



Executive Summary*

- Within the framework of United Nations (UN), particularly with respect to UN Security Council reform, Japan, one of the main financiers of the UN, is often considered of major importance and a candidate for future permanent member of the Security Council.
- Japan, together with Germany, Brazil and India, is part of the G4 initiative. However, the UN receives scant attention in Japanese foreign policy, not least due to the strong bilateral relations between Japan and the United States and a strong Japanese reliance on US support in terms of national security.
- The author, a former Principal Officer of the UN, critically analyzes Japanese policy on the United Nations and the possibility of Japan becoming a permanent member of the Security Council.
- The author concludes that Japan needs to conduct a multilateral diplomacy that simultaneously protects Japan's national interests and befriends other countries. He strongly criticizes the present policy of simply following the United States on UN policy as doomed to failure as a means of strengthening Japan's influence in the UN.

^{*} This executive summary was prepared by the editors.



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1. The rocky road ahead

Japan's aspiration to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is well known, particularly within the UN community. To attain this goal, Japan needs to recognize and analyze the historical background against which the United Nations was created after the Second World War, and the role of permanent membership of the Security Council. It also needs to understand how Japan has been positioned within this framework. The road map on the basis of which Japan might obtain such status cannot be drawn up solely based on the somewhat narcissistic argument that the international community has high expectations on Japan, based on Japan's large contribution to international cooperation through its ODA, its large financial contribution to international organizations, including the UN, or its increased participation in UN peace-keeping operations.1 While it is true that Japan has increased its contributions to the international community, this does not automatically entitle it to a position in the Security Council, nor does it give Japan any grounds on which to argue its case. While this is the common understanding within the UN community, it often goes unnoticed within Japan. If the discussion on this matter continues to revolve around this self-righteous argument, which lacks objectivity, it will be hard for Japan to achieve its goal.

Instead of listing Japan's PKO activities within the framework of the UN – such as in East Timor, Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere – and boasting about the amount of ODA and proposed plans to increase it in the future, Japan needs to present a clear and concrete vision of how it plans to contribute to the international community. Examples of visions that Japan could and should project include: (1) how to resolve international, domestic and local disputes, and how to establish post-conflict political governance with the effective and fair degree of involvement of the actors concerned; (2) how to construct an international economic framework and orientation that enables poverty reduction, which in turn will contribute to the emergence of functioning societies that can resolve disputes without resorting to the use of force (including terrorism); (3) an independent vision of development assistance toward developing countries; and (4) a vision of human rights in developing countries, with

particular relevance to their level of development and historical constraints.

After World War I, Japan was a permanent member of the Council of the League of Nations, together with the other victors of the war, such as Britain, France and Italy. In the case of the United Nations, Japan, Germany and Italy were excluded even from membership in 1945. After they were allowed to join in 1956 (Japan) and 1973 (West and East Germany), respectively, neither have been granted permanent membership of the Security Council.

Both the League of Nations and the United Nations were created as a result of the historical turmoil of World War I and World War II. In the absence of a similar international crisis, the only way for Japan to seek permanent membership of the Security Council is within the framework of the international political structures created after World War II, but its chances appear extremely remote. The prevailing international environment also militates against it.

2. Assessment of past diplomatic efforts

Japan began to lay the groundwork for its efforts to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council around 1970, which is also when the author first became involved with the United Nations. These efforts increased during the bubble economy of the 1980s, when Japan experienced a boost in self-confidence as a result of its economic strength. As early as the late 1980s, at the end of the so-called bubble economy, a high-ranking diplomat in Japan's permanent mission to the United Nations reportedly made a surprising statement to the effect that the time had come for Japan to join the Security Council as a permanent member, and that ambassadors from numerous countries took it for granted that Japan would do so. Hence, it was only a matter of time before it became a reality. The reaction within the UN community at the time was that the UN was not ready to expand permanent membership of the Security Council. Numerous developing countries were showing an interest in obtaining permanent membership, such as Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, India and Pakistan in Asia and South Africa and Nigeria in Africa. It would have been almost impossible to choose one from each region.

^{1. (}Note by the editors) This argument is indeed frequently brought up in Japan in order to emphasize the »legitimacy« of Japan's quest for a permanent seat in the Council..

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On 21 September 2004, Prime Minister Jun'ichirô Koizumi expressed Japan's eagerness to become a permanent member of the Security Council in a speech he made at the General Assembly, to the effect that Japan's contribution to international peace and security was a strong enough basis for admission.2 Three problems stand out when reading the articles on this issue published by Professor Shin'ichi Kitaoka, then Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan's mission to the UN.3 Foremost is the seemingly inadequate knowledge and experience of Japanese government officials with regard to the reality of negotiations within the UN. Second is the gap between what Japan sees as UN reform, and what is perceived as such by many other UN member countries (the differences do not concern so much specific details, but more the general framework and orientation of reform). Last is the major question of what Japan sees as its contribution to international peace is recognized as such by the international community.

The idea of adding four new permanent members to the Security Council, advocated by Brazil, India, Japan and Germany – the G4 initiative – and floated at the General Assembly of 2004, did not bring any tangible results, despite the concerted diplomatic efforts of those four governments, which continue today.4 Since then, a number of ideas more or less similar to the above but with certain modifications have been tested, but also without success. This should be construed as a reflection of the wishes of the current permanent members of the Security Council, particularly China, which strongly opposes the idea of Japan becoming a permanent member, as well as those of non-permanent members excluded from the abovementioned schemes, such as Mexico, Pakistan and Italy. In fact, in the case of Japan, while many countries professedly support Japan's candidacy for permanent membership, in reality they have no intention of following through.

It cannot be in Japan's long-term interest to demonstrate an excessively optimistic attitude on this issue in the domestic sphere, merely to appease the domestic political establishment. Japan once floated the idea of »permanent membership without veto power.« However, the main objective of introducing the concept of permanent membership to the Security Council in the UN Charter was to prevent military action from being carried out when one of the major countries opposed such an action. The background to this is the desire to maintain the stability and integrity of the organization as a whole. Thus, permanent membership without veto power makes no sense.

Incidentally, the speech made by Prime Minister Noda on 23 September 2011 at the General Assembly of the United Nations was symbolic of the current dysfunctional state of Japanese diplomacy, as it did not show any proactive commitment and lacked concrete proposals. The speech merely expressed a very general statement that the UN's role is an ever-increasing one, that Japan would continue to support the strengthening of the UN's effectiveness in tackling emerging issues and that reform of the Security Council was essential in making the UN more effective.

3. Suggested policy framework for Japan's UN policy

First, Japan needs to formulate a UN policy that takes into account the traditions and values of Japanese society, including compassion, based on caring for the weak, and the notion of public interest. Two examples of this are how the Meiji government dealt with the *Maria Luz* incident in 1872, and how it went on to propose the inclusion of the racial equality clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 (suggested as an amendment to Article 21).

In 1872, the Japanese government was faced with an incident in which Chinese indentured laborers escaped from the Peruvian vessel *Maria Luz* which had arrived in Yokohama from Macau *en route* to Peru. The Meiji government, despite great opposition from almost all the major powers, decided to impound the vessel, indict the Peruvian captain and free the Chinese laborers from the slave-like conditions they were suffering onboard, on the grounds that this treatment was against international

^{2. (}Note by the editors) See *The Japan Times*, 23 September 2004 (http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20040923a1.html); see also 25 August 2004 (http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20040825a3.html) for a statement by Koizumi regarding the domestic context.

^{3. (}Note by the editors) Kitaoka was originally a professor of Japanese history at the University of Tokyo and was recruited to the diplomatic service as an outsider in an attempt to diversify the discussion on Japan's role in the UN.

^{4. (}Note by the editors) See the »Joint Press Statement« of the foreign ministers of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan on 23 September 2011: http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/reform/joint1109.html.

law. The Japanese government at the time followed a diplomatic policy which strongly valued compassion. The racial equality clause proposed by the Japanese delegation during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 leading to the Treaty of Versailles is another example. Many observers, including victims of discrimination such as African Americans, viewed this proposal with high expectations. However, the proposal was eventually not included in the Covenant, although it obtained a majority of votes in favor (and no votes against), on the grounds that many members expressed reservations during the discussion. This resulted in US President Woodrow Wilson ruling that a contentious decision such as this required unanimous agreement.

Unfortunately, Japanese diplomacy at present still supports globalization under American leadership and in line with American values, and is not making an effort to befriend smaller countries. This attitude does not help Japan's popularity internationally. What is required is first for Japan to create sufficient friends within the international community (so that it is not viewed by other countries as being the fifty-first US state) and to draw up a grand design for the future shape of international society, incorporating Japan's national interests.

4. Areas and ways in which Japan's contribution should be formulated

There is no denying that the topic that attracts most interest among many Japanese in the context of UN reform is – quite understandably – the issue of the expansion of the Security Council. For other countries, however, this issue is not necessarily a priority. UN reform encompasses a variety of issues. Security issues include how to deal effectively with terrorism as a new peril facing the international community; the establishment of post-conflict governance; and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There are also social issues for which solutions must be sought, such as poverty and wealth disparities, epidemics and environmental degradation. In what follows we present examples of what Japan could propose within the framework of UN reform in order to win friends in the international community.

In Japan, the legislative branch of government, the parliament, is not competent or experienced in either domestic or foreign matters, while the executive branch –

cabinet, ministries and government agencies – are not willing to collectively formulate any domestic and foreign policy in a wider perspective, taking long-term, national concerns into consideration. Analysis of the current political and other domestic factors that characterize Japan indicates that it is scarcely possible to obtain support from the various actors for any diplomatic initiatives dealing with emerging international concerns, whose resolution requires cross-ministerial cooperation and coordination. In view of such constraints, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has so far not launched a single initiative concerning any of the issues discussed below.

4.1 Strict adherence to the principle of UN legitimacy for any military action

Within the UN framework, any action by a member state to deal with threats to international peace requires legitimacy. Nevertheless, in recent times a number of military actions have been taken by member countries without obtaining this legitimacy, such as the actions taken against Afghanistan and Iraq. The latter were carried out on the pretext that preventive military strikes against criminal groups are both a right and a duty of UN member states. The Security Council needs to clarify the conditions under which member states should be allowed to take preventive military actions against clear and present dangers.

The United States and the United Kingdom have persistently argued that military actions they have taken to protect their national interests, although ignoring international law and the UN framework, were nonetheless done in the interests of the international community. The recent actions taken by the United Kingdom and France against Libya were also unilateral military action against a sovereign state, and as such are not dissimilar to the actions taken against Afghanistan or Iraq. This kind of domestic conflict is not what the drafters of the UN Charter conceived of as a possible scenario of UN involvement – the UN Charter is concerned mainly with mediating conflicts between nations.

Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the creation of international rules that govern the involvement of the international community in domestic conflicts within the framework of the UN. It was the United States' self-righteous policy against Iraq that crystallized the need for new



international rules to deal with these issues, and it will be a time-consuming task to create a new system that remains consistent with existing norms.

4.2 Transitional governance as stipulated in the UN Charter

The most difficult task in post-conflict situations is to introduce effective governance mechanisms. The mandate system was created under the League of Nations following World War I; similarly, the system of trusteeship was established under the UN following World War II. After many colonial territories achieved independence – and particularly after Namibia became independent of South Africa in 1990 – a discussion arose in the UN on whether to delete the sections pertaining to the Trusteeship Council, but it was eventually decided to leave it intact.

Traditionally, the UN's Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) have been carried out with the agreement of all the parties to the conflict, and under an umbrella of neutrality. Assuming that the conflict parties have agreed to a ceasefire, the primary aim of a PKO is to ensure, through the presence of military forces provided by the international community, that hostilities do not start up again. However, the newly emerging types of conflict, characterized by civil war, massacre and terrorism, make it harder to identify the parties involved. In a traditional PKO, a ceasefire was first secured, then monitored, and if need be, a transitional authority was put in place to lay the foundations of an administrative structure. We are now at a stage where we should discuss the necessity and modes of assistance of provisional administrative authorities. This can be considered a new type of trusteeship.

In the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, the international community should have reviewed the provisions concerning trusteeship in the UN Charter, as well as the historical precedents, and should have placed the provisional government under international monitoring while trying to engage with the local population at grassroots level, all the while promoting the establishment of a stable government. The UN involvement in Cambodia, Namibia and Kosovo is similar to the system under the UN Trusteeship Council, excluding the intergovernmental consultative mechanism similar to the Trusteeship Council. In concrete terms, what was required in Afghanistan and Iraq was a

system under which the respective provisional governments reported regularly to a Trusteeship Council-like body, which would also have taken into consideration the views of locals. Countries generally contributing to post-conflict recovery situations, such as Japan, should have been included in this Trusteeship Council-like body, in addition to the permanent members of the Security Council. But this did not happen.

4.3 Recognition and enforcement of the rule of law

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, referring to the rule of law in a statement to the General Assembly, once cited the code of the Babylonian King Hammurabi. He asserted that the future of the UN should be decided on the basis of the rule of law, and that power does not create justice, but rather justice creates power. He also asserted that this principle was being shamelessly ignored by some members, and criticized in particular the stance of the United States. He also lamented the fact that, regardless of the size or the strength of particular countries, the rule of law was being implemented only selectively. He urged the General Assembly to ensure that the rule of law was properly enforced worldwide.

More than half a century has passed since the Permanent Court of International Justice created by the League of Nations was renamed the International Court of Justice (ICJ) under the United Nations. The time has come for a proposal that urges reform of the international justice system. The existing judicial procedure for dealing with border conflicts, for example, is undeniably underdeveloped compared to the procedure for dealing with domestic conflicts. The jurisdiction of the ICJ comes into effect only when the parties to the conflict agree on the resolution of their conflict through the ICJ ex ante or ex post (a compromise). Without the explicit agreement of the parties, the ICJ does not have jurisdiction over conflicts between sovereign states. Therefore, despite being called a »court of justice,« the functioning of the ICJ is similar to that of a national court of arbitration. For this reason, efforts to establish the rule of law internationally are severely constrained.

Japan is in disagreement with Korea and China over the territorial sovereignty of a number of islands and rocks in border regions, as well as over the Exclusive Economic



Zone (EEZ) surrounding them.⁵ One reason that these conflicts have yet to be resolved is the systemic shortcomings of international judicial procedures.

4.4 Proactive participation in the Security Council debate

Currently, although a majority of member states agree on expanding the Security Council, there is no consensus on the details. For example, the United States has shown some willingness to consider the possibility of Japan becoming a permanent member, but has made it clear that it is against Security Council expansion per se. This is because expansion would reduce US influence and lower the Council's overall effectiveness. The United States must pay lip service to Japan out of political solidarity, but is reluctant to pursue a policy that would make the Security Council even more unmanageable than it currently is.

One reason given by the Japanese government for aspiring to permanent membership is the need to obtain information on conflicts through Security Council debates, particularly discussions between the United States, the United Kingdom and France. Currently, Japanese diplomacy does not have the personnel and budget needed to collect this kind of information, and therefore it is understandable that the government identifies information gathering as an important objective. However, in the case of conflicts in countries with which the United States or European countries have historical, particularly colonial ties, would it not be preferable for a country such as Japan, without a vested interest or historical involvement, to gather independent intelligence and use it to develop a feasible solution and influence the Security Council debate?

Even if this is impossible, Japan should still strive to have its position reflected in the Security Council debate. The Security Council's current modus operandi in conflict resolution – its most important task – is for the United States, the United Kingdom and France to set the general framework and only then to invite the other members to the discussion table. Japan needs to convince these three countries that it should be involved in the discussion at this early informal stage.

From this perspective, the decision-making process that led to resolution of the conflict in Kosovo in 1999 might hint towards possible decision-making reform within the Security Council. In that instance, discussions were held at the summit prior to the Security Council session, the results of which were reflected in the debate. In essence, Japan must pursue a diplomacy in which it not only contributes financially, but also makes its voice heard. Unless Japan recognizes this, it will remain outside the inner circle making the important decisions, even after becoming a permanent member.

4.5 Transformation of the international economic order and reform of the Economic and Social Commissions

It has been stated repeatedly that the roles of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Commissions should be reviewed within the framework of their relations with the Bretton Woods institutions. Since Japan is a major donor country, developing countries are likely to be anxious to know Japan's position. Japan has been able to overcome an unfair international economic order imposed on it after World War II, and managed to join the club of advanced countries. Will it now seek to protect this economic order? Will it repeat the history of becoming a colonial power after having barely escaped colonization itself? Development assistance through the UN is the foundation for ensuring international peace and security, as well as a precondition for peace-building. There is a marked tendency in the management of the international economic order to impose Western values – in effect, North American values – on the global economy through the UN system. Developing countries are increasingly either left outside the globalized, excessively market-oriented world economy or incorporated into it, with the result that they are often taken advantage of. It should be an important UN mandate to halt this tendency

^{5. (}Note by the editors) This refers to the conflict between Japan and Korea over the Takeshima (in Japanese) or Dokto (in Korean) islands, in the West also known as the Liancourt Rocks, since they are indeed not really islands and have been uninhabited for centuries, and the conflict between Japan and China over the Senkaku (Jp.) or Diaoyu (Chn.) islands in the South China Sea. For the official Japanese position, see the homepage of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/index.html (Takeshima/Dokto); http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/senkaku.html (Senkaku/Diaoyu). Additionally, Japan also has an ongoing territorial dispute with Rusia over the »Northern Territories«, in the West better known as the Southern Kuril Islands (see http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/russia/territory/index.html for the official Japanese position).

and create an environment conducive to full developingcountry participation in the world economy.

The following issues must be addressed: (1) Are the developed countries willing to carry out economic and social policy decision-making and policy coordination through the UN, and if so, how do they plan to reflect that in the formulation of the UN's regular budget? (2) Are the developed countries willing to coordinate socio-economic activities with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization to assist developing countries in becoming economically autonomous? (3) How do the developed countries plan to continue development assistance at a time when the total amount of ODA is decreasing?

Today, economic policies are formulated on the assumption that economic activities are conducted according to market principles. However, the reality is that market mechanisms do not necessarily function properly in developing countries, and in some instances do not exist. Japan managed to reach the top class of economic performance 130 years after the Meiji Restoration in 1868,6 and 60 years after World War II. Many economists point out that the driving force behind this success was a government-led economic policy which created an environment in which the private sector was not left at the mercy of tumultuous market mechanisms but nevertheless, allowed to flourish. Japan could therefore help formulate UN policy for developing countries based on its own experience. Specifically, it could promote the following international cooperation activities through the UN: (1) create a medium-term objective that could serve as a guideline for private economic entities; (2) formulate a method of economic management for developing countries; (3) provide training in order to build human capital and develop the science and technology sectors; and (4) build a financial system that encourages savings, which in turn could be used for investment in factors of production.

4.6 Independent and proactive participation in development assistance

Hitherto, Japan has not involved itself in the activities of international organizations on the basis of a clear vision. In development assistance, Japan's preoccupation has been funding. This can be said to be Japan's position in all areas of the activities of international organizations, but the country has not participated in discussions on how financial contributions – including its own – should be used, and has rarely been involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of international organizations. Japan should, based on its experience, build up a proactive strategy on the development policy of developing countries, as well as development policy through the UN, and ensure the effectiveness of the activities of these organizations through monitoring.

The US influence on UN development assistance activities is far greater than can be justified in light of its financial contribution and greater than its influence on the UN itself. This is partly due to the organizational characteristics of the funding agencies (including the decision-making mechanism and a human resource policy in which US nationals are given preferential treatment). It would not be an exaggeration to state that these organizations are part of the US government. Japan assists in US efforts to exercise influence without making a proportionate financial contribution by letting Japanese tax-payers' money be used to advance the US agenda.

The situation has worsened since 1993, when a department which had been responsible for drafting Japan's UN policy in a holistic manner was restructured and dispersed among a number of subject-specific departments. Because of the vertical division of labor within Ministry of Foreign Affairs UN policy debates, it has become extremely difficult to draw up development assistance policies systematically, looking at the specificities of various organizations and divisions of the UN, and in accordance with Japan's national interest. It is imperative that both the amount and the destination of financial contributions to international organizations be decided with due consideration for UN activities overall, as well as Japan's policy priorities. However, the reality is that the US view is given priority over Japanese national interests, and the amount and direction of contributions is decided on the basis of power relations between the different departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As a result,

^{6. (}Note by the editors) The overthrow of the feudal military government of the Shogunate and the foundation of the centralized, modern nation-state.



a larger portion of financial contributions gets allocated to activities that suit US interests and subsequently to activities that are supported domestically, as well as within the Japanese government, without leaving much room for an overall consideration of UN diplomacy.

5. Conclusion

Japan needs to formulate a comprehensive UN policy (including its goal of becoming a permanent member of the Security Council) and in doing so to ensure that it does not reflect only the values of the United States, but also gives due consideration to the diverse values of the UN member states, including Japan itself.

Such a policy also needs to create an environment in which other member states would welcome Japan as a permanent member of the Security Council. That in itself constitutes a contribution to the international community. Japan has a responsibility to create a foundation for multilateral diplomacy that simultaneously protects Japan's national interests and befriends other countries. It is to be sincerely hoped that, as a result, Japan will be able to attain a responsible position within the international community.



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After receiving a degree from International Christian University, Tokyo, in 1965, Mr. Katsuno joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Having served at the Japanese Embassy in Romania and the Japanese Delegation to the OECD, he joined the OECD Secretariat as Principal Administrator in 1976 and, in 1984, the United Nations, first in New York and then in Geneva as Principal Officer (until-2001). From October 2001 through June 2006 he taught as a Professor at Keisen University, Tokyo, and acted as Senior Advisor, International Development Strategy, at the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) from October 2001 through September 2004. He has published numerous articles and books on questions of international law, the role of the UN and Japan in international relations.

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