
Peacebuilding in the Wake of Ukraine and Sudan

Conversation with Dr. Sukehiro Hasegawa

August 31, 2023

The following is an edited version of the remarks made by Professor Sukehiro Hasegawa during his conversation with Rector Tschilidi Marwara.

During the conversation with Mr. Tshilidzi Marwala, the Rector of the United Nations University, Dr. Hasegawa explained that since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there have been two phases in the development of UN peacebuilding. The first phase lasted for about ten years since Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued three *Agendas for Peace, Development, and Democratization* from 1992 to 1996. Following the Secretary-General's initiatives, peacebuilding activities were added to UN peacekeeping operations to prevent relapsing or repeating the conflict. The UN then decided to help the countries stabilize their situation and engage in nation and state-building. This second phase aimed at building a society where inhabitants felt their human security and freedom were protected.

In post-conflict countries, it was clear that people wanted free and fair elections, as Dr. Hasegawa personally observed in Cambodia and East Timor. In Cambodia, the mandate of the UN mission was to maintain the minimum security for the inhabitants and to prepare and administer elections. The challenge was establishing and maintaining free and fair elections before the UN mission departure. Dr. Hasegawa said that people in these countries were eager for free elections, and most of the national leaders accepted the efficacy of elections, but the problem was and is human nature, especially in the case of country leaders. When they acquire power, it is very difficult to let it go. We must be able to control power, but history for the last 2,500 years has shown that conflict and wars occur due to power struggles. He expressed concern that the global society was returning to an anarchical situation. National leaders make tactical moves to gain more power, ignoring universal values and principles. It is just personal interest and power. But this tendency has to stop. Elections that the UN has sponsored are one of the ways of reflecting people's preference for particular national leadership.



When asked about his view on the latest military coup that took place in Gabon, Professor Hasegawa said that the people seemed to welcome the coup that ousted the President, who had been in power for many years following his father, who had stayed in power even longer. Dr. Hasegawa hoped the military leaders would not become captive of the power they gained as, he said, most men who acquire power cannot resist the desire to hold on to it once they get power. It requires enormous self-discipline to relinquish power voluntarily. Apart from freedom from want and fear, the most important freedom we should gain and keep is the freedom from our own greed. For this purpose, we need to establish a culture and institutional norms for controlling national leaders. In Japan, we have established the governance structure and system to require political leaders to overcome their greed and obey the rules set for the behavior of political leaders. Compared with many countries where presidents remain in power almost forever, Japan is a country where power transition occurs regularly without any armed conflict. In Timor-Leste, where I served as the UN Secretary-General's special representative, the culture of peaceful transition of power has been gradually nurtured and established by national political leaders who accept the results of voting cast by people as demonstrated mostly recently in the results of national parliamentary elections held in a few months before in 2023.

Another issue is the need to change one of the principles established by the Westphalian Peace Treaty in 1648. This is the primacy of territorial integrity of an independent nation-state. In the case of the war in Ukraine, there have been proposals to bring both sides to the negotiating table, but the critical factor is territorial integrity, which President Zelensky is unnegotiable. The Russian side is determined to keep what they have taken. Dr. Hasegawa thinks that it is important that we should revitalize the process of finding the solution. In doing so, he suggested that we have to gradually come out of the mentality of the Westphalian system established in 1648. Sovereignty became very much attached to the territory. We have since moved in that direction, but as the UN Charter stipulates, what is most important is the security of the people. It was "We, the peoples of the United Nations," remembering the suffering of the war caused by the I and II World War, are determined to prevent this kind of suffering. The UN was created to save mankind. One of the things that national leaders should do is pay more attention to improving the welfare of people

and protecting their lives. That should be a priority number one. We should gradually change the understanding of our priorities. We should also address the need to protect people from the adverse impacts of climate change, AI, and nuclear power development, which can save us but may also destroy us.

Dr. Hasegawa also stated that we must revisit the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine. What happens when we set out to do something with good intentions ends up destroying the trust of each other by implementing the R2P with force. That is what happened in Libya, as it resulted in the regime change. Then, the perception of many leaders, particularly of authoritarian states, changed about the intentions of R2P. You might have good intentions but might end up doing something wrong unintentionally.

Dr. Hasegawa also shared advice for young people interested in pursuing a career in peacebuilding, especially in the UN. He said to go for it. The UN is very generous and allows you to work on whatever you want to pursue in many places around the world. It is important to know what you are good at and what you enjoy doing. If you enjoy what you are good at, that is the right thing to do. Dr. Hasegawa's advice is to know yourself first.

During the open discussion with participants, Dr. Hasegawa noted once again that it is incumbent on the people, and also national leaders, to place higher priority on the security of people rather than territorial domains. He referred to what happened in Japan at the end of 260 years of rule by the Tokugawa dynasty. During this period, Japan remained stable and peaceful, while it was the most unfair system in which samurai, who numbered only 6~7 percent of the population, dominated over the farmers, who constituted 85 percent, and craft men and merchants, who together accounted 7~8 percent of the population. It was unfair, but it was peaceful and stable. Stability and peacefulness depend on the expectations of people. We need to decide what kind of society we want. In the case of Japan, the last Tokugawa shogun surrendered the power and territories he possessed to avoid the destruction of the city of Edo or Tokyo and allowed the formation of a new nation consisting of local prefectures. What he did was the most courageous thing to do. That is to give up your power voluntarily.

In response to a question, Dr. Hasegawa acknowledged the existence of an industry that makes weapons in almost all countries. Some of these countries are peaceful but still make weapons. We need to discourage that and have those countries under control. We are going through a very delicate moment in Japan. After World War II, Japanese people said never again to use force in resolving disputes. Yet, we are now rebuilding our defense capabilities, and the military industry is about to grow. There is now a distinct possibility for another major war on a world scale. Basically, the main cause of wars is our human nature. We do not stop fighting and killing each other unless we find a system that can keep us in check. In Japan, out of 20 to 30 incidents in which police officers use their guns in Japan, in each case, they have thousands of pages of detailed descriptions of what exactly happened. Very rigorous. We feel safe in Japan because of the scarcity of guns and weapons that exist in the country. It is a relative thing; we have somehow managed not to have them. Dr. Hasegawa would like to see the world in a similar status, with a reduced number of guns and weapons.

Referring one more time to the situation in Ukraine, he said the world should have known Putin better. As Sun Tsu says in ***The Art of War***, the important thing is to know your enemy and yourself. In the past, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and started a war against the US. The higher level of leaders wanted to go for it, but would you do that if you knew you were not going to win? We human beings do not act rationally. Rational thinking is only 5 percent of our brain; the rest is unconsciousness. We should have known what Putin was going to do, and in February 2022, even Ukrainian leaders were not expecting that he was going to invade militarily. Would they behave differently? You cannot trust Putin, certainly not. But before the war, he said that one thing he would not accept was the entry of Ukraine into NATO. President Zelensky did not promise that. Could you say that if Ukraine promised not to join NATO, Putin would not have attacked Ukraine? On the negotiation table, you have to know very well what your opponent is thinking. We have to be very mindful that the leaders are interested in preserving their personal interests and power. They want to stay in power; they do not want to tolerate the growth of groups that can challenge their power. Therefore, we must create a system whereby we can manage and control them from abusing their power.

The international community is now in a state of anarchy. To bring nation-states under control, we need a global governance system that is strong, just, and fair. For that matter, Dr. Hasegawa advocated as the first step the immediate expansion of the UN Security Council. G4, African Union, Consensus, and Uniting for Consensus all agreed that the Council should be expanded by 10, from 15 to 25 members. The new ten members should be eligible for re-election, and all 25 members should eventually be elected periodically by the General Assembly so they are accountable to the member states as a whole.