

Workshop on “Japan’s Africa Policy: From TICAD to PKO”

Rie Takezawa, Institute for International Policy Studies

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WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Discussants:

Rie Takezawa, Researcher, Institute for International Policy Studies

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

Yun Sun, Senior Associate, East Asia Program, Stimson Center

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

Jeffrey Hornung, Fellow for Security and Foreign Affairs, Sasakawa USA

Fumihiko Goto, First Secretary, Political Section, Embassy of Japan

Yukito Ono, Second Secretary, Political Section, Embassy of Japan

Pamela Kennedy, Research Associate, East Asia Program, Stimson Center

Yuki Tatsumi welcomed the roundtable participants to the second workshop of the project and introduced Rie Takezawa, a researcher at the Institute for International Policy Studies in Tokyo, an adjunct lecturer on African politics at Musashino University, and a PhD candidate at Hitotsubashi University. Tatsumi then invited Takezawa to discuss her research.

Rie Takezawa presented her research findings so far. She first discussed the context of Japan’s activities in Africa, particularly the constraints on Japan’s military activity outside Japan. She noted that the contours of Japan’s peacebuilding policy thus have focused on “peacebuilding through economic development,” using economic development policies to help reduce poverty and create sustainable growth in regions such as Africa. She emphasized that Japan’s approach to peacebuilding is unique in this respect, because it is limited to a post-conflict phase. For her research, she focused on tracking the history of Japan’s peacebuilding policy in Africa, including economic engagement, shifts in policy stances, and case studies. Within this context, she argued that “Japan’s policy to contribute proactively to the peace, stability, and prosperity of Africa emphasizes peacebuilding through economic development. Since the launch of the Tokyo International Conference of African Development (TICAD) in 1993, Japan’s peacebuilding policy towards Africa has evolved to focus on quality growth principles, such as sustainability, but challenges remain in defining and implementing the policy.” Her research seeks to answer the question: “How can Japan refine its policy to better assist Africa’s peacebuilding?”

Takezawa then discussed the evolution of the TICAD, which began in 1993 as a forum for Japan, African countries, and interested organizations and companies to discuss development in Africa. She argued that by launching TICAD, Japan was both taking advantage of a decrease in global interest in Africa since the end of the Cold War and also bringing Africa back to global attention. TICAD was, in fact, the first major Japanese initiative on the continent, and has held conferences every five years since its establishment. Takezawa explained the contents of the first two conferences, which emphasized multilateral cooperation and African ownership. She noted that peacebuilding was not initially an element of the first TICAD declaration, though the characteristics of Japan’s unique style of peacebuilding, focusing on sustainable economic development, were linked to security in the declaration. The second TICAD conference in 1998 more explicitly tied economic development to peace and stability. Takezawa said that though the word ‘peacebuilding’ was not specifically used in these two

conferences, Japan was already beginning to formulate an economic policy towards Africa that centered maintenance of peace and stability. The third TICAD conference in 2003 established three “pillars” of Japan’s policy toward Africa – consolidation of peace, human-centered development, and poverty reduction through economic growth – and was the same year that ‘peacebuilding’ was added to Japan’s ODA Charter. Takezawa explained that the phrase ‘consolidation of peace’ was the concept of peacebuilding, which Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi promoted in Japan’s foreign policy beginning in 2002.

Takezawa identified a shift beginning around the 2003 TICAD conference and an inter-conference meeting in 2006, Conference on Consolidation of Peace in Addis Ababa, from a focus on ODA and debt reduction towards increased attention to the private sector’s role in development and investment, due to economic growth in Africa since the early 1990s. Takezawa argued that because ‘peace and stability’ were still among the pillars of Japanese development assistance as put forth in the Yokohama Declaration and Action Plan, the new focus on the private sector had not altered Japan’s overall use of development for peacebuilding in Africa. The sixth TICAD in 2016 reaffirmed these principles as well as cooperation between the public and private sectors in addition to separate private sector development.

Takezawa then discussed the implementation strategy for this policy under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which coordinates and implements the government’s ODA. She noted that the concept of peacebuilding and economic growth is vague and Japan’s policy of using “a diverse array of effort” to implement peacebuilding through development has resulted in a wide range of projects across sectors. This is why JICA’s projects tend to be classified as ‘peacebuilding,’ which brings the overall peacebuilding policy into alignment with JICA’s own strategy. Takezawa noted that around the same time that TICAD shifted to focus more on private sector development, JICA also changed its focus in Africa to accelerating economic growth, rather than specific poverty reduction programs, though it continued to work on reducing poverty as well. Supporting this shift was a revision in JICA’s strategy that directly equated the goals of peacebuilding with those of conventional development assistance. This justified the broad variety of sectors engaged in ‘peacebuilding’ within JICA’s development project portfolio. Takezawa assessed that, based on JICA’s stated strategy, the government of Japan was pursuing peacebuilding through economic growth in Africa in collaboration with JICA; however, she criticized the policy for being too vague and lacking any areas of specialty. She explained the Development Cooperation Charter, drafted in 2015, which characterized Japan’s development activities in Africa as aiming to bring “quality growth,” defined as “inclusiveness, sustainability, and resilience,” and thereby contribute to Africa’s peace and stability. Takezawa noted that this charter also links peace and growth, but does not bring any further clarity to the question of how Japan can best promote peacebuilding through economic development, such as specific sectors or fields.

Takezawa discussed her case study on South Sudan, which she described as a unique situation because Japan has both development projects there and personnel with U.N. peacekeeping operations (PKO), and because numerous actors, including MOFA, SDF, and JICA, have collaborated on projects there. The SDF was involved in infrastructure projects as well as civilian protection, but the latter is constrained by SDF military activity restrictions so that civilian protection takes creative forms, like building roads to ease transportation issues. ODA from JICA, in cooperation with the South Sudanese government, focuses on long-term development, including infrastructure, industry diversification, and services. Takezawa also described examples of collaboration between the SDF and JICA, such as demolition of old buildings and road repair, but noted that more collaboration is necessary.

Takezawa argued that Japan's unique approach to peacebuilding does not reconcile easily with international peacebuilding efforts, due to Japan's inability to participate in the conflict phase. Because Japan is forced by military restrictions to work on post-conflict projects, especially infrastructure development, the Japanese government is unable to respond easily to the pressure of other governments to participate more heavily in peacebuilding phases. Takezawa found that Japan has increased security commitments on the African continent, such as the SDF base in Djibouti. The 2015 security reforms will also expand the permissions of the SDF so that they are able to defend allies more easily.

Takezawa reiterated that both the peacebuilding policy and its implementation strategy are too vague and ultimately can be defined so as to include every sector and method of development assistance. She argued that the broadness made it difficult to coordinate with partner organizations, and that the policy left Japan's own interests in Africa vague as well, since Japan does not have a historical interest in Africa to serve as a foundation for the current policy.

Takezawa concluded with policy recommendations, including her main recommendation that the government of Japan narrow the definition of its peacebuilding policy so that it has clear objectives and describes why Japan is interested in Africa. She also recommended that Japan adjust its policy to best utilize Japan's own comparative advantages over competing donors on the continent. She further suggested that the Japanese government take an "All-Japan" approach, which is already in progress, to better coordinate the different interested organizations in Japan on projects on the ground in Africa. She highlighted the need to bring the private sector and nongovernmental organizations into the conversation. She argued that private companies can ensure that Japanese investment in Africa build reliable supply chains that are important for both the Japanese and African economies.

Takezawa finished her discussion by thanking the participants for coming and asking for their feedback.

Tatsumi opened the floor to the roundtable participants for comments and discussion.

Jeffrey Hornung thanked Takezawa for her discussion and brought up several points for discussion. First, he said it might be worth bringing China further into the discussion. Because China has significant development activities in Africa, it could serve as a point of comparison for Japan's work, such as through case studies of specific projects, or in terms of overall policy. He asked what the differences were in China and Japan's activities on the African continent. He also asked about the involvement of the private sector in projects and whose interests it served, such as the Japanese government, African governments, African communities, etc. He also agreed that Japan's working definition of peacebuilding was too broad.

Yun Sun then agreed with Hornung's assessment that comparing China and Japan would be interesting to see in the paper. As an expert on China with research experience on China's activities in Africa, she noted that China has much higher levels of investment in Africa than Japan does, but that Chinese forays into peacekeeping and business in Africa generally differ from Japanese investment in a number of other ways. She mentioned that the nuances of Chinese business in Africa are tricky, as the investment is welcome but it does not necessarily benefit the local African communities, so some African communities react negatively to Chinese business projects. In terms of aid, too, Chinese aid tends to come without strings attached, such as requirements for African governments to improve on human rights issues or

democratic institutions, unlike American aid, which has many conditions. She asked how Japan stood on this issue.

There was a long discussion about how China's strategy in Africa compares to Japan's. Various participants discussed the dilemma of exploitation; if China's strategy in Africa is exploitative in terms of natural resources and human capital, how does Japan's strategy compare to that exploitation? This point revived Hornung's comment about the definition of peacebuilding and Takezawa's recommendation that Japan more clearly define both peacebuilding its interests in Africa. **Hornung** and **Sun** cautioned that the paper should not become a paper about Japan versus China in Africa, since that particular aspect of this topic has been written about many times, but **Sun** did recommend bringing in China for comparison in regards to the relationship between peacebuilding and private sector development in Africa. She reiterated that it shouldn't become a China paper, but asked if Japan was considering China's increasing activity in Africa and responding to it. **Takezawa** responded to the questions and discussion on China by agreeing that China was a worthwhile comparison and she would consider bringing into her paper somehow. She mentioned that Japanese aid was previously mostly tied, but due to ODA reforms most of the aid was now untied. Despite the lack of "strings," though, she noted that Japanese aid to African countries was designed with the hope of helping to build peace, or help communities recover from conflict and prevent future conflict, which differed from a merely mercantile approach to investment. She brought up her PowerPoint slide showing the proportion of Japan's ODA in Africa compared to total Japanese ODA, which shows that ODA to Africa is only a small percentage of the total, and acknowledged that China outstrips Japanese investment activities (development or otherwise) in Africa. She said in regards to Sun's question that Japan did think about China, and Japan was taking the approach of increasing quality of development aid and emphasizing to African countries this quality over quantity (per her first policy recommendation), especially in areas like infrastructure, where Japan has a lot of experience. She also mentioned Japan's effort to make a longer term commitment with such projects by providing ongoing assistance, which might also help to differentiate from China's investment at the present.

There was additional discussion of the definition of peacebuilding and Takezawa's historical approach to her research question. **Hornung** wondered if Japan had satisfactorily defined peacebuilding. **Richard Ponzio** asked how the definition would further evolve and impact Japan's policy implementation. He also asked Takezawa to discuss further her points about the "diverse array" of sectors and projects that were collected under Japan's "peacebuilding" umbrella. He agreed with her recommendation that a narrower application of the term to projects would help define it and give Japan's overall policy clearer direction, because at the moment it appears that Japan draws a direct equivalency between "peacebuilding" and any development or aid activities. **Takezawa** reaffirmed that the definition was too broad to be useful in strategy-building, but that Japan was still constrained by its Constitution on military activity and had to focus on a different sort of peacebuilding.

The discussion shifted to Japan's activities with the U.N. and the South Sudan case study. **Richard Ponzio** and **Hornung** noted that Japan does a lot of work with U.N. missions. **Ponzio** suggested that Takezawa bring additional case studies into the paper, since the South Sudan case had a number of unusual factors, including the U.N. collaboration (and drawing some distinction between peacebuilding and peacekeeping), the breakout of fighting, and the need to shift around SDF presence based on conflict locations. He noted that it was a very good case study for examining how Japan is trying to engage in peacebuilding in areas that are still in the conflict phase sometimes. But he also said it would be helpful

to see a case study that were not so unusual, or that highlighted some of the other features she discussed, like collaboration with private companies or NGOs. **Takezawa** said she would consider these points and agreed that the situation in South Sudan was evolving.

Hornung also brought up Takezawa's discussion of the SDF engineering unit in South Sudan that has been tasked with civilian protection. He asked if the definition of civilian protection perhaps could be stretched too broadly in problematic ways, such as by having the SDF protect buildings owned by private companies or by the local government. Various participants noted that civilian protection in some instances could extend to serving a private security function, but that it still served a peacekeeping role; the question was whether the SDF could be interpreted as taking sides if it maintained security around such facilities. **Takezawa** noted that this could be possible.

This topic led to discussion of private sector collaboration. **Sun** and **Hornung** again pointed to China's mercantilist aid in some African countries, which led to some development but also propped up illegitimate or oppressive regimes. They asked Takezawa how private companies would further the goal of peacebuilding if they were concerned about profits and stakeholders first. **Takezawa** agreed that the problem of supporting problematic or weak regimes in African countries was difficult. She noted that private companies could get involved in projects at a more local level, which might help benefit specific communities, rather than an aid package delivered at a higher level. Various participants said that even in such cases, it was not always clear how much benefit went to the Japanese companies and how much to the local community. **Takezawa** agreed to look into the role of the private sector in collaboration.

Last, the discussion delved into collaboration between NGOs and the Japanese government. **Hornung** asked how eager NGOs were to collaborate with the government. **Takezawa** mentioned that some NGOs find working with the government to be cumbersome, and **Goto** and **Ono** confirmed this point. **Goto** mentioned that there were some NGOs in Japan that were very vocal about their unwillingness to work with the Japanese government, but that they still wanted to be given the option of pursuing that collaboration by being brought into discussions about ODA in Africa. **Ono** said there was really only a couple such cases anyway. **Tatsumi** noted that there were still a number of NGOs that were ready to collaborate if the opportunity arose, but some higher profile organizations simply complained loudly and were not representative of the whole relationship between the government of Japan and NGOs. **Hornung** asked about the "All-Japan" approach and how it would improve peacebuilding implementation rather than contributing to the problem of the too-broad policy. **Takezawa** agreed that the point about whether NGOs wanted to collaborate was an interesting topic to review further, and said that the All-Japan approach would ideally bring about more cooperation among all the Japanese actors. She said that, as her presentation had shown, JICA and TICAD were generally in line regarding their "economic development" approach to peacebuilding, but that there needed to be deeper cooperation on the project level. This cooperation would help Japan achieve longer lasting impact by unifying the actors with a more coherent policy; she referred again to her first recommendation that Japan figure out its main focus and objectives.

Tatsumi wrapped up the discussion by thanking the participants once again and inviting everyone to attend the public seminar if possible. She noted that the discussion had been fruitful and Takezawa had much to think about; **Takezawa** agreed and thanked everyone for their comments.