

## COMPLETION REPORT

### Japanese Democracy Assistance to Malaysia: Beyond Engagement

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The polemic of democracy assistance—domestically known as foreign funding—dominated the Malaysian political landscape from 2011 to 2016. Attention focused on several high-profile democracy promoters from the United States, such as the National Endowment of Democracy and the Open Society Foundation, as well as German political foundations (*Stiftungen*), some of which were allegedly involved in a plot to destabilize the then Barisan Nasional (BN) government. Critics' obsession with these democracy promoters is understandable, considering their high profile and their approach that tends to challenge the status quo. In actuality, however, there exist other forms of democracy assistance to Malaysia channeled by low-profile promoters such as Japan. At a glance, statistics from the Creditor Reporting System of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) from 2003-2016 indicate Japan as the second highest contributor to the sectors related to democracy assistance (such as elections, government, and civil society) in Malaysia, just below the US, with an amount totaling USD 22.969 million. Given this large amount of democracy aid, what kinds of assistance does Japan provide? And, what is Japan's role in assisting democratization in Malaysia? Within the context of state actor, this research argues that the so-called Japanese democracy assistance to Malaysia actually revolves around governance and security assistance. As a development-based democracy promoter Japan prioritizes a rather broad definition of democracy; it is also limited by the good bilateral relation enjoyed by the two countries through the Look East Policy, as well as Malaysia's comparatively adequate governance stature and economic development in relation to other Southeast Asian countries. Hence, Japanese democracy assistance to Malaysia is, ironically, aimed towards stabilization instead of democratization. The trend is expected to persist in the Pakatan Harapan government following Malaysia's (read: Mahathir's) inclination to not explicitly address democratization issues in its bilateral relation with Japan.

The same situation can be observed with regards to the role of Japanese non-state actors. Despite the huge number of Japanese think tanks and non-governmental organizations, only a handful of them participate in global democracy promotion. This research also examines the form of democracy promotion channeled by Japanese non-state actors to Malaysia through a case study of two key Japanese non-state actors in Malaysia, namely the Nippon Foundation and Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The findings indicate that both organizations adopt a rather accommodative approach and play a complementary role to that of the Japanese government, on the basis of track two diplomacy. This is in contrast to the role played by high-profile non-state actors such as the National Endowment for Democracy (United States) and Stiftungen (Germany), which have taken a more grounded approach in their democracy promotion strategies especially in Malaysia. The decrease of engagement by Japanese non-state actors in Malaysia also raises questions regarding the role they could play in Malaysia's current transitional period

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

1. **28 September 2018, Bangkok, 4th National and International Conference on Philosophy, Politics and Economics, “JAPAN AS PROVIDER OF DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE: SOME TENTATIVE OBSERVATIONS”, Presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail.**
2. **5-6 October 2018, Bandung, The 2<sup>ND</sup> Biennial International Conference On International Relations (ICONIS) & The 12<sup>TH</sup> Congress Of Asian Political And International Studies Association (APISA) 2018, “JAPAN AS A RELUCTANT ACTOR IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION: THE CASE OF MALAYSIA”, Presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail**
3. **30-31 October 2018, Kota Kinabalu, The International Conference On Politics And International Studies (ICPIS 2018), “JAPANESE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE TO MALAYSIA: THE ROLE OF STATE ACTOR” (IN MALAY), Presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail**
4. **17 January 2019, Universiti Malaya Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Association of Japanese Studies (MAJAS) Member Lecture Series, “JAPANESE DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE TO MALAYSIA: STABILIZATION NOT DEMOCRATIZATION” (IN MALAY), Presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail**
5. **25 February 2019, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Seminar on Japanese Studies Expert Networking in Malaysia 2019, “DEMOCRACY-RELATED RESEARCH IN JAPAN”, Presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail**
6. **“PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES: JAPAN’S INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE”, Presented by Associate Professor Dr Maiko Ichihara from Hitotsubashi University**
  - **10 July 2019 – held in Kuala Lumpur – joint collaboration with Japan Foundation, IDEAS and UKM**
  - **11 July 2019 – held in UKM – joint collaboration with UKM and Japan Foundation**
7. **4-5 September 2019, Serang, Indonesia, 1st International Conference Ondenocratisation In Southeast Asia, “THE ROLE OF JAPANESE NON-STATE ACTORS IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN MALAYSIA: COMPLEMENTING NOT CHALLENGING”, Presented by Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail**

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

1. **Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail, “BANTUAN DEMOKRASI DI MALAYSIA: PERANAN PROMOTER BERPROFIL RENDAH” (DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE IN MALAYSIA: THE ROLE OF LOW PROFILE PROMOTERS), *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics and Strategy*, Vol 45. No 1 (2008): pp 1-33 (see Attachment 1)**

2. **Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Amalin Sabiha Ismail, “THE ROLE OF JAPANESE NON-STATE ACTORS IN DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN MALAYSIA: COMPLEMENTING NOT CHALLENGING”, *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, Vol 15. No 2 (2019):pp 31-56 (see Attachment 2)**
3. **Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail, Makio Ichihara, Amalin Sabiha Ismail, Makio Ichihara, “JAPAN’S DEMOCRACY SUPPORT AS REGIME STABILIZER: THE CASE OF MALAYSIA”, *Pertanika: Journal of Social Science and Humanities* (forthcoming) (see Attachment 3)**

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)