

G lobal Governance from UN Perspective

Case for Stronger Japanese Presence

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The World in 2010

The world is changing at a fast pace and depending on where we find ourselves, we experience the changes in a different way. At the beginning of 2010, I was in New York where the effects of the 2009 economic crisis were still visible in the streets of Manhattan with many “out of business” signs around the city’s lively neighborhoods. When I arrived in Kathmandu for the first time in 10 years, I was amazed at how much the city had urbanized and how its population had grown, but also how much the city was still struggling with the appropriate supply of clean water and electricity. At the same time, the country was enjoying a level of security it had not known in the past decade. Now, I live in Tokyo for the first time in 22 years and marvel at how much modern technology is visible in this city, how vibrant it is despite the many years of economic recession and what great potential Japan continues to hold to contribute to the world.

The analysis of the United Nations (UN) is that “the world moved from the brink of a global economic depression to witnessing the beginning of a global recovery” in the past year, but “the recovery is fragile and uneven and there is no guarantee that a relapse will not occur.” Secretary General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations, in his annual report issued in July ahead of the 65th session of the General Assembly, acknowledges that “economic volatility, eruption of conflict, natural disasters, challenges to food security and strains on natural resources are unlikely to disappear.”

MDGs – Only Five Years Left

The answers to these challenges were articulated 10 years ago when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by world leaders. In 10 years, considerable progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty (Goal 1), tangible progress has been demonstrated in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Goal 6), and we have witnessed mixed results in ensuring environmental sustainability (Goal 7) and developing global partnership for development (Goal 8). Challenges remain in key areas such as achieving universal primary education (Goal 2), promoting gender equality (Goal 3), reducing child mortality (Goal 4) and particularly improving maternal health (Goal 5). In September, over 140 world leaders in New York pledged to keep their promise to the most vulnerable people and declared concrete steps they would take to accelerate the pace of change. In a major push to speed up progress on women’s and children’s health, more than \$40 billion in resources over the next five years was pledged by the international community. Over the next five years, the United Nations and its member states must adopt innovative financing and investments needed to support the provision of global public goods, dedicating resources to promote peace and security, and mobilizing resources to meet humanitarian and human rights needs around the world.



The MDG Summit opens at UN Headquarters.

The United Nations provides a legitimate and trusted forum where global issues are addressed squarely and an international consensus is forged to find and implement solutions. The United Nations took the leadership in defining and setting these ambitious MDGs and provided the forum for world leaders to define and agree on how to achieve them. Providing regular evaluation of progress with measurable outcomes, especially this year’s review at the highest political level, and providing a forum in which the political will of world leaders is held to account are precisely among the key roles of the United Nations in global governance. In the 21st century, global issues have to be addressed at the global level – how the United Nations has tried to address development efforts to improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world through the MDG framework is one example of the role the United Nations plays in global governance.

UN as Key Actor in Global Peace & Security

In today’s interdependent and globalized world, all national issues have a global nature and thus addressing such issues has to go beyond national boundaries, be they development, climate change, biodiversity, terrorism, or peace and security in general. Building peace and advancing development go hand in hand and are mutually reinforcing. UN peacekeeping has proven to be a versatile tool for deterring or reversing inter-state conflict, ending civil wars, mitigating humanitarian crises and extending state authority in areas where state capacity is weak or contested. Mediation and peacekeeping have contributed to an 80% decline in armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War, according to a study of the New York-based Center on International Cooperation (March 2010). Nevertheless, the world continues to face new threats and flashpoints and when violence breaks out, the United Nations still becomes the center of crisis management in hotspots throughout the world.

In the area of peace and security, the United Nations has transformed itself dramatically in the past 20 years. While the end of the

Cold War was met with great euphoria around the world, it ushered in a more complex political landscape and the role of the United Nations and its secretariat drastically changed in how it addresses conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and human rights. With a large number of conflicts coming to an end with peace agreements specifically mandating the United Nations to observe, assist or implement their agreement through the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the United Nations was put squarely as an actor at the center of conflict resolution, crisis management and what became subsequently known as peacebuilding efforts. The UN Secretariat itself became an important actor in international conflict resolution and management from what used to be a secretariat designed mainly to support conference service activities. There are currently about 122,000 civilian and uniformed personnel in 15 peace operations, and a further 4,000 personnel in 15 political missions and good offices missions.

Peacekeeping Operations

Today's complex peace operations incorporate political, military and humanitarian activities – depending on the needs and mandate of the operation – which have built upon traditional UN peacekeeping. UN missions now have increased responsibility to undertake tasks as diverse as preventing the outbreak of hostilities, disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating troops to secure the conflict areas, creating buffer zones, and monitoring troop withdrawals (as in Mozambique and Cambodia); providing security for the repatriation of refugees and for elections (as in Cambodia, El Salvador, Haiti, Mozambique and Namibia); protecting and delivering humanitarian relief (as in Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia); guaranteeing free access or denying such access to belligerents (as in Somalia and Bosnia); and clearing landmines (as in Cambodia, Mozambique and Somalia). Civilian police trainers, electoral observers, human-rights monitors and others have also joined UN peacekeeping operations on some missions, and they too participate in peacebuilding and peacemaking activities.

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Women votes in Sudan's extended elections

Preventive Diplomacy, Mediation & UN Good Offices

While UN peacekeeping continues to be in demand and with more “blue helmets” in the field than at any other time in our history, UN peacekeeping has been straining under the burden of trying to contain conflicts. Combined with the global financial crisis and a sense of fatigue internationally with the massive cost of far-away conflicts and their aftermath, the United Nations has redoubled its focus and efforts on preventive diplomacy and mediation as a cost-effective option for

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Japanese arms monitors inspecting Maoists' weapons at a cantonment site

dealing with crises. As articulated recently by the under-secretary general for political affairs (“Rediscovering Preventive Diplomacy: A View from the United Nations,” *Brookings Institute*, July 2010), this comes from the realization that (a) at the root of most conflicts are political problems requiring political solutions, (b) international mediation, facilitation or diplomatic encouragement are often better tools to address the distrust of national actors in conflict and that the United Nations brings special legitimacy and impartiality, (c) that robust diplomacy and mediation are required throughout the cycle of conflict management including assistance to the conflicting countries to navigate the difficult politics of reconciliation and rebuilding, and (d) partnerships with governments and regional organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS or the OSCE are key to successful diplomacy to prevent a conflict or mediate a nonviolent outcome of hard political differences. While many states often resist early involvement of the United Nations in politically sensitive situations out of concern that such involvement may lead to legitimizing an adversary or internationalizing their problem, the United Nations is increasingly able to demonstrate by experience that early expert political or mediation support by the United Nations may actually reduce tension and prevent further escalation of conflict or the return to a violent confrontation. UN involvement does not always have to lead to a large peacekeeping force or Security Council sanctions.

Most UN preventive diplomacy efforts take the form of “political missions” and are currently present in Africa (Somalia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic), Asia (Nepal) and the Middle East (Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories). They are headed by senior representatives of the secretary general and are tasked to use the secretary general’s “good offices” to help keep tension in check and encourage dialogue and agreements to move peace and political processes forward. These political missions are extremely “compact” and cost-effective, especially compared to peacekeeping operations, and work alongside regional and subregional organizations in the area as well as influential governments who have a key interest in resolving the conflict.

United Nations, Japan & the World

Within this complex international environment, Japan has always been viewed with great admiration for what it has achieved and expectations for the role it could play at the global level continue to be high. As the only country to have experienced nuclear bombing, as a country to have achieved remarkable postwar economic growth, a stable democratic environment and technological advancement, Japan is often viewed as an encouraging example from Asia that has



Road repair by Japanese Self-Defense Forces troops near Haiti-Dominican Republic boarder

achieved successful progress in a relatively short period of time. It remains the No. 2 financial contributor to the UN budget and has been playing an important role in many areas.

While the domestic mood in Japan is ambivalent and inward-looking, expectations from the world have not diminished but continue to increase for Japan to take leadership roles on various global issues. As phrased by Mr. Keizo Takemi, former senior vice minister of health, labor and welfare and one of the leading intellectuals in Japan in the global paradigm of the 21st century, knowledge, technology and accumulated experience have become key factors of influence in global politics. There is no doubt that Japan's accumulated experience in the areas of technology, economic development and reconstruction and humanitarian relief operations as well as intellectual capacity constitutes the source of influence in the world and the Japanese government should utilize the UN system as an integral part of their comprehensive foreign policy strategy. There is a case, therefore, for Japan to increase its presence at the highest possible political levels in strategic areas within the UN framework. Active Japanese diplomacy should be interlinked in other relevant fora such as ASEAN+3 or +6, G-7, G-8, G-20, APEC, etc. where diplomatic priorities and Japanese positions and strategic alliances and cooperation on issues of common concern would be strengthened.

Leading Japanese academics have recently tabled key policy recommendations for the government to formulate and implement its foreign policy strategy with the perspective to effectively use the UN system while at the same time making the system work for Japanese diplomatic priorities (*"Making the United Nations Work – Recommendations for Japan's United Nations Diplomacy," Academic Society of Japan, June 2010*). Among the useful analysis and recommendations, the following highlights seem particularly pertinent:

- i. **The Japanese government should develop a comprehensive strategy for Japan's role in the international arena which would enjoy government-wide support.** The government should take leadership in establishing a permanent structure within the cabinet which would formulate Japan's UN policy as part of its national policy. For example, the current measures that allow the deployment of Japanese Self-Defense Forces troops to UN peacekeeping operations, however welcome, may not be sufficient for quick deployment to critical areas and a more general legal framework may have to be developed. In order to obtain general public support for such a role for Japan, an effective and sustained public campaign strategy is necessary.
- ii. **Japan should be present at the highest political level in key international fora (or the risk of Japan not being present).** As one of the top donors to the United Nations, Japan should increase its sphere of

influence at the decision-making level in various UN fora. High-level representatives who have the authority to speak and decide on behalf of the government should participate and represent Japan. The prime minister and foreign minister should actively participate in key international conferences to demonstrate Japan's commitment but also to present a comprehensive and consistent position of the government. At the political level, this has been successfully done through Japan's active presence in the Security Council as a nonpermanent member, but attention should also be paid in more informal fora where UN policy is debated. For example, while Japan continues to rank as the No. 2 contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget, it ranks No. 46, just below Fiji, in terms of military and police contribution. As the UN Secretariat, along with key troop-contributing countries, develops a new UN strategy to better adjust to complex situations involving difficult terrain and volatile political contexts, Japan is *absent* and is missing an important opportunity for critical policy input.

- iii. **Japan should increase its ODA gradually and achieve a level of 1% of its gross national income (GNI) by 2015. It should recover its position as the No. 1 donor country in key UN agencies such as the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNHCR.** This should be matched with an equivalent level of presence of Japanese personnel in these agencies. For most countries, aid remains well below the UN target of 0.7% of GNI, but the current level of Japan's ODA does not even reach 0.2% of GNI. This ranks Japan as No. 21, below Greece.
- iv. **Japan should take a lead in advancing MDGs by actively introducing its experience and comparative advantage at key global fora.** Japan could take a leadership role in promoting "global development in harmony" through its lead in technology in areas such as agriculture, irrigation, prevention of global warming and cutting-edge medical technology. Japan could also take the leadership in advancing a comprehensive healthcare system in close cooperation with the WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA. Prime Minister Naoto Kan's pledge at the High-Level Plenary Meeting at the UN General Assembly in September that Japan would provide assistance of \$5 billion over five years beginning in 2011 to contribute to the achievement of health-related MDGs is a welcome development. The follow-up conference he pledged to hold in Japan in 2011 would provide an excellent forum to further advance Japan's leadership in this area.
- v. **More qualified personnel are needed in key positions throughout the UN system and diplomatic fora.** Acknowledging the importance of the role that the UN Secretariat plays, the government should aim to double the number of Japanese staff, particularly in senior positions, by 2020 in the secretariat and related UN agencies. As much as financial contribution to the United Nations is a right as well as an obligation, the same can be said about the presence and contribution of Japanese personnel in strategic positions throughout the UN system.

There is much to be done to strengthen the United Nations and for Japan to increase its voice in the international arena. Part of the work of the United Nations Information Center in Tokyo is to play a bridging role between Japan and the United Nations. We will endeavor to increase the knowledge and understanding of key UN activities and initiatives in Japan in order to encourage understanding and support from various stakeholders in the country. If such efforts contributed, in a small way, to an enhanced leadership role of Japan on the world stage, one of my own personal wishes would be fulfilled. **JS**

(The views expressed in this article are personal and do not necessarily represent the position of the United Nations.)

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