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HUMAN SECURITY: WHY JAPAN SHOULD DO MORE

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The complexities of today's international security agenda are staggering. A number of states in the world are today classified as "fragile", unable to govern themselves effectively, to provide the basic needs of their populations, or to maintain law and order. Some of these fragile states have become hotbeds of international terrorist groups, given the lack of effective control of their territories. Civil wars are also fought differently today from the conventional "government *versus* rebel group" format. Warring parties tend to be further fractured

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along lines of identity such as ethnicity, religion or clan, and shifting interests. While humanitarian issues were consequences of inter-state conflicts during the Cold War era, today they are often seen as root causes of identity-based internal conflicts in which attacks on civilians belonging to “the other group” is a central objective of warfare. These dramatic changes in the nature of conflicts have triggered a number of developments and transformations in strategies and approaches for international responses to crises.

The fundamental transition in the ways wars are conducted resulted during the 1990s in the “humanization” of the security concept in international policy circles. Well before concepts such as *Responsibility to Protect (R2P)* and *Human Security* were refined and elaborated by eminent international commissions, international peace operations made humanitarian protection and assistance important elements of their mandates. The international community learned the painful lesson in the former Yugoslavia and in the Great Lakes region of Africa that leaving human insecurity unattended can jeopardize state and even regional security.

This linkage between human and state security became even more evident in Afghanistan. Increasingly, Afghanistan appears to be descending into a vicious circle of human and state insecurity. The unstable environment and the lack of law and order seriously hamper reconstruction, which in turn contributes to the further erosion of trust among the Afghan people in their own government. The Taliban skillfully exploit this perception of a “failing state”, increasing their gains not through military advances in the traditional sense, but rather through carefully orchestrated information campaigns directed against the international community as well as through the use of asymmetric terrorist tactics. The response of the international community has been to stage even more robust and increased military interventions through Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The result of this vicious cycle is further instability in the country and insecurity for the people, the region and possibly the rest of the world.

That the importance of security and the well-being of individuals, i.e.,


human security, and the nexus between state and human securities are now well established and recognized, and that policy makers and practitioners are now searching for effective measures to ensure both through various types of international interventions, are certainly welcome. Human security provides a useful policy framework which helps practitioners plan and program activities more holistically and comprehensively to avoid gaps between various types and sectors of assistance.

However, the “humanization” of security has concurrently given rise to the “securitization” of aid. While this may have been a necessary and natural course of development in the new unstable environments within which aid operations need to take place, the securitization of aid poses two important dilemmas.

First, the fact that aid is influenced by a security agenda may result in the encroachment and blurring of the roles of civilian political, development, humanitarian, and military actors. Humanitarian actors are most concerned by this development, as the securitization of humanitarian actions could change the nature of the existing norm-based international humanitarian regime developed since the 19th century. Unfortunate methods of aid by some of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, especially in the early phase of their activities, in which humanitarian aid was provided in exchange for information on the Taliban, raised serious concerns about the subordination of humanitarian principles to a political and military agenda.

Second, the securitization of aid tends to rely on military solutions and quick fixes to complex sets of problems which are deeply-rooted in conflict societies. International policy circles are aware of the deficiency of this short-term approach, but so far lack effective alternative strategies which would produce sufficient progress. This is essentially because of the non-existence of a secure environment which would allow long-term socio-economic development, and the shortage of deployable civilian expertise necessary for state building. Again, the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq attest to this challenge.

Ensuring human and state security requires the establishment of a careful strategy framework, a continued strong and long-term commitment as well as better functioning civil-military co-operation on the basis of the principle of civilian control. Japan, which played an important role in the clarification of the concept of human security, can potentially make very useful contributions. Needless to say, a first step towards such a Japanese contribution should be general legislation on international peace co-operation which would allow active participation of troops in international peacebuilding efforts, in which most other responsible nations are engaged. A naïve claim, still sometimes heard in Japan, that civilian development assistance alone can build peace around the world is unrealistic and even irresponsible in this new age of complex security environments.

Pending a clearer national consensus on participation in peace co-operation, Japan can and should, however, make more active use of its civilian capacities and knowledge. Civilian expertise in peace and state building are in great shortage, which partly explains the current “military-led” peacebuilding effort in Afghanistan. There is much to be expected from Japan, which has a most capable and efficient civil service as well as the national experiences of rapid industrialization after the Meiji Restoration and of the miraculous recovery from the destruction of WWII. More active Japanese assistance in this field is not about charity or good-will. We need to understand that human security of people in a remote village of a failed state may ultimately be our own security concern in the 21st century global community. 

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