

Japan's Contribution to International Peace: Restrictions and Advantages

By Katsumi Ishizuka*

Japan is said to be a peace-loving country. In fact, the State's history indicates that Japan and its politicians have surely sought positive ways to dispatch Japan's SDF personnel to UN or international operations for the pursuit of UN-centred policy, despite the State's constitutional constraints. For example, Japan created or amended several laws including the PKO Law in 1992 as well as the JDR Law in 1987 and the Anti-Terrorism Law in 2001. Therefore, one can identify the evolving process of Japan's contribution to international peace. However, at the time of writing, Japan's contribution to UN peacekeeping is token. This article points out several restrictions and advantages for Japan to dispatch forces to overseas operations. The restrictions include legal, diplomatic, and situational ones. The advantages include ones due to the State's record in the UN, due to the state's diverse and comprehensive approaches to international peace, and those due to the current situation of international peace and security. Japan should take advantage of its middle-power status for its contribution to international peace.

Keywords: Japan; International peace; The UN; Middle power

Introduction

It is well-known that Japan is called a peace-loving country. This is partly because Japan is the only state that suffered from atomic bombs, partly because the State's Constitution prohibited the possession of official military forces and, therefore, partly because the Japanese citizens strongly desire international peace and order. The Japanese Government has long supported the "UN-centred policy" in the State's diplomacy.

So, what are the criteria for states that persistently hold peace and security dear? What kind of facts and figures prove the states' adopting the UN-centred policy? In the field of international peace and security, one such criteria would be the contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. Therefore, the frequency of the dispatch of troops or civilians to UN peacekeeping, or the number of personnel dispatched to the entire UN peacekeeping operations during a fixed period would be good indicators. As far as Japan is concerned, the current number of the Japanese Self Defence Forces (SDF) deployed in UN peacekeeping operations is merely four, almost the bottom of the international ranking. Essentially, joining the UN operations, which are neutral and non-coercive, should be ideal for Japan.

*Ph.D., Professor, Dean of the Faculty of International Business Management, Kyoei University, Kasukabe, Saltama, Japan.
Email: ishizuka@kyoei.ac.jp

How can one explain the contradiction between the status of a peace-loving country and the token participation in UN-led operations? In explaining the contradiction, this article will discuss the weaknesses (or restrictions) and strengths (or advantages) of Japan in pursuing its contribution to international peace through UN operations.

After the brief description of the history of Japan's contribution to international peace, this article will discuss restrictions and advantages of Japan's contribution to international peace from the viewpoints of its history, domestic laws, governmental policy, and current security situation of international affairs. In conclusion, this article will advocate some suggestions to revive Japan's performance in contributing to international peace by minimising the restrictions and maximising the advantages.

History of Japan's Contribution to International Peace

It is to be noted that even before Japan's membership in the UN, the Japanese Government indicated its commitment to the international organisation by dispatching its SDF abroad. In 1952, Foreign Minister Katsuo Okazaki officially stated that Japan would fill all the obligations of a UN member by all means at its disposal. In 1954, however, the House of Councillors passed the resolution which would not allow the SDF to be dispatched abroad despite the fact that some legal scholars advocated the participation of the SDF in UN missions. Japan joined the UN in 1956 and then became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1965. In February 1966, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs drafted a UN Resolution Cooperation Bill, which mentioned the SDF personnel as part of Japan's contribution to UN missions.¹

In 1982, the Japanese Government submitted a resolution to the UN General Assembly that advocated strengthening the role and effectiveness of the UN. The UN then requested that Member States submit concrete proposals to strengthen the UN. In meeting the request, the Japanese Government formed an advisory panel chaired by a former UN Ambassador. The group's final report encouraged Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

In 1988, Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita proposed the International Cooperation Initiative and identified five areas including UN peace operations in which Japan could play a role on the world stage.² In 1989, the Director General of the Japan Defence Agency, Juro Matsumoto, stated in the Diet that he was considering authorising the use of troops for anti-terrorist operations and international peacekeeping activities.³

In the Gulf Crisis and the following War in 1990 and 1991, Japan made a substantial financial contribution to the US-led Multi-National Forces, amounting to \$13 billion, although this financial contribution was criticised as "being too little

¹Kozai (1991).

²Ibid, at 18

³Leitenberg (1996) at 12.

too late”⁴ or “chequebook diplomacy”.⁵ The Secretary-General of the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) Ichiro Ozawa insisted that the SDF’s dispatching abroad was possible by the current law. The Foreign Ministry White Paper of 1991 stated that a contribution of troops was indispensable. Even Prime Minister Miyazawa stated: “Japan’s international contribution should include some sweating or dispatch of personnel to assist UN peacekeeping operations”.⁶ Finally, after much deliberation, the International Peace Cooperation Law (the PKO Law) was approved in the Diet which became the legal basis for SDF participation in all UN peacekeeping operations.

Since then, the SDF has been dispatched to the countries and areas including Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, the Golan Heights, East Timor, Nepal, Sudan, Haiti, and South Sudan for UN peacekeeping operations. Their missions include engineering units, transportation units, elections observation, military observation, liaison coordination, and headquarters personnel etc. Engineering and transportation units are so-called “logistics missions.” The other missions are individual ones. For example, in Cambodia, the SDF conducted their engineering missions in UNTAC, focusing on the repair of main supply roads and bridges in Takeo in 1992-1993. In El Salvador, the Japanese personnel observed implementation of the election of the president and members of the parliament as a member of ONUSAL in March and April 1994. In the Golan Heights, Israel, as a UNDOF mission, the SDF dispatched transportation units whose missions were the transportation of foodstuffs etc., safekeeping of goods in supply warehouses, and repairing roads. The SDF was stationed in the Golan Heights in relatively long periods, from February 1996 to January 2013. In Haiti, after the 2010 earthquake, the engineering units of the SDF conducted debris removal, levelling the ground, repairing roads, and constructing simple facilities. In East Timor, the Japanese Government dispatched both the SDF as engineering units for construction works and civilian police for counselling the local police administration in UNMISSET in the 2000s. In the South Sudan, since 2011 the Japanese headquarters personnel has implemented the arrangement of the overall supply base in the military division of UNMISS, and the engineering units had conducted activities including infrastructure like road improvement.⁷

In general, engineering units require large forces of battalion. For example, Japan dispatched the maximum of 600 forces in Cambodia, 680 forces in East Timor, 346 forces in Haiti, and 402 forces in South Sudan. The Japanese transportation units consisted of about 40 forces in the Golan Heights. The Japanese personnel number of other missions was the maximum of ten.⁸ Therefore, when the Japanese engineering units were deployed in UN peacekeeping operations, the total ranking of Japan in the number of personnel dispatched to UN peacekeeping operations was relatively high. For example, in June 2002, when the Japanese engineer units of the SDF was deployed in East Timor, the total number

⁴Ito (1995) at 285.

⁵*The Daily Yomiuri*, 12 February 1992

⁶*Mainichi Daily News*, 20 October 1991

⁷Fujishige, Uesugi, & Honda (2022) at 189-196.

⁸*Ibid.*

of Japanese personnel dispatched to UN peacekeeping was 679, which was the 20th place in the entire UN Member States.⁹

However, disappointingly, since the Japanese engineering unit withdrew from South Sudan in UNMISS in March 2017, Japan's contribution to UN peacekeeping operations has become token. The total number of the Japanese participants in UN peacekeeping in February, 2023, is just four (staff officers in UNMISS).

There are both positive and negative aspects for Japan to promote or discourage the State's peacekeeping policy. Negative aspects mean the restrictions of Japan's role as a contributor to international peace, which has been inherent to its history and tradition. Positive aspects mean the advantages Japan achieves by contributing to international peace. The following sections are restrictions and advantages of Japan's contribution to international peace.

Restrictions of Japan's Contribution to International Peace

Legal Restriction: Japan's "Peaceful" Constitution and the PKO Law

It is well-known that Japan does not have official military forces due to its history of World War II, which is also specified in the Article 9 of the Constitution.¹⁰ While the Japanese Constitution is, therefore, called the "Peaceful Constitution" in the peace-loving country, this Constitution makes restrictions to the missions of the SDF in UN peace operations. The restrictions are reflected by the PKO Law which was created in June 1992. The PKO Law included the so-called "Five Principles" for the participation of Japanese contingents in peacekeeping operations:

1. Agreement on the ceasefire shall have been reached among the parties to the conflicts.
2. The parties to the conflict, including the territorial states, shall have given their consent to deployment of the peacekeeping force and Japan's participation in the force.
3. The peacekeeping force shall maintain strict impartiality, not favouring any party to the conflict.
4. Should any of the above guideline requirements cease to satisfy the Government of Japan, it may withdraw the contingent.
5. Use of weaponry shall be limited to the minimum necessary to protect the lives of personnel.¹¹

In reality, several practical problems were identified as a result of the SDF's

⁹UN Peacekeeping Operations, the UN HP.

¹⁰Article 9. (1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. (2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be sustained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

¹¹Defence Agency, *Defence of Japan: The White Paper of the Defence Agency*.

involvement in UN peace operations, mainly due to operational constraints caused by the PKO Law. For example, when the SDF was deployed in UNTAC in Cambodia in 1992-1993, the Five Principles were broken when the Khmer Rouge refused to disarm and ignored the ceasefire. Nevertheless, the Japanese Government did not consider withdrawing the SDF. The decision of the Government to stay was criticised by some opposition parties.¹²

Another constraint of the Five Principles occurred in UNAMIR, Rwanda, in 1995. In fact, the SDF was deployed not in Rwanda but in its neighbouring countries, Zaire and Tanzania, because the deployment in Rwanda, where the ceasefire had not been agreed, would have been regarded as a breach of the Five Principles. In UNMAIR, the SDF was criticised by other contributing states when, because of Japan's PKO Law, it refused a request to look for missing staff from UN headquarters.¹³ This was because the PKO Law requires strict impartiality, and prohibits any belligerence by the SDF.

Furthermore, one of the most serious issues due to the constraint of the Five Principles occurred in the so-called "daily report affair" in UNMISS, South Sudan, in 2016. According to Kazuto Suzuki, the daily report affair was multifaceted. One aspect was that whenever the word "combat" was used in the daily reports written by the SDF staff to describe the security situation in South Sudan, the Ministry of Defence would replace with the phrase "armed conflict" in the summaries of their reports. Simply put, "combat" meant the breach of ceasefire which would require the withdrawal of the SDF from South Sudan according to the Five Principles. Another aspect was that it had become clear that, although the government claimed that the daily reports had been destroyed, they were actually being kept in storage. Reasonably, this raised questions about whether the Japanese government was concealing the truth about whether the SDF had witnessed or even been involved in combat.¹⁴

Diplomatic Restriction: Criticism from Neighbouring Countries

Rosalie Arcala Hall researched Japanese SDF's participation in the Disaster Relief Operations in Aceh, Indonesia in 2004-2005. Her research was highly critical of the deteriorating civil-military cooperation between the civilian Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) and the SDF. In fact, the article of her research was published in the journal of defence studies in South Korea. She criticised several aspects of the issues. One of the aspects was the argument about whether and in what circumstances Japan's military (SDF) may be brought in to respond to a disaster relief situation. This should require the overall debate on the meaning of Article 9 of Japan's Constitution. In actuality, it warned that the decision of the Japanese Government to deploy troops for international disaster relief operations was problematic as opposed to deploying civilian operations. It even implied that the investment of the SDF to develop additional capacity of disaster relief operations was strengthening the argument for the Japanese Government to pursue

¹²Ishizuka (2005) at 63.

¹³Ibid, at 64.

¹⁴Suzuki (2017) at 59.

remilitarisation. The Article also expressed a serious concern about a democratic civilian-control system in Japan. It recalled that the controversial dispatches of the SDF to the Indian Ocean and Iraq had occurred despite strong public opposition. Therefore, the deployment decision by certain politicians in the Government arguably strengthens executive control of the SDF, vis-à-vis the Diet, for example.¹⁵

Two questions can be pointed out in this article: One question is “Will Japan be remilitarised due to the SDF’s deployment in disaster relief operations even for humanitarian purpose? The other question is “Have the Korean Journal and the South Korean Government genuinely supported the above arguments?” Diplomatic restriction from a neighbouring state regarding the SDF’s deployment even for humanitarian operations becomes clear.

Meanwhile, China is also apprehensive about the debate on the constitutional amendment, which would legalise Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defence. In July 2014, Japan’s Abe Government introduced new legislation that reinterpreted Article 9 of the Constitution, which permitted Japan to use military force to come to the aid of an ally or a country when it is under armed attack. Chinese media criticised the changes as a “brutal violation” of the spirit of Japan’s pacifist Constitution. The Chinese Foreign Ministry also stated that constitutional reinterpretations raised doubt about Japan’s commitment to peaceful development. Chinese officials and academics censured the Abe Government for ignoring the majority of the Japanese public that opposes the changes to national security policy. On the one hand, the Constitution has been reinterpreted by the Japanese Government mainly in order to allow Japan to develop the SDF and to participate in international peacekeeping. The Japanese Constitution held that the militarily constrained State was abnormal power, prohibiting the use of force in operational areas. On the other hand, the constitutional interpretation in Japan had been condemned by the Chinese Government for fear that such interpretation would undermine the post-World War II international order by allowing Japan to take military steps to counter the rise of China.¹⁶ Likewise, a Chinese scholar also claimed that the average Chinese citizen still has deeply rooted apprehensions about Japan repeating its “militarist mistakes.”¹⁷

Thus, the above two cases indicate that both South Korea and China still regard the SDF as a sign of Japan’s re-militarisation. They therefore claim that the Japanese Constitution should not be amended, and that the SDF should not be deployed even in UN peacekeeping or even humanitarian missions. The diplomatic restrictions from the above two states would be the negative factors impacting on Japan pursuing its peacekeeping policy.

Situational Restriction: “No Peace to Keep” And Japan’s Excessive Pacifism

Currently, UN peacekeeping has been deployed in extremely difficult circumstance where there is “no peace to keep,” and missions are mandated to engage in robust and combat activities as well as in stabilisation activities. These

¹⁵Arcala Hall (2008) at 394.

¹⁶King (2014).

¹⁷Yongtao (2017).

activities require the use of force in order to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical attack.

Historically, the UN missions that include the use of force have been called “peace enforcement forces” at a strategic level, and also called “robust peacekeeping” at a tactical level. The UN has also accepted such missions in the operational areas. In 1993 Kofi Annan, then UN Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations asserted that there were increasing demands on the UN to enforce peace.¹⁸ In 1996, Annan reinforced his own stance, stating “the old dictum of consent of the parties will be neither right or wrong; it will be, quite simply, irrelevant.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, robust peacekeeping reached an apex in the mandate of the Force Intervention Brigade in MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Accordingly, the number of fatalities in UN peacekeeping operations has been increasing. As of 31 January 2023, the total number of the fatalities of UN peacekeeping since its establishment in 1948 is 4,280. This number consists of 1,385 accidents, 1,472 illness, 1,111 malicious acts and 321 others. The majority of UN fatalities has been from the UN missions from the Middle East and Africa, including Lebanon (UNIFIL 329), Mali (MINUSMA 298), Darfur, Sudan (UNAMID 295), DRC (MONUSCO 257), Liberia (UNMIL 204) Central Africa (MINUSCA 175) etc.²⁰

Many democratic countries, including Japan, are risk-averse, and reluctant to send their soldiers into the line of fire complying with such robust mandates. The trend toward peace enforcement and robust peacekeeping is viewed with concern by the Japanese Government which has strong attachment to the main principles of traditional peacekeeping operations; having local consent, being in an impartial position, and limiting the use of minimum force to self-defence. The total number of Japanese fatalities in UN peacekeeping is only six.²¹ It is a relatively small number among troop-contributing states.

The risk-averse tendency has been applicable to the Japanese public as well as the Government. This is illustrated in the results of opinion polls conducted before and after the occurrence of large-scale fighting in 2013 and 2016 in South Sudan, when the Japanese SDFs were deployed as an engineering unit in UNMISS. In the 2013-armed clashes, thousands of South Sudanese people escaped to the UN base in Tongping where the Japanese SDF was deployed. Widespread violence recurred in July 2016 when anti-government forces shot the UN Tongping Base again. At that time, the Bangladeshi engineering unit fired back.²² Experiencing the above incidents, the Japanese public has adopted a more cautious view towards UN peacekeeping. In accordance with the opinion polls conducted by the Cabinet Office, the Japanese public became less enthusiastic about SDF participation in

¹⁸Annan (1993) at 4.

¹⁹Annan (1996).

²⁰Fatalities | United Nations Peacekeeping, <http://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>.

²¹The six fatalities consist of one from UNTAG (Namibia), two from UNTAC (Cambodia), one from UNMOT (Tajikistan), one from UNMIT (Timor-Leste) and one from MINUSCA (Central African Republic) Fatalities | United Nations Peacekeeping. <http://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>.

²²Fujishige, Uesugi, & Honda (2022) at 153-154.

UN peacekeeping after the violence involving the SDF in UNMISS in 2013 and 2016. For example, in terms of the question of expectation for SDF activities in the opinion poll, 48.8% of the respondents answered “International Peace Cooperation (IPC)” in 2012. This figure dropped to 34.8% in 2018. Likewise, in terms of asking for IPC activities as a mission of SDF, 28.1% of the respondents answered “Should work on it more actively than ever”. However, this figure dropped to 20.6% in 2018.²³ Furthermore, the non-action of the Japanese SDF against anti-government forces in 2016 resulted in serious criticism even among Japanese academia of UN studies:

In the midst of this confusion {in the 2016 incident}, the JEG locked themselves in the camp. Fortunately, there were no fatalities among the Bangladeshi and Japanese engineers after this incident, but it left a serious concern for the Japanese side: should the JEG be allowed to just hide themselves while their fellow engineers actively fight to defend their common base?²⁴

In short, the currently volatile international situation, where peace operations have inevitably made a shift to the more coercive type of operation has resulted in the decreasing demand for Japanese SDF which expects to be deployed in more secure operations. It is not only due to the State's Constitution, but to the risk-averse policy of the Japanese Government. This stance has also been supported by the Japanese public.

Advantages of Japan's Contribution to International Peace

Advantage by the Record in the International Organisation and the UN

After World War II, Japan accomplished significant economic recovery termed “economic miracle”. Accordingly, Japan started joining international economic groupings such as IMF in 1952, GATT in 1955, OECD in 1966, and G7 in 1975.

Japan joined the UN as the 80th member state in 1956 with enthusiastic public support from the Japanese public. Japan's membership in the UN was supported by the State itself for many political reasons such as the State policy of pacifism hoping for a peaceful world order; unarmed neutrality guaranteed by the State's Constitution; and the expectation of diluting the State's almost total dependence on the US for its security.

One of Japan's remarkable records in the UN is, for example, illustrated by Japan's having been elected for non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council twelve times, the most frequently elected member. As early as 1973, the Japanese Government officially stated that Japan should be given a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, which was also supported by the US. In 2005, Japan again launched a strong campaign of UNSC reform with Germany, India and Brazil, who also strived to gain a permanent seat on the Council. At the time of

²³Ibid, at 217-220.

²⁴Ibid, at 154.

writing, Japan is serving as non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2023-24. Japan's diplomatic ability has been highly respected there at a time when the Security Council is not functioning properly over the war between Russia, the permanent member, and Ukraine. Takahiro Shinyo, a former ambassador of Japan's permanent mission to the UN, said that Japan's ability to help stop "high-handedness" by Russia and China will be put to the test after becoming a non-permanent council member.²⁵ In the Security Council, Japan has been a strong supporter of the principles of multilateralism, democracy and the rule of law valuing the UN Charter. For example, at the UN Security Council Open Debate on 12 January 2023, the Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi stated that "Uniting for the rule of law" must be the keyword in the current Security Council, saying "I believe that it is only through multilateralism that we can uphold the rule of law globally. [...] And, I believe that the Security Council should be the guardian of multilateralism."²⁶

Japan's strong position for multilateralism based on democratic international order was demonstrated in the General Assembly as well. At the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2022, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delivered a general debate in which he condemned Russian aggression on Ukraine and repeatedly emphasised respect for the rule of law. Indeed, he referred to the world of "rule of law" ten times in his brief speech there. He also mentioned the value of "human security" four times. The term "human security" was also linked with Japan's unique historic position as the only nation to have suffered atomic bombs during WWII. In addition to the promotion of the rule of law and human security, triggered by Russian aggression, Prime Minister Kishida strongly advocated the reform of the UN including the Security Council. Without concrete ideas and solutions on this agenda for nearly 30 years, Kishida stated that what is truly needed is not a discussion for the sake of discussion, but action towards reform. Therefore, he concluded that the time has come to start "text-based" negotiations to reform the Security Council.²⁷ In his speech, the Prime Minister has been determined that Japan would make "realistic" efforts by taking "concrete" action through the UN.

Meanwhile, Japan's strong commitment to the UN has also been illustrated by its enormous financial contribution to the international organisation.

²⁵*The Japan Times*, 2 January 2023

²⁶Hayashi (2023).

²⁷Kishida (2022).

UN Regular Budget Allocation Percentages from Major States (%)

Ranking	Country	2016-2018	2019-2021
1	U.S.	22	22
2	China	7.921	12.005
3	Japan	9.68	8.564
4	Germany	6.389	6.09
5	U.K.	4.463	4.567
6	France	4.859	4.427
7	Italy	3.748	3.307
8	Brazil	3.823	2.948
9	Canada	2.921	2.734
10	Russia	3.088	2.405

The Scale of Assessments for the UN Peacekeeping Budget by Major Member States (%)

Ranking	Country	2019	2020-21
1	U.S.	27.8912	27.8908
2	China	15.2197	15.2195
3	Japan	8.564	
4	Germany	6.09	
5	U.K.	5.79	5.7899
6	France	5.6125	5.6124
7	Italy	3.307	
8	Russia	3.049	
9	Canada	2.734	
10	South Korea	2.267	

Sources: MOFA, Diplomatic Bluebook 2020

In terms of the regular budget of the UN, Japan contributed approximately USD 238.8 million to the UN for 2019, ranking after the US and China. Japan's contribution to peacekeeping operations for 2019 was approximately USD 814.3 million, ranking again after the US and China.²⁸ On the one hand, Japan's anti-militarism and the subsequent "cheque-book diplomacy" was severely criticised during the 1990-1991 Gulf Crisis. Even Japan's decision by Prime Minister Yukio

²⁸MOFA, Chapter 3: Japan's Foreign Policy to Promote National and Global Interests, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2020*.

Hatoyama in January 2010 to withdraw the Japanese Maritime SDF in support of the US-led Coalition of the Willing was also criticised in the academic journal as a return to “cheque-book diplomacy”.²⁹ On the other hand, historically, UN Secretary Generals have remarked that Japan’s support to the UN was concerned with more than just funding:

*Japan’s wide-ranging support for UN activities has substantially improved the Organization’s ability to address chronic challenges of social and economic development. Its contributions in humanitarian relief are legendary, along with its longstanding efforts to promote global nuclear disarmament, its valiant efforts against global warming, and its strong support for UN peacekeeping efforts.*³⁰

Advantage by the State’s Diverse and Comprehensive Approach to International Peace: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations, Counter-piracy Operations, and “All Japan Approach”

The role of the Japanese SDF as peace-providers is not limited to UN peacekeeping operations. In other words, the SDF has been making diverse international contributions in addition to peacekeeping operations. One of them is humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations by the SDF. Asia is the disaster-prone region in the world. With a growing concern about the environmental issues such as climate change and the subsequent natural disasters, there is an increasing demand for the Japanese SDF in HADR operations. There, the SDF rescues victims and provides critical medical support, supplies and equipment.

In March 1982, the Japanese Government established the Japan Medical Team for Disaster Relief (JMTDR) for the purpose of the rapid response of medical relief operations to overseas disasters. Following JMTDR’s missions in Ethiopia in 1984 and in Colombia in 1985, the Japanese Diet passed the Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) Law on 26 August 1987. Subsequently, the JDR was dispatched to 15 countries and 21 operations from 1987 to 2020.³¹

There are several rationales behind Japan’s pursuit of HADR operations. The first rationale is normative. HADR activities are based on humanitarianism, altruism, and liberalism. Likewise, Japan’s policy on providing disaster relief is based on the expectation of a “give-and-take” effect. Japan, a country vulnerable to natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, and tsunamis, expects to receive similar support and assistance from foreign countries when in need. Another rationale is related to security. Countries hit by natural disasters are sometimes vulnerable to occupation by belligerent and terrorist groups. HADR operations can play a role as a preventive measure.³²

Weston Konishi at John Hopkins University has also pointed out several

²⁹Hynek (2012).

³⁰UN News (2006).

³¹15 countries consist of Honduras, Turkey, India, Iran, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan, Haiti, New Zealand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Nepal, Djibouti, and Australia. Fujishige, Uesugi & Honda (2022) at 203-210.

³²Ishizuka (2013) at 217-218.

merits for the Japanese SDF to join HADR operations. First, the deployment of the SDF to HADR operations does not need the approval from the Diet (parliament). Accordingly, the SDF can swiftly respond to the disasters without time-consuming debate over the issues of constitutionality or rules of engagement which would be conducted in dispatching to peacekeeping operations. Second, the participation in HADR activities would enhance joint defense cooperation with the US military and other like-minded nations, Third, and the most important, HADR missions would build goodwill and reinforce Japan's image as a responsible player in the international community. Japan, as one of the most developed countries, has a good combination of technological, financial, and human resources, which would contribute to HADR operations, and by so doing, Japan would build its soft-power assets in the region.³³

Another diverse operation conducted by the SDF is counter-piracy operations. Ships passing through the Gulf of Aden in transit to the Suez Canal have been facing serious security challenges caused by piracies. Meanwhile, the average amount of ransom paid for Somali pirates was \$5.4 million/case in 2010.³⁴ Responding to the demand from the international community, in March 2009, with the approval of the Japanese Minister for Maritime Security-Building Operations, two destroyers of the Maritime SDF started the mission to escort Japanese vessels to prevent pirates off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. In June 2009, the Anti-Piracy Law was enacted to legalise the mission. Since then, the SDF and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) have implemented the operations in the Republic of Djibouti. The SDF also conducts warning and surveillance activities in Somalia and in the Gulf of Eden with P-3C patrol aircraft. The flight activities included a total of 2,653 in flight missions and 19,610 in flying hours as of December 31, 2020, from June 2009. The aircraft have identified about 222, 600 vessels, engaging in counter-piracy operations on around 15,155 occasions.

In 2020, no piracy incident was reported.³⁵ There are several reasons for continuous deployment of the SDF as counter-piracy operations in the area. The first reason is deterrence. A senior SDF official said, "The second we leave, the pirates will have everything their way." The SDF's counter-piracy operation observes an important transportation route for Japan, especially for petroleum shipping. Also, twenty percent of the vehicles exported from Japan pass through the area.³⁶ Second, from the international viewpoint, the area in Somalia was where the UNPKO mission, namely, UNOSOM and the US-led coalition of Unified Task Force (UNITAF) were deployed for humanitarian purposes in the midst of civil wars in the 1990s, which failed to implement their mandates and withdrew from the ground. Due to the failure, former Somali fishermen appeared as pirates off the coast of Somalia. Therefore, the role of SDF in the counter-piracy operations is highly related to the UN operations on the ground.

Another advantage of Japan's contribution to international peace is the State's

³³Konishi (2016).

³⁴Sakurai & Kawashima (2013) at 8.

³⁵Cabinet Secretariat, The Government of Japan (2021).

³⁶*The Asahi Shimbun*, 26 January 2023.

adopt comprehensive approach to solving international security. One of the typical cases is called the “All-Japan Approach.” As mentioned before, the diversity of operations, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, counter-piracy operations as well as UN peacekeeping operations which Japan has engaged in, needs a more comprehensive approach requiring the diversity of actors for various operations. Such actors are not only the SDFs but also the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and NGOs that are actors operating directly in conflict and disaster areas. These players also include the Japanese Government including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and the Secretariat of the International Peace Cooperation Headquarters in the Cabinet Office, who are all considered policymakers. For example, in the UN peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste, or UNMISET, the Japanese SDFs or Engineer Group (JEG) cooperated on civil engineering work for the “Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex-Combatants and Communities in Timor-Leste” (RESPECT). The Japanese Government funded the project to support disarmament and demobilisation. RESPECT aimed to assist the integration of former Timorese soldiers into the local society by providing job training and employment opportunities, such as roadbuilding or forestation.³⁷ The “All Japan Approach” was also identified in UN peacekeeping in Haiti or MINUSTAH in the late 2010s. When the Japanese SDFs conducted construction work in the Sigueneau tuberculosis sanatorium as a part of MINUSTAH missions, for example, the Japanese embassy provided ODA funds as Cultural Grant Assistance to build a well and to donate an X-ray machine.³⁸

Advantage in the Current Situation of International Peace and Security: Instability in Asia, War in Ukraine and the necessity of the Role of Middle Powers including Japan as a Contributor to Peace

Currently, one can witness the increasing instability in international security, especially, in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, in Myanmar, the humanitarian crisis by the violence in Myanmar’s Rakhine state in August 2017 resulted in more than 90,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. In the same state, a military coup occurred in February 2021, and the leader in the current democratic regime, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been imprisoned. While the US administration has been ready to impose sanctions against the military regime in Myanmar from a human-rights perspective, no Security Council resolution has been approved on the issue. Japan, the politically middle power in Asia, is the only developed nation that can engage in dialogue with the Myanmar military.³⁹

Meanwhile, the withdrawal of the US military from Afghanistan in August 2021 evidently made way for the Taliban regime to gain momentum. In several days after the US withdrawal, the Taliban occupied the whole territory of Afghanistan. The US administration sent the message that “it’s time to end America’s longest war” at the time of its 20th anniversary of the “9.11 terrorist

³⁷Fujishige, Uesugi & Honda (2022) at 111-112

³⁸Ibid, at 132.

³⁹*The Japan News*, 20 February 2021.

attack”= of 2001. However, China and Russia made diplomatic approaches to the Taliban. At a meeting of foreign ministers in mid-July 2021, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation of China, Russia and Central Asian countries stressed the importance of Afghan-led dialogue, expressing their status to remove US involvement.⁴⁰

On the maritime issues in Asia, China has long claimed the territorial right of the South China Sea inside the Nine-Dash Line. In 2011, Indonesia and the Philippines officially objected to China's claim. In 2013, the Philippines instituted arbitral proceedings against China under Annex VII to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In 2016, the South China Sea Arbitration fully approved the Philippines' claim and offer and dismissed China's claim on the legitimacy of the Nine-Dash Line, its continental shelf, and its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Arbitration insisted that the maritime territory which China claimed in the South China Sea was beyond 200 nautical miles from China. The Arbitration did not approve the historical right which China claimed, either. However, China claimed that the judgement of the Arbitration was invalid.⁴¹ In February 2021, Beijing enforced a law allowing the Chinese Coast Guard to use weapons in the Sea and, reportedly, intimidation measures by Chinese vessels in the Sea occurred repeatedly.⁴²

Above all, Russia's military operations against Ukraine since 2020 has significantly tarnished Russia's status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Russia's determination to prevent Ukraine's membership of NATO and the State's joining the Western sphere of influence resulted in brutal operations by the Russian troops which are a breach of international law. Moreover, at the time of writing, there is no sign of peaceful solutions or ceasefire agreement between the two states.

Considering the above cases, it is obvious that several permanent members of the UN Security Council have not played their leadership role in the UN for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security. In other words, the super- and the great- powers have virtually abandoned the duties of their commitment to creating global security. Therefore, if so, who should replace such great powers as peacemakers or peacekeepers? The answer would be “the middle powers.” The middle powers are ideal peacekeepers and peacemakers. On the one hand, in a peacekeeping role that mainly focuses on mediation and arbitration, the coercive nature of the great powers and their colonial histories will make host states apprehensive. On the other hand, peacekeeping is a para-military role which requires appropriate military equipment, mission skills, disciplined soldiers, and high morale amongst troops. Middle powers can also provide logistical support capability, which is another important factor in peacekeeping missions. Therefore, peacekeeping gives the middle powers a chance to have a leading role in international security issues, which can restrict the superpowers' dominance. This intention has been that of most middle power contributions.⁴³ In fact, when the

⁴⁰*The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 3 August 2021.

⁴¹Hoshino (2017).

⁴²*The Japan News*, 9 April 2021.

⁴³Grant (1973).

first UN peacekeeping force, namely the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) was established in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis and the Second Middle East War in 1956 when the great powers were in stalemate, most of the contributing states to the UN operations were the middle powers. Since then, the middle powers have been in demand as troop-contributing states to UN peacekeeping, especially, during the Cold-War period.

In the post-Cold War period, Japan had remarkable records as UN peacekeepers in Asia. As stated before, Japan dispatched about 600 forces of engineering units to UNTAC in Cambodia from 1992 to 1993. Likewise, the state sent about 400 to 680 forces of engineering units to UNTAET and UNMISSET in East Timor.

Conclusion

This article argued Japan's policy and practice for the State to contribute to international peace through the UN. In terms of its history, Japan and its politicians have certainly sought positive ways to dispatch the SDF personnel to the UN or to international operations for the pursuit of UN-centred policy, despite the State's constitutional constraints. In order to do so, Japan created or amended several laws including the PKO Law in 1992 for UN peacekeeping operations, as well as the JDR Law in 1987 for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations and the Anti-Terrorism Law in 2001 for counter-terrorism operations. Therefore, one can identify the evolving process of Japan's contribution to international process. In fact, Japan has a remarkable record for the deployment of the SDF in several UN peacekeeping operations. Meanwhile, currently Japan's contribution to UN peacekeeping is, regrettably, token. This article pointed out several restrictions and advantages for Japan to dispatch to overseas operations. As a result, this article will provide the following suggestions:

First, Japan's identity as a peace-loving country should not be confused with that of an excessively pacifist one. Therefore, discussion of the constitutional amendment should commence at once.

Second, Japan should improve diplomatic relations with its neighbouring states in order to promote its UN-centred policy.

Third, Japan should continue dispatching its personnel to diverse operations with the State's comprehensive approaches.

Fourth, Japan should take advantage of its middle-power status with its like-minded states, replacing great powers, as a new leader of promoting international peace.

Finally, what should Japan do now as a middle power to contribute to peace in the international events mentioned above? For example, on the issue of political instability and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, Japan can dispatch humanitarian monitoring missions with its SDF to observe the possible violations of human rights in Myanmar and in refugee areas. On the maritime dispute involving China

in the South China Sea, Japan's SDF can conduct maritime peacekeeping missions just as they have done in counter-piracy operations in Somalia. In the case of the undemocratic situation in Afghanistan, Japan can dispatch political missions.

References

- Annan, K. (1993). 'UN Peacekeeping Operations and Cooperation with NATO' in *NATO Review* 41(5):3-7.
- Annan, K. (1996). 'Peace Operation and the United Nations: Preparing for the Next Century'. Unpublished paper, New York,
- Arcala Hall, R.A. (2008). 'Civil-military cooperation in international disaster response: the Japanese Self-Defense Forces' deployment in Aceh, Indonesia' in *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 20(4):383-400. DOI:10.1080/10163270802507310
- Caballero-Anothony, M. & A. Archarya (eds.) (2005). *UN Peace Operations and Asian Security*. New York: Routledge. Cabinet Secretariat, The Government of Japan (2021), Annual Report 2020. "Japan's Actions against Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden", 3-5 March 2021.
- Defence Agency (1995). *Defence of Japan: The White Paper of the Defence Agency*, (Tokyo: The Japan Times).
- Fujishige, H., Uesugi, Y. & T. Honda (2022). *Japan's Peacekeeping at Crossroads*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, Macmillan.
- Grant, G. (1973). 'Canada as Peacekeeper' in Granatstein J.L. (ed.) (1973). *Canadian Foreign Policy Since 1945: Middle Power or Satellite?* Toronto: Copp Clark, pp. 155-156.
- Hayashi, Y. (2023). 'Uniting for the rule of law' Statement by Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on 'The Rule of law among Nations', 12 Jan. 2023.
- Hoshino, M. (2017). 'A Discussion on the South China Sea Arbitration by the Permanent Court of Arbitration' in *Bulletin of Niigata Sangyo University, Faculty of Economics* 48:1-19.
- Hynek, N. (2012). 'Japan's Return to the Chequebook? From Military Peace Support to Human Security Appropriation' in *International Peacekeeping* 19(1):62-76.
- Ishizuka, K. (2013). 'The Crisis Management Capability of Japan's Self Defense Forces for UN Peacekeeping, Counter-Terrorism, and Disaster Relief' in *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 14(2):201-222.
- Ishizuka, K. (2005). 'Japan's Policy towards UN Peacekeeping Operations', in M. Caballero-Anothony, M. & A. Archarya (eds.) *UN Peace Operations and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 63.
- Ito, M. (1995). 'Expanding Japan's Role in the United Nations' in *The Pacific Review* 8(2):283-801.
- King, A. (2014). 'China's response to Japan's Constitutional reinterpretation' in *East Asia Forum*, <http://eastasiaforum.org>
- Kishida, F. (2022). Speech by the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, 20 September 2022.
- Konishi, W. (2016). 'Is disaster relief revolutionizing Japan's security affairs?' <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/07/06/is-disaster-relief-revolutionising-japans-security-affairs>
- Kozai, S. (1991). 'UN Peacekeeping Operations' [in Japanese]. *Mainichi Daily News* 474-481 (20 October), Tokyo: Yuhikaku.

- Leitenberg, M. (1996). 'The Participation of Japanese Military Forces in UN Peacekeeping Operations', Maryland/Tsukuba Papers on US-Japan Relations.
- Sakurai, T. & T. Kawashima (2013). 'Fact sheet of Antipiracy Activities off the Coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden', Japan Peacekeeping Training and Research Center, Joint Staff College, Ministry of Defense.
- Suzuki, K. (2017). 'Twenty-Five Years of Japanese Peacekeeping Operations and the Self-Defense Forces' Mission in South Sudan' in *Asia-Pacific Review* 24(2):44-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2017.1407534>
- Mainichi Daily News*, 20 October 1991.
- The Asahi Shimbun*, 26 January 2023.
- The Daily Yomiuri*, 12 February 1992.
- The Japan News*, 20 February 2021.
- The Japan News*, 9 April 2021.
- The Japan Times*, 2 January 2023.
- The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 3 August 2021.
- UN News (2006) 'Annan hails Japan's commitment to UN, marking its 50th anniversary as a member' 19 December 2006.
- UN Peacekeeping Operations, the UN HP. https://peacekeeping.un.org/site/default/files/june2002_1/pdf
- Yongtao, G. (2017). 'A Chinese View: The Risks of Changing Japan's Peace Constitution' - Council on Foreign Relations.

Abbreviations

- DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo
 EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone
 HADR: humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
 IMF: International Monetary Fund
 IPC: International Peace Cooperation
 JCG: Japan Coast Guard
 JDR: Japan Disaster Relief
 JEG: Japan Engineering Groups
 JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency
 JMTDR: Japan Medical Team for Disaster Relief
 G7: Group of Seven
 GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
 LDP: Liberal Democratic Party
 MINUSCA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Central African Republic
 MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
 MINUSTAH: United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti
 MOFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 MONUSCO: United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in DR Congo
 NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
 ODA: Official Development Assistance
 OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 ONUSAL: United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
 RESPECT: Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex-Combatants and Communities in Timor-Leste
 SDF: Self Defence Force
 UN: United Nations

UNAMID: United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMIR: United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDOF: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNEF: United Nations Emergency Force
UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNITAF: United Task Force
UNMIL: United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISSET: United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
UNMISS: United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMIT: United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste
UNMOT: United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan
UNOSOM: United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
UNTAC: United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAG: United Nations Transition Assistance Group
WWII: World War II