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Japan's Peacebuilding as a Conflict Handling Mechanism in Syria and Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This paper unfolds Japan's peacebuilding activities in the West Asian region through its economic and other assistance and how these activities are contributing to establishing the peace in the region. It is limited to particular war affected countries of the region: Syria and Iraq. The central focus of this paper is to highlight Japan's two main pillars of its peacebuilding, that is Consolidation of peace and Statebuilding, through which Japan is trying to mitigate the humanitarian crisis in the region. It enumerates the role of Japan's state-run agency like JICA and its one of important foreign policy tools ODA to execute and accomplished the task in these war torn countries.

Key Words : Japan's Peacebuilding; JICA; ODA; Refugees, IDPs

INTRODUCTION

Japan has adopted a much strategic approach to counter multifarious conflicts in the West Asian region. The region has been facing conflicts due to which humanitarian crises has occurred. The Civil War in Syria, one of the current on-going conflicts in the region, which started in March 2011, has destroyed the country. The problems between the Syrian government and the opposition groups followed by terrorist activity of Islamic State in the country have brought a dimensional security concern in general and humanitarian crisis in particular in the country. The furious fight in the northern part of the country particularly in the Aleppo has made the people to abandon their home. This kind of conflict is boosting the problem of refugee in the area. Almost the same situation has been facing by Iraq. The battle of Mosul, consist of terrorist activities conducted by the ISIS and Al-Qaeda, the people of the country has been facing enormous structural violence. Japan follows a well-stabilised structure within the system of peace approach. In its foreign policy, Tokyo has embraced the concept of peacebuilding by which it can create a friendly environment in countries suffering from civil war.

Peacebuilding in the Japanese Way:

Tokyo's definition of peacebuilding is based on its post-war value of pacifism emphasis on development assistance and more recently the model of human security.[1] We can trace the evolution of Japanese peacebuilding during the administration of Keizo Obuchi in the late 1990s in which the Prime Minister was very enthusiastic to foster the idea of human security. The concept of peacebuilding also contains the idea that it provides the alternate and suitable option of the concept of security by which Japan can bridge the gap of its constitutional limitation and international demand of Japan's contribution to peace in the world. Later on, the concept of peacebuilding was again defined and promoted by the Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and his interest in peacebuilding led to the inception of the Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace (AGICP). The AGICP in one of its reports released in December 2002 manifested Japan's notion of peacebuilding in two ways:

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the first is the Consolidation of Peace and the second one is State-building. Japan's Consolidation of Peace approach has a strong will of conflict prevention and management by promoting the peace process, providing humanitarian assistance, and the notion of ODA with the consideration of human security (the survival and welfare of individuals rather than the state) and the eradication of poverty. Another concept, State-building is concerned with the political, social and economic dimensions of the conflict-torn society.[2]

In addition to this, Tokyo has used the term peacebuilding in two different versions: narrow and broad. The narrow version initiates the process to manage the conflict. Ceasefire followed by negotiations and a peace accord are further constituting elements in this process. Broader version is consist of prevention of conflict even before it erupts, peacemaking, peacekeeping followed by a post-conflict consolidation of peace which includes disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of combatants into a post-conflict society. Further, it consist of work related to mines sweeping, capacity enhancing (which includes the training of administrators, judicial and police officers), dispatching of officers to election monitors and holding fair elections, establishing a Truth Commission for historical reconciliation, humanitarian relief and welfare, and reconstruction and development of infrastructure like school, roads, hospital and bridges for society and economy to function normally again.[3]

JICA, a state-run agency, is conducting peacebuilding activities for Japan guided by the concept of human security. Another element by which Japan is distinguishing its peacebuilding concept is ODA (providing Yen Loan, Grant Assistance, and Technical Cooperation). Japan ODA has incorporated the term peacemaking, peacekeeping and consolidation of peace in war-torn states and societies. Another structure of Japanese peacebuilding is Japanese civil society and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) which are increasingly engaged in consolidating peace. These groups in collaboration with MoFA and JICA are performing their activities through the world.[4]

Japan's Peacebuilding Activities in the War torn West Asian Region (Syria and Iraq):

Now, we look into the matter how Japan is actually institutionalising its concept of Consolidation of Peace and State-Building in the West Asian region to foster the peacebuilding activities. As, from the current scenario, it can be seen that countries like Syria and Iraq since a long time are entangled with violent conflict and civil war which have torn them from humanitarian point of view. Due to these turbulence a lot of other interlinked conflicts like refugees, unstable economy and security, challenges related to infrastructure like hospitals, schools, water, electricity; lack of communication facilities; hampering of democratic political system; malfunctioning of administrative organisation; massive crisis in police and legal system and issues related to human rights and gender inequality have emerged. Following are the activities which have been conducting by the Japanese government to mitigate these crises.

Assistance for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):

In an announcement by the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during the annual high-level meeting of United Nations General Assembly, he pledged to boost his support to refugees and IDPs from Syria and Iraq. In an another statement by State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Yoji Muto, he mentioned that how Japan has contributed more than USD 1.2 billion and Yen loan to Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan.[5]

At the Leadership Summit on Refugees, United Nations Trusteeship Council Chamber in New York, 20 September 2016, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced major economic assistance regarding West Asian refugee crisis. Describing refugees as a most serious challenge Japan expressed its economic assistance and support for vulnerable refugees and its commitment to provide a financial assistance of around US$2.8 billion dollars during 2016-2018 as a humanitarian and self-reliance assistance and also US$ 100 million to the World's Bank Global Crisis Response Platform. Japan also expressed its commitment to Syrian refugee children through "Japan Team for Syrian Refugees and Communities.[6] In the same statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, he expressed his plan to mitigate the refugee crisis by providing assistance to neighbouring areas of Iraq and Syria.

In a new policy framework, Japan has innovated to accept the refugee in the form of students in an exchange programme. In the year 2016 Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, declared that Japan would accept 150 Syrian Youths and develop human resource. In the year 2017 number of exchange students have been increased about three hundred. The government of Japan said that annually 20

Syrian refugees from Lebanon and Jordan would be taken from 2017 through 2021 as students. They will also have permission to bring their spouses and children. In addition to this, each student will be provided financial assistance of 140,000 Yen (US$ 1,240) every month, along with a payment of 13,000 Yen for their spouse and 6,500 Yen for each child. The selection process of these students will be made through United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).[7]

Humanitarian and Other Financial Assistance:

Emergency Grant Aid of US$ 10 million to IDPs and returnees to liberated areas in Iraq through UNHCR[8], USD 3 million in Emergency Grant Aid for refugees and IDPs in Syria[9], additional US$ 5 million Emergency Grant Aid to Syrian Refugees[10], Emergency Grant Aid of USD 6 million was given to support relief operations in the field of food, emergency shelter, health, and medical treatment for IDPs affected by the armed conflict in Iraq.[11]

USD 6 million Emergency Grant Aid through the UNWFP for Syrian refugees and IDPs[12]; aid in the field of food and non-food items, improving water, sanitation, health and medical care[13]; aid on water, basic hygiene, education, health through the organisation like UNICEF, in the form of Emergency Grant Aid for the improvement of humanitarian situation in Syria total of seven hundred thousand dollar has been provided by the Japanese government.[14]

Japan's Peacekeeping Operation in the Region:

Japan passed the Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operation (PKO Law) in June 1992. Due to this Law, Japanese Self-Defence Forces was able to take part in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPOK). After this, Japan revised the PKO Law in 1998 and 2001 to participate in the peacekeeping operations efficiently.[15] Through the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), Japan has been contributing to the peacekeeping operations. Japanese Self Defence Force (SDF) had been stationed in the Golan Heights (Syria) under the UNDOF since January 1996.[16] SDF was also dispatched to Iraq for humanitarian and reconstruction from late 2003.[17]

Supports through the JICA and Non-Government Organisations:

JICA since its inception has been conducting very vast and broad activities in the area of human security, humanitarian assistance in the world. In its guidelines, it has emphasised on several issues such as governance, security, social infrastructure, humanitarian assistance through which it has been focusing on human development in the world. In its effort to mitigate the problem of Syrian refugees, JICA has started a programme "Japanese Initiative for the Future of Syrian Refugees" in collaboration with UNHCR for Syrian refugees. The programme offers Syrian refugees to study in Japan and enhance their capacity by which they can increase peacebuilding in Syria.[18] JICA has been contributing in the field of health by upgrading health and medical services, promoting rural medical primary health services and providing emergency medical care services in the country. In the field of education, JICA is upgrading technical education, spreading vocational schools and spreading the primary education.[19]

In Iraq, JICA is massively working toward its reconstruction through the development of economic and social infrastructure. Through its ODA, Japan is boosting investment in Iraq and filling the demand for infrastructure. This investment is robust the economic growth by creating jobs and eradicating unemployment and poverty. Further, JICA is also strengthening the economic infrastructure. Through the domestic and private investment, Japan is helping in the development of electricity, transportation, and telecommunication. To support the basic living infrastructure, Japan is assisting in the area of health, medical, education and other sectors like water, sanitation, and sewage. Through its technical cooperation Japan is reconstructing Iraq. Projects like Power Network System, Cable Joining, Optical Fibre Splicing, Operation and Maintenance on Thermal Power Plant and Training Centre management are some major work in the field of technical cooperation provided by Japan in the region.[20]

One of the other means by which Japan is contributing in the peacebuilding process is Japanese Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Acting as a mainstream actor to promote peace and stability in the region, more than eight Japan-based NGOs, NPOs, and individuals are involved in the human rights and conflict resolution. They are urging the Japanese authorities to deeply engage in promotion of the leadership of the Syrian peace process as Japan is highly trusted by Syrians. In a move by the Government of Japan in collaboration with the Japanese Platform, which is a composed of NGOs,

is working in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance and human development in different countries of the West Asian region. In response to the harsh condition of the Syrian and Iraqi people, the Japan Platform is providing its humanitarian assistance in these countries. The Japan Platform is helping people like refugees and IDPs by implementing life-saving assistance activities as an integrated Iraq-Syria Humanitarian Crisis Response Programme. Providing food security in the conflicting areas of Iraq and Syria and their neighbouring countries (Lebanon Jordan and Turkey), it has implemented life sustained projects to provide enough food in these countries. The Japan Platform is also conducting other projects like provision of safe drinking water and development of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) in the refugees and IDPs camps in Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan and Mamilian (Man Al Yan) in northern Iraq.[21]

Conclusion:

Japan, by the means of its peace policies, has been actively addressing humanitarian crisis situation in the region. In a response to the humanitarian crisis and to peace in the region Tokyo has explicitly manifested its supportive stance by lifting up its peacebuilding approach in the region. Providing massive financial and economic assistance to refugees and IDPs in Syria and Iraq is one of the best examples of Japan's consideration for its people. Issues related to the human security are also addressed by the Japanese authorities through its support in the field of social and physical infrastructure development. In this regard providing economic assistance through ODA and helping out through JIAC and the Japanese NGOs is well considered.

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