

Coherence or Contestation: Chinese, Japanese and Russian Approaches to the Transformation of Peacebuilding Practices

The protracted nature of many contemporary conflicts and humanitarian crises has led to calls to strengthen international coordination on peace and security interventions in conflict-affected and fragile states. Yet most analyses of existing policy frameworks and programmes are oriented around the “liberal peace” paradigm (rule of law, security sector reform, governance and human rights, civil society, economic reform), and pay little attention to the logic and impact of the alternative policies and programmes pursued by major non-Western countries in conflict-affected and fragile states.

This project seeks to understand the normative and practical underpinnings of these alternative visions of how peace and security is achieved by focusing specifically on Chinese, Japanese and Russian engagements in global peace and security activities. In recent years, China has been increasingly involved in peace and security activities in Africa and Asia through a “developmental peace” lens; Russia is actively pursuing state-centered stabilization policies in the Caucasus and the Middle East; and Japan is extending its peace-related activities within and beyond Asia. Their policies and practices may actively embrace the existing normative architecture of “peacebuilding,” may pay lip service to it, or may reinterpret, challenge or complement it.

By focusing on how alternative understandings of the priorities for building peace and security are in turn put into practice in conflict-affected and fragile contexts (or in the multilateral arena), this project seeks to highlight the way in which both top-down and bottom-up dynamics influence the nature, content, and direction of global norms in the peace and security arena.

Through in-country consultations, interviews, and case study analyses, and drawing on the co-applicants’ extensive network of peacebuilding scholars and practitioners via their involvement in the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, the project will engage practitioners in Geneva and New York (and elsewhere) with an aim of investigating how these alternative visions of the pathways to peace and security are promoted by decision-makers, programmers, or researchers in the three countries of study. The project is relevant for those who are interested in the role of rising powers in global governance, the (re)shaping of international peace and security architecture, and the dynamics of norm diffusion and change.

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