

The Sustained Utility of Japan's Human Security Policy

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Abstract : The paper examines the policy and practice of Japan's human security. Specifically, it asks the question: How does Japan's shift towards a more proactive defence posture affect the place of human security in its foreign policy agenda? Corollary to this, how is Japan sustaining its human security policy? The objective of this research is to understand how Japan, chiefly through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), sustains the concept of human security as a policy framework. In addition, the paper also aims to show how and why Japan continues to include the concept in its overall foreign policy agenda. In light of the recent developments in Japan's security policy, which essentially result from the changing security environment, human security appears to be gradually losing relevance. The paper, however, argues that despite the strategic challenges Japan faced and is facing, as well as the apparent decline of its economic diplomacy, human security remains to be an area of critical importance for Japanese foreign policy. In fact, as Japan becomes more proactive in its international affairs, the strategic value of human security also increases. Human security was initially envisioned to help Japan compensate for its weaknesses in the areas of traditional security, but as Japan moves closer to a more activist foreign policy, the soft policy of human security complements its hard security policies. Using the framework of neoclassical realism (NCR), the paper recognizes that policy-making is essentially a convergence of incentives and constraints at the international and domestic levels. The theory posits that there is no perfect 'transmission belt' linking material power on the one hand, and actual foreign policy on the other. State behavior is influenced by both international- and domestic-level variables, but while systemic pressures and incentives determine the general direction of foreign policy, they are not strong enough to affect the exact details of state conduct. Internal factors such as leaders' perceptions, domestic institutions, and domestic norms, serve as intervening variables between the international system and foreign policy. Thus, applied to this study, Japan's sustained utilization of human security as a foreign policy instrument (dependent variable) is essentially a result of systemic pressures (indirectly) (independent variables) and domestic processes (directly) (intervening variables). Two cases of Japan's human security practice in two regions are examined in two time periods: Iraq in the Middle East (2001-2010) and South Sudan in Africa (2011-2017). The cases show that despite the different motives behind Japan's decision to participate in these international peacekeeping and peace-building operations, human security continues to be incorporated in both rhetoric and practice, thus demonstrating that it was and remains to be an important diplomatic tool. Different variables at the international and domestic levels will be examined to understand how the interaction among them results in changes and continuities in Japan's human security policy.

Keywords : human security, foreign policy, neoclassical realism, peace-building

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