

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)



Joint DIJ Social Sciences / History & Humanities Study Group

June 26th, 2013, 18:30

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How Wars Create Welfare: The Pacific War and Social Policy-Making in Japan

While it is commonly argued that the Japanese welfare state has its roots in the post-war period, this talk argues that the foundations for the Japanese welfare state were laid down much earlier, namely during World War Two. My talk will bridge the disconnect between historical and social science literatures and present preliminary evidence from my archival research on Japan's experiences leading up to and during wartime, outlining scope, direction and mechanisms of change within the government's regulation of social policy. Against the established argument about welfare states changing incrementally, I show how radical political change and the anticipation of war have laid the foundations for a fledgling Japanese welfare state.

The literature on institutional change believes various factors to influence development and expansion of the welfare state, among them working class strength and cross-class coalitions, institutional determinants and incentives created through electoral systems. Concurrently, despite being widely discussed in the historical literature to explain the expansion of the state as well as control over the economy, welfare state scholars have yet to systematically ask what effect war and mobilization for war have on social policy making. Historians have pointed to the compensatory nature of social policy building in the post war period, but have failed to analyze strategic anticipatory policy making predating the war's end.

Anna K. Skarpelis is a research assistant at the Institute for Public Knowledge and the Stern School of Business at New York University, doctoral candidate in sociology at NYU and doctoral fellow at the German Institute for Japanese Studies. She has worked as a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies and read at Sciences Po Paris, Ochanomizu Women's University and Waseda University. Skarpelis has received fellowships and awards from NYU's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the Max Planck Institute, the German Institute for Japanese Studies, the Toshiba International Foundation and the Japan Foundation.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by P. Holdgrün, B. Holthus, C. Hommerich.
The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is organized by K. Iwata-Weickgenannt, S. Klien and T. Weber.
All are welcome to attend, but registration (hommerich@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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