



Peacebuilding as a Field of Joint Endeavour In the Japan-U.S. Alliance: The View from an International Organizations' Perspective

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This paper was first presented at a one-day bilateral workshop on April 29, 2011, held in conjunction with the Osaka School of International Public Policy (OSIPP) in Washington, D.C. In the papers, authors aim to assess each government's "whole-of-government" or interagency coordination of peacebuilding policies and to identify priorities, assets, and expertise as applied to Afghanistan and Sudan. The goal of the project is to explore the strengths and weaknesses of both the United States and Japan's respective initiatives with an eye toward how the two allies can best cooperate and work synergistically in a "whole of alliance" approach to peacebuilding operations in vulnerable or failing states.

Introduction

Interest in peacebuilding as a subset of peace operations has increased over the past two decades against the background of (a) rising consciousness of the global interdependency of threats (e.g., malign emanations of failed states) and (b) the imperative for alliances with their roots in the Cold War to become – and be *seen* to become – relevant to current security demands. With respect to state failure, the fragility of post-conflict stabilization (revealed in studies on the rate of relapse² and recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan) prompts the reflection that the *peacebuilding* element of these efforts may merit greater investment. Regarding alliance concerns, in contrast to conventional military activities, the broader range of tasks involved in peacebuilding offers advantages for accommodating or taking advantage of the different capacities and comparative advantages offered by the U.S. and Japan. In short, peacebuilding

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² The World Bank estimates that 40 percent of post-conflict countries relapse into conflict within 10 years (World Bank website).

may offer a way to tune the alliance to the zeitgeist of contemporary security concerns, but also to turn the asymmetries that have sometimes restricted US-Japan cooperation to the alliance's advantage.

The potential for closer cooperation in peacebuilding endeavours to add value and visibility to the U.S.-Japan alliance may be easier to capture if we pause to reflect on the concepts involved – most obviously peacebuilding itself – as well as the context for peacebuilding that prevails in those countries chosen as case studies in this exercise. The first part of this paper scopes the term “peacebuilding,” identifying some of the prominent features that have influenced the development of the concept, and placing it in the context of related conceptual and operational themes. The second part of the paper looks at features of recent experience in Afghanistan and Sudan that frame the peacebuilding efforts in those countries, and which may also condition the insights they offer as case studies. The two features seen in both cases are the absence of a coordinating authority and the continuation of conflict alongside peacebuilding efforts. The effects of these are considered in relation to three questions that guide the studies that accompany this paper: the “whole of government” approach, national priorities, assets and expertise, and complementarity.

Scoping “Peacebuilding”

Peacebuilding has recently made gains in stature relative to other concepts that evolved around “peace operations” in the post-Cold War period. It has no fixed definition, but the working definition that it covers “a range of activities aimed at making peace self-sustaining and reducing the risk of relapse into conflict” is generally accepted in practice (DPKO/DFS 2010). It is worth noting a few points about the context in which it evolved and how this may have influenced our current understanding and employment of the term.

Use of the term in the United Nations can be traced back almost two decades to UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali's 1992 “Agenda for Peace,” which defined post-conflict “peace-building” as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (United Nations 1992). Another salient report that followed almost a decade of rather mixed UN experience in post-conflict interventions (the 2000 Brahimi report) described it thus:

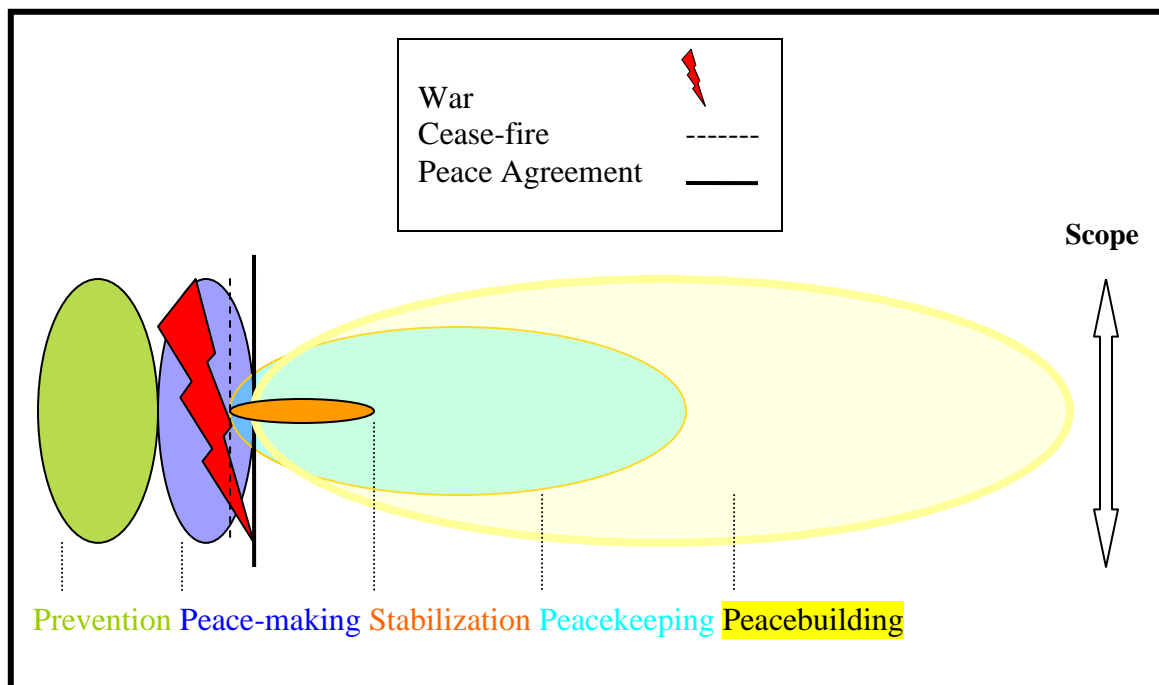
Peace-building ... defines activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war. Thus, peace-building includes but is not limited to reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening the rule of law (for example, through training and restructuring of local police, and judicial and penal reform); improving respect for human rights through the monitoring, education and investigation of past and existing abuses; providing technical assistance for democratic development

(including electoral assistance and support for free media); and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques (United Nations 2000).

Initially, there was a sense that peacebuilding follows peacekeeping in a linear sequence, but more recent studies and doctrines describe certain peacebuilding tasks as starting earlier in the sequence of post-conflict recovery (DPKO/DFS 2010). Any attempt to present these activities on a continuum therefore produces a degree of overlap between peacemaking, stabilization, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The aftermath of conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq drew attention to the theme of “stabilization” operations, which may also take place in the period of the conflict itself and as it (hopefully) starts to decline. The rising popularity of the term “stabilization” extends to UN peacekeeping, where it has even found its way into the titles of recently re-named operations (“stabilization” puts the “S” in the MINUSTAH mission in Haiti and in the MONUSCO mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Definitions vary, but for the UK, “stabilization” is about establishing a legitimate government, and therefore “has explicitly political aims” (UK Stabilization unit, 2008). As we shall explore below, due to its “state-building” or “nation-building” aspects, one could make the same observation about peacebuilding.

The following diagram is the author’s own attempt to present these various concepts to do with peace operations in a way that allows us to appreciate their overlap and their sequence in relation to conflict. They in no way reflect any UN or other official doctrine. The double-headed arrow to the right hand side indicates the scope of activities, which is also reflected in the different height of the shaded areas – thin for military and or political objectives, broader for others such as prevention, peace-making and peacebuilding that take in a range of issues commensurate with the character of the conflict in question (including development and state-building efforts across a wider range of professional disciplines). Peacekeeping is somewhere between the narrow, security-centric scope of stabilization and the wider scope of the conflict itself and of peacebuilding.



The typology could be described as follows:

- *Conflict prevention*: Such action can begin any time and, since it aims to prevent violent conflict, it shares some features with peacebuilding. As for its termination point, obviously it ends in failure when war begins.
- *Peacemaking* could be seen as a relatively “broad church” if one considers the full spectrum between diplomatic activities such as mediation and coercive action such as sanctions or interventions by force designed to bring the conflict to an end. All such activity may be conducted at any time during the conflict, but should be considered complete when the parties not only agree to “cease fire,” but commit via a peace agreement or other accord that comprises a process of resolving their conflict through peaceful means.
- *Stabilization* operations may (as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan) continue within the timespan of the conflict itself, and may continue for some time after, depending on how rapidly security is restored, but they tend to be rather narrowly focused on security and political objectives.
- *Peacekeeping* may be initiated very early in this sequence to assist in sustaining a cease-fire and “hold the ring” through the conclusion of negotiations on a peace agreement, the implementation of its terms, and even beyond. The functions of peacekeeping substantially overlap those of stabilization, but tend to embrace a wider scope of activities, depending on the agreement reached. Ideally, stabilization is a short-term endeavour and may take place in the absence of a peace agreement. In contrast to that ideal, we can observe a recent trend of peacekeeping operations that continue running even beyond the point at which the

implementation of the agreement that they were created to support has largely been completed. Such operations may stay on to fulfill some of the state's functions or continue the task of building state capacity (e.g. UNMIL in Liberia, MONUC and MONUSCO in DRC, and the missions in what has become Timor Leste). Some missions led by the UN DPKO came into existence without being based on any peace agreement at all (e.g., MINUSTAH in Haiti). This is one of the factors that have increased the difficulty of making a clean or exclusive distinction between *peacekeeping* and *peacebuilding*. This view is also reflected in the recent trend to describe peacekeepers as “early peacebuilders” (DPKO/DFS 2011).

This brings us to *peacebuilding*, which has tended over recent years to move toward the “left” of this diagram, i.e., its activities now begin in the “immediate aftermath” of the conflict (UN Secretary General Report, 2009). One could argue however that it is not possible to talk seriously about peacebuilding until there is a peace to build, which is why in this diagram peacebuilding activity is represented as beginning not after a cease-fire, but after the conclusion of an agreement, which (ideally) comprises the “road map” towards consolidated peace as committed to (ideally) by the parties to the conflict.

A recent DPKO/DFS study characterized the relationship between these concepts as a “nexus” (DPKO/DFS 2010):

Peacebuilding-peacekeeping nexus: **What peacebuilding is**

- Peacebuilding is primarily a *national* challenge and responsibility, and national factors will largely shape its pace and sequencing. An early and sustained focus on national capacity development is a central theme of the UN system's engagement in peacebuilding.
- Peacebuilding is a fundamentally political process requiring ongoing political mediation, the strengthening of national capacities at several levels for conflict management, and sensitivity to the political, historical, economic and cultural context and dynamics.
- Peacebuilding entails a range of activities aimed at making peace self-sustaining and reducing the risk of relapse into conflict. Peacebuilding may begin prior to the arrival of a peacekeeping mission and always continues beyond its departure. It is supported by a variety of national and international actors, happens at different levels (political, operational, technical, national, sub-national, etc.) and across many closely linked sectors.
- Peacebuilding priorities vary in response to the demands of each context, but typically include support to (i) basic safety and security including protection of civilians and rule of law, (ii) inclusive political processes, (iii) delivery of basic services, (iv) restoring core government functions, and (v) economic revitalization. The restoration or extension of legitimate state authority, including a basic degree of political consensus and financing, is typically one of the fundamental conditions for sustainable peace.

- While the above reflects the concept as articulated in numerous Secretary-General's reports (starting with 'Agenda for Peace' in 1992 through to the 2009 report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict), the roles and responsibilities of different actors and inter-governmental organs within the UN system and the relative importance of different types of support remain the subject of discussion among Member States. For this reason, different constituencies continue to use the term 'peacebuilding' in ways that may diverge from each other and from the concept as articulated in reports of the Secretary-General.
- In addition, the fragmented international system to support peacebuilding creates a number of systemic obstacles to coherence, continuity and predictability. This includes the need to draw from disparate financing streams of varying reliability and with different funding cycles across different parts of the UN system and beyond.

This brief review would be incomplete without mention of recent efforts toward the institutionalization of peacebuilding into the UN architecture but, without wishing to denigrate efforts in this regard, it seems fair to say that progress in this has lagged behind the advance of academic and conceptual thinking. The main feature of institutional development has been the establishment in 2005 of the intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), along with the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The secretary general listed its functions as follows:

“The Commission’s establishment in 2005 reflects Member States’ recognition of the need for a dedicated United Nations mechanism to sustain attention, mobilize resources and improve coherence while addressing critical gaps, needs and priorities in countries emerging from conflict. (UN Secretary General, 2009, Paragraph 25)

The PBC has taken on to its agenda countries that were beyond the “immediate aftermath” stage (first two years), such as Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic, and Liberia (PBC website). The PBF has dispersed money to a wider range of countries, including Cote d’Ivoire, Haiti, Kenya, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Sudan (DDR) (Immediate Response Facility), as well as Nepal and Comoros (Peacebuilding Recovery Facility) (PBF Website). However, when one considers the tens of millions the PBF disperses globally each year (\$50 million in 2009, less than \$80 million in 2010) across over ten countries, this should be seen in comparison to the budgets of stabilization or peacekeeping, where the larger individual missions have annual budgets in the range of \$1 billion (Sudan, DRC) or multi-billions (Afghanistan). This is not simply a matter of the institution’s material significance; the PBC and PBSO have not filled the role of overall strategic coordination of peacebuilding efforts, which remains a void in the international institutional architecture. Rather than dwelling further on these institutional shortcomings, we now turn to examine a few salient features of peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Sudan.

Case Study: Afghanistan

UN in Afghanistan

The UN's peacebuilding involvement in Afghanistan has been long and slow to show success. The factors constraining the UN's effort are generally significant in that they are related to difficulties that, while particularly obvious in this case, are by no means unique to Afghanistan: (1) the relative peace following the successful toppling of the Taliban in 2001 has proved transient, with effects that complicate peacebuilding activity, and (2) there is a lack of unity of purpose and authority to govern or coordinate peacebuilding resources, planning, and activity. Let's look at these in turn.

The fact that the conflict has re-ignited over the decade since the Bonn Agreement complicates the process of peacebuilding in several ways. Ongoing conflict and insecurity restrict access, drive up the costs of the civilian presence (due to the need for expensive protection facilities), and put obstacles in the way of attracting people with the right skills to come and work in Afghanistan. They also make it harder for the Karzai government to survive any reform of the security sector or reconfiguration of its members that might diminish its short-term ability to counter the insurgency.

As for the second point, the international effort is split between the NATO-led ISAF and the UN Security Council-led "Special Political Mission" (SPM) UNAMA. The coordination of peacebuilding is further diffused among other actors such as the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) and a particularly large number of national and international NGOs. Suggestions to appoint a "tzar" to lead the international coordination have come to nothing. Is the UN capable of fulfilling a coordination role for peacebuilding? One of the reasons it is not is perceived partiality – its identification with the internationally recognized authority since Bonn (which excluded the Taliban from power) puts it firmly on one "side," counter to one of the traditional principles of peacekeeping – neutrality.

The two challenges (ongoing conflict and lack of overall coordination) are mutually reinforcing. For instance, although the UN would be a natural place to look for coordination, as noted above, the conflict makes it difficult for the UN to take a neutral position because of where it sits in terms of relations to the main parties. Unlike traditional peacekeeping, where the UN sits between two parties to a conflict, here, the UN sits between the GoIRA and the international community. Neither the Taliban nor Al Qaeda is party to any form of agreement or cease-fire with any other actor. However, since it is itself little more than a representative of the members of that international community, the UN is hardly capable of claiming neutrality in this relationship either.

This points to another difficulty with peacebuilding in situations of ongoing conflict. Peacekeeping is, in its classical form, a rather technical process in that it provides a conflict resolution service to both sides regardless of their political position. This has historically been

the reason why “neutrality” became one of its operating principles. By contrast, *peacebuilding* is an explicitly politicized process, in that it supports the internationally recognized national institutions of government in extending their authority, including by force, across their territory. When engaged in peacebuilding in situations of ongoing conflict, the international community sides with the state against the rest, or the insurgents.

As a consequence of this partiality, the international approach to state-building in such settings finds it more difficult to respect another of the tenets of peacebuilding: “national ownership.” It is important in this context to remember the difference between the nation and the state. Privileging national ownership by using the government as a focus for international support is reasonable only so far as it is safe to assume that the government is representative of the nation. In Afghanistan this was brought into focus by the problems that ensued regarding the UN’s role when questions arose around the legitimacy of the Karzai government following the last national elections. The elections issue led to the noisy departure of the deputy special representative to the secretary general (SRSG), Mr. Peter Galbraith, shortly followed by the resignation of the SRSG himself, Mr. Kai Eide. This illustrates one of the potential implications of the differences between “national ownership” and “government ownership.”

The current situation of the international involvement in Afghanistan is dominated by the planned withdrawal of NATO combat forces and the transition of leadership and ownership of security responsibility to the Afghan government – the so-called Kabul Process. This leads us onto some of the other relevant issues of the peacebuilding context, which flow from the presence and role of the other major international organization active in Afghanistan: NATO.

NATO and Afghanistan

Before coming onto its activities in Afghanistan, it is worth noting some of NATO’s recent contributions in the area of peacebuilding and the Alliance’s development of the “comprehensive approach” doctrine in recent years. Although NATO is principally a military alliance, without much historical experience of mobilizing its civilian peace-building capabilities (with the possible exception of aspects of security sector reform), it has recently developed a strong doctrinal interest in stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) activities, which overlap to some extent with peace-building. Why should this be so?

Like the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), NATO developed an interest in peace consolidation as it became involved in countries struggling to end or emerge from some form of internal conflict. Unlike the situation in countries emerging from inter-state conflicts, international support to countries recovering from internal or “civil” wars has to be directed at the root causes – rather than the symptoms – of the conflict, or else they risk the political and economic cost of having to return. As these causes tend to lie in areas such as political, economic, social, or cultural areas of life, action designed to address them has to be designed and implemented according to the principles of social and political, rather than diplomatic or

military, science. Very often, the security situation needs to be stabilized for a period to create conditions that allow this peacebuilding activity to take effect. NATO has recently decided to commit to developing the means to deliver stabilization and reconstruction effects in such situations (see latest Strategic Concept adopted at its Lisbon Summit in November 2010). However, an international security presence capable of doing this is not only expensive, it may increasingly be hard to sustain politically when the peacebuilding effects are not seen to be coming through. As domestic political pressure to curtail seemingly open-ended military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan started to build, the need for the military to hand over to other national or international civilian authorities has been brought into sharper focus. So while NATO, like the UN Security Council, may not have the means to carry out actions to make peace gains “irreversible,” they have an institutional interest in seeing these processes succeed. The imperative of developing an exit strategy for military interventions has thus driven more attention to supporting the success of peacebuilding. Hence NATO’s recent interest in promoting its contribution to the “comprehensive approach.”

In the period following its intervention in Afghanistan, NATO has clearly recognized the need for military operations to be embedded in an over-arching strategy with military efforts contributing to a wider comprehensive approach that includes humanitarian, diplomatic, development, and governance initiatives. This was articulated in the 2008 Bucharest Summit and made part of NATO’s latest Strategic Concept, adopted in November 2010. However, it will take some time for NATO allies to put in place the practical means to implement these policy decisions. In Afghanistan, despite the encouragement of some high-level officials, talk of a “civilian surge” has so far been just that – talk (Boak, 2011).

The second issue besetting NATO’s efforts to contribute to a comprehensive approach in Afghanistan is the lack of unity of purpose among the international community. This is the prerequisite for an internationally agreed comprehensive approach into which NATO could contribute. In Afghanistan there is no obvious focal point for the articulation of this unity of purpose and effort. The default options are the UN, or the host government. However, on these issues the UN is dominated by the Security Council, which may not be a suitable authority from which NATO can accept coordination. Two of the UN Security Council permanent members, Russia and China, are not always guaranteed to share NATO interests. Leaving aside Security Council politics, one may wonder if it is realistic to expect that NATO would subordinate its military command to a political appointee who takes direction from the Security Council. Could we imagine General Petraeus taking orders from Kai Eide? The second option is the host government, but it hardly seems realistic for the host government to provide this focus in cases when it is exactly that government’s weakness which is the target of continued international state-building efforts.

Case Study: Sudan

UN in Sudan

The UN presence in post-conflict Sudan is largely matched to the role allocated to it in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the war between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which is based mainly in the South. The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) began with the completion of that agreement and supported the parties (governments of North and South Sudan) in implementing its terms. In 2006 a UN-African Union hybrid Assistance Mission in Sudan's western province of Darfur (UNAMID) was deployed to protect civilians and support the implementation of a fledgling peace process in Darfur. UNMIS and UNAMID are separate missions but both report to the UN Security Council. The UN has begun preparations for a reconfiguration of the UN presence in Sudan to account for the end of the period covered by the CPA. There is a broad expectation that the international peacebuilding effort in Sudan will continue in the soon-to-be newly independent country of South Sudan, and perhaps also in Sudan to the north.

Peacebuilding in Sudan

Although the CPA provided for a host of peacebuilding-related activities in Sudan, these were retarded because of the low level of trust between the parties and fear of renewed conflict. Due to slow progress on many of the confidence building measures designed into the CPA, as well as more fundamental issues (such as border demarcation, the status of the Abyei region, revenue sharing), both sides have neglected other areas of activity related to peacebuilding – notably security sector reform.

Other contingencies have contributed to the slow rate of progress on peacebuilding. In the north, the conflict in Darfur has continued its slow burn since 2004. Khartoum has also had to contend with another armed separatist movement in the East. Some of these regional issues in the North are tied directly to the ambitions of would-be rivals to the ruling party, such as JEM, who are accused of using the Darfur crisis as a way of unseating President Bashir's government in Khartoum. In South Sudan there are other reasons why there has been little peace to build. First, the "other armed groups" (some formerly in receipt of support from Khartoum) have only gradually and incompletely been brought within the formal military and state structures governing South Sudan from the new capital in Juba. Some still reject the authority of the Juba government, senior members of which accuse them of receiving support from the North, which Khartoum denies. Then there is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which remains active in areas bordering Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As with Afghanistan, efforts to build peace progress slowly if at all against a headwind of continuing conflict that constantly threatens to drive them backwards.

A second point Sudan has in common with Afghanistan is that many of the factors limiting the UN role in peacebuilding are related to doubts about its impartiality. Because of the situation in

Darfur since 2003, the UN Security Council has taken a series of actions against the government of Sudan (sanctions, referral to ICC, etc.) that alienated the UN from the host government, and compromised the traditional peacekeeping principles of neutrality and impartiality. It is difficult to say whether the UN would have had more success in getting the parties to implement the CPA and in advancing peacebuilding efforts had it not been for Darfur, but its effect on relations between Khartoum and the UN has certainly not made this task any easier.

Guiding Questions

The “Whole of Government” Approach

There is general consensus that because peacebuilding ranges across a wide scope of diplomatic, security, political, governance, rights, development, and economic issues, and consequently draws on an equally wide range of authorities for planning, implementing, resourcing, and funding, it requires a degree of coordination. A key UN report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (UN Secretary General 2009, paragraph 5) notes that:

Within the international community, the United Nations has a critical and significant role to play in peacebuilding. At the same time, the United Nations system is only one of several actors working to support post-conflict countries, and the coherence of this broader international effort is key to helping countries to succeed in their efforts to construct a viable peace.

Even after almost 20 years of considering “peacebuilding,” we continue to face the challenge that we lack any authority accepted as responsible for and capable of coordinating efforts in these areas, but even if one body such as the United Nations were chosen, there remains a second issue, which is its reliance on governments to provide the legal basis, the resources, and the funding to carry out peacebuilding activities. Some funding (e.g., the peacekeeping budget) is automatic: like the overall UN budget, funds are paid according to an assessment of the member states’ wealth. This form of “assessed contributions” is a fixed cost of UN membership. However, much of the funding for peacekeeping activity comes not from this assessed contribution, but from “voluntary contributions,” which are bilateral transfers at member states’ discretion. These voluntary contributions are subject to appeals processes and the variable contingencies of member states’ interests and budget priorities, so are less predictable than the fixed sums from assessed contributions. This lack of predictability presents an obvious challenge for sustaining the kind of multi-year programs required to address deep-rooted problems of peace consolidation.

In addition to this, funding that is forthcoming comes not centrally from a member state, but from one or other of its ministries. This means the lack of a joined-up approach to government presents the UN with a situation where different parts of its member states’ governments relate independently to different parts of the UN. What happens when the independent parts of the UN meet the independent parts of its member states’ governments is not conducive to a coordinated

international response. For example, very often political direction and legal direction come from the ministry of foreign affairs, military resources from the MoD, development funding from overseas aid agencies, etc., and these elements are delivered according to the individual imperatives of each ministry, rather than according to a national strategy. The existence of a national security council or other joint mechanism such as the “stabilization” units set up in the United States (OCS), UK (Stabilisation Unit), Canada (START), the Netherlands (Peacebuilding and Stabilization Unit), Denmark (Stabilisation Unit), and others would raise the expectation that coordination of this support could be achieved, but even where they exist, such institutions are rarely given the authority or capability to do so. Even if they had such powers, decisions on the allocation of resources would still need to be anchored in an authoritative assessment of national priorities, assets, and expertise.

Identification of National Priorities, Assets, and Expertise

The first difficulty in this task is in conducting a process for determining national priorities and directing the use or development of assets and expertise, that is above the institutional interests of existing government organs, which tend to skew the conclusions to favor entrenched interests. This may be assisted by the creation of a national security council or similar mechanism that is above other ministries, but this alone is not sufficient; however well structured, such a mechanism still requires the highest standards of national leadership with the vision to inspire and carry public support.

A second issue that is of relatively stronger importance with peacebuilding compared to peacekeeping or peacemaking is the need to appreciate and accept the longer duration of the overall effort, and the implications of this for total costs. This is exacerbated in the cases of Afghanistan and Sudan by the way ongoing conflict produces conditions in which progress is hard to realize, and even harder to demonstrate over a relatively short time. This has implications for the task of securing long-term material and moral support from the domestic constituencies whose calls that “nation building begins at home” get louder as time goes by.

A third issue arises from the way “nation building” aspects of peacebuilding may resemble domestic priorities in a way that makes comparisons with international action both easier and perhaps invidious to the sustainability of support to the latter. For both Japan and the USA, natural disasters and economic pressures that have afflicted both countries in recent years may sharpen the argument that nation-building efforts should “begin at home.” Pressure on public spending has intensified in both countries, either due to long-term trends in Japan or due to the extension of government borrowing to meet the costs of bailouts in America. Domestic causes that compete for the assets and resources required to meet short-term disaster needs and (re)construct infrastructure include the 2005 hurricane Katrina in America and for Japan the effects of the recent earthquake and Fukushima nuclear incident.

Complementarity, Strengths and Weaknesses

Any institution subject to less than rigorous external evaluation will be vulnerable to a tendency towards measuring its performance in terms of its inputs, rather than the outcomes or effects of its activities. This phenomenon is sometimes put more lyrically in the expression: “When all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.” When it comes to complementary or comparative advantage in support to peacebuilding, unless focus is maintained on outcomes and effects, the risk is of giving this tendency free play to the detriment of the overall objectives in the target country. It is also worth noting that there is no institution that has been designed specifically for peacebuilding. Rather, nations with an intention to contribute to peacebuilding rely on the tools they have, which were designed for other purposes and may be slow to adapt. Absent a view that peacebuilding will continue to be a sustained area of national effort into the future, and if the tasks for which these tools were designed are not deemed obsolete, this will only reduce the pressure on them to adapt at all.

Keeping this “institutional inertia” factor in mind, given existing capabilities, the obvious division of labor is for the United States to carry the burden of the dangerous and “kinetic” tasks, while Japan takes care of the finance. But there are also reasons to query this model.

For one thing, Japan’s Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have a wealth of experience in working among the population in response to civil emergencies, such as extreme weather (heavy snowfall) and natural disasters (earthquake, tsunami). This practice has accustomed the Japanese military to working among the civilian population, as well as refining skills in civil engineering and coordination with civil authorities. A military with such skills has obvious value in deploying “among the people,” in situations where civil society harbors doubts about foreign forces or has bitter memories of hostile military occupation.

Japan has undoubtedly been generous, but money on its own can be a blunt instrument, and a raw injection of finance may carry its own risks. For instance, Afghanistan rates among the lowest countries on the international ranking of corruption.³ A huge injection of cash to central authorities with weak accountability mechanisms and limited absorptive capacity in their institutions is practically guaranteed to contribute to problems of corruption. Corruption in turn weakens government performance and alienates it from the population. In the peacebuilding phase, where one of the main efforts is to restore public trust in government, this carries the risk of counter-productive effects.

These points are just to hint at the need to look again at stereotyped expectations of the Japanese or U.S. contributions.

³ Afghanistan is one of the handful of only nine countries ranked at the maximum level of “highly corrupt” at number 176 out of 178 countries in the 2010 report of the organization Transparency International (2010).

One clue to complementarity can be seen in the different attitudes Japan and the United States take to the tasks of “state building” or “nation building,” which are inherent to peacebuilding. According to the website of the permanent mission of Japan to the UN, Japan defines peacebuilding as “consolidation of peace *and nation-building*, and takes a multifaceted approach to strengthening the political, economic and social frameworks of the relevant country, while promoting the peace process, security and stability [italics added]” (Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN). It has been noted that “the very words “nation building” were akin to an expletive when George W. Bush ran for the White House four years ago” (Washington, 2004). Former U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice is said to have noted with reference to nation building that in the Bush administration the 82nd Airborne would not be walking children to school. Japan appears to harbor no such aversion, possibly because it has the experience of being the object of such efforts itself. This is potentially an area of complementarity that probably deserves more attention.

The respective strengths of the United States and Japan are somewhat offset by a common weakness – both countries lack institutions with a highly developed capability of comprehending foreign societies in a way that would enable them to wield raw military and financial power in ways that meet peacebuilding objectives. In the military sphere, it is training more than fighting that will enable the government to stand on its feet. In the financial sphere, it is not spending power, but capability in the responsible management of resources that will gain the government credibility and enable it to deliver services in a sustainable fashion. Both these activities pose challenges in that they entail a much closer understanding of and partnership with national authorities. This means speaking their language, living and working alongside them. Neither American nor Japanese officials are claiming these qualities as a particular strength of their system, but most would recognize their importance.

Conclusions

The first generally relevant factor reflected in these two cases is the absence of an overall coordinating authority for determining peacebuilding strategies, which would be expected to conduct an assessment of needs, as well as determine ways of meeting them in line with the comparative advantages of the various actors involved. The implication of this absence is that peacebuilding tends to be driven by “supply” sided logic. This can ultimately undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of overall efforts, which in turn undermines support among the publics of contributing countries. It certainly does not help to address the problems of lack of “joined-up” government. Nor does it help solve the issue of comparative advantage among donors.

Another thing Afghanistan and Sudan have in common is that peacebuilding efforts are being pushed forward in the context of ongoing conflict, so in a sense one could say that “there is no peace to build.” In Sudan, since the signing of the CPA, the governments in both Khartoum and Juba (North and South) have continued combat operations in their struggles against

rebel/insurgent movements, not to mention maintaining a level of military preparedness as a hedge against the need to resume fighting against each other, by proxy or otherwise. Likewise in Afghanistan, since the Bonn Agreement, while efforts have been made at peacebuilding, fighting with the Taliban and Al Qaeda has steadily escalated to the point where it presents a major obstacle to peacebuilding efforts.

The continuation of combat operations has various implications not only for the costs and substantive challenges facing peacebuilding efforts, but also for the scope of participation by civilian institutions. Security or even existential imperatives limit parties' willingness to adjust to post-conflict conditions of governance (democracy, accountability, switching out wartime partners for those capable of meeting norms of inclusiveness and expertise). A government that is simultaneously trying to manage a conflict and a post-conflict reconstruction may not wish to make the kind of adjustments expected of it – particularly in the area of security sector reform. It may need to keep certain partners whose awkwardness in the new political context must be overlooked because they possess the military means to help the ruling authority prevail or survive in the short-term security environment. As well as trading off long-term political changes for short-term needs, ongoing or anticipated conflict also weakens the incentive for host governments to switch resources from the security sector to other areas of governance and service delivery. Finally, the fact that a government is either at war or feels forced to remain on a war footing may make it harder for external partners like Japan and the United States to assist, either because offering support to a belligerent clashes with other norms or criteria of foreign policy, or because it involves the external partner in a wider international confrontation.

To the extent that these phenomena (lack of coordinating authority, peacebuilding on a war footing) are not limited to these case studies, they may need to be incorporated into our exploration of the potential for peacebuilding as an arena for alliance cooperation. The danger is that these phenomena are deeply antithetical to peacebuilding itself, i.e., the lack of a coordinating authority forces contributing nations to work through the government, while at the same time the government's need to remain on a war footing acts as a fundamental obstacle to progress in peacebuilding. This suggests more radical approaches are not only possible, but may be necessary. The United States and Japan could cooperate on building institutional capacity at the UN to serve as the focus for coordinating peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. Going even further upstream in the peace process, the allies could cooperate to design effective peacemaking processes that deliver more reliable agreements, reducing the chances that combat continues, thus improving the chances of peace building approaches later on.

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