

Japan as a “Peace Enabler”: Views from the Next Generation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yuki Tatsumi, Senior Associate with the Stimson Center East Asia Program, launched the *Japan as a “Peace Enabler”: Views from the Next Generation* publication on Monday, March 14, 2016. Kazuo Tase, Deloitte Tohmatsumi Consulting; Kazuto Tsuruga, Osaka University; Dr. Yuji Uesugi, Waseda University; and Colonel Micho Suda, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force spoke as four of the contributing authors. Aditi Gorur, the Director of Stimson Center’s Protecting Civilians in Conflict Program also spoke as a discussant on Japan’s pursuit of global peace and prosperity. The publication examines Japanese contributions to United Nations humanitarian and development efforts, a topic that does not often receive much attention by Washington, D.C. security policy circles. Yet 2016 promises to be an important year for Japanese multinational diplomacy, with Japan set to host the May 2016 G-7 summit, play an integral role in the Tokyo International Conference for American Development (TICAD), and serve the first of its two years as a nonpermanent UN Security Council member.

The first topic of discussion involved Japan’s efforts to galvanize international support for the concept of “human security” over the past fifteen years. Kazuo Tase described Japan’s record as decidedly checkered, for while Japan succeeded in advancing the notion as a means of channeling aid directly to civilian communities (rather than governments) in both humanitarian and developmental contexts, its desire to retain control over the conceptual evolution of human security backfired, mirroring the notion in a state of permanent underdevelopment within the UN system. This was contrasted with Canada’s experience during the 1990s with “humanitarian intervention,” which, with the benefit of UN member states’ input, morphed into the now robust “responsibility to protect” concept.

Japan also stood in its own way by failing to clearly articulate a definition for human security. The vagueness of the phrase, which attempts to capture the multidimensionality and interconnectedness of physical and psychological well-being or security, continues to elicit confusion. The absence of a viable means of quantifying mental and emotional health has precluded UN development of an agreed-upon definition, and without either a more tangible definition or an index measuring both physical and psychological human security, it is unlikely that the notion will gain meaningful application in post-disaster, post-conflict, or development scenarios.

Kazuto Tsuruga then discussed “fragile states,” which command considerable concern among the international community. Unfortunately, state fragility has proven difficult to address, in part because it lacks a universal definition; experts disagree over what economic, political, or social factors must be present for a state to be rightly “fragile.” Still, there is at least a cohort of individuals who agree that military action alone is insufficient when confronting vulnerable nations. This is where scholars believe the US-Japan alliance holds vast potential, entailing opportunities to coordinate the delivery of financial and human resource assistance to fragile states.

Japan and the US are leading contributors of official development assistance (ODA) for use in UN efforts addressing state fragility, with the former markedly increasing its expenditures in the post-9/11 era following revision of its development charter. Still, it is the amount of effort expended to influence policy formulation, rather than the cash value of money allocated, that determines the success of initiatives intended to help countries such as Afghanistan, East Timor, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka recover from conflict. Japan still has a lot to do in that regard and requires a more robust talent pool at the highest levels of international peacekeeping and peacebuilding if it is to play a significant role in the

political development of countries with complex and, in many cases, dangerous internal environments. While Japan managed to contribute to Cambodia's one-state settlement and reconstruction in the early 1990s, it undertook a comparatively limited role in Afghanistan over the past decade, where peacekeepers confronted more daunting, nuanced challenges.

Developing Japan's civilian human resources will prove critical if Tokyo is serious about assuming the mantle of "peace enabler" over the years to come. Yuji Uesugi talked about how at present, Japan's relative success in recruiting (and retaining) Japanese for entry-level positions within the UN system – around 200 Japanese hold entry-level peacekeeping roles – pales in comparison to its lackluster representation at higher levels, in part because peacebuilding and peacekeeping require sacrifice and an investment of time. Convincing individuals to deploy to dangerous locales at an age when they are thinking about getting married, having children, or taking care of parents is often difficult.

Career-life balance aside, Japan is not doing enough to prepare entry-level recruits for diverse, higher-level UN positions. Many trainees are field-oriented: eager to work in refugee camps or otherwise on the ground, so training focuses primarily on equipping young Japanese with the skills needed to work in the field. Unfortunately, this skill-set varies greatly from that needed for managerial positions, which involve meeting and negotiating with government and non-government officials and actors. For those young people who would rather avoid a career of international service, remaining within the relative safety of Japanese borders? Tokyo, alongside current or former Japanese active within the field of peacekeeping, should do more to raise the awareness, increasing communication between generations to attract the best and brightest to serve.

Another factor hampering Japanese international contributions is that while Asia has historically been the primary focus of Japanese peacekeeping efforts, most current missions are underway in other parts of the globe, particularly Africa and the Middle East. Japan will have to be creative as it seeks ways to ensure that such prior human resource investment in Asia does not go to waste, perhaps by promoting more systematic coordination among JICA, which has a scheme for sending civilians to so-called "developing" countries; USAID; and nongovernmental organizations based in both Japan and the United States. Furthermore, Japan may want to establish a multilateral, regional platform on which Japanese and Asian peacebuilders can work together, facilitating extra-UN cooperation of a sort seen in Myanmar, where state and non-state agencies and organizations forged a "hybrid-peacebuilding team."

Japan can play a bigger role in the international community by making political contributions to UN peacekeeping operations and sending police personnel in addition to SDF members. Those familiar with UN peacekeeping efforts agree that policemen could greatly increase the effectiveness of current operations, as they are trained to respond to riots, deescalate conflict, and interact with communities in ways militaries are not. Contributing police to peacekeeping efforts, then, could promote the concept of human security as something beyond mere physical protection of civilian populations.

That said, the military still has a critical role to play in peacekeeping, and new security legislation lends the SDF somewhat greater latitude in peacekeeping operations (not least because the laws authorize the use of weapons). UN member states abide the "three principles" when deploying military forces to peacekeeping missions: consent of the host government, impartiality, and the minimum use of force. If the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations is hampered by this limitation, the UN partners with EU countries, such as was done in early 2000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Regrettably, the current security environment in the Asia-Pacific limits the number of troops Tokyo can commit to peacekeeping efforts. North Korean and Chinese behavior necessitates prioritization of homeland defense over foreign humanitarian or development assistance. Thus, Colonel Michio Suda described how Japan must

maximize its contributions by playing to its strengths. It could pursue triangular partnerships with either the UN and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) or the US and EU powers, or, as advocated by Under-Secretary-General of the UN Peacekeeping Operations Herve Lasdous, it could supply modern technology and help operationalize TCC capabilities as a so-called “technology-contributing country.”

As Tokyo formulates a strategy for future Japanese involvement in international development efforts, it should consider how the aforementioned concepts of human security, fragile states, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping intersect. Human security, for example, may help UN General Assembly members improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions. In fact, the UN has grudgingly – and not yet completely – come to a realization over the last five or ten years that it sends personnel into peacekeeping contexts under the erroneous assumption that the relevant host-state governments are partners in protecting civilians. More often, however, host-state governments are the biggest perpetrators of violence against the public. And while this reality is particularly difficult to stomach given the challenge of accomplishing measurable, lasting results without the support of the host-state governments, such is the reality we now face in places like South Sudan and the DRC, where the government actively targets civilians for violence while actively interfering with peacekeeping missions.

Indeed, the traditional notion of peacekeeping no longer holds. Today, most missions are in Africa; are large and multidimensional; have mandates to protect civilians, build the capacity of the host-state government, and implement rule of law; and involve 10,000 – sometimes even 20 or 25,000 – personnel. Likewise, the profile of peacekeeping missions continues to evolve. UN forces are encountering violent extremism in Mali, and the UN is discussing the possible deployment of peacekeeping missions to Syria, Libya, and maybe Yemen. The question is whether peacekeeping is effective or can be effective in the context of countering violent extremism. Some are adamant that peacekeeping alone is not a solution, and that political resolution must come first. Still, many UN member states focus their efforts on peacekeeping rather than on solving issues at the political level, a tactic that limits what the UN can accomplish. The US and Japan can do more to enhance the political-settlement process driven by the UN but must update their understanding of peacekeeping.

For example, the concept of human security – whereby people, not the state, are at the center of peacekeeping missions – should be recognized as fundamentally important to the UN, whose protection of civilians agenda entails a commitment to the population of a country, not the state. Tokyo should consider applying this concept to its non-military contributions, such as JICA-funded infrastructure projects. It should weigh (and encourage other nations to do the same) how an infrastructure project could benefit the population or a government that’s perpetrating violence.

Japan should similarly bear such potentialities in mind when developing mandates. Around ninety-seven percent of UN peacekeepers serve in missions with mandates to protect civilians, yet reluctance to acknowledge that the state is often the perpetrator of violence against civilians persists within the UN. Countries like Japan should take it upon themselves to promote integration of the human security concept into the mandate-development process, urging UNSC members to acknowledge the potential threat posed by host-state governments to the physical security and dignity of civilians on the ground when engaged in the UN planning process or conducting conflict analysis before deploying missions.

And though altruistic and moral impulses drive Japan’s desire to be an international peace enabler, undertaking such a role provides undeniable opportunities to expand national soft power. The question for some in the audience was why Tokyo’s generous donations to Asian countries under the auspices of international peacekeeping have failed to turn the tide of Japanese public opinion of neighboring countries such as China, South Korea, and Russia. One possibility is that North Korean and Chinese

behavior has left the Japanese feeling less safe, though no less interested in doing more in the multinational peacekeeping or peacebuilding arena, which itself often promotes confidence building between or among Asian nations. In fact, SDF troops serve side-by-side with Chinese PKO forces for a shared cause on peacekeeping missions, and Japan's human resource development project for peacebuilding has attracted participants from South Korea and China since the beginning. On the military front, there are three levels of inter-country exchange: top, staff, and local. All three have seen dramatic progress since the 1990s, particularly when it comes to promoting staff-level defense exchange between South Korea and Japan. And at a local-unit level, commanding generals of Western armies and Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force have a mechanism facilitating communication. Japan also enjoys good relations with Korea and with China on UN peacebuilding commissions and the Security Council.