

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN POSTWAR JAPAN: The Revival of a Defeated Society. By *Rieko Kage*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. xv, 195 pp. (Tables, graphs.) US\$91.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-521-19257-6.

As United States military personnel complete their withdrawal from extended engagements in Iraq and continue the draw-down in Afghanistan, many observers hope to see civil society organizations in these countries bolstering the rule of law, serving as watchdogs over government activity, and increasing their participation in decision-making processes. Rieko Kage's slim new book offers a sober and nuanced view of postwar civic engagement which may reset unrealistic expectations for such war-torn societies. Using a rich array of data, including large-N datasets on the over-time recovery of Japanese prefectures, paired-case comparisons of voluntary organizations before, during and after World War II in Japan, and cross-national surveys, Kage underscores that wartime devastation in Japan and elsewhere did not damage the core social fabric which undergirds all societies.

Rather, she convincingly argues, forced mobilization during wartime in coordination with the legacies of prewar associational activities set the stage for postwar civic engagement. In areas where pre-conflict civil society organizations were most active and the state required more from its citizens—both as soldiers and civilian “volunteers”—postwar civil society was strongest. This counter-intuitive claim about the tandem expansion of state and societal capacities (cf. 9, 166) rejects standard civic engagement theories based on democratization, US occupation policy, disaster or conflict and baby booms.

How does forced mobilization increase civic skills? During war, citizens on the battlefield and the home front take on new, larger responsibilities and interact with a broader array of people than during peace time. They acquire communication abilities, political and social awareness and organizational savvy, overall growing their “civic skills” and priming them for further activities once the war is over. Hence US-based Vietnam War veterans have sought public office, participated in political life, and voted in elections more often than their non-drafted counterparts. Similarly, individuals in the US, Germany and elsewhere who were mobilized during World War II (that is, those born between 1921 and 1930) joined more voluntary associations than non-war-mobilized counterparts (those born between 1911 and 1920). These data (which Kage skillfully extracts from a number of international surveys) shed much light on the “Greatest Generation” in the US and abroad along with providing a possible explanation for the phenomenon observed in Robert Putnam's well-known work *Bowling Alone* (NY: Simon and Schuster). That is, the spike in volunteering, voting and civic engagement post-World War II may be due to the widespread draft in the United States, and the gradual decline in these areas has resulted from new generations of Americans who, on the whole, were never pressed into military service.

Kage uses the wide variation in reconstruction rates among Japan's 47 prefectures to reject explanations for post-crisis recovery based on economic or state-centric hypotheses which posit that higher levels of economic resources or the presence of a cohesive and autonomous state are sufficient conditions for better recovery (143). Tracking the restoration of jobs, hospitals, schools and library books, she demonstrates that one proxy for extensive communications and hence civil society connections—mail volume—is the best predictor of trends in rehabilitation. Areas with stronger civil society transmit information about pressing needs and coordinate group activities to overcome collective action problems which can otherwise stymie the recovery process, as I similarly argue in my book *Building Resilience: Social Capital in Post-Disaster Recovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Through side-by-side process tracing of YMCAs in Kobe and Sapporo, along with cases of judo clubs in Fukuoka and Yokohama, Kage shows how some areas in prewar Japan had greater citizen enthusiasm for and involvement in voluntary activities while others withered, especially as war time conditions deteriorated and top-down, government coercion intensified. Bottom-up membership in the YMCA in Kobe, for example, surged, while the initial elitist environment of Sapporo's YMCA led to its early postwar demise. Various organizations in Fukuoka promoted judo, sending teachers to other localities and working to form regional and national associations for the sport, while, in contrast, there was little enthusiasm among Yokohama youth for judo. Through virtuous and deleterious cycles of path dependence (explained well by Paul Pierson's 2004 book *Politics in Time*, published by Princeton University Press), initial conditions for voluntary organizations had a long-lasting impact on their postwar success.

The book's clearly argued and well-supported position raises two questions and sets out a new research agenda for scholars interested in questions of civil society and the state. First, Japan stands out in early twenty-first-century affairs as a relatively homogeneous nation, especially in comparison to other advanced, industrial democracies with their multiethnic societies, such as France, Germany and the US. Given these relatively unique demographic conditions, do any of Kage's claims need to be modified, especially with Robert Putnam's recent arguments about ethnic heterogeneity reducing political participation and civic engagement (which was published in 2007 in *Scandinavian Political Studies* (30(2)))?

Next, Kage's book illuminates the need for policy makers in post-conflict societies, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, to think about what government-led activities they can undertake to seek to develop their own civil societies. One conceivable approach would be for societies to press more youth to participate in national service activities, as the governments of Israel, South Korea and Switzerland already do; these nations have compulsory military or national service for their young adults. Are there any other feasible policy

options for decision makers hoping to jump out of path-dependent ruts and invigorate civil society organizations?

Kage has produced an excellent monograph quite useful for undergraduate classes focused on Japan, World War II, or disaster recovery, which will change our understanding of civic engagement and spark new discussions about the benefits of military public service, whether in wartime or peacetime.

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IMPERIAL JAPAN AT ITS ZENITH: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2,600th Anniversary. *Studies of the Weatherhead East Asia Institute, Columbia University.* By Kenneth J. Ruoff. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010. xv, 236 pp., [16] pp. of plates. (Figures, maps.) US\$39.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-801-44866-9.

This is the first book in English about the diverse and large-scale celebrations and commemorative projects organized by imperial Japan in 1940 to commemorate a purely fictitious date: the 2,600th anniversary of the putative founding of the empire by the mythical Emperor Jimmu in 660 BC. It was another grand and obvious exercise in the kind of “invention of national tradition” that had been ongoing since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, but all citizens and colonial subjects were required to pay their due respects to it nonetheless. And, as Kenneth J. Ruoff importantly makes clear, many did so with great willingness and enthusiasm—they were as caught up in the wave of ultranationalist fervour as were their counterparts in the fascist regimes of Europe at the same time. By focusing on this single if highly complex event, Ruoff is able to give a cogent and telling “snapshot” of Japan at a crucial moment in its modern history: at the height of its war with China and just before it declared war on the major Western imperial powers in Asia.

Like other recent studies such as Walter Skya's *Japan's Holy War* (Duke University Press, 2009) and Alan Tansman's *Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (University of California Press, 2009), albeit from a different angle, Ruoff's work enables us to see more clearly how the modern emperor system, developed first in the Meiji period (1868-1912), was made to serve the purposes of the Japanese fascism of the early Showa period (1926-45). In a word, this involved a process of popularization or massification: the elitist emperor cult of the Meiji oligarchs was opened up to mass participation, so that every Japanese citizen, and even colonial subject, could feel emotionally and spiritually involved in emperor-worship, in a way analogous to that of the leader-cult in European fascism. Using all the modern technological and cultural means at its disposal—mass media, tourism, mass rallies, department