

Workshop on “Japan’s Contribution to Institution-Building in Peacebuilding”

Kei Koga, Nanyang Technological University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discussants:

Kei Koga, Assistant Professor, Nanyang Technological University

Nobuhiro Aizawa, Associate Professor, Kyushu University

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

Richard Cronin, Distinguished Fellow, Stimson Center

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

Zack Cooper, Fellow, Japan Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Ayumi Teraoka, Research Associate, Japan Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

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

Yuki Tatsumi, Senior Associate of Stimson’s East Asia Program, hosted a workshop for Kei Koga, Assistant Professor at Nanyang Technological University, to discuss his research on Japan’s efforts in institution-building in peacebuilding activities. Tatsumi introduced Koga to the assembled experts, and then Koga summarized his research so far.

Koga began by defining institutions broadly, including norms and rules, international and regional organizations, and so forth; he defined peacebuilding as economic and social development that is the foundation of durable peace. His research questions focused on how Japan has developed its peacebuilding policy over time, the characteristics of this policy, and what challenges the policy faces. He noted that Japan can contribute to international stability and liberal values through peacebuilding, but also, regionally, could thereby boost Japan’s good image in Asia, making other countries more willing to accept Japan’s help.

Koga emphasized the importance of Japan’s conceptual basis for peacebuilding, which is part of the concept of “human security,” specifically “freedom from want.” Koga contrasted Japan’s approach with a Canadian focus on “freedom from fear,” which promotes policies to protect populations from political oppression and violence. Japan, alternatively, has focused on providing food and other ways of raising living standards. Koga gave the example of Prime Minister Obuchi, who emphasized human security (through economic development and improving living standards) during the Asian Financial Crisis as a means of stabilizing the affected countries. Koga also noted that while peacebuilding has been considered a post-conflict activity, it must begin during the conflict phase in order to be effective. Seeking to clarify the idea of human security, Japan also established the U.N. Trust Fund for Human Security under Prime Minister Mori, and began incorporating human security and peacebuilding into its foreign policy, including cooperation with the U.S. after September 11, 2001.

Koga then discussed several case studies of Japanese peacebuilding from which he derived several characteristics of peacebuilding: a non-military approach, due to Japan’s limitation on the Self-Defense Forces (SDF); a focus on socio-economic development; and long-term commitment to creating durable peace. The case studies included East Timor, Aceh, Cambodia, and Mindanao, with various levels of success and failure. Koga argued that Japan had the most success when the Japanese engaged with

many actors in the host country, building personal relationships that Japan could leverage as an interlocutor in peacebuilding. Koga noted that Japan has a general principle of noninterference, so if host countries did not want Japan to intervene, Japan would not, and in such cases, particularly when Japan had failed to build personal relationships with local leaders, the principle of noninterference weakened Japan's ability to play a meaningful role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and to promote socio-economic development. In addition to this challenge, Koga stated that the concept of human security was still vague in terms of Japan's policy goals. Because promoting human security and respecting state sovereignty can at times be mutually exclusive, Koga argued that Japan needs to develop a better framework for action on human security. He also acknowledged that the limitations on the SDF sometimes hinder Japan's peacebuilding efforts. Rather than alter the non-military approach to peacebuilding, though, Koga suggested that Japan adjust the SDF laws and international cooperation law to give the SDF more flexibility.

In the U.S. and Japan's differing methods and roles in peacebuilding, Koga saw potential for greater cooperation in the alliance. He offered the example of Indonesia, which did not have a good perception of the U.S. due to American emphasis on human rights issues and democratization, but which was willing to accept Japan's help in peacebuilding in Aceh. Koga suggested that the U.S. and Japan complement each other in peacebuilding, sometimes going where the other cannot.

Koga briefly outlined his tentative policy recommendations. He again emphasized the need to further develop the concept of and framework for human security-oriented policy. He also recommended strengthening ties between Japan and ASEAN, including through institutions like ADMM-Plus. Finally he suggested that Japan and the U.S. leverage their alliance relationship to monitor regional and local stability.

Tatsumi thanked Koga for his summary and opened the discussion to the group. Jeffrey Hornung recommended that Koga explain the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan's peacebuilding initiative, if the policy was as top-down as it sounded. He also suggested that Koga track how Japan's peacebuilding activities changed over time according to lessons learned, and that Koga also consider comparing Japan's work with that of the European Union, since there is much in common.

The group discussed these ideas in further detail. Koga agreed that the E.U.'s peacebuilding activities were more like Japan's than the U.S.'s and that Japan could probably learn from the E.U. going forward. In regards to the top-down nature of the policy, Richard Cronin raised the point that Japanese policymaking can differ from ground-level policy implementation, so the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not the only aspect that needs further examination. Cronin noted that there seems to be a gap in leadership on peacebuilding, such that Japan lacks the institutional, policymaking structure on this policy to expand its efforts significantly. He added that he does not think the difference between the U.S. and Japanese approaches to peacebuilding is very large.

Cronin also asked about Japan's role in the Asian Development Bank. Tatsumi suggested that this topic was more suitable for Nobuhiro Aizawa's research, which is more development-focused.

Ayumi Teraoka commented that many changes have occurred in Asia's regional security since the passage of Japan's peacekeeping law, and asked whether the security situation has changed how Japan approaches peacekeeping operations (PKO) and Japan's strategic thinking more broadly. She suggested that examining this question would reveal significant developments in Japan's strategy. Koga said it was

possible that Japan pursued peacebuilding to further its national interest, but he was not certain if such a consideration was tied to particular administrations or whether it was a long-term trend. He acknowledged that Japan's peacebuilding policy has not had a positive impact on the security environment in Northeast Asia, but emphasized the acceptance of Japan's assistance in Southeast Asia. He wondered if other nations would spurn Japan's help if they saw Japan's peacebuilding efforts as promotion of national interest, and said again that the perception of Japan by other countries was a factor. Related to the matter of national interest, Cronin suggested that Koga discuss the shift from official development assistance (ODA) that in the past tended to promote Japanese economic interests, to ODA in support of nontraditional security.

Zack Cooper asked about Koga's view of Japan's role in Africa. Koga noted that he had not looked into cases in Africa and the Middle East yet, but argued that Japan's engagement in Africa was based on the hope of winning support from African countries in an effort to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Tatsumi suggested that Koga expand upon his case studies to show characteristics of peacebuilding activities that allowed Japan to be successful, as well as factors that led to failure. She noted that Koga had already assembled several positive cases and he could look for examples that were not as successful. Koga agreed that this would add some depth to the case studies. Aizawa asked how Koga decided what case studies are considered peacebuilding. Koga raised the example of South China Sea disputes, which involve multiple countries and maritime issues, and said that he was looking at cases that occur primarily within one country. He also noted that PKO typically begin after the U.N. has identified a need for peacekeepers, and China would be able to veto matters involving the South China Sea. He suggested, though, that peacekeepers could be placed as monitors in the South China Sea, though it would be difficult. Aizawa asked him to expand on the concept of peacebuilding and how to define certain situations as needing peacebuilding. Koga agreed that there were differing definitions of peacebuilding, but that it generally connoted peace consolidation, socio-economic development, security sector reform, and such. Tatsumi noted that the concept can be expanded by policymakers as well, giving the example of the Philippines and Vietnam building up their coast guards to manage Chinese behavior in the South China Sea, which those two countries could argue is a form of peacemaking, since it helps stabilize the region. She also noted that a regional code of conduct could be considered peacemaking or peacebuilding. Cronin agreed with Tatsumi's point, but noted that such actions could be considered provocative as well and increase instability.

Tatsumi closed the workshop by thanking the participants for their discussion.