

Japan and the United Nations:  
A World Leader?

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## **Japan and The United Nations: A World Leader?**

The United Nations was originally formed in 1942 as a commitment between the Allied Powers to continue the fight against the Axis Powers. The end of World War II brought home a stunning reality to the world; there must be an organization to act as a moderator between conflicting nations to prevent the eruption of another devastating war. Since then the United Nations has served as a forum for the nations of the world to attempt to keep peace through diplomacy. There have been times when peace conferences have failed and the UN has shown its strength by sending ground troops, made up of soldiers from member nations, to quell uprisings.

The United Nations is made up of many different committees each designed to deal with some issue effecting the world today from famine to economic development. These groups are composed of member nations committed to the UN peacekeeping efforts. The UN is divided into two “houses,” the General Assembly, made up of all member nations, and the Security Council, made up of five permanent members including; The United States, The Russian Federation, France, and China. The strength of the UN resides in the Security Council, which serves as the backbone of the United Nations. Each permanent member of the Security Council has an ultimate veto, which they can use at any time.

Today the United Nations has become very instrumental in dealing with new threats to world peace. Enemies once clearly defined during the Cold War era either favoring communism or democracy no longer exists. Now adversaries to a stable

international community come from terrorists or warring ethnic groups, which are not as visible.

The rapid rise of many Asian nations, particularly Japan, admitted to the UN on December 18, 1956, has added a new perspective to the UN. From the onset Japan has considered the “centrality of the United Nations” as the main tool of their foreign policy. This concept has formed the basis of Japan’s <sup>1</sup>“Three Principles of Foreign Policy...the centrality of the United Nations, cooperation with the economically advanced Western nations, and its identity as an Asian nation.” Japan’s immediate and future survival demands that the UN promote a safe and stable environment conducive to free trade and growth. <sup>2</sup>“As the international community works toward a solution, it is vital to look at the United Nations, the only international organization with near universal representation. Japan is committed to implementing reforms that will strengthen the United Nations.” As a result of Japan’s greater ability to broaden its financial support to the UN it seeks a stronger voice on the Security Council. On the other hand Japan’s lack of physical participation in UN peacekeeping forces leaves an unsettling feeling in many members of the Security Council. Is Japan ready to take the responsibility to be a world leader?

## **Disarmament and Non-Proliferation**

Japan places a great emphasis on projects involving disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Many believe that Japan’s resolve for these issue stems from its experience as the only nation to suffer the destruction and devastation of two atomic bombs. Throughout the plethora of meetings held to discuss these issues Japan has remained firmly rooted, <sup>3</sup>“that it is important to make steady efforts for nuclear

disarmament in a realistic and determined manner with the goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.”

Despite Japan’s firm resolve to enforce the reduction of nuclear arms they have failed to contribute any type of physical support, in terms of weapons or troops, to any of the UN’s efforts. The close of World War II saw the defeat of imperial Japan. As part of their political rebuilding towards democracy they instituted a constitution, which among other things outlines Clause 9, which states,

<sup>4</sup>“the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes” that; “in order to accomplish [this] aim, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained” and that; “the right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Clause 9 greatly restricts the amount that Japan can get involved in combative UN activities however, Japan has begun to recognize the need for change.

The reduction of availability and usage of small arms is another aspect of disarmament. The view held by many influential Japanese, and other UN officials, is <sup>6</sup>“The unfettered transfer and the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons are other destabilizing factors in many regions of the world.... resulting in the escalation of combat and enormous loss of life.” The escalation of various tribal wars in Africa and rebel uprisings in Cambodia and Indonesia are cited as results of unrestricted arms build up.

Japan has been very active in organizing and presiding over conferences established to deter this problem. This initiative has produced the UN Register of

Conventional Arms, which aims to “improve the transparency and openness of arms.” To assist and support UN efforts Japan sponsored and hosted the Asia-Pacific Workshop on the UN Register of Conventional Arms. This workshop was held in order to attract more countries to participate in the UN efforts. In addition to this Japan submitted to the UN a resolution, which served to establish a type of board of officials to keep track of the weapons registered by participating countries.

Around the world the use of anti-personnel land mines has been a central issue of disarmament. Clearing anti-personnel land mines is particularly important because civilians, many of who are children, are being killed from exploding mines left over from previous conflicts. Many influential people from a variety of different countries have contributed a generous amount of money and time to the UN efforts of clearing land mines, most notably Princess Diana. Japan is not immune to these efforts having put the clearing of land mines in the forefront of its disarmament plan. To meet this goal Japan has formed four main objectives consisting of,

<sup>7</sup>”Strengthening the mine-clearing activities of international agencies with the United Nations as the center of coordination; promoting the development of new technologies for land mine detection and clearance; enhancing international collaboration on the regulation of anti-personnel land mines; and strengthening international assistance for the rehabilitation of land mine victims.”

Apart from orchestrating plans for the elimination of land mines Japan has contributed approximately \$22 million. The majority of the funds collected have gone to clearing mines in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In addition to disarmament Japan has been committed to non-proliferation, the abolishing of weapons of mass destruction. Most of Japan's efforts have been made through monetary contributions, which are estimated to total around \$100 million. The majority of this money has gone to efforts focusing on the elimination of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union. The world watched with amazement as the Soviet Union collapsed, leaving communism severely handicapped. Despite the political step forward many problems still exist. One of the foremost problems is the destination of its nuclear arsenal. Through efforts by the United Nations, including Japan, there has been strict monitoring of these weapons.

Japan is at the head of UN efforts to establish worldwide agreements and laws dealing with the elimination of nuclear substances. In discussions on nuclear testing Japan has remained steadfast in reiterating and upholding <sup>5</sup>“its three non-nuclear principles – not possessing, producing or introducing nuclear weapons into its territory.” During the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly in 1995 Japan, after drafting a number of anti-nuclear proposals, submitted a resolution, which would serve to ensure the “ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons...” It asked the nations holding nuclear weapons to keep the United Nations fully updated. The resolution was immediately adopted

While actively participating in these discussions Japan has contributed a great deal of money to non-proliferation activities. Its contributions have amounted to approximately \$3.5 million to the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) which was responsible for sending inspectors into Iraq and other areas to determine and destroy any nuclear weapons.

## **Peacekeeping Initiatives**

Members of the UN have duly noted that Japan has given a great deal of financial assistance to peacekeeping missions. Despite this many nations have faulted Japan for not contributing any weapons, artillery or soldiers to these efforts claiming they want to create a protective shell and refuse to share in the bloodshed. These sentiments have left an unsettling feeling in the members of the Security Council and are the subject of continuous debate. In response to these accusations Japan calls upon its constitution, specifically Clause 9, requiring that it forever renounce the use of arms for means other than self-defense. Unfortunately this excuse has not served to quell the discomfort felt by the other member nations who contribute personnel and money to the UN.

Japanese views regarding Clause 9 have recently begun to change however, not without a great deal of debate within Japan. The need for change became apparent to Japanese officials after the Gulf War in 1991. When called upon by the UN to aid in the Gulf War Japan failed to respond quickly enough to the high demand for troops. When Japan finally agreed to send some troops the war was nearing an end. Japan received a tremendous amount of stinging criticism from other nations once the war came to a close. Japanese officials have stated that Japan's response to the Gulf War was not adequate and that it still "haunts" the country today.

The most significant change in Japanese policy has been through legislation passed in 1992, the Law Concerning the Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and other Operations. This legislation,



<sup>8</sup>”would enable Japan to support US forces more closely if a crisis occurs in nearby countries. Legislative changes would make clear, for instance, that Japan could treat US casualties, help enforce and embargo, and allow US planes to land at civilian airports.”

This is a large step forward in increasing Japanese participation however; strict limitations have been placed on the new legislation. Japan has agreed to send troops provided they will not be directly involved in combat and the UN adhere to the conditions outlined in the legislation, which includes, <sup>9</sup>”a cease fire must be in place; the parties to the conflict must have given their consent to the operation; the activities must be conducted in a strictly impartial manner; participation may be suspended or terminated if any of the ‘above conditions ceases to be met;’ and the use of weapons shall be limited to the minimum necessary to protect life or person of the personnel.”

Japan has made a noticeable increase in its participation in peacekeeping activities since this legislation was passed in 1992. Japan was one of the key nations involved in operations in Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, and El Salvador. In 1994 Japan made a substantial physical contribution to operations in Zaire and Kenya, to help Rwandan refugees, by sending approximately 1,800 members of their Self-Defense Force to aid in humanitarian relief.

Along with increasing their physical presence in UN Peacekeeping Operations Japan has taken a lead position as vice-chair of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. This committee will attempt to strengthen the UN Peacekeeping Operations. In addition Japan was integral in the establishment of the PKO Reserve Fund which was

implemented in 1992. These contributions have served to strengthen Japan's presence in the international community and show they are willing to take on more responsibility. Japan has begun to take a stronger leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region. Efforts are being avidly made to strengthen Japan's bilateral relationship with the United States. Japan has further opened up their markets to more U.S. imports in addition to allowing the United States to keep a military base and personnel in Japan. Within Asia itself Japan has taken a lead seat in organizations such as APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum which both serve to unite the Asian nations and increase their wealth and productivity. It is very important that Japan assume a strong leadership position in these regional organizations because it is such an economically and financially integral part of the world.

Japan has been one of the largest donors of financial aid in the UN. Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) has played a very important part in the financing of UN activities. In 1994 ODA lending reached a high of \$13.4 billion. Four strict "principles" guide Japanese lending policy, which include,

<sup>10</sup>,"environmental conservation and development should be pursued in tandem; any use of ODA for military purposes or for aggravation of international conflicts should be avoided; full attention should be paid to trends in recipient countries' military expenditures, their development and production of weapons of mass destruction and missiles, and their export and import of arms; and full attention should be paid to efforts for promoting democratization and introduction of a market-oriented economy and to the situation regarding the securing of basic human right and freedoms in the recipient country."

These guidelines give Japan some input into how its contributions are used.

## **Japan's Role in Aiding Developing Countries**

Now that Japan has become a highly industrialized nation it has been a strong advocate of investing in developing countries throughout the world, particularly within Asia. Japan's investments in Asia were an important catalyst to the rise of the four "Asian tigers." Due to the important role that Japanese investment played in bringing many of the underdeveloped countries into the global market Japan has been termed, by analysts, as "the lead goose."

Japan has now been actively moving the UN towards taking a larger interest in developing countries. Given a great deal of credit when it comes to monetary donations and contributions; its' ODA has provided more than 150 developing countries including Asia, Africa, Central and South America, the Middle East, and Oceania with assistance to begin movement towards a market-oriented economy. The ODA serves as capital to fund new infrastructure and to ensure the improvement of humanitarian efforts

It is integral to the global community that the larger richer nations of the world offer assistance to a greater number of developing countries. Japan has emphasized its view for this goal by terming it the "new global partnership." The "new global partnership" based on <sup>11</sup>"the recognition that developed and developing countries must escape from the grip of the old ways of thinking and cooperate to achieve genuine progress toward development." The goals of this partnership are, <sup>12</sup>"output-oriented development targets," including, "a reduction by at least one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, universal primary education in all countries, a reduction

by two-thirds in the mortality rates for infants and children and a reduction by three-fourths in the maternal mortality.” The time period for completion of these goals has been projected for the year 2015.

Apart from investing a lot of money in Asian and Southeast Asian countries Japan has taken active steps towards helping Africa become more developed. In 1998 a meeting of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) was held focusing on the necessity of African development for future growth of the global community. Japan has been offering a great deal of aid to African nations in order to promote <sup>13</sup>“democractization, economic reform, human resource development, environmental protection.” Japan has also implemented UNCTAD IX which has cost Japan around \$100 million and provides for an expansion of education in Africa and an agreement to allow 3,000 African “trainees” to undergo technical training in Japan. In 1992 Japan began giving some of its ODA towards environmental clean up, which totals from 900 billion to 1 hundred yen. This money is intended to assist each country in becoming “self-reliant,” in terms of infrastructure and “cultivating human resources.”

Along similar lines, Japan has been an ardent supporter of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), established through the UN in 1991. Over the next few years Japan has pledged 45 billion yen to the cause to environmental causes in developing countries. Not only involved in implementing better environmental standards, Japan has become active in population control through its Global Issues Initiative (GII). In the next seven years Japan will contribute \$3 billion of ODA to promote AIDS awareness, family planning, and child and maternal healthcare.

## **Reform of the United Nations**

### **Reform of the Security Council**

One of Japan's main thrusts, as an emerging world power and influential member of the UN has been the subject of reform. The plan for reform focuses on three main areas: the Security Council, Financial restructuring, and the cohesiveness and communication within the UN. Japan sees the improvement of the Security Council as the first and foremost of areas needing reform. Japan claims that the <sup>14</sup>“primary objective of Security Council reform is to strengthen its function by enhancing its legitimacy and effectiveness.”

Japan emphasizes that the way to do this is to strengthen the Security Council, by restructuring it so it will better represent the multitude of member nations within the UN. Currently there are five permanent members and all other member nations rotate for a period of time onto the Security Council. Part one of Japan's plan for revision seeks to increase, by a small percentage, the number of permanent seats on the Security Council, allowing for a new perspective on global events and new input. Secondly, there should be an increase in the non-permanent membership to the Security Council to include both developed and developing countries such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Japan contends; any nation with the willingness and capability to substantially contribute to the UN should become a permanent member and be allowed to assume a larger role in the global arena.

### **Financial Reform**

Modification of the UN financial sector is the second focus of Japan's plan for the betterment of the UN. The basis of this reform relies on the Japanese belief in

“responsibility to pay based on capacity to pay.” There will not be a set amount that each country must pay; rather each country would have to contribute a percentage of their nation's funds to the UN. Therefore, a large surplus could be built up, which could be reinvested because wealthier countries would pay more because they have the capacity to do so.

Required contributions and voluntary contributions have determined UN financial reserves, as of late. These funds are then divided into two categories: the regular budget and the budget for peacekeeping operations. Priding itself on always paying its required dues on time and in full Japan has been very generous with its voluntary contributions. Second only to the United States Japan's contributions to the regular budget amount to \$167.9 million and to the peacekeeping operation's (PKO) budget of \$43.42 in 1995. In assessing the voluntary contributions made in 1994 Japan's donations were estimated to be \$549.2 million.

Japan's outline for reform has been set by their primary goal to, <sup>15</sup>“strengthen financial and administrative systems of the United Nations so that the organization will reflect the changing realities of the international community and that it will be able to adapt to the emerging needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” Three main objectives have been devised to stimulate fiscal reform; beginning with a distinction between immediate cash needs and excess funds, which can be used to begin financial reform. Secondly, financial reform should coincide with other UN reforms. Third, each member should honor its obligations to the financial aspect of membership. Japan emphasizes it is extremely important that all nations pay their required dues promptly and they are further encouraged to give more to specific UN activities.

### **Reform of Development Sectors**

An ardent supporter of investing capital into developing economies. Japan has been urging the UN to change its approach to the needs of developing nations. The plan focuses on the jumpstarting of maturing economies and the improvement of social development.

From an economic standpoint, Japan has devised the concept of the “new global partnership.” The first part of the theory requires the UN to reinvest money into emerging economies. Secondly, while giving these countries a financial base Japan wants to ensure these nations will one day be self-sufficient and give back to the international community. In order to do this Japan wants the UN to work with the leaders of each developing nation to set development targets and goals and to help each nation forge a development strategy specific to their ability and future goals.

For the UN to continue providing adequate assistance the UN itself must become better equipped to promote unity. Along with goals for helping underdeveloped nations achieve a better more efficient economy, Japan seeks to strengthen the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. This council was initially set up to keep a flow of communication between the different sectors within the UN however, Japan, and other member nations, feel that it has become too bureaucratic and no longer serves a useful purpose. ECOSOC needs to be reformed and amended so it can better handle discussions and serve as a common thread through the organization. The reform entails,

<sup>16</sup>ECOSOC to undertake review of the mandates and working methods of its functional commissions and expert groups and bodies, and recommends measures

to enhance interaction and cooperation between Bretton Woods institutions and other parts of the United Nations.”

This change would bring together all the separate parts of the UN to provide all members with a forum to give input on different operations. The UNH would then be better armed to focus on more than just one aspect of development in a country.

### **Improve Capacity to Maintain Peace**

In post Cold War year's new threats to international peace have arisen requiring new methods to deal with conflicts. Japan has been a key member in discussions surrounding new techniques to handle these new threats. Continually expressing its vow to not use arms Japan has outlined ideas for a non-aggressive approach to conflict. Four main tactics are currently being discussed including, preventive diplomacy, post-conflict peace building, coordination, and sanctions.

Preventive diplomacy suggests each nation involved in a conflict conduct diplomatic discussions, within the UN, to try and prevent any violence from erupting. Post-conflict peace building attempts to reestablish relations after a conflict has arisen. This type of rebuilding would focus on the reinstating of diplomats between countries and aiding in regenerating of their economies. Japan sees the concept of cooperation between member nations as a key element to the functioning of the UN. Japan stresses that it is imperative for each nation to follow in conjunction with mandates put forth by the UN. This will serve to make the effects of UN activities more forceful and lasting while creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and responsibility.



The last proposal for dealing with conflicts, sanctioning, has been the center of heated debate. A nation can be sanctioned for failing to comply with UN mandates. Many of the member nations question whether sanctions really achieve the goal it is put in place to do. Arguments against sanctioning claim that the restrictions only really effect the civilians of the country, which is no the intended purpose. Along with this they claim that the sanctions hurt countries which rely on the penalized country for trade. Although this method is still under fierce debate progress is being made to establish new methods for dealing with problems facing the world today.

### **Japan's Qualifications for Permanent Security Council Member**

Rapid industrialization has rocketed Japan into the position of one of the world's foremost economies. Japan now seeks to become a permanent member of the Security Council arguing that it has the capability to be a world leader. In its proposal Japan cites it enormous financial contributions and its involvement in peacekeeping operations sponsored by the UN. They believe they have played an instrumental and vital role in many discussion groups in the UN and have helped bring together the Asian nations. It emphasizes they are willing to dispense all their resources to the UN except those prohibited by Clause 9 of their constitution; although they will not engage in combat, they will make their presence felt in other ways. To prove this, they have sent Self-Defense Force personnel to areas such as Cambodia, Mozambique, and the Golan Heights to act as observers and advisors. Japan claims these roles are just as important as actually fighting because they are helping the nations facing conflict rebuild themselves.

Japan has also made the valid claim,

<sup>17</sup>” It should also be pointed out that there are no differences under the UN Charter in obligations, including military ones, between permanent members of the Security Council and other members of the United Nations.”

The members of the Security Council readily acknowledge Japan’s contributions to UN sponsored activities. Yet, they face a dilemma, they do not want to expand the Security Council to new countries. They argue, if they allow Japan to become a permanent member why not let others who have shown economic growth do the same. This argument also coincides with the problem of Japan’s inability to contribute physically to the UN combative needs. The members of the Security Council believe that in order to be a world leader, it is necessary to not only contribute financially but to share in the burden of conflict resolution which may lead to bloodshed.

## **Conclusion**

There is no question that in the past two decades Japan has turned itself around to become one of the world’s most efficient and productive economies. This does not however, secure its standing for permanent member of the Security Council. Although Japan has contributed a great amount of financial assistance to the United Nations a lot more is required to be a world leader. If the Security Council were to admit nations based on their economic growth where would they draw the line between which countries could and could not be admitted. There are a number of nations around the world, including Japan, which have shown large growth but this alone is not enough.

In order to be an international leader sacrifices must be made to ensure security. This includes contributing military forces to UN endeavors. If Japan were to be admitted

to the Security Council without making this commitment there could be dire consequences. Without full endorsement of all available resources of the nations on the Security Council discrepancies and hostilities are bound to arise. The Security Council must put forth a strong unanimous front with all nations sharing equally in the burden. If Japan were allowed to dictate the terms of its participation an imbalance would occur causing a faction in the Security Council leaving the UN vulnerable to demands made by aggressors. Therefore, until Japan is ready to make a full commitment to the Security Council their petition for permanent membership should be denied.

### **Endnotes**

1. Kodansha, p. 153
2. Obuchi (in MOFA document), p.1
3. Ikeda (in MOFA document), p. 1
4. MOFA, p.1 (Current Issues Surrounding UN Peace . . .)
5. Ikeda (MOFA document), p. 1
6. Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (MOFA document), p. 2
7. Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (MOFA document), p. 4
8. Barr, p.1
9. MOFA, p.2 (Current Issues Surrounding UN Peace...)
10. Diplomacy, p. 4
11. Satoh, p.2
12. Tomiichi (Development), p.1
13. Tomiichi (Development), p. 2
14. Satoh, p.1
15. Satoh, p.2
16. Satoh, p.5
17. Satoh, p.6

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