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"Asian" Approaches to Peacebuilding?: Modalities, Convergences, and Differences in India, Japan and China's Approach to Supporting Peace Processes

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The Global Transitions Series looks at fragmentations in the global order and how these impact peace and transition settlements. It explores why and how different third-party actors – state, intergovernmental, and non-governmental – intervene in conflicts, and how they see themselves contributing to reduction of conflict and risks of conflict relapse. The series critically assesses the growth and diversification of global and regional responses to contemporary conflicts. It also asks how local actors are navigating this multiplicity of mediators and peacebuilders and how this is shaping conflict outcomes and post-conflict governance.

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Key Findings

▶ A coherent "Asian model" of peacebuilding does not exist, but there are common features which characterize the international conflict management practices of China, Japan, and India.

▶ Understanding the specificities of the engagement of Asian states in international conflict management requires mapping their engagement at different levels - global, national, and local - as well as contradictions at the various levels.

▶ Commonalities between Asian states' engagement in conflict-affected states include features such as a focus on peacemaking, stability focused state-centric engagement, and a developmental approach to addressing conflicts

▶ Differences among Asian states are evident in the levels of institutionalization within peace-related engagement, their approach to multilateral cooperation to supporting conflict-affected states, and their individual capacities to engage internationally.

▶ The differences are accentuated by intense geo-strategic competition between these Asian states themselves, especially with the rise of China and the growing India- China, and China-Japan rivalry.

▶ Such differences between Asian states, especially as India and Japan seek to counterbalance China in the region, and such shared anxiety regarding China's rise has created convergence between India, Japan, and Western states. Such convergence is creating a nascent momentum for further partnerships and coordination with Western states on issues related to peace and security.

Introduction

Asian states, such as Japan, China, and India are increasingly active in their diplomatic engagements in conflict-affected states across Asia and beyond. These Asian states are not only competing with Western-supported liberal peacebuilding in countries undergoing political transitions, but are also said to be introducing alternative norms and forms of international engagements, often even illiberal and authoritarian modes of conflict engagement (Carothers and Samet-Marram, 2015). Reflecting such shifts, there is now a nascent body of scholarship focused on Asian states in their engagement on peace and security issues and their difference with Western states who, despite variations, largely subscribe to a "liberal peace" model of conflict resolution.

Beyond their increased role in conflict-affected states, the focus on Asian states and their engagement is underpinned by two other factors. First, such questions are based on the understanding that conflicts and their resolutions efforts in Asia are distinct and confront different challenges that have not adequately discussed in peace scholarship. Unlike other contexts of political crisis, most Asian cases have not experienced collapsing state institutions, and thus have not required large-scale international state-building projects (Keethaponcalan, 2020). Furthermore, these conflicts have largely not been internationalized, or received international/regional peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions. Many such peacebuilding efforts have been nationally-driven, led by semi-domestic or democratizing governments (Smith et al., 2020). Unlike other regions, notably Africa and Latin America, Asia does not have a robust regional human rights regime (Smith et al., 2020), outlining the normative and institutional vacuum in which Asian emerging states operate in the region. Despite these specificities, studies on international support to conflict-affected states continue to be dominated by discussions on liberal peacebuilding projects supported by Western states, with Kosovo and Sierra Leone as examples of these prototypes (Lewis, Heathershaw and Megoran, 2018). Barring empirical studies on Cambodia and Timor Leste, conflict-resolution and peacebuilding efforts in Asia have found a limited focus, leaving their specificities less explored.

With equal importance, such calls to understand Asian approaches are situated within discussions of a global power shift – the diffusion of power away from the West, economic resurgence of many Asian states, and by extension their increased influence in global governance (Mahbubani, 2022). Proclamation of the "Asian" century, and the associated "pivot" to Asia by the major states and groupings like the US and EU, highlight the centrality of Asia in global governance. Further, their distinct "Eastphalian" approach to international crisis management – founded on norms of sovereignty, the sacrosanct nature of the state, and critique of liberal internationalism – has raised calls to understand how and in what ways these Asians states can foster alternative governance mechanisms (Kim, 2018). Such debates on global power transition towards Asia, which have dominated the disciplines of International Relations and global governance, have been largely overlooked and disassociated from peace studies.

However, it is difficult to think of "one" Asian model, which unlike Western states has rarely agreed on and functioned as a "single entity on global issues" (Mahbubani, 2009). This adds further complexity to understanding the norms and modalities of Asian engagement. Differences between Asian states - such as Japan, India, and China - are evident in related issue-areas such as membership in multilateral forums and international development assistance. India and China are not a part of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and do not explicitly subscribe to the norms of democracy, rule of law, justice, inclusion, and security sector reform that have characterized liberal peace interventions championed by the Western states which dominate OECD membership (Uesugi, 2021). Whereas Japan, in contrast, is a member of the OECD and subscribes to the DAC (Development Assistance Committee) framework. However, while working closely with Western states and the liberal peace projects they champion, Japan's differences on issues including prioritization of norms of sovereignty and its engagement centered on promoting economic, social, and cultural rights in contrast to political rights has prevailed (Jütersonke et al., 2021). Despite the absence of a coherent "Asian" model, questions persist, and there are debates if some commonalities bind the modes of engagement of Asian states.

This paper seeks to unpacks these issues. It looks at how and in which ways Asian states impact peacebuilding concepts and practices. In looking at the modalities of engagement, the paper highlights the different scales or levels at which Asian states have sought to influence the conceptualization and practices of peacebuilding. The report also charts convergences and differences among Asian states in their peacebuilding engagement.

Rising Asia and the shifts in the scales of peacebuilding engagement

To understand the capacity and modes of engagement of Asian states, however, we need to consider the various scales or levels in which they engage. The understanding of engagement across various scales has become even more pertinent with the broader shift in global politics and their economic rise. A fundamental facet of the economic rise of countries such as India and China has been their ability to influence post conflict processes at multiple scales - international, national, and sub-national - through advocacy in existing multilateral forums like the UN, working directly in conflict-affected states, and influencing cross-border dynamics at the local level across the borderlands in neighboring countries. The varying scales in which Asian powers operate are pertinent, given that the scholarship on emerging powers generally has been fragmented - either they have focused on the diplomatic prowess at the UN, or the impact of their engagement in conflict-affected states (CAS). The need to prioritize multiple "scales" is also increasingly recognized in peace scholarship, with frameworks like the "trans-scalar peace system" which calls to recognize actors across global, international, national, regional, and local scales to fully grasp the complexity which peacebuilding initiatives are situated within (Millar, 2021).

Their rapid rise has meant that India, China, and Japan have continued to influence norms and forms of global multilateral engagement, including shaping the conceptualization and execution of peacebuilding and related concepts at the UN and related forums. The scope and intensity of this multilateral engagement on peace and security agenda is new. Historically, given the identities of India and China, as regional powers in South and Southeast Asia, their role has been confined to the region. Similarly, while not classed as an "emerging" actor, Japan's engagement has also largely focused on the region. Within the broader global peace and security agenda at present, they continue to be marginal in conceptualization and discursive knowledge-building on peacebuilding. However, their disruptive potential to dilute or narrow the scope of related concepts is increasingly recognized.

For instance, when India and China were concerned with coercive military action's impact on developing states, they successfully curtailed the legal scope of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and humanitarian intervention through activism at the UN (Zhenmin, 2009; Dalmia and Malone, 2012; Kurtz, 2014; Kozyrev, 2016; Kulshreshth, 2016). Similarly, while China, since 1971, has been empowered with veto-weilding rights at the UN Security Council, its economic rise has made it more confident in using one in more recent years. Until 2011, China had only issued few vetoes, but since then it has issued multiple vetoes over the Syria crisis alone. This highlights its increased confidence in navigating the peace and security agenda multilaterally (Fung, 2018). China's vetoes have also impacted the execution of peace and security agenda, as evidenced in Myanmar. Here, China (and Russia's) use of vetoes imperilled the international pursuit of justice and accountability during the Rohingya crisis in 2017, which saw thousands of Rohingyas from the Rakhine state in Myanmar face the Myanmar military's campaign of ethnic cleansing, leading them to be forced to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh. The increased desire in influencing multilateral frameworks is also evident in China's push for its nationals to acquire higher-level posts in the UN Secretariat, and its considerable effort to insert key phrases, such as "shared future", which reflect its vision for global governance, into UN documents (Fung and Lam, 2021). Scholars have rightly appraised how Asian powers may exert their pressure on the existing international peace architecture to challenge the dominance and control of the West, which might even come at the expense of rights, democracy, and civil society (Uesugi and Richmond, 2021).

At another level, these states have also been able to influence political transitions directly in CAS at a national level. While across Asia in different sub-regions, India and China have always been key sources of moral and material legitimacy. However, their unprecedented rise has altered the scale and the intensity with which they are able to engage. Increased diplomacy and peacemaking efforts, aid, military support, loans, or market access have all become salient modalities of their engagement in countries in their near-abroad (Chaturvedy and Malone, 2012; Lintner, 2016). Their in-country engagement evidences a need to look beyond the confines of formal "peacebuilding" policies or visible diplomatic efforts. Despite India and China not having a peacebuilding policy to operationalize their engagement (Call and de Coning, 2017), patterns of their trade, investment, and cross-border flows have significantly impacted peace processes and their agendas. The interest, ability, and confidence to effect political transitions, while has increased globally, is still stronger in the region or their near-abroad.

Grandiose infrastructure projects, such as China's "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) and India's "Neighborhood First" policy respectively have impacted discussions on the peace process in Myanmar. For instance, while Chinese sources have seen BRI as contributing to development and peace in Myanmar, an unintended consequence of BRI has been increased militarization of ethnic areas. In a bid to secure Chinese investments, armed troops have been deployed by the Myanmar military in ethnic areas. These increased deployments and militarization during the peace process have inhibited trust in the peace process, with many Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) and ethnic nationalities concluding that the military used the peace process to consolidate its hold on areas with abundant natural resources, and expanding its control over ethnic areas (Adhikari, 2021). The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), a key EAO in Myanmar, evidenced this by confirming that the most significant offensive by the military in 2018 occurred in areas where BRI's flagship project, the China Myanmar Economic Corridor, initiatives were being undertaken (Bu, 2018). The KIO further stressed that the primary motive for this offensive was to secure areas hosting Chinese investments (Bu, 2018). Similarly, seventy percent of Japanese companies have continued to invest in Myanmar despite the coup in 2021, which reversed a decade of experiment with a peace process and partial democratization, and has contributed to buoying the economy, and facilitating the junta's grip on power (The Japan Times, 2022). Likewise, the stakes India has in Myanmar, in terms of regional connectivity projects such as Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the Trilateral Highway project, is said to be one of the core reasons India has not severed its ties with the Myanmar military since the coup in 2021 (Haacke, 2006; Singh, 2021). In Pakistan, in the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, another flagship project of the BRI is threatening to increase tensions between marginalized provinces like Balochistan and the federal government (Boni and Adeney, 2020).

A much-discussed theme in peace studies is the disconnect between national level peace processes and local level processes and conflicts (Autesserre, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2015). However, a lesser discussed feature of Asian regional powers in peace processes is the direct and indirect impact of their engagement in sub-national or local dynamics, especially in CAS bordering these states. Borderlands in CAS, such as Myanmar and Nepal are contested spaces, and homes to groups that straddle the borders across India and China. Further, their strategic location at intersections of states means they can be important for plans of regional connectivity, market access, national security, and shaping overall diplomatic relations (Meehan and Goodhand, 2018). Such cross-border connections ensure that the political dynamics in CAS are shaped by a larger regional ecosystem, wherein different groups can avail weapons, benefit from economic flows, and access safe havens which intersect with (and complicate) any national and international attempts to broker peace at the center. For decades in Myanmar, for example, multiple EAOs across Northern Myanmar have continued to rely on China. This includes not only weapons, but for their very existence through networks of cross-border trade, rations, medical care, and safe havens (Smith, 2007). This formal and informal collusion between EAOs and provincial actors in Yunnan have undermined Myanmar government's attempts at state-building on the Sino-Myanmar border (Haacke, 2010; Clapp, 2015). China's increased appetite for all possible commodities from Myanmar, such as jade, opium, and timber, have expanded the cross border trade matrix, both legally and illegally, which has intersected with conflicts in the borderlands (Myint-U, 2020). Similar cross-border dynamics have impacted conflicts in Sri Lanka, Nepal, North Korea.

Another scale through which Asian powers can influence post-conflict processes is "the power of their examples", or by becoming normative benchmarks that CAS want to emulate through constitutional or institutional borrowing. While the scholarship tends to posit liberal norms and institutions as sole templates that are promoted in CAS, evidence from Asia demonstrates that these Asian states are increasingly becoming reference points to be emulated.

Beyond CAS, much has been written about the Chinese model of state-led economic growth without political reform has been a normative template for many developing countries (Ramo, 2009). This model has often been described as the "Beijing Consensus", in opposition to the Washington Consensus, which is cited as a challenge to the democracy-market economy model heralded at the end of the Cold War (Bava, 2017). In CAS, it is also the institutional models of countries like China, India, and Japan that are being looked to and applied. While contemporary analyses tend to contrast Chinese models Western models of development engagement, a more historically grounded analysis reveals that Chinese engagement and aid in CAS in Africa is shaped by the patterns of Japanese aid to China. These are founded on ideas of inviolability of sovereignty, the need for a strong state, and development focused on industrial and infrastructural growth (Brautigam, 2009). Further afield, such "developmental" models centered on strong state, aversion to international push for democracy and authoritarian leadership have also been used by political elites in Zimbabwe, the Gambia, and Ethiopia (Hodzi, 2020). In the immediate realm of peace processes, different marginalized groups in Nepal have drawn inspiration from India's experience of pathways of accommodation for minorities, from federalism, to affirmative action, participation with a constituent assembly (Shneiderman, 2013; Hachhethu, 2014). Similarly, as Kin-minorities, the Kachin people have looked to China's use of the minority Jinghpo language in Dehong Dai and Jinpo Autonomous Prefecture as a model for the promotion of minority culture (Han, 2016).

More importantly, while Asian states operate on multiple levels - global, regional, local, and normative - there are contradictions across these scales. For instance, while India and China have championed principles of non-intervention, sovereignty, and national ownership in multilateral forums like the UN, their engagement in CAS within their region has been interventionist and domineering. Japan, similarly, has held an ambivalent position across these scales. In 2021, in the aftermath of the coup in Myanmar, Japan endorsed the UN, EU and the G7 Foreign Minister's statement internationally by condemning the military coup in Myanmar. However despite its economic and political influence over the military and civilian leaders, it did not impose sanctions on Myanmar (Sasamori, 2021). Further, despite its official condemnation of the coup, Japan continues to move towards normalizing ties with the junta (Kasai, 2021). The ambivalence demonstrated by Asian states such as these is further facilitated by the fact that they do not "necessarily operate in the same way as Western donors, nor are they constrained morally by 'universal' norms and 'international' standards defined by the West" (Uesugi, 2021).

Convergences within the 'Asian' model

While engagement norms and modalities of India, China and Japan vary between themselves and across scales, it is possible to extract a few points of convergences.

Focus on peacemaking: While their approaches to peacebuilding may range from ambivalence to indifference (see liberal model), to disruptive, India, China and Japan have all played critical role in bringing hostile parties to agreement, or peacemaking, as the UN labels it. Empirical evidence from CAS in Asia demonstrates that these states have been key peacemakers, often surpassing the influence of Western states in facilitating peace agreements.

Japan played an important role in mediating the incipient ceasefire between Myanmar military and the Arakan Army (AA), bringing some respite to the strife-torn western Rakhine State in 2020. The Japanese government's special envoy to Myanmar and head of the non-profit Nippon Foundation Yohei Sasakawa's close relationship with the military provided additional leverage. In the Philippines, Japan has been an observer in the peace talks between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), participating in the International Contact Group (ICG) and also hosting an informal meeting between President Benigno Aquino III and MILF Chairman Al Haj Murad Ebrahim to resolve the various issues on the Mindanao peace process (Iwami, 2018). Similarly, since 2013, China has facilitated rounds of talks between the KIO and the government of Myanmar and, alongside the UN, has been an observer to these bilateral talks (United States Institute of Peace, 2018). China also arranged for all EAOs based on the Northern Myanmar- China border to fly from Yunnan province in China to attend the 21st Century Panglong Conference in 2017 (The Irrawaddy, 2017). In Afghanistan, since the takeover by the Taliban, China has maintained direct communication with the Taliban administration, and both sides have met on several occasions, bilaterally and internationally, to discuss plans for Afghanistan's reconstruction. Beijing has also been active in various international, multilateral, and bilateral talks on Afghan issues with regional governments and international powers (Kuo, 2021). Similarly, India has a long history of brokering talks in key moments of crises and conflicts across South Asia. In the Sri Lankan civil war, India's mediation eventually resulted in the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord and the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) into Sri Lanka in 1987 (Sengupta and Ganguly, 2013). Similarly in Nepal, India brokered the alliance between the Maoists and the SPA, which crystallized in a 12-point agreement signed in New Delhi.

While these Asian states, notably India and China, are not vested in everyday deliverables of peace processes - especially pertaining to issues of human rights and inclusion - their prioritization of peacemaking through mediation and facilitation is evident. This quest for peacemaking is undergird by the need for regional stability, and recognition of the role of stability to elicit economic growth (Sutter, 2012). In the context of India, regional instability is often seen as a primary impediment, necessitating its expenditure of enormous resources managing a conflict-ridden neighborhood (Khilnani et al., 2012). Similarly, through mechanisms like the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development, Japan's support for a peace process in Mindanao has primarily been geared focused upon stabilizing the Philippines —a strategic partner for Japan (Ochiai, 2016). A critical factor that facilitates this peacemaking endeavor is the absence of hesitance in collaborating with illiberal actors such as militaries and armed actors, in countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar (Uesugi, 2021). While other countries are focused largely on the region, China is increasingly active in peacemaking outside the region, as evident by its mediation in South Sudan.

"Developmental peace": With varying intensity, these Asian states demonstrate prioritization of "developmental peace", or the understanding that conflicts are rooted in material deprivation, and that pathways out of conflict needs to address economic needs of the population (Xuejun et al. 2017; He 2019; Kuo 2020). Therefore developmental assistance, usually through building of physical roads and other related infrastructures to enhance economic participation and wellbeing in CAS has been prioritized by Asian states.

In India and China, this reflects a domestic experience. Such "developmental peace" has been piloted internally, particularly in peripheral provinces such as Tibet and Xinjiang (Paperny 2008; Kabzung 2015) where narratives of development and growth are deployed to control and integrate minorities. Conflict-resolution efforts in India's North-Eastern states and Kashmir, for example, have been centred on counter-insurgency and development, in the form of the extraction of natural resources, infrastructural development, and the boosting of cross-border trade (Mcduie-Ra, 2009; Fareed, 2018). In outlining the solution to decades of simmering violence in Indian-administered Kashmir, the Indian Prime Minister was incisive: "All problems, all differences have only one solution … development, development, and development." (Fareed, 2018).

This developmental focus has been increasingly pitched by these states in multilateral forums too. India's representative at the UN in 2012 argued for development to be the "central pillar" of human security (Hansel & Möller, 2015, Pg 88). Similarly, Chinese Ambassador Liu Zhenmin asserted at the UN, "Without development, however, justice and the rule of law are only castles in the air" (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2009). Chinese representatives at the UN have gone further to attribute the failure of liberal peacebuilding as its neglect of development (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN 2013a). Japanese policymakers are also receptive to the "developmentalist" canon with a belief that post-conflict legitimacy comes from economic growth and inclusive provision of public services (Jütersonke et al., 2021).

More practically, this "developmental" peace has manifested in peacebuilding engagement, through development assistance centered on human resource development and infrastructure building. Most articulations of China's peacebuilding approach have outlined the primacy of development. Yin He's conceptualization focalises the centrality of development-oriented national economic strategies as core to China's peacebuilding (He 2019). Similarly, Steve Kuo's writing on China's engagement in Africa, cites sovereignty, stability, and infrastructure-led economic development as three features (Kuo 2020). In practice, Chinese policymakers have pitched providing infrastructure and developmental aid through schemes like BRI as contributing to the peace process in CAS (Alexandra and Lanteigne 2017). Further, the infrastructure focus of its developmental aid is underscored by the fact that about sixty-one percent of Chinese concessional loans to Africa are used for infrastructure construction, and sixteen percent are for industrial development (Zhang, 2016). Likewise, with peacebuilding assistance undifferentiated from development assistance, India's development assistance, which is focused on infrastructural, connectivity, a human resource development, is seen to contribute to peacebuilding (Singh, 2017). Similarly, grounded on domestic norms of pacifism, Japan's peacebuilding practice sought to prioritize non-coercive approaches through provision of foreign aid and human resource development (Iwami, 2016). Within this milieu of development assistance, notably since 2012, with the tenure of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, there has been a state prioritization of infrastructure-focused development assistance (Sasada, 2019). Relatedly, owing to the focus on economic wellbeing, countries such as China and Japan have prioritized economic and social rights over political one - which is also seen to be a core difference with that of Western states, and liberal peacebuilding projects (Jütersonke et al., 2021).

State-centricity: A normative focus on sovereignty, and as its logical corollary the non-interference in internal affairs of another state, is seen to be core demarcation from Western states. Attributed to factors such as history of colonialism, the prioritisation of autonomy in their foreign policies, and identities as leaders of the post-colonial developing world (van Ness, 1998; Patrick and Thaler, 2010; Choedon, 2015), India and China have advanced state sovereignty as sacrosanct (Walder, 2015). In practice, they have advocated for countries to have the right to choose their own system of governance and pathways for development, without international intrusion, and overlooked the internal affairs of states, however rogue or repressive (Narang and Staniland, 2012). While limiting engagement of Asian states in the discursive canon of "sovereignity" may be misleading given their intrusive engagement in the regional neighborhood, the prioritisation of "sovereignity" has manifested in their peacebuilding engagement in the form of "state-centric" engagement, or, a commitment to strengthen central state authority in post-conflict states. For Japan and China, this focus on "state" is also owed to their own growth trajectories where central governments took an initiative in industrialization and infrastructure development.

Japan's peacebuilding engagement in Timor-Leste, Myanmar and Mindanao confirms this state-centricity, given the primacy of Government-to-Government relationships in its engagement (Uesugi, 2021). India has also insisted that its development assistance to CAS must be given without conditions, and should not impinge on the sovereignty of its partners (Singh, 2017). Relatedly, India has sought to avoid the use of NGOs, with which it has an uneasy relationship, to deliver any overseas function, or be a channel for development funding and assistance (Mawdsley, 2010). Additionally China has relied on state institutions, notably diplomatic channels such as its embassy and state representatives and envoys, and has not used domestic NGOs to devolve its function when engaging in Myanmar (Adhikari, 2021). In Myanmar, this state-centric engagement is also evident in its monetary assistance for state institutions key to the peace process, such as National Reconciliation and Peace Centre and the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (Htwe 2019).

Divergences among the Asian states in international peacebuilding

Despite these convergences, multiple differences come to light. This also suggests that an alternative, coherent Asian model that can compete with "liberal" model of peace and conflict resolution is unlikely to materialize in the immediate future.

First, there is a difference on levels of institutionalization within their approach. Japan has an institutionalized aid architecture, mandates on peacebuilding and partnerships, both in its bilateral as well as multilateral engagements, and has semblance with Western aid. Peacebuilding has become a key pillar in its foreign policy, as evident in its engagement in Cambodia, East Timor, Aceh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Mindanao (Lam, 2008). Similarly, Japan has been able to develop a niche area by championing concepts such as "human security" that underpins its peacebuilding engagement. On the other hand, China, despite increasing institutionalization of its aid architecture, is yet to do the same in the domain of peacebuilding. This absence of a firm peacebuilding policy seems to have allowed it flexibility in aligning its priorities with the fast-changing contexts of CAS (Wong and Li, 2021). India, despite increased development assistance and some semblance of institution, "does not have a specific policy or strategy that guides its engagement in the post-conflict states, nor did it join the developed countries to champion the liberal peacebuilding agenda. India suspects the peacebuilding agenda of the DAC countries" (Choedon, 2021; Pg. 3).Thus, while calls for greater institutionalization of its international engagement have been raised even domestically, a peacebuilding policy framework in India looks distant. A rigid policy framework is also seen to inherently overlook the contextual challenges and needs of CAS, whilst additionally reducing the options of policymakers in Delhi to pragmatically change their engagement based on developments on the ground (Adhikari, 2022).

Second, a notable difference is evident in their cooperation with multilateral institutions like the UN on the peace and security agenda. China, with its veto-power, has been more welcoming of multilateral engagement. A careful analysis of the several Defense Papers released by China from 1998 onwards reveals that it sees the UN as the core of the current global multilateral architecture, often raising concerns about the need to redeem the UN from being a proxy for the US (Information Office of the State Council, 1998; Information Office of the State Council, China, 2015). China's commitment and gradual increase in peacekeeping personnel contribution, including combat troops since 2013 and the active use of vetoes at the UNSC for peace and security related agendas, signal a gradual shift in its attitude regarding intervention - from outright dismissal to guarded engagement, and more robust participation (Fung, 2018).

This gradual shift is despite ambivalence towards, or even dismissal of peacebuilding, which contradicts China's position on state sovereignty and non-intervention, and its focus on development and social order (Lei, 2011; Alden and Large, 2015). On the ground, China has been more willing to partner with, and has advocated for, UN engagement. In Myanmar, when different EAOs proposed seven countries to become witnesses to the NCA, including the US, the UK and Norway, China only supported for the UN and itself to be formal witnesses-signifying its willingness to work with the UN (Sein, 2016).

Similarly, while India's engagement on different multilateral forums is growing more entrenched, at the regional level it is focused on bilateral engagements (Wagner, 2012). India has been at the forefront of the debate on UN Security Council reform. India has not only consistently campaigned for a permanent seat at the Security Council, but has also linked its continued peacekeeping deployments to justification for its stance. On the ground, coloured by its domestic experience of UN mediation in Kashmir, India has been opposed to UN political mandates in the region (Muni, 2012). In the Nepali peace process, India categorically lobbied Nepali counterparts for a constricted UN mandate. To assuage Indian concerns, Nepal sought not a "boots on the ground", armed peacekeeping mission, but rather a political mission with "qualified civilian personnel" in the form of a United Nations Mission in Nepal (Martin, 2012).

Japan, like India, has ambitions to become a permanent member of the Council (Ishizuka, 2006). However unlike India, it has a history of conducting its aid and peacebuilding support through UN channels. For instance, between 2006 and 2012, about sixty-five percent of Japan's assistance was directed through multilateral channels, most notably UNDP, the UN Children's Fund, and the UN Education, Science, and Cultural Organization (Ashizawa, 2014).

Third, there is a sheer asymmetry in the scale of its engagement. Indian aid, as well as peace and security-related engagement remains rooted in its neighborhood. South Asia received ninety-two percent of Indian aid from 2005 to 2010 (Tierney et al., 2011). China, by contrast, has evolved to move beyond its immediate neighborhood. Africa is one of China's most emphasized areas of strategic engagement. Since the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, patterns of aid, along with diplomatic and peace-related engagements have been enhanced (Zhang, 2016). Similarly in Japan, aid and engagement focus can be placed somewhere in between India and China. Japanese aid has focused on Asia - though beyond its immediate region. In 2015, Asia accounted for 52.8% of the regional allocation of Japan's aid, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 15.6% (Sasada, 2019).

These differences become more pronounced with the intense geostrategic competition between these states, which implicate their engagement in peace, security, and developmental agenda more broadly. The "China-threat" factor, which posits China as both a competitor and threat, has been a deciding factor for both India and Japan. This has also meant that increased convergences between Japan and India, with initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (with US and Australia). China, in turn, has denounced the Quad as a Cold War construct and a clique "targeting other countries"(Reuters, 2022). The shared anxiety of the rise of China might mean that there will be more coordination and convergence between India and Japan, with that of Western states (Xavier, 2019). More broadly, there has been a tendency to position each of their respective approaches as "unique" to another, and therefore often exaggerating differences. For instance, Japan's championing of human security in global forums might have found takers in the West, but has failed to garner tangible support from other Asian powers such as China and India (Uesugi and Richmond, 2021). Similarly, in critiquing China's BRI, India has started to articulate norms of transparency, and rule of law that seeks to both distinguish it from China and appear closer to standards and norms articulated by Western states and multilateral institutions (Ministry of External Affairs, India, 2017). These dynamics also highlight varying determinants of international engagement, thereby reinforcing Selby's call for paying greater attention to the "states, strategy, geopolitics" of peacemaking (Selby, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper highlights the need to look at multiple scales at which Japan, India, and China impact post-conflict processes in Asia. The sacrosanct nature of ideas of sovereignty and non-interference in the international engagement of Asian states cannot be the sole determining lens in engagement of Asian emergent and regional powers when a multi-scalar approach is deployed. The paper also highlighted how three key Asian actors - India, China and Japan - have become institutional, normative and constitutional benchmarks, with CAS in Asia and even Africa borrowing from these states on their design of federalism and use of minority accommodation, pathways for economic development, and understanding on relevance of the state.

There are core convergences, and specificities of Asian model of peacebuilding that distinguish it from liberal peacebuilding. However, beyond common features, and their focus on stability, development and ideas of state-centricity, there is little that coheres Asian regional emerging powers in their approach to peace and security. Ideas on development, stability, and state-centricity are foregrounded not only on their respective domestic experience, but also on the pragmatic grounds of necessary regional stability for continued economic growth. This paper also suggests that the differences and contestations between the varied Asian models of conflict-resolution might open avenues for further partnerships and coordination with Western states. This is evidenced by the sustenance of diplomatic networks between India, Australia, Japan and US (referred to as the Quad) aimed at supporting an open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

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