing from the AIIB, caused many tensions in South Asia. India along with its allies, Japan, the US, and

Australia endeavored to keep the Chinese at bay and check its influence in South Asia in terms of controlling strategic geographical location, which is marked by increased economic and military cooperation.

The pursuance of such policies and subsequent development discourse and the alliance are all conceived with consideration of the strategic nature of the land, geography, resources while perceiving the indigenous peoples in these contiguous areas as threats and an obstacle to such ambitions. Increased militarization, suppression of community rights and voices, the restriction of civil society space while insisting on economic and

42 *CHTTimes24.com*, 4 January, 2016

43 "World Bank funded-project kicks off in Chittagong Hills without meaningful consultation with the Chittagong Hills institutions and indigenous peoples", By: Kapaeeng Foundation, 8 February 2016, Land Portal <https://landportal.org/news/2016/04/aipp-world-bank-funded-project-kicks-chittagong-hills-without-meaningful-consultation>

44 "Japan & Bangladesh agree to help realize early return of Rohingya refugees", The Japan Times, May 15, 2018 [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/15/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-bangladesh-agree-help-realize-early-return-rohingya-refugees/#.Wvq-SH\\_VDX4](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/15/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-bangladesh-agree-help-realize-early-return-rohingya-refugees/#.Wvq-SH_VDX4)

45 Bangladesh: Strategic Master Plan for Chittagong Port (Sovereign Public Project | 45078-001) <https://www.adb.org/projects/45078-001/main#project-pds>

counter-terrorism cooperation characterize the regions.

The human rights implications on indigenous peoples such as displacement, extra judicial executions, sexual harassment, etc. are the direct outcomes of the ongoing military operations by the States against the indigenous peoples, and also due to the tensions created by the military buildup and cooperation between powerful countries in pursuing their political and economic agenda in NE India, Myanmar and in Bangladesh.

With the negation of indigenous peoples' rights and their intrinsic relationship with land and resources and the fast intensification of the commercial motives with tacit facilitation of the States, the nature of conflict and impact is changing fast. The curtailment of peoples' rights, destruction of their environment, their polity and self-determination further induced multilayered tensions. The enactment of special emergency laws, such as the AFSPA, 1958 in NE India is central to ensure India's control of and security for key infrastructures to advance its geopolitical agenda in South Asia, South East Asia and beyond.

The pursuance of unsustainable and destructive development processes pushed indigenous peoples to the periphery of survival, compelling them to consolidate and deepen their struggle for their self-determination, for defense of their land and livelihood, and for their rights and dignity as a people. Their resolve is fueled by the increased militarism unleashed on their lives and land.

The massive loss of land and livelihood the indigenous communities and the destruction of their environment and culture due to militarization will worsen the armed conflict and intensify the resistance of indigenous peoples. The opposition to the dam building in Kachin State along with increased conflict situation and the cancellation of Myitsone Dam in Myanmar simply illustrate such intensifying social conflict.

Development cooperation should be founded on responding to the development concerns and needs of affected indigenous communities. It should help advance the

democratic development process, encourage the meaningful participation of indigenous communities in defining and implementing development projects affecting their rights, land and resources, and their future as a people.

Development cooperation, including the provision of aid, should insist on strong compliance to standards on indigenous people's rights, environmental protection, sustainable development and corporate accountability to uphold human rights principles and practices. Donors' involvement in and financing of peace building processes should not be manipulated to just advance the interests of their multinational companies or to pursue their security or political objectives even at the expense of the recipient countries and their people.

Governments should stop all forms of militarization and human rights violations unleashed on indigenous communities. All emergency and security laws employed to repress indigenous peoples like the AFSPA, 1958, the National Security Act, 1980 etc. should be repealed. Indigenous peoples' right to Self Determination over their land and resources as outlined in the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should be fully recognized and implemented.

Pursuing development cooperation in South Asia and adjoining areas in South East Asia in the context of self-serving initiatives such as India's Act East Policy, China's OBOR and Japan's Asia Pacific Open Door Policy will only ignite and perpetuate greater conflict and fragility in the region. Development cooperation that merely advances the economic, political and military/security agenda of donors is rooted in colonialism, hegemony and neoliberalism, and is contrary to genuine development that serves the people. Formulation of any development strategy by the States without involving the affected indigenous communities in NE India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, and respecting their rights and aspirations would be counterproductive and incite more conflict, suffering and destruction.

# Militarization of Japanese Aid: The Northeast Asian Context

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In the *Reality of Aid 2016* global report, this researcher wrote that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have three major concerns in Japan's new charter governing aid: the securitization of aid, dominance of growth-centered vision, and (re)commercialization of aid.<sup>46</sup>

This paper focuses on the first of these concerns: securitization of aid. It presents data released by the government of Japan and analyzes these to examine whether Japanese aid is being used to advance Japanese security directions and policies, especially in the wake of the change in the said charter.

## 1. Revision of the ODA Charter into the Development Cooperation Charter

On 10 February 2015, the government of Japan announced its new Development Cooperation Charter, which revised the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Charter, and changed its name.

When the process of the revision started in March 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) made it clear that the new charter should be aligned with the security policy of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government, announced in December of the previous year, and the economic vitalization plan. In other words, one of the objectives of the ODA Charter's amendment is to further instrumentalize aid for Japan's security and commercial interests. At the beginning of the process, the Vice Foreign Minister affirmed this direction, saying that "ODA will play a role in security-related fields."<sup>47</sup>

Among the four principles of the ODA Charter (which was approved by the Cabinet in 1992 and revised in 2003) was that "any use of

ODA for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts should be avoided." In the new Development Cooperation Charter, although the idea of avoiding the use of aid for military purposes was maintained, a sentence was added that opens up ways to support armed forces or members of armed forces in recipient countries:

Avoidance of any use of development cooperation for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts:

Japan will avoid any use of development cooperation for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts. In case the armed forces or members of the armed forces in recipient countries are involved in development cooperation for non-military purposes such as public welfare or disaster-relief purposes, such cases will be considered on a case-by-case basis in light of their substantive relevance. (Emphasis added)<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Akio Takayanagi, "Japan: Recent Trends in Aid Policy and Technical Cooperation," *The Reality of Aid 2016*.

<sup>47</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, April 1, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> *Government of Japan, "Development Cooperation Charter: For Peace, Prosperity and a Better Future for Everyone," 2015.*

Despite the Vice Foreign Minister's statement that aid would play a role in security-related fields, the Charter that was finalized after the debates allowed aid for armed forces or their personnel only in cases of public welfare or disaster-response purposes. CSOs, however, remain concerned and express the fear that the government will expand the scope of its military-related aid. They are also concerned that equipment provided for non-military purposes could be converted to military purposes in the future.

Three years after the new Charter was announced, it is important to raise the question: what has really taken place? As I will describe below, there were cases that ODA was provided for projects that involved the recipient countries' armed forces or their members, mostly in projects related to disaster prevention. In addition, there have been several big projects that supported Asian countries' marine coast guards.

At the ODA Policy Council of the NGO-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regular Consultation Meetings in July 2017,<sup>49</sup> the militarization of aid was one of the issues that were discussed, and MoFA disclosed a list of aid projects and programmes that involved the recipient countries' armed forces or their members, as well as a list of major projects and programmes that are related to anti-terrorism, public security and maritime security.<sup>50</sup>

## 2. Aid Projects and Programmes Involving Recipient Countries' Military or Their Personnel

According to the MoFA's list, there have been 23 projects and programmes that involved recipient countries' militaries or their personnel after the Development Cooperation Charter was announced in February 2015. Table 1 shows the allocation of the 23 projects and programmes.

In its notes, the list explicitly says that at the planning phase the MoFA checks the objectives of the projects and programmes based on the principle of "avoidance of any use of development cooperation for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts." During the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases, the MoFA again checks to ensure that the projects or programmes are not used for military purposes.

In Table 1, we can see that a little more than half of the projects and programmes fall

under the category of disaster prevention.

In 20 out of the 23 projects and programmes, military personnel were among the participants in training programmes, or the military was among the beneficiaries together with various ministries and departments. Out of the three cases in which the military was directly supported, two were for supporting the military band of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and one was a case in which the military was in charge of disaster prevention. The three in Indonesia and Malaysia for coast guard improvement are for improving capacity for information gathering, and military members were among the participants.

While military personnel were among the beneficiaries of a many ODA-funded projects and programmes, so far, in these cases, the principle of preventing Japan's aid from being used for military purposes or for aggravating

<sup>49</sup> In Japan, regular policy dialogues among CSOs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA: the implementing agency of Japan's ODA programs) have been institutionalized since the late 1990s. The "NGO-Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regular Consultation Meetings" has two subcommittees: ODA Policy Council and the Partnership Promotion Committee. The former discusses aid policy while the latter is concerned with the MoFA's support schemes for CSOs. Both meet three times a year and a General Meeting is held once a year. The NGO-JICA consultations are held four times a year.

<sup>50</sup> The list is accessible at the MoFA's website, although available only in the Japanese language.

international conflicts has been upheld. CSOs should, however, remain vigilant and be on the lookout for efforts of the Japanese government to expand the scope of its

military-related aid – as well as for efforts to use for military purposes certain equipment or knowledge that were originally provided for non-military purposes through aid.

	Social Development	Disaster Prevention	Administrative Capacity and Rule of Law	Maritime Security	Making Maps	Others
<b>Bahamas</b>	1					
<b>Bangladesh</b>		1			1	
<b>Bolivia</b>		1				
<b>Colombia</b>	1					
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>			1			
<b>Ecuador</b>		2				
<b>Ecuador and Peru</b>		1				
<b>Indonesia</b>				2		
<b>Malaysia</b>				1		
<b>Myanmar</b>			1			
<b>Nepal</b>		1				
<b>Peru</b>		1				
<b>PNG</b>						2
<b>Sri Lanka</b>		1				
<b>Thailand</b>		1			1	
<b>Turkmenistan</b>		2				
<b>Turkmenistan and 3 Central Asian Countries</b>		1				
<b>TOTAL</b>	2	12	2	3	2	2

**Table 1. Allocation of Aid Projects and Programmes Involving Military or Military Personnel**

## 3. Aid for Coast Guards in the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia

The list of major projects and programmes related to anti-terrorism, public security and maritime security has the names of 32 projects and programmes in 16 countries. Most of the projects in African countries (Cote

d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Mali, Mauritania, Kenya and Rwanda) and in Middle East-North African countries (Jordan and Morocco) are for public security, in which the Nigerian project against human trafficking can be included. Projects

for countries in South Asia (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Maldives) are aimed at several objectives: anti-terrorism, anti-pirates, maritime safety and security, and prevention of crimes such as drug trafficking. All projects related to anti-terrorism, public security and maritime security in the above-mentioned countries are provided in the form of financial grants or technical cooperation.

The most contentious or controversial projects are probably a loan project for Vietnam (signed in June 2017 consisting of 38.4 billion Yen) and another loan project for the Philippines (October 2016 consisting of 16.5 billion Yen).

The objective of the project for Vietnam called “Maritime Security and Safety Capacity Improvement Project” is described by the MoFA as follows:

This project is to provide six patrol boats to the Viet Nam Coast Guard. This cooperation is expected to contribute to enhancing the capacity of the Viet Nam Coast Guard to appropriately implement coast guard activities such as sea rescues and maritime law enforcement in Viet Nam’s territorial waters, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and so forth.<sup>51</sup>

The objective of the “Maritime Safety Capability Improvement Project for the Philippine Coast Guard (Phase II),” according to the MoFA, is to construct two patrol ships to be used by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and aims to improve the PCG’s capabilities to quickly and appropriately respond to maritime incidents, such as search and rescue, and maritime law enforcement. It is expected that this cooperation will contribute to the enhancement of the maritime safety of the Republic of Philippines.<sup>52</sup>

It is important to note that when discussions to revise the ODA Charter started in spring 2014, there was a media report saying that the Abe government’s intention was to lift the ban on the use of ODA for military purposes in order to support, for example, the Philippines and Vietnam, in constructing military-civilian ports – although this was later denied by the government. In Vietnam’s

case, the coast guard was part of the navy until 2013 but was later restructured as an organization independent from the military. According to a media report, Japan proposed the restructuring because it was banned from supporting the military under the previous ODA Charter.<sup>54</sup> During the process of the charter’s revision, there were also speculations that one reason why the Abe government wanted aid to play a role in military-related fields is to prevent a similar incident – asking a recipient country to restructure its governmental agencies – from happening again.

Although not included in the list that the MoFA provided the NGO-MoFA Consultation meeting, an Exchange of Note between the governments of Malaysia and Japan was signed on 16 November 2016 which provided two patrol vessels previously used by the Japan Coast Guard which were scheduled to retire to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA). It also provided grant aid for the improvement of Malaysia’s maritime safety and security.<sup>55</sup> While the grant aid is described as part of the ODA, the provision of the two patrol vessels is not.

What Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan have in common are territorial disputes with China. Malaysia, too, is a country that faces the South China Sea. The Abe government has been considering China as a threat, and responding to China’s growing influence has been one of the key issues in its foreign policy. In recent years, China has shown increasing aggressiveness in asserting its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and countries affected have been responding by asserting their own. The provision of patrol ships to Vietnam and the Philippines and the grant for Malaysia could be considered as examples that show how Japan’s ODA is aligned with its security interests.

It should also be noted that the Abe government has been expanding technical cooperation with, and providing equipment to, the militaries of the Philippines and Vietnam. Although these efforts will not be counted as part of the ODA, they are aligned with the Abe government’s security thrust.

## CONCLUSIONS

The securitization of aid often pertains to the linking of security interests with aid for failed and fragile states in the context of the “War on Terror” which the US launched after September 11, 2001.<sup>56</sup> While the securitization of Japan’s aid occurred in this context,<sup>57</sup> under the Abe government, there is an emerging trend where aid is being used as a countermeasure to China’s increasing global influence.

The securitization of aid occurred under the ODA Charter, despite its explicit ban on all military-related aid. It is expected to continue with the ODA Charter’s revision into the new Development Cooperation

Charter which, while on principle maintaining the ban on military-related aid, explicitly allows aid related to social development and disaster relief – a backdoor through which securitization of aid can enter more fully.

While the change from the ODA Charter to the Development Cooperation Charter has so far not amounted to the dramatic shift that observers feared, it remains to be seen what such outright revisions in policies towards military-related aid will bring about – especially amidst changing geopolitical realities.

51 [http://www.mofo.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_001617.html](http://www.mofo.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001617.html) (accessed 27 February 2018)

52 [http://www.mofo.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_001323.html](http://www.mofo.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001323.html) (accessed 27 February 2018)

53 *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 April 2014.

54 *Sankei Shimbun*, 8 May 2013.

55 [http://www.mofo.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_001355.html](http://www.mofo.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001355.html) (accessed 27 February 2018)

56 Stephen Brown and Jörn Grävingholt eds., *The Securitization of Foreign Aid*. Houndmills: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2016.

57 Pedro Amakasu Raposo and David M. Potter, “Peace-building and the ‘Human Securitization’ of Japan’s Foreign Aid” in Brown and Grävingholt eds, *op.cit.*

# Development Cooperation and Development Plans for Merauke

*Institute of Policy Research and Advocacy*

Merauke is one of the districts of Indonesia's Papua province with a total area of 4,469,841 hectares and consists of a potential area for agricultural commodities. The development plan for Merauke had been designed since the year 2007, under the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), known as the Merauke Integrated Rice Estate or MIRE, established by the Merauke Regent, John Gluba Gebze.<sup>58</sup>

The long-term objectives of MIRE are to (a) establish Merauke district as the center for agricultural/food production in Eastern Indonesia (KTI) to provide support for attaining national food security; (b) to establish Merauke district as a competitive agropolitan area, both domestic and international; and (c) to attain the social welfare rate of farmers with the minimum income of US \$1.500/capita/year.<sup>59</sup>

In 2010, SBY published the Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development (MP3EI) 2011-2025. MP3EI is intended to drive the realization of high, balanced, fair and sustainable economic growth. It also intends to enable Indonesia to place itself at the top ten advanced economies in the world by 2025 and the world's top six by the year 2050.<sup>60</sup> This master plan has two key factors: acceleration and expansion. It was hoped that the master plan would enable the country to accelerate the improvement of various existing development programs, especially in boosting value added in the prime economic sectors, increasing infrastructure development and energy supply, as well as developing human resources and science and technology.

The MP3EI has identified eight main programs and 22 main economic activities. In addition, it identified six economic corridors as growth centers that are expected to boost economic development throughout the nation. This will enable investors and businesses to clearly choose their desired sectors and preferred regions according to their business interests and specializations.

The implementation strategy of MP3EI will integrate three main elements:

1. Developing the regional economic potential in six Indonesian Economic Corridors: Sumatra Economic Corridor, Java Economic Corridor, Kalimantan Economic Corridor, Sulawesi Economic Corridor, Bali–Nusa Tenggara Economic Corridor, and Papua–Kepulauan Maluku Economic Corridor;
2. Strengthening national connectivity locally and internationally;
3. Strengthening human resource capacity and national science and technology to support the development of main programs in every economic corridor.<sup>61</sup>

The development themes of each corridor in the acceleration and expansion of economic development are as follows:

- Sumatra Economic Corridor – “Center for Production and Processing of Natural Resources and of the Nation's Energy Reserves”
- Java Economic Corridor – “Driver for National Industry and Service Provision”
- Kalimantan Economic Corridor – “Center for Production and Processing of National Mining and Energy Reserves”
- Sulawesi Economic Corridor – “Center for Production and Processing of National Agricultural, Plantation, Fisheries, Oil and Gas, and Mining”
- Bali–Nusa Tenggara Economic Corridor – “Gateway for Tourism and National Food Support”
- Papua–Kepulauan Maluku Economic Corridor – “Center for Development of Food, Fisheries, Energy, and National Mining”

As stated above, the Economic Corridor of Papua and Maluku Islands is focused on becoming the “Center for Development of Food, Fisheries, Energy, and National Mining.” The development strategy for it is focused on five main economic activities, which are Food Agriculture, Copper, Nickel, Oil and Gas, and Fisheries.

One of the key programs of this economic corridor is the creation of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) as a way to respond to predictions of food and energy crises. The Merauke area has been chosen to become the center due to its flat terrain and fertile land. MIFEE envisions the large-scale cultivation of crops in adopting the concept of agriculture as an industrial system based on science and technology, capital, modern organization and management.<sup>62</sup>

The area assigned for MIFEE development is has the size of 1.2 million hectares and consists of 10 clusters of Agricultural Production Centers or KSP. The locations of the KSPs can be seen in the figure above. MIFEE's short-term development priority (2011-2014) is to develop clusters I to IV, covering an area of 228,023 hectares. The four KSP clusters being developed are: Greater Merauke, Kali Kumb, Yeinan, and Bian located in the Merauke Regency.

The medium term (2015-2019) development will be directed at developing areas of agricultural production centers for food crops, horticulture, animal husbandry, plantation, and aquaculture in Clusters Okaba, Ilwayab, Tubang, and Tabonji. Meanwhile, the long term (2020-2030) development will be directed at the establishment of a central production area for food crops, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries and plantation in KSP clusters Nakias and Selil.<sup>63</sup>

One of MIFEE's priorities is to meet the country's sugar demand by ensuring sugar

58 Jong, Hans Nicholas, 2015, “Food estate project may turn Papua into forest fire hotbed” <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/10/30/food-estate-project-may-turn-papua-forest-fire-hotbed.html>

59 P. 325, Manikmas, Made Oka A. “Merauke Integrated Rice Estate (MIRE): The Awakening of Food Security and Food Sovereignty from the Eastern Part of Indonesia.” Analisis Kebijakan Pertanian. Volume 8 No. 4, Desember 2010: 323-338

60 P. 8, Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Indonesia Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025

61 *Ibid.* p. 10

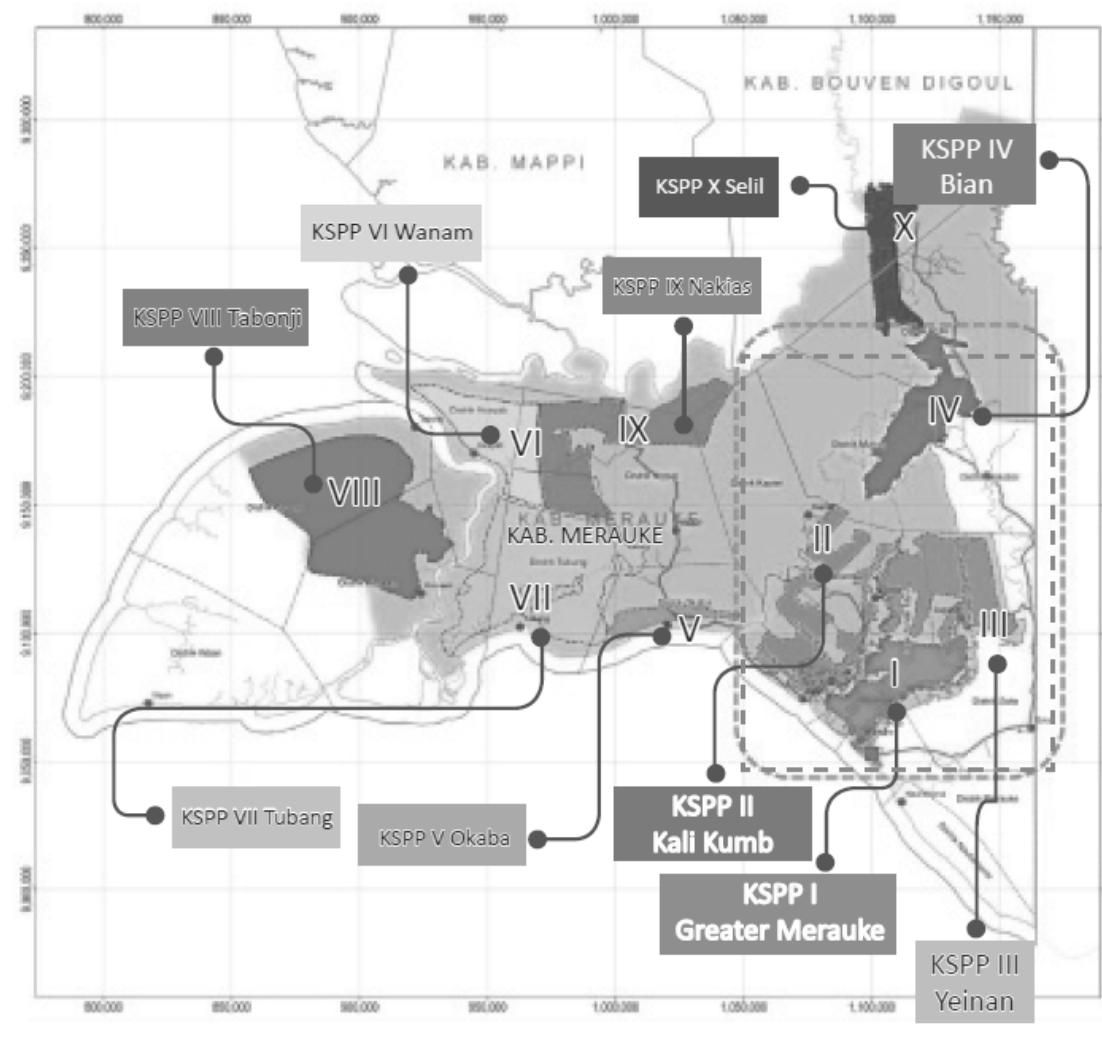
62 P. 158, Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Indonesia Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025

63 p. 159, Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Indonesia Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025

and sugar cane production. Papua has the potential to become a major producer of sugar cane, having 500,000 hectares of land area allotted for the crop's production. This is the largest land area outside of Java that is devoted to sugar cane, making Papua home to 47 percent of land area for sugar cane in Indonesia other than Java. Aside from sugar cane, the non-food material that will be produced in MIFEE is palm oil. Indonesia is the largest palm oil producer in the world, producing 43 percent of the total world production of crude palm oil.

MIFEE development requires infrastructure support that includes the following:

- Preparation of maintenance and development plans for water resources infrastructure networks and swamp reclamation;
- Development of service and collection-distribution centers for agricultural products;
- Development of a sea port in Merauke and docks along the Kalimaro River and the Bian River;



**KSPP on MIFEE Grand Design**

Source: Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025, p.158

KSPP	Area	Commodity
<b>KSPP-1 Greater Merauke</b>	44, 239 Ha	Rice, corn, padi gogo (prime variant)
<b>KSPP-2 Kali Kumb</b>	50, 140 Ha	Sugar cane, livestock, corn, ground nut and soybean
<b>KSPP-3 Yeinan</b>	80, 717 Ha	Corn, ground nut, soybean, fruits and livestock
<b>KSPP-4 Bian</b>	52, 926 Ha	Ground nut, palm, fruits and livestock
<b>KSPP-5 Okaba</b>	27, 705 Ha	Rice and livestock
<b>KSPP-6 Wanam</b>	112, 599 Ha	Fisheries, corn, sago and rice and livestock
<b>KSPP-7 Tubang</b>	295, 904 Ha	Livestock, rice, sago and livestock
<b>KSPP-8 Tabonji</b>	315, 142 Ha	Livestock, rice and sago
<b>KSPP-9 Nakias</b>	173, 971 Ha	Corn, ground nut, soybean, rice and livestock
<b>KSPP-10 Selil</b>	65, 280 Ha	Palm and livestock

Source: Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025, p. 159

- Development of routes connecting palm oil plantations to mills and port locations;
- Improvement and development of roads and bridges in each KSPP;
- Rehabilitation and development of a water system in each KSPP;
- Development of an agribusiness terminal, storage and export port in Serapuh and Wogikel;
- Continued development of the Merauke Ocean Fishing Port and the Merauke Port;
- Development of an organic fertilizer plant in Wasur, Serapuh, Tanah Miring SP VII, Wapeko, Onggay and Sota; as well as the development of the ammonia urea project in Tangguh;
- Development of biomass-based electricity in Merauke and Tanah Miring.<sup>64</sup>
- Preparation of quality human resources through manpower training and capacity-building for universities;
- Provision of capital assistance and agricultural cultivation technology to farmer groups;
- Establishment of research and development facilities for agricultural technology, livestock and fisheries in Merauke, as well as the procurement of agricultural equipment and machinery (tractors, planters, reapers, power threshers, mini combine, water pumps);
- Establishment of Agriculture Vocational Training Center and Agriculture Labor Training Center in each KSPP;
- Preparation of cultivation technology for agriculture and plantation-based science and technology (pre- and post-harvest) in Merauke.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to regulatory requirements and infrastructure support improvements, MIFEE development requires the enhancements in human resources and science and technology, such as:

Based on the above description, although MIFEE focuses on 10 clusters of KSPP's, it is also closely related with other infrastructure and connectivity projects. In terms of

64 p. 161, Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Indonesia Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025

65 p. 161, Ibid.

Muting District, the related infrastructure development project is the Road Improvement in Merauke-Muting consisting of 204 kilometers (see Table below).

According to the SBY administration, the MP3EI, including MIFEE, is not intended to replace the National Mid-Term Development Plan or the RPJMN or the national and regional development processes currently ongoing. On the contrary, the MP3EI functions as a

complementary working document for these development plans. After Joko Widodo was elected president in October 2014, however, the MP3EI, including MIFEE, was integrated into the National Mid-Term Development Plan (RPJMN 2015-2019). In the RPJMN, MIFEE was renamed Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus (KEK) which means “Special Economic Zones.” The 10 clusters of MIFEE are still stated in the document, implying that it is still the same development plan, the MIFEE plan under MP3EI.

## INDONESIA INFRASTRUCTURE GUARANTEE FUND (IIGF) AND THE WORLD BANK

The MP3EI includes US\$ 470 billion in investments that, to a large extent, is envisaged to be supplied by the private sector through public-private partnerships.<sup>66</sup> To provide more assurance to private investors, the government established the Indonesia Infrastructure Guarantee Fund (IIGF) in December 2009. The IIGF is an independent State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) that is 100 percent owned by the Government of Indonesia (GOI). IIGF was established under Government Regulation No. 35-2009 to be the sole institution — or the “single window” — for appraising, structuring, and processing claim payment and providing government guarantees for infrastructure Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects in the country.<sup>67</sup>

Investments under the MP3EI scheme, however, did not show satisfying results. Therefore, in 2012, the directors of the World Bank

approved a new project to support the newly-established IIGF. The World Bank project, also known as the Indonesia Infrastructure Guarantee Fund Project (IGFP), aims to help the IIGF appraise and supervise PPP projects. First, the component will provide technical assistance to the project in order to enhance the capacity of contracting government agencies to prepare PPPs, with a total budget of US\$ 4.6 million. Second, the World Bank will help the IIGF to finance guarantees if these require additional capital, with a total of up to US\$ 25 million. The World Bank will appraise the PPP projects which will receive IIGF guarantees that are financed by loans, and in the process the World Bank will transfer expertise and operational know-how to the IIGF.<sup>68</sup>

Members of the private sector who would like to invest in the MP3EI infrastructure projects will be able to receive guarantees from the

No.	Infrastructure Type	Project Name	Investment (IDR Tn)	Construction Period	Location
9	Road	Road Improvement Timika - Nabire (407.7 km)	631	2011-2014	Papua
10	Port	Serui Port	567	2011-2014	Papua
11	Road	Road Improvement Merauke - Muting (204 km)	388	2011-2014	Papua
12	Road	Road Improvement Manokwari - Bintuni (257 km)	365	2011-2014	West Papua

Source: Dezan Shira & Associates, ASEAN Briefing: Master Plan for Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia's Economic Development 2011-2025 P. 206 (appendix)

66 <https://www.indonesia-investments.com/news/todays-headlines/indonesias-mp3ei-masterplan-received-idr-647.46-trillion-in-investments/item1058?>

67 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/brief/faq-indonesia-infrastructure-guarantee-fund#1>

68 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2012/09/11/world-class-guarantees-better-infrastructure>

69 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/brief/faq-indonesia-infrastructure-guarantee-fund#1>

70 <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/indonesia/brief/faq-indonesia-infrastructure-guarantee-fund#1>

71 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/999761517330922566/pdf/IL-RES-DATA-EXT-P118916-01-30-2018-1517330913276.pdf>

IIGF. There are two types of guarantees offered by the IIGF (that are supported by the IGFP/World Bank):

1. IIGF guarantees which are backed by IIGF's own capital.
2. World Bank-supported IIGF guarantees which are backed by World Bank financing. These guarantees are not World Bank Group guarantees, but rather IIGF guarantees backed by financial support provided under the IGFP. World Bank-supported IIGF guarantees will only support projects that would be eligible for World Bank Group support.<sup>69</sup>

In the PPP scheme, the related government agency, as the Contracting Agency (CA), will be the ones responsible for making inquiries to the IIGF regarding potential guarantee coverage. Once the CA submits the application to the IIGF, the process that will ensue is as follows:

- i. IIGF screens the CA's submission to determine whether the project is eligible to proceed and what risks need to be covered;
- ii. IIGF conducts detailed appraisal on whether to provide guarantees, based on CA's pre-feasibility study and IIGF's own analysis;
- iii. IIGF structures the guarantee package;
- iv. IIGF issues the guarantee and, subsequently, monitors the project during construction and operations to ensure that relevant parties implement the project according to their respective responsibilities under the Guarantee Agreement (GA) and Recourse Agreement (RA). In the event of a guarantee call, IIGF will undertake claim assessment and make the associated guarantee payment to the guarantee recipient. A recourse mechanism subsequently enables the IIGF or the Ministry of Finance (MOF) to recover such payments from the concerned CA.<sup>70</sup>

The World Bank project, the IGFP, was scheduled to start on 11 September 2012 and operate until 31 March 2018, which was later extended to 31 December 2018.<sup>71</sup> Although the process of obtaining the financial guarantee from the IIGF requires the CA to ensure that the standards meet the required IIGF standards of procedures, there are still conflicts found on the ground.

Members of the private sector investing in infrastructure projects under the MP3EI plan, in this case under the MIFEE plan, are still engaged in conflicts with local communities and indigenous communities within the area of their business operations. Conflicts between the companies and local communities that arise in the process of developing infrastructure are often handled through the use of military or security forces. The next article will explain further the impacts of development plans to local communities in Merauke.

# Military and Police Interference in Land Disputes in the Agro-industry Megaproject in Muting, Merauke

*Foundation for Papuan Village Children*

Largely because of reforms implemented in the previous era, there has been a critical awareness among various indigenous communities or indigenous and tribal peoples in almost all provinces in Indonesia of their position, rights and ownership in the Unitary State of the Republic. In the past, globalization, multiculturalism and democracy were contrasted with the concept of “Indonesian” nationalism. Political and economic globalization was contrasted with protectionism and false capitalism, while multiculturalism was reduced to the philosophy of “Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity),” and democracy was practiced in the form of corporatism and patron-clientism.

The effort to reinvent the existence and identity of some indigenous and tribal peoples who have undergone a process of elimination and social conservation, has been able to gain sympathy and support from a broad range of elements in the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the government. The same goes for efforts to maintain the existence and identity of some indigenous and tribal peoples who feel threatened by development processes in their territory. In the implementation of laws, however, the people still experience injustice in various forms. One of these forms is land grabbing in the name of economic development.

This form is reinforced by the practice of economic diplomacy prominently demonstrated by the Indonesian president at three international meetings around 2014, namely: the 2016 APEC Summit in Beijing, China on 10-11 November; the 25th ASEAN Summit in Naypidaw, Myanmar on November

12-13; and the G-20 Summit in Brisbane, Australia on November 15-16. The president used these forums to forge economic partnerships in infrastructure projects and other areas of economic cooperation. The government’s economic diplomacy has three goals: attracting foreign investment, opening up overseas markets, and bringing in foreign tourists.

One of the areas in Papua that is being targeted for foreign investments is Merauke. The national government believes that the region, because of its advantageous geographical location, is a potential new industrial area, which can become the largest in Indonesia. There are 80 companies that are ready to invest in the area, with activities in food crops, oil palm, sugar cane, and other economic sectors.

Government states that the main objective of the agro-industry megaproject in Merauke is to prevent a national food crisis, which is predicted to occur in 2020. To realize the objective, the central government initially responded to Merauke’s regional policy under the leadership of John Gluba Gebze (2005-2010), which was “Merauke as an agropolitan city.” Various regulations in the agrarian sector were formulated by the central government to realize the mission. These are Governmental Regulation No. 28 of 2008, Presidential Instruction No. 5 of 2008, and Governmental Regulation No. 18 of 2010.

This large-scale investment market was inaugurated by then-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in Kurik District, Merauke, in 2010. The program was named

the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE). Together with other national policies, the industry megaproject received full support from the provincial and regency governments in Papua. MIFEE is also part of the consolidated national development master plan called the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesia’s Economic Development (MP3EI) of 2011-2025. It has a project value estimated at USD 5 billion, and has the objective of increasing agricultural output and to making Indonesia a self-sufficient country in staple foods.<sup>72</sup>

MIFEE, however, threatens a land area of 4.6 million hectares with deforestation and destruction.<sup>73</sup> Indonesia’s president Joko Widodo mentioned the figure in Wapeko Village, Kurik District in Merauke, in a statement made on 11 May 2015. He also said that potential investors have been identified for 1.26 hectares of the land.<sup>74</sup> This potential

for environmental damage is a direct threat to the indigenous people of Merauke, who are traditional societies highly dependent on the forest as a source of life and economy.

Protests against MIFEE come from various elements of Papuan society. At the national level, protests also come from various non-governmental organizations in the area of environment and human rights. These NGOs regularly publish their investigations on violations being caused, and forecasts of the impacts that will be caused, by MIFEE. A number of NGOs between 2011 and 2013 reported to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) about MIFEE, and received a response recommending a change of approach in the development project. The Indonesian government, however, has yet to take measures recognizing and protecting the rights of the Papuans in Merauke.

## JAKARTA’S POLICIES CAUSE AN INCREASE IN HUMAN-RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MERAUKE

The presence of the military and police tasked to secure the companies’ activities has made things worse. Companies have become increasingly free to exploit forests without fear of infringing on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, despite numerous petitions and protests over human-rights violations.

The local government of the Merauke regency has the administrative responsibility for various investments in the MIFEE megaproject. It has not, however, showed concern for various reports made by the community and human rights watchdogs regarding MIFEE’s impact on indigenous peoples, as well as the credible allegations of human-rights violations committed against community members by the military in defending the company’s security.

On 13 July 2017, Frederik Gebze, an elected district regent of Merauke, made a statement asking various NGOs to stop harassing investors in the area. According to him, investors who operate in the area are needed by the Merauke local government, as it does not have the budget to build facilities and regional infrastructure. There have been allegations that NGOs have waged a black propaganda campaign against investments in Merauke.

Gebze’s statement does not square with Papua’s status as a special autonomous region, which actually receives double of

<sup>72</sup> *Manis dan Pahitnya Tebu, Suara Masyarakat Adat Malind dari Merauke Papua*, 2013: 7. Forest People Programme Report, PUSAKA & Rights Resources.

<sup>73</sup> Metro TV, Jokowi’s speech in Kurik, Merauke.

<sup>74</sup> AntaraTV, Jokowi’s speech in the harvest in Wapeko Village, Merauke 2015

the state's financial support compared with other regions. Ditingkan province's financial mechanism mandates a special autonomy fund division of 80-20 where the district gets 80 percent while the provincial government manages 20 percent. This means there is no reason for districts to say that they do not have an infrastructure development fund. The Special Autonomy Fund does not include the regional budget (called APBD), the Special Allocation Fund (called DAK), and the general allocation funds (called DAU) that are granted by the central government every year.

The strongly-worded statement of the Merauke regent is a defense of investors who also defended him as the winner in the bupati (regent) election in the same year. The introduction of Pusaka Jakarta Foundation's March 2015 research titled Atlas Sawit Papua describes a close relationship between local government officials and investors. Investors must undergo a mechanism of gradual inspection, first at the level of the district, then at the level of the province, and finally at the level of relevant ministries. According to Pusaka, the number of location permits tend to increase in time for the election – during the end of the election or before the election of a regional head.

The statement is also in line with a strong national development policy that has dictated regional development priorities and has made it difficult for the region to reject it. The Merauke regent's statement is part of an effort to follow the policy trend set by the central government for the whole country.

In his third government, President Jokowi has made various efforts to facilitate investors' operations in Indonesia, issuing a national policy for this. He launched economic policy of volume XVI on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (BEI), which covers the efforts of both the central and regional level governments. At the end of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Beijing, China on 10 November 2014, Jokowi asked APEC countries to invest in Indonesia.

The European Union has criticized Indonesia for several times over the spread of oil palm companies in the country, and the impact of these on local communities. Jokowi

responded by justifying his economic policy, calling on the EU to not discriminate against oil palm, and to not damage Indonesia's image as a palm oil producer.

For the central government in Jakarta, Papua is one of the areas in the country that has received full attention. This is shown by the eighth time that Jokowi has visited the island to inaugurate infrastructure development, meet the public directly in an open field, promise settlement of cases of gross human-rights violations, and so forth.

Within three years of his presidency, Jokowi has already visited Merauke twice. This also signifies the importance given to self-sufficiency in food, for which the region's role is crucial, and to the success of joint efforts there. As state apparatuses, local governments and the military must perform their functions in accordance with the mandate given by the government.

For every five kilometers along the 700-kilometer road between Merauke and Boven Digoel a military outpost has been built. Aside from being part of efforts to secure a territory, their construction is also part of an effort to terrorize the people who have been struggling to keep their land and who have been demanding their rights to the government. Because the area is remote, there is no telecommunication access nor adequate transportation, making it very hard for community members to defend themselves from possible human-rights violations. This also presents a downside to investors, as the location will not attract job seekers with the skills needed by the company and will hinder people from competing for work.

The chief of the police and the army at the district level undergo a rotation system after a short period of time, especially if there is a report of their involvement in incidents of human-rights violations in the community. On 08 December 2017, the authors got a confirmation of the information from Pastor Niko Rumbayan, who explained that there had been a change of police and military leadership in Muting. The rotation system was implemented with the objective of eliminating the interference of higher agencies in police and military duties at the lower levels.

On 11 December 2017, Merauke students conducted a peaceful demonstration to commemorate International Human Rights Day, which falls on the 10th of December, in front of the Merauke regional people's representative council (DPRD) office. In that demonstration, students expressed alarm over the state of human rights in South Papua. Students urged

the local government to close the MIFEE megaproject because it has been proven to be a failure in bringing development to the indigenous Papuans in the southern part of Papua, more particularly Merauke. The demonstration only succeeded in meeting a local government board member, who did not provide a significant response to the students' demands.

## THE MAHUZE CLAN'S STRUGGLE IN MUTING

The village of Muting, center of the district, is located in the northern part of Merauke regency. It was originally inhabited by the Mahuze clan from the Malind tribe. As the village directly borders Boven Digoel regency in the north, it also became home to several indigenous tribes from the southern part of Boven Digoel regency. Nowadays, Muting is not only inhabited by tribes of indigenous Papuans, but also by non-Papuan peoples who arrived in the area through the transmigration program.

Historically, the tribes living in the area, straddle between these two regencies, observe traditional boundaries of indigenous lands that have existed for generations, namely the boundary between the Mahuze and Ndiken clans of the Malind tribe that borders the areas of the other tribes living in the area, such as the Mandobo, Muyu, Awyu, and Jair. Companies working in the framework of the MIFEE megaproject generally do not understand the local situation, and hence often raise new problems.

As an example, the company PT Inti Agrindo has entered into a transaction to obtain the rights over the customary land of the Ndiken clan of the Malind tribe, which is also claimed by the Mandobo tribe. The company, having obtained the formal permit, ignored the demands of the Mandobo tribe and continued expanding, resulting in the tribe's protests against the company. The company then decided to secure its assets by using the military and the police.

This issue, a potential area for conflict, however, is not regarded as a priority by various parties, such as the government, corporations,

and the local law enforcement agencies. It is alleged that the lack of concern for this issue is deliberate, in order to facilitate the operations of the dozens of companies under the auspices of the MIFEE, to control land through manipulation rather than persuasion, and to negotiate the lowest prices with the tribes and clans in violation of customary law.

The Mahuze clan of the Malind tribe in Muting considers the land as their "mother" who feeds them for life; even when they die, they believe that the land will receive them back. Thus, destroying their traditional forests is a sin to their ancestors. For them, the land, the forest, and everything in it were created only once by God and given to their ancestors, and if they sell the land, God will not create such land again for the second time.

The belief in the sanctity of the forests makes the Mahuze clan stubbornly refuse every offer from the company – such as providing monthly foodstuffs and Christmas presents, official positions in the company for Mahuze leaders, and a 70-30 profit sharing between the company and the landowners. The Mahuze declined to accept even the foodstuffs, as they regard this act as some kind of "bribery" aimed at winning their hearts in order to yield their lands.

Despite this, the Mahuze clan has lost 6,000 hectares of forests to PT Agrima Cipta Persada (ACP) company without the knowledge of all clan members. According to Agus Daewo, the agreement with the company was signed unilaterally by the former clan secretary. The agreement

provided a legal basis for the company to use the communal forest and to even trespass into forest areas that are not included in the agreement.<sup>75</sup>

The payment of Rp 350 million from the company as ex gratia payment, or out of a sense of moral obligation, to the clan secretary is being returned to PT ACP. The company through its public relations office, however, rejected the refund and stated that the company leadership will negotiate with the clan once again. As quoted, “There, Pak Edi stated that if the Mahuze clan wants to refund the money, they should write a letter, an affidavit. We wrote that, and on the third day, we went to the company. I was there myself and brought Rp 304 million to the PT ACP office, but Pak Edi did not want to receive the money.” (AD, 27 June 2016). This rejection of the refund meant that the company could legally continue to destroy the clan’s forests.

The clan chairman and secretary have been involved in disputes with the company in trying to prevent the destruction of the forests. The community often fought with the contractors, who insisted that the latter’s owner was a military officer in the Merauke District Military Command.<sup>76</sup> Even the police chief of Muting, Joko Setiawan, is also a contractor employed by the company. As a result, various public complaints to the police who are supposed to protect, nurture, and support the public, all fall into deaf ears. (Picture 1)<sup>77</sup>

A number of rallies and protests have been held by the Mahuze clan to defend their traditional lands. Along the 20 kilometers between the Trans Papua road to Muting Village, several warning

75 Interview with Agus Daewo on 27 June 2016.

76 Recording on 10 October 2015, archive of the chairman and secretary of the clan.

77 Writer’s documentation

78 *Sasi* is a form of customary prohibition in Papuan indigenous society, which usually takes the form of a warning sign that is planted with a ritual in a certain location. In Anthropology this is regarded as part of local knowledge or local wisdom.

79 Interview with Agus Mahuze on 26 June 2016.



Picture 1 <sup>77</sup>

signs (*sasi*) have been erected,<sup>78</sup> using 2m x 2m boards, by the Mahuze clan. The signs have the words “Mahuze Customary Land, Not for Oil Palm” written on them. There are at least five such signs in the road. People who do not approve of the *sasi*, however, have deleted several words without the clan’s knowledge.

According to the chief of the Mandobo tribe, there is a conflict of ideas between groups within their society. The community itself has made investigations into the defacing of the signs, but has not found the perpetrator. There are indications of disagreement within the Mahuze clan, and the act may possibly be an attempt to pit the clan against the migrant population, either Papuans from other places or transmigrants.

The Mahuze clan’s stand on PT ACP did not come from nowhere; it is a result of a formal consultation. On 22 September 2015, a meeting took place in the Ulilin district, attended by various groups in society and the government: the head of the Ulilin district and the Muting district (Marman), members of Merauke Regional Parliament, Muting police chief Joko Setiawan, the military commander of Muting, and company representatives. The community, united as a customary law group, emphatically rejected the forests’ destruction without the clan’s permission.

The people demanded that the government bring the director of PT ACP, Arif Widodo, to the meeting, so that public complaints can be submitted directly. They also stated that as long as they have not met the company director, the destruction of the forest must be stopped. At that time, the Muting police chief agreed that the community should meet with the director. He also stated, however, that there should not be a stop to the exploitation of the forest, and this resulted in protests. As things turned out, there would be no meeting with the company director and the forest destruction would continue. This forced the Mahuze clan to erect road barricades on 9 October 2015, as the land right transfer was not approved by all members of the clan.<sup>79</sup>

The Mahuze clan’s firm stand on their ancestral lands makes them the target of

allegations in several cases connected with the company. For example, immediately after the road barricade in 2015, a forest fire occurred in the company’s area. The police summoned the clan’s chairman and secretary to testify on 10 October 2015, just one day after the barricades were erected.

According to witnesses, the distance between the company’s area and the Mahuze residence is very far. Despite this, the clan’s chairman and secretary were questioned at the Office of the Senior Police of Muting. Both of them were placed in different rooms and questioned for several hours to provide information that went into investigation reports. A month later, they were again summoned to provide the same information.

The forest areas that have been cleared contain stacks of dry wood and various barks, which make forest fires possible, particularly at that period, which was a lengthy dry season. The police’s summoning of Mahuze leaders was more than a sign of how the police monitored the activity of the clans who were protesting and barricading. It was a form of shock therapy to, and intimidation of, the Mahuze of Muting Village.

On 16 July 2016, army officers from the Muting Military Rayon Command visited Agustinus Daewo, chief of the Mahuze Besar clan, in his home in Muting Village. The officers invited him to meet with the leadership of the PT ACP, in the plantation office and handed over the “Decree of Primary Cooperative Kartika Setya Jaya, Merauke District Military Command 1707, No. 816/VII/2016, dated 11 July 2016.” The decree was a notice of the permission given to land clearing for PT ACP’s oil palm plantation.

The military thus acts not just as the state security apparatus, but also as an extension of the company – either in maintaining the company’s security interests, or in acting as a contractor to clear indigenous forests on the company’s behalf.

Additionally, other clan groups, even the Indigenous Community Association (LMA) of Muting District, have played an important role in conducting negotiations for land rights

transfer. The LMA held a series of meetings on various occasions and places to entice people to give up their land to the company. Various letters from the LMA that circulate in Muting show differences in the LMA stamp and logo, giving rise to suspicions of manipulation of the association in Muting. For the Malind, especially the Mahuze, no more recognition, much less trust, can be given to the LMA. Various kinds of issues pertaining to the clan's internal affairs are now settled in consultation with the Muting parish priest.

In a meeting in Muting on 25 June 2016 facilitated by Muting LMA chairman Sebastian Ndiken, attended by Capt. Septian, the new military commander, the LMA chairman told the people to relinquish their land to the company, in the name of development and prosperity. Ndiken also told people not to be provoked by the parish priest of Muting, Fr. Niko Rumbayan, who told people not to sell their land. He even incited the public to oust Fr. Niko from Muting Village. In the meeting, all forms of documentation, both picture and sound recording, were prohibited. The chief of the Mandobo tribe who was invited had his camera seized by the customary law police.<sup>80</sup>

The meeting also saw the introduction of the new military commander to the indigenous peoples of Muting. Prior to the meeting, on 23 June, military personnel were seen patrolling the village in full gear. The secretary of the Mahuze clan quoted the commander, Capt. Septian: "Against persons or clans or anyone hindering the company, I am prepared to stand behind the company and I will back the company! Because that is a government program." The clan secretary also said that "That's what he said. So we did not talk, we kept silent." (AM, 26 June 2016)

The security forces' arrogant attempts at intimidation are seen clearly in Muting, and they continue to urge people to follow the will of the company to let go of their land. According to Fr. Rumbayan, who has worked

with the people of Muting for two years, the people are being taken as fools because they do not have enough knowledge about the various regulations on land, and are also offered enticements and taught examples that are not true. For example, they are told, in the meetings held by the government and the military, that the people who would sell their land to the company will become exceedingly rich. They were also told that the people of Borneo who sold their land are now living a prosperous life.<sup>81</sup>

There also is a practice among the indigenous people in which non-Papuans are adopted into the clans. As a result, people who have been adopted can be fully involved in the decision-making processes of the tribes and clans, including those that discuss the buying and selling of land between indigenous peoples and companies. The tendency of persons who have been adopted by indigenous peoples is to encourage the handing over of indigenous lands to the company. This is in fact a manipulation, a fraud that benefits themselves and not the clan.

Among these adoptees are Kasim Naresi and Ridwan Regobola, who were adopted into the Ndiken clan and even got the post of clan secretary. Often, if the adoptee is a former Babinsa or military, he will most likely push for the agenda of the corporations and the military leadership.

An update on the state of the project was expected to be released by the MIFEE leadership in Merauke Regency on 30 July 2016. This researcher found out, however, that there is no separate MIFEE office in the regency; it has been merged with the office of the economics department of the Merauke Regional Planning and Assets Board. The head of the MIFEE, Mit Talubun, has been succeeded by Yosafat and refused to provide information about the issues being faced in the field before the new head is appointed.

80 On 25 June 2016, there was an internal meeting held by the LMA. The customary police seized the camera of Pak Darius, and forbade him from recording voices and pictures of the meeting.

81 Interview with Pastor Niko Rumbayan, MSC, on 27 June 2016.

## BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN MERAUKE AND REGENCIES

There are land disputes not only within the Malind tribe, or between companies and the Mahuze clan, or between the clan and the military. There are also disputes between the Malind who inhabit the border areas of Merauke regency and the tribes of Boven Digoel.

The chief of the Mandobo tribe who lived in Muting said that the company PT Bio Inti Agrindo, which has cleared the forest on the indigenous lands of the Mandobo tribe for oil palm plantations, obtained its approval from the Malind tribe of Merauke. The customary forest areas of the Mandobo, located straddling the boundary between Merauke and Boven Digoel, are now occupied by the company, based on the transfer of rights particularly from the Ndiken clan of the Malind tribe.<sup>82</sup>

Protests made by the Mandobo chief and his people before the company were ignored, because the company claims to have already gained the permission to use the land. In anticipation of the protests, the company premises were secured by the Special Forces Command (Kopassus).

On 05 July 2015 in front of PT Bio Inti Agrindo's office, a resident known as LO who was participating in a protest against the company was intimidated through a warning shot fired above his head. He claimed that the shooting took place when he had an argument with the Kopassus security forces. The Kopassus member, named Kalalu, directed his M-16 rifle to LO's head. When they argued, he fired his gun above LO's head. It was presumed that the soldier emptied all contents of a magazine to frighten the protesters. After the shooting, the bullet casings were recovered by the Kopassus soldier, and only one casing was kept by the residents as evidence. The victim stated, "Yes, they were aiming at us. I was almost shot; my head was almost hit. He aimed the

barrel here (pointing to his head). I dared him to shoot, he raised the barrel a bit and fired, emptying the magazine."

Terror and intimidation are accompanied with verbal attacks that threaten and stigmatize indigenous peoples. "This land belongs to the state, you are Papuan separatists, you should know where you live. In this republic, no one is in power except the military," said a Kopassus soldier to the indigenous Mandobo tribe which remains adamant that the land, being their ancestral land, is theirs.

The Mandobo chief claimed that another terror incident happened earlier in 2013. One evening, Kopassus members and security forces of PT Bio Inti Agrindo came to his house and invited him to attend a meeting, but he refused. The next day it was known that there was no scheduled meeting at all. He also said that companies operating under MIFEE promised that landowners will receive 30 percent of the yield without doing any work. This promise, however, is never realized.

Informants from the community also explain that historically, indigenous lands have been divided by the ancestors of each clan, both Malind and Mandobo, in the border regions. It is known that in ancient times, the Malind and the Mandobo fought against other. In order to make peace, the boundaries of the indigenous lands of the two tribes were set. This story was told from generation to generation among the tribes in the border areas. It is therefore important and necessary to have a clear boundary of customary lands affirmed by the government, so that companies trying to invest in the area can be asked to respect the boundary.

The four major tribes in Boven Digoel – the Mandobo, Muyu, Awyu and Jair, who live in the border area with Merauke – tried to find

82 Interview with Mandobo Chief Darius Nenop on 28 June 2016.



Picture 2 <sup>84</sup>

a way out of the disputes through customary deliberation procedures in Douval village on 28 November 2015. In the meeting, the people referred to history to ascertain the locations of customary lands that have been set for generations. The indigenous groups also declared the land as their mother and prohibited its sale to companies. The meeting resulted in a declaration titled “Declaring the Land as Our Spiritual Mother.”

The Muting parish priest, Fr. Rumbayan, discusses the impacts on people’s livelihood if forests are replaced by oil palm and other plantations. In Holy Masses, he blessed several crosses that were presented to him and that were then placed in every village in Muting District. The one-meter tall signs were erected on their ancestral lands, with the hope that these would prevent evictions or forced sales.<sup>83</sup>

According to chiefs who coordinated the action, the crosses, which double as *sasi* signs, were raised by the Mandobo across their customary land and forests that have not been seized by the company. The Malind in Merauke who want to protect their ancestral lands also did the same. The Mahuze clan of the Malind tribe was well organized and continued to protect what remained of their forests.

The *sasi*, or prohibition of deforestation, assertion of land ownership, and the cross itself, cause debates among people in the customary law communities who have been deceived by the LMA and the company. The debates occur in many occasions. People who support the company in the name of development believe that people who reject the company are anti-development and anti-prosperity. The pastor who pioneered the cross signs is accused of being a provocateur. The LMA of Muting District issued a call to expel the pastor from Muting. The actions of the LMA are seen by the Mandobo tribe and the Mahuze clan as resulting from, and proof of, its collaboration with the company. They no longer trust the chairman of Muting LMA.

The promotional materials disseminated by the company among the indigenous peoples also show warnings of abuse of indigenous peoples. There are images of scantily clad women at the end of each material. These are found in the materials titled “Program for Establishment of Community Plantation Primary Cooperative at the area of PT Papua Agro Lestari by PPA Public Relations S & C Korindo Group,” and “Cooperatives within the Framework of Promotion of Cooperative Formation,” released by the Office of Cooperatives, SMEs, Industry, and Trade of Merauke Regency in 2016.

## PROTECTION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ HUMAN RIGHTS

Indigenous peoples depend on the forests for their life and livelihood. Land, forests, air and water are natural resources that produce their basic human needs and, in Papua, forests are the sources of various foodstuffs. In Papua, among the food provided by the forest include sago and tubers as sources of carbohydrates, also fish, prawns, kangaroo, deer and other sources of protein, as well as fruits and vegetables that provide minerals and vitamins. Forests also provide a variety of other materials, such as wood for building houses, boats, and bows and arrows. Forests also provide a wide range of medicinal plants for the local indigenous communities.

The Malind tribe takes materials from their customary forests to build houses and a variety of family needs. It also gathers medicinal herbs that are processed into traditional medicine to cure illnesses.<sup>85</sup> The Malind, aside from deriving food and shelter from the forests, have a spiritual bond with the latter. The forests are central to their belief system that governs all aspects of their lives – from traditional ceremonies to sacred places, from myths and legends to art and livelihood, among others.<sup>86</sup>

Each of the seven tribes of the Malind has its own major totem: sago for Mahuze, coconut tree for Gebze, kangaroo for Samkakai, cassowary for Kaize, pig for Basik Basik, eagle for Balagaize, and dog for Mahuze. Myths that survive in the Malind community in Merauke are also tied to the forest.

Land use resulting in changes in the Malind’s social life, the entry of companies with a variety of interests, and manipulation supported by the military have often destroyed the kinship system among the seven

major tribes of the Malind. It is important to note that the approach used to the community is two-pronged: persuasive and aggressive. Assimilation and diffusion also continue to undermine the position of indigenous peoples, denying them of any protection.

The condition of the Muting reflects the condition of indigenous peoples in other areas in Papua. They are vulnerable to direct or indirect violence because of the entry of companies and military involvement. The real situation has been documented since the Dutch colonial era up to their integration into Indonesia in 1963. The discrimination and marginalization of indigenous peoples are committed by the state, intentionally or not, in the name of national development.

Attracting investments has the main purpose of increasing state revenues and contributing directly to the community, especially of indigenous peoples, whose land areas are used by companies. In reality, however, landowners could only work and earn low wages as the company’s workers. This is because they do not have the skills needed in the various fields of industry, coupled with low education levels, which reduce competitiveness with local and foreign workers brought in from the outside of Merauke. And when the government has the agenda of converting 4.26 million hectares of forests into MIFEE areas, or even 1.26 million hectares of land for initial use, what will happen to the indigenous peoples? The government should respect indigenous Papuans in accordance with the laws, namely the Special Autonomy Law No. 21 of 2001.

The Government of Papua Province, as an arm of the central government, gives virtually no

83 The photo of the cross *sasi* was taken near the area of PT Bio Inti Agrindo.

84 Writer’s documentation

85 These local knowledge in building houses and making traditional potions are part of ethnoscience.

86 *Hutan Hilang Hidup Menjadi Malang*, YPMD IRJA; 1993.

protection and preference to the indigenous peoples, especially the indigenous Malind. The implementation of Special Autonomy Law No. 21 of 2001 in Papua (Papua Special Autonomy Law) is being questioned. Violations occur despite Chapter I, General Provisions, Article 1 letter i. stating that: “The implementation of specific policies in question are based on the basic values that include the protection and respect of ethics and morals, the basic rights of indigenous peoples, human rights, rule of law, democracy, pluralism, and equality, rights and obligations as a citizen.”

Article 43 of the Papua Special Autonomy Law also clearly affirms the government’s commitment to the protection of, and preference for, the indigenous peoples. In contrast, in its implementation, indigenous peoples are regarded only as objects of development. This confirms the speculation that between the special autonomy bill that was filed and the law that was signed, many substantial changes have occurred.<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, the central government considers the failure of the implementation of the Papua Special Autonomy Law as a failure of the local government and the political elites of Papua. For the central government, the law is a comprehensive solution to problems in the fields of economy, society, culture, and politics. The law also creates a representative body of the Papuan people, the Papuan People’s Assembly or Majelis Rakyat Papua (MRP), which was founded in 2004 by Government Regulation No. 54 of 2004. Chapter I, Article 1 (6) of the regulation states, “MRP is the cultural representation of indigenous Papuans, which has certain powers within the framework of the protection of the rights of the Papuan people based on respect for local customs and culture, empowerment of women, and strengthening of religious harmony.”

The MRP has a status that is equal to the Governor and the Papuan People’s Representative Council (DPR-P). The Special Autonomy Law assigns duties of protection and affirmative action to it. In practice, however, the MRP is regarded as a “toothless”

institution. It does not have adequate powers in decision-making, other than the nomination of policies for the consideration and approval of the provincial government and agencies of the national government related to Papua.<sup>88</sup> In 2010, the MRP was split into two: MRP in Papua Province and West Papua Province. This is seen as a mistake, as the MRP is a cultural institution, not a public administration institution that can be separated with government reorganization.

In 2008, the Government of Papua Province published the Special Regional Regulation (Perdasus) of Papua Province No. 23 of 2008 on the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Individual Rights of Members of Indigenous Peoples of the Land. The special regional regulation is intended to bring political legitimacy to the existence and role of indigenous peoples. However, there is also another intent: highlighting the powers of local governments vis-à-vis the indigenous peoples. This regulation requires that the customary rights of the Papuan indigenous peoples are to be granted based on results of research.

This research is to be carried out on a specific customary community as determined by the regency or city. It will also determine the boundaries of land rights based on customary law. The results are then submitted to the regent or mayors or governor to determine whether or not the community has land rights based on customary law. The indigenous peoples generally do not approve of the regulation, because it is open to the possibility of manipulation that may benefit others. This difference of opinion results in the ineffectiveness of Perdasus No. 23 of 2008. Thus, the operation of the MIFEE megaproject in southern Papua, especially in Merauke, goes unsupervised by regulations that protect the community.

At the national level, the state does recognize and respect the customary law community unit along with their traditional rights. The community and their rights enjoy protection and guarantee in the 1945 Constitution, Article 18b paragraph (2). After the 1998 reform, the government issued Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights. Article 3 (1) of

the Act states that, “Everyone is born equal in dignity and human rights and is bestowed with the intellect and reason to live with others in a spirit of brotherhood.” Further, Article 6 paragraph (1) of the Human Rights Law states that “In the interest of upholding human rights, the differences and needs of indigenous peoples must be taken into consideration and protected by the law, the public and the government.” Paragraph (2) states, “The cultural identity of indigenous peoples, including indigenous land rights, must be upheld, in accordance with the development of the times.”

Regional Administration Law No. 32 of 2004 also contains the protection of indigenous peoples. Article I Paragraph 12 states: “Village or the like means a unity of a constitutional community which has borders and the authority to govern and manage the interest of the local people based on their history and custom that are acknowledged and respected within the frame of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia.” This means that respecting human rights of indigenous peoples can be satisfied without injuring this right.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated by the United Nations on 10 December 1948 through Resolution 217 A (III), which Indonesia has ratified, states that “the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (Preamble of the UDHR). Furthermore, Article 1 of the UDHR states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

The International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), announced by the United Nations on 16 December 1966, by its Resolution 2200 A (XXI), states that “the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want

can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights (Preamble ICESCR)”.

There are other international covenants ratified by the government of Indonesia that seek to uphold the rights of indigenous peoples: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention/ ILO Convention 169, African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR), and Decision of the Conference of the Parties relating to the Implementation of the Convention on Biological diversity (CBD).

However, the lack of knowledge about national and international laws on the part of the local government and the security forces in Muting, the MIFEE area of operations, inevitably results in various violations of the rights of indigenous peoples. These violations have injured whatever good intentions the central government has for Papua, particularly for Merauke, as a region that is intended to support national food self-sufficiency. National and multinational companies continue to increase every year in the MIFEE megaproject, occupying a land area that is expected to reach 1.26 million hectares and, even more, targeted to reach 4.26 million hectares.

MIFEE, moreover, is a national program. It is the responsibility of the national government to ensure the protection and supervision of any company that operates in Merauke. The security forces, both the military and the police, are appointed as security forces at all company locations. This happens despite the role of the military as stipulated in Law No. 34 of 2004 on the Indonesian National Armed

87 Theo van den Broek OFM, *Mengatasi Keterpecahan yang Melumpuhkan*, p. 13, explaining the bill and how it changed significantly when it was signed into a law.

88 Special Autonomy Law No. 21 of 2001, Article 20.

Forces which states (a) that the national objective of Indonesia is to protect the people and the country of Indonesia, promote general welfare, educate the nation, and participate in implementing world order based on freedom, lasting peace and social justice; and (b) that national defence is all efforts to uphold the country's sovereignty, defend the territorial integrity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, and the safety of the entire nation from the threat of military and armed threats to the integrity of the nation and the state.

The practice of military acting as company security does not fit its mandate. This behavior is shown by the police in Muting, violating Law No. 2 of 2002 on the Police of the Republic of Indonesia. The objective of the military's presence should not be to secure companies from the indigenous peoples. The police should protect and defend society, not act as the guarantor of MIFEE's security. Human-rights violations are inevitable when the repressive military and police are the means that are being used to solve disputes between the community and the company. Yet this is done by the security apparatus, both as individuals and as agencies (military rayon command or sector police), in Muting.

MIFEE's ongoing operations, which continue to expand its land coverage in Muting, is a serious humanitarian threat to the indigenous people in the area. It is not, however, seen as such by the government, both central and provincial, despite various reports that indicate human-rights violations, marginalization of indigenous peoples, and loss of forests as a source of livelihood. The project even endangers indigenous peoples' customs and traditions, because of the damage to the forest as a source of cultural inspiration. Despite having been included in the Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989 (K169), the government never used those protected rights as a reference in crafting and carrying out development programs.

Things get worse with the practice of officers of the military and the regional government of getting involved in businesses. This is further compounded by a condition that is difficult to change by civil society in remote areas, the limited facility for technology and information. The low level of education, the lack of understanding of rights and of equality before the law all result in the victimization of indigenous peoples.

## PATTERNS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MUTING

Although Muting has become relatively well known because of human-rights violations uncovered through multi-NGO human rights advocacy, the release of the documentary *The Mahuzes* strengthened the impact of the advocacy of indigenous peoples living in the area. The movie was screened at the United Nations committee on 16 May 2016. Despite this, human rights violations in Muting still continue.

According to Pastor Rumbayan, "human rights observers from various NGOs, even from the National Commission of Human Rights, have visited us. We take them to meet the victims and see the disputed areas, but the condition in Muting remains as it was. Community members continue to be victimized in their lands."<sup>89</sup>

During the field research, this researcher also found indications of military and police involvement in MIFEE operations from the village

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Pastor Niko Rumbayan, on 27 June 2016.

level up to the Merauke regency level. This can be seen in the appointment of Joko Setiawan, a police officer, as the police chief of Muting, by the head of the Merauke police. Setiawan was known by the people of Muting village as a former contractor for clearing operations in indigenous forests. As a victim stated, "After a few months, in early December, no, in October, he was moved here and became police chief. Previously he was a contractor, now he is the police chief in Muting district."

The case of the military rayon commander (Danramil), Captain Septian, is similar. According to the people, Captain Septian was unlike the previous Danramil, who was more convinced and respectful of indigenous people's rights to land. Intimidation and repression by security forces are highly visible, not only through statements made by the military and the police at the village level, but also through the approach they have taken, in the form of excessive security attention to the community's activities. The military personnel patrolling every afternoon are in full battle gear and arms.

PT ACP, the only company attempting to grab the Mahuze clan's lands, has a record

of using intimidation and terror against the people of Muting. After failing to reach an agreement in efforts to negotiate with the Mahuze clan, it ordered the military and the police to carry out terror and intimidation. It now imposes its will through the LMA of Muting district, calling for meetings between clans of the Malind tribe in Muting and asking them to hand over the land to the company in the interest of welfare and development. The Muting LMA also facilitates the "adoption" of non-indigenous persons who are members of the TNI (Babinsa) to support clan organisations in Muting, except those of the Mahuze clan. The adoptees then seek to persuade the clans to sell their lands to the company.

Such is the current state in the field with regard to military and police interference in land disputes in the agroindustry megaproject in Muting, Merauke. The situation shows a deliberate and controlled attempt by the company, the military, the police and the LMA, down to the "adopted" persons to obtain the indigenous peoples' lands for the companies, by hook or by crook. The local government does not perform the functions of protection and supervision with regard to cases involving the clans in Muting.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The government's lack of respect for and protection of the basic rights of the indigenous communities in Muting are shown by the lack of attention to the misbehavior of the military and police in the area, who freely do business as contractors with the company. The LMA, as one of the institutions of indigenous representation in Muting, also lacks proportionality in representation, and as such becomes an "accomplice" of the military and the company. Instead of creating unity, the LMA causes conflicts within the indigenous peoples.

As of now, the company carries out arbitrary forest clearing based on manipulative agreements. It insists that it has full rights to the indigenous forests of the Mahuze and

Mandobo of Muting. Even the agreement granting 30 percent of the profits to the landowners is an empty promise. Instead, the company imposes its will by running a cooperative program, saying that this is for the people's welfare, without any consultation with the local community.

The government, from the national down to Muting district level, turns a blind eye to all complaints made by the indigenous communities. The communities have exerted various efforts to present their situation: from complaints at the district level up to various reports of findings filed by national and international NGOs to the UN committee. The UN committee has even made recommendations to the central government

to uphold the human rights of the Papuan people, especially in Muting, Merauke. Until the writing this report, however, none of the issues have been settled either by the central government or the Papuan provincial government.

With the goals of national development and of national and international food self-sufficiency, Merauke still serves as the main area of the MIFEE megaproject. Various issues that arise in the region, including in Muting district, are considered to be unimportant. The national food crisis in 2020 is considered to be a bigger priority than the state of human rights in the area. This is most likely the reason why the issues of human rights, discrimination and marginalization pertaining to the indigenous peoples in Papua are not given attention by the government, as the authority approving large-scale programs such as MIFEE.

From the series of reports and analyses presented above, this researcher proposes the following recommendations for action by the parties most responsible for the conditions in Merauke, especially by the Mahuze clan and the tribes in the border region. These proposals have the goal of minimizing not only horizontal conflicts among people, but also vertical conflicts with the company, society, and the government – or worse, those conflicts that worsen the problem of national disintegration. The recommendations include:

1. The necessity to change the government's view or paradigm towards indigenous Papuans, especially the people subjected to the MIFEE megaproject in Merauke. This paradigm shift should respect the decisions of the indigenous people towards the sale of land and guide all actions to be taken towards the community. Creating this paradigm means respecting the indigenous peoples' local culture.
2. Eliminating the stereotype and stigmatization of separatism being attached to the indigenous peoples of Papua, especially the people of Merauke affected by the MIFEE megaproject. This is necessary so that issues of indigenous

land disputes can be viewed objectively, and that examining these issues could open up to siding with the indigenous people of Papua.

3. The necessity for an in-depth study of the Special Autonomy Law No. 21 of 2001 Article 12, as amended by Law No. 35 of 2008, point (a) Indigenous Papuans. This article has been misinterpreted in the aspect of customary adoption of non-Papuans to satisfy certain purposes. There should be sanctions for such misinterpretations.
4. The need for supervision from the Papua People's Assembly (MRP) on the performance of the LMA in the province and district levels. This is necessary so that the LMA can perform its duties and functions properly without harming indigenous peoples, as is happening in Muting.
5. The need for strict monitoring of military and police performance at the Merauke regency down to Muting district level specifically for various acts of violence and violations of human rights against indigenous communities. There is also the need to halt military involvement in the contracting of businesses in the district.
6. The need for decisive action with regard to members of Kopassus who work for PT Bio Inti Agrindo's main office and employ terror, intimidation, and even physical threats to communities that protest companies operating without permits.
7. Pull out all members of the TNI or police who are convicted of committing violent acts and of conducting business practices that harm the community.
8. The importance of providing knowledge and understanding to the indigenous people with regard to what is rightfully theirs, and is guaranteed by the Constitution and various national and international regulations, as well by as various Indonesian land regulations. This is necessary so that communities can make decisions based on an awareness of issues and of their basic needs as a people.

## Land Grabs and State Forces: Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar

*Council for People's Development and Governance*

In the aftermath of World War II, foreign aid was used for the reconstruction of states allied with the US and for establishing US neocolonial influence in many countries in the "Third World." Determined to maintain political control over various countries, donors led by the US used foreign loans, technical assistance and grants to help douse anti-colonial and national independence struggles taking place in the 1940s in the region, including those in the Philippines, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Given such a historical background where aid was used to advance donors' economic, political and military agenda, development co-operation reforms must be persistently forwarded and espoused to ensure that aid's potential to foster development is truly maximized.

Major bilateral development agencies – such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), as well as multilateral institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank – have designed and implemented aid strategies that merely promote the interests of donors.

For example, the US frames its development assistance as an opportunity to "support America's national interests" through "collaboration with aspiring partners that are aligned with US interests and development investments where [it] can have the most impact". A similar position is expressed by the UK when describing its work and development investment portfolio in its former colony Myanmar: "DFID's programme is part of a wider UK strategy for Burma to become a stable, prosperous, democratic, and like-minded ally that champions human rights, plays a positive role in the world, and that supports UK interests and bilateral trade."<sup>90</sup>

Development aid has been an effective tool used by donors to assure themselves of markets that will absorb their surplus goods and capital. Donors have accomplished this by using aid as leverage on recipient governments, forcing the latter to implement policies that promote free trade, labor flexibilization, public-private partnership (PPP) programs, and openness to foreign investments, among others, as supposed drivers of progress, prosperity, stability and peace. Recipient governments are often more than willing to

90 2017, UK Department for International Development

oblige by these policy conditionalities not just because of the “development” that aid supposedly brings but also because aid helps prop up their own political power. Unfortunately, many projects funded by aid are rarely aligned with and determined by the sovereign people’s demand for genuine development. As such, violence against local communities, including militarization, often accompanies the implementation of these projects.

This worsening condition is observed in developing Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Myanmar and Cambodia where military force is being used to forcibly convert vast tracts of land for aid-funded “development” projects in communities that are witness to long-standing and intractable disputes over land, food security, human rights and justice.

## DEVELOPMENT AID FOR DONORS’ MILITARY/SECURITY AGENDA

Over the past decades, official development assistance (ODA), the primary mechanism to deliver international commitments in the global campaign against poverty, has faced several challenges. Apart from the continuing struggle over donor countries’ 0.7 percent ODA/GNI (gross national income) commitments, effective development advocates have also been vigilantly monitoring the increasing use of development aid to support and legitimize counter-terrorist and other security-related initiatives in recipient countries. Dwindling development aid spending vis-à-vis trend of increasing military spending observed in the Asia Pacific is also becoming a cause for alarm. In 2016, the top five bilateral ODA donors from the OECD Development Assistance Committee – the US, Germany, UK, Japan, and France – disbursed a total of US \$72 billion in bilateral ODA while spending US \$802 billion for the military, with US military spending amounting to more than 21 times of its bilateral ODA disbursement.<sup>91</sup>

Intense militarism and wars of aggression in recipient countries have entailed serious implications on the global aid regime and the overall campaign for sustainable development.

Especially since the US-led global “war on terror” in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, aid has been increasingly utilized as an instrument to protect donors’ national security and promote their foreign policy such as the US’s recent preoccupation with containing competitors like China.<sup>92</sup> This use of what some refer to as “smart power” is not limited to traditional world powers. China, for instance, played the most important role in boosting Myanmar’s post-1988 economy through foreign investment that utilized the Southeast Asian country as source for its “much-needed natural resources and a market for Chinese manufactured goods, including weapons.”<sup>93</sup>

The increasing tendency of prioritizing conflict, peace and stability concerns as preconditions for development is realized not just in individual donor development strategies being implemented in countries like the Philippines, Cambodia and Myanmar but also in the very efforts of the OECD DAC to “modernize” ODA – that is, allow for military and police-related spending in connection with maintaining peace and security and preventing violent extremism in recipient countries.

91 2018, The Reality of Aid, Rising Militarism: Implications for Development Aid and Cooperation in Asia Pacific Manila: CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness.

92 Ibid.

93 Seekins, Donald, 2015. “Japan’s Development Ambitions for Myanmar: The Problem of “Economics before Politics”, Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 2/2015: 113-138.

	2010	2015
<b>Philippines</b>	USD 14 billion	USD 32 billion
<b>Cambodia</b>	USD 72 billion	USD 67 billion
<b>Myanmar</b>	USD 7 billion	USD 63 billion

**Table 1. Registered ODA Commitments for the Philippines, Myanmar and Cambodia for the period 2010 -2015**  
Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System Aid Activity Database

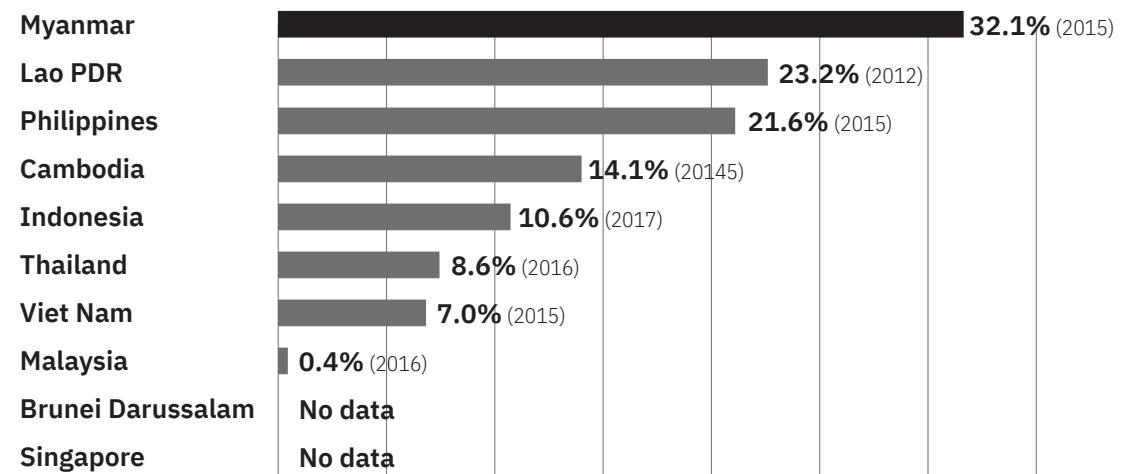
## CONTINUING UNDERDEVELOPMENT AMIDST REPRESSION

Increasing ODA disbursements have been noted in the Philippines and Myanmar (with Cambodia experiencing a decline even as absolute figures show that it still corners a substantial amount of aid) over the period 2010-2015 (Table 1). A significant portion of people in these countries live below the national poverty line (Figure 1) amidst increasing reports of human-rights violations committed among marginalized and vulnerable communities.

In Myanmar, for example, the persecution and displacement of the Rohingyas through state-supported military violence have resulted in the forced evacuation of more than 650,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh on top of an estimated 120,000 internally displaced people in the central Rakhine State.<sup>94</sup> Meanwhile in the Philippines, an average of one farmer is killed every five days since President Rodrigo Duterte assumed office in 2016.<sup>95</sup> These killings exclude the more than 10,000 drug-related killings

94 Human Rights Watch World Report 2018: Myanmar, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/burma>

95 Peasant Movement of the Philippines, June 2018.



**Figure 1. Population living below poverty line in South East Asia**  
Source: Asian Development Bank, Basic Statistics 2018

under the Duterte administration reported by media outlets and human rights organizations.<sup>96</sup> In Cambodia, while international development agencies have lauded the creation of jobs facilitated by development projects and foreign investments that brought unemployment rate down to 0.2 per cent (ILO 2018), 51 percent of jobs in the country are actually considered as “vulnerable” jobs. This means that people work in jobs that are not salaried.<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 2. Military encampments and development projects in the Philippines' Cordillera region**

## MILITARIZATION, LAND GRABS AND AID

There is in the region an increasing trend of corporate land grabs enforced by state security forces often in the service of big foreign corporations and supported by foreign aid.

96 Int'l, local professors validate 5,000 deaths in PH due to war on drugs, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1003944/intl-local-professors-verify-5000-deaths-in-ph-due-to-drug-war#ixzz5KlJ3BctF>

97 <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cambodias-low-rate-unemployment-doesnt-tell-whole-story-report-finds>

98 Dela Cruz, Deewa, 2018. “South-South Land Grabs: A desk study on Chinese land concession projects as economic investment cooperation with Laos and Cambodia,” Policy Research on Operationalizing People-Oriented South-South Cooperation, CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness and Reality of Aid.

99 Ibid.

100 “APC condemns Heng Fu’s land grabbing in Cambodia, expresses firm support to indigenous Kuy people’s struggle for land,” <https://asianpeasant.org/apc-condemns-heng-fus-land-grabbing-in-cambodia/>

101 2017, UK Department for International Development [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/636538/Burma1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/636538/Burma1.pdf)

102 “Is Rohingya persecution caused by business interest rather than religion,” The Guardian, 4 January 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/jan/04/is-rohingya-persecution-caused-by-business-interests-rather-than-religion>

A growing number of military encampments have been reported and observed by peasant communities and indigenous populations in the rural areas of the Philippines, Cambodia and Myanmar where decades of conflict and dispute over control of rich natural resources have been taking place.

In the Philippines, for instance, human-rights violations, including violations against indigenous people’s rights to ancestral domains are rampant in regions such as in the Cordillera where the government promotes large-scale foreign-funded mining projects, hydropower and geothermal plants, irrigation dams, and cash-crop plantations (Figure 2). In Mindanao, the country’s second biggest island, an April 2018 international fact-finding and solidarity mission led by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines or KMP), Karapatan Alliance for the Advancement of People’s Rights and other groups recorded around 2,945 human-rights violations in land-contested areas. Note that Mindanao has been put under Martial Law by Pres. Duterte since May 2017 while big-ticket infrastructure projects are being planned for implementation there as part of his administration’s flagship program “Build, Build, Build” that is financed mainly through ODA. It is said that about 70 percent of the country’s military and security forces are currently deployed in Mindanao.

In Cambodia, rampant land grabs and human-rights violations among indigenous and peasant communities have been occurring in areas under the government’s Economic Land Concession (ELC) program. ELC is a long-term lease arrangement allowing a concessionaire to clear land in order to develop industrial-scale agriculture. As of 2017, about one-fourth of the country’s agricultural and forest lands are already under the control of Chinese companies, of which almost a million hectares have been acquired through ELCs.<sup>98</sup> It is no coincidence that China, an emerging global power, is not only Cambodia’s top foreign investor but also its top contributor of aid, accounting for more than 70 percent of the aid the country receives.<sup>99</sup>

The intensifying repression of rights related to these investments is being experienced, for instance, by the Kuy people in the province of

Preah Vihear where tens of thousands suffer from displacement, destruction of livelihood, dispossession and harassment. The Cambodian government granted 42,000 hectares of land in Preah Vihear to Chinese company Hengfu Group Sugar Industry Co., Ltd in 2016.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, donors such as Japan and the UK continue to provide loans, grants, and technical assistance to Myanmar amidst the ongoing reported genocide of almost 800,000 Muslim Rohingyas. For instance, while the UK’s DFID seems to be careful in distancing itself from the central government by channeling its aid through multilateral institutions as well as local and international NGOs, it still does not hesitate to express the “UK Government’s enduring support for Aung San Suu Kyi [and] provid[ing] good foundations to influence and help her government to succeed.”<sup>101</sup>

Emerging discourse among development and peasant scholars have begun to re-examine the religious/ethnic persecution of the Rohingyas as mere smokescreen for whitewashing the state-supported corporate land grabs taking place in resource- and mineral-rich regions of Myanmar. In her research, Sakia Sassen notes the massive grabbing of vast stretches of land from smallholders that is enforced by state military forces since the 1990s. Such land grabs were carried out without compensation for the indigenous peoples and with threats against fighting back. “This land grabbing has continued across the decades but has expanded enormously in the last few years. At the time of the 2012 attacks [against the Rohingyas], the land allocated to large projects had increased by 170 percent between 2010 and 2013. By 2012, the law governing land was changed to favor large corporate acquisitions.”<sup>102</sup>

Sassen adds that the aggressive persecution of the Rohingya and other minority groups is possibly motivated less by religious/ethnic issues than by military-economic interests given how expelling the Rohingya from their land is “good for future business.” This coincides with the government’s allocation of 1.3 million hectares of the Rohingya’s area for corporate rural development, a sharp increase from the previous allocation of just 7,000 hectares in 2012.

## MAKING AID WORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

Structural adjustments and other conditionalities that come with loans, technical cooperation and grants aggravate conflicts and social unrest in already conflict-ridden areas. Organized resistance against destructive “development” projects that are being pushed by governments and funded by foreign aid is suppressed, often by military force.

As donors and governments promote the view that having a “peaceful and inclusive societies” is the precondition for development, they also dismiss legitimate people-led struggles for land, food, justice, and self-determination as violent extremism. Such rhetoric being promoted by the US and other top bilateral donors not only undermines the people’s struggle for real democracy but also delegitimizes the very root causes of their struggles – unequal distribution of wealth, landlessness and state-sponsored land grabs, rural underdevelopment, lack of access to basic social services, among others. Instead of helping address these underlying issues, aid initiatives for conflict, peace and security programs focus more on civic engagement, technical skills training, economic participation, and restoring law and order as solutions to prevent radicalization and spread of extremist ideology in conflict areas.

The current practice of ODA delivery and use of aid that influence the very definition of countries’ development demonstrate how the militarization of aid goes far beyond diverting critical financial resources to military expenditure of top foreign powers. At a time when peace-keeping and stability are framed as the main preconditions of development, protracted wars and emergencies are becoming less the exceptions than the very norm of development. Given that the norm for addressing poverty and attaining development is economic growth along the path of neoliberal orientation with the use of

the state’s military force, how can aid function beyond sponsoring aggression? How can aid be transformed to serve the people’s need and champion the people’s rights?

In the last 20 years, civil society organizations have used their combined position to engage high-level political space – as well as their unique knowledge and grasp of realities faced by marginalized communities around the world – in order to counter the prevailing development rhetoric, challenge the practice and conduct of development aid, and advocate for overall development reform. Civil society and people’s organizations, as representatives of the people, are uniquely placed to hold donor countries to their historical obligation of assisting poor countries recover from the aftermath of colonial aggression and dispossession. CSOs and people’s organizations must continuously push for key reforms that will realize the transformative potential of development aid in the lives of the people.

The potential of ODA as an essential and relevant resource for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) cannot be overlooked. When utilized according to the principles of democratic country ownership, inclusive development partnership, and transparency and accountability, aid has the immense potential for crafting economic and political policies that are truly beneficial to the people. Development effectiveness advocates maintain that it “could play a key role in realizing the SDGs because of its unique characteristics as dedicated resources for development shaped by public policy choices.”<sup>103</sup> Most importantly, the participation of people through organized political actions, people’s organizations and civil society is critical in ensuring that aid is driven by the demands, needs and aspirations of the people who stand to benefit, or suffer, from it.

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# Militarization in Tajikistan: Contexts and Conflicts of Interests in Central Asia

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From the moment of gaining independence in 1991, Tajikistan, along with other post-Soviet Central Asian countries, became an important geostrategic object of rivalry of the world's main power centers. Despite the commonality of goals that the main players share on some issues with regard to the country, they also have conflicts of interests that have a geopolitical nature.

Countries of the Central Asian region have different understandings of the tasks in developing the “Shanghai Six,” a focal point for economic cooperation and joint military exercises. Behind these activities, however, lie more global goals, which can only be achieved if the countries come to a common understanding of key issues and an agreement on these.

## RUSSIA AND CHINA IN THE SCO

The functioning of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has long gone beyond its originally stated goals. From a modest association with limited tasks of cooperation in Central Asia in general and in Tajikistan, in particular, the Shanghai “business club” quickly evolved into a regional security bloc. This is evinced by the creation of a strong military-political bloc, which includes the countries of the Central Asian region.

Russia, unlike the United States, has no goal of promoting democracy in this region. The essence of the position of the Russian Federation's political leadership lies in the fact that actions that aim to promote democracy can lead to the destabilization of domestic political processes in the Central Asian countries, which certainly can negatively affect, first of all, Russia, being the nearest neighbor. By conducting military exercises with Russia and China, these countries are confirming the political will of the said power centers in ensuring stability in their countries and becoming the leaders of a new powerful Eastern bloc.

As a result, the SCO has become not only an important geopolitical factor, but also a reason for restoring priorities and guidelines in foreign policy. At the same time, there are serious divergences between the positions of Russia and China on the priorities of SCO activities. China within the boundaries of the “Shanghai” space carries out serious economic projects, which also strengthens

Beijing's position in the geopolitical region. Unfortunately, such maneuvers of the strategic partner contradict Russian national interests. Moscow believes that if the countries of Central Asia realize that Beijing is really solving their problems, they may lose interest in integration with Moscow. In this regard, Russia is trying to draw the attention of the organization's member countries into the fight against terrorism and extremism, insisting on compliance with its rules of the game inside the club, and depicting economic integration in the SCO zone as a more distant goal<sup>104</sup>.

In recent years, the SCO, at the initiative of China, has focused on joint energy projects, including the development of the oil and gas sectors, exploration of hydrocarbon reserves and the joint use of water resources, and the establishment of an inter-bank SCO to finance similar projects<sup>105</sup>.

Russia is concerned that China will establish economic hegemony in post-Soviet Asia, and does everything possible to block Beijing's integration proposals. Russia prefers to negotiate the free flow of goods, services, capitals, labor only with Commonwealth of Independent States countries that are equal or lagging behind in economic development.

China, which offers cheap goods and labor, obviously does not conform with such conditions. Chinese goods can displace Russian products in the market, and Chinese workers can dramatically change the social and demographic situation in the Far East. In addition, Moscow fears that expansion of trade with China will strengthen a trend that is unfavorable for Russia: currently 95 percent of Russian exports to China are commodities, while Chinese exports to Russia mainly consist of highly processed products.

Although SCO member-countries insist that the organization is not a militaristic bloc, the main activities under its auspices are still of a military nature. The first joint “antiterrorist” SCO exercises were held in 2003 in the territory of Kazakhstan and the Chinese region of Xinjiang, populated by Muslims (who seek independence, and Beijing considers them potential terrorists). In 2007, large military antiterrorist exercises “Peace Mission 2007” were held in

Chebarkul, Chelyabinsk region. The succeeding exercises in 2010 were conducted in the south of Kazakhstan. Thus, the SCO member-states are preparing to jointly use military force against new challenges and threats<sup>106</sup>.

As a result, they have already achieved some degree of compatibility and coherence among their armed forces, and these are likely to increase. Maneuvers are held on the east coast of China and in the surrounding waters, in Central Russia and Central Asia. In 2015, the Russian Navy and the Navy of the People's Liberation Army of China held joint exercises in the Mediterranean. This change in geography speaks of the readiness of both countries to demonstrate to the whole world the strength of their military partnership, as well as their strategic unity in one of the most important and troubled regions of Eurasia.

In exchange for its support, China will insist on Russia to transfer advanced military technologies in anti-aircraft and anti-missile defense, aviation and navy. Moscow, meanwhile, is cautious in supplying Beijing with the latest technological innovations, remembering the periods of deterioration of bilateral relations in the past and not wanting to provoke discontent among other Asian powers, particularly India and even Japan. But in the current situation, when Moscow more than ever needs Beijing's support, Russia may have to loosen the restrictions of defense technology exports to China.

The annual joint military exercises of the “Shanghaiers” under the guise of fighting international terrorism make the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) headquarters and the Pentagon nervous. An increasing number of analytical publications and comments in Western media in recent years directly affirm that Russia and China can form an eastern version of NATO. The geopolitical parameters of the emerging new power pole force the European Union and the US to think about a possible threat to their interests. This is especially so given the fact that India and Pakistan have become SCO full members, and Iran has repeatedly expressed its intention to change the status of a Shanghai Club observer to that of a member<sup>107</sup>.

104 See: What the Ministers of Defense of the CIS countries agreed on // <https://news.tj/news/tajikistan/security/20171012/o-chyom-dogovorilis-ministri-oboroni-stran-sng>

105 Source in the government: Russia will supply Tajikistan only new weapons // <https://news.tj/news/tajikistan/security/20161202/is-tochnik-v-pravitelstve-rossiya-postavit-tadzhikistanu-tolko-novoe-vooruzhenie>

106 See: 15 years of the SCO: history and development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization // <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/3355240>

107 See: Martin Larysh. Interests of the EU in Central Asia // [www.cbap.cz/archiv/1418](http://www.cbap.cz/archiv/1418)

At first, Russia did not take the SCO seriously. It closely followed the activity of China and from time to time cooled China's ambitions of expanding the organization's scope by turning it into a free trade area, for example. Everything was changed by two factors: the deployment of US troops in the region after September 11, 2001, and the acquisition by China of oil fields in Kazakhstan. Since 2003, Russia has become more serious about the SCO and has begun working with China to expand the organization's area of competencies. Russia initiated an increase in the number of members, inviting Iran and India in 2005 as observers.

In response, China demanded the invitation of Pakistan. Both sides, however, agreed that the strange application for membership of the US, submitted in 2005, should be rejected.

A certain potential for tensions and even conflicts between Russia and China exists in Central Asia, a region stuck between the two powers. China has established itself as the main trade and investment partner of the countries of this region, and Russia, in turn, seeks to integrate these former Soviet republics economically, politically and militarily into bodies such as the European Economic Area or EEA and the Collective Security Treaty Organization<sup>108</sup>.

But even here the Chinese are tactful enough not to offend the Russians. In the SCO, along with China, Russia plays the role of an unofficial co-chairman. Beijing also does not cross the prohibition line established by Moscow, in for example establishing political alliances and military bases in the post-Soviet space. This position contrasts sharply with the Western policy of expanding NATO and the EU in the former Soviet borderland in the territory of Eastern Europe.

The Russia-India strategic alliance could substantially strengthen Russia's position at the international level. This alliance against terrorism and radical Islamism would have greater prospects and could seriously change the international alignment of forces. Should the Russian-Indian alliance push through, radical Islam would have an enemy that stands ready for sacrifice in terms of making

tough and unpopular political decisions and understands the realities of the Islamic East much better.

But this does not mean enhancing coordination of efforts within the framework of the SCO, where India has its own contradictions with other members, like China.

Acknowledging its own relative weakness compared to China, Russia will continue to look for a force that would serve as a counterbalance to China, developing relations with other major Asian states, although this has become more difficult than before. Russia can try to increase the importance of RIC, an informal consultative association with China and India, which is mostly ceremonial in nature. Theoretically, after India's accession to the SCO in 2015, a triumvirate of the great Asian powers may emerge within the framework of this organization. In practice, however, Moscow will rather continue to develop relations with these two countries in parallel. Russia will have to act cautiously in the realm of selling military technology. It wants to maintain its position as the main supplier of arms and military equipment to the armed forces of India, which views China as the main threat. At the same time, it may have to transfer to Beijing more advanced military technology, which is unlikely to please New Delhi.

The biggest impact of deepening Russian-Chinese integration will be felt in the interior regions of Asia – Afghanistan, Mongolia and the five Central Asian republics of the former USSR. The Eurasian Economic Community or EAEC will have to work closely with China in the latter's project of developing the economic belt of the Silk Road. Most likely, there will emerge a single trade and investment zone, covering the entire central, northern and eastern Eurasia, the economic driver of which will be China. This zone can be called "Great Asia" – from Shanghai, its business center, to St. Petersburg, its outpost at the gates of Europe.

At the same time, the SCO can give Greater Asia a mechanism for consultation and coordination for policy, joint economic development, financial support and cooperation in the field of security. Russia will continue to play an important role in the

SCO, but most likely will take the second place among its member-states along with India. The one who set the tone and provide most of the resources of this organization will be China.

The geopolitical shift in Eurasia will affect the global strategic balance of power. Russia and China will not create a military alliance, but for each of these countries the US will be a potential enemy. The growth of China's

nuclear potential will bring it closer to the level of the US and Russia. In the 2020s, the strategic arms control process will only make sense if all three of these powers are included, but Beijing's consent to participate in it is only possible if it considers this to be helpful to enhancing its security and prestige. In any case, Moscow will cease to be Washington's only counterpart in discussions on issues of strategic stability.

## RUSSIA-TAJIKISTAN MILITARY COOPERATION

It should be noted that Tajikistan is located in the southern boundary of the common area of responsibility of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the complex situation in Afghanistan dictates the need to constantly improve the defense of its southern borders. Therefore, military and military-technical cooperation are priority areas of Russian-Tajik cooperation.

A significant stabilizing role is played by the 201st Russian military base (RVB) located in Tajikistan, the largest Russian military base outside the Russian Federation. Since the beginning of the 1990s, during the years of civil confrontation in Tajikistan, the base has carried out a peacekeeping mission and contributed to the normalization of the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border. The personnel of the 201st RVB are constantly on alert, taking part in joint Russian-Tajik exercises, as well as in exercises conducted by the CSTO.

Junior commanders of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Tajikistan (AFRT) are trained at the Russian military base. Only for the period 2014-2015, about 2,000 experts – sappers, scouts, mechanics-drivers of tanks and infantry fighting vehicles, and artillerymen – were trained for the Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan. In addition, Russian officers and soldiers carry out an important humanitarian mission in traditionally providing assistance to orphans, disabled people and veterans in Dushanbe, Tursunzade and Khatlon region. During disasters, units of the 201st RVB are involved in providing assistance to the population of the affected areas<sup>109</sup>.

Russia's leading positions in matters of military and military-technical cooperation with Tajikistan are largely due to traditional ties, the overwhelming predominance of Russian-produced arms and equipment in the Tajik army, the staffing of the main units of the AFRT command with personnel trained in the Russian Federation's military educational institutions. The provision of the AFRT with Russia's military products is carried out within the framework of the agreed plans for the modernization of Russia by the Tajik armed forces<sup>110</sup>.

108 See: the Air Force of Tajikistan will receive the first combat aircraft from the Russian Federation in 2017 // [https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane\\_i\\_mire/content/201611301321-5oce.htm](https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201611301321-5oce.htm)

109 See: Shoigu said that Russia prepared five tactical groups for Tajikistan // <https://news.tj/news/tajikistan/security/20171012/rossiya-godu-podgotovila-dlya-tadzhikistana-pyat-takticheskikh-grupp>

110 See: In 2017, Russia will supply military aircraft to Tajikistan and resume training of Uzbek officers in Russian universities // <http://www.fergananews.com/news/25682>

Annually, about 500 Tajik servicemen are trained in Russia on for free. The AFRT's command considers the graduates of the Russian military educational institutions to be the best trained in the profession. The armed forces of the two countries actively cooperate in developing measures to prevent any possible aggression. In March 2017, in Tajikistan, major joint exercises of the Central Military District of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and the AFRT took place. The purpose of this kind of exercise is to discourage any potential aggressor from invading Tajik territory.

A Russian military facility called "Window," which conducts optical observation of space objects, is located in the city of Nurek and plays an important role in strengthening of the Russian Federation's security. It is designed to promptly obtain information about the space environment, catalogue artificial objects, and determine their class, purpose and current status.

It appears that close coordination between the special services of Russia and Tajikistan in the fight against terrorism and extremism facilitate effective interaction and achievement of concrete results. Given the constantly improving tactics of terrorists and extremists, it is advisable to further expand Russian-Tajik cooperation, both in bilateral format, and within the CIS, the SCO and the CSTO<sup>111</sup>.

The Russian Federation continues to provide Tajikistan with all kinds of assistance for the protection of the latter's state border. This function is performed by the Federal Security Service Border Cooperation Group. Along with servicemen of the 201st RVB, border group officers provide operational support to their Tajik partners and help train personnel. The Russian Federal Security Service's regular aviation ensures the delivery of Tajik border guards and cargoes to hard-to-reach areas of the country.

The illicit traffic of heroin from Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the national security of the Russian Federation and other CSTO member-states. Tajikistan, which has a long border with Afghanistan, cannot cope alone. The competent authorities of the Russian Federation therefore provide assistance to the Drug Control Agency (DCA) which is under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. The assistance comes in the form of the renewal of its material and technical base, its structural expansion through the creation of territorial units, the training and retraining of personnel, and material support. Tajikistan's DCA was provided with modern special technical equipment as well as vehicles and premises for operational and search activities. Reconstruction of buildings for the agency was also carried out<sup>112</sup>.

With Russia's help, three new units have been set up along the most busy routes of drug trafficking. With Russia's help, the outflow of qualified personnel of the Academy of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan has been halted, the discipline of its officials has been improved, and improvements in the work of investigative and operational units have been noticeable. It is necessary to

111 See: KhakimovSh. K. Religiously motivated extremism and problems of its prevention in Tajikistan // Collected materials of the Almaty international scientific and practical conference "Prevention of religiously motivated extremism in the modern metropolis" (Almaty, November 24, 2016). Pp. 61-68; <https://www.news.tj/en/news/tajikistan/security/20171101/tadzhikistan-i-rossiya-gotovi-ukrepit-vzaimodeistvie-po-protivo-deistviyu-terrorizmu>

112 See: Overview of the drug situation in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2015. // The review was published with the financial support of UNODC: "Regional Program for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries" and the Project "Monitoring Trade in Afghan Opiates".

113 EMERCOM, Center of Humanitarian Demining and Special Blasting Operations, [ONLINE] Available at: [http://www.emercom-d.com/en\\_about.htm](http://www.emercom-d.com/en_about.htm) (Accessed: August 2012)

114 FAO stat, <http://faostat.fao.org/>

115 Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2013) Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation 12 February 2013. [ONLINE] Available at: [http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/brp\\_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b-43256999005bcb-b3/76389fec168189ed-44257b2e0039b-16d!OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b-43256999005bcb-b3/76389fec168189ed-44257b2e0039b-16d!OpenDocument) (Accessed: May 2013)

116 See works such as A. Binder et al. 'Humanitarian Assistance: Truly Universal?', Global Public Policy Institute [Online]. Available at: <http://www.gppi.net> (Accessed: July 2012)

emphasize that, despite changes in Russia, all agreements with regard to rendering assistance to Tajikistan's DCA remain in place. Combating Afghan heroin aggression is also carried out in a multilateral format. Under the auspices of the CSTO in Tajikistan, joint anti-drug operations named "Channel-South Trap" and "Thunder-2015" were conducted.

Aside from providing solely military and security assistance, Russia has been providing experts and equipment for the recovery and liquidation of unexploded ordnance. This type of aid, labeled as "demining," can be seen as humanitarian in the sense that it is both life-saving and a form of post-conflict assistance, because civilian efforts to build a lasting peace and avoid another armed conflict are deemed development aid.

Demining has been part of activities funded by Russian aid since 1996, when the first operation in a foreign country, Tajikistan, was undertaken. In 2000, a specialized organization, Emercom-Demining – the Center of Humanitarian De-mining and Special Blasting Operations – was set up to "provide rapid and effective solutions to international humanitarian operations"<sup>113</sup>. Though it generally operates on a bilateral basis, this organization has in recent years increasingly worked in partnership with the International Civil Defence Organisation or ICDO.

In relation to Russian humanitarian assistance in the region, it is worth mentioning that in the recent years, Russia has made a number of international aid commitments, marking its re-emergence as an international donor since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Yet the country's involvement in aid also has clear limitations. Most important of these, it still has not signed up to the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Principles and lacks a single international development agency on humanitarian aid provision, with the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergencies or Emercom currently playing a dominant role in this area.

Russia's humanitarian activity still remains below the levels achieved by most "traditional" donors. Another notable characteristic is that Russian humanitarian aid is primarily in-kind, consisting predominantly

of processed food, transport, shelter, and so on. The majority of this aid is directed at former Soviet republics, highlighting Russia's traditional regional focus in terms of giving aid. Russian aid commitments tend to be implemented through multilateral organizations rather than bilaterally, and the country is also reluctant to work with non-governmental organizations.

Humanitarian food aid is currently the largest component of Russia's humanitarian aid. In-kind food aid falls into two main categories: processed food, particularly canned foods with a long shelf life; and wheat and wheat flour, whose prominence is unsurprising given Russia's status as the world's top wheat producer (and the largest in terms of production per capita<sup>114</sup>). These two types of aid are sent to a wide variety of recipient countries.

The countries that have received the highest proportion of Russian humanitarian aid are located within Russia's sphere of influence, and in particular within the former Soviet Union – particularly the Caucasus and Central Asia regions, with the bulk going to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The geographical distribution of Russia's aid must be viewed in the context of its long-term strategic ambitions. Russia regards former Soviet republics as its sphere of influence, and its willingness to maintain close ties with them explains why they receive such a large proportion of its aid. The regional focus of Russian aid efforts has caused many experts to conclude that its motivation for becoming a donor once more is primarily geopolitical. This observation is compatible with the vision expressed in the recent Russia Foreign Policy Concept, which states that "Russia's foreign policy is transparent, predictable and pragmatic"<sup>115</sup>. In this view, geostrategic leverage and positioning in the world economy are what drive the country's actions as a donor in the post-Soviet world.<sup>116</sup>

Russia's focus on countries of the CIS or the former Soviet Union is, as a consequence, often interpreted as a way of maintaining a degree of influence over these countries, and several scholars highlight the correlation between regimes that are friendly with the

Russian government and the amount of aid that their states receive from Russia. The cases of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and sometimes Armenia are cited in particular. It is important to note, however, that the blurring of boundaries between humanitarian aims and economic or foreign policy objectives is recognized as a growing problem in donor action globally. If perceived self-

interest shapes aid policy, assistance may not be allocated within and between countries according to human need. Moreover, in conflict situations, people and institutions implementing aid programs on the ground may be viewed by parties to the conflict as partial or politically motivated, and so may face greater security risks, as may the beneficiaries<sup>117</sup>.

## CHINA IN CENTRAL ASIA

There is a similarity between the approaches of Russia and China to humanitarian assistance and development cooperation in the region. In the new millennium, China has substantially increased its assistance abroad in the form of both soft loans and grants. This trend accompanied expanding trade relations and the intensification of China's global search for natural resources. The main recipients of Chinese assistance have been Asian neighbors – including the Central Asian states and resource-rich African countries<sup>118</sup>.

Chinese development assistance proved highly competitive due to a number of factors. Firstly, its lack of conditionality, which contrasts with development assistance coming from Western donors, who characteristically demand reforms in return for aid. This makes regimes of recipient states feel more comfortable with China's assistance. Secondly, China can deliver results quickly and effectively because of its cheap and efficient labor force<sup>119</sup>.

Governments of recipient states are highly appreciative of Chinese development assistance. At the same time, at the level of political and economic elites and the public, concerns are expressed about the negative impacts of this assistance and the general increase of China's presence that accompanies it. Local industries are endangered because they are unable to compete with their Chinese equivalents. Chinese companies bring labor with them, therefore few jobs are created locally and no technology transfers take place. In Central

Asia, there are also fears of Chinese migration and the demographic and cultural challenges that it presents.

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the poorest countries in Central Asia and therefore most in need of foreign investment and assistance. This situation makes them more vulnerable to external pressures. The actors who would gain influence in these two states could ultimately influence the destiny of the region as a whole.

There are other features that mark off Chinese development assistance from that of traditional donors. Firstly, it lacks clarity and transparency. Unlike the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries, the Chinese government does not have an official definition of what constitutes development aid. The Chinese prefer the terms “strategic partnership” (featuring “political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchanges”)<sup>120</sup>. The Chinese government does not have an agency dedicated to being in charge of development assistance and does not publish reports providing consolidated information on foreign aid.

The second important feature is lack of conditionality. Chinese politicians and experts emphasize that their country's foreign policy is guided by the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and treatment of other countries as equals.

Large portions of Chinese development assistance are channeled into apolitical infrastructure projects, while capacity-

building is much less emphasized than is in the case of Western donors. China offers its own example of development but does not impose blueprints and models for other countries to follow.

Assistance is also tightly linked with the promotion of Chinese business interests. The key condition of soft loan provision is the participation of Chinese companies.

In Central Asia, as was mentioned above, China was instrumental in the creation of the SCO in 2001. Since then, China has used the body to promote economic cooperation with Central Asian states based on trade and development assistance.

China's development aid is delivered in three ways – grant aid, interest-free loans, and concessional loans. Grants tend to be disbursed in kind, through various projects, as requested by the recipient country. Preferential or concessional loans are extended by the government and provided by the China Export-Import Bank or Eximbank.

Chinese development assistance projects are mostly of a turnkey nature – constructed first and then sold or transferred after completion. Chinese companies which win contracts bring their own specialists, labor and equipment. The policy of importing labor leads to an apparent paradox. While Tajik workers migrate to Russia in great numbers and on a regular basis, jobs in construction projects in Tajikistan are filled with Chinese workers. Tajiks engaged in the projects are few and they are mostly drivers or occasional manual labor workers. Chinese companies prefer to use Chinese labor because it is supposedly disciplined, hardworking and cheap. In this situation, Tajik labor is not allowed to compete with Chinese workers.

The biggest chunk of Chinese development assistance is allocated to infrastructure projects. The benefits of good roads, power lines and hydropower plants are incontestable. The construction of transport infrastructure helps Central Asian states to break free from the isolation resulting from their landlocked geographic situation, and therefore increases their potential for development. China plays a key role in this respect: it has the finances, experienced companies, cheap and disciplined labor force, and a streamlined and effective process of negotiating and delivering projects.

China builds roads connecting China to Central Asia, but also ones that interconnect Central Asian states, thus contributing to regional integration. China, however and similar to Russia in this way, is interested in the promotion of regional integration with China's active participation.

The new transport infrastructure will increase trade between China and Central Asian states. On the one hand, cheap Chinese products help the impoverished people of Central Asia to maintain a certain standard of living. On the other hand, it creates very tough competition for local industries<sup>121</sup>.

117 [https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/dp-russia-humanitarian-donor-15071-en\\_0.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/dp-russia-humanitarian-donor-15071-en_0.pdf)

118 See G.T. Chin and B.M. Frolic, “Emerging Donors in International Development Assistance: The China Case; Partnership and Business Development Division, IDRC CRDI, December 2007

119 Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, “China's Independent Foreign Policy of Peace,” 18 August 2003, <[www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdU-wjzclt24881.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdU-wjzclt24881.htm)>.

120 The Declaration of the Beijing Summit of the FOAC, 5 November 2006.

121 <https://www.ifri.org/.../ifrichincentralasiakas-senovaengjanua...>

Both China and Russia are interested in security and good governance in the region, stressing the rule of law, rather than democratization, that are necessary to improving regional security. China is more interested in improving the business environment for its economic plans and

trade whereas Russia puts more emphasis on security and military integration with Central Asian states promoting joint military training activity and on supplying weapons and other military equipment to these states's respective armies.

## MILITARY SPENDING: TRENDS AND IMPACTS

The events in Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Libya and other hot spots of the world, as well as world economic and geopolitical transformations, fuel a variety of militaristic and alarmist sentiments that contribute to the explosive growth in the demand for a wide variety of weapons systems. In this respect, Central Asian countries are no exception.

The trend in the growth of the military budgets of Central Asian states can be described as fairly stable. Their spending on security is increasing – both in countries with very limited funds such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as in richer countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This is a trend that is common for the region.

The steady growth in spending on the army, police and special services has been observed at least since the mid-2000s and continues to grow. According to data, Kazakhstan's defense spending in 2017 amounted to about USD 2.5 billion, although in 2011 it was just USD 1.3 billion, while Uzbekistan's defense spending in 2018 will be more than USD 1.4 billion. The defense costs of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are estimated at about USD 150-200 million and also show annual growth. In general, since 2006, the military expenditures of the Central Asian countries have increased by an average of 25% -30% annually.<sup>122</sup>

It should be specially noted that all available data on actual and potential military expenditures of Central Asian countries are approximations: the regime of secrecy in most Central Asian countries differs little from the Soviet one, and determining military expenditures and arms statistics with sufficient accuracy is quite a difficult task. Nevertheless, all experts and observers agree that there is a clear trend of growth in military spending and the trend suggests that, for at least the next decade, the states of the region will spend more and more on the army. Thus, it can be stated that the standard regional arms race has quite developed in Central Asia, just like in the Asia-Pacific region and the Persian Gulf.<sup>123</sup>

Data on military expenditures in the countries of Central Asia raise questions about the reasons that cause the growth in absolute figures of military expenditures. Of course, there is a natural

122 Military Strength Ranking <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp>

123 ArmsraceinCentralAsia. AndreiValentinovichGrozin, HeadofCentralAsiaand-KazakhstandepartmentofInstituteofCIS <http://materik.ru/country/detail.php?ID=14518&print=Y>

124 Central Asia: Military Balance: <https://www.caravan.kz/articles/centralnaya-aziya-voennyj-balans-375511/>

125 Central Asia is being armed <http://www.easttime.ru/reganalitic/1/248.html>

objective need to modernize armament and military equipment. At first, while exercising their sovereign rights to the share of the USSR's military property, the leaders of the new states sought to obtain as many weapons as possible. Afterwards, in a couple of years, it became clear that the costs of protecting and maintaining the huge arsenals in normal condition lay beyond their control and is a big burden on budgets, and some of these properties have become a direct threat to the population of nearby areas.

Later on, when weapons produced in the Soviet era became outdated both morally and physically, the problem of repairing and modernizing them, as well as buying more modern weapons became more pressing. Almost all countries of the region continue to carry out military reforms because the military equipment, infrastructure and command system that they inherited from the USSR do not correspond to new realities anymore.<sup>124</sup>

However, a simple desire to modernize armed forces cannot be the main reason and there are more compelling reasons for such a sharp turn towards increasing military spending. It is clear that there is growing concern in Central Asia about the situation in Afghanistan. This concern is present in all Central Asian countries without exception, since US operations in Afghanistan are clearly stalling. The Taliban, and even more recently, the "Islamic State," hold very solid positions almost throughout the country. Central Asian governments closely monitor the situation in Afghanistan and recognize that it is becoming less and less predictable. This, of course, makes them rely more on their own armed forces as the best guarantee of security.

The pressure exerted on the leaders of the Central Asian countries by numerous new challenges should have helped to bring them closer together, but this has not happened so far. Almost all states of the region have tensions between each other, sometimes quite serious and capable of developing into direct confrontation under unfavorable circumstances. Among the problems complicating the relationship between Astana, Tashkent, Dushanbe, Ashgabat and Bishkek,

one can name territorial disagreements, incompleteness in the process of delimitation of borders, distribution of trans-boundary water resources, issues of energy supplies, multidirectional orientations of the states of the region in foreign policy, among others.

Small local clashes between military personnel of these states have already occurred on the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, including unilateral mining of the border area by Uzbekistan. The current president of Uzbekistan has proclaimed a friendly policy towards neighbors, but given the long history of strained relations and sometimes outright animosity, it is too early to talk about real friendship and good-neighborliness.<sup>125</sup>

Each state of the region also views its armed forces as a guarantor of internal stability. Recent "color revolutions" in different parts of the world, including the "Arab spring" have made a strong impression on all Central Asian countries. No one in Ashgabat, Tashkent, or Astana want such a conflict within their countries. They view their own well-paid army and law enforcement and security agencies as the main guarantors against such events.

The security bodies of these countries, in addition to a generous infusion of finances, are also endowed with greater, frequently unlimited, powers, which naturally negatively affects citizens' civil rights and freedoms. The sad examples of Syria, Libya, Ukraine and other countries where popular protests turned into armed confrontation make it easier for the governments of these states to seek and achieve popular support for strengthening the security forces' role and authority and increasing military spending.

International human-rights organizations have long regarded Central Asian states as authoritarian regimes which provide limited rights and freedoms to their citizens. With increasing militaristic and alarmist sentiments, these restrictions on rights and freedoms will become even more severe, and a significant concentration of power in the hands of the ruling regimes will be the obvious consequence.

The negative influence of militarization on the social and economic situation in the countries of the region cannot be ignored either. As countries of the region spend larger amounts of money on the military, other domestic programs like education and infrastructure development will be receiving less.

For countries with a developed military-industrial complex and a large export of military products, increases in military spending are not so painful, and often useful in terms of expanding production, scientific potential and professional jobs. Kazakhstan and a part of Uzbekistan still have some production of military products, but most of the equipment and ammunition are purchased from abroad. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, however, are forced to import almost all types of weapons right up to the last bullet. The growth in military expenditures is badly hitting the budgets of these countries and is negatively impacting their socio-economic situation. Defense and security expenditures take the bigger share of these states' budgets.

It should also be emphasized that it is well-known that military spending is often not disclosed, and the way of spending huge

budget resources is rather nontransparent. Military spending is often financed with different budget items and, therefore, the exact figure of expenses is often much higher than what is stated. In view of the secrecy and the specific nature of budgeting for defense and security, as well as the lack of democratic control over expenditures, there is a problem of transparency in expenditures and, correspondingly, of increasing corruption among law enforcement agencies.

Central Asian countries have been facing difficulties in achieving economic growth for several years. There is a decline in business activity and cash inflows from migrants working in Russia, which constitute a significant part of the income of countries such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. These countries accordingly face difficulties with revenues for their state budgets. In this situation, in order to increase military spending, the authorities will inevitably resort, as in past years, to tightening tax regimes which are already some of the toughest in world. This, in turn, will further reduce business activity and employment and will result in a further increase in the outflow of migrants from these countries.

Undoubtedly, the development of military-political cooperation is of strategic importance for countering modern challenges and threats. At the same time, an urgent problem for the countries of the Central Asian region and especially for Tajikistan remains the observance of human rights, the formation of civil society, support for constructive initiatives of citizens, formation of a multiparty system as a condition to foster political and ideological diversity, as well as the creation of conditions favorable to the freedom of economic activity. Therefore, it would be advisable that the country's budget policy conforms both with the military doctrines of the countries of the Central Asian region and a strategy of sustainable development.

## CONCLUSION

It is obvious that excessive militarization harms Central Asian countries both in their socio-economic life and in upholding the rights and freedoms of their citizens. On the other hand, however, the question arises: how to achieve maximum security in the region without resorting to excessive militarization? According to most experts, the most acceptable solution to the problem is initiating steps towards common security in the region and launching institutions of war prevention and preventive diplomacy. These measures should go hand-in-hand with initiatives that will bring about independent and sustainable development, so as to address the root causes of criminality and armed conflict.

In this respect, taking into account the practices of the leading modern states, it is necessary to discuss proposed military budgets with the involvement of representatives of civil society organizations and institutions in order to ensure transparency. This is the only way to ensure that military objectives upholds the welfare of the people in Central Asia and that conditions for socio-political transformations and economic reforms are likewise created.

This analysis clarifies the interests of member countries in the SCO:

- Russia is interested in forming a military-political bloc that acts as a guarantor of security and stability in the Asian region.
- China is interested first and foremost in the markets and raw materials of Central Asia and Russia.
- India is interested in guarantees of oil supply from Russia and Central Asia via pipelines through China or through Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Pakistan hopes to intensify the participation of SCO member-countries in its energy project – the construction of the trans-Afghan gas pipeline system from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India, and to strengthen its political influence in the Central Asian region.
- Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan are interested in avoiding China's hegemony. They hope that Moscow will restrain Beijing's expansion. They are also interested in getting economic benefits from the transit of raw materials and goods.
- Iran is primarily interested in opposing the US, even to the extent of mobilizing its close friends and sympathizers.

- Mongolia intends to use the position of the geographical buffer between China and Russia to obtain economic benefits.

The further militarization of the Central Asian region in general, and of Tajikistan in particular, should not hinder the process of sustainable development and improvement of the population's well-being, as well as real socio-economic reforms and socio-political transformations. In order to ensure transparency and increase the effectiveness of military policy, it is necessary to create public consultative councils involving law enforcement and security agencies. In addition, it is useful to regulate international cooperation related to the militaries with human-rights obligations. In this respect, it is very important that the participation of citizens and their public associations be included in the discussions.

In fact, today Central Asia's transformation process, within the post-conflict period, as well as its further development largely depend on the activity of the population in building and strengthening civil society to help solve urgent problems that their countries face. Radical transformations taking place in modern society as well as initiatives for addressing many of its problems are inextricably linked to the formation of civil society.

Today, it has become an indisputable fact that civil society initiatives are the most important and the most significant factor in forming a democratic, law-based state aside from a truly free and tolerant civil society. In a certain sense, the emergence of NGOs in Central Asian countries is not only the answer to the new challenges of democratization in the region. NGOs are also helping the revival of a new statehood in all spheres: health protection, restoration of private housing and farm holdings, peace building, culture, education, etc.<sup>126</sup>

126 Karimov Sh. The role of NGOs in the formation of civil society in Tajikistan. Abstract for the degree of Doctor of Political Science. Dushanbe, 2016





# The Reality of Aid Network

An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance