

Seminar on “Peacebuilding and Japan” Publication Launch

March 6, 2017

SEMINAR TRANSCRIPT

Discussants:

Kei Koga, Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological University

Hiromi Nagata Fujishige, Associate Professor, Hosei University

Nobuhiro Aizawa, Associate Professor, Kyushu University

Rie Takezawa, Researcher, Institute for International Policy Studies

Yuki Tatsumi (Moderator), Senior Associate, East Asia Program, Stimson Center

Website:

<https://www.stimson.org/content/peacebuilding-and-japan-views-next-generation>

On March 6, 2017, the Stimson Center hosted a seminar to launch a new report on *Peacebuilding and Japan: Views from the Next Generation*. The seminar was moderated by Yuki Tatsumi, Senior Associate of Stimson’s East Asia Program, and included the four authors of the chapters in the report.

Tatsumi gave context for the *Views from the Next Generation* project, which is in its fourth year and brings emerging scholars to D.C. for a policy-focused dialogue. She also explained the choice of Japan’s peacebuilding activities as the report’s theme, which often are under-recognized due to limitations on the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). She then introduced the four authors, before giving the floor to Kei Koga.

Koga discussed his chapter “Toward Effective Institution-Building in Peacebuilding,” in which he explores Japan’s unique contributions to peacebuilding. He started by defining peacebuilding according to the U.N. Capstone Doctrine, both conflict management and proactively ensuring sustainable peace and development. He stated that there are many different kinds of peacebuilding programs, and that Japan should capitalize on its comparative advantages in its form of peacebuilding, and not worry about what it is not doing. He defined Japanese peacebuilding programs as being non-military (due to limitations on the SDF), oriented towards social and economic development (disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; economic assistance; institutional development; building of personal ties for times of crisis), and with a long-term commitment (a historical strength for Japan’s peacebuilding, particularly in Asia). He pointed out some challenges, including the dilemma between human security and state consent, the problem of legitimacy, and the limits placed on its military forces that prevent them from getting to key locations. Koga argued that rather than focusing on these difficulties, Japan should improve what it already does well. He made four recommendations for Japanese policymakers: reinforce personal ties with foreign leaders, enhance the Secretariat of the International Peace Cooperation Headquarters in the Cabinet Office, support the establishment of an Asia-wide research network on the peacebuilding, and utilize Japan’s alliances to coordinate peacebuilding based on comparative advantages.

Hiromi Nagata Fujishige focused on the military aspect of peacebuilding in her chapter, “A New Horizon for Japan’s ‘Armed Peacebuilders’?” She started by discussing past dispatches of the SDF, which have included U.N. peacekeeping operations (PKO) since 1992. Even so, the “five principles” of Japan’s PKO law serve as strict constraints to prevent breaching Constitutional bounds, and that has limited the options for participation. Instead, she said, Tokyo has emphasized non-combat unit operations, such as engineering units, first in East Timor and Iraq, and later Haiti and South Sudan. In these situations, the

SDF, despite being armed forces, carried out distinctively peacekeeping-like operations. She highlighted the very close cooperation between PKO and official development assistance (ODA). She also spoke of how the administration has faced challenges to function within limitations of the Constitution, notably with the deteriorating security situation in South Sudan, where the forces were originally given a “state reconstruction” mandate that was eventually upgraded to “protection of civilians.” Fujishige assessed the impact of the recent permissibility of “rush-to-rescue” missions as limited, because as the situation worsens in South Sudan, the SDF still does not have the flexibility to carry out protection of civilians. She made four policy recommendations: enhance the engineering units; develop the peacekeepers’ ability to serve as mentors, as she does not think there will be deployments after South Sudan; improve collaboration across the public and private sectors with an “All Japan” approach; and better collaborate with the United States.

Nobuhiro Aizawa presented a case study of Southeast Asia in his chapter “Peace and Institution Building: Japan in Southeast Asia.” He started by stating that he hopes that peacebuilding continues to be studied and discussed, even as issues relating to North Korea and the South China Sea heighten security concerns in Asia. Southeast Asia has had numerous wars in the past but since 1979 has not had an interstate war, and Aizawa viewed Japan’s contribution to the peace as its ability to establish development as the measure of political success, and to support that development in any sector. He noted that there were challenges arising in Southeast Asia, notably the strategic attention paid to Southeast Asia by the U.S., China, and Japan. Historically, ASEAN as a regional institution resolved many conflicts within its membership, such as the border conflicts between Thailand and Cambodia and between Indonesia and Malaysia, but now in the South China Sea, with China, a non-member, involved in territorial disputes, ASEAN’s ability to find a solution is unproven. Aizawa also discussed how China’s rules for development assistance diverge from the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, and the competition between China and other countries, including Japan, that will follow in Southeast Asia. He noted the risk of large-scale environmental disasters in the region, which Japan can help mitigate. Aizawa also remarked on the trend of urbanization and how it affects domestic politics in Southeast Asia, and he recommended that Japan build strong ties between local leaders, such as mayors, to create new opportunities for cooperation. He ended his discussion by noting that the U.S.-Japan partnership is important for continued development and laying the foundation of peace in Southeast Asia, and suggested that the U.S. and Japan cooperate on education measures in Southeast Asia.

Rie Takezawa finished with an examination of the African continent in her chapter “Japan’s Peacebuilding in Africa.” She asserted that because Japan’s SDF are constrained by the Constitution, Japan had developed a peacebuilding policy over time that sought to use economic development as a means of promoting stability. She noted the psychological distance between Africa and Japan, which has led to Africa being perceived as marginal to Japanese interests, but argued that Japan has important reasons to engage with African countries, including need for peacebuilding efforts. She then reviewed the history of Japan’s peace and economic development-oriented engagement with Africa, beginning with the 1993 launch of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) that became the foundation of Japanese commitment to Africa. Later, in 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi’s administration introduced the concepts of peace and state-building. Prime Minister Abe, during his second administration, started using the term “peacebuilding,” including in the revised Development Cooperation Charter, which indicates a new willingness to use the SDF in peacebuilding missions. With this evolution from purely economic development to peacebuilding, Japan has slowly lifted some of the limitations on participating in missions. In terms of challenges, Takezawa noted the difficult balance in between Japan’s peacebuilding style, which is still a non-military approach, and international peacebuilding efforts. She also argued that Japan’s peacebuilding policy is remains vague, and she

recommended articulating clearer objectives for Japan's peacebuilding, bolstering collaboration among stakeholders to overcome lack of coordination, and encouraging the Japanese private sector to set up operations in Africa.

Tatsumi opened the discussion to the audience for questions and answers. Robert Munson asked whether Japan was considering expanding its peacebuilding to include activities like airlift operations in South Sudan, with the implication that current Japanese efforts had limited usefulness. Fujishige answered that she thought the current operations were better than nothing. She agreed that Japan should reassess its involvement, and added that airlifts were typically part of peacekeeping rather than peacebuilding. Tatsumi noted that airlifts were used during Operation Enduring Freedom in limited capacity, but that recently there had been more of a focus on dispatching personnel to the field.

Joel Diamond asked whether the panelists thought there might be an increased role for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in working through international partnerships or grants in the peacebuilding field. Aizawa said that JICA had already been expanding its menu of options, in particular with the idea of local-to-local government partnerships on issues like waste management. He discussed JICA's work on urban transportation issues, in particular intra-city work. Lastly, he mentioned that JICA had also shifted its way of operating so that clients in local governments compete for contracts, creating a new competition dynamic that crosses between multiple countries. Fujishige stated that she thought JICA could examine possibilities for contributions in dangerous situations. Takezawa added the idea of the importance of human resource development as part of JICA, since it can be carried out in several ways, including training in African countries and in Japan. In particular, she noted JICA will likely perform closer mentoring in developing nations by Japanese specialists in the near future.

Shuji Maeda asked about whether the psychological distance between Japan and Africa had shrunk in recent years, especially as there has been more collaboration, and whether the SDF could participate in more difficult missions in the future. Takezawa said that she did think the distance had shrunk, particularly through the influence of TICAD, since the conferences were covered in the news frequently. She noted that though there are still diverse opinions among the Japanese public about the SDF dispatch to South Sudan, the Abe administration was doing well in contributing to peacebuilding efforts, compared to previous administrations. Fujishige mentioned that the Japanese Cabinet Office's triennial public opinion surveys has shown an increase in support for operations focused on "international cooperation," but the Japanese are still skeptical of the operations in Africa, less because of constitutional concerns and more because they perceive situation as dangerous. She hypothesized that if there were to be a Japanese casualty abroad related to peacekeeping efforts, the Abe administration would face a major setback. Tatsumi added that she found it ironic that the Japanese felt more comfortable sending diplomats and aid workers to dangerous situations than sending the SDF.

Tatsumi thanked the attendees and panelists and closed the discussion.