

Workshop on “Japan and PKO”

Hiromi Fujishige, Hosei University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Discussants:*

**Hiromi Fujishige**, Associate Professor, Hosei University

**Yuki Tatsumi**, Senior Associate, East Asia Program, Stimson Center

**Richard Ponzio**, Nonresident Fellow, Just Security 2020 Program, Stimson Center

**Bill Durch**, Distinguished Fellow, Future of Peace Operations Program, Stimson Center

**Jessie Babcock**, Office of the Secretary of Defense

**Jason Russel**, Office of the Secretary of Defense

**Marcy Dupalo**, National War College

**Hana Rudolph**, Research Associate, East Asia Program, Stimson Center

Yuki Tatsumi, Senior Associate of the East Asia Program at the Stimson Center, hosted Hiromi Fujishige of Hosei University to discuss her upcoming paper on Japan’s role in U.N. peacekeeping operations (PKO). After a brief introduction from Tatsumi, Fujishige delved into the goals of her paper, which were to explore the gaps between Japan’s ambitions for its contributions to U.N. peacekeeping and the reality of its capabilities. Fujishige gave brief background information about Japan’s peacekeeping operations laws, the amendments to such laws, and their effects on Japan’s ability to contribute to PKO. The contributions Japan makes to the United Nations’ peacekeeping operations are constrained legally by Japan’s constitution with respect to military capabilities, adding to political hesitation on behalf of the Japanese government in contributing infantry units to the U.N. Fujishige noted that Japan is only contributing military troops to the mission in South Sudan, but also pointed out that this mission is far from safe and there has been very little discussion within the government to withdraw. Although revisions to Japan’s PKO law in 1998 and 2001 relaxed the constraints on Japanese peacekeepers’ military capabilities, Fujishige asserted that the most significant change to the PKO law occurred in 2015, resulting in *kaketsuke-keigo*, otherwise known as “rush-to-rescue” capability.

In the past, Japanese peacekeepers were unable to help civilians in the case of violent conflict because their capabilities were confined to self-defense, which resulted in much criticism and controversy from within the government and the public sphere. However, Fujishige stated that *kaketsuke-keigo* would grant Japanese peacekeepers the ability to protect civilians through military force when necessary without requiring Japan to contribute infantry units to the U.N. Fujishige predicted that Japan will continue to contribute to U.N. peacekeeping operations through engineering units, but did not foresee Japan contributing infantry units or a force commander despite the fact that Japan is one of the largest financial contributors to the U.N. Fujishige underscored this point by stating that she herself as well as her colleagues see little rationale for Japan to send infantry units to participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations. However, hesitance to contribute infantry units to U.N. peacekeeping operations is not something unique to Japan but is a pattern found in most developed countries.

As Fujishige's brief overview of her paper was completed, Tatsumi invited the other participants of the roundtable to offer their feedback. Tatsumi suggested that the paper should discuss more specific and concrete policy recommendations for the Japanese government in order to help build a bridge between the goals of the Abe administration and reality. Echoing this sentiment was Bill Durch, who highlighted that the U.N. is in great need of high level medical facilities, which he suggested Japan can help deploy with the addition of self-protection provided by *kaketsuke-keigo* capabilities. In addition to other alternatives to contributing infantry to PKO, Japan could contribute through drone units, transport helicopters, and community oriented policing. Jessie Babcock asked whether the Japanese government would be interested in expanding Japan's role in PKO beyond South Sudan as well as expanding the full extent of Japan's PKO force's ability to defend itself. In response, Richard Ponzio suggested that a reference to the HIPPO Report in Fujishige's paper may be timely, especially regarding the need for a vanguard force within PKO. In addition, Ponzio also mentioned that it is time for a female Special Representative of the Secretary-General to come out of Japan.

Fujishige responded to their comments, noting that despite the change in security legislation that took place in 2015, there is not only hesitance from military personnel to use weapons but hesitance within the Japanese government to contribute infantry units to peacekeeping operations. This hesitance mostly stems from the potential backlash the government would receive over a Japanese peacekeeper dying in an exchange of gunfire, which could create a setback for Japan's PKO contributions altogether. Despite this, Japan recognizes the importance of contributing to the U.N. through both military and non-military means as well as participation in multilateral organizations in order to respond to the ever-growing presence of China on the global stage. However, dialogue focused on U.N. peacekeeping operations within the Japanese government is on the decline due to a shift in focus on territorial issues in both the East and South China Sea.

Richard Ponzio highlighted the cooperation seen between the Balkan states in U.N. peacekeeping operations that ultimately helped improve overall relations between them. Ponzio asked Fujishige if participating in the same peacekeeping operation was possible for Japan, China, and South Korea in order to foster trust between the three nations, rather than viewing PKO as a competition. To this Fujishige responded that the U.N. framework does not provide a sufficient model for regional cooperation, since the U.N.'s membership is global and its work is multilateral. In addition, there is no regional framework in Northeast Asia that could be used to arrange cooperation. Tatsumi and Ponzio clarified that Ponzio was thinking about the possibility of temporary cooperative arrangements, such as Japan conducting peacebuilding in South Sudan and asking another country to partner with them. Ponzio asserted that there are a variety of models that could work for Northeast Asian countries, and he emphasized that the U.N. can still provide support and an umbrella for such efforts. Babcock suggested that Japan consider India, Vietnam, and the Philippines, as countries with which Japan has been strengthening ties.

Fujishige acknowledged the value of regional cooperation. She noted that China, South Korea, and Japan are all working in South Sudan, but that there had been little cooperation, if any. She asserted that without direct daily communication between China and Japan, as well as preparation and practice, regional cooperation would not be smoothly implemented. She expressed doubt that the U.N. could

provide proper support, since the U.N. directs the members of its missions, leaving little room for adjustment. However, more multilateral exercises, such as Khaan Quest in Mongolia, would be good opportunities for countries to build cooperation.

Regarding the possibility of Japan contributing a female Special Representative of the Secretary-General (raised by Ponzio earlier), Fujishige stated that she believes that Japan is behind on putting female power into PKO, but there is a possibility of Japan contributing more female officers to the U.N. headquarters, if not the field. Babcock suggested that gender mainstreaming may be a prudent topic for Fujishige to include in her paper. Fujishige agreed that Japan should consider expanding capacity building in this area.

Tatsumi thanked the participants for the discussion and ended the workshop.